

Interviewee:	<u>ROTHBERG</u> , Herman	Date:	May 4, 2004
Interviewer:	Marcia Goldberg		
Audio tapes:	3 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Restrictions:	None		

## SUMMARY

Herman Rothberg, previously Chaim Pacowski, was born in Vilna, Poland in March, 1919. His parents died when he was very young. He received all of his secular and religious schooling in the Vilna Boys' Orphan Home. At 13, he left the orphanage and worked in various mills both before and after the Russians took over Eastern Poland. Herman joined the Russian Army before he was 21. He trained in the Gubernia of Penza, part of the Russian Federation.

The Army placed him in one of the labor battalions made up of former Polish citizens. In 1941 he was arrested by the NKGB for counter-revolutionary propaganda for talking about how in Poland there were items in stores. Herman was jailed and sentenced to 10 years of hard labor. He described the near starvation, harsh conditions and deteriorating health and explains that he was released because a doctor from Lithuania used his influence to get him released. He subsequently worked on a collective farm and then was reassigned to a labor battalion, but was again arrested and jailed, this time for not having a passport. Upon this release he hopped a freight train bound for Tashkent, a warmer climate, to try to survive.

In 1943 Herman was inducted into Berling's Army, one of the special Polish units under Russian Army command. He describes his experiences in the army, several injuries and the Russian takeover of Warsaw. From the army, Herman went to Foehrenwald Displaced Persons Camp in Wolfratshaven, Germany. For three and a half years he worked there for HIAS and the Joint Distribution Committee. In 1948 he left Europe and joined relatives in Philadelphia, where he married and established a family.

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## SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War, 1939--1945--Personal Narratives, Jewish

Vilna, Poland

Russian Occupation of Poland

Soldier/Military – Jewish

Soldier/Military – Russian/Soviet

World War, 1939--1945--NKGB, People's Commissariat for State Security

World War--1939--1945--Berling's Army, Special Polish Unit, Red Army

Foehrenwald Displaced Person Camp