

And this is mark number 26. Slavs and slaves. Day to day life in the ghetto, aside from your art-- when it was at a peaceful time, what was it like?

When it was peaceful, then I went out drawing. Look, I had my sister with a little child, and then sometimes my sister wanted to go out to town. And somebody had to stay with the child. We had our hands full, yes.

And then they asked me for all sorts of teaching people and showing people. And when I worked for the Germans, I worked the whole day in the studio. When you went out to work, you came back at 7:00 at night, yes. I was in the working brigades like anybody else. I was working at the airport. I was working at the agriculture. I was working--

But then, went when somebody-- for instance, women who are working at agriculture in a big farm where they grow tobacco. In Lithuania, it was still experimental, yes. And there was a professor who saw me drawing, so he asked me to paint a few plants for him. And then the manager of the farm saw me painting, so he asked if I can paint the portrait of his wife.

And then I was sitting there and painting portraits. It was warm, and they gave me to eat. And then the neighbor wanted a portrait until in one winter the women who were working there were stealing something. Of course they were stealing. They were hungry. So he sent them back before their time, and I was at their flat. I didn't know about it.

So somebody came and said-- the mother of that lady came and said, well, your brigade is out. Hurry to catch them. So I hurried, and I fell in the snow, and I had a broken leg. It took me months to heal, and then it was an open wound, yes. And they took me on a wagon with a horse to the hospital. It was quite a tragedy, and my sister came crying. But I did many drawings at the hospital later.

Let's cut for a second.

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The Jewish police-- were they a good police force?

They were a good police force, yes, and they were really the elite of youth in Kovno. They had very difficult jobs. There were many Zionists between them. There were many intelligent people among them. But you know that on the day of the Children's Action they arrested the whole Jewish police so it could not collaborate with the people in the ghetto in saving the children.

And by the way, they came to take the children when the people were out to work, so the people came back in the evening. They didn't find the children. You can imagine what crying and shouting and what noise rose up in the ghetto when people didn't find the children at home.

And the Jewish police-- they took them to the Ninth Fort, and they demanded of them to disclose where they were hiding places for children. And those who went with them-- there were a few-- stayed alive, and the others were shot, the bloom of youth. I knew many of them.

The underground-- did you know any people in the underground?

I knew not many, but I was not from the place. But I knew that there was an underground, and I knew that they were organizing youth. And look, among the youth there was the movement, anyway, we will not survive, so at least we want to die as fighting people not like sheep.

Many times when I lectured in kibbutzim or-- I have here a traveling exhibition, and I have films. And I was invited twice a year on Yom HaShoah. This is Holocaust Day. And the 10th of Tevet is a memorable day of the dead whose

burying place is not known, so they have it as another Holocaust Day.

I was invited in kibbutzim, in organizations, in museums to have an exhibition of my etchings and to come and lecture, and I have even films made of that-- videos made of that. I showed one of my films, and then there were questions and answers, yes. And what was the question? I forgot.

In the ghetto-- this is to go back-- did you ever teach children drawing?

No, because if I-- and they were very disappointed that I didn't help them with it because if I had done it, I couldn't have found time for my collection, for my work.

And when you were deported toward the end-- and you were deported-- describe to me those last few days, and describe to me how it was going there to be deported?

Well, we knew that everything was-- that the Russian army was approaching. By the way, I was then working for the commandant of the ghetto, and we were copying for him landscapes and so. And he loved very much the landscape, and he said to me that he wanted to send me to a Lithuanian farm to paint a few pictures from him from the Lithuanian countryside. He didn't want the ghetto. He wanted to send me. Maybe he wanted to save me or so. I already made plans that I will take on a little boy and I will save this one and save that.

And then I brought him his last picture and I said, well, Herr Obersturmbannfuhrer, you said you wanted to send me to a farm in Lithuania to paint for you, so I said, oh, please, wait a few days until things calm down. And a few days later, we had to march out of the ghetto. That was the end of my career with the obersturmbannfuhrer, yes, but we were marched off at the DemokratÅ³ Square. And we were waiting to be led to the railway station, and it came out there were no-- there was no railway for us. There were no-- how do they call it?

Cars.

There were no cars. And we stayed for two or three days under the sky. We slept outside. They didn't let us go back to our homes, yes, until there were cars, until we were led to the station. And we were optimistic. Maybe the Russians were already-- a week later, the Russians came. They liberated Kovno very soon after we left, yes.

Was it burning?

They burned the whole ghetto, yes.

Was it started while you were still there?

Yes, yes. They started-- [? Gadiel's ?] little boy and his sister's little girl-- they were together with [? Bension ?] Schmidt in a hiding place in our studio. And [? Gadiel ?] with his family went out, and [? Bension ?] Schmidt-- he didn't come out. He was burned inside, yes.

And I met Mrs. [? Gadiel ?] later in Stutthof, and she said that they had taken the children away from them. And [? Gadiel ?] was in Dachau or something. They both survived. I heard from them. I wrote them a letter.

When it was burning, did you see the burning?

From afar we saw here and there flames. They were looking for hiding places where they hid the children. There were hiding places under the houses, yes, and many people survived in those hiding places. With many people, they took them out of their hiding places and brought them to the assembly point where we assembled.