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THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF  
THE HOLOCAUST  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT  
APRIL 13, 1993

TITLE: Kip Winston  
I DATE: November 20, 1988  
SOURCE: USHMM  
RESTRICTIONS:

SOUND QUALITY: Excellent  
IMAGE QUALITY: Good  
DURATION: 1 Hour 40 Minutes  
LANGUAGES: English  
KEY SEGMENT:  
GEOGRAPHIC NAME:  
PERSONAL NAME:  
CORPORATE NAME:  
KEY WORDS:  
NOTES:

CONTENTS: There is only one of the two interview tapes transcribed here. The other was not given out and cannot be located at this time.

Tape 1

THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR

1:00 Kip Winston was born in a suburb of Warsaw, Poland on April 19, 1936. An only child he was still a part of a close-knit large extended family with fifteen aunts and uncles on his mother's side and nine aunts and uncles on his father's side. They lived in a large complex he compares to the Kennedy's.

3:15 Kip's grandfather was the biggest contractor in Poland. He did engineering and construction work and although Kip was not very conscious of it at the time he realizes now they were rather wealthy, and were considered to be of high social status. He grew up in an urban setting, but they had a large country house outside the city as well.

In terms of religion his father's family was conservative, leaning towards being Reformed. They did not practice for the most part outside of holidays. His mother was the daughter of a rabbi who gave up orthodoxy when she married.

Both of Kip's parents were educated: his father held degrees in architecture from the University of Vienna and engineering from Moscow University; his mother had the equivalent of a high school diploma and was self-educated in art and literature. He was exposed to philosophy, classical music, high art and literature at a very young age.

7:30 Kip's family did associate with non-Jews. They were intellectuals living in the urban milieu of the 1930's. His parents were aware of pogroms and prejudice but firmly believed that educated, civilized people accepted each other as individuals and not based on their religion. He recalls inter-marriage of friends of the family.

10:00 Kip doesn't remember any anti-Semitic behavior directed against him before the war began. He points out that he was a very little boy at this time--only three years old.

- 11:05 No one believed the war would happen. The upper middle class was secure in its ideas. They didn't believe Hitler would walk through Poland. They also thought that France and England would aide them in the event that anything would happen. Discusses how his grandfather aided in building the fortifications in Poland and how he believed in their effectiveness. Like the Maginot Line in France this Wall was useless against modern warfare.
- 15:00 Kip describes briefly that he fled with his parents from a train that was bringing them to a concentration camp. The train derailed due to ice on the tracks and his father forced them to flee into the woods feeling that death was imminent should they remain.
- 17:55 Mentions again how only three years old when war broke out. Kip was playing in the yard of the country home with a slightly older cousin riding a pony. They heard noises overhead (bombs). Aunt (ph) Brunya ran out and screamed at them to come inside. Kip began to run inside but his cousin lagged behind. A bomb landed on the cousin. He exploded on Kip. Kip knew then that the war had begun.
- 21:10 Kip remembers sheer panic of first days. Some friends and family members had already been killed. Some decided to run. Kip's father although not the oldest child was the calmest and acted as caretaker for the family. He wanted to get everyone out of Poland and by the time it was his turn (early September) it was already too late. Kip remembers refugees on the road and soldiers. There were Germans on one side and the Russians were on their way.
- 26:00 Specific statement for tape explaining again that he was a small child (3 when war broke out and 6 when it was over for him) and did not retain all his memories. Kip is not sure what his exact feelings were when these events were happening. His family discussed much of what took place in later years and a relative published a book, The Holocaust Years, which combined with his own memories has brought a

lot of confusion. Kip remembers emotions. Fear. Terror. Not knowing what was happening or why.

29:15 Comments that teenagers and adults understood the physical aspect of what was happening when soldiers broke down doors and forced people out at gunpoint. Kip was told that formerly he had been a gregarious child and when the soldiers invaded his home he ran up to them expecting new playmates. The noise scared him and he saw strangers doing unfriendly things. Menacing. Terrorized. Didn't understand at all and no one could explain--his parents were just as terrified as he was. His world turned upside down.

33:30 Kip remembers that people just started disappearing.

#### LIFE IN THE GHETTO--October 1940-February 1941

36:00 At four years old and living in the ghetto, Kip had grown up a lot and had begun to understand things.

36:45 Kip knew the Jewish restrictions before the ghetto was built. He could no longer go to the zoo or the movies, etc. Noticed the construction in 1939. First the family moved to an apartment in (ph) Lita Dobra and then into the ghetto.

41:00 There was different food and less of it. Kip remembers bodies on the street, the dying and the dead. Quickly there were no animals left; they were eaten. He knew his father was working but not sure what he did. Kip's family still saw each other regularly. The Jewish community tried to keep as normal a life as possible going. (Kip doesn't remember specifics.)

44:30 Kip's family became more religious. His uncle was a journalist and put out some sort of an underground paper.

45:40 Kip tells how he does not like to say anything good about the Germans and the Nazis that were there in Poland, but more often than not they were saving the Jews from their fellow Poles. Calls the Poles "real bastards."

- 46:30 Jewish women and children were attacked by Poles. Remembers seeing a Polish "youth" kicking a pregnant Jewish woman brutally in the stomach and a German soldier dragged him off her.
- 48:00 Discusses "kapos" and how many Poles volunteered, mostly young men. They were allowed into the ghetto on "kapo days" when they could come in, beat people and leave. Kip still sees their hateful faces.
- 50:45 Kip compares these Poles to the racists of America.
- 52:00 Recalls the smell and death in the ghetto due to starvation and exposure. Incapable of remembering a day in his last months there when he could walk down the street without seeing bodies.
- 53:05 Started hearing about people being taken away and knocks on the door. No such thing for him as a typical day.  
[GLITCH IN VIDEOTAPE]  
Woke up each day wondering what would happen. There was talk of getting out. Remembers his father talking to a lot of people, much activity. They worried about day-to-day needs, mostly food.
- 55:00 Has vague memory of it but Kip knows he contracted diphtheria. Knows people took care of him, somehow found food and medicine for him. Says he has heard accounts of viciousness within ghetto but in their circle at least people cared for each other--otherwise he would not have lived.
- 56:45 Reiterates that only remembers bits and pieces, generalities. He pushed his feelings away. Fear and the feeling that he was trapped were always present. (Kip was only four and a half years old at this point.)

#### FROM THE GHETTO INTO HIDING

- 58:00 In January 1941, people were beginning to be sent to camps. Kip does not recall that those in the ghetto knew. They were aware that people were being resettled, but only knew they were leaving, not why or where. The Nazis were still experimenting with killing techniques.

- 1:00:15 The night they were taken everyone on their block was ordered into trucks which took them to the train. The train was to take them to a camp, either Maidanek or Treblinka, although Kip believes it was to be Treblinka because it was north of Warsaw and they escaped into Lithuania. With his parents Kip boarded the train. There were between 200 and 300 people to each cattle car. Somewhere between Warsaw and its destination the train derailed due to ice. Kip's father grabbed him by the hair and his mother by the arm and they ran.
- 1:04:00 General confusion. The Germans didn't shoot at first. Kip believes it was because their orders were to deliver bodies to the camp and those at the camp didn't want dead bodies. The German soldiers did not know what to do. They started rounding people up and then Kip heard shots. Kip and his family just kept running for what seemed like hours.
- 1:06:30 They finally stopped at night in the middle of the woods. Kip's father explained to him that he had realized that they would not "benefit" if they had continued on to the camp. He knew it was an end of some sort.
- 1:07:15 They cleared away from the other escapees, wandering for days. They remained aware that there were others in the woods. Kip doesn't know how they ate or slept; it was mostly outside and occasionally in barns.
- 1:09:00 Sometimes they passed other refugees. Discusses how they were more afraid of the Poles than the Germans. The Germans were looking for them, but any Pole would certainly turn them in or kill them. They stayed in the woods for weeks.
- 1:10:15 They found a hunter's shack one day with beds, some clothing and a small stove. They desperately needed rest so to keep people away Kip's father put up a sign that said "cholera." They stayed a couple of weeks until one day a man came and believing them to be sick offered to help them. (He was a doctor.) Kip's father confided in Dr. Braun who was "also a Jew, not an enemy." (Kip remembers learning at the time that everyone who wasn't a Jew should be considered an enemy.) He stayed for a time and

shared their food.

- 1:12:45 Kip does remember clearly playing in the road near their shack one morning very early, between 6 and 7 a.m. A German fighter plane started shooting at him. Dr. Braun ran out and jumped on top of him, taking four bullets himself. He needed help immediately. Kip's father knew that to admit Dr. Braun to a hospital was probably signing his death warrant, but they couldn't just leave him to bleed to death.
- 1:15:05 Kip's father ran out to the road and convinced a farmer and his wife on a hay wagon to help Dr. Braun. They took him to a nearby hospital and left him there. Kip and his parents kept running. They could not wait to see what happened.
- 1:16:00 Twenty years later Kip met Dr. Braun in a cafe in Tel Aviv. They struck up a conversation and realized that they had known each other. He remained close friends with him until Dr. Braun's death.
- 1:17:15 While in hiding they stole food and clothes, foraged and Kip thinks his father trapped. They lived a hand-to-mouth existence. Finding water was their biggest problem. They were hiding in an agricultural area so food was relatively available. The hunter's shack was a place they stayed only a few weeks, one of many various shelters they found during their year of hiding.
- 1:19:01 Kip's family kept moving staying mostly outside and sometimes in barns. Kip's parents told him that there were people who helped them but he never learned their identities. Most often they were on their own because they were too afraid to approach anyone.
- 1:20:10 Kip's father kept them moving north. He wanted to reach Lithuania. His father didn't trust the Russians. He never explained much to Kip, but Kip believes his father knew what he was doing and had a destination in mind.

## LITHUANIA

1:21:00 They wandered around that year (most of 1941) avoiding the Germans. Kip does not discuss actually entering Lithuania. He recalls that their situation improved once they entered Lithuania. His father somehow got involved with the partisans there. They continued moving, day-to-day, sleeping outside still, but now there are memories of being with others and he can recall sitting at tables with other children present.

1:22:15 They managed to stay in houses in Lithuania. Kip's father had the names of people (he doesn't know how or through whom) and they helped them with food, clothing and shelter.

1:23:01 Kip's father became involved with underground activities. Kip knows that he smuggled cigarettes and Polish zlotki back and forth over the Lithuanian border. In this way Kip's father managed to save enough money to get them started. Kip doesn't know exactly how his father's black market dealings worked, but they were certainly illegal.  
[GLITCH IN VIDEOTAPE]

1:24:05 The partisans also accumulated arms. All the clandestine activity was to raise money to buy arms for the Lithuanian underground and Kip thinks his father was paid for doing it (received part of the profits).

1:24:55 The Russians attacked Lithuania and the Germans were moving up from the south. It was time to get away again. Many people were moving to the East. Kip's parents were afraid. They had heard stories about the Russians being worse than the Germans. His father was tired of life on the run. Since both of Kip's parents spoke almost fluent German his father decided the last place the Germans would look for escaping Jews was Berlin.

#### BERLIN AND BEYOND

1:25:30 Somehow Kip's parents had managed to hold on to their own Polish passports throughout their hiding and flight. They got false papers added to them through the Lithuanian underground to although them some



freedom of movement and the family boarded a train to Berlin.

1:26:10

They were still in hiding in Berlin. They moved into some kind of apartment within a hotel. Their biggest fear was that someone would speak to Kip, who being a little Polish boy and not speaking any German could only answer in Polish and give them away. Kip recalls two things vividly from their four months in this hotel.

\*One day when he and his mother were out walking a parade was going by with someone important. Kip believes it may have been Hitler himself. Everyone was "heiling." Kip didn't understand (only about five at this time) and didn't raise his arm. A soldier in a black uniform (S.S.) hit him with a truncheon and shouted at his mother. Terrified, his mother raised his right arm and he stood obediently heiling until the parade was over.

\*Another day right before they left the hotel Kip picked up the phone. Someone, probably the operator, yelled something in German. Kip was so scared by the sound that he threw the phone out the window.

1:28:00

Kip is not sure if his family knew anything about the camps by late 1941. His father knew something. They were in limbo in Berlin. His father was trying to get in touch with the resistance. There were some Jews left in Berlin, but very few.

One day Kip's father went into the Ministry of the Interior, walked up to the highest-ranking German he could find (an S.S. colonel) and started yelling at him for incompetence. He complained that he had come voluntarily to work for Germany as a contractor, but had been sitting in a hotel room for months. He threatened to return to Poland if something was not done immediately. The colonel was so flustered he asked what and where he wanted to go and began readying travel documents. Kip's father said he wanted to go to Italy to help build the fortifications. The colonel signed all the necessary papers at once. Kip smiles. Says his father's act was "complete chutzpa."

1:30:20

They boarded the train to Italy hoping to get to Genoa to take a boat somewhere out of Europe--

Palestine, America. At the border there was a problem and only military personnel were allowed into Italy. The train was turned around to go back to Berlin. Kip's father realized that their travel documents said they could travel anywhere in the occupied zone. Switzerland seemed a bad idea because France would be difficult to leave. However, Denmark was a wonderful idea because they could get to Sweden, a neutral country, and leave from there.

1:31:15 They switched trains in Stuttgart with no problem and headed to Copenhagen. Once there they could not leave the country as easily as they had hoped. Kip recalls that it was winter. They stayed with someone for about a month. They were not afraid of being turned in because everyone in Denmark was "Jewish." (Kip discusses how everyone in Denmark wore the Jewish star to protect their Jews.) They knew the Danes would help them.

1:33:01 It became more and more difficult to get to Sweden. The Germans were aware that the Danes were smuggling Jews and the Swedes didn't really want anymore to come. Kip's father was still trying to get in touch with the underground.

1:34:10 There was a long waiting list of people to be smuggled across to Sweden. Kip's father decided to take matters into his own hands. He would go to the quay every day. He noticed a ferry that ran regularly to Stockholm which often brought high-ranking Germans there for excursions. He watched the people who monitored passengers. Kip's father zeroed in on one lieutenant, a "screw-up" obviously because he had the worst shifts, was always there on Sundays, etc.

TAPE ENDS HERE. SECOND TAPE OF INTERVIEW NOT FOUND AS OF APRIL 13, 1993.