

**RG-50.156.0019**

## **Summary**

Edward Grossman, born Eliahu Grossman 3/29/21 in Medzilaborce (Mezulaboritz previously under Austro-Hungarian rule) Czechoslovakia. Father Chaim, a peddler who spent a number of years in the US before 1919. Mother, Blima ran a grocery store. Long ago ancestors may have been refugees from the Inquisition. Family Hasidic. He went to cheder from 3-10, Talmud Torah til 14 and then to yeshiva as well as public school. Town 60-70% Jewish. Some Zionists in town and some went to Palestine> Community elders opposed to Palestine. Wanted to wait until "Holy One decides when Meshiach" will come and redeem the people.

After 1938, Grocery "Aryanized" and taken over. His part of Czechoslovakia became Slovakia, an independent state aligned with the Nazis. Nuremberg laws applied and Jews wore yellow stars. Aware of torture and killings elsewhere. Slovakia not occupied but neighbors became Nazis. Drafted into Slovak army 10/41 as part of a labor battalion. Built roads. Treated reasonably well and allowed to worship and even lay tefillin daily. 2500 Jews in 21st Battalion, 6<sup>th</sup> Division. In 1943, Nazis purged Jews from military and they were supposedly discharged. Slovak Minister of Defense, a "humanist," kept them together doing the same work despite SS demands. Only Jews left out of 100,000 in Slovakia. Supervised by Chrenkaguard, Slovak equivalent of SS 1943-10/28/44. On that day, surrounded by SS and 410 taken to Auschwitz. May have been last to be transported to Auschwitz. From there 800 prisoners taken to Tziganer, the gypsy camp in Birkenau. Heard that a transport from Terezin recently liquidated. 11/19/44, 900 prisoners taken and men, women and children separated and tattooed (B140983) by Jewish boys. Men sent to dig rutabagas for a few days and then sent to a weaving factory to sort plastic for "mussulmen" (human female skeletons) to weave rope for the German Navy. Overseen by a Communist kapo from Stettin who tried to protect them from SS by beating them in front of SS. Grossman singled out by an SS officer and told to guard a bundle and if anything missing, he would have his dogs tear him apart. 1/8/45, prisoners ordered into "appell", evacuation from the camp.. 200,000 marched out for 3 days to Gliwice sixty miles away. Cold and snowy, and anyone who stopped was killed. Half never made it. Put on a train in open flatcars to go to Mauthausen in Austria. Trip took 7 days and many more died from hunger and exposure. Mauthausen was full, so they were sent to Sachsenhausen/Oranienberg. Only 30 left on his car by then. Survived on snow as no food. Then sent to Flossenbergl (where French Premier Leon Blum was in next barracks. Put to work in a quarry. Sent to Ausencommando (satellite camp) to work on an airfield. Too weak to work. As Americans approached, 900 marched away until 4/27/45 when word received that Himmler had released the prisoners. Grossman and two others went to a nearby town and were given food by a farmer.. Americans came 5/2/45. He broke into a bakery in town and ate half cooked bread and became sick. Weighed 80 pounds. Hospitalized at American hospital in Engsfelden until 7/45. Czech government sent trucks to repatriate its prisoners. Found out his

mother murdered on Rosh Hashanah 1942 by a drunken SS soldier and 2 sisters and other relatives died at Majdanek and Treblinka.

Czech government helped with food, housing and schooling. He went to business school and became active on behalf of Jan Masaryk and Edouard Benes' part. Not good after Communists took over so he got a visa to go to the US as well as a government appointment to be a government representative of the nationalized textile industry in the US Midwest and Canada. Rescinded after Masaryk killed. Came to live in Minneapolis where brother lived. Tried to get trade jobs with 3M, Cargill and others but no Jews being hired circa 1948. Did several menial jobs and went to night school at University of Minnesota. Met the president of Napco and got a job. Now (1984) a senior VP and head of export division. Now on Board of Jewish Federation, JFS, JCC and Adath Jeshurun synagogue even though he lost faith in God after the war. Wife (Unnamed) brought him back to Judaism, at least culturally and he was instrumental in setting a Holocaust memorial at the Minneapolis Library.