

Oral History: Pinchas Ringelblum, October 30/November 6 [two tapes], 1996

Pinchas Ringelblum, born in Warsaw, Poland on September 3, 1922, describes: his education in a Yiddish secular school, reflecting the secular views and activities of his father; his mother, Fela, nee Fink, who worked at home, sewing garments; his younger brother David, born in 1929; the important place of Yiddish-Jewish culture in Eastern Europe; belonging to Bundist organizations; his limited exposure to Polish anti-Semitism; growing anti-Semitic acts beginning in 1936; having “minimal” religion in his home; the Nazi attack on Warsaw; a government announcement on September 6, 1939 that all Jewish males should leave the city to avoid being captured; leaving Warsaw the next day with his father and a family friend, along with “hundreds of thousands of Jews from Warsaw and surrounding cities and towns”; traveling eastward toward Russia but having to turn southeast to avoid the Nazis; deciding there was no point in trying to escape the Nazi advance and that, because his mother and young brother had been left behind, he and his father would return home; arriving in Warsaw and finding ruins and panic; being accosted on the street by a Nazi officer; his parents deciding he should escape to Bialystok in the Russian-occupied area; failing once, but then making it to Bialystok; his father being conscripted to hard labor and escaping separately to the Russian area; accepting Soviet citizenship; thousands of those without citizenship being transported in June 1940 to the far regions of the USSR, and many of them dying; remaining in Bialystok until June 1941; joining his father in the Ukraine; fleeing the Nazi advance; escaping into the interior of the Ukraine as the Nazis approached, but his father, fatefully, returning to Warsaw to be reunited with his wife in the Warsaw Ghetto; being arrested as a spy against the Soviets, but escaping as, once again, the Germans approached; being conscripted into a Soviet army labor force but being transferred in July 1941 to a Soviet headquarters unit to do deskwork; being taken into the regular Soviet army, where conditions were much better; with his battalion, arriving on the outskirts of Stalingrad in December 1942; traveling over several months to Novosibirsk; remaining in Siberia in Novokuznetsk to do chemical work in a steel factory; working on a government collective farm (*sovkhos*) and liking it; being repatriated to Poland June 1946; hearing of Polish gangs trying to kill Jews who were returning to Poland; leaving Poland for France in December 1947; immigrating to Australia, marrying, and having a son.