

HENRY (SZPIGIELGLAS) GLASS

POLAND/RUSSIA/ENGLAND/CANADA

Interviewed by

Laura Jachimowicz

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&

Renia Perel

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Interviewee: Henry Glass (G)

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Interviewer: Laura Jachimowicz (J)

G: [My name is Henry Glass.] The name really I took in England in 1965, if I remember. Before my name on which I was born was Szpigelglas'. I was born in Warsaw on a 'Pańska' Street, number 64, in 1920, where I lived up to the War, up to the time of the War...now, stop now.... Warsaw, at that time when I lived in it, was above a million population, where the Jewish population was as small as four hundred thousand. I lived in a Jewish district. My family was from my mother's side living quite near and they been quite progressive the other way, how do you say not progressive... 'nabożny' [Polish, 'pious'].

J: Religious.

G: Quite religious, and we kept to them quite close. Opposite, like opposite to my family of my father which [had] been even more religious and they been so many, so many brothers and sisters in that family as [that] I only remember [a] few of them.

J: Was your father, ah...he was a rabbi?

G: No, no, no. He was quite progressive in this case. We owned.... My father emigrate[d] to America after the Second [First] World War and he came back because my

mother wouldn't move there, because she wouldn't like to leave her family. The families are quite really big, you know. I was educated in a Hebrew school; the name of it is 'Tarboot', which I think, now, because I don't remember, I think it means 'culture' [in Hebrew]. I was belonging, when I grew up a little bit, to Zionist organization, one of them was...well, [I] forgot. Anyway...I need a plan [map].... Schools in Warsaw, Hebrew schools, where the language was Hebrew except Polish and Polish history. The rest was all Hebrew, and I don't remember a word.

J: Was it very much anti-Semitic situation at that time also?

G: Yes, but I wouldn't feel it much, because I lived in the midst, in the midst of Jewish people. The whole street, the whole district, so even you know if you needed to go somewhere, no, everywhere Jewish people [laughs]. You know, they're mixed with Poles also but, well, you don't go really to, to district which are only Poles living. [There's] nothing to do there.

J: What happened after that, later on, when you graduated from school?

G: I graduate[d] from this school and I went to a school which in Polish transfers [translates] to, 'szkoła rzemieślnicza' [Polish, 'trade school'].

J: That's a business school.

G: Business school, eh, was run by the Jewish 'gmina' [Polish, 'community'], you know, communit...

J: Committee.

G: Community. Jewish community. And before I could finish it, there was war.

J: So, the War started just before you finished your school?

G: Right.

J: What year was it, 193...?

G: 1939. Well, we expect[ed] that the war will be coming, you know.

J: Okay, how did you know the war is going to come. What happened?

G: Well, if you read papers, and people expecting it, you hear from the conversation, on the other hand, they...this, eh, everybody imagined [at] that time as [that] the war would last only two or three months.

J: Did you hear about the Nazis at that time?

G: Yes, yes, because, because, few years earlier, we took to our, eh, 'mieszkanie' [Polish, 'apartment'].

J: We took [to] our place of living.

G: Our place of living, a family which was originally Polish but they lived in Germany and they [the Nazis] kicked them away [out], so we supplied them, you know, with accommodation, and the 'gmina' was supplying them with food.

J: Before the War?

G: Oh ya, this is [a] few years before the War, I don't remember ... so I know what is going on there, you know, plus I see the accident in Gdańsk. You read about [in] the

papers, you know, and you see it on television, everywhere.

J: So, what you said is that you were aware of [what] the Nazis [were] doing...

G: Oh yes.

J: Before the War began. You knew they were against Jews?

G: Right.

J: What happened to you when the War broke out?

G: Well, I was in Warsaw when the War broke out and on the seventh day, by [on] the radio, the government asked people which [who] could be in the military, I mean from I think seventeen years old, to leave Warsaw because they expect that the Germans to take it very soon. And to leave it and to go to the east. So, I left like everybody else, I don't mean everybody else, maybe there are people which didn't left [leave], but a huge amount of people left because the, the highways have been packed with people.

J: Did you leave on your own or were you left with a family?

G: No, I left my own, on my own.

J: So, you decided to leave...okay...go ahead.

G: Well, I left [on] my own and I went to, up to Bialystok on foot, mostly on foot. I met [a] few Jewish guys in my age and we kept together and we [had] been bombarded [a] few times by the airplanes and shot [at], you know. We run away from the highway, hiding, you know, then we can as some people don't get up, you know, and you walk further on, you go day and night. You walk even half asleep. I

remember I went through Garwolin, which is I think fifty kilometres from Warsaw and the whole Garwolin, which is a very small community, was burning. So, you could walk only in the middle of the highway because everything on both sides was burning.

J: The Germans were destroying the cities...

G: Oh ya.

J: And burning them.

G: The Germans not only destroyed the city because I now don't even remember where it was, when they went through the small town and if they saw a face looking at them from the window, they [would] shoot at it. So you know, everybody was afraid of them. Young guys, to tell you my really [real] impression when I saw them, when I came back and I saw them in Warsaw, I was thinking, how come they hate Jews? Like half of the army is Jewish. They looked to me, you know, not much difference, not all of them are blonde of course; there are quite a lot of dark faces. But, well, anyway, I went to Białystok and this was the time when the Russian[s] agreed to take half of the Poland, divided between [themselves and] the Germans. And I thought, well, this is the end of the war and I'll go back home, and [so] I went. When I came to Warsaw, I think after three weeks, I don't remember exactly, Warsaw was a bit bombarded but my house was standing.

J: So, that was in 1939 you returned back...

G: Ya, ya.

J: To your own place in Warsaw?

G: Ya, ya. Straight away I returned back.

J: What month of the year was this approximately?

G: The War broke out in what month? The beginning of
September?

J: Somewhere [sometime] in September, ya.

G: September [1939]. Well, in October I was back home.

J: So, you returned back.

G: Ya.

J: Okay. Go ahead.

G: And I lived there, no work, no money, and I saw people are
leaving to the Soviet Union. A lot of my friends, not
relatives, but friends and acquaintances.

J: Why?

G: Because life was very hard.

J: So, they were leaving to Russia, not because of the
Germans, or because...

G: Not only because of a...but a lot of, because of [the]
Germans, because the Germans made searches in houses and
all the men's [male] population they took to work
something, really could be rubbish, you know, like...and
they take them out of town, they do the work a day and
they leave them there. So they must march, I would say
fifty kilometres back to Warsaw. No people been afraid,
and they would give a Jewish person work, like in the
middle of the street where the horse made, you know the
thing, to scrub it up with a toothbrush, you know. It's

degrading. You see a German walking you must get from, you know, from the pavement.

J: Were you wearing a 'Star of David' [armband] in October of 1939?

G: No, no, no, no, no. So anyway, seeing what is going on in Warsaw and this was the end of the war really, no more war, I decided [I] would leave with some of my friends, eh, to Russia. I thought maybe the Cossacks are not so bad like the Germans. I left somewhere [sometime] in November, I don't remember now the date, walking to the border. When we came to the border, first the Germans searched us. I mean really searched. Some of the women were taken to the wagon and stripped naked, you know.

J: The Germans were searching you at the border?

G: Oh ya, and then they let us go and it was a huge field with plenty of people and on the other side of the field had been the [Soviet] Red Army, and we have been sitting there two or three days, I don't remember but few days anyway, and some Red Army official came and they talked to people and one day they allowed us to go. So we went. I went back to Białystok and [in] Białystok was very hard to find any accommodation because a lot of people which run away from the other side of the Poland went to Białystok. This was really the biggest town near the border. So, I remember I have an uncle, my father's brother, living in Volkovysk, which is not too far from, I don't remember, shall we say [one] hundred kilometres from Białystok. I

bought a ticket and I went there, and [when] I came it was a little bit to the evening. Volkovysk at that time, I think, was thirteen thousand [in] population, and quite a lot of Jews living there. When I got out of the train, I took a 'dorożka' [Polish, 'cab' (horse and buggy)], and I told them to...

J: Horse buggy.

G: Buggy?

J: Horse buggy.

G: Horse buggy, and I told them to take me to Mr.

Szpigielski. There was only one, of course, and he took me [there]. It was a restaurant. I know he owns a restaurant, it was, I think, few restaurants, big ones in the town and he was [the] owner of one of it [them]. It was closed but I knocked at the door and he came [and] opened the door and asked, "Who are you?" I said, "Well, I'm son of Itzhak Meyer." "Oh," [he said,] because I saw him maybe twice in my life but when I saw him I was small. Anyway, I lived there; two of my cousins came there, too. We lived in his place...by the way, I worked in his restaurant, but I don't think this is so important, but to me it was very funny because I was the cashier, and I paid every year, every, everyday for eh, for eh...'jak owca jest' [Polish, 'it's like sheep'], sheep, for sheep, sheep, you know? And the menu was everything on it, beef and everything was on the menu and one day I asked how come you are not buying other meat only the sheep? He said

because everything is sheep meat. This was [an anecdote that] I remember to the [this] day. But, anyway, my uncle went to work for the Soviets organizing "Gos" restaurants, I mean, government restaurants, and I was still in the restaurant and my friend from Warsaw, a very good friend, came, came to see me. He was living in...Grodno and he said to me, "You know what, if we go to Lithuania, there is a possibility to go to Israel from there." So, I packed my few things which I had got. I said goodbye to my aunt and few cousins and when I came to my uncle, I said, "Listen uncle, I'm leaving to Lithuania," He said, "Why are you leaving for Lithuania?" I said, "I could go from there to Israel or to America but I won't be here, not the Russians are good and not the Germans are good." So he said, "Don't be silly, America came [will come] to us." I remember that very well because when I was in prison and the Red Army took Volkovysk back, I wrote to him a letter...

J: How did you end up in prison?

G: Oh, we are jumping a little bit. We will come to it afterwards, but this is only the thing with him connected, this is why I am jumping. I wrote to him a letter and after many days the letter came back to the prison with a lot of stamps [indicating that] it was "proviereny voyenoy tsenzuroy" [Russian, "checked by war censorship"], checked by the government ['censored'] and there was written by a pen... 'wiesz taki 'anilove' pencil?' [Polish 'Do you know

such an aniline pencil?']

J: Marked pen. [a marker]

G: Marked pen... "Taken away to Germany"... not to

Germany... taken away [by the Germans]. This, you know, because it was a [not clear] and they know each other so when the letter came, you know, they send them back and somebody in the government has written it as he was taken away. This was a surprise to me, because when he said to me, "The America came to us," I thought he would run away from the Germans like everybody else, but he didn't.

J: And the Germans went as far as this place?

G: Yes, yes. Afterwards they went back, you know, but....

I left my uncle with my friend, Godyk. We went to, I don't remember, a small town on the border of Russia and Lithuania; really it was Polish Lithuania. When we came there we could see as the Russian soldiers [were] looking with dogs and taking people away. Somehow we managed to jump to the other side and we ran away and we run away. And we went to the small town. Then we knocked at the door, somebody's door and we said, "Listen, we are" such and such people "who would like to cross the border." So they said to us, well, being very afraid really, them and us, "Go and sit in this such a room and wait."

J: What border were you going to cross again?

G: Between Russia and Lithuania. We've been sitting there few hours then a Polish, eh... 'chłop, jak się nazywa?' [Polish, 'a peasant, how do you call (in English)?'].

J: A boy.

G: Not a boy.

J: A farmer.

G: A Farmer came. He took us by the back garden somewhere into, into a woodland and he put us into his hut. Not hut, 'domek' [Polish, 'shack'].

J: House.

G: House. But a house, you can't call this a house.

J: Shack.

G: Shack. And he left us there and he went away. We fall asleep with my friend. When we woke up the room was full with people.... Probably he was, I think, going back to the town collecting from different places.

J: Would he have been an informer?

G: Pardon?

J: He might have been the informer?

G: Well, he might be but he wasn't. So, anyway, it was dark. He took us all, all the people through a woodland...

J: To the forest.

G: To the forest, and we walked, walked, walked, one after the other, it was dark, and then he stopped and he says, "Well, not far from here is the border, now you pay me money." We agreed, you know, so everybody paid him money, except me and my friend, 'cause we didn't have money, and we thought, ah, what the hell, people go you'll go after them. But he wouldn't move, so part of the people paid our fee, we carried, you know, the luggage for them and we

crossed the border, in the morning, you know, people with money went by train to Vilnius and we walked to Vilnius. We came, to Vilnius we came, we went to a kibbutz... in Wilno [Vilnius], yes.

J: What year was this? 1940?

G: '40, beginning.

J: The beginning of 1940?

G: '40. Just, just the beginning. I mean, maybe it wasn't a kibbutz formed before but different organizations formed different 'kibbutzim', you know, few rooms, and they called it kibbutz. It was a queue to get to Israel. The work which we've been doing, it was winter, we went with the big saw and asked people if they have something to saw, the woodland for them, you know. It was a very cold, very cold winter, I remember. Anyway, this was how the life was going on, up to the, up to the moment when the Germans attacked again, Russia [in 1941]. Meanwhile, I got [a] few letters from my mom [in] which she was asking me to come back.

J: How was she surviving having Germans in Warsaw?

G: She was saying to me as [that] my father and my brother are working, we have our own factory, they allowed them to do some work, so they haven't been too bad. But, more near to the outbreak of the [German-Soviet] War in '41, I got a letter from my mom as I must send her some parcel with food because they are starving. So I sent her some, I wasn't too rich myself. I was still in Wilno [Vilna],

really, I moved really to Trakai, which is twenty-four kilometres from Wilno, where I worked as a waiter in a Jewish restaurant. When the war broke out I was afraid of the Germans. But from day, one day before we saw the Russian army moving in. Lithuania then was under Russia. I left to Trakai when the Russian army took Wilno, because we've been afraid as they were arresting the Kibbutzniks. You know? So, we disappear in different places. I went to Trakai with my friend. Anyway, when I saw that the war starts again and I didn't want to get into the Germany, I went to Wilno, walking of course, and I went into a military train which was going back to Russia. This was the last really [real] train and specially was interesting 'cause after maybe [a] half hour of driving the train, the train stopped and the machinist, who was Polish, ran away. And they've been asking the Red Army soldiers, "Who could manage a train?" But somehow they managed and we went. What else would you like to know? ... Oh, anyway, I went to Russia; we stopped [a] few times. We got some food from the Russians and after [a] few days they stop[ped] us and they took us from the train and put into a 'khoz' [Russian, 'collective Farm'], a farm which means. I don't remember the place. But anyway, and this place we've been starving because we got, shall we say, every third day, no, three, three days, a kilo of bread and the fourth day nothing. And we lived there, you know, on hay... 'wiesz w takich szopach' [Polish, 'you know, in

those sheds'] do słownie' [Polish, 'literally']. Anyway, we decided to get out of there, with a few of my friends. So, we took a train, then we took [a boat] on the Volga, ya, and we went from there to Astrakhan. And Astrakhan wasn't too bad really but from Astrakhan we went back by Caspian Sea to, to, to, to...Uralsk. [In the] Urals. We thought from there we could go to Middle Asia and maybe further on but they stopped us in [the] Urals and we went to work there. We worked probably there half a year, when they called us to the Russian army.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1.]

Interviewee: Henry Glass (G)

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Track Number: T1-S2

Interviewer: Laura Jachimowicz (J)

G: They asked us to go to the Russian army. When we went for a check up they said we are not people which [who] could be taken to the Russian army because we are from Poland somewhere, they wouldn't trust us and this was few times. I think on the tenth time, they took us to a working army and from there they took us to Uralsk which is a town in the middle of Ural [mountain range]. When we been driving there by, eh... 'pociągami jak jest' [Polish, "How is 'by train'"]...

J: Train.

G: Train.

J: You got there by train.

G: By train together with others, Kazaks and so on, you know, and the journey was something like three weeks at least. you know, very little food, but near Uralsk we met trains similar to ours with Polish army.

J: Polish army?

G: With Polish army in it.

J: What were they doing on a train out there?

G: So, then I thought, well, when we stop next time, [when] we stop next time at some station, we went to talk to them

and they told us they are going to Iran. So we thought, well, hell, if they could go to Iran, we could go too. We are Polish, we still got some Polish papers, you know. So they advised, they advised us when we came to another destination we should ask to be transferred to the Polish army. We could really go straight away but we thought, well, better we will do it in the order [i.e. it would be better to do it officially]. When we came to this, to this town, we went, eight of us, to a Russian commissar, we put, everyone of us, a letter as we want to go to the Polish army and he told us to wait. And after two weeks they [the Russian authorities] came at night and they arrested us.

J: Who arrested you?

G: The Russian K.G.B.

J: After you put in the letters that you wanted to leave to the Russians.

G: Right, right. They kept us nine months in prison under the interrogation saying in the beginning that we are 'spies' and in the end they 'przestali' [Polish, 'they stopped'].

J: They stopped.

G: They stopped saying, they stopped saying [this to] us; [instead] we were 'anti-Soviets' and anti-Soviets in a group. So this was '58.10' and '.11' which is the, the court for the Russian thing. Well, and I got eight years of prison.

J: So, they sentenced you. After nine months of interrogating

they sentenced you for eight years of prison.

G: Prison. Well, this [situation] looked more or less like this. I didn't been [hadn't been] on a trial...

J: There was no trial.

G: No trial. After the interrogation, after nine months, they called me to a room and they told me, writing it, such and such person, "You are committed to eight years in prison."

J: Without a trial.

G: But not a prison, they called it "Ispravitielnye Trudovye"...

J: Hard labour.

G: You can say this, it is hard labour but they are pronouncing it differently; [that] you should "educate" yourself there.

J: Say this in Russian. How do they call it?

G: "Ispravitielnye Trudovye Lageria." [In Russian, "Correctional Labour Camps"] Ispravitielnye. Panimayesh? [Russian, 'Do you understand?']. So you should 'get better' ['rehabilitated']. Then I said, they said, "Sign here," and I said, "I won't sign it." So they said, "It doesn't matter, at least you know what you got. You can go."

J: So what happened? They sent you to the hard labour?

G: Well, they sent me by different routes, they sent me to different places to work.

J: Where did you work, what places? What kind of work?

G: Mostly, ah, what kind of work or where? In begin...not in

beginning, mostly all the time, nine years, I was in Urals, in different camps.

J: Prison camps.

G: Prison camps. The central prison was called 'Tavda'. And after the nine years, after the seven years they took us to Siberia to a special 'political camp', because the camps [in] which I was there, they [there have] been some 'politicals' and some 'criminals'.... Well...

J: What kind of work did you do for the first seven years? What kind of work did they make you do?

G: How [do] you say 'cutting trees'.

J: That's right. That's how you say it. Logging?

G: Logging.

J: Logging.

G: Logging.

J: And a...

G: And a little bit I was doing [constructing] wooden railways, to take the wood from the, from the...

J: My question is, what kind of [living] quarters were you given?

G: Oh, very nice quarters, you start building yourself, big barracks from logs, you go first cut the logs...

J: And you make up, ah, little homes out of them.

G: Not little. Barracks, you know, were...in one barrack, in one barrack...lived sixty [to] eighty people.

J: What kind...how did they feed you there?

G: They feed [fed] us 450 grams a day of bread, and soup

twice a day. [In background, a voice says, 'One pound of bread'.] No, 'once', 450 grams [a day]. Yes, [that is equivalent to] one pound.

J: And what about clothes?

G: Well...

J: Did they give you any? I mean, were you cold, you know, did they give you some warm clothes to wear?

G: No, no, they...[in] wintertime you get warm clothes, you know, this, eh, 'foofaika' [Russian, 'quilted jacket'] and whatever...

J: Okay.

G: And 'valenki' [felt boots], you know, in the beginning [not clear] so it was 'łapcie' [Polish, 'bast-shoes'].

J: So, after seven years of, ah, being, they sent you to a prison which was a strictly 'political prison'. What happened then?

G: No, vice versa. It was a normal prison. After seven years I went for one year to a political prison...

J: To a political prison, what happened there?

G: Which was [had] much more restrictions, you know.

J: When you talk about restrictions, what do you mean by restrictions?

G: Well, shall we say, you couldn't go to a toilet...
'wieczór' [Polish, 'evening']...

J: By yourself?

G: No 'by yourself', [rather, not] 'in the evening'. They made a lot of repression on you. Shall we say, they will

take you to work and in the middle of water and snow and they asked you to sit, you know, not yourself, the whole thing, you know. If they don't sit, they shoot. In the end was, we know [that] they are not going to shoot us, so they said "sit" and nobody sat. You know what I mean? So... [Voice in background, 'Sit where?'] There you stay.

J: On the ground; on the snow.

G: Snow is not too bad. The water, whatever. But, anyway, the work was not only there, coming back to the previous prison camps, the work was like this. You get up [at] six o'clock, you march, you go to get your piece of bread and bit of soup, and then you go to work. The work was eight kilometres one way, which you walk and you work there up to the evening, and before the evening it doesn't matter. I mean, wintertime you work less; summertime you work longer. They took us back, you know, together; they called the names, if nobody's missing and you walk again the eight kilometres. Then you get a portion of soup and that's it. You go to bed, and this is seven days a week.

J: Were a lot of people dying there because of the over-exhaustion and starvation?

G: Starvation. I wouldn't say exhausted [but I would say] starvation.

J: Starvation.

G: I was one time the...one time, quite a few times...an invalid. They sent me to a special, eh, eh, camp, you know, for invalids.

J: Hospital?

G: No, a camp.

J: A camp, another camp.

G: For invalids, you know, where there was only two hard-working 'brygady' [Voice in background, 'brigades']. Brigades. One was digging the, the earth to make space to put the dead. The other one was only cutting, cutting wood to warm the, the shacks.

J: Why would you dig for the dead? How many people were dying that you had to have that?

G: Well, in one of them the camp was four hundred people, the whole camp, it's not a big one, and every four to six weeks they sent two hundred people in, and there were always four hundred.

J: You mean two hundred people were dying?

G: Well, I was in a hospital because I got 'zapalenie płuc'.

J: Pneumonia.

G: Pneumonia. In this camp was two barracks of hospitals and the doctor was a Jew from Rumania, and I thought my heart is beating very hard so I went to the, not to the doctor, there was a sister, hood, thing...

J: A nurse.

G: A nurse, and she measured me the temperature and she looked at the temperature, I don't know what it was, but then she took, eh, two thermometers, she put here and there to check if I am not doing something, you know, and then they put me in the hospital. So what I want to tell

you [is that] you wake up, you know there are rooms where, shall we say, [there are] ten and ten beds are [on] both sides. You wake up in the morning, some beds are empty and some are covered, you know, in this room where there is [are] twenty people, shall we say three or four every night died.

J: Okay, that was your first seven years. Then you were a year in a political prison and then what happened after that year? You went back to the original prison?

G: No, then I was freed.

J: Then you were freed after eight years?

G: Ya.

J: All together.

G: Ya.

J: What happened to you when you were freed? How were you freed in the first place? How did they free you?

G: Oh, Well, from the camp they took me to a prison and the prison I was sitting above [more than] the eight years. They said they, they haven't got the convoy, the military to take me. Then one day they called me and called other people. They took us into [a] few trucks from there and they, they drove, I don't know how many hours, and they left us in a very small village and everybody signed a paper as [stating that] if he runs away from this village he'll get twenty-five years.

J: What year was this?

G: '50.

J: 1950.

G: Ya. March, March 1950.

J: So, they drop you off in that village and they told you,
you must stay there?

G: Right, and work. Well, so you go again the same story,
cutting wood.

J: A logger.

G: A logger.

J: How long have you been there?

G: Well, I was there up to '57, but mind you I wasn't, I was
quite free after Stalin died. Because they sent me the
'rehabilitation' papers.

J: Let me ask you a question. You were there after the War.
You were still in jail when the War ended.

G: Oh yes.

J: Did you hear about your family meantime?

G: No.

J: So, you didn't know after the War ended what actually
happened to your mom and dad, or the rest of your family.

G: No.

J: Okay. So, you were released in 1957 or '58?

G: '57. No, I was released in '50. 1950.

J: I know, but for seven years you stayed in the same
village.

G: The same village, yes. I was released, I got my papers, I
think in 1955. Stalin died in '53...

J: Okay.

G: And one of my friends, who was in Israel, had written to me [asking] have I received the papers which are freeing me. I said, "No," so he said, "Write to them." I written [wrote to the authorities] and I got the paper too. Then it was a time when the...I could leave this space [place].

J: No, no. We want to hear about it.

G: No, no, no. I could leave where I was living...

J: Okay.

G: But with us there been some Lithuanian, some Estonian which became free, too, and some of them went back to home and surprisingly, very quickly, they came back. So, we stayed there and then we learned as [that] the Polish government is taking back Polish citizens. So, I put [forth] a request for it, and I was free then still living there, and they told me, "No." So I went to...

J: You put in a request to...

G: A request, ya, so I went to Moscow. I went to the Polish embassy where they showed me a huge book with plenty of names which are rejected and the, the person told me, you know, the 'Big Brother' does whatever he wants. By the way the person, stop.... Again.

J: You put in another request?

G: Yes.

J: When were you finally released? Papers were given to you. What year was this?

G: '57.

J: And where did you go?

G: To Poland.

J: What happened when you arrived in Poland?

G: Well, [at] that time [President Władysław] Gomułka was in power and he was trying to do the best for the refugees. Like I got straight away for me and my family, 10,000 złotych. About any return it was big money then and after...

J: You had your wife with you at that time?

G: Oh yes, and some accommodation, an apartment, apartment.

J: When did you learn about...

G: Where did I learn...learn Russian?

J: No. How did you find out if your family was alive or not?

G: Oh.

J: When you returned back to Poland? How did you know that your family had perished?

G: Listen, listen, even being in the camps, you read books like, eh, Ginsburg who was with the Russian army and he went to Treblinka, whatever, you know it was bad, you don't know the exact, you know, amounts, but still now, don't forget, don't forget, as [that] I have a sister in London, living all the time there and she was writing to my mother through Switzerland, and then the letters stopped, it means, well, they stopped; nobody to write.

J: So, your family, in fact, perished in the concentration camps.

G: Right. When I came to Poland I have written to the Red Cross, already, to Israel and the only person who answered

was somebody who hasn't answered for my answer and he said he was my relative who was in our living quarters before the War and I think, I think I know who it was, but well, this was the whole, the whole family. And, mind you, 'Szpigielglas' is the only family with this name. You can have 'Spiegelmann' or so different, but Szpigielglas [my name] was only one family, and a huge family.

J: You had a sister and yourself? How many were in your family?

G: My brother, my sister and me, I was the youngest.

J: So, who survived, yourself?

G: My sister and myself.

J: So, your brother and your mom and dad and everybody perished?

G: Oh, everybody went.

J: So, what happened when you arrived to Poland? How long were you staying in Poland?

G: Two years.

J: And then?

G: I emigrate[d] to England.

J: You went to England. Okay. And then?

G: And then I was living in England for sixteen years and [then] I emigrate[d] to Canada. I got enough of this Socialist government in England, for many years you know, and I thought better I run away from Europe at all. That's it.

J: What were you doing in England?

G: In the beginning I started not knowing a word in English because I never went to school. I started as a carpenter which is a trade which I learned myself in the camps.

J: In jail.

G: In jail. So, I worked [for a] few years then, for somebody, then I started myself and then I didn't have no work at all. It was summer and I put some few estimates, no answers, and I read in the Polish paper as [that] somebody needs a driver with a clean license. Well, I was driving then and I liked to drive, so I went there. There was a firm which is called in English, 'Ship's Handler', this is people which are supplying vessels which are coming to the port, whatever they need and this guy, a Pole, was specializing in the Polish vessels to supply them [with] whatever they need and I start to work for him like a salesman and this was good money.

J: And then what year did you come to Canada?

G: Ah, '74.

J: '74?

G: Ya.... Stop.... From a Kohoz to work, you see the 'Kohoz' people in Siberia, they work [in collective farms] summertime, and [in] wintertime [there] is nothing to do. So, they give then a quota to cut so much wood and to take so many horses with them to, to haul it away, you know? So, she was one of them who came there and I thought, well, not a Jewish girl wouldn't come from Moscow to live here and I, I was stuck there you know, so I thought,

well, and living myself all my life here I prefer to get married. And this is, this is all.

J: Was this before your prison or after?

G: No, this is after the prison, we are talking about '51. We got married...

J: You got married in 1951?

G: '51, ya, and two my sons been born [in] '52 and '53.

[voice in background, 'Oh, they were born there also in Russia'.] Ya... 'Sibiriaky' [Russian, 'Siberians']. A German nurse, an old lady, and she said to me, "Synok ['Sonny' in Russian], you are very lucky; you are the first one which is leaving this hospital, and I think this was thanks to the doctor really."

J: The Jewish doctor?

G: Ya.

J: Well, there you are. Can you tell me one story in prison that would be more interesting for us to hear?

G: Yes, they took us from the trains, they took us from...

J: They took you from the train...

G: In Tchelabinsk and we walked to an old monastery who [that] was there. It is as usual if the Russians are arresting peoples as usual [usually] it's night. We been walking, was just, just beginning to get light, daylight. They put us in the basement in a monastery in a huge room. They been two, two...two sleeping [voice in background, 'bunk beds'], bunk beds, but not even beds, but it was like in Oświęcim [Auschwitz], you know, in the whole...

J: Barbed wires?

G: No, no, no. I mean in the basement was a huge room where I was and all around had been bunks...

J: Bunk beds.

G: Bunk beds, but not as separate beds, long way, and in the room was so much, so many people...

J: How many people do you think it had?

G: Quite a few hundred, because I found a place to live only under the bunks. And people been sleeping on the floor, so really you couldn't move. I don't remember how long I was there but, you know, there was one, how you say, 'beczka' [Polish, 'barrel']... 'kadushka...kadushka, kadushka' [Russian].

J: Let's continue. I'll explain it later when somebody asks me.

G: Okay. Well, you know, if you need to go somewhere, you, you know...

J: Toilet, toilet.

G: A pot, but this is not a pot, I mean the whole thing [toilet] and, you know, to get there it took you quite a long time to ask people to move...

J: To maneuver around.

G: And we got the 450 grams of bread and you really supposed to watch it because they opened the small window in the door and they say a name and a piece of bread comes and this bread travels to you through so many hands and many times disappears, and you end up without bread the whole

day.

J: ...I'm saying in a short.

G: Even in a short I must think about it. I am very far away from it...

J: And your survival?

G: Okay. Yes, I think, I think, even being through the very hard period of time, like sixteen years in Russia and different countries and so on, I am still lucky to be alive because my whole family, and the family was probably a few hundred people, are finished...

J: Perished.

G: Perished. So, what could I say about it? I can't understand how a culture, nation, like the Germans could do such a thing, and that's it.

[End of tape 1, side 2]

Interviewee: Henry Glass (G)

Date of Recording: April 6, 1995

Ident. Number: 07-2

Track Number: T2-S1

Interviewer: Renia Perel (P)

P: Interviewing Mr. Henry Glass for his photo-documentation, and he has some interesting additional statements to make about his survival. Mr. Glass, would you continue with telling us [about] this incident about your, the T.B. [tuberculosis] and so on, and how you got in touch with your sister, etc.

G: Well, probably T.B. I got in prison. But when I came...when I was released from prison, and I was complaining about my health to a doctor, they found that I got T.B. on the left side of my lungs, and I got then a bit lighter work....Okay, meantime, I have written two letters to my sister in England which I remember by memory the addresses. One was [to] the Red Cross, to try to find them, and the other one was the old address, which I memorized. The letter from the Red Cross came quickly back. This is, I forgot to tell you, this is after Stalin died [in 1953], not before. And the other letter, after two months, I got a letter from my sister which was explaining to me...they don't live any longer at that address but the lady to whom they sold the house went to the lawyer from which [whom] she bought the house, and he

has known the address of theirs. And she [my sister] thought [that] I am not alive a long time ago, because, you know, so many times...

P: She didn't hear from you.

G: Not hear at all. Well, the next letter I explained to them, you know, my health and so on, and they sent me a hundred pills for T.B., which, when I went with them to the local doctor, local, he said he has read about them in a foreign [medical] journal and they are supposed to help me. So I was taking them, and I was taking them up to when I went to Poland, where they sent me straight away to a sanatorium. The letters are here. When I came [back] to Poland I have of course been in contact with my sister and they have tried to take me over to England, but the government wasn't too keen, so we tried to make it maybe to...so we tried to get me to Rhodesia, but meantime the government of England has agreed to take me over, us, because my sister was the only living relative of mine, like "złączenie rodzin" [Polish, "unification of families"].

P: 'Unification of family'.

G: Unification of families. And that way only, I and my wife and my two children immigrated to England in 19..beginning of 1960. [dog barks] We lived in London where I worked as a carpenter, straight away, after seven days. Not even knowing a word in English. [laughs] Well, that's it.

P: So, then you were a carpenter...

G: Yes.

P: And, and you worked in England. How long did you stay in England? How many years?

G: Okay. After the [miners'] strikes in England with the Socialistic government [Labour Party]. There was no light for months and we thought now the Socialists are coming to rule England too, we decided to move out, so in 1974. In '73 we applied to come to Canada and they accepted us, and we came here in 1974.

P: Oh, so you arrived in '74 to Canada.

G: Yeah.

P: And you were trying to escape the Socialists.

G: Right.

P: [laughs]

G: I [had] got enough of them. Well, this is the whole story.

P: Ah ha. So, ah...I just want to ask you one more question. How do you feel about Canada, and your life here, and are you content with the move that you made? [dog barking]

G: To tell...you make good wages and living, they [my sons] married here, I have grandsons and [grand]daughters here, I am pleased.

P: Well, the other thing that I feel like it's unfinished, we don't know if your sister is still alive in England or not?

G: She's here.

P: She's in Vancouver?

G: She's here, and I don't talk to her for so many years.

P: Oh, I am sorry to hear that.

G: I am sorry, too.

P: She lives in Vancouver?

G: Yes, but this is a complete[ly] different story. I don't think we should mix her...

P: No. Well, I didn't know...

G: With this.

P: No, no.

G: Because, to tell you the truth, I will tell you....

[break]...in Israel, where we together, the four friends which went through the whole, how you say, the whole...

P: Tragic period?

G: Tragic period, yes, when you are not eating for days you know, you lose weight, you work hard so you cry but you work. And, you know, we suddenly found ourselves in Israel, all together, still alive. So how do you feel about this? I think happy. You see me smiling there.

[laughs] And that's it. We survived, we survived.

P: And do you feel like triumphant, heroic about the survival?

G: No, no, no, not really, not really, not really.

P: You feel it's a gift?

G: Oh, I try to think as less [little] as possible about it. Really I live day from day, day passed, I just one day, you know, [notice] how quickly it passes, and that's it.

[End of interview]