

Herszberg, Jerzy (IWM interview)
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See: <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80009273>

Object description

Polish Jewish civilian in Lodz Ghetto, 2/1940-7/1944; inmate of Auschwitz, Birkenau, Braunschweig, Watenstedt, Ravensbrück and Wöbbelin camps, 1944-1945

Content description

Jerzy Herszberg describes his background in Poznan, Poland, in the 1930s; character of Polish antisemitism; family circumstances; level of knowledge about Hitler; arrival of Jewish refugees in Poznan. Recollections of period as inmate in Lodz Ghetto, 1940- 1944: conditions in ghetto in older part of town; living conditions in ghetto; death of mother; reaction to move into ghetto; organization in ghetto; job as messenger; visits by German to factories in ghetto; character of selection in ghetto, 1942; diet including snails; lack of contact outside ghetto; contact with returning deportees; rumors about fate of deportees; cultivation of food; conditions during winter; obtaining clothing; work making parachute harness; lack of queues; hospitalization during typhoid epidemic, 1942; job as messenger; languages spoken; life in the ghetto; trip made out of ghetto, 1940; liquidation of ghetto, 7/1944 including hiding in cellar and leaving with police deportees; groups which stayed behind; size of group of police deportees. Aspects of train journey from Lodz to Auschwitz, 7/1943: loading of train; character of journey; lack of knowledge of destination. Recollections of period as inmate of Auschwitz-Birkenau, 7/1944-11/1944: reaction to sight of inmates; treatment of ex-policemen on arrival at Auschwitz; guards treatment of inmates watches; selection process; undressing and showering; lack of knowledge of gas chambers; retaining shoes and belts; examination of mouths; move to Birkenau; loss of jewelry; lack of administration on arrival; accommodation in barrack block; composition of group; beating of former policeman; issue of rations; discovery of water source; lack of occupation; contrast in ghetto and camp diets; morning ablutions; roll calls; latrines; growing awareness of nature of camp; types of clothing worn; method employed to leave Birkenau. Various aspects of train journey from Birkenau to Braunschweig, 11/1944. Recollections of period as inmate in Braunschweig, 11/1944- 2/1945: reception at camp; accommodation in barracks; infestations of lice; conditions in camp; work in factory; treatment by German master; rations and water supply in factory; treatment by Kapos and commandant; latrines; fatigue; question of his youth effecting treatment by Kapos; question of homosexuality in camp; Ukrainian female workers; Allied air raids on factory; lack of knowledge of progress of war; reaction to Allied Air raids; question of Allies not bombing concentration camps; state of health; question of escaping; appearance of inmates; character of German and Jewish Kapos; question of will to survive; nature of companionship in camp; treatment of dead and sick inmates. Various aspects of journey from Braunschweig to Watenstedt, 2/1945; recollections of period as inmate at Watenstedt, 2/1945-3/1945: opinion of Polish Kapo; accommodation and size of camp; incident of Spanish inmates playing music; different nationalities in camp; nature of work; question of committing sabotage; activities when confined to barracks; question of why Germans evacuated inmates; lack of food on train journey. Recollections of period as inmate in Ravensbrück, 3/1945-4/1945: character of camp; religious nature of Hungarians; question of knowing days of week; level of awareness of progress of war; condition on arrival in camp; lack of water on arrival; arrival of Red Cross parcels; visit of Red Cross representative; question of potential transfer to Sweden. Recollections of period as inmate in Wöbbelin 4/1945-5/1945: attempts to hang on to Red Cross parcels; preparations of Kapos to leave; disappearance of guards; reaction to surviving Holocaust. Recollections of liberation by US troops and journey to Poland, 1945:

reaction of liberating US troops to sight of inmates; contact with female German civilian; trips into Russian Zone; relations with US and Russian troops; start of march towards Poland; relations with Germans and Russians on journey; contact with surviving members of family in Poland. Aspects of journey to GB, 8/1945: crossing from Poland into Czechoslovakia; attitude of Czechoslovakians to camp survivors; reception at Theresienstadt transit camp; fate of sister. Aspects of period as refugee in GB, after 8/1945: flight from Prague to GB with group 'The Boys'; reaction to arrival in Windermere; continuing education; languages spoken; receiving reparations. Aspects of post war visits to Germany and Poland.