

Part. Oh, setting sticks.

OK. Go ahead and tell me.

While we were looking a place in the ghetto, I went along once with my father. And that was what you call Slobodke. The ghetto was in Slobodke. Kovno was like a peninsula. They had two rivers on either side of the town. And at the end of the town that the two rivers met-- the one river was the Neman the other one the Viliya. Slobodke was on the other side of the Viliya. That's where the Kovno ghetto was.

While going there to look for a place that we had to move into the ghetto, we walked into some of the abandoned houses that Jewish people lived before. And the blood that we saw in the beds, beds unmade, cribs full with bloodstains in the cribs.

And that was right after the Germans came in. The Lithuanians themselves made such a pogrom. They went through Jewish houses, killing everybody. Old, young, babies in the cribs. That scene, with the blood in the beds and the blood in the cribs, this I'll never forget. And that was the Lithuanian [YIDDISH], the Lithuanian murderers that committed these things.

Later, we have seen a lot of other atrocities. Well, that was one of the most horrible scenes that I have seen, even throughout the Holocaust.

When you moved into the ghetto, were you afraid?

Fear was not the question. We were afraid every time we heard footsteps. The joke was that you knew when the Germans are coming because they are banging on-- the way they were walking, you could hear for a block away. The only problem was, in ghetto, in the street that we lived, it was not paved. It was sand. But if you saw a German from the three blocks away, you hid.

In ghetto itself, after it got to some kind of normality, whatever normality could be in ghetto, they did have rations. And they had to supply the minimum of bread or whatever, the minimum of-- they need trusted and capable people to man to the store, to watch the bakeries, and so on.

My father being a very honored and trusted individual, capable businessman, they somehow favored him. I'm talking the ghetto administration. And gave him an inside job. In order that he should not have to go out every day from the ghetto to work. But gave him a job in the ghetto because they needed him.

They needed somebody to trust, who should administer a store where bread was being divided and given out on the rations to the people. So that was my father's job most of the time. In a store and also, later on, a bakery that he was the, so to speak, the manager of the bakery to watch what's going on, that nothing should be stolen, nothing should be done unjustified.

And they trusted him. And he was taking care of that job. So that enabled him not to have to meet the Germans on a daily basis.

And what about humiliation to your father? Tell me about his--

Humiliation? Once, while he was in the store behind the counter, a German came in. And seeing my father with a beard, pulled out his sword, and cut it off, half a beard. And he wanted to go further, but somehow, from the outside, somebody called him. So he left him like this.

My father, being a religious man, and didn't care. You know, he will not give in to the-- so he will not even straighten out his beard. Half of it was cut off. He took a scarf, wrapped it around his face, and that's the way he was walking till the beard grow back. But he wouldn't cut it. Bigger humiliations than beatings and spitting in your face. That was even

worse. Yes.

I had cousins and other family that were beaten brutally. I remember one specific and older cousin. I was at the time 11, 12 years, 13 years. And a cousin that was 19 came with boils from head to toe. A German, somebody else probably wouldn't have survived. He was a young fellow, strong fellow. And he was black and blue from head to toe. That was a daily occurrence.

Do you remember one of the early Aktions the Intelligentsia Aktion?

That was, in the Jewish calendar, Marcheshvan, [HEBREW] Marcheshvan, the seventh day of the month what you call Marcheshvan. That was the big Aktion that everybody had to go out on the big, open field. And they were selecting right, left, left, right.

At that time, most of them were families. They didn't take-- not as much breaking up families, but families on one side, families on the other side. Fortunately, we were selected on the right side.

Those that were selected on the left side, they pushed in the what you call the Kleiner ghetto. The ghetto was a big highway, or what were there was a big highway went through the ghetto. On one side of the highway was a smaller part that was called the Kleiner ghetto. But being that the highway had to go through the ghetto, so each part was individually wired or fenced in.

So those that selected were taken in the small ghetto. And the next day in the morning, they took them to the Ninth Fort and killed them. At that time, I understand, 9,000 Jews were killed, I think, in the Great Aktion.

Do you remember that day?

I remember the day vividly. It was still dark outside when we went out from the house. And we were all standing there for hours. The day was a dismal day. It wasn't raining but was a cold, damp day. And stayed there till late in the evening. And then we were sent back to the house.

From my family, my uncle [PERSONAL NAME] family, only three children were left on the right side, the rest of the family on the left. So these three children later moved in with us in the two rooms that we had the kitchen and the room.

And we partitioned of the kitchen. These three slept behind the partition in the kitchen. While we, meaning my parents and the two more brothers, myself slept in one room, in the other room. It means at night, the room became one bed. It wasn't a very large room, either.

And in the morning, they used to put it together because they wanted to make a quorum, a minyan in our house, even in ghetto. So everything was pushed aside and the 10 people used to come in and used to pray down right there.

Later, they took away the books and there was-- they gave up the books. So we had to hide whatever we wanted to. The few books that we kept, we had to hide them, that god forbid somebody shouldn't see it. And that was the biggest crime.

In the big Aktion, do you remember going past the German doing the selecting?

It was a fleeting moment. It was a go this way. And that's where we went. It wasn't that we were looked over for hours. It was a fleeting moment. It became the line. We go to the right, we went to the right and that's it.

Did you know-- had you already figured out which was the good side?

I did not remember figuring it out at that time. But after a while, we realized that we are on the right side.

OK. We have to put another roll in.

Mark.

Three marker.

In the big Aktion, when you talked before to Paul, you told him that it looked like the people doing the selecting and the guarding were enjoying their jobs. Is that right? Laughing.

To them, it was a joke. They're kidding around. Go here, go there. It was like with smiles on their faces. And the biggest joke was that people did not know what is right, what is wrong. People did not know what's happening. And when the people wanted to go the wrong way, and they were laughing, they made the biggest joke to them.

They did them a favor. Some day, some people asked them to go the other way because families were separated. So they-- there was a joke. You want to go there, go ahead. They did him a favor. That was a joke. There was-- I don't remember exactly, but a few officers that was there, standing there. And of course, a lot of guards. And that's the way it went through.

Go ahead.

As a result of that big Aktion, what we call, people realize that many times-- there was a lot of other Aktions, even before and after. That if you're not there and you survived it, you have a better chance to stay surviving instead of going to a selection.

So what we started doing is make hiding places. Bunkers as we called. And of course, not every house or every place was suitable. So we teamed up with a neighbor across the street from us who had a little house. And the water source was a well in the yard. And next to the house, maybe 10, 12 feet away from the house was a barn. That way he kept at one time wood if he had anything to keep there.

So he decided to dig up the barn, make like a bunker underneath, cover it up with whatever wood he could, and cover it up with the dirt, and dig a tunnel. Because once you went into that little house, the vestibule had like a cold basement. I mean, it's poured cement. That was like a basement. Only small, but just under the vestibule.

So they had a trap door to get onto that place. They broke through a wall in the cement and dug a tunnel from there to the room that was actually underneath that barn.

Now, they needed any kind of supplies. So the well was very close by. So it made it so that they took out the first round from the well, covered it up, and put a well also into the bunker. Not no well. And they were taking water from our well that we had in the backyard.

By the Kinderaktion, and that was already in '44. In then Jewish date, it was two days, the Kinderaktion, that was the third and the fourth day of the month of Nisan. We were hidden there in that bunker.

However, a parent of one of the people of another neighbor somehow was found somewhere else. And in order to be released, or what he thought he'll be released, he snitched on us so they should let him go.

So the second day of the Kinderaktion, in the late afternoon, all of a sudden, they started banging on the wall, because they already found this out. They wouldn't have found it unless somebody pointed a finger. And that's the one that pointed a finger at us. They took us all out and that's when my father and my younger brother were taken away.

Before that, when I was about 14, that was means two years in the ghetto, they also realized that if you have a profession or you're employed, you had a better chance of survival, at least on a day to day basis. So my father put me in the [GERMAN] in ghetto. I should learn a trade of tinsmith.

And capable I was and picked up very fast. Within a few months, I was a full-fledged tinsmith, so much so that what we were doing there was for hotheuses. We used to make the cans, the spray cans or milk cans. So it needed turning the

metal and also a solder iron.

I caught on so fast that it's not how you holding the solder iron or you're leading the solder, but how you apply the acid before. And that's how the solder will be. When I once brought in a utensil finished, it was only about two months after I started, not even two months. And I showed him that I finished it.

The foreman couldn't believe it. You couldn't do it. He wouldn't trust me. He accused me that somebody else did it for me. Till he went in the shop with me, and I showed him how I solder. That just like a string. That convinced him there that I did it. And a month later, he made me the foreman for the whole shop. That was what I did in the ghetto after I was 14.

My father worked during that time, as I said before, in the bakery. But when they were short in people to send out for certain jobs outside of the ghetto and they didn't have enough who to send. And they had, let's say the demand was that they give me 60 men, or 100 men, or 300 men, and they were short, they grabbed whatever they could. So even my father, who was employed in the ghetto, had to go outside. Usually he did not go outside the ghetto.

The problem was that this was a winter. And they used to go out when it was dark and used to come back when it was dark. And here, my father was very religious, and he had to put on the tefillin. During the day, not during the night, you cannot put it on. So he needed to put on the tefillin in the morning before he went out, put a forehead on top of the tefillin. A forehead.

And a whole day, he used to work like that, and came back at night. That is torture. Because anybody knows that there are certain limitations, certain restrictions what you can do within the tefillin, when you wear the tefillin. And that is torture, but few times he had to do it. Otherwise, he was not exposed to the outside of the ghetto.

In the house, was it cold?

In the house, we had a oven that was heated by wood. And the back of it was in the other room in between the two rooms. And the same over we used to bake some things. And being, like I say, my father in the bakery, so we probably had maybe a little bit better than most people.

But in the house, the cold of the house was more or less bearable. We managed the best we could. Of course, it was not comfortable. But manageable, according to the ghetto standard.

At one summer, I remember, we had nowhere to put the garbages. So in the backyards, these houses were separate, and each one was the small houses on lots. So those backyards, the toilets were a separate little house in the backyard.

And when they used to dig a hole for garbage, to put the garbage. But when the hole were filled up, you covered it with dirt, and dug a hole next to it. And that's the way you go around to it, to get rid of the rubbish.

One summer or spring morning, I go out, and I take a look. There are certain weeds, a certain grass that grows on top of an old garbage dump. And I recognized this is tomato, two plants. And I kept it a secret. But I said, these are definitely tomato plants. So in corner of the house that we had in the other side, I took these plants and made a garden.

That year, I picked 150 kilo of tomatoes. I was about 14-- 13, 14. I used to sell the tomatoes, a kilo of tomatoes for two kilo of bread. That helped us survive while other people had to do other things.