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**Negnevitzky, Yakov Isakovich**

- 1.00 Born in 1925 in Minsk. Had a sister. Father was a factory worker. Discusses early life and the extent to which family observed Jewish traditions.
- 1.09 Outbreak of war was June 22, 1941. Within a day or two, bombing began in Minsk. Many parts of the city burned. People began to leave the city. Sister was lost in the panic. Yakov and parents tried to flee from Minsk, but the route was cut off by German advance and they returned to the city.
- 1.18 On July 26<sup>th</sup>, Germans established the ghetto.
- 1.19 Interviewer asks to return to early life and family.

(BREAK)

- 2.05 Felt no anti-Semitism in Minsk whatsoever before the war.
- 2.09 Discusses food shortages in the 1930's then in 1938, food became more available; cultural life improved.
- 2.20 Says family felt that the war was approaching in the 30's, after Hitler's rise to power in 1933. But, they never dreamed that the Germans would advance so far so fast once the war started.
- 2.23 Heard what was happening to Jews in Poland after the war started in 1939.
- 2.24 Family wanted to flee from Minsk after the war started, but never thought that Minsk would be occupied so rapidly.
- 2.28 From the beginning of the German entry into Kiev, some of local population began to exhibit signs of anti-Semitism, saying they would now "get even" with Jews and Bolshevicks.
- 2.29 On July 4<sup>th</sup>, mother and sister, who had become separated from Yakov and father, returned to Minsk.

(BREAK)

- 3.00 Soon after German entry into Minsk, all men aged 18-60 gathered in large square. Some Jews were taken by truck and shot. Some 800 of these men (Jews) were put in the ghetto. All Jews in the ghetto by the end of July 1941 (about 90,000 Jews).
- 3.08 Groups of violently anti-Semitic local citizens would raid individual houses in the ghetto at night and kill the occupants.

- 3.09 In August, Germans began “pogroms” taking away men and shooting them. On August 26<sup>th</sup>, Germans appeared in his courtyard. He ran from the house and hid in a ditch. Found by German guard, but only beaten. Returned home. Many young men were killed.
- 3.15 August 31<sup>st</sup>, another such “pogrom.” Again, Yakov hid. He believes these actions, which were directed against young men, were meant to eliminate those Jews who were capable of mounting a resistance movement.
- 3.16 Yakov decided to prepare a hiding place to try to escape future German killing actions. November 7<sup>th</sup> pogrom, Yakov lost many relatives.
- 3.20 People began to realize that Germans intended to eventually kill everyone in the ghetto. Says that some Ukrainian soldiers, formerly in the Soviet army, participated in these pogroms as did some local Minsk residents.
- 3.25 At this point, Germans began to see a need for skilled workers – tailors, shoemakers, metal workers, etc. – as German military and construction units became established.
- 3.26 Yakov worked as an apprentice tailor in German field headquarters, along with his father.

(BREAK)

- 4.00 On March 2, 1942, Germans carried out a pogrom as workers were returning to the ghetto. Yakov was able to hide. He heard later that 5,000 ghetto residents had been rounded up and shot.
- 4.04 Some of the remaining men, including Yakov and his father, were sent to work in a German service unit where German Jews and Jews from other Western countries were working. They had been brought into Minsk ghetto beginning in November 1941. They were put into a separate part of the ghetto, fenced off from the Soviet area.
- 4.05 After the March 2<sup>nd</sup> pogrom, people began to dig hiding places.
- 4.12 July 26, 1942, troops surrounded the ghetto just as work parties were leaving for their jobs outside. Yakov and his father were among those workers who were already outside. Those inside were subject to another “action.” Those who had left for work were not permitted to return for four days.
- 4.13 During this period, all remaining in the ghetto were killed, although many survived (they hid in prepared places). Yakov’s mother survived. Many others survived, but around 20,000 people were killed.

- 4.16 In 1943, Yakov fled from the ghetto. A friend worked in a German soldier's club. The friend stole a hand grenade and a few weapons. In the summer of 1943, many people began to escape the ghetto and go to the forest – to the partisan zone. Some of those who left soon contacted Yakov and proposed that he join them.
- 4.25 He and a small group leave work group and walk to forest, carrying the hand grenade, which his friend had given him.
- 4.26 After some hours, met by a partisan (a Jew). Together with others who had left moved farther into forest.

(BREAK)

- 5.03 A partisan commander refused to accept Yakov and his comrades, saying that without proper identification, he could not be sure they were not agents for the Germans.
- 5.04 Wandered around the countryside. At one point, his group was surrounded by a unit of Polish partisans loyal to the Mikolajczyk government (in exile in London). This was near the old 1939 Polish – Soviet border. Poles helped Yakov and his group find a partisan unit.
- 5.09 Yakov and friend formed their own partisan unit in June 1943. Yakov went on operation to gather weapons near the Minsk area.
- 5.16 A main task of his partisan unit was to try to save the more than 700 people who remained in the Minsk ghetto.
- 5.17 Describes composition of his unit.
- 5.19 In July 1943, German surrounded and blockaded partisan units in the Minsk area. Describes the effort to avoid Germans.

(BREAK)

- 6.00 Yakov fell sick with typhus. Spent many months ill.
- 6.02 By the beginning of 1944, his unit was well established in well-supplied bunkers. Carried out attacks on German rail lines.
- 6.04 In June 1944, heard cannon fire from the advancing Soviet troops. Germans moved into the forests and battles ensued with partisan units hidden there.
- 6.08 Yakov's unit met first with Soviet troops. The unit returned to liberated Minsk.

- 6.12 Interviewer asks to return to ghetto narrative. Asks what went on in the ghetto during the interludes between the killing operations. Yakov answers that most people worked. All thought of finding food and surviving. Yakov describes his friends in the ghetto.
- 6.15 Says that German Jews in the ghetto did not believe that Germans intended to kill all ghetto inmates.
- 6.16 Says some partisan units would not accept Jews. Heard of instances in which partisans even attacked Jews who had managed to escape from the ghetto.
- 6.19 Says sister was killed during German action; dates that father and mother were killed in their hiding place. Other relatives were killed – 19 in all.
- 6.21 Interviewer returns to partisan activities.
- 6.23 After liberation of Minsk, he joined regular army. He was wounded and sent to the hospital near Moscow. Later, attached to Baltic fleet. Sent to part over Helsinki and was in a port guard.
- 6.26 Discusses life after the war. Went back to Minsk in 1948. Entered technical school and worked. Married in 1950.
- 6.30 Shows photos of family.

END OF TAPE