

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

EDWARD SACKS

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Philip G. Solomon
Date: February 13, 1990

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Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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ES - Edward Sacks [interviewee]
PS - Philip G. Solomon [interviewer]
Date: February 13, 1990

Tape one, side one:

ES: 1990. I, Captain Edward Sacks, am pleased to accept an invitation from Josey Fisher, custodian of Holocaust Archives, Rebecca Gratz College [Gratz College], to relate the experience with the Bavarian military government from May, 1945, to January, 1946. My contacts were mainly with Nazi oppressors and displaced prisoners of war. I had practically no direct contact with people in concentration camps, except February, 1946, our company was billeted in a large building across the road from [pause] Ravenstock, Ravensbrück concentration camp, where many people were still living as they had no place to go. These individuals were still wearing striped prisoners' uniforms and they moved about freely in the camp. [tape off then on]

Military government was established to bring law and order to Germany out of chaos. Displaced persons, many criminals, were roaming all over the land. Camps were established to retain former prisoners of war in order to process them so that they may be repatriated. [tape off then on]

I would like to review briefly what took place when we first arrived at military government headquarters, 11 Obernstrasse, Munich, which building was formerly the *Landrathaus* [seat of district magistrate] of Bavaria. We arrived on 16 May, 1945. Our unit was E-1 F-3 ECAR, APO 658. On the 18th of May, I was placed on temporary duty with F-1, F-3 detachment as deputy to Captain Sheldon, supervisor of land government, of Landkreis [rural district], München, population 70,000. I visited 27 *Burgermeisters* of Landkreis to determine what present security measures were available; established liaison between U.S. military; posted ordinances; especially Law Number One which covered the collection of all types of weapons and penalties; secured listing number of displaced persons, and other general security conditions.

20th May at Taufkirchen, Germany we found seven displaced Polish military men, lying on the side of the road, who died drinking acid heat. 21st of May at Feldkirchen [village 8 mi. east of Munich] I was notified a disturbance was being created by Polish soldiers stationed at a temporary camp at the outskirts of Feldkirchen. I took a jeep with driver and arrived at a farm where three Polish soldiers had a calf on a truck. The farmer who owned the calf was a heavy set man, in contrast to the soldiers who were thin. The farmer stated that the soldiers had rifles, which I wasn't prepared to confront them, so I ignored the farmer's advice. The soldiers had a note from an American officer who authorized them to forage for food, that is, to locate food wherever available. The farmer stated that he was paid for the calf but did not wish to sell it. I told the farmer that he was fortunate that he was not physically harmed. I told him that he should accept conditions as

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they were. The farmer said that the soldiers previously took one of their trucks from the farm. The soldiers admitted that the truck was owned by the farmer. I told the soldiers that to leave the truck, but they could take the calf. They took the calf on the second truck, which they brought with them. [tape off then on]

23rd of May, arrested a young SS trooper. 25th of May at Gräfelfing [village 6 mi. west of Munich]. I was told to investigate a house which was being, or was causing a disturbance from the individuals who lived there. This was Gräfelfing. I went to the house, which was kept by two young women, in good condition. I was told that the Nazi who owned the house left, and later I learned that the CIC [Commander in Charge] set this house up as a trap to secure the arrest of this Nazi. The citizens of the town offered to furnish me with a home in that area, which naturally I refused. People were very much disturbed by inadequate security. [tape off then on]

On June the 1st Reports E1F3, Public Finance. June the 13th secured reports from banks, advising the officers' party affiliation. On 15th of June I was assigned to work on public security under Colonel Quirk [phonetic], headquarters *Polizeipräsidium* [police headquarters] in Munich, which was formerly Landrathaus of Bavaria. Organized assistant to clear civilian passes through civil offices to be supervised by military government. We did this to eliminate the queuing up of people seeking passes to return to their homes outside Munich. Many of these people spent days in lines waiting for the police to issue passes.

23rd of June, returned to fiscal department. [tape off then on] While working at the *Polizeipräsidium* I recovered two lists of Jews arrested. One during November, 1941, listed 800 people. The second one, February, 1942, listed 1,000 people. [tape off then on] These lists were donated to the Rebecca Gratz College [Gratz College], the Holocaust Archives [Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive]. [tape off then on] I was in charge of two different convoys of Nazi loot to be delivered to United States Military Finance Headquarters, Reichsbank, Frankfurt, Germany. To arrange the convoy, I called Lieutenant Kornfeld Ordinance 3406, 7th Army, and advised him what equipment was required. July the 20th, 1945: One convoy consisted of weapon carrier equipped with machine and alert gunner, two jeeps, and half-ton truck. The load consisted of two boxes of gold teeth, having the odor of body decay, gold-rimmed eye glasses, etc., one box of pieces of eight, which were gold coins the size of a dime, 100 gold bars, each weighed 100 pounds, encased in half-inch wooden case, three bags of currency. A receipt issued by Major Russel E. Sheer, Fiscal Department, E1F3, was given to Major Jesser [phonetic] of the Reichsbank, for 7,620 RMs. [tape off then on]

In May, when we first arrived at our headquarters in Munich, we found all types of papers, scattered all over the building. I recovered three Nazi magazines: [unclear], *Beobachter*, one dated July 15, 1933. On page 857, full-page advertisement for Kodak. Page 861, full-page advertisement for Palmolive. A full-page advertisement for Ford, and the issue, July the 27th, 1933, on page 818, full-page for Flit [insecticide], another full-

page for Pond's. An issue, July the 19th, 1933, full-page at Johnson, another for Quaker Oats, another for Acfi. These companies evidently feared communism to such an extent that they were willing to help finance the Nazi Party by inserting advertisements in their party magazine. I recovered these issues, but they disappeared from a desk where they were placed. [tape off then on]

On September the 9th, 1945, an office was set up with six secretaries to determine Nazi classification of officers and banks and insurance companies. Out of an estimated total of 10,000 people, our office fired approximately 3,000 who qualified as being Nazi criminals. This office functioned until November 15th, when I secured a leave of seven days for R&R at Cannes, France. When I returned I learned that the project was disbanded. Evidently the dismissals of these Nazis strongly affected the functioning of German financial institutions. Practically every German was a member of the Nazi Party, either directly or affiliated. [tape off; long pause; tape on]

PS: Yeah, this is Phil Solomon, interviewing Mr. Edward Sacks for the Holocaust Oral History Archive of Gratz College. The date is February 13, 1990. This interview is being added to the testimony you have been hearing on this tape that Mr. Sacks recorded at his home before coming into Gratz College for this interview. I would just like to add a few questions, Mr. Sacks, to supplement the very valuable testimony you have already recorded on this tape. I'd like to repeat that Mr. Sacks has given to the Holocaust Archive some very precious documents and books. Before asking you some additional questions, Mr. Sacks, pertaining to this material, I would like to establish your position in the military in the fight against the Nazis. You have already explained quite a bit of that. The few questions I would like to ask you is approximately when you entered Germany, whether you were, well, let's put, where in Europe did you first serve prior to arriving in Munich and securing the documents and books that you have turned over to the College Archive?

ES: Our orders were to proceed to Munich, military government, on the 25th of April, 1945.

PS: Yeah.

ES: We...

PS: At that time...

ES: Reached...

PS: Oh, I'm sorry, yeah.

ES: We, on May the 8th, Armistice Day, we were at Heidelberg, Germany, and then proceeded on to Munich.

PS: At that time, Mr. Sacks, had you, that was just about the end of the war, at that time had you seen any evidence of Nazi atrocities against civilians or the military or prisoners of war? Had you seen anything at all in moving through whatever countries and then into Germany itself?

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ES: I had been working on convoy work up through Europe: Brussels, Holland, through France, parts of Germany, and I had never ran into anyone discussing concentration camps or even arresting individuals. We just were not, we didn't have the occasion to discuss it with any natives...

PS: Right.

ES: And it didn't, it wasn't ever, the subject was never brought up.

PS: Yeah. When you arrived in Munich, you were serving then in the American military government?

ES: That was, yes, that was the Bavarian level, or the State level of military government which headquarters in Munich. And I was assigned originally to the Finance Department. Now stop it. [tape off then on]

PS: Mr. Sacks, in the recording, the testimony you did on this tape prior to coming in this morning, you described, certainly you gave accurate and excellent testimony as to what you saw, say in the Munich, in the police station in Munich. Now there you presented to us the two different lists that you mentioned about Jews that had been deported from Munich. I believe you mentioned there were two different lists...

ES: Yes.

PS: Each containing say roughly, accounting for about 2,000 individuals who were...

ES: That's correct, 1800 people.

PS: Yeah...

ES: [unclear].

PS: Do you believe that this probably represented all the Jews who lived in Munich at that time?

ES: Yeah, as far as I could determine, [skip on tape] 1942 was actually [unclear] to make it the Final Solution, as the Nazis called it. And I don't know of any additional, large-scale...

PS: Yeah.

ES: ...arresting of Jews or any other people...

PS: Also, Mr. Sacks...

ES: ...after that date.

PS: When we saw, when you handed those two lists to us in the Holocaust Oral History Archive, I believe we showed you the *Gedenkbuch* that had been given to us by the West German government. And I believe you were there when we checked and some of the names on your list are those...

ES: Right.

PS: Yeah, corresponded exactly to the *Gedenkbuch* which lists, the West German government compiled this list of close to 200,000 names of Jews whom they were able to trace from the time they were deported from their homes, and each concentration camp they were sent to and then their final solu-, you know, where they ended. And we

checked, I believe, a few of the names, and they corresponded exactly to names in the *Gedenkbuch*. The, so actually that list is certainly very valuable testimony, and it will become a permanent part, of course, of our memorabilia in the Gratz Archive. I'm just curious, when you arrived in the police station where you saw this, were there any German police still on duty there who had taken over?

ES: Naturally the military was in control of all police activities. They were functioning to some extent, but they were somewhat bewildered evidently because they didn't have proper leadership. As an officer of the military, I was requested to try to solve a, the problem of displaced persons, which was tremendous at that time. Lines were formed at the police station and some of the people were there two or three days before they were able to secure any police help to send back to their homes.

PS: Mr. Sacks, we spoke about the two lists that you showed us and presented to our Archive, which certainly were very, very meaningful. Now, the books, there were what, two or three books that you also presented to the Archive that were from the same police station, which you have referred to in your, the recording that you made before coming in? Is there anything you can add to the description? Were they of antisemitic content? Were they required reading by the SS?

ES: In my experience in seeking out some of the ranking Nazis I found that they each had large libraries of books relating to the Nazi organization, and evidently they supported their publications in order to help finance their objectives. The books that I gave to the Holocaust Archives were always revised history to present the Nazi viewpoint. I've seen additional books which to, were completely revised history, that is the German history according to the Nazi viewpoint. As a matter of fact I have one. Maybe eventually I'll be able to part with it.

PS: Yeah. [chuckles] When that time comes of course, you know our, we have a very complete, probably one of the finest, most complete Archive in the country and possibly the world, of you know, our audio tapes and memorabilia. You certainly have contributed, you know, another valuable portion. Just to review another thing, Mr. Sacks, you also mentioned about the smells of the teeth, and people in uniform, and I believe the gold rimmed glasses. Is there anything you'd like to add to that, anything else you can recall that relates to that that would be of interest to your testimony? [pause] You were speaking of the teeth, the odors, the people in uniform, the glasses. You did mention all of this in your tape. I was wondering if maybe just you could reminisce and think of anything else that might bear witness to this testimony. That about, you think you about covered it?

ES: I had a bullwhip which evidently came from the concentration camp. It was so, a miserable looking weapon, I threw it away.

PS: Yeah.

ES: The, each Nazi was issued a steel blackjack, evidently at the end of the war, for additional protection. And those blackjacks were marked SIPO, *Sicherheits*

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[*Sicherheitsdienst*] *Inspector Polizei Offizier*¹. I found two of them in two different apartments. So I assume that the, each high-ranking Nazi officer received one.

PS: You actually arrived in Munich, oh about a week after Munich had been captured.

ES: May the 16th.

PS: Yeah, about, yeah, May 16th. I believe that Munich was captured on or about April 28th. So it was within a few weeks. At that time had the American military government established any kind of a German police force? Were there German policemen who had been secured or appointed by the American military government?

ES: The police stations were, police officers were functioning, but if I recall, they weren't permitted to have arms of any kind. And their operation was, their ability to function was very limited, at the beginning. And security, it was mostly supervised by the army military government.

PS: Yeah. During your duties in Munich, I believe that you've covered very well, you've described various experiences. Can you recall about how long you remained in Munich? About when you, you arrived around May 16th, and can you recall about how long you remained in, or the vicinity of Munich?

ES: Yeah sure. We departed about April the 15th, 1946.

PS: Oh, so you were there almost a full...

ES: Yes.

PS: The full year.

ES: The last month I was organizing, I think it was the 281st Engineer Battalion, as we were being sent home, whatever the term is.

PS: Yes. So you were actually in Munich then almost a full year after the end of the war, or after Munich was captured by American Forces. During that period, or toward the end of that period, did you see any Jews? Jews who had survived and had originally lived in Munich? Did you see any of them return to their homes? Any return to the city of Munich?

ES: I had a chauffeur who was Jewish, from Lithuania. And unfortunately he worked as my chauffeur for approximately a month, and was reassigned to another pool. And afterwards, I learned that he was arrested for black, doing black market work. So, I'm not very proud that he was Jewish. [chuckles]

PS: When you left finally in, when you finally left Munich in April of 1946, did you leave Germany at that time? Did you go to another area within Germany?

¹ Sipo, or *Sicherheitspolizei* [security police], was the organization formed in 1936 as part of Himmler's reorganization of the German police. It comprised the state criminal investigation branch, Kripo and the secret state police, and was commanded by Reinhard Heydrich after Sept. 1939. (Encyclopedia.com: Oxford Companion to World War II)

ES: No, we were processed to return to the United States. We went to, we traveled by Forty and Eight cars, it's the old type cattle car², to Bremerhaven, and then took the ship, I think it was the, the first time we went came back on *George Washington*.

PS: Yeah, well, so that was approx-, that was when, in 1946?

ES: 194-...

PS: Yeah.

ES: [unclear]. [tape off then on]

PS: Mr. Sacks, I believe we've reached pretty much the end of my questions and your testimony. Is there anything that you did not mention or I did not ask that you would like to add to your testimony? Anything we didn't cover or any thoughts that just come to your mind at this point?

ES: I'm sure things will come to my mind...

PS: Yeah, that's...

ES: ...at a later date, but right now I...

PS: The way, well, really at this point...

ES: I mean it's, what is it [chuckles] 40, 45 years?

PS: Yeah, 45...

ES: Almost 45 years ago.

PS: This is the 45th anniversary.

ES: Yeah.

PS: Well, regardless, Mr. Sacks, your, we want to, on behalf of the Gratz College Oral History Archive, I want to thank you for your very, very interesting and valuable testimony and, of course, also for the lists and the books that you presented to us, which all, including this tape, will become a permanent part of our Holocaust Oral History Archive. And again, on behalf of our Archive, I want to thank you very, very much for your testimony and for the material you have presented to us. Thank you.

ES: Thank you, Mr. Solomon. [tape off then on] Okay. [pause] There's two additional items which I would like to add to this tape. The first one, a letter received from Alexander Wanger, dated March the 16th, 1946. His Company was the Ace Electric Company, 145 North Third Street, Philadelphia, PA. Addressed to Edward Sacks, Legal Branch, Headquarters, 3rd Military Regiment, Bavaria, APO 403, care of Post Office, PO, New York, New York. [pause] He was concerned about a nephew, George Fiedrich, interned in Sachsenhausen concentration camp, last seen on April the 25th, 1945, at which time he was taken in the direction at Lübeck, Germany. He's 22 years old. When Mr. Wanger's letter was received, I inquired about his nephew, George, at the *Polizeipräsidium* in Munich. Fortunately, they were able to give me his address [pause]. I went to the address where George was living. He was very reluctant to open the door to his apartment, evidently fearing that he might be arrested again. After George opened the apartment door,

² Forty and Eight is a type of boxcar, used in World War I and World War II, which transported forty men or eight horses. (World War II Encyclopedia)

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I spoke to him about the letter received from his uncle, who wished to bring him to the United States. I suggested that George contact the American office and his uncle would pay all expenses. I naturally gave him the detailed information where to locate his uncle. A few months later George met his uncle in Philadelphia. [tape off then on] And if you're not, if you can't use them, [tape off then on]

The second article refers to the military government maga-, newspaper, dated the 3rd of January, 1946, by the name of *The Bavarian*. The article concerned that the head office of military government takes over command responsibility. The 3rd Army was to continue its duties of security, prisoner of war control, demobilization of armed forces and disarmament of military installations in Germany. The order was issued by USFET [United States Forces European Theater], outlining plans for separation of military government from Army tactical field forces. [pause] It was aimed at having military government organizations depend more upon German civilian agencies, with some of the supplies and personnel. When USFET order was issued, it was received by a Captain Atkinson, and Captain Ansbach. These two officers had desks directly in back of mine. They discussed USFET order for about three days. I got tired of listening to their discussion, so I asked them if they were interested in a suggestion from me. My suggestion was to keep control of Bavarian State echelon and lease the lower political units to the Germans, making them responsible to our organization. They accepted the suggestion and proceeded to put it in effect.