

Interviewee:	<u>MANTELMACHER</u> , Leo	Date:	September 26, 1983
Interviewer:	Nora Levin		
Audio tapes:	2 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Restrictions:	None		

## SUMMARY

Leo Mantelmacher, the second youngest of five children, was born in June 23, 1919 in Kozienice, Poland. His father was a tailor. Leo describes him as a religious and self-educated, multilingual open minded person. Leo details pre-war life in Poland, including several incidents of abuse by antisemitic students, teachers and adults, especially around Easter. He contrasts the good relations with the *Volksdeutsche* that lived nearby.

Leo details life after the German invasion in 1939 and brutal treatment of Jews by the SS. Leo and some other Jews were transported to Radom, and housed with Jewish soldiers segregated from the Polish army. His sister was able to bribe a *Volksdeutsche* in the camp to get Leo out. Back in Kozienice Leo made clothing for local Poles in exchange for food. Leo cites many occasions when so called "miracles" helped him to survive. Leo describes the creation of the Kozienice Ghetto and briefly mentions several brutal killings of children by Germans and the killing of Moishe Brunstein, a member of the *Judenrat*, by fellow Jews. He mentions a few times when Poles assisted them for money: delivering their bartered food payment so it would not be confiscated from Leo and holding some fur for Leo who would have been shot for smuggling. Leo explains how he was one of several hundred people from his ghetto who were saved from 1942 ghetto liquidation<sup>1</sup> when the Poles requested the Jewish labor force be able to stay to finish draining the swamp.

Leo was deported in October 1942 to Wolanów labor camp where he did brutal cement work. Leo witnessed piles of Russian POW corpses upon their arrival at Wolanów labor camp and describes that Italians were executed in front of them by Ukrainian SS. He also recalls one Polish worker who treated Leo humanely, helped him secretly make clothes which he was able to barter for food and helped Leo's brother Max when he had typhoid fever. In early 1943, Leo volunteered for an ammunition work brigade in Radom to try to reunite with Max. He talks about his near starvation until Max was able to smuggle him some gold which he traded for bread.

In July 1944 Leo went on a forced march to Tomaszow-Mazowiecki where he spent about six weeks digging anti-tank ditches on almost no rations. He describes arrival at Auschwitz and a selection by Dr. Mengele. Two days later, Leo and others that had not been killed upon arrival were sent by cattle car to Vaihingen, near Stuttgart, to dig

<sup>1</sup>See also his brother's testimony, during which Leo and his brother describe how their sisters escaped liquidation of the ghetto by getting on a transport to Kruszyna labor camp.

tunnels for German factories. Again he made caps and clothing to trade for food. He also recalls that an elderly Polish guard hid him so he could rest from the brutal labor.

In late 1944 Leo and other surviving prisoners were moved to Dachau concentration camp. After four weeks, everyone was given a Red Cross package and taken out of Dachau. Leo relates the bad experiences his group had after liberation: almost being shot by fleeing SS and lack of shelter and food. Their ordeal ended when they encountered American troops. After staying in a private home they were sent to Mittenwald Displaced Persons camp for six or seven weeks. He recounts how his sister found him and he was reunited with her and his other siblings all of whom survived. Leo came to the United States in 1949.

See also the interview with his brother, Max Mantelmacher.

Interviewee: MANTELMACHER, Leo      Date: September 26, 1983

### SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War (1939 - 1945)  
Holocaust, Jewish (1939 - 1945) Personal narratives - male  
Holocaust, Jewish (1939 - 1945) Poland  
Poland - History - German occupation (1940 - 1945)  
Jewish ghettos – Radom  
Jewish ghettos - Kozienice  
Forced labor  
Antisemitism  
Atrocities  
Aid by non-Jews  
Labor camps: Radom, Poland  
Labor camps: Goranov  
Labor camp: Vaihingen, Germany  
Labor camp: Tomashev Mazowiecki, Poland  
World War (1939 - 1945) Post liberation experiences  
Displaced Persons Camp: Mittenwald