

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

HENRY SKORR

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer:	Harriet Richman
Dates:	February 8 - July 19, 1983

© 2008
Holocaust Oral History Archive
Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

This page left intentionally blank.

HS - Henry Skorr [interviewee]

HR - Harriet Richman [interviewer]

Date: February 8, 1983¹

Tape one, side one:

HR: ...and Harriet Richman the interviewer, taking place on February the 8th, 1983. Mr. Skorr, would you please begin by telling us a little bit about the town that you came from in Poland, and what it was like there before the war?

HS: I was born in 1921 in Kalisz. Kalisz is on the western part of Poland, a part from Poznan state. In the beginning we was belonging to Lodz state. And later in 1923 they put us to Poznan state. Kalisz is the last bigger town that had a bigger concentration of Jews in the western part. It's very important that I explain what means in Poland the western part, the eastern part. Poland was divided between Russia, Austria and Germany a few hundred years. In connection with this, in the old part of Poland this was under occupation of the other, the occupation, let's see, Russia, Germany, or Austria was developing entire different culture, or a Russian culture or a German culture or a Austrian culture. We was belonging to the German part. In our town, until 1914, not far from our town was the border in Sayborno between Germany and Poland. Classically, the western part from Poland was always antisemitic. During the history of Poland, the old pogroms, the old anti-Jewish actions was more active in the German, in the western part of Poland what was belonging to Germany. The state of Poland was founded in the western part of Poland like in Gniezno, Torun, Bilgoraj, Poznan, Kalisz. This is the historical part of Poland, that Poland start to develop in the first kingdom from the Piasts, the first kingdom from the Piasts was in Gniezno. We are not far from that part. I believe--I'm talking a little more now--I believe that our town, the community, the Jewish people, was the emigration from the western part, from Germany, when the Polish kings invited Jews and Germans to Poland to help to build up Poland to make it more modern, to create towns, cities, to create industry. So I believe that in our town was the biggest concentration of Jews when they come from the western part of invitation from the Polish kings, from Boleslaw Hrobrey [phonetic], from Boleslaw the Piast, from Boleslaw--Casimir the Great. This is all kings what was involved in building up of Poland. And a part of building up of Poland was from the Jews what they bring, they bring their knowledge from the western part, from Germany, from French, from Italy, and they helped building the cities. Our town was built western part. This means city hall, and from city hall the streets was going around in a radius. This means they make from a *Ratush* [phonetic], this is the center *platz*, and from this the streets was going around like German style. This is our city of Kalisz.

¹This interview was conducted on multiple dates in 1983: February 8 and 28, April 12, May 2, June 14 and 28, July 5 and 19.

And Kalisz is a very old city what was existing either before the history of Poland. It was located on the river of Prosna. And during the history we learned that Jade Tract, the Jade Pike what was going from Rome to the Baltic Sea was going through our city. We find still in our city bridges and highways made with the ancient stone from the Romans. Through our city was going Napoleon Bonaparte in 1812 when he went to conquer Russia. We find there too bridges what he was building for the army, and we find the Alayzyu Zafina [phonetic] what is a name from his wife, and all kinds of signs in French what is written when he was marching with a big army through Poznan, Kalisz, to the Russian border.

So I want to repeat, we are the last bigger town in western part of Poland what had a bigger Jewish community. I believe in 1939 before the German invasion was approximately 30 to 40,000 Jews in Kalisz. The Jews was occupied most in their home industry. There was carpenters, shoemakers, butchers, bakers, goldsmiths and so-and-so. A big part of making a living, this was, people was going to market in the western part from the small towns from great Poland. They call it in Poznan Oloshno [phonetic] and they was over there selling their merchandise. And they have a special how to say, a congregation. They was concentrated and represented by the Polish government to protect their interests. Because when they was going selling their merchandise, they always had all kinds conflicts, all kinds pogroms, all kinds of robberies in the small part, in the other towns when they went to sell. And I remember being a child, I always was listening how my mother and my father and friends was telling, "Oh, this week was a very bad week for the Jews on the markets. They was beating them up and they was taking away their property. And this was like in my memory waiting over when they're coming back from home and coming back from the markets and selling what was a good day or a bad day or if they was beaten up or not beaten up.

So, how I want to continue with my Kalisz, what have a historical part in development of Poland and have a, too, a very historical part in our Jewish history. In Kalisz was the first time written the *Kaliszian Krakdar* [phonetic] in, I believe in 1410, by the King Boleslaw Piast. In that ***Krakdar*** the first time the Jew start to be not a private property between a landlord or from another *reger* [phonetic], between a other big man what could do with him what he wants, take away his property, take away his life, take away his wife and throw away the bones from the cemetery. Until now nobody was punished for killing a Jew, or for harming a Jew. In that *Kaliszian Krakdar* [phonetic], that king Boleslaw Piast first put this on paper that a Jew is now the property from the king and is under the king's protection. I saw in the *Kaliszian* museum, in city hall, the original tract what is written in Polish and in Latin. And the witnesses was very famous people like the *Starosta* [phonetic] from Sieradz, the *Starosta* from Poznan, and the bishop from the Catholic Church. Because the Church was always very active against the Jews. And that king involved them to sign the signature that the church should too protect the Jews.

So, I want to say again that Kalisz had a big role in Jewish history. And our social life, and our organizational life was very nice developed. How I remember, we had our own *Gemeinde*, with our own small city hall. And we had our own Jewish hospital, Jewish orphanage, a Jewish old age home, a Jewish synagogue, a Jewish Talmud Torah, a Jewish *mikveh*, and a Jewish school what was kept up by taxes what Jewish people was paying to the *Gemeinde*. The *Gemeinde* is like a *Kahal*, what was elected by Jewish people. And the *Kahal* was hiring the rabbi, and hiring the other functionaries what was working in the Jewish community. Plus, I remember we was electing too our representative to city hall what was representing our Jewish rights and our Jewish interests, because we was in constant conflict with the Polish outside world. And they was the official protection given by us. We have a constitutional right to be a self-governing body, with our by-laws and with our way of life, we made our own taxes, and with paying government taxes. I remember we had a very big old *shul* what probably is old a thousand years And the *shul* was built like a fortress, where Jews in time of distress ran away or it was a pogrom or it was an attack by the Tartars, or it was attacked by the Swedes. When the Swedish invasion of Poland, Jewish people was active fighting against the Swedes. And we still have near the synagogue the old butcher stores, built like a fortress. And when we was learning the history, to explain this, I'll, this was in protection against the Swedish invasion when they was going in the western Poland, and when they was going to Czestochowa. And Czestochowa now is important with the black madonna. This was too a part involved with Jewish history. And the Jewish people was active fighting against the Swedish invaders, against the Tatar invaders, fighting for Polish way of life.

How I say I remember, not far from our synagogue, a wall. And they say the wall is the remnant from the Jewish ghetto, with very big bricks. This, everything was destroyed by the German invasion. How I, I want to repeat about the so-, we have a very developed social life, and a very developed political life. In our town we have plenty, all kind of social organizations and political organizations, most oriented Zionistic in direction from Palestine. We have a *Poalei Zion*², a left *Poalei Zion* and a right *Poalei Zion*. We had a *Betar*. This, *Betar* is the Zionistic party what Begin was the representative. We have too a Bund organization. A Bund organization, this was a Jewish working party what was saying when Jews belong to Poland they don't have to emigrate to no other country. They have to fight together with the Polish worker, the welfare from the Jewish worker. But they was a little minority, because Jewish people didn't believe in Polish justice. And the tragic history that the German come show us that the idea of the Bund, that we are a part from the Polish life and the Polish work, from the Polish proletariat is very false. In the first time of trouble, everybody abandoned us and we had

²*Poalei Zion*: Movement started in late 19th century whose ideology consisted of a combination of Zionism and socialism.

no way to exist. And the policy of the Jewish parties was much more realistic because they was orienting the Jewish people for emigration to Palestine and believing that only this can safeguard our existence. And how tragic we saw this in 1939 they was right.

We had a very developed religious life too. We had plenty Jewish organizations with the *Agudah*, with all kinds of *shteiblach*, religious *shteiblach*, with an *Agudah* school where religious people was going, with a Talmud Torah where poor Jewish children was going supported by the *Gemeinde*, with the Hebrew schools like *Tachtumoyna* [phonetic] in *Tarbut* where Jewish people, Jewish youth, was learning Hebrew, learning Polish, and learning to be future good Jewish people to emigrate to Israel. We have to develop sport life. The youth was organized in Jewish clubs, what was a part from the political life, like the Bund have *Yushenka* [phonetic] and the *Poalei Zion* have a *Morgenshtern* Club where we was playing soccer and gymnastic and box and we was too on the river, how is to say?

HR: Rowing?

HS: Rowing on the river. And we have a club *Makabi* what was very famous with this, a very famous soccer club. That youth was too prepared to protect themselves, because every Sunday was made like little pogroms in the city and the Jewish youth was learn, was getting their education in the sport clubs. In the time from trouble we was always ready, was fighting off the Polish hooligans what was always each Sunday attacking Jews. When we want to go to the park, we want to go to the river, we were wanting to go to a soccer game. So that we was a very sophisticated, developed Jewish community with our pleasures and our displeasures and our troubles and our life.

HR: Tell me something now about...

HS: Yes.

HR: Your own personal life, about your family, your mother, your father.

HS: My father was a butcher. He, we have a store, and my father too was selling live cows to Warsaw. I remember when I was a child my father was still working for somebody. And later he went to his own business and he was successful. I remember how we were, he was working very hard getting up 2:00 in the morning, taking his all the things what you need to the slaughterhouse. Because in Poland we have to take the cow to the slaughterhouse and make this everything, kill the cow, and the *shochet* have to see how this is kosher. And later this have to be brought up to the butcher shop. And my mother was at home. Later when we grew up a little she was helping out with the father in the business. We was very, I was very proud of my father. He was one from the strongest men in the city. And everybody was afraid of him. And if somebody was a time of trouble, they know to go to Yosef and that he will protect. I remember like I was a child, if somebody took away money even from somebody, they called to my father and he should go to the other person and straighten out that conflict. I remember it like now that if I, a girl was giving her dowry to a rich man, so he should keep it and give her dividends. In the end that rich man didn't want to give her back the money. And I

remember like now that girl come crying to my father that a man stole her dowry. And my father pick himself up--it was Saturday night--he went to that rich man, and the rich man was afraid of him. He give her back the money. This was important for me, that I remember this. And he was a very good man, very hard working. Now the family was a very close-knit family. And we was living in the Jewish part from the town in a big house where was living maybe fifty Jewish tenants. And even the *struzsh*, how they call *srtuzsh*...

HR: An apartment?

HS: The man what cleans the house.

HR: Janitors?

HS: Even the janitor was talking Jewish. And the houses in our town was built different than here. Every house was built like a fortress, in the front a big gate, a very heavy gate. And when you closed the gate nobody can go in. Is not open. At night, 10:00 at night, the gate is closed and made from a very heavy oak, and the whole building was built inside in the...

HR: The courtyard?

HS: The builder, the, yeah, there was a backyard. The whole life from the house was in the backyard, surrounded on all sides with buildings, and with a pump where we take water. And the outside was closed up. In that house was maybe 200 people living and there is so many children. And we was always living in the backyard, playing around, fighting around, and living our own life, and going to our own holidays. Because every holiday was a big thing in such a house. It comes a, when it comes a Passover, the women was bringing down all the straws and all the old clothing and was washing and cleaning. And the rabbi come *kashering* everything. And the, either the *goyim* in the city was knowing that is coming the holiday, and everything was done in the backyard. The, all women and the all, was a whole a *mishmash*, day and night was everything, was that backyard busy. We...

HR: How was *Shabbat*?

HS: *Shabbat* was very nice and beautiful. *Shabbat* start Friday in the afternoon. When the *mikveh* get a sign, a sign-up whistle that the Jewish people have to close the stores, and everybody is closing the stores. And the *Shamas* goes with a wooden hammer knocking on the doors, and we was closing. And you see it everything is slowing down, and people start to go to the *mikveh* with the clothing to wash themselves. Fathers and children and going out back from the *mikveh*, they change their clothes. Everybody was going in their, in these, such special *Yibitis* [phonetic] they was calling. How was that called, made from velvet.

HR: Special clothes.

HS: Special clothes from velvet. And everybody nice, washed clean, was going home. And later we start with the candles. You see the candles in every house and every window. And you start to see this, feel the smell from the gefilte fish between the whole

thing, and we know that *Shabbos* is coming. In the afternoon the women was preparing the *cholent* and the cakes. This was all baked, made at home, and taken to the bakery. This was baked in the baker's home. And *Shabbos* it was picked up the *cholent* back hot, because you couldn't make fire on *Shabbos*. Only a *Shabbos goy* or a *goy* from the school was coming making the fire. If no, is no fire in the houses. And I would say this is the, this was by every Jew, not talking about he is religious or not religious. This was our traditional way of handling *Shabbos*. We get up *Shabbos* in the morning. The father with the boys, with the children, went to the synagogue. The children was holding the *tallis* in the--I was holding the *tallis*. And after coming back from the synagogue, we eat a meal and the father was always listening what the children learned in *cheder*, the *sedra*³ from in the week. And later they was learning a little Torah in the house. And it was coming guests. And this was the *Shabbos*. In the afternoon *Shabbos* we was making *Shalashides*⁴. And when we was already looking around, otherwise the first stars in the sky we could make fire. We could light in this.

HR: [unclear].

HS: Yes. This was in the beginning. Now later when we start, I start to be older, I remember I was going with my father, with my mother, to the park, because Kalisz have a very famous park made from a very old forest. These are remnants from a old forest. And in that park was a River Prosna. Now Kalisz is surrounded by a river, and they call this Polish Venicia, because then you cross from one street to other you have to cross a bridge. So the river was going around in serpentines in the city. And this park was around that River Prosna. So I remember Saturday it was a nice day. We was always going with the father, with the mother, nice clothed. We have to go to the park. Later when I was a little older I didn't like so much to go with the father. I want to run around by myself. My father was a very big disciplinarian. We have to do exactly what he like and how he liked. And I can assure you that we are doing everything what he liked. We had a very big family what was always Saturdays they was coming to guests to us, or we was coming to them. And I don't know how we was communicating because was no telephone in that time. Now we know already that this week one would come to our house and next week the other would go to the other house. And this was our life.

HR: Do you remember your grandparents?

HS: I remember only mine mother, mine grandmother from the father's side, and grandmother from the mother's side. One my grandfather from the father's side what was killed by the Polaks. He had ground like a farmer, and something happened. It's not unusual in Poland life. They getting drunk and they kill him. Yeah, I remember my mother's mother what was lately living with us, because her son went away to Brazil and she was living with us. She was a typical Jewish grandmother, very skinny, very lively,

³Portion of the Torah read each week.

⁴3rd meal of the Sabbath day.

working day and night just to do, to pleasure for us. She was a beautiful cook, and we was fortunate when she was cooking for every child a different meal what the child liked. I remember she was going special to a different pump, about half a city, to bring water what is good for drinking. She was going to a special store across the city, they're selling better flour and cheaper flour. This was my grandmother, and she was still alive when the Germans come. And when we have to run away she was very sick. We couldn't take her with us. And then they, later I arranged, I come back to save her, she was already taken away by the Germans and destroyed in the first destroying camp what was made in Poland, near Poznan. This is Chelmino. Now, to say, I remember when I was started to go to *Cheder*. My grandmother on my father's side took me to the *Cheder*. I was a small child. I was very afraid, and I was crying. And she had all kind of candies in knots and she was putting on mine head. And everybody around was clapping the hands and singing that a new Jew is growing. And I was started to be a little more happy and I remember I stopped to crying. The rabbi was Rabbi Hanoach, Rabbi Hayner. He was a very good rabbi. In mine eyes he was good because he always was giving me candies.

HR: How old were you, do you think?

HS: I was three years when I start to go to *Cheder*.

HR: And you remember this?

HS: I remember this very clearly, because I remember how was my grandmother was carrying me over there, and they put me near the *Sefer Torah*, and they put the candies and the nuts on my head. When I finished *Cheder*, when I was six years old, my father engage me to go to a Jewish school. [tape off then on]

HR: Now, you were talking about the *Cheder*.

HS: Yeah. When I finish that *Cheder*...

HR: How long did you go to this?

HS: I was going when I was, until six years old. I remember I already know *Chumash* and *Toysafos*. And I start to learn Russian. Now *Gemora* I didn't, learned already, because my father was very active in the Jewish *Poalei Zion*. And there was a Jewish *Borochovschule*, named from Ber Borochov.⁵ This is a Jewish *tereticka* [theoretician] from Russia, what was, his theory was Jewish Hebrew Socialism. This means to create a working class in Palestine and to go to build Palestine with the Jewish hand. And the *Poalei Zion* organization was very active in our town. And I remember my father was very, very active. I remember always guests was coming from Warsaw, either one was a guest from Palestine at that time was calling Zerubavel⁶, a very famous person with a big beard. I was a small child. And I was very proud that I could see him. In mine eyes he was looking like Theodor Herzl. Why he was so remembering for me? That so

⁵Borochov, Ber: (1881-1917) Socialist Zionist leader and theoretician.

⁶Zerubavel, Jacob: (1886-1967) Leader of *Poalei Zion* organization.

many all kinds of famous people was coming to our apartment, because Zerubavel was by us. I'm telling this to give a-

Tape one, side two:

HS: It's working now? And my father, how I say, was very active in that Jewish, in that *Poalei Zion*, in the *Arbayter Heim*. In that time they was organizing that school what I mentioned before, Ber Borochoy School. And my father decided to send me and my sister to the school, to the Borochoy School, that we should get Jewish education. Not only a religious education what we have in the *cheder*, but that we should get Jewish education and we should learn Hebrew. This was a very original school, a small school, only supported by the people what send the children.

HR: All Jews?

HS: All Jews.

HR: Jews.

HS: I'm talking only about Jews. This school wasn't either supported not by the city and not by the *Kehillah*, not by the *Gemeinde*, only by the people what send their children to the school and by the political organization from the *Poalei Zion*. I remember clearly that sometime there was shortages in the school. They didn't have coal to heat the ovens because they didn't have money. And they're collecting money by the members that we should continue, that we should be able to go to school. I was going, I start to go over there in kindergarten, because I was six years old. And I remember our teacher was a lady from Vilna. We had neighbors Lichtenstein. And she, in the beginning she show us all kinds of pictures from Palestine and from *kibbutzim*. And they show us how grows oranges. And this was so exotic in mine eyes, so different that we was exposed in our town and in Poland that I was feeling then that I am a different world, not understanding Hebrew. She was singing the songs, teaching us the all kind of Hebrew songs. And it was such a different sound for my ears that I remember this until now and I am already in the sixties. This, the teachers, how I understand, they was schooled in a Jewish *Seminarium* in Vilna. The Vilna *Seminarium* was preparing special teachers for all schools in all Poland. This was the only *Seminarium* for Jewish teachers what have the official legality with the Polish government. Later I start to go in the first grade, in the second grade, in the third grade. And they was, our teacher was different teachers; every year the teachers was changing. They was going, they finish one year going from us to Lodz and from Lodz to Warsaw, and we was getting different teachers. The second teachers was a teacher and her name was Shmielevska. She was from Warsaw. She was a little a hunchback, a very sweet and a very dear woman. And she was such a, and she teach us so much love about Israel, about Palestine, that knowing that country I started to love that country. I remember there was a picture in the movies, they show a, they took our children to that movie, and it was *Viosna, Viosna*, [phonetic] *Palestine* is [unclear], *Spring in Israel, Spring in Palestine*. And we saw how the oranges are growing and how the cactuses and everything. And this was developing to me a big love for Palestine and for Jewish people. I went to the school only to the third grade, because the school couldn't

financially exist. And under pressure from the Polish government, I remember they was sending always inspectors and always complaining that the school is not good in this way and the other way, until they finally, they succeed and they closed the school. So I finished mine Jewish, Hebrew education only three classes. After this I was, I went to Polish public school. And in that time opened for me entire different new world. Until the third grade I was in strict Jewish environment, and my life was 100 percent Jewish. I was not exposed to no Polaks, and to nothing Polish. I know only the Polish beating up Jews and the Polish doing this and the Polish doing that. No, we was inside in our Jewish world. We know that we have to run away from *Shigutzim*, [non-Jews] run away from the policemen, run away from Gentiles. We know only that we should be in our own environment. When they closed up that school and I was forced to go to a Polish public school, it's clear I didn't have the Polish preparation. We was learning Polish in that Ber Borochoy School, now very nominal, very little. And I remember I was very backward in Polish. And when they make me a test I remember how they was laughing from me, laughing that the Jews don't speak Polish. And they are laughing from my accent. And they was laughing from mine orthography. And they was saying, I remember how they was saying that I am a stupid Jew. [tape off then on] This was my first experience with, how to say, with the outside Gentile Polish world.

HR: And with antisemitism? Your first experience with it.

HS: And I remember when I come back to home how my--I saw the look from my father and mother how they was heart broken that I didn't make good in that test. And it was, I promised myself that I will in the future try to do very good, because I was very concerned, I was, I loved very much mine father and mother, and the look in their eyes was very much disturbing for me. And I remember how my mother, she was very progressive in her age. I will give you example. She know to write and to read Polish, Russian, German. And we have always plenty books in our house. And this was, at that time, was very remarkable that a woman was so, basically in that time a Jewish woman was only involved with her home. They wasn't involved with the outside. My mother, should rest in peace, was a very modern woman, and her point of view was very progressive and very modern. And her way of doing was an example for me. And I was very heart broken that I didn't satisfy, that I couldn't do that she should be proud of me. And I promised myself that I will do better.

I went to a school, the name was Mikolaj Rej. This is a man, Mikolaj Rej was the first Polish writer what created Polish language, the literal language. Until that time was, in Poland was talking in Polish and written in Latin and other languages. He was, Mikolaj Rej was the first man what create the Polish orthography, the Polish. And this was a school what was concentrated all minorities in our town. In our town was Russian minorities, German minorities, and Jewish minorities. So they make a special school where the children from the minorities was going. I remember not far from our house where we was living, on the *Yitsalah Uiltsah*, [phonetic] was a Russian, a Pravoslavlic

church. And was a German *Kirche*. And the all children from the people what was living around was going in that school. And the all children from the people around was very antisemitic and we was in constant fight. There was not a day when they didn't attack us, there not a day when they didn't beat us up.

HR: The Russians and the German children?

HS: The Russian, and the Germans, and the Polaks. So, in that Mikolaj Rej school was on the other side of the town. I have to walk every day maybe a five miles from mine home to the school. And the school was built in a factory, in a abandoned factory. Poland in my time was a very backward country. And they haven't enough schools. They haven't enough nothing. So they make schools, they haven't the schools special built for schools. They just took buildings and accommodated for schools. Our school was made in a building what was before a textile factory. And that it was the shortage of schools was so high that we was learning in three shifts. One week I was going in the morning. One week I was going at 12:00. One week I was going 5:00 at night. And not take in account snow, rain, snow, rain, winter, summer, ice. Every day we was going to school.

HR: When you went at 5:00 you came home when?

HS: Then we was going home very late. And sometime my mother or my father was come with me. I have to cross the park how I say in the beginning. It was a very big park. I have to cross that park. And at night was very, very wild. And we have to...

HR: Did you experience any antisemitic things from, of other kids beating you up, that sort of thing?

HS: Yes, yeah. We, going in the school, I'll come to this. Antisemitic, our relations, how I say to the Gentile world, was very hostile. The *shaygetz*, you know, it's the Jewish, the *shaygetz* means the young Gentile boy, or the *shiksa*, the young Gentile girl, was our natural enemy. And very, very seldom this was the exclusion of the rule. Beating, getting beated up was a normal thing like eating bread. Being spitted on, being hit, and being cursed was such a normal thing like in daylight is light and night is night. This was accepted and they was beating up. If we beated back, it was sometime, we was beated up so, I remember I went to school--I went to school through the park, and four boys was waiting for me and with a stone they split my head. [unclear]. They took a big stone without just, without talking to me they hit me and I fall to the ground full blooded. And they took me to the Jewish hospital and they bandage me. I wasn't going two weeks to school. And after two weeks I went to school. And the teacher asked me, "Why didn't you show up to school?" I say, "The boys, a boy throw a stone in my head." She asked me why. I told her, "Because I am Jewish." And she didn't answer nothing. And this was accepted like a normal thing. She didn't volunteer she is sorry or not sorry or nothing. This was accepted because I'm Jewish. I sit down on my bench and this was it. The same on the when we finish the lessons. How they call this in between?

HR: The end of the term?

HS: No, in between...

HR: In between semesters?

HS: In, when we go out in the back yard to play between the lessons.

HR: Oh, recess.

HS: In the recess. Constantly was only beatings up, or other things. And the official people, the *Wózny*, that means the man, the janitor of the school, they didn't pay attention. They look away when we was beaten up. In that school we was going only a few children--three, four or five children. And it was no way to do something. Now this was accepted. This was a part of living. And there was active teachers, active antisemites, *Pankornada*. [phonetic] There was a teacher of *robotorenschen*, homework and gymnastic. He was a official antisemite. He could, in the lessons, say that the Jew *parcha* Jew, you know, *parcha*, [mangy: Polish] this means when your head is not clean, Jew go to Palestine, and so forth. And this was a normal thing. And I have admit there was a teacher, he was a Socialist. He was belonging to the Polish Socialistic Party. He was a protector of Jews. And there was a constant antagonism. You can see that constant fight between them--not a physical fight. He tried to protect us, and the other tried to intimidate us. And they, when he that Tom Kowalski, what was that the Jew lover, how they call him in the school, he was singing for us Jewish songs either. When we were so very down, he was singing, we was in the school, in our class, we was four Jewish children--two boys and two girls. And there was a other group of teachers, patriotic Polaks, what they say everything what is Poland is great. They didn't comment, they wasn't not anti-Jews and they was not pro-Jewish. They was just pro-Polaks. And I remember, I was a very big, I start to read books. I start to love to read books. And I was reading books, plenty about the Russian occupation of Poland. And there was a Pani Shikolska, a old Polish woman, she was teaching us history and geography. She was sent away by the Russians in '95 [1895] to Siberia. And she asked me about, when I was reading a Polish book about Siberia, and she told about the Polish revolt against the Russians, and how it was a Jewish *polkownik*, a Jewish man what was with the Polish soldiers fighting against the Russians. His name was Berek Yesolevich. [phonetic] And I, and it was making a special battalion of Jewish soldiers under the name of Berek Yesolevich. And I brought this up. Well he was writing every month one work in Polish. And she brought, after that came out, what I brought it up, and show this what a sign of the Polish patriotic that I am a Jew, now I am very patriotic for Poland. This was Pani Shikolska.

And we was going only five days to school because Saturday, like Jewish boys we was official excluded by a law we shouldn't go, we was excluded to go Saturday to Polish school. Special my father was a kosher butcher, and we demand a exclusion. Now I have to go to get a Jewish religion lessons to a Jewish school. There was a special public school only for Jewish children. The name of Eliza Orzeszkowa. Eliza

Orzeszkowa was a Polish writer what was in the history of Poland writing positive about Jews, about the Jewish positive contribution to building of Poland, of Jewish how they're good tailors and how they're good shoemakers and how they built in Lodz the big textile factory. And she was a very big Polish writer, Eliza Orzeszkowa, and very positive for Jews. In her name they built our, a school in Kalisz, a public school. And there was only going Jewish children. To that school I have to be, Jewish children have to go once a week to get lessons in Jewish history. They call it lesson of religion. This was a part of our education. And what I was learning on Saturday I have to go to a Polish boy and he have to give me what they learned that day. I have to write it over and have it ready for Monday.

How I promise myself that I will see that my parents don't have aggravation from me, I start to learn very good. And with the time I start to be the best student in our class. And later I was the best student in our school. And I saw when they was taking, every month was a, for parents, how they call it, a parents' day.

HR: Mmm hmm, that's it.

HS: A parents' day. And my mother--mostly my mother was going because my father was working too much, always was busy--and my mother was going. And I remember when she was coming home, and her face was shining, that I make so good. Because I was believing that I am in heaven. And later, being the best student, I was invited to the Polish *Starosta* [phonetic]. *Starosta* is like governor. And I was getting a diploma. This diploma, I went with my father. And he put on special clothing, I remember, to go to that *Starosta*, because this was a, something unusual that a Jewish boy is invited. He put on such a special black hat--they call it a *cylinder*--and a special clothing--they call it a *smoking*--with a patterned *lakierki*. And he went with me. And I was in the front line with other children, other these. And I saw that my father is very proud of me. And this was mine all, you know, this was mine biggest accomplishment to give him that pleasure from--through learning good for them. Because they was always worrying and always are involved that the children grow up good, that the children learn, that the children be happy, that the children were healthy. This was ninety-percent of their life. And the children, in the opposite, with the other way, tried to do everything what is possible to make the life in the parents more happy and more livable. Because the life in the parents in that time was very, very, very hard. To making a physical living was very hard. Earning the money was very hard. And to live in that society, to be under constant pressure, they have to have that part of pleasure from their children. And most children, analyzing now what's going on in the world, analyzing this, most children was responding this way. They felt a responsibility to give a little happiness to their parents. And you very seldom hear things that children was doing what was not good for their parents, was not good for the community. It's clear we didn't hear either about crimes, about these, about the smoking, a child, or doing something, or they think this was so unthinkable like the world should come apart.

And the end of, when I finish the school, the final from this was that my parents was invited from the priest from the school. The priest from the school was the *skarbnik*, [treasurer: Polish] how is a *skarbnik*? The money man from the school. He was giving out stipendiums. And I was chosen to get a government stipendium that I should continue to go to school. This was a unheardable thing in that school, that a Jewish boy should get from them, from that school of minorities, that I should be, and I should get a stipendium. I remember it was a whole celebration by us, in our, by our family. Thinking about this and talking about this, and talking to our friends and talking to our relatives, this was a whole extraordinary situation, that the priest is inviting by a letter the parents to come the future for the children.

I had the principal from the school, Ham Roshkovski [phonetic], he was a very big patriot of Poland. And he was insisting in us a very big part of pride in history, pride and love to Poland. And I have to admit, one time I was a very big lover of Poland, of Polish history. Even when we were suffering so much, he tried to explain me, he took me once to a exhibition from a miniatures I forgot that, a Jewish painter was painting miniatures Arthur Rosh [phonetic]. And in the museum from Kalisz. And he explain us in these miniatures the [unclear] from that Jewish emancipation. He explain us how the Jewish people were suffering in the beginning in Poland, and how with the process of emancipation from that Poland will be more educated. The hate against the Jews will go away. And I remember he was a big patriot. I loved that per-, I loved him very much. And he was very positive to Jews too, what was a very seldom expression. Later I meet that man, after the German occupation, when he come back to Kalisz because of course everybody was running away, he come back. I meet him on the street. He was walking without shoes, without clothing. He just come back from the running away. And I went to him. I say, "Paniez Roshkovski, *herem*? [phonetic] Mr. Roshkovski, where is Poland? What happened with Poland?" And he start to cry like a small child. [tape off then on] Poland is a very unhappy country. And the Jewish people are the unhappiest people in that country. Because Poland, when was, how I say before, it was divided 100 years ago between bigger countries like Russia, Germany, and Austria, after gaining the independence in 1918, right away they start on the way to mistreat the Jews. Even when the Jews was in the Polish Army they didn't believe that the Jews are loyal to Poland. They was believing that the Jews are more loyal to the Russians because the Russians in that time, after the revolution, was attacking Poland. And they was near Warsaw. And, they called it from the Polish Army, "the miracle by the Vistula." When the Polish Army fight back the Russian Army, the Russian revolutionary Army what was under the leadership from Trotsky, and they went back until to Kiev. In that time already, the Polish, the Jewish soldier what was in the Polish Army was mistreated like a spy and was put in a special concentration camp after--Neabolna. And the all divisions, especially from General Holland, what was in the western part from Poznan, was strictly antisemitic. And the Polish, and the Jewish people didn't gain nothing from the

independence of Poland. And before they was together with the, Poland was a part from the Russian imperium, the Jewish people had a more easier life with the Russian people because the antisemitism, and the *chornayah sotnia* [phonetic] what was organized from the reactionary part from the Russian leadership and the Russian government wasn't a strict expression of the Russian people. Was just organized from their heads. And when Poland took back, when Poland get back the independence, Poland was cut off from the natural market what was Russia. Basically whole Poland was working only for the Russian market what was an immense market including European Russia, and including Asiatic Russia. So like the cities of Lodz, even what was a highly industrial textile city, was working only for the Russian. And the other industrial part of Poland what was working for the Russian market, with one shot was cut off from that market. And at that time start to be economically very bad in Poland.

In the beginning Poland should be a democratic country. The Polish constitution what was in 1921, and with the first Polish president Paderewski, should be a democratic president, a democratic country. And if you go back through the history of Poland, you have--a, he was doing plenty for the democracy for Poland, and for the democracy in the world in there. Although, taking away the part, the Jewish problem, Poland was sending our best souls either to America, like Tadeusz Kościuszko, like Polasky. Even they was heroes in the revolutionary war in America. The same Poland was sending in the time from the Renaissance, in the time from the fight for freedom and democracy and [unclear] orders. So, Poland have a, was a part of a renewal of the Renaissance from Europe. And Polish people and Jewish people was believing that Poland will be a normal country. And after this-

Tape two, side one:

HS: I remember how the situation was getting worse and worse in Poland. And Poland was on the way of being a fascistic country. I remember I was being a child. I was, I saw from the, in the windows from our apartment the fights on the street in 1926 when was the, how they call it, the revolt. The May revolt. The *Tchevid Majowej*, when Marshall Pilsudski took over the power and throw away the constitution in 1921 and make more of a fascistic power. And how in that time our situation start to change. In 1929 when start the big crisis, economical crisis in America, that crisis went over to Europe and went over to Poland. And what, harder is for us to be, to live in Poland, that harder it was to be the life of the Jews in Poland. Because the Polish government, the Polish ruling class want to put away the old economical worries, the old economical troubles from the old population that being able to give them work and bread and other things, showing that this is the fault from the Jews, that the Jews take away the bread from them, the Polish worker. That the Jews is the enemy from Poland, the Jews is that and the Jews is this. And in that time, with the death of Marshall Pilsudski, was coming to the ruling part the Polish colonels with their leader, Richsmigali [phonetic] also in government. The situation of the Jews started being intolerable, especially in the western part of Poland. And it's amazing. The organized antisemitism was coming from the west. It was coming from Germany, from the progressive part from Europe. [tape off then on] And it's characteristic that the eastern part of Poland wasn't so exposed to a organized antisemitism. The Polish farmer or the Polish average person in the eastern part of Poland was less antisemitic than in our western part. And we was very aware of this. And our, all our Jewish organizations was very much involved in preparing themselves in fighting against the antisemitism. Why I am bringing this out? I want to come to the situation that it was not our way of living for the Jewish youth in Poland. After you finish school, even when you was still in school, you could get a stipend to go to *Gymnasium* or to high school. You have no prospective to finish the school. You have no, and after you finish, you have your *Matura*, how they call it, when you make the test that you are already a, finished *Gymnasium*, ready to go to a university, was no way what you will do with your future. And Jewish, and the people what was a little richer, they send their children to study in France, to Switzerland [unclear] send them off.

So, the situation for the Jewish youth was very explosive. And it's amazing, together with this the awareness of being Jewish was more expressed by the people. Not saying that we was going around like martyrs, like unhappy people. We was very aware that we are Jewish and we were proud of being Jews. We didn't want to be Poles. We feel that we are much more moral height. And we was never, I never remember a time that I would deny my Jewishness. I want to give you a small example. Being in the school, one from the best students in the school, I was elected to go with our school flag to a army holiday. The army in Poland have a special, is a special symbol. The army is

Poland, and the Polish person is very proud of the army. So when it comes such a holiday and a holiday from every regiment, every school announce that the, with the flags three people. I remember I was one from the three people with our flag, and they made a celebration in a big field where there are the Kazars [phonetic] and the, between the, from the soldiers. And over there they make a, they was praying and on this field they make a altar, a church altar. And it was maybe 10,000 people. And everybody kneel down. And I felt it's not right that I should go on my knees because I am a Jew. And I was standing alone, a person, a boy 13, 14 years old, on that amazing field with so many soldiers and horses, standing alone to make a, it was an *shapolah* [phonetic], how you say in Poland, the field prayed. And I was standing. I remember after this the boys what was with me with that stupid, that flag, they was very mad at me. And when we come to the school was a whole discussion. And I remember that mine, the principal in the school, Pavroshkovski, explained to them why I didn't kneel down, that it's not to be ashamed to be a Jew. And I still didn't want to kneel down.

To, coming back to that Jewish problem, so I want to say that was not a way for us to study further. How I say, I have to be all rich. You have to be able to go to a other countries to continue your education. I intend to be a, I remember how my father was very concerned what they will do with me. I didn't want to get more education. I had to get a profession. So they decide to give me to, not a shoemaker, to a profession what makes the upper part in shoes. I and this was involved too with a whole regiment because Poland had a whole status for the middle age that every profession have its own...

HR: Guilds.

HS: Guilds. And we have to go through a whole procedure, in two years learn, in three years you studied and going to the schools. And in this was too antisemitism. There was Jewish guilds, and there was Polish guilds. The Jewish guilds, the Jews was not accepted in the Polish guilds. So, by Polish law, by the law of [unclear], that a boy goes to school and signs a contract with that Master. The Master have to have a diploma, and I have to be sent to evening school three times a week. In that evening school already the antisemitism was so high at that time. This was already in the late '30s. They was forcing us to sit on the left side. They make already in the school a ghetto. The Jewish boys would sit on the left side, and the whole class should sit normal. We was the four boys in that class. I was the one what decided I will not sit on the left side. I was standing on my lessons. I was standing in the class and not sitting down. And I remember the professor was coming out to give us the lessons. He saw that I am standing and he didn't pay attention. And he knows very well why I am protesting. The end was when, in the end from the lessons, the Polish boys were always following up on us, beating us up. This was our experience every day and every night. And still we didn't want to sit and to be on the left, sitting on the left side of the ghetto.

The fascisation of the Polish government was growing so terrible that they permit already in our town in Kalisz to divide the market--Jewish part on the left part. And I

remember there was a special organization from, the [unclear] and the Polish, and the Polish antisemitic organization, was putting up signs, "Don't Buy By The Jews." And if I, a Polak went into a Polish [means Jewish] store, they put in a sign on his back, a printed sign on his back that that pig is buying from the Jews. It's clear that we was a resistance, yes. We was making [unclear], self-defense organization, what we was patrolling that market in the days of Tuesday to Friday, fighting back the pickets what was not permitting the Polaks to go into the Jewish part. And I have to admit, that was too a part from the Polish working class, the Polish Socialistic Party, was with the Jews fighting together every Friday and every Tuesday when was the market day, and fighting back at the [unclear].

HR: You're saying the Socialists fought with the Jews?

HS: Polish Socialists, yes. And it was a movement between the Polish youth, between the Socialist youth, to be sympathetic to the Jewish case. And the Polish Socialistic Party was coming out in their newspaper, *The Robovnik*, [phonetic] means *The Working Class*, fighting against the fascistization of the country and the organized antisemitisms of the country. Because what I am saying, what happened to us on the market wasn't only expression for the Jew of antisemitisms. The Polish government was coming out with a special line, "You shouldn't hit a Jew, but you should fight him economically." This means, in Polish they say, "[Polish phrase]." This means that you can make a boycott not to buy by the Jews. So I want to bring this out to show in what terrible situation we was before the war in Poland, not taking in account the German danger what was coming out. Because since [unclear], Hitler was coming to power, the German danger was start to be very actual in Poland, especially in the western part by us, in the Poznan *Prowincja* [Province]. Because we had whole towns, we had whole villages what was populated by the ethnic Germans. And every Sunday they was going with their flags, the *Hackenkreuz* [Swastika] flags, and the uniforms from the Storm Troopers. And it was a normal occurrence after such a pro-German demonstration was right away a anti-Jewish action. They was fighting back, hitting the Jews.

HR: Mr. Skorr, do you remember times when people were actually killed, the Jews?

HS: Yes. I remember in our town, it was a fact that Jewish people was just killed in the street for being a Jew. I even, I remember mine--a friend, I forget his name. He was too in the Polish, he was too in the youth of the *Poalei Zion*. He was a member in the youth *Poalei Zion*. He was living off Deginska [phonetic] Street. So, a boy come in with a knife and just kill him on the street. We made him a very big funeral what was a political demonstration. Now they not to care even they didn't arrest him [unclear], and it was--I remember the official, when there started to be official pogroms. It was a pogrom in Pszcyna, when a Jewish boy hit back a Polak and injured him. And you remember in 1936, '37 was a bloody official pogrom in Pszcyna what is not far from Oswiecim, what was later made to come to Auschwitz.

The same way I no want that you should have the impression that we was going around only like martyrs, suffering people. We was in that whole terrible time, we was happy people. We had all our own world. We accept that situation that we live in a very hostile country, a very hostile people. No, we have our own inner world. And we was very healthy, mentally by us. We was healthy and happy. We'd celebrate our holidays. We'd celebrate our national holidays, our religious holidays. We was going to Jewish theaters. We was going to concerts. I remember every Jewish organization had their dramatic clubs. That means they was playing all kind of Jewish shows. And all, everything on a high literal level, because the Jewish literature, we was very well educated and very literate in Jewish literature, in Sholom Aleichem, in Peretz, in Mendele. And the all modern writers was our daily bread. We was living with their life and gaining the strength from their writing.

HR: But Mr. Skorr, at that time no one was anticipating the catastrophe that was coming in the future. No one had that kind of prophetic feeling.

HS: We had the feeling although, we had the feeling that something terrible will come. But we didn't have the feeling that will come a such a terrible thing that annihilation of a nation. We had the feeling because we was very political active. We was very political watching the European theater. We saw what was going on in Abyssinia. We saw what's going on in Spain. It was the *Buergerkrieg*, how is the name of the *Buergerkrieg*? Like a, the war here between south and north?

HR: Civil.

HS: The Civil War. The Civil War in Spain, when we all was, the whole Jewish youth was just shivering, ready to go to fight by the Spanish people. Well we was automatically inclined with ourself to the left, from the left movement, believing that the way of Socialism was going to bring justice and bring our way that we had, we'd be able to exist. The rea-, this is what I want to bring up. The whole youth was very Socialist, leftly oriented including in this, the Polish government and the Polish was coming out with a slogan that the Jews are Communists. They called it the Jewish *Komunja*. To saying, oh, we are, we sympathizers, we was very aware, we was given out the brown book, about Hitler's behavior in Germany, about the first concentration camps in Germany, about what they're doing to the, not only to Jewish people. Because we have to remember that Hitler start his fight, you know, the Jewish was only the fringes movement. First he destroyed the Socialist and the Communistic movement. And the first people in the concentration camps was the opponents to his political National Social-- National Socialistic Democratic Party what he created. And on the [unclear] of this, reading his book, *Mein Kampf*, what was [unclear] in Poland, we saw black and white what he tried to prepare for us. It was clear for us in 1938 when he throw out, physically he throw out the Polish Jews from Germany. There was Jews in Germany. They're called the *Ostjuden*, [Jews from East] what they never was German citizen. He took them physically to the Polish border in Zbaszyn, and throw them out on the fields.

I remember my father was very active in the community. We was, the German border wasn't far from us. And he was taking, he was organizing a committee to save the Jews. He went to the border with bread and with everything, and bring the Jews to our town. And they was divided to, up into all Jews. They was living with us. I remember by us was living a family, Leipzkind, from Breslau. And they was living in our apartment. Was a mother, a daughter, and a grandmother. And I have the believing that she had a German Gentile husband and he was left in Breslau. And she was only come with her daughter and with her old mother. And the amazing was that they was coming to us and after being there a little time, they was criticizing us, that our level of life was so low, that we wasn't so cultural developed, that we are not, having water in our apartments, not the toilets in, that we are backward people. And I remember that we had constant discussion, especially the daughter had, she have a daughter Elza. She was always just praising Germany this way, and Germany is nice and Germany is clean and Germany is strong. And I'd say, "Are you not ashamed of [unclear]? Take a look what Germany did to you. They throw you out like a Jew." And they was only showing that we are such backward people. In our backwardness, what they were saying, I still saw the whole beauty of our life. We was so dedicated to each other. We was so much in love with our parents. And the parents was so much worrying and caring about their children that we was such a holy person. And our family was the mainstay from our life. And the children, I remember the basic worry from parents was only what will be with the children? How will it be with the children? Why I am saying this? I will give you a example from our life. I decided that I can't get education, that I have no future. Now my parents want to give education to our sister. Our sister was the crown in our family, like you know, we, everybody, the father, the mother and we, the boys, love her very much and she was the top from our family.

HR: She was the oldest?

HS: She was the oldest, and we all was caring and we all was very proud of her. I remember the mother, especially the mother, was very educated minded. She was very well written. I'd say my mother was much ahead of her time. She knew a few languages. And our home was always full with books and full with newspapers. I have to mention newspapers. Now in America a newspaper is you go out and buy a newspaper. In Poland by the Jewish people you no buy a newspaper. Four or five or ten tenants buy together one paper. When you finish the paper, the next tenant reads the paper, and the next tenant reads the paper. So buying a paper wasn't such a simple thing. Buying a paper was a celebration, and it was well readed in our house, and well discussed in our house. And I remember a Saturday or Friday night, what a beautiful table, it would be covered, everything, with a beautiful light. And the light that we saw was holy is in our house. And after this, the father start to read the paper, because it was a special Saturday edition with all interpretation what's happening in Poland and what's happening in Spain, what's happening in Abyssnia, what's happening in Palestine. And even my grandmother

what was 80 years old and she didn't hear well, she was a part of our discussion. And when we children was learning that she didn't hear good, my father was yelling on us not permitting to laugh on the grandmother. And he explained to her the whole everything what's in the paper. And she was so interested to know what's going on, which was amazing that a woman from 80 years old, sick and small. And she was full of life to the end, to a tragic end what I will come later.

What I want to bring out about my sister. They decided she should get education. To get high school education in Poland was more than to get your college education. It was at a very high academic level. She had to join a *Gymnasium*, a girls--this *Gymnasium* was like a Junior College. It was divided for boys and for girls. Well to go in over there was very hard especially for Jewish people. There was a unofficial list how many Jews can go in, without telling black and white. And I remember we was preparing she have to get special preparation in Latin and in other, in geometry that we have this in public school. I remember I was reading with her together *Homer* and her all, from the Greek tragedy, in preparation, and special clothing. And in the end she wasn't accepted. She wasn't accepted, and we had the impression she passed the test. She wasn't accepted because we was Jews, and because my father was a butcher. Maybe if he was a higher educated person maybe she would be accepted. The trauma from not being accepted was very much on my sister. And she joined the Communist Youth, what was the sign was that she, that to fight the Polish fascism. And I remember they was putting out leaflets, illegal. The Polish Communist Party was illegal. And she was in their work was putting out flags on the electric wires, make five minute demonstration in the street, you put out a red flag make such a demonstration, or putting on new flags on this. I remember doing such a job my sister was caught by a Polish and she was arrested. And can you imagine the tragedy in our family? We was a religious people, that having a daughter what was belonging to an illegal party and was arrested? And was sentenced to seven year *dopokrachya*, [phonetic] how do you call it? Where, it's not a prison. This is for children.

HR: Detention center?

HS: No, this is for a...

HR: Correction?

HS: Youth, corrections, yes.

HR: Right.

HS: And this was for us like she would be sentenced to death. I remember the uproar it was in the community with this. And the whole community was helping us to collect money to hire one from the famous lawyers in Poland. I forget his name. And that case went to the Appellation Court, and to the Supreme Court. And she was getting, she wasn't sentenced to that, to prison, only...

HR: Paroled?

HS: Paroled for five years, for ten years.

HR: Probation.

HS: Probation, right. I remember the tragedy. I remember how my parents, my mother, was like crying--I never saw my parents crying--how they was crying. And mine heart was going out, seeing that intolerable situation we are put in, not being able to do this, not being able to exist. I saw we're going in in such a pressure that what will be our future? Because the Polish, the end was we was only working, doing for the Jewish people. A shoemaker was making shoes for the Jews. The baker was baking for the Jewish. Basically we have no strict contact with the Polish people. And it was getting worse and worse, because the Polish situation was worse. The Polish worker had no work. Lodz was without work. The all big towns was without work. And I remember what was going on in the street, demonstrations between the people without work. And our situation was worse, because we had no connection with the outside world. It was let's say Jewish shoemakers what never make a new shoe. He only was fixing old shoes, or have tailors, they wasn't making new clothes. They was only fixing the old clothes. And not meaning that it wasn't, with that whole thing what I'm saying, in our Jewish world we wasn't a monolith world. Was rich people, was poor people. It was a struggle between the rich and I remember there was very rich Jewish landlords what every Friday night they throw out Jewish tenants on the street for not paying the rent, and collecting the money by other Jewish people to collect their rent for them that they should move back to the apartment. I remember Jewish people that was very rich. They was wholesalers, or suppliers for the army, and there was people what was dying from hunger.

HR: So, Mr. Skorr, you're not suggesting that Jews were any different than any other people.

HS: No, right. Wasn't different. No, we was for the outside world, for the Polish world we was Jews. Now we are inside in our Jewish world we have all our Jewish problems. We have rich people, we have poor people.

HR: But even in the atmosphere of impending danger, there was no pulling together of the Jewish community so that people would still throw people out even though they didn't have...

HS: Yes, no, correct. Was not pulling together. I believe there is not pulling together in the world. I believe with the atom bomb, molecularly, there is always constant fight between the atom too. Everything constant movement. No, there was a very big difference. I remember Itzik Adder, a person what they, on the Jewish street, this Zolta Gasse, this Jewish street he own maybe twenty or thirty buildings. And every day you could see on the street people with the *shaynigis* [phonetic]. You know what *shaynigis*? Like here we call them mattresses. They filled up with straw, and they all this, on the street with children, with the water pails. Because we had no water. You have to carry the pail.

Tape two, side two:

HS: The Jewish world wasn't a, you can't take it's like a Jewish people like one part. There was big trouble in the Jewish population. Or we was united against our outside danger.

HR: The community.

HS: The outside danger was so big, because the outside enemy doesn't think that poor Jew or the rich Jew. He wanted to kill all Jews. Now inside we have our troubles, we have our fights and we have our tears and we have our smiles. We have our tax collectors what was so hated by the Jewish population. Let's see...

HR: Jewish taxes?

HS: Tax collectors. They was a, he was employed by the government. I will come to this. No Jewish person was employed by the government. You couldn't be a janitor. You couldn't be a doggie catcher. You couldn't be nothing. A Jewish person couldn't be a part of the establishment. And a person, a Gentile person where he only wore a button with a Polish eagle, was already the representative of the power. And he was already afraid and he was already alert. So what, only to collect the money from the Jews, the Polaks hired Jewish tax collectors. And if a Jew didn't have the money, that Jewish tax collector come to his house and take out his furniture, what kind of furniture he have. They take out everything. And that was a special class of people what was hated by the Jewish population. And such a time was coming, because he was coming with a Polish *policja*, a Polish *policja* means a Polish policeman. And he was doing his dirty work. Because the not liking the Jew like a Polish citizen, the Polish government collect every tax, anything what they can from us. They didn't like us in their schools. Now we have to pay a special tax for building schools. We have to pay for everything, and not having, you know, the benefit. It's clear we was a, we have a Jewish autonomy with our *Kehillah*. We have our form of self-government, how I say in the beginning, with our court, with our rabbinate, with our *din Torahs*, with our school, with everything. But we have to pay money for this stuff. [tape off then on]

And so bringing this out everything, I'm trying to give a picture of our Jewish life, and seeing that our problems was mounting so terribly that we felt it will come to explosion. I privately, how sinister it sounds, I was thinking there will come a war. And I was waiting for a war without possibility of tragedy because I felt something have to come out. All this was a sense of adventure because I was in that age of looking for adventures. I was 16, 17 years old. Now I felt that we can't exist a long time this way in Poland. And still, in that time of cataclysm--we have to see it was a time of upheaval in Europe--the fascism was being very strong. It was already made the Iron Pact between the Soviet Union and Hitler. And Mussolini was already taking Abyssinia. And Franco was already conquering Spain. And was already a time from the *Volksfront* [phonetic] and the left took over in, with Premier Blum in France. And there was upheaval from the

east in Russia where Stalin was making his bloody cleaning. And we felt that we are living on a, it's time for a earthquake. And we felt this. We was very afraid. We was very thinking. And you know, every Jewish person is a philosopher. And it was always, when we will see three, four people. They was standing, and discussing politics.

It's interesting to mention this. We was living our special life in Poland. Saturday was our holiday. Sunday was their holiday. We couldn't work Saturday because our Jewish religion, our Jewish *minhag* doesn't permit us. Not saying that we are religious [unclear] a Jewish person didn't work Saturday. A Jewish person didn't work on the holidays. Not questioning is he religious or not. Only, the Polaks didn't permit us to work Sunday. It was a strict law, enforced with very strict Polish policemen. So what the Jewish people did in that day, Saturday they went to the synagogue. After the synagogue they eat, they went to sleep. In the afternoon they went to the theater or they went to the park. Sunday was a day of politics. The Jewish people was going out on the Jewish street. And the Jewish on the Zlotygaz [phonetic] and the [unclear] on the corner where it was a Jewish delicatessen. And a Jewish *zuckeraria* means a candy, a [unclear] candy store. And you can see a hundred or two hundred people standing, talking politics. And standing with their sticks, it was a law that everybody have a walking stick. The men, they were standing, people, and talking politics. They were standing everywhere. You see six, four, five, ten, fifteen people. And you can go in and hear how they're discussing the Palestine or they're discussing Spain, or they're discussing Ghandi, or they're discussing the [unclear], the question what learned people concentrate on this. And this was amazing, specific Jewish, specific Kalisz, that on a Sunday you would go out on the corner of that street and you talk politics. And if you have to find your father or you have to find your grandfather, you go over there, and you know that you will find him. This was the more, not-so-religious people, because the religious people were sitting in *shteiblach*, *davening* and praying and learning Torah. The little more *Haskalah* [Enlightenment] people, how we say, were standing and discussing.

I want to say something too. We have our own Jewish underworld. I don't know how I express myself. There was a Jewish band from the brave boys, strong arm boys, what they call a *Czarnowreczye*, the black hand, made on the model from the Italian mafia. And it is very unique. They wasn't bad people. In our eyes they was the heroes, the *gibers*. And if you have, if Jewish people have a conflict between them, somebody no want to give money, somebody own this, somebody made not good shoes, somebody take away some money from a girl, they no go to the court. They no go to the rabbinate. They go to the *Czarnowreczye*. They go to Layzer or to the other and say, "Layzer, that man did this and this wrong to me." That *Czarnowreczye*, these strong boys, went to that guy and say, "Listen, you will give the money." And that guy know already he have to give the money or they broken the bones. And this was so in our eyes they was very nice people. In the reality they was hooligans, right? But they did the Jewish function. And if somebody just try to hit a Jew, this was a normal, hitting a Jew was a normal thing, like

you drink a glass of water you know somebody will hit a Jew, somebody will break a window. Or somebody will take a Jew by his beard. Then is more vicious. Or somebody will take off the *sheitel* from a woman throw with this. Let's get these boys, this was a band maybe ten, twelve, the *volyayingen*, how we were saying. Let them see there's something doing. You should see what kind, how, what kind of slaughterhouse they make with them. They take them apart and they kill them. And they was sitting on the bridge and crowing in their court. And Jewish people was coming to them and asking, and getting help from them. In, when a time, there start a time in 1938, in the beginning 1939, when the antisemitism was very organized, the [unclear] was already not only talking, they was fighting us. They was hired like guards. I remember there was a Jewish autobus line, a bus line, which was going through Kalisz through the small towns, to Lodz. Kalisz, Sieradzo, Zdunska Wola, up until at last Lodz. In that time on the highways, the bus was being stopped by the farmer boys, by the hooligans, and the Jews was taken off from the bus and beaten up and roughed. Would you believe what the Jewish autobus line did? They hired the boys from the *Czarnowreczye*, from the black hand, and they was guards on the line. And nobody was, and they was afraid because they had knives, they had guns, and they know how to beat the Polaks. And it's amazing, in our eyes, they was taking, in our eyes they was heroes, Jewish heroes.

HR: They didn't get caught by the police?

HS: The police was afraid of them. The police, if somebody, a Polak, was going and complaining that he was beaten up by Layzer Kaminski, or by a other, they have special names, the Eizner Life [phonetic], we have such [unclear] names, you know, the police would say, "Who told you to start with them? Don't go to them." They know they, they're not, eating potatoes. "They can beat you up." The police was afraid of them.

This was, we had like a, I told you, like a Jewish world. And around them was the Jewish *traygas*. How do you call it, the *traygas*? The Jewish porters. There was a Jewish profession, very nice people, hard working people, even by us. You could be a good Jew. What means a good Jew? Not that you are a Jew. That you are in Jewish way learned. You can be a Jewish porter. You can carry water, and you have the name, you are a good Jew. You can be Itzik Adder and have plenty money, or [unclear] was a millionaire, and he wasn't a good Jew, because he wasn't a Jewish man. I want to bring up, there was a Jewish profession, Jewish *traygas*. They was carrying loaves from street to street, and they were standing on the street and they have their own guild. You can go and take him. You have to take by the line. And they was, they was educating the children in Jewish way. And they was very nice people, but very hard working. If such a Jewish man, such a Jewish porter, get a little richer, he buy a small carriage. He didn't carry on his back. He carried the load on a small carriage, from store to store or furniture in this. This was specific and they had their ropes, their [unclear] the sign of their profession on their [unclear], and they was waiting day and night or snow or rain, standing on the corner of the Bladina [phonetic] Street near the Rotsayger [phonetic] Pharmacy, and waiting for

this. And they was very dear people. And they was, people have, feel respect for them. Not talking that they was porters. And for the *VoiaYingen* they weren't having so much respect. The community didn't have respect for the Jewish mafia. No, they considered their power they can protect them. But the Jewish porters, they was like a, the people respect them. We have two Jewish, is *droshkages*. They was taking load on horses, *droshkages*. This is like, a *droshke*, this is from the Russian, carriages. If he is a more wealthy, he had a carriage. A lot he had a nice carriage, with the rubber wheels, with a leather *Kapote* [long coat] if it's rain. And he was carrying people from the city to the railroad. And how I can see now this is a whole world [unclear]. Later we had the other horses, *risargi* [phonetic]. This was a, he had one horse; the person had one horse. And he was taking a load. The *droshke* was taking only people, and it was everything nice and clean and he have to have a number from the city. Our biggest holiday, our boys is, when they permit us to wash their horses. We was taking the horses in the summer time, and going to the river, and wash the horses and we was believing that we are the kings of the world. We have too a Jewish *expeditsia*, [phonetic] a *expeditsia*. He was carrying a load, heavy load, from factories from us to Lodz. I'm just mixing up things I just want that we shouldn't forget.

In that whole kaleidoscope of situation what I want to bring up, I want to tell you that the Jewish youth was growing up beautiful, clean in their mind, in their thinking, in their behavior. Their whole meaning was only to get a profession, to get education. Not thinking that we are living on a--we are living out our welcome. We wasn't thinking. We know that we live in bad times. You know, in our history there is so much experience. Our fathers and grandfathers was telling us about the *Haidamackers*⁷ to Ukrainians, the *Chmielnickis*, the Polish *chalirikas*, the all kind antisemites was killing us for 100 years. And we always know this is a part of our tradition, is a part of our life. And Jewish blood was always very cheap. It was always flying on the street.

Now we was living with this growing up, and we was growing up very nice, very healthy, with love and respect for people, love and respect for our parents, love and respect for literature. Being so [unclear] by the Polish reality, we turned in. Our literature was the most famous world classic literature. We didn't read cheap. It was, probably wasn't the cheap literature. We was brought up with [unclear]. We was brought up in a Jewish literature, because Poland was just flowering with Jewish poets and with Jewish writers.

And the same thing, our relations to our parents and to growing up, and me being a boy, the relations to girls was so beautiful, so pure, so inspired, that I am now, still now I am already a old man, I'm flowering in my mind the beauty of the moments. Because don't forget please, that in that, all the people was growing up, physical laws exist for

⁷Paramilitary bands that disrupted the social order in Polish Ukraine during the 18th century (*Encyclopedia Judaica*).

people. We are children, later we are already youth. We start to look on girls. Girls start to look on boys. And you know, the changes was so subtle, so nice, that I try to find this now in this world and I can't see even a sign. What was the meaning a boy look on a girl? A boy--a woman, and a girl in our philosophy, was put on such a high pedestal that you was preparing yourself to be ready to that appearance, that you can be ready to go around and to walk and to talk with a girl. And that, you have to be already different clothing. You put already a few pennies to buy a new shirt and to buy new pants and this, because you start to going around with a girl put you already in a different category. We was a bunch of boys going around, maybe ten boys, a group always. And when we start to get the profession, we start to get already to earn some money, so I start to see the signs that people start already, are already to look on girls. If one [unclear] they come Saturday, he's nice clothed. I ask him, "What happened?" Why he's nice and he went to a barber already, the haircut. Because we was going out without hair. We, our, we didn't have hair. We cut our hair with a *machinka*.

HR: All the way down?

HS: Yes.

HR: Oh.

HS: Until six, until, I believe, until 14, 15 years I was always have the haircut like with a machine. Soon you start already have longer hair, and wear longer pants. You start already to be like a grown up. This was already start to be after the *Bar Mitzvah*. In that time, you start to be already a little more serious. You're not horsing around so much. And we used to take a, I say, take a look, my friend, Motek Leder, my best friend, he walks with a girl. I was very shocked.

HR: With long hair already.

HS: Already nice. He was already earning money. He was learning, he was studying by, to be a tailor, by the best tailor. This is a history too. His father, I'm mixing up this.

HR: It's all right.

HS: His father was a old Russian revolutionary in the Jewish party, in the Bund. And he was in Siberia. He was sent by the Czar to Siberia. He come back from Siberia. He was over there ten years. He developed a *gruzlica*.

HR: Tuberculosis.

HS: Tuberculosis. And he died. I remember the funeral was a whole revolutionary funeral. People by the thousands of people they was walking with the red flags. I didn't understand so much the sense. Only now I understand the sense of this. And he wasn't, why I remember this? A Jewish law by a Jewish tradition, you are mourning, you don't cut the nails, you no wash yourself, you no cut the hairs. And he was coming into school. By us in the school they was every day checking if we are clean or we have no lice or the nails are cut or the ears are cut. And he comes without nails, without cut the nails, dirty. And the *hygieniska*, this means a teacher, a hygiene teacher.

They're called a *hygieniska*, ask him, "Motek," his name was Mordechai, "Motek, why are you dirty?" He started to cry. And I explained that his father passed away. And the whole class, I remember, was very quiet. And later our main teacher, what was our principal teacher in our class, Panya Sadova, she was responsible for the class, she had a whole speech how the children that by Jewish law, a time of mourning is that Jewish people no wash themselves. And this was. What I want to bring out, and he was a orphan. So, the *Kahal*, the *Gemeinde*, and his father was a famous political person, this, the *Kahal*, the *Gemeinde*, tried to put him to, give him to a, the best tailor in town, that he can learn over there without paying money. Because usually when you go learn a trade you have to pay to that master 300 *zlotys* then you pay a contract. The *Kehillah* was forcing him that, not forcing, was putting up that one orphan goes to the tailor Toldosky. He was the most famous in the city. And he was working over there, and he was learning over there, and he was making already money. The sign that he was making money, he was changing his clothes, and nice dress, and he start to go out with a girl. With this he was not going all the time, well he wasn't just a good looking, wild boy just running around.

And little by little the group start to be smaller because everybody find a girl. And we started to go out. What means go out? To go to theater, to go to the movies. In a very, in a nice, respectable way. And such a boy was already looked up by other people, because he was already very much respected. What I want to bring out with this? That in living under the [unclear] we was living our normal life with our normal pleasures with our normal things. We was, we love our Saturdays, to make some in the Saturdays we tried to go out of the town. We had to take some sticks and stones that the Gentile boys, we have to fight them off. Because we love to go to the nature. There was a forest, a vineyard, five miles from us. Always Saturday we tried to go over there, five, ten boys together. When we was five, ten boys together the Gentile boys was afraid to attack you. One person was more easy for attack. So we was taking our life and our realities how it is, and coping with this. Now we are coming out...

HR: It's 1939.

HS: And the time wasn't standing. The upheaval was coming near. Hitler was already, it was already after the *putsch*, after killing his own [unclear], the S.A., and start already after the *Kristallnacht*. You probably remember the Crystal Night, when a Polish boy Grynszpan, went in. I believe this was in Paris, and killed a the third secretary from the German Embassy, in protest for sending out his parents, throw them out to Zbaszyn. His parents, the Grynszpan's parents, was Polaks, Polish Jews. His parents was, we took them into our town. It was already the Crystal Night. And we saw already the upheaval is nearing. And what was their action, the Polish government? The Polish government was start to be more fascistic. The Polish government was making too their own concentration camp. Was a concentration camp in Kaitos Bereza [phonetic]. In Kaitos Bereza in the eastern part of, near the Russian border, was, make a Polish concentration camp for

people which are against the regime, in the same model what is the German concentration camp. And the Polish colonels, including their, the state, the Secretary of State like you call it here, the *Ouser* Minister, Beck, Józef Beck, was very close working with the Germans against the Russians. And from them he was getting the ideas, the Polish government was getting the ideas, to demand a part from Czechoslovakia, Zbaszyn, and a part from Litovskaja, near Memel. And the Polish government was so blinded by the German propaganda, seeing that the enemy is Russia, that the enemies are the Jews.

And that time not only the antisemitic line that the people was developing, there was developing a official line, antisemitic line, with antisemitic laws, anti-Jewish laws. What is the law? First of all was the law of *Ugolotualny* [phonetic], that we shouldn't cook even, the way of slaughtering the cows, the Jewish way, they was for a whole year was hold the [unclear] with everything which was [unclear] so important how to kill cows in Poland. They didn't see that the Germans are preparing to destroy Poland. The whole energy and the whole press, and everywhere, you only was hearing how the Jews are killing inhumane the cows. And it was a whole, and come out a law what was permitting only that three or four butchers can kill in the Jewish way the cows once a week in a town. Or they come out with a law how to paint the houses. The, Poland was bending already, and they was worrying how to paint the houses. The meaning was, in the small towns, who have the house? Only the Jewish people. So they was only the whole intention was misleading the Polish people, and showing them the wrong way, bringing out such extraordinary stupid things that the people will no oriented see the danger. They like, their priest Shetsha [phonetic], like the Madame Pristorova. This was a, there was a, in there, like the Congress, in the same. There was Congressmen. And every day they was coming out with all anti-Jewish denunciations and reference, and propaganda. And the official explanation why Jews should be pulled out from the Polish university, and the [unclear] in the Warsaw University and the L'vov University, Krakow University, and Lublin University. Every day they was only killing and harming Jews, cutting them with knives and throwing them out. In the time when they killed the Polish Mr. Pieratski, in Lemberg, they come out with a, this that the Jewish did this because he is an antisemitic against the Jews. And they started to make pogroms against the Jews.

The fascisation of Poland was going on day and night, not seeing the danger, and not willing to see the danger. I believe that the ruling class from Poland was working together with the Germans to prepare the war against Poland, and against Russia. The German fifth column was so developed in Poland, either by the leadership, that this is the reason that the Polish Army wasn't modernized. The Polish Army wasn't mechanized, and the Polish police was only make fascist designs. And the only, in our town, only *Volksdeutschen* could belong to the Polish police.

We will come now to the upheaval when it comes 193-, in the beginning from 1939 when they start, when the west started to give in to Hitler. When Hitler went in to Ruhrgebied [phonetic], when Hitler went in to Austria, when Hitler went into Sargabid

[phonetic], when Hitler went into Sudeten, if you try to remember this, we know that the cataclysm start. Polish people start to talk about the war, only talking in their chauvinistic way, that we will destroy Germany. We will make them the second Grunwald. This was a famous battle in Grunwald, in 1410, when the united armed forces from Poland and Lithuania, under the Polish king Jagiello, destroyed the German Army, the *Krestinostis* [phonetic] (Teutonic Order?), and the Grunwald. And they start to put up signs to the, on the streets, placards, with-

Tape three, side one:

HS: The atmosphere in Poland started to be very tense, and very unruly. The Polish population was talking about war and the Polish government was talking about taking Czechish territory. It was amazing how they tried to link away that problem, that German problem and they tried to camouflage the situation. They tried to put that Poland has to take a part of Czechoslovakia, in the time when Czechoslovakia was in trouble. It means Zaozhe [phonetic], a part of territory by Czechin. And putting out a anti-Czechish hysteria by the Polish people, and I remember it created demonstrations, "We want Zaozhe. We want Zaozhe," what people was yelling. It's clear that the Jewish people was taken away from the whole thing, because I remember already we was like instinctively the Jewish community, the Jewish, everything was like preparing themselves for the inner trouble, what we expect. The tremors were coming. We could feel in our souls what the Polak couldn't feel, because finally the Polak could lose only the government what he didn't like so-and-so, but he could lose his country, he could lose his life. And we know what in time of war what the Germans are, could prepare for us. So the tremor that scariness, was very deep, went in in our hearts. And I remember the constant discussions or in the synagogue, or in the *shtieblach*, or in the organization that I belonged, or in the street everywhere, was talking about the coming danger. And I had a feeling like we was preparing ourselves for that fight. Privately, how I told you before, I was welcoming that storm, because instinctively I felt we have no way to exist. How can this go further? How further? And I was feeling maybe in that exploding storm, something will come out positive, in the same time being afraid--what will happen? You know, I remember like now walking in the park Saturday morning, you know, thinking so and waiting how the storm should come. You know, I was like, I remember I had discussions with my friend. We was young boys. Most was anti-war. I, how stupid I was, I say, "There will come a storm, and maybe the Russians will come in and that means Poland will fall apart, something will come in. There is no way we are existing in a artificial environment what have no way to exist." I remember the strength, the discussions what we had with our, with my friends, and waiting, and thinking a lot of this.

How families was preparing themselves? How people, like what I am talking now, I'm talking now general. How people in their [unclear] homes they was preparing for that trouble. And every felt trouble was coming. And then we felt that the family will be affected. Because everything what we had in Poland what was secure--I would say secure, what was our moral and physical defense--was our family, our invisible world what is created around father and mother and children, in that apartment what we have. And we was, I remember we was afraid what will happen to us, what will happen to the family. And I remember the discussions what my father and my mother had. They remembered the Germans from 1914. In 1914, I will say Kalisz is a border town. The Germans were, this was the first town what the Germans occupied in 1914. And they

destroyed the whole town, not the whole, but the center from the town, just by bombing, shelling, and killing. And they killed maybe 1,000 people and lined them out near the [unclear] house, near the city hall. My mother was in that time in Kalisz, she said. This was only in the beginning, three, four days. Who was killed was killed. Who were hiding in the basements were hid. Later they come out and say the Germans wasn't so bad, she said. The Germans brought kitchens, and they started to give soup and they started to give bread. And they started to make disinfection cameras. You know disinfection? *Endlousens*. They was, they're always crazy about cleanliness. And there, she say they come to every house and take out people for disinfection. *Endlousen* cameras. What was she wanting to bring out? She want to quiet us down. She was a very smart, unusual woman. She wanted to quiet us down, that it's not so terrible. And probably she wanted to give us strength before that horrible things what will come. And so these constant discussions was in every house. And everyone in his own level. The very religious people was afraid how they will conduct their religious life, how they will [unclear] the synagogues. Because we know already from the experience with Germany it was written a brown book, I don't know if it's known about the brown book here in United States. But that brown book was given out, I believe by the League of Nations, condemning the atrocities and what the Germans was doing against their own population, against Jews. And that brown book was very well known by the Jewish people. And everybody was afraid what will be.

And to the end, when Chamberlain was meeting Hitler about safeguarding Europe 1,000 years, about giving him and the *Anschluss* what was with Austria, and by giving him the Sudeten, how they dismembered Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia was very modern with a very strong army. They was ready to fight, and they had a, Czechoslovakia have a defense pact with Russia. They say from France, Czechoslovakia, Russia have a defense pact. If the other aggression will come there, they will fight. How they circulated, and how they avoided, and how they didn't want to let in Russia in that fight, Chamberlain, he got Hitler in his various houses, the devil knows where. And he comes back with this sign, "Thousands Year Peace." And we was [unclear] Chamberlain with his umbrella. It was so much, you know, irony in our Jewish papers, that what he was promising thousands of years of this. And we know that only he's giving in to Hitler till he has the war, until Hitler comes in with this straight demand from Poland, to give back Danzig, and to give back the Pomeranian corridor. Germany by the 1918, when Germany lost the war, Poland was get Danzig, and *Oust* Prussia, with the city Konigsberg was divided from Germany. Poland took that part in between. So East Prussia was divided from Germany. So Hitler come out with the demand. And this they call it the corridor. How is it in German? The corridor?

HR: Mmm hmm.

HS: The corridor, yeah, the corridor. He wants back Danzig, and he wants back the corridor. And the Polish government very, help him out, very nationalistic, very

chauvinistic, very stupid. I will tell you why--because they was believing that they had a pact with France and with Great Britain that if they will go to war, they have to go to the war. And this is what happened. And the demands from Germany that he should give away this and this, the Polish Marshall, [unclear], "I think [unclear] but one buck." This is a historical expression. *Niyeded guzhik* [phonetic]. A *guzhik* means a buck. But I don't know [unclear]. And it was clear at that time that it will be war. And the ultimatum was given and Great Britain was saying to them that it will be war. This was the last day of August, yeah, July, August, that war start [unclear].

How was we behaving to this? The panic start to be very big. And, it was so unreasonable. With one shot come, with one thing come a, believing that courage will be again destroyed. And everybody what could start to take out his household, his things, sending away to other towns. We was, all the clothing and house wares. We was a part from that panic as usual. Every Jew was, the panic is this. I remember we hired a what, such a carriage with the horses. We put out the clothing, and I went with my uncle to a small town. They call it Lask, near Lodz. What was the reason? How was the reason? I don't understand, because not, they said Kalisz will be destroyed like 1914. You have to take away the all stuff.

HR: Do you mean to say that almost every Jew went? Or a percentage?

HS: Yeah, every Jew start to send out his clothing.

HR: Oh, just to send away.

HS: We lived in such a panic already. And you could see, we had a uncle what had a horse and he was dealing with the farmers and this. So, we hired him. We put in every, our clothing, and his clothing, and other family clothing. And I went with him with this horse about 200 miles near Lodz. Over there we had a far relative. We put everything in a basement, and we come back. In that time start already the mobilization. The city started to be entire change. I have to tell you, we didn't see in our town, until the war, we didn't have no cars. We didn't have mechanical transportation. Everything was done by horses or by legs. Until the Germans took me and the Gestapo took me in a truck, I never was on a car until 1939.

So, in that time, the first time I saw army trucks, Polish Army trucks, with soldiers starting to go around in the city and mobilizing the people in our own--the friends what was in the age of mobilization. They put on shoes and this, and they start to prepare the certainty to be in the army. I was walking in the park and I saw the young boys in the army going in beautiful new clothing, very strong, and very--and I was believing, "Maybe we will beat the Germans. Maybe it's true that we will beat the Germans." Because it was a very, in that time they toned down the antisemitism. You didn't feel that, you know, that concrete danger maybe make it quieter. You couldn't see such a expression of antisemitism. And we start, come out a mobilization. We have to go to dig trenches. So, you could see boys from the *yeshivahs* with their rabbis. You could see children from the schools. You could see political organizations with their flags--

Po'alei Zion and Bund. You could see our rabbis, Meyer Lewis with the *shtrahmel*,⁸ with one of those things, going with the shovels. Where they took so many shovels in one shot I did never know. You could see thousands of people streaming out on the fields, and under the leadership from the [unclear], this means from the soldiers, and they show you how to dig. And I'll tell you a secret: no Jewish person had once a shovel in their hand. We didn't know how to dig, because we was never exposed to this kind of activity, this kind of work. And we never, I never had a shovel in my hand. And so most of people. It's true yes that other people, other Jewish persons, like my father and other people, they was physical, always physical working, they know how to handle this. Now they, how the *yeshivah bokerim* and how the rabbis was doing this was, you know, was only--and the Polish soldiers started to laugh. I remember I was, I started to be very mad, because I was very sensitive on my Jewishness. I was very sensitive on my Jewish honor. And I start to work so hard I start to get...

HR: Blisters?

HS: Blisters. And I will tell you, the blisters I had until I was in Russia, deep in the forest, still the blisters was on my hands, so many months later. I had blisters on all my fingers, when we dig holes, and what the rabbis and the *yeshivah bokerim* was nothing done, because they didn't know what to do. They didn't know how to do it. You have to know how to do this kind of work. But I just want to give you the atmosphere. This was only a political demonstration that we are ready, together with the Polish population, to fight for Polish independence. And it started to come out all kind of signs; it still wasn't war. This was a few days before. It was general mobilization. And the Polish government come out with all kinds of plans and instructions, how to close the windows, and how to make the paper, and how to do that and how to do this and how to do all kind of things. How to take apart the--near the houses, how do they call this? The [unclear].

HR: The...

HS: The fences.

HR: Fences.

HS: To eliminate danger of fire. With all kinds such, you know, such kind of stupidities. And how to use if they will throw gas and you haven't got a gas mask. You take a towel over your nose, you know, with all kind of things. And we start to be a little more serious, think about it like that. They arrested these kind of people that they was spies for the Germans. And they make a court trial and they was executed. I was living, lately we was not living in the Jewish neighborhood. We was living on a Ulitsa Peratskago [phonetic]. And this part was the German people with their [unclear], where the *Kirche* was concentrated. And they, and over there was a factory from the toys, Shryah's factory, where most German people was employed. And apart from the people

⁸Fur velvet hat worn by Orthodox Jews on special occasions.

was that, in that sign, in the placards, that they was German spies. And they was executed. And, this was until about two days before the war, in the first, I believe, was the rations [unclear]. I don't know [unclear] in English. When the war started, August, September. Did it start, the war, in September?

HR: In September.

HS: Yeah.

HR: That's right.

HS: That's correct. The 1st of September we start to get all kind of signs. And the radio start to give all kind messages. And at night they started to say that it's war with Germany. War with Germany, and the upheaval start. What start the upheaval? With one shot come a this everybody have to leave the town.

HR: This is a Polish order?

HS: Right. I don't know it was a order or it was a panic or it was a German...

HR: Instigation.

HS: Instigation, because with such a terrible disorganization, such a terrible upheaval, you take 80,000 people, no communication, no cars, no trucks, and you say, "Everybody has to go out."

HR: Did you hear this word of mouth? You did hear it? Just neighbors started saying, "We have to go. We have to go."

HS: Neighbors. Neighbors started. We started and it started to be so terrible. And there start to be such a panic. And people start to run. And we go out on the street and the street is without electricity. Everything is dark. And start to be such a horrible panic. And what else? We was a city built on bridges. I told you in the beginning.

HR: Yes.

HS: Our river was going around back and forth. We was living near a bridge. And they say, the Polish Army, told come to our town, to our house, and they say, "Open all windows, because the bridge is dynamited, and it will be exploded." In this was a terrible panic if the bridge is exploded how we will go out. And we started to, and at that time, my father lost himself. My father started to fall apart. When he saw that the family, everything falls apart, he started to cry like a small child. And seeing this, this was for me the worst thing in my life until that time. I never saw my father in such a distress. My mother was sick in that time. She had ulcers on her leg, bleeding, you know? And how--and she was a heavy woman--and how will, what we will do? And my father was in terrible, you know. He started to tear his hair from his head and he started to cry so like a small child. "What we will do? What will be with us? And what will..." You know? And be everybody falling apart, the mother, the children, everybody.

HR: And this little grandmother of yours was in the house too.

HS: And so where we will go? My mother can't make a step even. She had such bandages, you know, so elastic, you know?

HR: Yes, yes, her legs.

HS: She had such a swollen leg, you know? The whole leg was, from the knee until the bottom was one wound, you know? So I say to my father, "We have downstairs the carriage." We was, my father was a butcher. We had where to carry that meat such a carriage, inside with a metal that the meat have to be carried from the slaughterhouse to the shop and it should be hygienic. The law, from the Polish law, it have to be inside with metal, and this have to be every time washed. When you come with this carriage to the slaughterhouse, they no let you in if that policeman doesn't look in, "Oh, this is not washed." So I say to the father, let's take in some food and some clothing and let's put in the mother in that carriage and we--let's go!" And my father started to fall apart. He couldn't, he couldn't concentrate himself. And he started to cry like a small child. And so did the mother, so did the children, so did the grandmother. And the grandmother said she will not go. She said, "What will be will be. You go. I will be here, and I will keep everything what this is. What will happen will happen. I will not go." And she was over 80 years old. And she was a sick woman. I don't know what kind of sickness. She was always vomiting. She was eating. She can eat. Soon as she should eat an hour later she start to vomit. This was a, I'm sorry I'm mixing in. I just want to give you a picture.

HR: Sure.

HS: I, we know the ritual. She was eating everything soft. After an hour she'd start to say, "Oy, oy!" We have to put in a pail, and we have to hold her head, and she was vomiting. This was every day a ritual. She had something with the stomach. I remember how long I am existing I remember this.

HR: Oh my.

HS: So it couldn't be cancer. She was skinny like a finger. And she would run, you know, she was always on the move. And she said, she, [unclear]. "You go. I will be here. What will happen will happen. God will help us. You will come back, you will have a home." You know, and we watched the child, we left with her the smallest brother, Moishe. He was...

HR: How many children now? I mean...

HS: We were four children.

HR: Four children.

HS: We was three sons and one sister. And he was a little, a sick boy. Because in Poland plenty of people was sick. Youth was very sick. I remember he was getting that cod liver fat or something? You know, he was always...

HR: Cod liver oil.

HS: Oy, he was always so much. We have so much trouble with, always, with the eyes and with his head. We was carrying him always to that, there was such a, from the public [unclear] with the lamps, you know? He was very sick, and he [unclear]. And her last word what I remember when we went out, she say, "Just watch Moishe. Watch Moishe." This wasn't where to watch Moishe. Wasn't what, I couldn't organize, you know? And I said, "Papa, let's go! Let's go!" And he was crying. And I took the mother

out, downstairs, and we took some, we were making our own wine, you know? You know, in Poland you make your own wine. Cherries, blueberries, and I figure when we have to have a drink, something. And this was Sunday. We still had *challahs* and this. We, I took in, and we took in an ax too.

HR: An ax.

HS: We had an ax in the store. I said, "Let's have something to protect ourselves." A big ax, you know, like in Poland they was, the meat was cut with big axes, you know? I wrap in that ax, and put in that. I had to start to be the leader, you know? I put in the two bottles, milk bottles, [unclear], big ones.

HR: Big vats of it.

HS: Right. With cherries and blueberries and other kind of things and this. And we take this down. And I put in the mother, and I put in the brother in that carriage. And I even went in the front like a horse, you know? And the sister with the brother. And the father was pushing. Because we have to go up. How I told you, we have the rivers and a bridge. And the town was still from the King Jagiello was made such a, it shouldn't be the water overflow. How they call it? From the river.

HR: A flood.

HS: That it shouldn't be flood, was made such valley.

HR: Dikes.

HS: Dikes, yeah. The old dikes maybe 800 years old. They call it Valley Aygroška [phonetic], because the King Jagiello was making the, was building the. And we have to, I just try to remember everything. And we pushed that carriage up, and we come out that bridge was still soldiers over there what it was mined. And we come out to the highway, and my God, I never saw, hundreds of thousands of people, just going. Villages, with cows, with everything. A sea of people. You can't imagine. If you saw now that picture what he want to show you in *The Winds of War* about Poland, this was a small joke, what you see, I never saw so many people. We was from a small town, right? A river of people! Horse after horse, villages. The same what we was going, all, there was a, all that villages. I believe this was a, the Germans put up a disinformation to make a upheaval. Because villages was coming from there, and one village was going there. It was stopping and nobody could go. The army could go through, couldn't go through. They have to walk on the side, and they was cursing, you know? They was, with, they have the, and the big trucks what never I saw before. And nobody was moving. And I was going, you know, and carrying the mother, you know? It was nice and cool. It was night. It was still summer. It was still hot, but the nights was nice and cool. And I didn't know where we'll go. Where will we go? We just go because people are going. We didn't know where to go. And we started to go. And we go and the Jews and Polaks, villages, horses, soldiers. And we say, "What the hell is it?" You know? And I was sure that we, they say we should go out from Kalisz because we will fight in Kalisz. Kalisz is-

Tape three, side two:

HS: They said we should go out. I tried to remember that Kalisz will be a battlefield. And they intend to open the...

HR: The dikes.

HS: The dikes to flood [unclear]. And I was working, and I was in that time working by a carpenter. So, with the master, we with the master, we take the furniture and make the furniture--and this was in a basement, you know how--put this up higher that when the river will come, we have this whole thing. I metted that master later, Gelbach. So we are on the highway. We're walking, hundreds of thousands of people, with horses and with this and with that. You know, on the side women with children what can't walk. I meet a woman, when I start to learn the trade to make the upper shoes from this, he was mobilized. I saw that woman standing with two children on the side, one child about three years. The other was a child about one-and-a-half years. She say, "Henry, what should I do?" You know, and I feel with my heart it's, I forgot, I either couldn't, not that I am an honor to my own thing; I was pushed behind when, with other people. We was like in a conveyor, you know?

HR: Sure.

HS: A mass conveyor of tens of miles of people. I couldn't even talk to her. I would take the children on that carriage, you know? I carried the mother and Moishe. I would carry these little children and she would walk. I couldn't even stop, you know? Her name is Yetka, Yetta, called Yetta. She said, "Henry, what should I do?" You know, and I feel that my heart--I couldn't stop. And I--what happened with them I never saw them any more. Two children. You see, don't forget that we are, again, we are extreme people abnormal. We never was at night outside on the street.

HR: Yes.

HS: You see, the Polaks, they was living a normal life. We was, I never saw a night that I should be, let's see, 2:00 outside, and on the fields, on this, you know? We had not that experience, because we was like insulated, artificial everything. You see, we were not exposed to nothing. And here, the first night I am outside on fields, on the highways, you know, with so many horses, and so many things, you know? And it comes in my mind, you know, I was reading in that time Peretz, how he was talking about 1914, how the Jewish people was exposed from the Czarish army, you know? When they was fighting the Germans, they send away the Jewish people to the city. Jewish people are not reliable. Later they was saying that the Jewish people are with the Germans. And how he was coping, you know, with the immense refugees what was from the battlefield. In that time I was thinking how if he was feeling, seeing such a situation. So we was going, going the whole night, until we come to a small town, Kozminka. I come in that Kozminka, you know, and we was dead, I was dead tired. I never did, I was like a horse carrying this. Dead tired, you know? And I look on my mother, you know? So I was no

more tired. And I look on mine other, they was still young. They complained, “This hurts me. This hurts me.” And I say to my brothers, “Don’t you see the mother? Why are you complaining? Don’t complain. They suffered enough, you know?” And my father wasn’t saying nothing. [unclear].

We come to that Kozminka, a small town, a small marketplace. In Poland that small town is a marketplace. Around houses, small houses, I never saw this because I am from a bigger town. Kalisz was already a small, typical Jewish from Sholom Aleichem time, and there’s always a marketplace. And around the people, and around the Polish soldier are already disorganized, already with the, without belts, you know? In the Polish Army without a belt you’re already not in the first thing if you are deserting, if you want to harm you, to take you off the belt. A Polish soldier without belts, and this was this. And they say the Germans are so strong and they’re this. And I said, “Oh my God, what will be now?” And we can’t get no bread and we no can get nothing. We no can get water. There was, Poland was the pumps, not the pumps, how do you call it?

HR: Wells.

HS: The wells. Well the well was already emptied, so many people was drink. So I took out a little from that wine and I start to give a little to my mother. And my mother was so brave. She doesn’t saying nothing. And you know she didn’t have for nothing, you know, didn’t mention nothing, you know? And she was so brave. She was so controlled, you know? I just all, I was very concerned with her. Most I was concerned with her, because she was unable to walk. And we was over there a day. Not a day, a few hours. Let’s see we come in maybe 6:00 here around at night. We come in 6:00. And you know who I meet over there? I’m walking under this, with a silver stick. That lender, what was throwing out every week people. Itzik Adder, the millionaire, what owns a whole street, was walking with his wife. He have a, with that *cylender*, you know. He wear with a nice *berdle*.⁹ He was a *yezen* [opera hat] with a stick, with a silver this, walking...

HR: The same as everybody else.

HS: With his wife. He can’t walk, because he was never walking. You know, and walking so, that...

HR: Your feet get so...

HS: Yeah. And I look so on him. And I think, “Itzak Adder, where is your houses? Where is everything?” And I saw already in what kind horror we are. Now, we come in this and I say, “What to do? We can’t sit here on this.” Because we couldn’t--I can’t give you this, I have to be a big artist to explain you this, to see that horror in the people’s eyes, you know? And their behavior, you know? And their...

HR: Fear.

⁹Trimmed beard, fashionable at the time.

HS: Fear. And their hunger. Not, already nobody had bread. Nobody took with them. They just ran, you know? I, we had a still a little bread, we, a little of that wine. And already you see nothing was organized. Was no life more. In a few hours. So I say to the mother, "Let's go out a little to that street. Let's go on the side. We are in the middle on the river," I say. "Let's go somewhere on the side." So, I carried that, I took that carriage and we moved a little to the side. A little to the side was already in the fields. You know what a town is in, a small Jewish town is? A few houses.

HR: And that's it.

HS: And that's the fields. Around was already farmers. And over there, we come in to a house, in the outside house, was already a farmer. I say, "Can I put in the carriage?" He say, "Okay." Well, they was, you know, the farmers...

HR: A Polish?

HS: Polish farmer. Basically they, you see, they were so antagonized when they're organized. Basically they're simple people. Do you understand? In time of trouble yeah, they're not so vicious. I no, I don't want to bring out that everybody was a animal. I believe everybody is good; now they can make from the person a animal. So, a young guy, he say, "Okay, stay over in this." And I went to the, I took in the father with the money. He started to, so father give him the money, and the money was in a bag. We carry money in bags in that time, leather bags, you know? And I went out to look around for bread, for something. I come to the market. And this market is a half a street. And lots of soldier on a horse, "All men goes to Lodz! All men goes to Lodz!" You know? And I run that way back to father and say, "Father, we have to go to Lodz, that the army is saying that we have to go." And, you know, in that time we have to go. So, I come to the mother, I say, "Mother we have to go." And she say, "Go. Go with your father, and leave us here with the children, and I will be by that farmer and..." she started to cry. And I went with my father, and then we went, before we went over, the Polaks exploded a bridge. Was a small river. So, I took a piece of wood from that bridge and we swim over and we started to walk with the father to Lodz.

HR: And three children [?]_____...

HS: Three children and the mother...

HR: With the farmer.

HS: We went to, I don't know where to go. I saw where everybody is going. Again, you know, we went with this. And we, to the direction to Lodz. Lodz was maybe 200 miles.¹⁰ The order of it, we was afraid that if we will not go, the Polish can do something. And second, we want to fight the Germans. We wanted to fight the Germans. We went to, with that this was already a half a day, right? We was a half a day in that

¹⁰According to the Atlas, the distance from Kalisz to Lodz is approximately 100 km. Walking under the extreme conditions must have made it feel much longer.

small town, in Kozminka. And after, and this happened around 12:00, 1:00. We went, it was a nice day. I'm too on this?

HR: No, I want to make sure it's working.

HS: And we walked to villages, you know, to all kind of things. The same horror what was in this all packing and going, packing and going, you know? And going and crying.

HR: Wait a minute. [tape off then on]

HS: And the women, you know, in the villages, women with the *Yesus Maria* crying, you know? And sitting near the, on the highways in Poland we have big crosses, you know? How they call it? Yeah?

HR: Mmm hmm, right.

HS: And praying, you know, and this?

HR: Statues.

HS: Statues, and praying, you know? And it's such a horror. For them the horror is more than for us, because we was living always, and they was, you know, for a farmer to take out with the horses, with the pigs, and with everything and going. And we're going so at night and in the evening it comes in the evening and we see a big fire everywhere. The whole horizon around is damaged. And we, as I say to my father, "Let's go in, in the forest. I am afraid what happened over there." What's happening over there? They was plenty ethnic villages, German villages. And soon they was coordinating this, they put on their German clothing, on the motorcycles, and they made fires in the forest with the machine guns. And they start to, you know, to shoot. We was walking in that forest and we saw plenty crazy people, not far in water from where my father is, is a big crazy house. How they call a crazy house?

HR: An asylum.

HS: Asylum. When the war start they let out the, crazy people. And they was walking with the, they have such protective clothing, you know?

HR: Tied up.

HS: And they was, right. And walking around, you know? And we was between them. And they was coming on us. They was hungry, and they was eating the, this. And my father start to fight them. They was crawling on us, you know? Until we ran away from there from that burning forest, and we come out again on the highway. And we come to a small town, Dobra. A small town, Dobra, and my father goes around crying, "Where is my wife? Where is my children?" And crying like a child, you know, going around. I say, "Father, now stop it. Now what do you see, so many people where, everybody is now." He was going [unclear]. I say, "First of all, let's go buy a bread." There still was a baker. I see over there from the smell from the bread. I went in, I had the money in my pocket. I took two loaves of bread, you know, that round...

HR: You could still buy it? With all...

HS: Yes.

HR: These people there was a big line there must have been?

HS: No.

HR: No?

HS: No, I don't know what. We wasn't coming from the straight line. We was coming from that forest.

HR: Right.

HS: And we see, and we were, and I feel the smell from the bread. I say to the father, "Let's buy the bread." This wasn't, this was part of the town. And I bought two loaves. This was not a normal loaves, because [unclear], a farmer brought it. So, I took two loaves and we went to the city. We went to the city. We went to Dobra. Again, when you went to the marketplace, the city is the marketplace. This was a little a bigger town, with a church, with a [unclear] and small houses. And we went and saw, and I saw my master, I told you, from the carpenter, Gelbach. And he say, "You know, your aunt is here, *Ciotka* [Aunt] Rivka, is here with a few children." Mine family, my mother's brother's here too, with the wife, she is with two children. And he, and she don't know where the other are, a lot like we. *Ciotka* Rivka? He say--we ask, "Where is she?" And he show us. "She is in the house." So we went over there, and we was over there.

But with *Ciotka* Rivka is a whole story. She is a very ultra religious woman. She didn't want to come to our house that we are not enough kosher. Her husband, *Feter* [Uncle] Herschel, is like my mother, religious progressive. His hobby? Books. He could sit a whole day in books. And she was always fighting him that he read books. She know only religion. They have a store--I'm sorry I'm going back--they have a store, a *milchikeh* store, selling cheese and eggs, butter, rolls, bread. And I would like to show you the economy from that time--it pays for my *Feter* Herschel to come to us three miles to deliver us four rolls and one bread every day. Can you imagine? And she was very religious, very Orthodox, for nothing. She never want to visit us, because we're not enough religious. She never let the girls--she had four beautiful daughters--she never let them come to us. They was coming to us but she shouldn't know--that we shouldn't spoil them. When the boys start to be a little, and they were in Jewish clothing, you know, in traditional, a Yiddish [unclear] with a *capota*. Later when they start to work, the elder one, Yosef, he is here, I will tell you a whole story with him. He made modern clothing, whatever, with a hat, with everything. He keep this in our house not to show them to the mother. Because he was, she, he didn't want to aggravate her. You know, the respect for the mother and father is very big. And the children, the girls, have to be--they have to do what she wants to do. And this is the reason that she didn't want to give them us, we will come back. The boys I saved.

So, we come back to them and *Ciotka* Rivka. We was over there, and again, we was sitting over there. And my father start a little calm down, you know. He said this. And again, with friends, with that, my master Gelbach, they are from the same town. You know, these, all people from the same town. Now later we was living in Kalisz. But,

they're born in the small towns, you know? And they was talking about the wars, what was, and how it was in 1914 and 1916 and 19- this. And the Germans are not so terrible and not so this. Okay? And the night we went through a night. And in the morning we go down, we come to around a Polish *ulana* [phonetic]. *Ulane* is a kind of soldier of horses. Ran to us, turned out, and ran back, on horses. And we hear a big *kanonada*. You know *kanonada*. Automatic fire, you know? Tremendous fire. And we, everybody hide himself. And we went back to the room. In the afternoon we hear trucks, you know, rrrrrrrroooooommm, coming in. And we look out through the windows and we see the Germans are here. We didn't reco-, we didn't know how the Germans look. We saw they're not Polish soldiers, the clothing. Now one, and when they was turning around, I saw on the cask a *Hakenkreuz*, and I know, that the end come.

The Germans come in, and we was looking through the windows. They make a turn around on that market, make a few, and then pull the machine gun there, you know? Fire and then run back. And it was all day quiet. In the afternoon they come in with a whole, then we hear tanks coming in, you know? And we heard yelling, "*Gevalt, gevalt. Shema Yisroel.*" And then a half an hour later with one German soldier coming to our room with this, like, knock out the door--we was hiding behind this--with a grenade and with a pistol. "*Juden raus!*" You know? We pick up our, like this, and we went out from the door. And also is standing already German soldiers with bayonets, you know? And we run outside on the street to, and they was pulling all us to the church. The church was like a fortress, you know? In Poland everything was made, you know, so. And we come out on the street, and that smell, that different gasoline, you know, such as they was using a synthetic gasoline, that smell of war, you know, overwhelmed you. And you see the soldiers, they're so big, axes, you know, and knocking in the doors. And other, you know, I saw a soldier with a bayonet, and a Jew, in his behind, you know, putting in, putting this in his behind, you know, in that, in folds. And everybody, the men, only men, not women. And they put us over there to that church. This was already in the afternoon the second day. And we are standing by the church. Comes two trucks with machine guns and a officer, a high officer on a motorcycle, you know? And he stays over there. So I was sure that's it. He will open fire. And come with a other truck, and he say, with a *dolmetscher* [interpreter], you know? One German who speak Polish, or a German, and he say, "There is fighting a battle on the Warta River, not far, near you." If they, and we will be hostages. If they can overcome the Polaks, they will explode us, you know? We have to go into the church. And they put in a explosive in the church, you know? And everybody have to give the watches and it was a, put in everything there, the money, the watches, you know.

HR: This is not just Jews. Were there some Poles?

HS: Everybody.

HR: Everybody.

HS: Not Jews, not Polaks. Everybody.

HR: Everybody.

HS: Right. And we went over there. I didn't give him the money. I see he is not watching. I am not so fast to give him the money, right? I already want to start to resist them, you know? And we went to the church, the first time I was in a church, you know? We spit out three times, you know? When a Jew goes near a church in Poland, they have to spit. Or, he makes a thing and puts in his pocket and he walks [unclear], you know? Such a [unclear]. I never saw a church, you know? And we sit over there on the side. And right away they divided Poles, *Juden*, and Poles. The Germans. In that turmoil, you know? And in the night you know you hear the, *Kanonada*. They were, the battle was, so twelve miles from this was the battle going on and you see that fire in the windows. And at night, you know, they come in to the church, three soldiers, with the pistols here, and took out the priest. The priest was by the altar. They took him out and kill him. And in the church there was plenty of crazy people, you know? What was, I told you, in the...

HR: From the asylum.

HS: Yeah, from the asylum they was over there. And they was going around, you know, and playing. And there is not [unclear] with this. And they was, and they didn't let us out to go to the toilet.

HR: The bathroom.

HS: To the bathroom. And people was so scared. And they was doing everything over there by the altar. It was terrible, you know? A horror. And they still didn't say nothing about Jews. In the morning they come in and they say, "Somebody told us that there are weapons here. If you will not give the weapons, everybody will be killed." And, I was afraid that the Polaks can do something to us. They're throwing in a gun and that's it. So, I say to my father, "Let's watch. Let's watch that they are not coming in, or the Polaks are even coming in." And we start to talking to the people that we should be alert that somebody shouldn't doing something to us. And they come in in the morning. They make a line, and they say, "Every tenth will be shot." And they start to make one, two. So what people start to do is start to run. Nobody want to be the tenth. You know, it's a parody in that tragedy. But the crazy people, they didn't understand what's going on. Was a whole, I mean, running around. And the Germans started to laugh, and they make, and they couldn't control it. This was still, they were still soldiers. This was the army.

Oh, you see, I forgot to tell then when we were standing so by the church and he say, "And how," and starts so with the hand, everybody, you know, the Jews are thinking always. [unclear] to shoot, they start to kill them. They start a panic, you know? And they start to tear their, the clothing. And they start, "*Shema Yisroel*," and this and that, you know? And they started to, and they touch me. You know, I was not so big. And my father finds it, you know? And I run to that German, to a German soldier. I say, "What, sir? What?" And I see the German was scared, you know? You know, it was a terrible

picture, you know? People panicked. They started to tear the clothes, you know? People start running around, you know. And the sun was, was about 5:00 in the afternoon. And I see what the hell, how far we was running to finish here. [unclear the *Dolmetscher* come, and he say that we will be *zakladnikes*, we will be,

HR: Hostages?

HS: Hostages, yeah. So, the next day, that they want to take the, every tenth, was such a tumult. Nobody want to be the tenth. They was running around, and the crazy in the middle. The Germans started to laugh and they went out. And we was still in the church. So, next...

HR: And they didn't give you food.

HS: They didn't give food.

HR: Water?

HS: They didn't let us out, nothing.

HR: Nothing.

HS: Not food and not water. And the Jewish ingenuity start to work right away. Come in a soldier and say, "Is here a one Yakobovich?" "Yes." "Your wife is very sick. Go out to your wife." You see, that was the second day, and they destroyed the Polaks over there. So the women outside start to, what's happening with the men? And go to a soldier and then, "I'm sick." And the soldier, "Take out the husband. Take out this," you know? So our, you know, our Ciotka--Aunt Rivka too, "She is sick." Okay, sick, and so we went out.

Oh, I forgot. They let in, the second day they let in women with food and with water. And in the second day in the church I find one my, a boyfriend. And his girlfriend, I told you what they start to go with a girlfriend, was in that town, and she was with the women coming in bringing in water and this. He was, his name was Rishek. He was a floor maker. So, as everybody find a wife and, that she is sick, and they let us out. They let us out, the war, it's finished, the battle is finished. They let us out from this. They let us out, and they say, "Nobody goes out from the town until we give you permission. Who will be finded will be shot on place." We're sitting over there with already back in the house, and we took in that our, my friend too, Rishek, you know? He was alone. How he ran, everybody was running. You don't know...

HR: [unclear].

HS: Right. And my father again, what with the mother and what will we do? He will go, he goes back to [unclear]. He say he knows the places. He was buying cows in the neighborhood. We was, in Poland you go to villages and buy, yes? He know there are swamps around. No Germans will be over there. Okay? I didn't want to stay over there. I didn't know what the Germans, I want to go back to what happened to the mother with the children. And we decided to go back to the mother.

HR: You too?

HS: Me too, yes. [unclear]

HR: Okay. [tape off then on]

HS: When we come back to that small town, to Kozminka, well we didn't find our mother, and not the children. We just find our carriage was standing in the back yard by the Polish farmer, and we find the farmer, that he was killed, how later I find out from my mother, because he resisted the Germans and they shot him in this, in his house. His house like was a farm house, on the end of the small town. And we find in that carriage the whole thing what we left. We find that wine what we took with ourselves, and we refreshed ourselves a little. And we rest a little and we washed ourselves up. And we start discussing with the father what we should do now. We decided to go back to Kalisz. And it was dangerous to go, because the whole German Army was going in that time to Lodz. And we had to go to the military, to the third commander in the city and we get from him a permission to go back, to let us go on the highway where the army is going. We went to that commander and we told him that we are from Kalisz and we felt that our family went back to Kalisz. And we asked permission to go back. He look over my father and my father was wearing this semi-military clothing. He was a butcher with the boots. And he asked, "What kind of clothing is this?" And I explain to him in German that he is a *fleisher*, a meat man. And this was what he was always wearing. And he give us a *schein*, *Ausweisschein* that we can walk on the highway.

HR: He gave you a permit.

HS: A permit.

HR: Right.

HS: An *Ausweisschein*, right, a permit to go. And we start, it was already so, in the afternoon. And it was a beautiful day.

Tape four, side one:

HS: And the day was beautiful. It was this start already from the Polish golden fall, its golden days like summer. The sun was shining, it was very sunny, and it was very hot. Going on the highway we wasn't permitted to go on the main road, because the main road was clogged with a army. [tape off then on] And besides, the size and the quality from that army was so overwhelming that every, that we were feeling like small, very helpless people. We never saw such a mound of tanks, of canons, and such a beautiful quality, and such a mass that the person saw that Poland couldn't fight such a tremendous army. And what was amazing, that no German soldier was walking. Even the foot soldiers was on bicycles with their own, with the guns and everything. And how I say tanks and canons and everything, mechanized. And we saw the *Messerschmidts* in the air. And that size, and the quality in that army make us believe that Hitler will take over the whole world. This was so scary, so terrifying to just thinking what kind of situation was the Polish Army. It was only based on horses and on the feet from the soldiers and walking. And no wonder that they couldn't stand against the Germans. Either they will be so, when they have horses, they was entire different horses, a kind of Belgian horses, very big and very strong and very clean. And we saw the, with [unclear] they was walking and the [unclear] make on us such a terrible impression we have felt like the world fall apart.

How I say we couldn't walk on the highway, we walked on the sideway. And we have to cross, I remember, a few bridges what was destroyed by the Polish Army. And the bridges was being repaired by German *sappers*. In the same way with--they was such big soldiers, such big men that we never saw such men, in such a beautiful clothing. And they was so strong, and doing it with carrying such big things to repair the bridges that we fall apart. I have to admit they didn't make no anti-Jewish remarks or nothing. They didn't ask us who we are and what we are. I remember when we fall in with our carriage in the sand, we couldn't move because the whole wheels went into the sand, two soldiers, they took that whole carriage like a child, like a play thing, and just to push it out. And they make from us pictures. Probably they was military correspondents. They made from us pictures how we was going, because we was very dirty. And our hair was very dirty from that sweating, because we was walking like horses, carrying with that carriage. And the way around was so full with sand that we was very, very, in a very bad shape. I remember we come to a well in a village. And I drink a whole pail of water like a horse. I was so thirsty. And this was, I remember this until now.

How I say the German soldiers wasn't showing, we didn't hear anti-Jewish remarks. Only coming a little closer to the city, we was maybe about ten or fifteen miles from the city, and the army was still continued marching in the direction from Lodz. We hear one remark. That was Germans what was from Silesia. And Silesia was a mixture of Polaks and Germans. And the Germans know a little Polish. And that the German, when

we pass through, he recognize that we are Jews because he was in contact with Jews. And he say, "*Jude*," this means, "Jews," and he show with his finger like with a knife and cut your throat. This was a remark what was very until now in my mind. They say, "*Jude*," and he showed like to cut our throat.

Coming with, closer to the city, all bridges was destroyed. Only partially they was repaired by the German Army. And we have to cross through boards, until we come to our city. We didn't see no signs from fighting. Nothing was destroyed, only the bridges. And the highway was a little destroyed from the tanks, because they was so heavy, and the Polish highways wasn't built in such a good quality. I remember the main bridge what we, not far from our house already, we have to cross on make-believe bridge, on boards. No heavy transportation could go through.

And we come to our home, to our building. When we come to our building we saw that our building is partially destroyed from the explosion, from the bridge which was near us. All windows was broken, all doors was open. And we went in in there, in the house, from the back, believing that nobody is in the house. We went up to our apartment. We walked in to our apartment, and we find our mother and sister and the two boys, sleeping on the floor. And our all furniture thrown down on the floor, and everything broken apart. The windows are broken. And everything, because near was the bridge.

We waked up the mother and can you imagine the tears of joys and of sorrowness that we all are together? We didn't care that the house is broken up, that nothing is in working condition. We was happy to see them all. And our mother start to tell us what happened to them when we went away with my father on the command from the Polish Army, and how the German Army come in and they start a fight with the Polish Army in the small city, in the small town of Kozminka. And they make a position near the building from that farmer. And she, they'd constantly say the command, "*Fritz Feuer, Fritz Feuer!*" And she heard that the farmer start to shoot on them and they kill him. But the fire fight was, and she say maybe a half an hour. Later everything stopped, until the German soldiers come in into the apartment and throw all people out. No *denska* [phonetic], she say they was looking for men. There was no men. And they started to ask or they are from Kalisz. She said, "Yes." And they say, "All people from Kalisz have to go back."

And so we was all back in that house. We took a little rest in our apartment, and we walked over the whole house, see what happened with neighbors. Nobody is back. The first thing what I did with my father, we secured the doors from our neighbors. And we closed in that nobody should steal from them the furniture or other things. Because people, later they start after a week or two, little by little they started to come back. Because people was running in all kind, in all directions. And very seldom whole families come back. So we start, this was the first, the second, the third day of the German occupation. Was no administration, only military administration. We had no

food. We had no electricity, until a few days later, they start to make a city administration with a *politzeiamt* [police station]. And it was the first announcements, the placards on the street, how we have to behave under the occupation. We have to give back weapons if we have, all signs from the Polish and Russian, all signs like the eagle, and all valuable things. Like all radios we have to give back. And every such announcement was ended, "If you will not fulfill that, you will be shot." Since that time, we just always see announcements what was always finishing, "If you are not doing this, you will be shot. If you are not doing this you will be shot."

In the beginning was not molesting. They didn't care who was Jewish, who is not Jewish. They start only a different trouble. The Polish, the Gentile population from the city start molesting Jews, coming in their apartments and taking out furniture, and beating up Jews. And they learned a lesson from the Germans very well. And they know it from before. And the first harassment in Kalisz we didn't have from the Germans; we have from our Polish neighbors. I told before that a few days before the war was announcement in the Polish government that they find German spies in the toy factory from Shryah and they all, they arrest them and they was executed. To our surprise, soon after a little order was made in the town, we see the all people back. Nobody was shot from the *Volksdeutsche*, from the Germans. This was just maked up believe, and it was not true. They didn't called nobody, and they didn't shot nobody.

We, in the beginning we didn't know what to do, how to do our professional life or how to exist. And we decided that our mother and our sister will go to the commander, to the *politzeiamt* and to get a permission that we open our butcher shop. My father was afraid to go to ask for this. I don't know the reason. Now men was very hesitating to be in touch with the Germans, with the German administration. And to women they was a little more courteous. It was a very, very terrible time. You could find cows walking around in the street, running around without owners. And you just could take a cow and take it to the slaughterhouse and kill and sell it. It was such a turmoil. And the *politzei Kommandant* give us a permission to open our butcher shop. And this is what we did. It'd be very simple. Cows on the street, we took them to the slaughterhouse and we killed and we sell them. And the German soldiers was very good buyers. And my father was very mild surprised. He say, "Take a look what kind of different is the army. What price you're telling them, they're buying!" We didn't know that the Germans didn't have enough food in their country. And they was very surprised that they can buy still meat without rations, and other things by the farmers. And they, but then was the question only to get it, with that merchandise. And we was getting from them *Deutschemarks*. And we didn't know how this will work out, because we have Polish *zlotys*, and they have only *Deutschemarks*. Now, in the beginning, how I say, was the situation wasn't terrible. Was no harassment. And little by little the bakers was opening. We could buy bread, and we could buy other stuff. And on the market we could buy by the farmers chickens. And this was a few weeks until comes in the civil administration with the Gestapo.

When they started with the Gestapo, our troubles start for serious. What was our trouble? First of all they start to make a *Judenrat*, from the Jewish *Gemeinde*, what should register all Jews. And the first order from them was that we have to bring back all radios, fur coats and gold. And our radio was broken because from the explosion what was from the house. And still we have to bring them back the broken radio because I was afraid that there is a registration and the administration that we have a radio. And we have to bring it. The fur coats, we decided, my mother's beautiful fur coat I say we will not give it back to the Germans. We cut it in pieces and throw it away in garbage. I didn't want that the Germans should enjoy our coat. And the same with the gold and with the diamonds. We took the diamonds and gold and we hide it in the walls what was broken up, the walls, from the explosion. And we hide it in the loose bricks, and telling that we have no nothing else.

My father start, it was in the beginning, he was optimistic. "You see that it will be okay." He say, "The Germans are not so terrible." Now, after a few weeks we saw what they mean. We have to put up in our store a sign that we are *Jude*, a *Jude* sign. And later we have to put on the signs of the hand, a yellow band. And it was announcement that Jews can't walk on the sidewalk. They have to walk on the middle on the street. And when they see a German soldier they have to take off their hat. And there is no permission to open *shuls*. Is not permission to open Jewish schools. And everything have to, we listen what the *Judenrat* is ordering. The *Judenrat* was made from people not from our old leaders what was in the city. I don't know what happened with them. Or they ran away or they stayed. It was such a turmoil. Plenty people what was in Warsaw. Plenty people was, either they're running farther away. So the Germans made, ordered the *Judenrat* what they want. And I remember the head from the *Judenrat* was the *hazzan* from the German *shul*. We have a regular *shul* and we have a German *shul*. And that *hazzan* from the *shul* was the head. And he was filling out the orders what the Germans was doing.

With come in the Gestapo start to be a terrible time in the city against the Jews. They was catching Jews on the street and making *laftankis* [phonetic] this is called. They come in with the trucks on both sides of a street, arresting all Jews and taking them to hard work or taking them to make exercise or taking them to clean the toilets and, or taking just to beat them up, just to harass them. And they make us a new sport. And when they catch a Jew on the street with a beard they cut off his beard with pieces of meat and they wounded him and they hurt him. And we start to see different people in the street. All the religious people changed their clothing and not be, not willing to shave their beards, they put on like *farshteles* [disguise]. They put on such clothing like they would be sick, covering the beards. And it was very tragic and very comic to see the people what we know they're Jews, religious Jews, going around in different civil clothing without the Jewish hats, and covering the beards. This was only the beginning. Later the German recognized who was wearing a, covered the face, they special stopped him and

they cut him off the beard with a knife. And so all the religious Jews have to shave off their beards.

Our life start to be much more complicated with coming in the Gestapo. And they was coming in to, they have a list from all the nice people with all Jewish intelligentsia, Jewish doctors. And they was coming into their houses and in the eyes from the children beating them up and humiliating them, taking them down to the street, making a whole night exercise. And in the morning when you come on the market street and you hear the fire department, you find the dead people laying around after a half a night, a whole night of exercise. How I say, the old Jewish intelligence was so humiliated. And in the, and we start to pick up a horror, and we was seeing my father changes already his optimistic outlook. And he was already agreeing to me that we got, the situation will not be so smooth. Because mine idea was that they no mean to give us a hard time. I felt in mine thinking, and I felt in my bones, that they mean our destruction. And nobody will do to help us to overcome this. People didn't want to believe. They just, and our Jewish philosophy what they all was thinking, "Oh it was hard 100 years ago, 200 years ago. And the Haidamackers,¹¹ the Cossacks, the Polaks, the this, and we will overcome."

I want to explain how our life in the beginning was when the Germans come in. And we have cows by farmers, we was fattening them up a whole summer, and later sending them to Warsaw. And I decided to go to them and to demand from them back the cows, or to sell them. And I have a very mixed reception by the [unclear] there. A few say, "You *parshevi zud*, you dirty Jew, go out from here or I will kill you. I don't owe you nothing. I will not give you back nothing from your property. And if you say--if you come once more I call in a German." A other farmer was our friend, Pavlov. He say, "I will not give you back the cow. Only I will give you back potatoes. I will give you back flour. And this will be, because what will you do," he say, "with the cow?" I agree with this, and I took that carriage, and I started to make reserves for the winter in our house. I start to bring potatoes. I start to bring wheat. And that wheat I was going to the mill, how they call that mill?

HR: Mill.

HS: To the mill, and exchanging this for flour, exchanging the flour for sugar. And then we will make in our apartment a whole storage area that we can put and keep a whole winter. Now I know, and I felt in my bones that this will be now in the end from that, that they no mean to let us be alive. And that they're catching the Jews on the streets started to be very persistent. And every hour you hear that on this street they caught 200 Jews, 300 Jews, and take them out in hard work. I developed a special strategy. When they was, when they're making the *laftankis* on the street closing up the street with the trucks. And I was with my carriage carrying potatoes or something else, they didn't recognize that I am Jewish. So I lay down with my carriage, make believe that the

¹¹ 17th and 18th century Polish rebel serfs who preyed on Jews.

carriage is broken, and started to change the wheels. And until they went through with the trucks. And this was a very nice trick. And I, with the time was so excellent. Soon I see the German trucks was coming, I right away start to work on repairing the carriage. And one thing you have to say, the Germans when they see that you are doing something, or you're working, or you're doing something, they no bother you. They have a respect for work.

And that in, now coming with this and being a young boy, being very unruly, I, constantly I was running in the streets. Constantly I have to stay in the line for bread because my father was afraid to go and I didn't want to expose that my mother or the brother or the sister goes. So I start to be the main supplier and staying in the lines in the bakery for bread. And the first menace was not the Germans. It was the Polaks. If a German come in to see who stays in the line, he takes with him a Polish boy and that Polish boy was showing, *Jude, Jude, Jude, Jude*, and the German take out the all our, the Jews from the line. And without that Polish boy he wouldn't take out. He wouldn't know who is a Jew, who is not a Jew.

They caught me once on the street with maybe about twenty other boys, and they took us to the Jewish *Gymnasium*. And they give us big axes to break the benches. The benches and everything and the portraits of Herzl and everything, was piled up on the in the back yard. Because in that building they make a *koszary* [barracks], that means where the army was standing. And we have to break this everything up. Being a strong boy, I took that big ax and I started to knock down the benches one, two, three. And I saw that was a few boys, one was a Jewish *yeshivah* boy with the *payos* there, not enough alert, he still was looking like a *yeshivah* boy. And he couldn't even pick up that ax. I went quiet to him and I say, "Give me the ax and I will work, and you go on mine side where is already the breaking up parts." And a German saw this. And he give us both a good beating. He say, "You don't work for him. You did your job." And he was very mad on me. He give me a loaf of bread and he say, "*Mach mahause*." ["Go home."] So, and I start to develop a philosophy that if you're being caught by the Germans, you have to start to work. You no have to show them that you are lazy or you are afraid. In this situation you're endangering yourself. Just show that you are brave, you are working and doing. They respect and they let you out, and they no beat you up.

They called us up once in the Gestapo. The Gestapo took a whole building on Jasna Street. This means on the light street. And we have to wash over there the trucks, and wash the motorcycles, and wash their bicycles. This was all apart from the army, from the Gestapo equipment. And the same thing. We was doing the work, now together with this we was getting a terrible beating. We were so beat up. They broke my one teeth and they start to make with us exercises. We have to go on a ladder with a pail of water on the head and not losing this. And it's clear that everybody couldn't, nobody could do this. And we was beat, then beated up. And we was beaten up until at night. Being over there in the Gestapo I saw my, is a friend what I was going with in the school, a

Volksdeutsche, a German, Pfeffer. He was a whole big shot in the Gestapo going around having that *Hakenkreuz* on the left side, going around with a gun. And he didn't even look in my direction. Until the war start he was coming to my house and I help him to make homework. And now he start to be a big shot.

It was starting, the situation was very terrible on the streets with the plain population. I want to give you a example how, what they do to us. In our town, like in every town, we have our town crazy and town stupid people. And how, we have the stupid Moishe and the stupid Chomendar [phonetic] and the stupid Ruchel, and the crazy Pinchas, and the crazy Sheindel, what was official crazy people we recognize in the city. And they was running around in the city. The Gestapo, seeing them in the town, they come to him on the street and kill each crazy guy with a shot. He goes with a motorcycle, comes to him, and the crazy people didn't recognize the danger or to run away or this. And they was continue to do their all things what they was doing always. One *meshugenah* Pinchas was running like a horse. This was his craziness. Moishe now was telling how many people what was dying. He was a stupid guy, working with the *Hevrah Kaddishah* [burial society], and he was always telling, "Today was two people died; three people died." And he continued this way of life by the Germans. So, they killed him on the street. It start up, it was a very big unemployment in the cities. Nothing what to do. Our old sources of life was destroyed. And the *Judenrat* make a deal with the Gestapo that the Gestapo will not catch people on the street making [unclear] all kind of works, and they say to the Gestapo that they will supply the amount of workers what the Gestapo need, or what the German administration need. And it's clear that who they sent to work- they sent the poor people. The rich people was paying them so they didn't have to go to work. And poor people was getting notification in the houses, tomorrow to come to work. The work what means in most of the time the Germans didn't mean work. They mean only to beat up, to humiliate the people, to just, just to do their sadistic things.

And I remember once my cousin was, he was a religious boy. Oh, I forgot to say that he, they come in, when we was already in our house two weeks, when we come back from Kozminka, two weeks later they come to our house, and it was the *Politzei Shturm* there, at night. They was afraid to go into their house. And they were sleeping by us. And we have to go the next-

Tape four, side two:

HS: And we have to go the next day to bring for them clothing that they can change the clothes for a civil clothing, that they can go to their houses. And when the *Judenrat* start to send out people to work, they receive too a notification, "You have to go to work." And they was afraid to go to work. So I decided to go in their place, to do their job. I reported to the *Judenrat*, and we was sending out on the highway near the railroad. And we was carrying stones a whole day. Why I am mentioning this? I'm mentioning this was, in that time it was a very seldom thing happen. Was a German soldier, probably he was a not a really German, Austrian he was. He told us, "If you see nobody is coming in just sit and don't work. If you see that somebody is coming from far away, make believe that you are carrying the stones."

HR: Who told you this? A German?

HS: A German what was our *Obermann*, a German soldier what was the supervisor what we had to do. Because the work was just to humiliate us. We was taking stones from one side of the highway and carrying them to a pail on the other side. And he told us, "If nobody comes in here from there, make this, just sit down. Don't work."

HR: Now, this soldier wasn't a Gestapo then?

HS: No.

HR: So he had feeling and he...

HS: Probably. This was a very seldom thing.

HR: But you saw it somewhat, sometimes.

HS: Yes. And I had a other fact once. I was standing in the line for bread at the bakery of Katz. And one, a man from that, from the owner, that Katz, he didn't hear good. How do you call it in English?

HR: Deaf?

HS: A deaf man. And when they took us out from the line, to arrest us, because we was *Jude* we shouldn't stay in the line, one soldier called him too that he should go. It's clear that he didn't hear. So that soldier take that rubber...

HR: Truncheon.

HS: Trunch, and run to him. And I saw a other soldier, a elderly man, was going like in between them, not letting him to beat up that boy. And he took that boy and put him in the other line. This was very, a very seldom, and very, it's very deep in my mind.

I have one more fact about this. In our house was living a man what was before the First War, he was in the German Army. He was, how I say in the beginning, our town was a border town. And a part of people was from the German side. And he was in 1914 he was a German soldier. Now he was a Polish Jew. When they throw out the Jews in Zbaszyn in 1938, they throw him out too. We was so in the occupation already maybe a week or two, come a German soldier looking for him. He was very afraid, but knowing

what this means. And when there is, when that soldier saw that old man, he was a older person already, he started to kiss him. What was? They was together soldiers in the German Army in 1914. And how long he was in the [unclear] in Kalisz, this he was bringing him things. He was bring bread and he was bringing wine. I want to show there was, still was German soldiers what was not...

HR: Human beings.

HS: Was human beings. And they no was so from the Hitler side. It's characteristic, when they arrest me, when, at that factory that they, with that boy, that deaf boy that didn't hear, they was leading us to the magistrate. This means to the city hall. And it was already snowing and raining. And I keep my hands in my pockets. And one soldier, and this was against the law--you know I wasn't always a law abiding, with the Germans I keep my hands in my pockets--the German comes to me and hits me with his boot, with his jack boot in my back. And he gave me such a bang that I feel that I am fainting. And this make me so mad that I decided I will not take out the hands from my pocket. And he was constantly going, beating me up, to the city hall, and I didn't take out the hands from my pockets he made me so mad. When we come to the city hall, was already 150 or 200 people. They put us on trucks and they took us out of the town, not knowing what will happen. This was the first time that I was in a car, in a truck. Until that time I never was riding in a truck. And was riding in that truck, this was a Gestapo truck with a *brezent*¹² on top, with the Swastikas on both sides, and so many Jewish people inside. And everybody already, Jewish peoples right away start to think, they say, "Maybe they will take us in the forest to kill. Maybe this and maybe that." And they start to throw out money on the sides. And I want to try to jump from that truck. You know, when I open a little, that *brezent*, I see that behind us comes a car what is watching me. Behind us is a German car with a machine gun, was watching us. And we was sure they are carrying us to death.

Now well what happened? They took us to that forest, to a river. And over there they was making, fixing a bridge what was destroyed. And they didn't intend to kill us. We just was working, carrying big pieces of wood while they're fixing the bridge. And in that time we have a very friendly reception from the soldier what was working on the bridge. Later I find out, this is not a German. This was a third organization, where was, and they employed Germans, Czechish Germans. And they was entire different, like they wasn't like real Germans. They was friendly to us. They was feeding us. They call us *commarade*. And when we was with that, going, bringing the, all kind of things in a truck, we saw Polish soldiers going home already with the clothing, you know, running away. They took everybody on the truck and called them *commarade*. And they say *Machtes Lausen* [phonetic]. He was very friendly. At night they give us bread and they let us go.

¹²Tilted opening at roof of truck.

Now the going was a very terrible thing, because it was about maybe 20 miles from our city. And was the *Politzeistunde* [curfew] there. And we have to walk the whole highway with the hand up, because patrols, German patrols with motorcycles was constantly going back and forth. And they was always ready to open fire. And they stopped us and we was taking, we was telling them that we come back from work. So, we was coming back to our city.

I want to bring out the characteristic from that time. We started to believe in a new Messiah, the Messiah should be Russia. We started to go around all kind of talking in the city that Russia will come to take over our part, that Poland is divided between Russia and Poland, and our town will be the last town like it was until 1914, and the Russians will come. And everybody was just looking out for that day and listening. And every day you had different rumors and different things that the Russians are coming, the Russians are going. And we was believing in, especially the youth, was just praying and just thinking how the Russians will come and how we will be again free and everything will be okay. The elder people was very skeptical, saying that the Russians are not better than the Germans. They don't believe in God, and they no like rich people and they will do other things. And it was a whole turmoil in that big tragedy with the Germans. Was a turmoil on the Jewish street how it'll be, what will be. And it was too a few Jewish boys, Communists, what was released from our prison, in our town. You know, they was belonging from the part what is now occupied from the Russians. From Kovel, from Bialystok, from Sarne. I remember the names. And they was the whole heroes from the town, because they could legally go in to the *Polizei Kommandant* and get a *Ausweis* [identity paper/passport] to go to the other side. And we was always, I remember, standing in the line for breads in the Jewish quarter, in the Jewish streets, where we was not so much afraid of the Germans, always constantly discussing how this will be and how lucky they are they belong, that they are from the Russia and from the other part. How we will come over? And what should be done? Because it was getting worse and worse with us.

What was getting worse? They closed off the market and made from this a prisoners camp for soldiers. And later when the soldiers was released or put in the other camps, they start to take whole streets of Jews, putting in, evacuating whole streets of Jews. And you can only take your little clothing. And they put you, they call it in the *Halle* how is this *Halle*? *Halle*, this means...

HR: Prison?

HS: No. *Halle* means on the market, a building, like here the market is in stores. Store.

HR: Oh, a marketplace.

HS: A marketplace. No, it was a building. And they started to take the Jewish people out from the streets and putting over there, and saying that all Jews from Kalisz

will be evacuated to Lublin. This means in that time already they started to prepare the camp in Majdanek. And they started to evacuate street by street.

HR: What year is this?

HS: This was, and this was still in 1939.

HR: '39.

HS: Yeah.

HR: How close was Majdanek? Was it [unclear]?

HS: Oh Majdanek was almost in the center of Poland.

HR: All right.

HS: Lublin. We was on the west of Poland. We was very far from us to go to, so that was...

HR: But did you know about that concentration camp?

HS: No, no. We didn't know nothing about it. It was nothing saying about the concentration camp at that time. It was only saying that in that time our part will belong to the *Deutsche Reich*, to Pruszkow. It means that our part, what is from the Warta River to Lodz, from Pruszkow, from Balon, to the German, to the *Dritte Reich*. And Warsaw and Lublin will be the *Generale Government*. It will be like a Polish semi-government. So, in that time already they started to evacuate whole streets and taking all the, taking the people away. And we have to leave the whole apartment in good condition, because they were starting to bring *Volksdeutsches*. I don't know from where. Now I am suspicious they was bringing *Volksdeutsche* from Lithuania, from Latvia when they maked a deal with the Russians. They started to evacuate the people and they took the best and most beautiful apartments, the Jewish apartments, from the richest people in town, and they bring a German family. And you can't take out not one box from the apartment. Everything what is there, you have to leave it over there. Even not your clothing. Only the poor people could take out a baggage. If they come in, a German officer come to a Jewish doctor, three, four rooms apartments with the beautiful furniture, the person have to take, give him this apartment, go out, and they take over. This was a daily occurrence in our city.

And taking this, everything into account, and seeing what they're doing, I come to the conclusion that we will not survive, that our way is only or to escape or to go away from the apartment. Nobody from the people what I was discussing with them, they wasn't ready to such a thing to do. It was very terrible to think that people with one, it's very hard for a normal person to understand that something terrible is coming, that they will destroy you. It's easy to read in a book or it's easy to hear. But practically, to tell the people that they will take a whole town of people and kill, or they will tear a whole amount of people from a country and then destroy, this is impossible that people should understand. Either when you read it in paper, "They kill 100 people," it doesn't hit you because you no understand what this means, killing 100 people. And so, and I believe that people was shutting off that idea, that horrible idea what can happen with them. And

they just want to live the daily life and overcome the difficulties. And if they're getting beaten up, they're getting beaten up. If they're taking away the father to a camp, or they shoot him on the street, it happened. And they still believed, "We will survive." They didn't know and they didn't feel and didn't accept the idea how much I was talking with people that there is not a way that we should survive this, that their meaning is not to give us a hard time. The meaning is to destroy us. Nobody want to accept that idea.

I remember I was sitting, and this was Hanukkah, with our neighbors. We was sitting in our neighbor's apartment and making potato *latkes*, and thinking what, how we will survive, and what will happen to the next Hanukkah. And I, we were discussing, was a group of young people, a group of elder people. And then the elder people start to cry. And I was very, I say, "Our crying will no helping. And our praying will no helping. Something terrible come us over, and we have to decide something to do." I by myself didn't know what to do. No, I feel our, to be passive is our destruction. And the time was going, even I say, "The time is worse. Winter is coming. Our way, our mobility will be less." No, I couldn't achieve nothing, and nobody wanted to listen to me.

I was occupying myself with the, how I say, with the bringing all kind of pieces of wood and pieces of this and meat. And I cut off, the bridge what was destroyed from the Polaks, I brought a saw and I cut, I loaded up a whole, one room was full with wood. Just occupying myself, believing that we will do something.

Until a horrible thing happened to me. Being on the street how I say, was very unruly. I was always running around, always want to listen and want to know and to hear and what is. And I was waiting that the Russians should come and they should come and they should come. We was arrested on the street, me and my brother, with other people. We was taken in to the Gestapo. We was in the Gestapo, and they was bringing in maybe about fifty more people. And they put us on trucks and we, they took us to a ride in the countryside, and we went around, we went maybe about 200 miles, to a German *Grundbesitz*. The name was Moravine [phonetic]. A German *Grundbesitz* means a German landlord, a big estate. And how I say, we have in our parts of country whole villages, whole estate what was by Germans. And we was brought up to that Moravine, to that estate, not knowing nothing, where they are bringing us. Now, I was used already to be on trucks, and so I know already what is waiting for us. We come to that estate. They lined us up, the two Gestapo, two Gestapo--I see them like now. And come the German *Grundbesitzer*, a woman, with a daughter, a beautiful young girl, a 18-year-old girl, blonde. And the German, the Gestapo tell us, "You are now the property from that woman. You will work here, and you will die here. You have to work here. And if something you will do wrong, we'll make a *Kurz Gericht*." This word she say, a *Kurz Gericht* means they took out the pistol and they say, "We will shoot you." And that woman invite us, ask us, "What you're doing? What is your profession?" She spoke to us in Polish. She was born in Poland. I told her that I am a carpenter. And one told her he's a blacksmith. Other people was like a shoemaker and this. And she started to find work

for them. The most people went on the fields to pick up sugar beets. Me she took to such a house. It was like a carpenter shop. No, it was not a carpenter shop. They have to make wheels for, how, what they, carts. What is a cart in English? What's a cart?

HR: A cart, mmm hmm, the wheels? It's a cart.

HS: The horses, yeah. I told her I don't know how to make carts. I don't know even the tools. I am I say a furniture carpenter. And I don't know how to do this. And she started to yell on me, "You *faule* [rotten] *Jude*! You this and you that!" You know, and they start to beat me up. And she said, "*Marsch!*" Into the field. And she took me to that field where the people was working. It was maybe two miles. And she was constantly yelling at me, and she was start to get hoarse from yelling on me. And they put us to work on the sugar beets. They make from us brigades. We have to take the big forks to take out there from the ground sugar beets and with knives to cut off the greens. And to collect the beets and make baskets and take them to a storage place. We covered these beets with ground. It's clear we never saw a field. We never was in field. We'd never known such kind of work. We was very detached from nature. The Jewish people was very detached from nature in Poland. It's clear we didn't know how to do that work. And they start, and give us under guard from *Volksdeutsche*, from Germans born in Poland what was running around. They have their rifles, and they make for us so, they give us so much trouble. They wasn't interested in our work. They was only interested in beating up. They were standing in such a situation that when you ran with the basket, where you ran, they beat you up. If you fill up the basket, the basket maybe have 200 pounds, you can't carry. If you not enough, they throw you out on the field and you have to do to replace it again. And constantly they beat you up.

One man was a elderly Jew, maybe in the 60s. He couldn't work at all. So they, two of the young *bohais* [phonetic], the young Germans, take off their rifles, and they beat him to death on the field, with their rifles. They didn't no shoot him. They just beat him to death. And we have to carry him from that field and to that *Grundbesitzer*. They put us in such barns. We were sleeping in the barns where they keep hay. And they put in such big German shepherd dogs. And the dogs was constantly biting us and we have to climb constantly on the, not on the roof, on the, behind the roof, on the...

HR: Rafters?

HS: On the, yeah, on the boards, sitting a whole night, you know, because the...

HR: The dogs.

HS: The dogs want to tear us apart. And it start our, you know, it start our going. We got over there and we was working so on the sugar beets. And we was working on the potatoes. And we was working on the *kukurudza*, cutting the *kukurudza* this corn. Little by little we start to know the work. And little by little we see what we have to do. And it's clear that I could run away maybe ten times a day. I was working near a forest. Now they had told us if one from us run away, ten people will be killed. So

how can you run away? How can you escape, knowing that they will destroy our friends and my brother, you know? And they make a other ritual. Every 9:00 in the morning come the *gendarme* from Tsekhur on a, such a coach. And that woman come in. And they lined us up. And we was getting a beating, a half an hour beating, for breakfast, every day with the rubber truncheons. And I was getting a double beating because she still remembered that I was that *faule*, that I didn't know how to make the wheels. So every time, every, the whole line was beaten up, I went over to the, I had to go out and get. I had such a leather jacket, and that leather jacket was so cut with that beating till like I had this, like *lukshon*. How do you call *lukshon*?

HR: Noodles.

HS: Like noodles. And I didn't want to show that I am crying. I took my hat on my eyes, you know. And they was beating us every day. And it's amazing we're getting used to that beating too. We was getting used to that beating. And for a sport sometimes they say that we should beat each other. We beat there let's see me, to me a turn, and to my brother a turn, that we should beat each other. It's clear we didn't beat each other, and so they show us a lesson how they was beating someone. Side by side with us was working Polish farmers too, what was too captive they're captured just like us. You know, it's amazing, the Polish farmers, they was captured like us, and they was laughing from us.

HR: Well why did they capture the Polish?

HS: To do the work.

HR: Oh, oh, just to...

HS: You see that *Grundbesitz*, that land was, when the war start, the Polaks overrun that estate, kill her husband, and she have such a rage.

HR: They were Germans.

HS: They was ethnic Germans.

HR: They were, yes.

HS: Right. Ethnic Germans. You see, this is, the Germans on the western part from Poland, is a historical struggle in Poland. They was always a *Drang-nach Osten* [Eastward expansion], a historical *Drang-nach Osten* since the beginning of the Polish kingdom. In that time the *Drang-nach Osten* was modernized by a Bismark and by Hitler. Now in the beginning was the Christ leaders. Did you hear about Christ leaders? This was such a, like a priest leaders, with their, that they will bring Christianity with war and fire. And they was colonizing the east. And the Polaks was hiding in back. Was, and the whole Polish literature from Bolaslav Prusk [phonetic] which was written *Placowka*. *Placowka* means the outpost. There was a law in that time, when this was under German occupation, when the German occupied a part of Poland, that a Polak can't build a house.

HR: He can not.

HS: So they was building carriages, living in carriages, just to keep the Polish ground. And this was glorified in the Polish literature, *Placowka*, that, you know, he was-

-the farmer Schliemach [phonetic]--I give a name from that book, from *Placowka*--that he was living in that coach, working on the ground and no want to sell the ground to the German farmers what was killing, coming with the big, like he was going here in the western...

HR: Oh, yeah, caravans.

HS: With the caravans. He want to pay him with gold. And they destroyed, they killed his son and his wife is dying. And he's saying in the dying moment she say to him, "Marchin [phonetic], you no sell the ground." And there is a taken, and Maria Konatniska and take Aliza Zhoshkova, there is songs what they say, "Never will a German spit in our face. We'll never permit that a German make Germans from our youth." So it was a old...

HR: History.

HS: Yeah.

HR: But, so those Germans, I mean the Poles hated those ethnic Germans. But the Germans were treating the Poles almost as bad as they were treating the Jews? Or not? Did they beat those Poles?

HS: No.

HR: They didn't.

HS: The Germans? You mean the ethnic Germans?

HR: Yes, when they were beating you, what did they, did they also beat those Poles?

HS: Well, I will comment. They want to beat the Poles, but the Polak put in a knife. A Polak is not a Jew, you know? Well I will come to this. So you see there is a eternal struggle on the western part of Poland since the beginning of the Polish kingdom in about wrestling out the ground. And these Germans, you know, that in Moravine, they was ethnic. They were sitting hundreds of years over there, and being with Germans, you know? Outer-most Prussian, either they're building, the estate is built in German style. This was a, it's a historical struggle. So, it was the Polaks farmers too was working like we. But they let them out, they don't sleep with us. And the Polish farmers, they was lau-