

Interviewee:	<u>FRIEDMAN</u> , Dr. Leon	Date:	April 7, 1981
Interviewer:	Josey G. Fisher		
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## SUMMARY

Dr. Leon Friedman was born February 17, 1902 in Warsaw, Poland. His parents owned a grocery store. He received his teacher's diploma and Ph.D. from Warsaw University. He discusses pre-war antisemitism and his education. He joined *Hashomer Hatzair* and served in Palestine from 1922 to 1924 instead of serving in the Polish army. He describes life in Kibbutz *Hashomer Hatzair*. He returned to Poland where he taught for 14 years.

In 1939 he walked to Bialystock illegally with a group of Jews. He lived under Russian occupation until June 1940, when he was sent to the village of Mandacz in Komi, Siberia with his wife and daughter for refusing a Russian passport. He describes travel to, conditions in, and escape from Mandacz in detail. Dr. Friedman worked as the chief accountant in Murashi. He went to Sochi (Southern Russia) as part of a transfer of 3000 Jews, which he arranged. He describes life in Sochi whose population was predominantly Greek.

After the war, Dr. Friedman and his family returned to Warsaw and Lodz. They were smuggled into Berlin. He talks about conditions faced by refugees in the Russian zone. He mentions two brothers who experienced antisemitism after joining the Anders Army. In 1946 Dr. Friedman organized the escape of 9000 Jewish refugees from East Berlin to avoid transport to the Soviet Union. He describes an illegal border crossing from the French zone to the Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp in the English zone, where he started a school for orphan's preparing to go to Palestine on *Aliyah Bet*. He lived in Stuttgart, Germany for a few months where he founded a "Folk University" with help from the Jewish community.

Dr. Friedman and family arrived in Philadelphia March 3, 1947. He founded the Association of Jewish New Americans of Philadelphia. He talks about his life as a refugee, why he survived, the effects of hunger on human beings, and the treatment of Holocaust survivors.

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## SUBJECT HEADINGS

Warsaw (Poland) 1902-1939; 1945

Lodz (Poland) 1945

World War 1939-1945

Hashomer Hatzair

Education

Children - Education

Illegal border crossings

Bialystock

Mandacz, Komi (Siberia)

Murashi (Soviet Union)

Sochi (Soviet Union)

Anders Army

Berlin - Russian zone

Bergen-Belsen (refugee camp)

Survival skills

Starvation

Holocaust survivors