

Interviewee:	<u>WINKLER</u> , Alexander	Date:	April 21, 1985 ¹
Interviewer:	Steven G. Latel		
Audio tapes:	1 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Restrictions:	None		

SUMMARY

Alexander Winkler was born in Humenne, Czechoslovakia on March 24, 1914. Mr. Winkler describes his town as 60% Jewish and tells of good relations between Jews and non-Jews prior to the Nazi invasion. All of Mr. Winkler's family (wife, child, parents and siblings) were killed except for two brothers whom he was able to save.

In 1938, Mr. Winkler was mobilized as an Austrian soldier from Sudetenland. When they found out he was a Jew, they put him in a labor battalion. He escaped and began working in villages to survive. Mr. Winkler details the shortages of food, the growing restrictions on Jews (curfew, confiscation of property and wearing badges). In 1942, Mr. Winkler aware of the growing dangers, escaped into the forest and joined a Yugoslav-led Czech partisan group. He describes how they got arms from the Czech army who supported their efforts. The men were arrested and jailed for a year in Michalovce-Prešov, but were released in April of 1943 by a court officer who wanted them to be able to testify after the war that the Slovak government was not pro-Nazi.

Mr. Winkler's experiences included joining a Russian resistance group (Czapajew partisan regiment '43-'45), disguising himself as a peasant to act as a messenger, and being sent to a labor camp in Bakony, Hungary. During this time it was not known that he was a Jew. He also details two weeks when a priest he had known before the war allowed him to stay in his home and recover from an illness. He was liberated from the Hungarian labor camp by Russians, but was mistreated because they thought he was a German spy. He eventually became an interpreter for them and traveled with the Russian army hunting Nazis. During an illness, a Russian Jewish doctor directed him to go toward Budapest to find his kin. He returned to his hometown but moved to Israel in 1949 when Czechoslovakia was turning communist. Ten years later he moved with his wife and son to the United States.

¹This interview was recorded at the 1985 American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in Philadelphia, PA.