

Mr. Zylberszac, reel one. You were born in which year, Mr. Zylberszac?

In 1927.

Whereabouts?

In Łódź.

What did your father do for a living?

My father was a butcher, and we had our own butcher shop.

Did he employ anybody?

My brothers were working for us, and also family which come from the country, my cousins.

How old were you when you left school?

I was 12 years old.

What kind of a school did you go to?

A public school, which is not the same as here. A public school at home is a school which, I should imagine, elementary school which you got in England.

Was it a school for people of all religions?

Part time I went to a state school of all religions, but I also went to a Jewish school.

What kind of work did you take up on leaving?

Unfortunately, when I left, I-- straight away the war was on, and I was working for my father. I was working as a transport, with a horse and cart delivering provisions for the ghetto.

Now, could I ask you about relations between Jews and non-Jews in Poland before the war started? What were they like?

I was a child at the time, and the only-- the only contact which I had with the non-Jewish people was very little, except in the street. And at the part where I lived, in my block of flats for instance, the-- I would say there was around 90% Jewish people, and there were 10% non-Jewish people, and with those people we had very good relations.

They worked with the Jewish people together. And we lived in a very Jewish part, and it was more or less segregated. Had we gone out from this part to the non-Jewish areas, I think we would have found very much hostility.

Did you personally come across anti-Semitism before the war?

It was very visible, yes.

In what form?

In physical form. I, as a child, would go to school, and I would meet up with non-Jewish children. They would attack us, physically attack us. And we would have to defend ourselves. And obviously, those children who were unable to defend themselves were usually beaten up quite badly.

But I don't know myself, looking back at it, that it couldn't happen in any place with little gang wars and things like that. I myself wouldn't know that because I was too young to understand at the time what was happening, whether it was just one little gang beating up another, a little fellow which they caught in the street or whether it was to do with anti-Semitism.

What did your parents tell you about all this? How did they explain it to you?

They felt that it was anti-Semitism and that the Jewish people were picked on.

Did they try to give you a reason about why it was so?

I explained to you, we were a family of butchers. And my father always told me since I was very young to stand up for myself and to try and defend myself as best as I could.

Did you do that?

At all times.

Now, can you remember anything of the war breaking out?

There was rumors that the war was going to break out, and the rumors straight away started off that they were going to kill the Jews. The Germans were coming to kill the Jews. And as a child, this was foremost in my mind. And any time this was mentioned, I felt like my mind was paralyzed with fear.

Did you see anything of the fighting?

No, I didn't see anything of the fighting at all. The only thing I saw is when the Germans came in to my town where I lived, and they came in actually like giants. I imagined it like in the Bible, like the giants, the Philistines when they tried to conquer Israel.

And they came in, and the first thing I knew is when they broke down my door and they came into my place very early in the morning. I was still in bed. And they were asking us whether we have ammunition and weapons in the house, whether we were hiding anything.

I remember lying in bed and covering myself up over my head with the blankets or whatever we were using at the time. Because I was so scared and paralyzed with fear from all the rumors which I've heard before they came in, I thought they were going to kill us there and then.

Was anybody harmed by them?

No, they just went through our rooms where we lived, and they practically destroyed everything. They took the bayonets and stuck it into everything which we possessed, and threw everything on the floor and were just looking generally for guns and ammunition.

Once the Germans had taken over and you had these searches, did you see them on the streets regularly, or were they not prominent?

The Germans were very prominent straight away. Not only the Germans, Poland was-- in the town where I lived, Łódź, we had a very large contingent of German Volksdeutsche.

They straight away took over the running of the town. They knew exactly where everybody was. In fact, Poland, Łódź, was divided into three groups of people-- the Poles, the Jews who lived in my town, and the Germans. And I think they were divided into a third of the population.

The Jews had 33%. The Germans, I believe had 33%. And I reckon the rest of them were Poles. So a lot of the administration was done by the Germans before the war.

Of course, when the Germans came in, the German, the Volksdeutsche, took over the running of the town, and they knew exactly which part and what to do and where to go and which Jew had what, and they straight away started to harass us.

They took our-- they took my father's business away. They didn't let them slaughter the cattle according to the Jewish ritual, which was forbidden by the German law by the penalty of death. And this is how-- I see how the how it started all off, with a campaign of terror.

Were relations between the Jews and the Volksdeutsche the same as between the Jews and the Poles, or were there any differences?

There was a great amount of differences. The Volksdeutsche and the Poles were friends, and they had one thing in common-- to do away with the Jews. And this sort of-- and this sort of-- In this way, the Poles and the Germans were united to do away with the Jews and to make more room for themselves and to take over the Jewish businesses in the same way as they did in Germany, I should think.

And they were cooperating with the Germans, as far as I could see. I believe, myself, had not the Poles helped the Germans in every way they could, a lot more of our Jewish people would have survived.

In what ways did the Poles help the Germans?

They would tell them where the Jews were hiding. They would tell them who had some money which they could extract from them. They would tell them who was in charge of the Jewish community to give them information. They would tell them all the-- they would give them all the documents, which they could have destroyed had they want to, where the Jews live and who was Jewish and who wasn't, which would have been very difficult for the Germans to find out.

They give them information such that it made it very easy for the Germans to go around to every Jewish house and take every Jew away at random, like they did in Germany, which they had all the information themselves. Had the Poles destroyed that information, I believe, myself, that it would have been very difficult for the Germans. It would have made their task that much more difficult, and it would have taken that much longer.

Polish Jews were distributed all over Poland. Every little hamlet, every little village had Jews in it. Had not the Poles helped them with documents and pointing out which was a Jew and which wasn't, it would have been much more difficult for them in this way to find all the Jewish people.

What did the attitude of the Poles in Łódź seem to be towards the German occupation? Did they collaborate, or did they resist?

There were some which resisted, obviously, like in every other country. But to my eyes as a child, I think that they did everything they could to resist the German occupation in their own way.

Did you see any signs of collaboration by the Jews-- by the Poles apart from collaborating against the Jews?

There was always collaborators, and there was collaborators, I would say, amongst the Jewish people as well. Everybody wanted to live. Everybody, like in every other country, wanted to have that little bit of extra food or a titbit which the Germans could give. Nobody at the time, I would say, believed-- I don't think anybody in the world would have believed that the Germans were such beasts and that the atrocities which happened could have happened.

I don't think the Poles themselves believed it. The Poles, as far as I was concerned as a child, had too many Jewish people in Poland, and they didn't want them there. They just wanted the Jews out of Poland.

They didn't want to kill them, I wouldn't-- I would say. They just wanted them out of Poland. They didn't want them there.

Before the war, had your family thought of emigrating from Poland?

Not really. My father was born there. He had his business there. Like in every other country, he was brought up there. He was a good citizen. And I would say that he really wanted to live there.

In fact, when the war broke out and he could see what was happening, he still didn't believe it that they would harm him. Because he was an upright man. Everybody knew him. We were a good family.

And even the Polish people recognized that my father was a working man. He did his work, and he minded his own business. He didn't interfere with anybody, and I would say that he was a good citizen of Poland.

Did you consider yourself to be Polish or Jewish or both?

I considered myself a Polish Jew, being born in Poland. I couldn't consider myself otherwise because otherwise the Poles would have soon pointed it out that I wasn't a Pole, that I was a Jew. There was only one way you could consider yourself in Poland if you lived as a Jew.

Of course, there were Polish Jews who assimilated like in every other country, and they were intermarrying with non-Jewish people, and they considered themselves as Poles. But it didn't help them much when Hitler came in. He pointed out three or four generations back that they were Jews and had to go back to their Judaism.

In fact, I would say that those people suffered more than me. I suffered because I was a Jew, and I knew I was a Jew. But those people suffered. They didn't even know why they were suffering, which made it that much more difficult for them to survive.

You said that your father's business was taken over. So how did your family survive afterwards?

With great difficulties. My father used his horse and cart to work for people. We had a horse and cart to transport our meat. My brothers had butcher shops, and my sister had a butcher shop, and my father used to buy in bulk for all the three shops.

So we had the horse and car to transport from one shop to the other the meat. And also my father used to go to the country with the horse and cart to buy cattle. So this horse and cart were used during the war and just after my father's business was taken away to transport things for other people. This is how we made a living.

In fact, we employed, in the beginning, a non-Jewish man who lived with us in the same block of flats and worked for my father from time to time. And when the ghetto started to be closed, he tried to take our horse and cart out of the ghetto and keep it. And this is a man my father trusted with his life.

In fact, it wouldn't be for one of my brothers, who was at the time with him, that in fact would have happened.

At what stage did the Germans start to introduce laws and regulations restricting the activities of Jews?

Oh, that happened as soon as they came in. Jews had to wear yellow stars. Jews had to wear white bands on their armbands. We in the Łódź ghetto had to wear a star, a yellow star on the back and on the front. Anybody who didn't wear the star was punished very severely.

In fact, the first thing I saw when the Germans came in, and this is, I believe, was the campaign of fear in Łódź, on [NON-ENGLISH] Platz, which was called [NON-ENGLISH] Platz, they took a certain amount of people of Jews which they called at random and hung them up in the street by the neck and let them hang there for days and days and days. And they made most people go and have a look.

Did you see it?

I saw it, yes, as a child at 12 years old. It wasn't very far from us where the people were hanging. They were hanging there for days. And I thought, how could this happen in the world? I couldn't believe my own eyes.

What does about [NON-ENGLISH] Platz mean?

There was a place during the war that is like a marketplace, where the people used to come with their ware and displayed the ware before the war. During the war, they used to use it when the ghetto was shut for the transport to come in through the ghetto and where all the German administration was.

I think that from the beginning to the end, there was a campaign of fear. They tried to terrify the people. One reason was that the people shouldn't make any uprising. The next thing was that the people should be so scared of them that they shouldn't do anything.

As soon as they went-- as soon as a German went near us, we were so scared we'd become paralyzed. Because they started to hit us. He could take you and kill you. And there would be no retribution to him or to anybody else.

There was no law and order. And as I said to you previously, this is something, the fear which we suffered during the war and in the last five years which will never come out on any tape recordings, on any writings, in any books. And nobody could write it down on paper.

This is how I feel. Because most of the time the people were so scared of the Germans, not only the children but the grown-ups. You could see it in their eyes. You could see it everywhere.

You could see a German come into the street where I lived. There was 1,000 people there, and all of them wanted to become invisible. They never knew which one is going to take out the gun and shoot for no reason at all.

Did you have any unpleasant experiences yourself on the streets?

Well, there was one unpleasant experience in my own house. As I explained to you from the beginning, we were people, butchers, and we were very strong people, and we didn't stand any nonsense from nobody. Even before the war, when the Poles started, we were a family who liked to defend ourselves.

When the Germans came in at one time to our house, and they tried to interrogate my father because he slaughtered a cow according to the Jewish law, one of my cousins was there, who was the champion boxer of my town, and the Germans hit my father's face, and my cousin went for him. And he took out the gun, and he was going to shoot him there and then, and my father intervened and just held my cousin back.

And I was there in the room, and I definitely thought that the German was going to kill my cousin there and then. Had it not been for my father putting himself in the way, he would have definitely shot him.

So strength had nothing to do with it. People who think that they're brave and in a free world can't imagine when a man comes in with a gun to your house, and he puts it to your head, the bravest man has to give in. Otherwise, he gets killed. And there is nobody stupid enough to want to get killed.

And at that time, my cousin could have taken the German-- he was so strong-- and tore him into two people.

When was the ghetto set up?

The ghetto was set up in about 1940 something like that. I'm very bad at remembering dates. End of '39, beginning of '40, I would say.

Whereabouts in Łódź was it?

It was a place called Baluty, Balut. It was a place called-- it was a place where it was prominently, before the war, Jewish. I would say in that part, where they set up the ghetto before the war, it was 80% Jewish.

And to that place they brought all the Jewish people from the west end, so to speak, of Łódź. And in the end, they brought all the Jewish people from all over the areas, the little towns and the villages. And they brought them in and made it so much overcrowded that there was nowhere to live. People lived in the streets.

And did the non-Jews have to get out of Baluty?

Yes, the non-Jews were taken out of the place.

Was there a wall around it or barbed wire or what?

There was a wall and barbed wire. There was barbed wire and a space and barbed wire. So if anybody was caught in between, automatically he was shot. There was no-- there was no question asked. He was caught in between the wires, they killed him.

Of course, if he was caught going across the wall, they also shot him. A lot of people got shot trying to get food into the ghetto because there was great starvation there. There was no food at all.

So there were guard towers as well?

Guard towers all the way around.

Dogs?

Yes. The guards had dogs, and there was a bridge which we crossed from one side of the ghetto to the other. The ghetto was divided into two halves. And in the middle, the tram used to go through.

Were you-- were you already living in Baluty, or did you have to move in?

No, I lived all the time in the place. I lived in Baluty before the war. My part of the town was in the ghetto, where I lived before the war.

So you stayed in the same flat?

The same flat, yes. Of course, the flat at the time was shared with other families which came into our town which lived in the West end. We lived in one room, which was divided into four.

We only had barely enough room to sleep. And at the time, my father took in another two families, relatives of his, and also slept with us on the floor. So more or less the whole place looked like a dormitory. And at night, you couldn't even go down to the toilet because everybody was sleeping on top of each other.

Were you able to sleep under such conditions?

Well, needs must, and I was really a small child. I don't know how it affected the grown-ups, but when I was tired enough, I should imagine that I slept all right. My most-- the biggest problem wasn't sleep. It was food.

There was no food and just barely enough to exist. And thousands and thousands of people, before we even started, died of starvation. That was another policy of the Germans. In order to save themselves the bullets, they starved us to death.

I would say that the campaign of the Germans was worked out scientifically from the beginning to end, and they were really very good at it. I would give them full credit for that.

The campaign of fear, of starving us, of extracting all the energies from our bodies before we died from the strong people, I think they did an extremely good job of it.

Can you describe the food that you had?

It wasn't difficult to describe. We had a little piece of bread, which was enough for a mouse, I would say, and just a plate of soup, which was-- which was like a root vegetable in water, which had no energy giving strength at all.

And that we had to do a full day's work on. Everybody who didn't work in the ghetto, for instance, they took away, deported them. And after the war, we found out their fate, what happened to them.

You said people are starving to death. Did you see dead bodies in the streets?

Oh, that was a every day occurrence. I mean, the people who took away the dead bodies, there wasn't enough people working, workers there to be able to cope with it.

In fact, some of my friends-- I said to you before I was in the transport. Some of my friends were doing that job, and they were absolutely overworked, worked day and night to cope and couldn't cope with it. Thousands and thousands of people died in the ghetto before we even went into the camps.

Where were the bodies taken to? Do you know?

To a place called Marysin. There was a burial ground.

Was that inside the ghetto?

Yes. I believe some of my family was buried there as well. Even before we went away from the ghetto, two of my children-- of my sister's children died, and they were buried there.

You said that people tried to get out to get food. Did you ever try to get out yourself?

I was too scared. But I worked in the transport, and I worked with the food. When the food came in, I brought it in to the people in the ghetto to the main storehouses. And now and again I would find a potato in my truck or a radish or a cabbage, which helped out with the ration of food which I got. And in this way, I believe my family and I survived that much longer than the rest of the people in the ghetto.

Was there any possibility of growing any food in the ghetto?

There were people who grew food in the ghetto, who had got little bits of ground and grew food, which part of it had to be given back to the administration, and part of it was kept by the people. But you can imagine that there were so many starving people there. At night, they used to go and pinch the stuff, and the people who grew it could get up one morning, although they guarded it all night, and found that they had nothing from all the work they'd done. It was a matter of desperation. People would--

Mr. Zylberszac, reel two.

Out of desperation, people would grab anything they could find. People would dig up coal which was hidden in ground, because obviously this was another problem. The people in the ghetto had burned everything they could lay their hands on to keep warm.

We had the most severe winter, I would say, ever happened in Poland. The snow on the ground and the ice was about 2, 3 foot thick. In my block of flats, I'm surprised that people didn't die of dysentery, because all the sewage and everything was all frozen up with the ground. I would say it was lucky that the ground was frozen. Otherwise, more people would die.

There was no medicines. In the district where I lived before the war, there was no doctors. There was a qualified nurse, an unqualified doctor who used to go around treating the people.

So I don't know how they cope with this part of things, because I should think that a lot of people must have died of all sorts of different diseases. And we burned everything which we could lay our hands on.

I remember that my father chopped up his chopping block from the butcher shop, and his box in which he kept his meat. Everything got burned. There was nothing left.

We had some wooden houses where people used to live in our blocks of flats. Even the houses were torn apart. The wood was used for burning and keeping warm and trying to keep alive. Everybody tried to live another day.

Everybody was desperate. The desperation you could see in people's eyes. people who were friends all their life didn't even bother to stop and talk to you, to try and preserve the energy to live another day. And this is how it went on from day to day.

Which was the worst-- suffering from hunger or from the cold?

I would say the worst thing we ever suffered anywhere, right through during the war, I myself, for myself-- I'm speaking not for others. I wasn't a big eater. I was only a small child, and I didn't-- obviously, I was hungry at the time of the ghetto, but I wasn't as big an eater as my brothers and my father and my sisters. I myself suffered more of fear than anything else, which everybody else suffered from-- fear and cold.

Because I was always frozen and cold. And up till today, I don't like the cold weather. I mean, I just can't stand it anymore.

Did people actually get frostbite?

People were frozen to death, not frostbite. People-- you could get up in the morning one day and find corpses lying frozen to death. It was so cold. It was unbelievable. And there was no heating. There's nothing to warm yourself with.

There were so many difficulties in the ghetto. The administration was kept by a man called Rumkowski. A lot of people say that he was a nasty man, and that obviously he looked after himself and his henchmen. But I would say in desperation that he did everything he could for the people in what was the things which he could do with.

He had a policy. He believed himself that if he got the people to work, the Germans would let them live. And this is how he tried to keep the people alive. But this wasn't the case. The Germans obviously used him as one of their pawns like they used everything else psychological to destroy the Jewish people.

He was the kind of boss of the ghetto, wasn't he?

That's correct. And he had his own police force. He had his own transport. It was like a state within a state. But obviously the Germans used him to get at us. Like I said to you before, the Germans had all the papers, all the names of Jewish people.

The Jewish administration indirectly helped them in a way, which is unbelievable. Because if they wanted any Jews, the Jewish administration would give them all the documentation, where the Jews lived, who didn't work, and the Jews which were in prison or did any wrongdoings to the Germans, every sort of information which the Jewish administration had at the time, the Germans could just walk in and take it, and they had all the administration which they needed to carry out their beastly, beastly job.

How much personal contact did you have with the administration? Well, I worked for the administration. I worked for the ghetto verwaltung, which isn't the ghetto verwaltung which run the ghetto. I work for the transport side of it.

I brought in the food to the ghetto. As I explained to you in the beginning, everybody in the ghetto had to work. If you didn't work, they deported you. And now after the war we found out what the deportation meant. They deported you to a place called Chelmno, Kulmhof, which they used mobile gas chambers. One of my brothers was taken away in this way.



This is called a Vernichtungslager. There were three sort of concentration camps. One was of a Vernichtungslager. One was an Arbeitslager. And there was a second-- a third camp which was called a concentration camp.

In the Vernichtungslager, they took you away, and they did away with everybody. They put you in a mobile gas chamber. By the time you reached your destination, you were dead. That was called a Vernichtungslager.

An Arbeitslager was a camp which they took you away. They extracted the energy from your body until you couldn't work anymore, and then they killed you. A concentration camp was a camp which they took you in. The old people they gassed, and the children. And they did away with their bodies by burning them in crematoriums.

The people who still had a bit of energy left in their bodies, they worked it out scientifically that three months by the amount of food which they give you, you would only last three months. After three months, you had another what they called selection. You were undressed in the nude. A German would come along, go through all the people, see who had still some energy left in the body.

He would leave him to work until the energy was exhausted, and the rest of them would be taken back to the concentration camp, put in the gas chambers, as we know today, and then in the crematoriums and burn them, and the bodies were just done away with.

Coming back to the ghetto, under these terrible conditions, did people go mad?

We had, I should imagine, the biggest asylums in the world. But of course, the Germans didn't keep them there long. The people who were very sick and mentally disarranged, they just made a spare row. One day, they came along, surrounded the hospital, took them away, and that was the end of it.

So this sort of people we never kept in the ghetto, not the very sick and not the mentally. Even I believe no reading, hindsight after the war, that the first people who the Germans practiced with the gas and the crematoriums were their own people. Germany, they took the German people from the asylums, and this is the first time they ever used the gas chambers, and did away with their own people before the war, or during the war when Hitler came to power.

Did you get any help from outside the ghetto?

No, not me personally. I believe some people did do some sort of business with the Poles. They gave them the last bit of money which they possessed, and they brought in a little bit of food. But I would say that the amount was negligible.

Was there ever any such thing as resistance organization within the ghetto that you heard of?

Well, we tried to resist as much as we could in our own ways. The people who worked tried to sabotage their work. But if anything was ever found, the people were very severely punished, and the punishment was usually death. They would take them away, and that would be the end. You never see them again.

What forms of sabotage did you hear of?

Mostly from the work which they've done for the army and for the ammunition and for things like, that putting in the wrong thing in the wrong place. In this sort of way, but there was never any physical-- physical--

Resistance.

Resistance in the ghetto.

What kind of work on the ammunition were they doing? Do you know?

They were making the containers for the V1s and the V2s, and they were doing uniforms. They were making straw shoes for the soldiers. So they would put the shoes-- both feet the same size or one foot longer than the other and things like that. Not very much they could do, really. It was more of a moral resistance than a physical one, that everybody felt that he was doing something to help for the Germans to lose the war.

Was there any religious life in the ghetto?

That's a difficult question. Because my own father, till the very end, I would say, did not want to eat any meat which wasn't slaughtered in the ritual way. In the end, of course, you had to give in, because it was just a matter either he dies or he eats it. And when it is a matter of life or death, by the Jewish law, you are supposed to-- you're supposed to eat. It is, in fact, a good deed to do it.

But the people who were righteous people, very religious people, were taken away, really, at the beginning of the ghetto. When the ghetto was closed, they deported them to camps, which we found out after they were Vernichtungslagers, and they did straight away away with their life.

They were not strong people, you see. They were learned people. They used their head instead of their muscles. And the Germans didn't really need people who had brains. They just wanted energy, like machines, to use them for their factories. Instead of petrol, they used our bodies.

And this sort of people, the religious people who used their brains, they didn't need them. So at the beginning of the war and beginning of the ghetto, in my block of flats, they were all taken away, and I never saw them again.

Was there a functioning synagogue?

The synagogue was blown up straight away when the Germans came into Łódź. One of the most beautiful synagogues you've ever seen in your life. As a child, I thought it was really the ultimate, and I believe after the war when people talk about the great synagogue of Łódź, everybody tells me that it was a great synagogue. It was beautiful.

I, myself, have never ever seen one-- because when you see it with a child's eyes, you see it different than with a grown man's eyes. But in my eyes, it was one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen. As soon as the Germans came in, they put dynamite in the synagogue and blew it straight up.

I think that religious worship was forbidden by the penalty of death. So it was very-- even if there was any, it was very hidden, and people couldn't really go out and pray like we do in England or anywhere else in the world, which is free worship.

When were you taken from the ghetto?

I was taken away in 1944, I think at the end of the closing of the ghetto.

Can you describe what happened in detail?

I will try. It was a very dramatic time. It was a very terrible time of my life. I lived all the time in the ghetto with my father and mother and some of my family, which was already taken away previously, like my sisters and nephews and uncles and brothers.

My father and I and my brother worked for the ghetto transport. And we were still physically capable and strong people, and they needed a lot of strong people to clear out the ghetto. In fact, they needed about 300, 400 strong men to clear out all the ghetto and ship all the stuff from the Jewish people which was left behind to Germany.

My brother and I and my father were picked for this job. But they wanted to take my mother away from us, so all three of us decided to go with the transport with my mother. And we went to a place called Auschwitz.

We arrived to a place called Birkenau, where there was a selection. At the time, I didn't know, but now I know that one of the selectors was Mengele.

And I would say that this was the most dramatic time of my life, when I was pulled away from my mother in this place, and from my father. I was at the time already 13, 14 years nearly. I was left there with one of my brothers who looked after me all the time, and through that brother which I survived.

My mother was taken away from me, and my father was taken away from me in this place. And I never saw them again. One of the Germans in one of the camps afterwards, when we described my father, my brother and I, kept on humoring us, saying yes, he saw him in this camp, and he saw him in this camp.

Of course, after the war, we found out that it was all lies. My father was killed in Birkenau with my mother when they arrived there. When I arrived in Auschwitz, as I explained to you in the beginning of the tape, the whole thing was a campaign of fear and terror.

They took us into some bath. They undressed us in the nude, and it was dark. Now I believe that the crematoriums were too full for us to go into, because we were standing outside the crematoriums for hours in the nude, waiting. I didn't know what we were waiting for at the time.

I thought in that waiting-- and the fear was absolutely something which can't be described. After waiting for about 2 hours in the nude, some soldiers came with some sticks and dogs and chased us in the nude into an open, burning fire in the dark.

And there was about 200, 300 people. And we were all running. They were beating us, and the dogs were chasing us. And I definitely thought that they were going to chase us into that live fire. It was an enormous fire burning there.

As we got to the fire, they diverted us into another place, apparently which were showers. We took a shower, and they gave us a uniform, like a pajama sort of affair. It was freezing outside. We put on that uniform after the bath. And how we survived that, God only knows. It must have been meant that I should survive. And this is how I was deported from the Łódź ghetto.

I stayed in Birkenau for about a month. Afterwards, I went to Auschwitz, and I worked there for about three months, in different camps which were part of Auschwitz.

What was the difference between Birkenau and Auschwitz?

Auschwitz, I would say, was more of a working lager. Birkenau was a Vernichtungslager. In Birkenau, they had all the crematoriums and the gas chambers. And it was everybody's ambition who was in Birkenau to get out of there.

The longer you were in Birkenau, the more chance you had of ending up in the gas chambers. And it was due to my brother, who was an extremely strong man, that I got out of there. They picked my brother again to go to a working camp, to Auschwitz. And he pointed out to the German that he had a brother.

And he was in two minds whether to take me or not, but seeing that my brother was such a strong man, he took me as well. And this is how I got out of Birkenau.

Were you made to work in Birkenau?

In Birkenau, we were not made to work, no. They were waiting, really, for the gas chambers and the crematoriums to become free to put you in there. Now I know that.

I met one of my sister's children there. His name was Isaac, and we asked him to come with us and to stay with us. And he tried to persuade me to go with him, because he was not much older-- I was not much older than him.

He said that they were going to give him more bread and milk tonight. And if I should go there, I would get a piece extra bread and some milk. And now I found out-- I found out afterwards that they collected all the young children. They wanted them all in one place.

In the night, they came along with trucks and lorries. They took all those children in that block that same night, and they took them to the crematoriums and gas chambers. And all those young children on the age, they burned and gassed.

What kind of ages?

I at that time must have been getting on for 14. He must have been about 12. Anything under 12 at that time went.

Were there very young children there?

There was-- some of the children were four or five years old. And I believe after that, we never saw any children in the camp. I never saw my nephew again.

What were living conditions like in Birkenau?

Well, undescrivable, really. I mean, when I describe to you that in the Łódź ghetto we slept very uncomfortable, and there were overcrowding. I mean, Birkenau, we slept on top of each other. There was no possibility even of turning around in the night.

They were packing in as many people to one of those barracks as it was physically possible to do. Oh, I forgot to describe to you the arriving to Birkenau. I think I better do that because I think this should be on record.

We were put into cattle trucks. We were put in, so many people into a cattle truck, that when I arrived in Auschwitz with those trucks, about a quarter of the people were suffocated, never even arrived alive. There was no space to breathe.

There was-- it was unbelievable. And when we arrived there, they straightaway started to beat us and kick us to get us out of those wagons and terrify us again. Then they took us into one big barrack. There was one Jewish fellow who was obviously collaborating with the Germans, asking us whether we brought any valuables or whether we had hidden any valuables or whether we got any gold teeth or anything that they can extract, and they can extract them before and give them the valuables to save our lives.

And if they found any valuables in any way, which was impossible even to get through because we were undressed in the nude, but some people might have swallowed some things or some things like that. And they tried to get those things from the people. And they said if they find anything, they're going to X-ray. They're going to do this. They're going to do that.

And if they find some valuables, they're going to shoot us or kill us there and then. I didn't see any people going forward to say that they've got the valuables, but the speech this man made, if I had anything, I would gladly hand it over to him. It was so terrifying.

And there's another thing which I think should go down on record which the Germans did, which I thought was very clever, now I can think about it.

They took the German people. They put them in charge of the Polish people, the kapos, the Lagerführers. Then they took the Polish people and put them in charge of the German people. And I believe this was a campaign of terror, one against the other.

They took the Hungarian Jews, put them in charge of the Polish Jews, the Polish Jews on the Hungarian Jews and played one up against the other. And in Auschwitz, the whole time while I was in Auschwitz, being a small child and having lived in Łódź all my life, I never saw any other Jews except Polish Jews.

When I saw those Hungarian Jews who were in charge over me in Auschwitz and in Birkenau, I thought they were German. They spoke German. They behaved like German. And I definitely didn't think that there were Jewish people.

I only found out that there were Jews in another camp. When I ended up with them in another camp, I found out that they were the same as us. They were Jewish people. It was a very clever way of putting one against the other.

And this is the campaign of terror went on and on and on that way with all different tricks and all different ways. they would come along in the Łódź ghetto, for instance. They would surround the one street, and they would tell the rest of the ghetto that in this street live a lot of murderers, undesirable people, and we've got to get them out of there. Otherwise, the rest of the ghetto will suffer.

And the Germans would come around, surrounded that street, clear out the whole street, and take them away. So there should be no resistance, you understand? Then they would come along to another street, and they would say, ah, this is the street where all the murderers lived, and we never found out until now. We got to-- got to do away with them to save the other people's life in the ghetto.

They would do that. Then they would go to another street, another district. They would say, here live people who don't want to work. They just don't want to work, and we don't want people who don't want to work.

Those people who don't want to work make it harder for the people who work. And therefore, you don't have enough food. They eat the food, and they don't work, therefore we got to take them away, and then you will have more food. This went on from one street to the other until they cleared out the whole ghetto.

Did the tactics of trying to play off the Poles against the Hungarians against the Germans work in Auschwitz?

In every camp I've been to. Most of the times, I must say, that the kapos which I have been to were professional criminals, murderers, which had green winkels on. The yellow winkels, the homosexuals, and the red winkles, which were the communists. In most of the camps, they were in charge over us, or the black winkels, which were the Gypsies.

And they were extremely, extremely ruthless people who were the kapos. They would only put people in charge of a camp, such a person who had no remorse to kill anybody or to do away with your life. They were absolutely like robots, those people.

A kapo would do the same thing in front of a German as the German himself. They would beat you to death.

In Auschwitz, the kapos had what colored badges?

The same as the criminals. They had either red winkels, green winkels, or black winkels. It means a corner. A winkel means a corner. They a corner like a mark on the side, which told you what he was, or told the Germans what he was.

If he was a homosexual, he would have a yellow corner. If he was a Gypsy, he would have a black corner. If he was a communist, he would have a red corner. Only the Jews had the striped uniforms.

I myself have a number on my arm, which is 9616B. Everybody who went out of Auschwitz, with the exception of a few select transport, were marked by a number on their arms. And if--