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Summary of Oral History Interview with Jacques Steinberg—ENGLISH

Jacques Chaïm Steinberg, born on September 10, 1920 in Warsaw, Poland; his mother Léah (née Dubinski) was born in Warsaw and his father Abraham was born in Skarżysko-Kamienna; one of six children; emigrated to Danzig in 1926 – anti-Semitism; his schooling was in German; his father started a confectionery; Jewish school children were relegated to the back of the classroom; speaking of anti-Semitic insults at school, thus ending schooling in 1937; in 1938 his father left for Warsaw – one hour before the Gestapo arrived for him; in the fall of 1938, Jacques, his sister Gerda and his mother left for Warsaw; living at Mila 17 in the Jewish quarter and future ghetto; Mila 18, in the heart of the ghetto, was the secret bunker in respect to the 1943 Warsaw uprising; Jacques working in a chocolate factory; speaking of numerous round-ups by the SS; speaking of his uncles in the USA, and his other brothers and sisters – Paula and Annie arrived in Palestine on the "Patria"; in May 1940 Jacques was taken to the freight station, and put in a closed cattle car – 80 in each car; never seeing his parents or sister Gerda again; SS taking Jacques to the Organization Todt (OT)– near the Carpathian Mountains; constructing a railway line; in 1940, Jacques was transferred by canvas-covered truck to another station, and then on to Dorohusk on the Bug River; in 1941, arriving in Dębica – SS-Trupp Heidelager – under the command of H. Himmler; "To be in a good Kommando, you had to have some luck...."; spending about three years in this camp; recalling a roll call that lasted more than two hours – Jacques was barefoot on the frozen ground, in winter; working in a garage with an SS from Berlin, who helped Jacques; working as a glazier – recalling how he came to learn the trade; recalling a cruel SS named Ernst Fischer from Vienna; in the beginning of 1944, arrival at Birkenau – Jacques was number A 18335 – "At Auschwitz-Birkenau, only luck was the deciding factor between life and death..."; leaving the "hell of Birkenau", and arriving in Gleiwitz (Gliwice – 70 km from Auschwitz); working in the metallurgical plant; his work as a cook for the SS kitchen; Jacques frequently prepared a Jewish meal – stuffed cabbage, matzah ball soup; January 19, 1945 – evacuation of the Gleiwitz camp – heading west on foot; remembering the snow and temperatures of –10° to –20° at night; this was the "death march"; arrival at Gross-Rosen camp where they were received by a pack of salivating dogs; being lead to the freight station, where they were pushed into open cars – in the dead of the Upper Silesia winter – approximately 100 in each car; they were covered in snow; recalling another deportee named Henry Bocian (originally from Poznań); spending days and nights in the open car; Jacques rendering homage to the writers Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, Jorge Sumprún, among others; arriving in the city of Weimar – Buchenwald was about 9 km from Weimar; received by a pack of dogs that howled louder than the SS; staying in Buchenwald from the end of January to beginning of February, 1945; Jacques and his friend Henry Bocian were part of a Kommando that was sent to Berga an der Elster (the small Elster River) – to dig a tunnel for the installation of an underground arms plant (the Erzgebirge region); April 17, 1945 – evacuation; marching towards the Czechoslovakia border; April 22, 1945, Jacques escaped by running in a "zig-zag" fashion in order to evade the SS; "But this was not yet

freedom..."; arriving in Rittersgrün; Jacques found a small farmhouse and inside, some work clothes – he spoke German, so he wanted to pass as an ethnic German from the east; staying at a farm in Elterlein at the home of a peasant named Hilarius; Jacques was a little over 24 years old at the time; Jacques called himself Janek Rogal – as this was not a Jewish name; Jacques leaving for Annaberg, then to Jahnsdorf, where he saw a jeep with four American soldiers; according to Jacques, "It was impossible to describe my joy...." – this was May 8, 1945 around noon; after five years, on the last day of the war, Jacques had found his freedom— a survivor of gas chambers and crematoriums; the next day the American soldiers took him to Stollberg Im Erzgebirge – an American military administrative camp; Jacques leaving this city and heading west – "Poland was the grave of my whole family, and Judaism in general..."; Jacques' arrival in Weimar (by bicycle) to obtain certification of his Buchenwald imprisonment; staying in Bad Salzungen with another deportee named Moses Bank; staying in the Hamburger Hof hotel in Frankfurt am Main; his two sisters in Israël, and his brother in Paris learning that he was a survivor; Samy Auszenkier taking Jacques to France; receiving his repatriation form on September 28, 1945; staying with his uncles Charles and Albert Dubinski in Montreuil; Jacques was the one and only survivor of the family in Poland (over 100 family members); at that time, Jacques didn't speak French – just German and a little Yiddish; working in his family's furniture factory in Montreuil; speaking of his cousin Marcel; a new life for Jacques; married in 1948; the birth of his son Daniel in 1950 and his daughter Gigi in 1954; Jacques said, "I cannot forget Auschwitz...the Auschwitz tattoo on my arm is a reminder. My testimony is in debt and in honour to those who died in the extermination and concentration camps and the ghettos of Poland..."