

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT

Interview w/TED PAIS

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Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854

TIMECODE NOTES:

Bob Silverthorne: Wentworth Films. Kovno Ghetto project. Interview with Ted Pais; T--E--D, P--A--I--S. 5-6-97. Sound roll 20 continued. Camera roll 42 at the head.

(Tape Cut)

C: One marker.

SB: Mr. Pais, tell me when and where you were born and the name you were born with.

TP: I was born (cough) August 25, 1915 in St. Petersburg, Russia. My name was Pais--same as in United States. The only thing I used to spell it--I am from Lithuania so the name use to be spelled P--E--I--I--S. And the first name in Russian they used to call me different; Ted--I was changed my name when I came to the United States and my name--my Jewish name was Taschum, T--A--S--C--H--U--M.

SB: And tell me about how you ended up in Kovno.TP:

Well that uh--one of the reasons I was born in--in St.

Petersburg--in Russia because in 1914 when the first World War broke out, the chief--the commander of the Russian army was Painsnipnicareyenicareyeshvitz, it was the brother of the Czar issued an order that all Jews, living in a Baltic countries, had to go deep, Russia because they were accused of being German spies. So my grandfather, who was a very well to do man--he had

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just--he came back from South Africa with a lot of money and he--he use to open the mill but he had to move to Russia. And in--in uh Russia, Jews were not allowed to live in big cities--only in little Stetchla-hoisers, nothing special. Because my grandfather had money, so he was allowed to stay in St. Petersburg and the war was on, so he opened a factory where they manufactured what I think--eh for army like holsters and all kind of acts-acts military things. So, that's why I was born in Russia--it was my grandfather and grandmother and it my mother and father they all moved

to Russia. Now from there, we lived until 1918, because really he's not from Lithuania. In 1918, Lithuania became independent and if the if they revolution, we all moved back to Lithuania. And my grandfather continued his business. And I--my father worked for this business manager and I worked uh--I went to school there--I graduated at uh Lithuanian high school and from there I went to university in Kovno that's Kovno's, they called it in Lithuania. So uh later on in the 1940, when the Soviet Union occupied the Baltic countries, my grandfather lost his business because it was nationalized and I uh my mother--my father was work--ing in Kovno--he had a job because before--6 months before that, the mill burned down and my father got a job in Kovno and I was already going out with this girl and I met--I was in University but we got married. So this is the reasons we wound up in Kovno. That we lived in Kovno and that's where the Germans got me.

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SB: And, tell me about--

C: One second.

(Cut)

BS: Speeding.

C: And mark, 2 mark.

SB: Um, and so on the eve of when the Germans came in, how did things change in Kovno?

TP: Well, the Germans--the Germans came--the worst start when the Soviet and Germany broke in June the 22nd, 1941. I was married and I was still going for last year in university and my wife was a nurse working in a hospital. And I remember Friday, it was June the 21st-eh uh the 20th--yeah the 20th. If you were planning with a few more couples to go to a picnic, next day which is the 21st and the uh course that the um there was--we lived by a river. There was a steamer and go into the country, for a picnic. It was 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning and I heard exh--explosions. We woke up and what happened? Say that well maybe, we lived not far from the airport, maybe they are doing something at the airport. And in about 6 o'clock in

the morning, the bell rings--someone is at the door--it was my father. He lived just around the corner. I said happy too sleepy? There's a war broke out. What

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war? We don't know of any war. I turned on the radio and--and I heard Molatoff make this speech that the Germans invaded the Soviet Union and you know then--but there are experiens who--who will survive and who will defeat them and so forth. Now, I went out and dressed and went out in the street there was Russian troops are marching from all states--everywhere. And it felt like they were retreating us. Stopped to for a drink of waters--soldiers just--just. So they ask a hammer are you? And they the Soviet Union, you called everybody Comrade. He says, 'Are you Jewish.' I says 'Yes.' Said, 'You better run because the Germans, right behind us and you know what to expect if the Germans will come here.' And I went out in the street, I thought well maybe they're just were gonna glance

over so I rode my bicycle in a road to the railway station. I thought maybe I could catch a train and go deeper into Russia, somewhere. But I wasn't kidding so that there were people on top the work house and eh everybody was running so I was I just came home and but I noticed already that we--we didn't see anymore policeman--uh u--uniformed policeman of the state. We saw already some kind of hooligans you know wearing kinda of a arm bands carrying riffles, you know. I didn't like the looks of them, you know. They were already taunting, 'You Jews,' that's, 'Your end is coming. The German army's right is advancing here'--I think so, we already felt what this--what's going to happen. So, we neighbors of my wife's were Heliate Myvaskelens and they say they said that they have some

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friends who lived--they own a farm and that we should join with them and somebody is gonna wait for us with a horse and wagon eh soon. But said location. It was

such a warm day, it was June 22nd and we, you know, her mother set us that's a lot of suit cases and winter clothes, you know, and we carry--it was a long walk--long walk. Gen--somehow they--the adrenaline begins to work as you get more slank and you carried--carried all this that location. And here the Lithuanians were hanging out--the--the--all the Lithuanian national flag because there--there was no Lithuanian national flag. There was the Soviet flag with that--that had a red flag. So here I didn't know and there were--a lot of them had guns and riffles and they were all armed. So we finally came to the bridge where we're supposed to meet these people that uh horse and wagon and they the--there's an officer with a whole--soldiers that told us to leave from there because the bridge is going to be blown up and the explosions and cause this is a major bridge, where there the all the railroads top it from it from railroad from Germany of it's kind to Lithuania. So they're going to blow up the bridge so we had to run from there. Stencil, my father, my mother, my sister was with us and uh my wife and ands her brother in law. So we wound up in--in to this suburb of we knew where it was. We finally we heard shooting in the street. No soldiers. By civilians when I saw the civilian Lithuanians speak, wearing all kind of old Lithuanian army insignia with little killing the--all the Lithuanian flag were shoot-

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ing at--at--at the Russian soldiers in the back. And then they dead soldiers rob them, they took his watch way, took his money away, you think later. It is not a beautiful sight. It was so worried that when they told us to so that us the latest and even the house, he says would you like something to drink? So I said well just water. And he said--I said you know, she was a Jewish woman, so she says, 'You better--you better come into the house. You all come into the house because things don't look to good because this is death--death suburb was uh this little Lithuanian partisans not scal--liberators and organized and so we can see these people can took a scene and somehow we lost my mother in law and we lost my brother in law. They disappeared. There was no way we were later when we came back home we found that they we home--they'd been back home. So to spend the 3 days and the Lithuanian's partisans came the took us to work. Remember they took us Tuesday. That was the twenty...? third right? 23rd and says we should go and clean every stage rather that

there might have been soldiers and dead horses and--and bird dreek or something. They have to clean up because the German army's coming in. So, the uh--they worked--they get the brooms and shovels and worked on the street and then they took me and my father into the uh place. There was a big metal factory. And there was people lined up--all Jewish people and there was uh fellow in a Lithuanian old army uniform trying to make writing uh take people's names down. So there's one thing I did when I heard that the Russians are leaving,

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I burned my Soviet Passport and I took it with only uh an identification card I have plus the discharge papers from--from the Lithuanian army. So finally, told them to come to the table that the guy was registering, he says, 'Are you Jewish?' 'Yes, I am a Jew.' 'Where's your Soviet passport?' I says I didn't get one. 'What do you mean?' Well, I didn't recognize the Soviet occupation for Lithuania. Right eh--eh you know you

want to save your lives you try to save you sister.

'What do you have?' I showed him the discharge papers from the Lithuanian army. So he looks at it and says, 'Oh, you--you served in the first infantry regiment in a such and such company. I served that too.' He says 'You remember the name of the Sarge?' I says, 'Yeah, I do!' 'Oh, I remember it too.' He says you know, 'You're not a communist.' I says, 'No, I'm not a communist. I was never a member of the party and I was just a student, university student.' So he says, 'What--what is your address?' I says, 'I live in the city of Kovno.' 'But what are you doing here?' he says. 'Well the war broke out, so I thought I gonna join some relatives and spend the time with them. 'So, you can go back home.' So he gave me a soldier to accompany me--take me home, take me to the place where we were. And you know where he was taking me to the little late in the afternoon. I had to drance a German Bachelor playing--a German soldiers marching--

SB: Wait, he's gonna put another roll of film.

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TIMECODE NOTES:

(Cut)

BS: Go to camera roll 43. Sound roll 21. Slate 3 is up.

(Cut)

C: Marker 3. 3 mark.

SB: So back up just a little bit to where you were showing your papers--papers.

TP: Yes, so in a way by showing him these papers, I kind of saved my life because all these people--there were hundreds and hundreds of these armed Lithuanian uh partisans who were Nazi collaborators. They were--the same day, they murdered many Jews already and at the same city. So that he assigned an armed guard to take me back where I was staying, I felt like well maybe that saved my life. At the moment he did and he took me through side streets because he heard the radio, the German marches playing and soldiers marching and there was an order from the German high command that no civilian people would be in the street when they march in or everybody will be shot. So, because I knew about

the order already. So they dropped me out there and went so, that's what the Germans arrived already. Now, that was Tuesday. We stayed another day or two with those people. They were very nice to us. They fed us. There was a house full of people. They have some family

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members, some friends that they are they had a big house they decided to go home. So they started they went home getting their belongings again but all this soldiers did was German military personnel. At one place--if--if my uh wife's grandmother was with us, and eventually an officer with her you know we felt, as Jews, already that we don't belong to any of them--there gonna kick us out but the--the army--the combat troops--they had nothing to do with the Jewish they batik. A couple of officers apologized--they were blocking our way in the sidewalk. So we came home, we found our my wife's mother with her brother. They went home the same day and they were safe--nobody touched

them. Well, and then our troubles started. The Lithuanians started to drag people from every--everywhere and then take them to different execution places. The felt free--the uh--they felt so free to do what they--what they want to do because that's was the first of the post of the uh General Ye--Yeager, from the S.S. that he stops in Lithuania for the killing the Jews was easy because due the collaboration of the local people. So if some eh leader says Jewish community went to the German high command, they could talk to some of them and say they had nothing to do with the local people. The local people want to murder you just stay bacticow. So we knew that we are also the lower level you gonna protect us. So then they started to issue all kinds of ord--first of all there was they, or the rabb--food rationing. The rations for Jews was very meager--barely--but could--but the Soviets who could

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get but you starves to--they're are all out of food. And the Jews came to--to--the Jews couldn't stand in the same line with the 'Gent-tiles.' So, uh, and then issued there was the order issued that you that we half to where a yellow Jewish star on the left side of the your chest and--and--and one on the back too. We can not walk on the sidewalks and uh a few days came out the order that all Jews had to move out of the city to a ghetto. And that was they called it the Vililampolay or Slobatka they called it in Jewish. That was a--a suburb where mostly Jewish people live in it. So but Jewish people did who lived--they had houses in the city. They had--they--but some gentiles live there had to trade houses for a little check they gave a big building away. Hell, there was no papers thrown up--nothing because the German military installation wrote the whole thing. So then we had to move--that they gave us a rule that we have to move to the ghetto by August 15th--

SB: Let's stop for a sec. Let's just get room tone.
Just cut.

(Cut)

SB: Okay let's just back up to the decree to form the ghetto, and moving in to the ghetto.

TP: Yes, I don't know if I mentioned it. The war broke

out June the twe--22nd on a Sunday. The 24th on a

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Tuesday afternoon, the city was occupied by the German army already. The German army didn't do anything to the Jews--nothing until the--there were special groups assigned to--to beat the Jews but the Lithuanian took care of many Jews already. So that he came out the Jews have to move to the ghetto. So they had to find a place where the--the ghetto could only--there was at that time, in Kovno, was about, I would say, around--30,000 Jews when the war broke out and I think you probably know the percentage--maybe 3 or 4 thousand of these survived in concentration camps and so forth. So, so the time my parents tried to find a place where to live and so my wife and I and her parents. So scattered my uh wife and I found everywhere were some relatives and my parents found some other place and my father and mother in another place and finally eventu-

ally later we joined up together so but the--but the situation the city was terrible. The Lithuanians use to grab you's who moved into the ghetto moving around and they use to take him to the different river by the Fort. We had several forts: number 4, number 5th and number 9th Fort. So uh this is all Russian Fortresses where the under the Czar they built it for military purposes. So the before we moved to the ghetto. We didn't yet moved to the ghetto, they built a fence--a barbed wire fence and I participated in building the fence too; dig holes and all that; they carried the lumber and. And August 15th was the day when the locked up the ghetto. They could not go without armed guards and so we thought we were protected now. We later

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realized that's where the trouble started because they had all the Jewish in one place and they knew how to take care of them. I mean they knew what they wanted

to do to them. And the--the fought the Jewish administration there were eh Jewish litgesvages--nice people but--but not everybody wanted to help the Jews; be in the Jewish administration because there are all have to take orders from the Germans. What happens when they ask for a hundred or thou--or thousand people to be killed. The life in the ghetto was not easy. We lived in very crowded conditions because that time it was late summer so it uh we didn't need any uh heat in the house but the rations that they gave us were meager but whatever people tried to prepare food for what they call the prences my mother would play the piano. So my mother--we were not allowed to take musical instruments into the ghetto so she sold the piano to some Lithuanian family and she use to work everyday. Jews were not allowed to take any public transportation. Unless horse and wagon if you could find one. And they uh, she walked many many miles everyday carrying bundles of flour or potatoes or all kind of stuff she could get. Sold it and money they--they couldn't do nothing with money anyway. They didn't have a value with money. So uh we started work after we the fence was built and the ghetto was locked up and then we started form all kinds of uh labor groups to work with the German army. I went to work for the German army with to build--in Kovno they had an airport but a small airport but the Lithuanian aviation had only about six or seven planes

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from the first flew were. And they uh there's no runways to first were the German needed to see little concrete runways for there liftrafa, that the Air Force. That when I was exposed to the first time to the German Air Force. Incidentally, from the first days though the day I was liberated I was working for the German Air Force. So it was very hard work. It was 12 hours and the two shifts--day shifts and night shifts and--and four was a problem it was raining and the had the didn't use any bulldozers. They had the Jews to did with shovels with and you know what happens to clay when it gets wet. We could uh lose our shoes uh and it was terrible. So I worked there for the airport for the rest--several months and it was very hard. My wife worked in a uh--there was an infirmary and a hou--so she worked part time in a hospital. Course there was no pay but just to do something for the people, you know. My father got a job to work for the food distribution center and how could you get a job that you knew

little. Because there was no employment office something like but it was established an employment office. So later I--I used some eh like some of the people that was here before--what is their names, I forgot.

SB: Oh, Meriam Gershwin.

TP: Gershwin, yeah. So, uh my father who knew some of the officials in the administration and became a uh like a group--a group leader at the airport. So they gave me a group what they use to unload the railroad

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cars eh all the building materials; gravel, cement, and uh construction steel and what not. I had a group of hundred and twenty women and forty men. It was very hard work for the men and do you know the--the German--the forma and the assistants were very well--

SB: We got to put another roll up. Could I get you

something.

(Cut)

C: 5 marker.

SB: Ted, let's talk about the actions now that we're at the beginning. The Intelligencia Action?

TP: Yes, yes. That was about, I would say in August 18th when they after the closed the ghetto. And what they needed 600 or 500 people to work in some archives and uh it was people were in order would be nice. We wouldn't have to did ditches and work in the airport and later. So my father and I decided to go too. And my mother was preparing sandwiches for us because you had to have something to eat you know. Mothers always worry. So by the time my went we didn't have any other refrigeration to keep perishable foods in the cellar so my mother went down to the cellar to get some pickles for the sandwiches. By the time she got the pickles cuz the sandwiches were ready, my father walked up the--and there were people were marching out to regular

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closing gates and the rest of the Germans who were there eh six hundred and forty or five hundred and forty I did--I really don't remember. They don't need anymore. There they started to force them back off. You know, you have to go back to work in the airport. So that they started spread rumors all of the people are working. They work in Germany. They work in different places. They are doing some nice work there, you know. Nice uh lodging. Gestapo were spreading the rumors that so and so got a letter from her husband...so an so got a letter from her son. And she specifically asked and I say did you ever see your girl here. No. They killed them the same day. And the Fort number 4 that was in the outside of Kovno. There was a little Jewish society when the upper contactals and the professors and teachers and doctors that were they asked that they should of been intelligent, educated, well-dressed. So that's where they--I always wondered why they did they want this is well I would think this is because uh because intelligent people, educated people are the ones who would revolt. Not that the revolt that I think there are a couple ghettos and the Warsaw ghetto. The couldn't--the thought

that--that a couple time is Kovno they called us one day, the same place where the Big Action on the October the 28th. The called us the people who would come out and they're going to talk to us about uh black outs. Not a little trouble--black outs. They kept us for the night and serve and then they told us to go home. Later I found out that they were testing us--what would

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Jews do when they are attack assembled in a large group? In under a big audience. So came the large action that time they told everybody to get up and everybody to assemble in the they call it the Democratu Ikstead. The uh square of the Democrats. And everybody had to be there and they could Gestapo. Gestapo men were there and the started to direct whether to go to the right or to the left. We didn't know which is the good side, which is the bad side. But we saw that once they went to the one side they took them back to

the small ghetto--there was a ghetto--first it was divided in two parts and they build a bridge to go from one ghetto to the other one. And then the Jews were evacuated from the ghetto one day on the right and were killed. So some of the people, when they took the right action to go to the left, they took them to the--to the small ghetto. And people started to fight a little they gonna have apartment or nothing but the next morning we saw they were all going up the hill toward the 9th Fort--the direction of the 9th Fort. And they were all killed. The had I would say between 10 and 12 thousand were killed the same day.

SB: You saw them going up the hill?

TP: Yes I saw it--the next morning. And the guards--the Germans and Lithuanian guards.

SB: And did the people know where they were going?

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TP: I guess they knew where they were going because the 9th Fort was the only way. They know that was the direction of the 9th Fort. I was never in the 9th Fort until--until March 1944, when they arrested me with the Jewish Police. Then--then I was there for 3 days.

SB: Um, okay let's get to that in a little while.
Let's um did you get--did your wife have a baby any-time?

TP: Yes. My wife became pregnant in the ghetto. There was a dead line when women can bear children. After dead line, babies had to be aborted. But my baby didn't want to go through it an abortion. And the baby was born after the dead line. But the papers registered in the ghetto records, it was born before the dead line. It was born--the baby was delivered by a mid-wife because my wife knew what from the hospital, she was an excellent mid-wife. The next morning out beared the placenta in the back yard. And I didn't witness but I time, I heard the birth of the baby but I uh the baby looked healthy and you know it was fine. But the baby didn't know what is what he was what kind of life he was coming to but the little. So the baby was born I would say October the 42--something like that. So when the baby was killed he was about 2 and a

half years old or something like that. The wife with the baby went to Studhoff--that's where they took the women from Kovno ghetto before they took the men to Dakow, they took them to Studhoff.

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SB: Um, so how did you keep the baby in the ghetto?

TP: Well, it was hard. You couldn't get uh milk. My brother worked--worked in a place use to sometimes the Germans gave a little milk. It was hard. It was rough to raise a child. Clothes--there was no baby clothes they have here. They had to take some old clothes and make it--cut it down and make fit for a baby or uh shoes--it was very hard. I think that people here who live in the worst economic conditions in slums, things like that, had a much easier way to raise baby then it was in the ghetto. And you know, here we spoke Yid-dish. Everybody spoke Yiddish. And they spoke a lot

but German. You know when he started--the baby started to talk and understand a little bit, he use to say, 'I'm afraid there's a German. I'm afraid there's a German.' In Yiddish, he use to say it. And he--and I built an underground he--to hide ourselves because we thought--we knew that the war is coming to an end and the Russians are coming closer. So in a couple days we could hide over here. So at night I used to dig it and take the dirt throughout not the Germans could see it. And the rest that was the uh ghetto police and a stay and stay oysh and my wife kept the baby in the cellar. It was kinda a sickly temp--than going into a cabinet that in order for the baby not to cry, she gave him injections in his thigh. I don't know what injections were but the baby acted terrible after it was, I came back from the 9th Fort because the Germans did come.

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The dogs and they responded with guns on the floor and

say there is a uh underground shelter or a thing like that; but...

SB: Tell me about the life in the ghetto and trying to get food.

TP: Well, they gave us rations; very small rations; how much bread that we eat and so much flour; never got any sugar or never gave us salt and once in a while they use to give us horse meat. But you know, your horse meat--if you season it right, it tastes very good. It tastes almost like beef. It's a little bit tough sometimes but if you grind it up, it's--you can make a horse burger. And uh people use to go to work, they use to try to organize something or uh. Like when I went to the airport, the Germans already were short a few because they use all the trucks on the Russian front. So they use to hire Lithuanians with horses and with wagons. And they use to deliver all this stuff. So when they came to work, use to take manage to put pants or a shirt. Women use to put an extra dress or another pair of underwear and take it in trade with the Lithuanians for a uh for flour for--for bread, for if you like to get a couple eggs or little butter or something. That's what that--so in the morning, when you woke up, if they made little tea or something--coffee we didn't have. So if you had a little piece of bread that the whole family use to--use to divide the bread in little slivers, you know for

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Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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TIMECODE NOTES:

everybody a little piece. Or you if you get a few potatoes, use to boil a few potatoes and you know everybody, at home, the mother would arrive and her mother used a ration for this--only way we could feed ourselves. There was no second helping.

SB: What about community life?

TP: Well, community life--it's not that there were--the Germans did not want there any schools but somehow there was sch--there was schools there was--af--after the first year, somehow, after the Big Action, they said life is gonna be--they took already about 12 thousand people out, so they don't have to feed so many. So maybe we can organize a little bit. But uh, university students, we organized a group like we belonged to Zionist fraternities. So we use to meet every once in a while, you know. We could talk about

our troubles. Then there was--well there was an orchestra. There was several people in the police force who were good musicians and then and they--

SB: Ran out. Reload. We got to put another roll on.

(Cut)

(Sound Roll 22 Next)

BS: Wentworth Films. Kovno ghetto project. Interview continued with Ted Pais. Sound roll 22. Camera roll

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TIMECODE NOTES:

25 is up.

(Cut)

C: Marker 6.

SB: Um, we we're talking about how hard it was to have a baby in the ghetto.

TP: How do you--to raise a baby--to bring up a baby. It was hard--it was hard--because had to manage with what we had. Incidentally, I was, after mentioning I was working at a airport at one time I had a German guard who's a very--he was from the German air force--with the ground crew. And he was very nice fellow--he was a friend with me and he happened to tell me he was in concentration camp too because he was a socialist and they socialists little in use and he was put into Dakow. Then he was--in the war--in the war, he was released from Dakow and put in the army and the uh--I happened to mention that I have a child--he don't live in the ghetto, so--so he brought--one day he brought me a bag of sugar and he brought some flour, I think like that. Because I thought of the--but the food situation it was and when I was--and later he became--was a cook in the uh--in the uh air force barracks when they had their pilots just to use--so use to ask with the comrade 12 or 1 o'clock and use to give me lunch. It was very delicious lunch too you know what the pilots were eating who were going to bomb

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Interview w/TED PAIS

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TIMECODE NOTES:

Russia a thing like that. But you know it was a very--their food was getting already--they tried to skimp on food more and more. First it use to a nice soup with meat. Later is was just like a potatoes with the grave--a think like that. It gave you the idea that they're running out of everything you know.

SB: Um, tell me how you became a ghetto policeman?

TP: Oh. Well, it was--ra--get--when I--in 19 forty...three--forty three--only before. There were rumors started circulated they um--the Germans want to take most of the people who worked for the air port. You see they didn't have enough uh guards to guard us from--there was a shift--was a shift--there was a thousand people they use to go work, you know. They need almost a--a regiment of soldiers to accompany them because there were so many Jews and so many soldiers guarding--like that. So they wanted to build barracks at the airport. They should live in the airport. Women separate from the men and work right there. We had a family. We didn't want to be separated, so if we

got--I tried to use the influence, what I had from my father in law, what he knew very important people and says uh. As a matter of fact, I wanted to become a policeman when the ghetto first started. I was not accepted. You're too educated for it. We need rough characters you know. But later I don't--they cleaned the ranks of the policeman because they didn't--they misbehave you know. So they had to get people who use

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TIMECODE NOTES:

their head more than their mouth you know. So I was accepted and they uh--and they gave me a--a job with the to be at some ghetto shops. Where they use to bring uh German army uniforms to wash them and clean them and mend them and--and so it was like a plant guard. So that was that. That was easy. You worked for 12 hours and 12 hours you--you go home. So that's how I became a policeman. Until--until the day when they arrested the Jewish policeman. I have to

give--the reason why they just--the Jewish police.
That was already 19 forty...end of '43 and '44, when
the ghetto was converted--instead of a ghetto and a
concentration camp. When the S.S. when they became the
head of the ghetto. See before they had was
they--they--the district commission of the S.A. was
the member but then the S.S. took over. That's why the
concentration camp had the Daskimblovia or Gulka maybe
that his name. He was a uh S.S. colonel. So uh--so
you figure--so why do we have policeman--yes there was
an underground movement. People use to go into fights
you know--fight the Germans, the Partisans and then of
course, a certain people the police knew about the
underground movement but the guards wouldn't here a
thing like that. So they called the police that par-
ticular day--that was in a--that was the day of the
uh--I think was in March 1944. That was the took the
children and old people away. But I thought the
date--I think March '44. And the uh--and they took us
all. We had to assemble all the front of the commander
of the ghetto. Shiny boots there from and there stuff

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TIMECODE NOTES:

from operate and we--somebody exactly 8 o'clock in the morning and see a couple buses drove up with the windows were painted white. And the buses were a bunch of Ukrainian, Nazi collaborators and S.S. men with machine guns got out. So they got out. This is--we use to call--the Jewish people--this was a hundred and twenty years you know. So they started to talk to us about the uh like that we're not watching the uh you know Russians began to fire cannons those planes over Kovno. The front was coming closer and closer but we don't when they uh we the guards would turn off the lights in Kovno they uh.

SB: Oh, the curfew at night?

TP: Not that the--there was curfew anyway.SB: A black-out?

TP: Blackouts. The black lights uh. All the police are not watching the blackouts. Police isn't doing was he is supposed to do you know--uh anyway. That how they--they told us to go in the buses. And I see really one bus was going af--was really he had that the shoulder fell off. So they tell the people not in the

first buses. And then--it was going the direction of the 9th Fort. Now remember one fellow refused to go into the bus. He just refused to go into the bus. So he says--he says to the Germans and the S.S. man who want to take him there. 'Well, if you want to kill me, kill me now!' So get the game and all though some

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TIMECODE NOTES:

German come over to knock him down. So they shot him. You could see later the bullet hit him right here (pause). Of course he died. So they took us to the 9th Fort. They kept us there for 3 days. They--the Gestapo--members of the Gestapo came, a few times to themselves tell who else was here--tell us--tell us who are the leaders, who are the underground, where are the guns hidden. Who has buried money and gold. Where are they uh underground shelters--the Bookers?, they call it. Where are bunkers? And who is--and where is it? If you tell us you go back to the ghetto as pol--po-

licemen. If you're not, they said it in German: So-
dahelamhelamgoff. So the deal, guard there was uh--go
out there was a smoke cause they showed us to window
where they were digging out the bodies from the Great
Action and from the other Jews who from France or from
Germany who are brought here to execute. So you're
going up with the smoke to dear God, you know. So we
were there. A hundred and forty were taken there. 97
came back. They were all administration. They are
soldiers and Adolf killed and I was among the 97 who
came back. There was a negotiation with some who
worked for the Gestapo that uh they tried to uh
ob--obey the orders of the S.S. and think like that.
And be good boys and behave who'll behave
ourselves--cooperating with the authorities. So it
came after that they took us Monday, Tuesday, Wednes-
day, Thursday afternoon they brought us back to the
ghetto. That's when I saw my child, I survived and he
was so--he didn't recognize me from all those injec-

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Interview w/TED PAIS

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TIMECODE NOTES:

tions and that he was so. And from there on, we were just uh waited to--

SB: Let me--let me ask you something. Did they torture so at the 9th Fort?

TP: No. Not that, not that, not that--they just ask questions. They told us--tell us what you know so one guy pipes up this bunker--this and this and this and oh they knew we were dead already. Tell us what you know. What you don't know, don't tell us. I didn't know very much--I just kept my mouth shut. No they didn't torture us. But however one fella was brought into our cell. He was so beaten up it was terrible. He was bleeding. He was later dead--he was brought you know. We knew who he was. He was also policeman. I says, 'What happen to you.' They beat him up because they all before the war, his parents owned a very elegant fur shop. They use to sell their furs and before they went to the ghetto, he gave--they gave their furs to some Lithuanian people they know and so she couldn't go out of the ghetto and they were gonna pay them back with food--I think like that. So sometimes she went to the walls and they refuse to give them more food or money whatever it was. So he says--she says she is going to complain to the Gestapo about you. Don't go complain to the Gestapo about Lithuanians. So they

got--they get a very important the Gestapo, that his wife was there and they accused him that they stole their furs and I think like that. He was beaten up so

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TIMECODE NOTES:

badly and I--I don't think he--he didn't come back. He remained at the 9th Fort.

SB: And how did they choose who they killed and who they let go?

TP: Pardon me?

SB: How did they choose who they killed?

TP: Oh, this they--they killed all the top officers--the top officers: the captains, the lieutenants, you know in a police force. The use to set up certain ranks seargent, I think like that. Also were in the leading place uh they also killed, as a matter

of fact, they took one, La--Levine then, he was the chief of the police he forces uh. It was winter, that time was, a nice at a fakir and one of our guys were taken for interrogation and uh and he saw his boots and his coat hanging there, so the Gestapo ask him says, 'Do you know whose coat it is?' He says, 'It's Levine's.' He says, 'He doesn't need it anymore. He's not--he's not alive anymore.' The executed him right there. They--they the ones who made the decision and those who were liberated uh to some influence--to some one Jew who worked for the Gestapo and the uh so he said uh he came to talk to us at the 9th Fort. He says, 'You know, I'd like to get you out you know, back to your family, something like that.' Well--

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TIMECODE NOTES:

SB: We have to put another roll.

(Cut)

BS: Go to camera roll--go to camera roll 45. 45 is up.

(Cut)

BS: Correction camera roll 46 is up.

(Cut)

C: Seven mark.

SB: Early in the ghetto, did you know or did you see the hospital burning?

TP: Yes. Because my--my--my--my wife worked there but she had just, I don't remember. Was he finished the night shift? Or--my sister was a medical student, so she worked at the hospital too but I think--I can't recall--that she just finished the night shift and she left the hospital. The hospital was on the small ghetto, on the other side of the bridge. And she because the bridge soldiers and Lithuanian Partisans were surrounding the hospital. I knew they were burning the hospital, I knew it. I saw it burning from a distance.

SB: Why did they burn the hospital? TP: Because they say

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TIMECODE NOTES:

it was Typhoid cases of Typhoid fever. There was no Typhoid fever. Speaking about--but burning, I have to tell you something that has nothing to do with the ghetto but I saw it when I was in the ghetto. We use to march--go by everyday a prisoner of war camp or Russian prisoners were there. There's a big 3 or 4 story brick building--we use to see it because they--the prisoners worked at the airport too. And one day, the guards we were marching to a different street. So I asked a German guard, I says, 'Why uh--why we going to different street?' And he says, 'Oh that was the end a fire or something.' We didn't works that Sunday. He says, 'I'll tell you next week.' Next Monday, we were going back to work. There were bulldozers leveling go. The burned down the whole prisoner of war camp--I told you Russian prisoners in there. And bulldozers were leveling those ground. I speak back to the ghetto. You know the ghetto. How was life in the ghetto. In the ghetto there were no more wooden

fences being built--use them for fuel to keep our houses warm in the winter time. We burned chairs, we burned furniture what we could live without--live without things like that--that would--they didn't give us any wood, you know, or coal anything.

SB: What--what--tell me about the orchestra. We were starting that.

TP: Yes, the orchestra was uh--the would openly smile but when they all good musicians and they organized an

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TIMECODE NOTES:

orchestra. They was a--we had some good violinists who played in the opera orchestra and they--they use to have concerts once in a while. They use to have concert that was in an old synagogue--they use to have the concerts. I attended one concert and the uh it was beautiful. And they--the German administration use to go watch the concert--a thing like that.

And--and they say incidentally, you know in Germany, you could not play any works of composers who were part Jewish or Jewish but over there you could play a Mendel song and other things you know. But the--the German, the S.S. man or the S.S. officer stood up to listen to this concert. They like music sure. They played music in Aushwitz and they led them to the--to the gas chambers.

SB: What else about you know religious practices were forbidden in the ghetto?

TP: Well, the religions you practiced you know the uh, they practiced uh--I have to think about Kosher cause we didn't get any uh Kosher meat so they had uh no meat. They uh--if somebody was lucky to get a chicken someplace, so they use to--sel--slice a little and eat your way and all so they let the Jews could have chicken. I had chicken once in the 3 years you're in the ghetto--only once. My brother in law got a chicken somewhere and we cooked lately. It was such a great fiesta. And the uh the Jews yes they use to play. The

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TIMECODE NOTES:

had--they did an official--they had their own synagogue but they use to get together and play and they was no Matsa--Matsas for Passover but I don't know, some people use to mo--when they get flour, use to make Matsas for themselves so. As a matter of--in the camp, in Dakaw in the camp, there was no--else use to give me bread but I knew some very religious Jews who use to trade their bread for the potato and not to eat the bread.

SB: What about ceremonies in the ghetto or sec--secret ceremonies? Secret religious.

TP: Ceremonies no. There was none of that. But maybe some people bet married. Some people did get married because they uh, because some of it, you're afraid you not only will take people out to different camp so people didn't want to be separated. So couples who were going out--going out together--in a date. So they uh use to get married. But not that they celebrate. You use to get--get married--you need an Ghetto Administra-tion you know--just for a record.

SB: Uh huh. What about the partisans? Did you do any...?

TP: Oh incidentally, after my baby was circumcised. He was circumcised. There are more real that uh--outrageous people performed circumcision, yes. So he died a real Jew. And now you're talking about the uh...

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TIMECODE NOTES:

SB: Partisans, underground.

TP: Well, I knew certain people who were active in the partisans. They uh, I knew one of them was of the leader of the partisans. I knew him in person. But I never see much in the ghetto. They use to do all the work was underground, you know. And they, incidentally, he was just before they closed the ghetto, he was ambushed by a bunch of Gestapo men. He was supposed to meet somebody but they was Gestapo, there were traitors

you know and but I think there was an underground movement. I thought that certain people were growing beards and mustaches and things like that. And I knew it this--uh this for a reason not to be recognized and to look differently. But so when I was a guard, of that in that uh factories where they had the--the shops.

That they supplied the uni--the German army uniforms for the partisans. Because they used to bring the uniforms from dead soldiers and they use to wash them, and clean them and mend them and there were so many of them, nobody kept track of them and that's why the partisans us to get their German army uniforms to--to be disguised themselves as German soldiers.

SB: So you--

Jim Ball (Operator): Got a battery change.

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TIMECODE NOTES:

(Cut)

C: 8 marker.

SB: The uniforms, um the extra, did you--did some get put aside for the partisans?

TP: Well they--they use to--we use to steal it from there. The--the police use to steal some--we were guards at night of the shops. So we opened the doors and some use to steal and then give it to the partisan leaders--German army uniforms. They needed them you know to be--

SB: Did you steal anything else at night?

TP: Well I didn't steal a thing. You know that--that certain policemen did but I not--you know the partisan movement had to be so secretive that you can not trust everybody, you know. I knew what is this but I knew a couple policemen who were there--helped to steal this uniforms--a thing like that. I knew it was--it was going on. I'm glad it happened you know.

SB: Um, the ghetto organization, were the ghetto--

TP: Administration, a Ghetto Administration yes. I you know, there was Dr. Elkish, he was uh, they use to call the Orbayuda. He was the head of the Jewish council

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TIMECODE NOTES:

there, the Udaendulster. He was a very fine doctor and was a great doctor too you know, in his profession. And then there was--you want me to name the uh names of the people?

SB: No, I want you to tell me what you thought of the council.

TP: I thought that they did a wonderful job. I think they uh--the one thing, they never submitted any list of people to be killed like there are so many in other ghettos, they forced the uh the ghetto, in the state to give a list of people they--they didn't want to be responsible for picking people. But when the Germans came and they take them--they say they take a thousand

people to work with them. We tried to believe that they came to work but we never heard from them anymore. But they tried to do the best job under the circumstances. I guess that they had uh--in the ghetto court, if somebody was caught stealing--we had a little ghetto jail. A couple times I was watching the guys in jail who arrested--a thing like that. Well there were even a couple guys that uh--a couple guys murdered a family and robbed them their money and the police caught him later.

SB: All within the ghetto?

TP: Within the ghetto yes. We had a court. Some--some for little misdemeanors thing like that, you know and

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TIMECODE NOTES:

uh then was talking to the people use to be--the one of the jobs, the police once. See people who, on the airport was very hard work. So some people worked in

factories in the city and it was easy work and they could get some food--something like that. So the ghetto administration put up a rule that these people who worked ev--on those easy jobs should give one day a week to work at the airport so the people from there could be relieved, you know. So it was like this. Like my sister worked on time in a--in a German military hospital. She was a medical student but she use to wash--uh wash floors over there you know. Because that was an easy job. They use to give her food over there and there was work indoors. So my sister had to go for one week and work at the airport to relieve some women to relieve some women who worked seven days at the airport.

SB: Okay, I think we're just about to run out, right?

JB: Yes.

SB: So, we let's put on one more.

TP: Okay.

(Cut)

BS: Sound roll 23. Camera roll 47.

(Cut)

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TIMECODE NOTES:

C: And 47 marker 9.

SB: So you're gonna tell me about the liquidation of
the ghetto.

TP: Yes, in spring of 1944. Rumors began to in the
ghetto that eventually the ghetto will be liquidated.
What they gonna take us to concentration camps and we
of course, thought of the worse you know what liquida-
tion means? Of course the S.S. was already in charge
of the ghetto and they were talking about different
places. They're gonna build barracks and move part of
the ghetto there but uh. And until it came about the
June--June/July forty.. forty four. And they uh the
orders that to come the ghettos what the remaining the
ghetto was already small. So many people were killed
and moved to camps but some will go by and together
we've taken. Some people will go by boat to Germany,
or to other camps, thing like that. It finally came

that day I think it was July 15th already, I don't remember. It was a terrible day. It was very hot and--and it rained very hard. And they took us to the--we marched of course by foot to uh not the railroad station but to the uh--place where there's a railroad tracks there. And there was a cattle cars there. We sit with our--with family--with children whatever--and we got in there. The cars were full of manure thing like that. Incidentally, this baka, the head of the top command until Dr. Elkis who was the--he was a very good terms with this. So I says, you can

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TIMECODE NOTES:

take you library with, take you books along with you.
And you'll be--you have a very nice place to live. So
anyway they took us to the camp--took not to the
camp--to--to the--to the train and the train started to
roll and we were--we were riding all evening and all
night until next morning. It was terrible, there was

rot. And those railroad cars were stenciled these eight horsels or 40 people--that silver train--those cattle cars were. We were farther a hundred people you know. The manure--it was terrible--it very. So we finally arrived in the uh--a place that they stopped and they yell--the guards open the door and they uh we saw a sign Diganhoff, was the name of the railroad station. That was in Germany, in Prussia. And they said all women and children get out. You will go on a narrow gates train. You'll go to camp and the men will follow you later. This is when I said goodbye to my mother and my father said goodbye to my mother and we said we'll meet in the United States. A remember the addresses. My father had 3 brothers here and 2 sisters (in the U.S.) and he said 928 Shoven, Evanston and 5140 North Central Park Chicago, Illinois. Remember the addresses. We will try to meet there. Of course my..my father came here later and my mother died after the war so they took us there. We never saw the women again. The women was taken to Studhoff. Studhoff was a camp with gas chambers and furnaces and my sister--and eh saw my--my wife a few times there and then they didn't see them anymore. They took the women and children away and they put them in the gas cham-

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TIMECODE NOTES:

bers, right there, right out. And they took us to--all the way to the station Calforing which is in the area of Munich and from there they marched to our camp. That was camp number 1, and a extension of the concentration camp Dakaw was the war camp number 1. Like a Einst they called it you know. And it was a very we came there and started uniforms and for a camp lifestyle, some thing like that.

SB: Let me ask you about the liquidation of the ghetto. Did they--they ended up burning the ghetto at the end.

TP: Yes, people who came--the following day, the more people came from the ghetto who they found in those bunkers and that they were. So they tell us they were burning the ghetto. They came people in those bunkers, use flame throwers, you know, to get those people out. And they burned the buildings down, yes. There are people, many people who were alive hiding inside perished in the fire.

SB: Now, let's go back, can you tell me again about the

hiding place that you had?

TP: Yes, my hiding place was built in a little house and there was a kitchen--there was cellar. There was an opening--a door in the floor. And you, with a ladder, you go down to the cellar. That way you could keep food--it's colder in the cellar. So what I did was there was a kitchen cabinet against the wall and I

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TIMECODE NOTES:

just covered the opening where you can go to the cellar. I think it's kind of a rug or something I put there, nailed it down. And I cut out a hole in the floor that when they opened the cabinet door, you could climb into the hole in the cellar. I even brought an electric-- a wire for electricity. We had electricity in the ghetto for light. And there was kind of a uh air hole and little windows. I made it bigger to get air you know. And uh--and I made it so that the floor was a cabinet. I nailed down a couple pots, you

know, so when you climb into this--to this hole, you can take this wooden floor, with these nailed in pots to it, so they open the door and see it's just a cabinet with pots on the uh. That was to camouflage it. However, my wife told me later that the soldiers came there and pounded in the floor and I did something else to the hidden cellar. I think I put some extra dirt under the floor or something. They should of they heard a pounding with a--with a riffle--they didn't come out there.

SB: What did you do with the dirt?

TP: The dirt we use to put in pails and we use to throw a little by little outside, you know, and the had--there's no guard. It was just dirt inside so we sent the dirt and try not--not to show any puddles. If you saw The Great Escape, the movie. Did you see The Great Escape?

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SB: Yeah.

TP: How the British uh filled up to their pockets.
They took the dirt in their pockets and they use to uh hold their pockets and pull a string and the dirt used to go down their pants and the dirt so it was what I did is uh take it out to them. Take it in a bucket. A little bit with my fist; I use to distribute it all in different places so that there was no--uh pile of dirt.

SB: And um when you got arrested with the other police, they took the, they took your shoe laces and glasses. Tell me about that.

TP: Yes, the took the--that's right, the took it was far most of them were boots. But they took my eye-glasses away. They had knives; if anybody had little scissors--something like that. They said we have any bullets with you. You can not speed up your death with us. They took the glasses away because, you know, at least you can cut your--tried to commit suicide. And uh--and uh belts, suspenders, anything which you can make uh hang yourself or something.

SB: And did you get told, while you were there, that you weren't going to live very longer?

TP: Well, when they first took us. When we first came to the 9th Fort, so that the S.S. and the German police guards were there look in the book he says. He says,

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'You know this is Fort number 9.' And I quoted the German, 'From--from here come Canacksoleek, nobody returns from here. So then he stood to the others said then took us in--into the cell. The cell was almost knee-high of water. There was so full. I don't know where the water was from and we stood there. But then, you know, we are no more than humans, we have physiological functions to take care of. We have to go to toilet. So myself with somebody else started knocking on the door. The guards would come. Say, 'What do you want.' I says, 'We have no toilet.' 'Then do it right here because you won't live long.' So that what we did. But later is was getting dark already and I had one little electric bulb there burning and they open

the door and he says, 'Five men out.' So I said we took five men and I was one of the five to whom I volunteered. So I figured well if there are going to execute that they took a few people at a time to execute them.

Hear me, I might as well die now. If I live so I live. And they took us to another cell. There was light and there was kind of a sleeping bunks, you know, for sleeping and there was uh pails for taking care of you toilet habits, you know. And there was drinking water, a thing like that. And the table with benches. And then they brought us bread and soup and I--I--and that's how they brought us to the cell, five men at a time. But you see the people who were left didn't know what happen to use because the can hear, they see us in

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the cells. So we and they told them this is your new hotel, you'll sleep here overnight.

SB: Okay, um, I think were just about out. The hanging of Mac.

TP: Yes I knew about it and I saw him hanging there when we came back from the airport from work. They put in such a place that the people will go back to their houses and 'Yes, I saw him hanging.' I was not there when he was hung but I saw him hanging there. They did it purposely that everybody should see it. Yeah I knew what happened. I knew about it. I knew he was.

SB: We have to get the sound of the room. Just be very quiet for--

(Tape Cut)

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