

VICTOR CHAIM MINTZ

Born in Warsaw, Poland 1909. Father, David (D.1911) and mother Sarah. Maternal Grandfather, Moshe Sander Engelman, wealthy forest owner who sold lumber to Germany from Glaskov, Poland. Maternal great-great-grandfather the first rabbi in Warsaw. Great-great grandfather's cemetery monument in Warsaw says "Rabbi Moshe Alexander Engelman, son of Rabbi Yanke Vesukeh Engelman," who wrote a book called "The House of Aaron" which was published in NY in 1946. Grandfather knew Theodor Herzl and Nachum Sokolow, the president of a Polish Zionist Movement. Family religious. He spoke Yiddish and Hebrew and Polish. During WW I, family went to Proskurow, Ukraine. In 1919, he witnessed a pogrom in which 5000 Jews killed. Returned to Poland in 1920. Mintz had 2 years of college and became an accountant in a bank in 1929. Knew of Kehila in Warsaw, a sort of self-governing Jewish association in Warsaw with own schools, welfare and taxation authority.

On 9/1/39 when war started, he was called to dig trenches. Three days later, he and cousins fled east to Bialystok. Rest of family stayed in Warsaw. Mintz stayed in Bialystok until 12/39 and then went to Lithuania. He and others arrested by Lithuanian soldiers and taken to the Russian border where other Jews paid off the soldiers to release them. Then on to Vilna in a horse and buggy paid for by the Joint Distribution Committee. After Russians took over, Mintz went to Telz where he met and married his wife in 12/40. After Germany attacked Russia, Mintz and wife fled on a freight train to Kovno and then Riga, then on into Russia on another train to a collective farm outside of Danilov. Stayed working on the farm until 8/41, then on to Novosibirsk and finally to Samarkand (where daughter born) until 1946. Worked as an accountant. Evacuated back to Lodz but wanted to go to Israel. Learned sister and brother-in-law died after liberation from a camp and their child was killed in the camp. Mother and grandfather died at some point before war's end. Through Bricha and HIAS he was able to come to Minneapolis where wife's brothers and sisters lived.

Mintz thinks a lot about survival and became less religious during and postwar, but has become more religious in recent years. Sons went to Talmud Torah and one son went to Yeshiva U. Still upset that US and UK turned away Jews before the war. Objects to the idea that Jews went "like sheep to the slaughter" as he feels they had no choice when faced with heavily armed people, citing Babi Yar as an example.