

Interviewee:	<u>YASSI</u> , Samuel	Date:	June 11, 1998
Interviewer:	Marian Salkin		
Audio tapes:	3 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Restrictions:	None		

SUMMARY

Samuel Yassi¹ was born in Ostrow, Poland on April 28, 1924. He was the oldest of five children in a modestly middle class family. Sam and his family fled to the town of Poprusch [phonetic] when the Germans occupied Poland. When that area came under Soviet occupation all refugees, including the Yassi family were loaded into box cars and relocated to Siberia - a journey of six weeks duration. The Yassi's were deported even though they had passports. The family settled in an apartment in Siberia. Sam (15 years old) and his parents were put to work in the forest felling trees; the younger siblings were not. He describes his attempt to get an education instead of working, but after his father's death at age 43 from pneumonia shortly after their arrival, Sam had to return to work in order to receive food rations for the family. He describes the difficult living conditions, bitter weather and restrictions under the Soviet government.

Eventually the family was allowed to move to the south, to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and Sam tells of this journey on the chaotic Russian trains. He describes the next several years as the family tries to survive: being placed on a cooperative farm where they picked tobacco, being moved once again to the White Mountains to make room for Russian refugees, moving back to the Tashkent area where the found work building a factory. The family stayed in this last area for about two years during which time Sam managed to get his younger siblings into a Polish Jewish home for children run by ORT, where they were schooled, clothed and fed. Sam details this period of time tells of the death of his mother and brother. Sam then went to the city of Fergana to seek work. He tells of being sent on a huge canal building project which was very hard labor. Leaving there, he went back to Tashkent without a job. He was caught "speculating" but through his ingenuity and luck was not sent to the coal mines, but ended up first learning to be a shoemaker and then to make salt and he became a salt maker.

Sam met his wife, Sylvia in 1946, after the war had ended and were married. They went back to Poland and eventually found his brother and sister. He relates that his brother and sister stayed in Poland and how he and his pregnant wife ultimately made their way to the United States, first being smuggled out of Poland to Austria and then over the Alps to Italy. In Italy they lived in a Displaced Person's camp where they stayed for three years until they could arrange for the papers to get them to the United States arriving November 21, 1947.

¹Mr. Yassi indicates in his interview that his former name was Sholom Yashenofsky.