

Interview with JOHN M. STEINER

Holocaust Oral History Project

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Q. WE BEGIN TODAY WITH YOUR TALKING ABOUT LEAVING BLECHHAMMER AND THE DEATH MARCH AND HAVING TO LEAVE YOUR FATHER BEHIND.

A. All right. So, prior to our leaving Blechhammer, it became very obvious in terms of the turmoil and some of the things we could hear, war and war noises, that the Soviets were closing in. And that, of course, in one way or another, was raising our hopes and stimulating our ability to fight on and struggle, and continue our struggle.

It is an important thing that so many people said that there was no resistance against the Nazis on the part of the inmates, the Jewish inmates in particular, because they were there without really being aware of any particular reason. They had not done anything. They felt innocent, and had not committed any crimes. But they were there simply because they were either religious Jews or cultural Jews, or what have you, because most of the people of course, never understood

the reason why they should be there by virtue of the fact that the definition of Jewishness was something which the Nazis, in a totally haphazard and unscientific fashion, related to a race which is, of course, totally unbelievable and ridiculous, particularly when you think in terms of the fact that you may have originated from a Jewish family which went back generations and centuries of Jews, religious Jews.

And then there are considered to be racial Jews for reasons which now are properly defined by a lot of people in the SS, and other people never could take it seriously because the scientific hollowness of the whole thing was just simply not proven in any shape or form.

And so people are bewildered and say yeah, Jewishness is not a race. That is something that has not really been properly reflected on, I think, in very many interviews and discussions with survivors. And I think it is very important to establish that somehow this notion of a race, the Jewish race, was imposed by the Nazi ideology. It was very typical for the Nazi ideology kind of developed by the Nazi ideolog, foremost by Hitler himself, who had learned it back in Austria and Vienna. And so people were confused.

So the struggle which I was initially talking about before I went into this ridiculous notion

of race, which was accepted by serious academitions for reasons which probably escapes them now, if they are still alive, made it very difficult to really find meaning in all that struggle and resistance. And that's why, for example, psychologically, people said, what do I resist with and against, because I am not guilty of anything. I think that is a very important moment which poses a problem for a many people to find meaning in their suffering. But, now that then depended very much on the individuals to come to terms with that particular predicament in which they found themselves in the camps. (sp)

I have had no problems with, difficult problems, with finding meaning, except I could see the unbelievable cruelty and lack of reasoning in all of this. But you see, that also gave me some sort of, say, how do I come to terms with this sort of fate, with this sort of situation I find myself in?

Q. HOW DID YOU?

A. Well, simply by using my inner resources and, if you will, philosophies and notions, which gave me strength, and that may be of religious philosophic humanistic, and that helped me and then pretty much along the lines explained why (Victor Franko), which I really, totally identified with, because the man was absolutely right and independently much younger than

he, of course, and then not at all having gone through schooling at that time, because I was a teenager,.

I pretty much reached similar conclusions, and I think that is a very important thing to mention which we haven't done before, because I am not just interested in describing the horror which has been done so many times, but how do we interpret it? What did we learn? And that to me is the most important. What can I learn from it? What can we learn which we can pass on to future generations? And that's my professional interest.

Q. AT THAT TIME, ARE YOU REFERRING TO YOUR BELIEF IN ANTHROPOLOGY?

A. Yes. Well, I think anthropology certainly was a great help. There is no question about that, in terms of thinking, in terms of reincarnation, thinking in terms of previous lives, thinking in terms of how do I deserve it, or what is the meaning of it all? How do I get into a situation merely by some sort of a chaotic occurrence, or is there some sort of verse and rhyme to it meaning which really can be? I pondered over that, and somehow I thought about that, and I was very fortunate because my encounter with my family at that time to points, Theresienstadt and then Auschwitz Birkenau, and with my father being in Blechhammer together, so we certainly discussed that, and helped each

other in order to accept that situation, and accept it not in terms of accepting and saying that's fine, but say hey, how do I make sense out of all of that, and what's the meaning, and how do I survive?

And this gave us, and that's what I am talking about, this gave us some sort of additional motivation to struggle and not to give up, because so many people gave up because they couldn't find meaning in their situation, only the dreadfulness of it all. And I have profound understanding for it, particularly under Jewish circumstances, because if I am a political person, and fought, which we did too by the way, very actively, against the regime. So, we didn't just sit back and let it happen. No. We were very active and proud all of it in so many different ways, nothing profound or major perhaps but still something.

When I was a boy scout and we had my group, the leadership, or whatever, just the boy scouts, and we did some Micky Mouse stuff, we helped people to escape, which we did very specifically when it was still possible to escape over the Czech borders to Poland prior to the invasion of Poland. And then, we'd also meet with other people who were like minded and reflected on things and oppose whatever could be opposed. So, some of that certainly had been done. That was a very good start to

speak of.

But most of the people found themselves in a predicament without having done anything to break the law, and just went like sheep, so to speak. That's what they were accused of. Just kind of closing the circle, saying that the will to survive was indeed resistance, and that's something which people have not understood properly. The will --

Q. STRUGGLING FROM ONE DAY TO THE NEXT?

A. That's right. To resist by struggling on and saying, I'm going to survive, not how so many people say, which is kind of ridiculous in ex post facto, and I'm absolutely opposed to that and say to bear witness and all of that. It's just something which people thought of only after the fact and not during that, because they were preoccupied with other things. It's one of the most ridiculous things that I've ever heard, and that keeps on coming, and keeps on coming, and people say this and claim this it is totally, absolutely, utterly -- I've had other problems which are more immediate than bearing witness.

So, anyway, this everyday struggle -- and now, there was very little hope, because obviously any information we received was very minimal, if at all available. So when the Russians, the Soviets closed in,

and we heard the music of the war, let's put it that way, poetically, and it gave us hope, because, you see the situation, as we found it, in terms of our situation, was very hopeless, because we had absolutely no idea that we had a chance of survival or that Nazi Germany would lose the war. That was not at all clear at that particular point, and certainly not to two people who were isolated from any sort of news and information. And so there was no external information which would give hope.

So, during that particular time when the Russians were closing in, there was an additional moment of hope. I remember that was just around New Year's Eve, around Christmas time, and then we suddenly for reasons which still escape me got some soup, which was pea soup with bacon in it, some special rations. And all that just absolutely beat me, and I said, hey, all of a sudden all of this, and then pretty soon afterwards, we were just told we had to leave. We could hear the cannons and all that in the distance. So the question was, you know, are we going to stay, and I discussed that with my father, but my father was physically not conditioned, although at that time, he was 44 years old, a relatively young man.

All of these sort of things were distorted, because anyone who was over 30, so to speak, in a

concentration camp was just like an old man, you know, just deteriorated that quickly. That's why people of my age had a much better chance to survive physically than the people who were older, more resilient.

Q. HOW WAS YOUR FATHER'S HEALTH THEN?

A. My father's health -- he was a very sports-minded individual, was into sports and all sorts of things as a young person until the time he was actually taken to the camp, and even then. And so he was physically exceedingly active. He was kind of considerably smaller than I am. But he was a exceedingly active and robust, muscle-bound individual, won prizes in sports activities and what have you.

So, he was in good shape. But still, because of the age and a lot of things, he just deteriorated, and had bad cases of dysentery and what have you. And that weakened him to the extent that he was susceptible to some other disease, types of things which, to be sure, were not constitutional, but were based on the situation in which we found ourselves, because indeed people were older and less resilient, and even though those diseases I've had, you know, developed some unbelievable resilience, which I still can't explain.

Where you have the resources, where you have



got the resources under the circumstances without proper nutrition and all that sort of thing, which I think should have start being studied by medical people much more. We have totally neglected why people have survived, under what basis, without all the things which we are told today you have to do in order to be healthy, and all that. And yet people survive things which under normal circumstances people don't usually survive. Certainly I have. There is no question about that, without all that. So that is something which people should have studied, and they neglected to study.

So then the discussion was, am I going to stay with my father or am I going to move out. Now, all of the able-bodied individuals were forced by the SS to move out. It didn't really mean you had to abide by it, because there were ways and means to stay.

Q. WHY'S THAT?

A. Well, it's just a lie, because you talk about this tremendous large plant which was the in Blechhammer which was in the syn-fuel plant so there are ways and means to either hide in the camp and all that, or the plant or all this sort of thing. So there would be opportunities.

For some reason or another, my father decided to stay, because physically he couldn't move on.

And I decided for whatever reason to move on, which turned out to be the biggest mistake I could have made, under the circumstances, because very soon after we had left, because when we were marching, the Russians, the Soviets were closing in after dark. So actually the distance between them and us, in spite of the fact that we were on the move, became closer.

So, my father was liberated within a few days. If I had stayed, I would have been liberated within a few days, and would have survived the whole thing, physically speaking, virtually unscathed, or minimally unscathed, because he recovered in a very short time from all of the various things he had, because the conditions changed and all.

Q. SO WAS A GUARD DETAIL LEFT BEHIND WITH THOSE WHO COULD NOT GO?

A. Well, the guard details were then more and more increasingly more interested in their own survival and the survival they made, and that is something which I'll be talking about in just a moment.

So to be sure, to begin with, they tried to round up all the able-bodied people and put them into this sort of death march situation, move them away from the battle ground, the Russians captured. But then some of them who stayed or most of them actually stayed and

not killed by ( ) and I don't know where 1460  
they're anywhere. I don't quite remember, because I  
wasn't there and my father just was not that fully aware  
about these things, although we discussed it and he told  
me quite a few things. I don't think it was a great  
danger that they would have been killed. He certainly  
wasn't, and most of the other people he knew were not.

So, those who were able-bodied and most of  
my friends with whom I had worked and all that, they  
moved out because they were just about my age or older,  
not necessarily younger, but most of them about my age or  
older.

And so the death march was one of the worst  
possible things, because not only were trails of dead  
people who were in similar situations killed by the  
rear guards because they no longer could not march on,  
because it was, we are talking generally 1945 and a very  
cold brutal winter snow. And with our striped pajamas,  
we certainly were not at all protected against the cold,  
and we had our wooden sole shoes with canvas tops without  
any proper stockings to protect us against this freezing  
weather and the snow.

So, within a relatively short time, people,  
and then of course, with bare hands -- So most of the  
people incurred frostbite within a very short, relatively

short time, within a week. And so the same thing happened to me. I had a pair of mittens which I was able to get from the contacts which I had in Blechhammer with the outside and the distant relatives who sent in all sorts of interesting, important survival materials like medicines, money, food stuff and what have you, mittens and shoes and all that.

So I had mittens, which was unbelievable, because most of the people actually did not develop frostbite of their feet to begin with. Most of the people, for reasons which still escape me and I'm not clear about, developed frostbite from their hands, and so they became black and blue, and then the flesh fell off. And so it was just terrible, just like third degree burns, just a similar situation. So, that did not happen to me by virtue of the fact that -- and I still remember, just a very strange color, University of California color, black and gold, you know, black and yellow. And Missouri is black and blue, isn't it? Anyway, one of the Universities, black and gold, Missouri or California one. Who cares?

At that time, of course, little did I know that I would wind up in the United States. I didn't have any particular hope to survive, even then.

But then for some reason, we had to walk,

and we slept in the snow, and very rarely were we able to sleep in some sort of a haystack or when we were very lucky, with pigs, but I remember there was a SS man in charge of that particular area, local one in uniform, and he said, you could infect the pigs, so you have to get out. Pigs were very important to me, because they were fed with potatoes, you see. And so we ate the potatoes for the pigs, and that was a feast. Actually, also, those who were able to get it survived. And, before we go to the pigs we were thrown out of the place where they had cattle, cattle and hay, and when we could stay in a relatively warm situation, that was just like today, if I have a chance to stay a night in one of the most fancy hotels. And even that is not a proper comparison, to be sure.

I always took advantage of the situation and made the best of it. That was a very important thing. I at all times was able to make the best out of a miserable, terrible situation. That is precisely what we could do with the older ones who are no longer as flexible and no longer as alert. And this type of alertness came with age too, and some measure of intelligence which most of the people had anyway, because, if they had not that type of minimal intelligence, they would not have survived up to that

point, anyway. And now I think that is an important point.

Yes, so whenever there were grains, we ate the grains and all that. But very frequently we had to stay overnight in the snow and all that, and that meant that the people had just developed dreadful diseases, pneumonia, pleurisy, you name it, dysentery and all that.

They could not control -- most of us could not control our bodily situations so that we didn't have any underpants anyway, so everything was soiled and all of that which, you know, prostate and all of that sort of stuff would just be awful, and you had to walk virtually, 24 hours a day. Almost, not quite, because, yes, there was rest.

Now, the interesting part also was that as that situation increased, the SS, the guards, were starting to suffer also. What they did, they took all their belongings and put them on some sort of carts, and "privileged" inmates then had to simply take the carts and push them or drag them. For that, they got some sort of food, or whatever. But then, the SS guards were differently equipped obviously, and had all the proper clothing to protect them against the freezing cold weather. And then they started to develop symptoms and they dropped out.

So the more people dropped out, the less guards there were and the more free we felt. However, that was very deceptive, because there was always a rear guard, which I personally never quite experienced myself, but anyone who stayed behind, and that's when we could see what happened to other groups of people who were, and we talked about, we are talking about over a thousand, easily two thousand people in this particular group. So those who came before us, then we could see where they went, because that's where they dropped all the bodies. We could see where we walked. It was lined up with bodies who were shot.

Q. SHOT?

A. Shot.

Q. BECAUSE THEY WERE SLOW?

A. Well, they simply couldn't walk on anymore, or were too slow or whatever and dropped out. And so that's one thing, and then we could see a staff car with SS people, because there was a point that we said, well we are encircled or something, and then we would stop, and then they came to tell those who are in charge of our group that we are to march on. And we had high hopes that we would return or that we would stay, and that we actually would be overtaken by the Soviet army. And of course, we were told to march on. I

remember the staff car, because I saw officers coming in and giving the order to continue.

Q. DID YOU KNOW TO WHERE YOU WERE MARCHING?

A. Oh, well, we had no idea. There were some rumors, but we didn't, you know. Some people said Grossrosen, you know, and all this, but to which indeed was the place they marched us. But so many people dropped, and they just died, and what have you,

So coming back to the mittens, we were kind of sleepwalking, and couldn't control our bowel movements and all this sort of thing, totally exhausted. So in this sort of half sleepwalk, sleep type of situation, I lost one of my mittens, and I knew what that meant, because I already felt that I was not feeling my fingers, and discoloration was already there in spite of the mittens. So I said, if I don't find it, I'm in deep trouble. I'm going to lose my fingers, as so many friends of mine already had. And some of the much stronger ones said, how come you're in such good shape and I'm so much stonger than you?

Also, during their work when we worked together, they were just ones more physically able to do more physical work than I. And then they were falling apart and dropping out and all that and said, well you



are actually are probably the weakest of us all, and you just are able to continue and we're not. So, that was the discussion, and we couldn't quite understand, and I still don't understand. There are no constitutional differences why.

At any rate, then I decided that I had to find it again, obviously. I went back by the guards there was not enough SS to really see that necessarily, so I went back and looked who might have picked it up, because I could see the person who had it on because it was yellow and black. So, I said, you got my mitten, here it is. Of course, he was not willing to give it up so I took it from him, and I had recovered my mitten and I continued. By that time, my feet were getting very bad, and there was no question about it. I had a full case of frostbite which became worse and worse.

I remember also, for example, and that is an important thing which I wanted to mention, the death march, because it remains in my mind. We went through townships and little villages and what have you, and the response of the inhabitants, and even animals was just unbelievable. And there was one particular larger -- it was a small township. It was not a village but a township, and we went through the main street marching through the main street. And before we actually entered

the township, there was a dreadful howling of all of the various dogs and animals, just instinctively, apparently, responding to this dreadful army of skeletons and half-deads, and it was a dreadful howling.

And people in the streets which of course would be empty, some of the people just broke down seeing us, and some of the women also shouted words of encouragement were Germans and said don't give up, you know. And then of course some people on the other hand came from buying some food stuff. And I remember still in this sort of made out of canvas bags, just simply this type of rope bags made out of canvas rope. And so they just simply jumped some inmates and took off with what they could. And the SS came and there was a big struggle, and there was shooting and stuff, and what have you. And then of course there was outcrys and all of that, but then some people really shouted encouragement also, women, particularly women. We didn't see any men, because men weren't around, just those in uniform, and what have you.

Then, of course, we also saw the retreating Germans. When they saw us, they just spat at us and shouted obscenities, because they viewed us as their enemy, particularly since they were retreating and all that.

So, this sort of thing became worse and worse. And one night, this small group of us were able to stay in a haystack, and I took off my canvas shoes, whatever shoes I had, and I could see that my toes were totally rotten and all that and already bones were sticking out and all that. I just took part of the rotten toes and threw them out. Took them off and threw them out. I just couldn't walk anymore. I just couldn't put the shoes on anymore and all that. So, I said, that's the end, because now the rear guard will come and take care of me, just in other words shoot me. But the interesting thing is I thought, are we going to die and all of that, but we didn't. And indeed the SS came and they were relatively civil, no big deal and I thought boy, how come they don't shoot us, because that's what I anticipated, that we would be shot just like those we have seen who stayed behind. And they said, you stay here and we'll come with some sort of carriage and we'll take you to somewhere.

Well, that happened, and then I understood, because we were in a place very close to a relatively unknown concentration camp called Reichsbahn, which was a womans camp. And that was primarily women who were employed just as slave laborers in war industry. So we were very close so they took us up there. There was a

horse carriage, as they have, the farmers, but it was covered actually and then in came a Major with a drawn Ruger pistol. I still remember that. He said, you swine, we will show you what the Russians do, what they had done, and just started to really call out obscenities and all that and, with a drawn Ruger, we couldn't, we were crippled people, and so they kicked us into this sort of carriage and beat us, just simply beat us.

The degradation was worse than actually what they did except them calling obsentities, and we'll show you what the Russians, you know, what the Russians, you swine are responsible, and he was military police. He was not a SS, but was a military police. He was a Major, I think, in terms of the rank, as far as I can remember.

Anyway, so we got into that, and then they drove us to Reichsbahn, then all the people who could not march on were somehow were around and got stuck somehow. They were sent to this particular camp, and that's why they didn't shoot us because they just moved us, chances are, that's my conjecture. But, otherwise --

Q. WHY DIDN'T THEY SHOOT YOU?

A. Well, because they just -- that was an assembly camp and from there on, they shipped other people further and distributed them elsewhere. Now those people continued to march, whoever were left, and people

just died by the hundreds, so that you had a lot of two thousand people and you probably had a couple of hundred to actually survive, or three hundred. So, then when they came to the Grossrosen destination, which was a death camp. It was not just a concentration camp, it was a death camp, so those people hardly ever survived, you see. Some may have, but very few. I haven't personally met any.

So those of us who came to Reichsbahn, and that was a very many movements, not just from Blechhammer, but from other camps too, so that was a camp where they put us. The men still were there but they were on the move. They moved them out. And so we were the ones who stayed a few days and then the whole structure started again ( ) and they took over and they are responsible to the SS, and they distributed the soup, or whatever. We got soup, and some bread, and all that was very, very little, but still there was some. And people died like flies because of frostbite, infections, and disease, you name it.

Then, there were couples who would take advantage of the situation not only to get more food for themselves by assuming a type of leadership situation and played into the hands of the SS, who enjoyed that situation and structured it so that it would become that

way. But they also killed fellow inmates cruelly. One of them was a green type of inmate. Green, that is to say that he was a professional criminal. He was particularly bad and he just simply -- people that did not respond to his whims, he just killed them with his bare hands so to speak. He just killed them.

And for reasons which again escape me, he liked me, for his idiosyncratic reasons, so I had some sort of privy. He gave me extra food, and I could -- there were these sort of containers where the food or soup was, so I was able to scrape it out and some remnants and all that. Then he came back and said, are you still alive? Some other the people are dead. You really should be dead by now, and just finished him off, and totally unpredictable, but with me he was pretty consistent, because he was always supportive for reasons again that are rationally difficult.

Well, from then on, we stayed and met some few people and talked. And people died and whatever they left, I took. There was used blankets, whatever there was, but apparently, they had some food still available in that particular camp.

So, when we finally were moved to the ramp up there, it was kind of a railway station, kind of lorries, so the most of us who couldn't walk, I was one

of them, you know, couldn't walk on. So they put us into one of these strange type of lorry, about four people in one lorry, which they had on rails, and you just pushed them down the hill to the open cattle cars, open box cars, railway cars.

I was with some other people, because they threw us into these sort of lorrys, and so that you sat on the limbs or parts of the bodies of other persons. One had a terrible leg injury and he shouted. And then the SS came and looked at the man and I said, be quiet, don't draw any attention, but he couldn't help himself. I said, don't draw attention to yourself. Well, anyway, he couldn't repress and shouted in agony. So this one SS man, I still remember, he had kind of an iron bar in his hand. He came and saw him and just killed him, just simply over the head and killed him. So we saw things happen all the time.

Then we just came finally to this open car, and then they threw us in. And then that was another ordeal, something which, I don't know whether I gave you, which I described in my writing. So that you had several layers of people who were first of all thrown in, and then you had secondly three layers, and the first layer was suffocated by the second and the third layer, if they couldn't really struggle out. That was the precise

situation in which I found myself. I was in the middle layer and was being suffocated by the third layer. And I just simply felt that was the end, because I couldn't breath anymore properly and all that. So I, for reasons which still, I just am absolutely in awe, but I said I can't make it, but I struggled on nevertheless, forward and up. I got myself up out of this situation so that I was on the third layer. But anyone who became the third layer was the cause of the death of the second and the first layer.

So, that was the awful situation. Your survival meant that fellow inmates beneath you in a different layer were going to be killed. That continued up to the time -- we just went through about ten days, two weeks, because time situations are very difficult to pinpoint, because time experience was very different in concentration camps and under normal circumstances.

Q. DID YOU MANAGE TO GET ANY FOOD?

A. That's an interesting thing, because as I said before, there was obviously food available, so we were given two loaves of bread and margarine, and some marmalade, or whatever it was, I remember. And I was able to get more, so instead of two loaves, I had about three or four loaves. I think I had three loaves, and I was taking it under my shirt. And I was able to get two



blankets rather than one blanket, and all that.

So I was, what we called at that particular time, the skill of organizing, which means that you just simply took whatever you could, as long as you didn't take from an inmate who was still alive. That was morally unacceptable, although people still did it. I never did it, and morally you're in a better position, for so many survived at the expense of others.

And that is, I think, a reason, and I keep on emphasizing that in my lectures or in my writing, or whatever, that people who have survival guilt do not feel guilty because they have survived, but they feel guilty because of how they have survived. And that's an important thing which has not been discussed very much, because it's a very sensitive area. I understand that, and that's why that I mentioned it, and I specifically emphasize it, because there is no such thing as survival guilt, as such.

I don't feel guilty because I survived and some other people have not, because I have not caused it. It was not my doing. But, if I have survived at the expense of someone else, then I've got a reason to have moral problems. So many people who are survivors indeed have survived because they have taken advantage of the situation of people who were weak or couldn't defend

themselves and done things to them which caused either very serious injury or even murder. And they should feel guilty. I don't have any problems, philosophically speaking, problems with the fact they feel guilty. But that's the reason, not by virtue of the fact that they merely have survived.

Q. YOU DON'T THINK THAT THAT INSTANCE IS POSSIBLE? I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN ABOUT PEOPLE WHO HAVE DONE THINGS THAT THEY FEEL GUILTY ABOUT, BUT JUST MERELY BY THE VIRTUE OF SURVIVING.

A. I don't see any reason for it. I don't see any reason. If they do, that is highly ideosyncratic, and I'm not ruling that out as a possibility, but there is no rational reason for it, because they done what they could to survive, and they should be praised rather than faulted. I should feel good about it other than bad. It doesn't mean that I don't regret the fact that so many other people have not. I mean that's obviously a tragedy, and I think we should feel sad and sorrow and whatever, but not guilt.

All right, so by virtue of the fact that this boxcar situation, that people survived, they survived only in terms of that indeed they took up space which made it impossible for other people to survive. And from that point of view, I am in a way guilty too,

you see. But the interesting thing is, and that's not necessarily a deduction of cognitive dissidents or how, as you put it, rationalization or self-justification, but the fact is that there is such a thing as, which I have never understood before because I never experienced it, drive of self-preservation, under extreme stress situations. And I have talked about in total, total situations, the drive of self-preservation will take over, and you just can't help yourself, even if you have absolutely no hope to survive another minute, another hour, another day, because I certainly didn't, but I fought on, because the drive of self-preservation took over.

So, that meant that brothers killed each other in order to survive directly or indirectly. Buddies, friends, whatever, struggled for space, because they were just like sardines packed in this sort of, we talked about over a hundred people, in one open boxcar.

So, these were the situations, and so people kept on struggling. And to begin with, there was more space by virtue of the fact that people were still alive. The more dead there were in that particular boxcar, the less space there was, because dead bodies have a nasty habit to bloat and expand so that we are not permitted to throw them out, sure, because they did not want the

railway tracks to have these nice calling cards.

Q. THEN WHAT ABOUT ALL THE DEAD ALONG THE ROADWAY?

A. Well, but you see that was something which was on the roadway, but not the railway tracks. That was in the midst of wilderness, and there were no other alternatives. They didn't see any other alternatives, because there was no way of putting them someplace because they were running from the Russians, I mean, they were closing in. So, there the situation was slightly different because there still was a "civilized" world and you just don't leave any traces of that nature. So, they are not permitted.

And even those people tried to escape. Some of them, in their despair, jumped off either because it was moving very slowly, the train was moving very slowly or they just in their despair, they just said, where it had stopped, they jumped off. Then they were ordered to come back. And in the car they were shot and put on the outside.

And that happened. And even some people moved, and the guard came and, particularly thinking in terms of a Ukrainian fellow who couldn't hardly speak any German in an SS Uniform, and that's one thing which I forgot to say interesting. Because there was a shortage

of guards during the death march, some of the people who looked kind of more arrogant, all were non-Jewish inmates, were given SS uniforms and asked to be guards. And that was the irony of it all. It was just absolutely absurd, bizarre. And so I could see that, I saw it. It was not just hearsay, but something which I actually saw. A young kid was still able-bodied said, okay you German or whatever you are, Germans, at least they had to speak perfect German, good German, or whatever. Young kid, they said now we appoint you now as SS, and they gave him an SS kind of uniform, and they did it -- not that they had anything against the fellow inmates, but they just said, well, maybe I will have a better chance to escape, to survive.

And some people tried to escape, but that was a very bad thing because most of them were rounded up and caught and then killed. One of my close buddies did, and I have never heard of him. I would have heard of him after the war one way or another, but I never heard of him again. He did it in a town, a township, actually it was a proper town, which was easy to escape because we were not that closely guarded, because more and more SS people dropped out.

So that was in a kind of relatively busy street of, a city, big town, or city, in (Upper Silesia,) I 3240

believe it was Upper, actually, to be very specific. So he just jumped into some doorway, and we discussed it even before it. He said, I am going to escape, and I didn't know whether to encourage him, but I felt, I had my doubts about it -- to what extent it would be saving one's life. I had my doubts about it and therefore I didn't do it. Not that I couldn't have done it, but I decided not to. He decided to do it, and I never heard of him again after the war. And I don't think he survived. He just didn't make it.

And then also, you just supported bodies and all that until you just no longer could. You supported them until you couldn't carry them anymore. You couldn't support them anymore, and they said, why don't you drop me? And we dropped them, and of course, they were just shot by the rear guard, and we never heard from them again.

So, in coming back to the boxcar situation, so first of all, they organized some leadership and they said, we need help to help each other, and why don't we collect all the food stuff, and we'll distribute it so that those who have more will share with the others. It was some sort of democratic fashion. So one fellow and the Lieutenants, and they did it for a few days, and they ate it all, and they had a power elite, just like in real

life. And then you had this democratic leader that turned into a Stalin, you know, and left it all and all the people that rebelled against them, they just beat up or killed or whatever. And those Lieutenants, of course, helped them and they lived for a few days like kings on the rations they had taken from their fellow inmates for safe keeping, and be distributed.

Well, we could see then, as we see now, in the more recent developments in the Soviet Union, then they turned against each other when they were under stress, so they were in the process of killing each other. So the Lieutenants killed the Fuhrer, you know, the inmate fuhrer. So they all came to a rather bad end, except the two lieutenants survived. And they arrived in Dachau, and then they came and visited me saying, here we are, your old buddies. And I said, some buddies you are. And I said, just get out, you bastards.

Q. IN THE BOXCAR SITUATION, YOU GOT TO THE TOP LEVEL FINALLY. WAS IT A CONSTANT STRUGGLE TO REMAIN THERE?

A. Constant struggle, yeah. Because those who arrived, because of space, because of the bloated bodies and all of that, so there was less and less space. So, people encroached upon you and took over your space, and just pressed on you so that blood circulation

stopped. You couldn't breath anymore and all that.

That happened to, particularly in this situation, to one of my buddies whom I knew for a very long time and actually since Theresienstadt, I knew him. So he had this injury in particularly his one foot. His left foot was just hanging on some piece of muscle and whatever, a piece of skin, because it was totally rotten, the whole foot, and so he was in agony. He had also, a dreadful case of dysentery.

So I helped him as much as I could, and then as space became more scarce, he just started to take over and lie on me using me as a sofa, not a sofa, but just lying over, and I said, I can't breath anymore. You have to go. I have to push you. We are talking about the drive of self-preservation. And, he couldn't. He couldn't. So, I pushed him, and I knew that when I pushed him it was either him or me who would die. And then when he was pushed in the middle so long, noone wanted to have him on them, so the only thing which still had some degree of strength were the feet of inmates, so they kicked him from one situation to another until they kicked him to death.

And that was a normal occurrence, "normal" occurrence. It was an everyday sort of situation. And if you did not defend yourself, you were in the center.



And once you were in the center, all the feet were on you and you were pushed to death, virtually kicked to death.

Now, and then meanwhile before we actually arrived to Dachau, more and more people were dislocated. And the people who were close to the walls of the boxcar, then of course had something to lean against and therefore could use their feet more effectively. Now, I was not leaning at any time against the wall, therefore, I was much more at the mercy of all the other ones who were pushing me around.

So, finally I was also dislocated to the extent that I was in the center and being pushed around. Some friends of mine said, if you get in the center, you know what is going to happen to you, and there was no question about that. I used my teeth, my nails, everything to defend myself. Everyone that did it used whatever they could to defend themselves from being dislocated. But, meanwhile, there was virtually a pyramid of dead bodies who already looked like that glassy type of thing, smelly, rotten corpses.

So in the last stage, and it happened to be also the last stage of our journey, because very shortly afterwards, we had arrived at Dachau via Prague. And I recognized that, and people were getting food from some workers, and the SS would then push them away and with

weapons, and then they got some water or some food. So those people just simply, a bunch of people just tried to take it and spilled it, and all this so that no one actually had anything. It was just a terrible, tragic situation.

Then, during the last stage of the journey when I was dislocated on and no longer could hang on and defend myself sufficiently against all the pressure which I received, I was struggling and being kicked about. So then I was able to climb up this mountain of rotten bodies and simply put my heel into one of these bodies, who happened to be my buddy who died because of it, and was able to remain at that particular situation where I was out of reach of feet and other people, because I was up on that thing, and arrived in Dachau.

And also, one of my buddies who was next to me just pressing against me and all that was this Ukranian SS man, which I didn't finish to tell, I think, came and just looked at him, and he was trying to get adjusted, and for some reason he just drew attention of this S.S. person to himself and he just took his Ruger, I remember the Ruger pistol, and just simply looked at him like, no kind of hatred, just no effect kind of, just looked at him through his Ruger pistol and shot him in the vein, there. And I could see the surprise. The

light went out, the eye light went out. It was terrible. Could have been me. So these all situations were just examples. That was actually one of the worst experiences, worst than anything else I remember.

Q. HOW DID YOU GET INTO THE BOXCAR?

A. Some could climb and those who simply could not climb anymore, they were just heaved in, just simply thrown in. I was put up and the other ones between, those who could, the inmates. It was first-come, first-serve, so to speak, except first-come, first-serve was the death.

Q. HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO HANG ON TO YOUR FOOD?

A. I hung on to my food because some, I just simply didn't give up, you see. And, so some I gave up and some I didn't, you know, because I didn't trust them.

Q. I DON'T MEAN WILLINGLY, I MEAN IN A STRUGGLE. YOU WERE IN THE MIDDLE AND YOU WERE STRUGGLING UP TO GET AIR.

A. Oh, well, just simply pushing and struggling and all that, I mean from the second layer to the third layer. I was in such a situation where you were struggling for your life, and that gave me some extra strength, apparently.

Q. YOU HELD ON TO YOUR FOOD ALSO?

A. Oh, yeah. Not only that, but also my blanket and some medication which I still had against pneumonia and these sort of things, because these relatives, or distant relatives, friends, happened to be also a physician in Prague. So they had access to the medication, to medicine, and they sent that along too, which actually saved my fathers life. Because they asked what to send, what the problems were. So they sent this type of medication, against dysentery and pneumonia and this sort of (fornaments) at that particular time, (fornaments). I took what I needed and gave my father that, which saved his life.

Q. SITTING HERE TALKING ABOUT MANY OF THESE THINGS, YOU HAVE A WONDERFUL SENSE OF HUMOR. WAS YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR ALIVE STILL IN THE CAMP DAYS?

A. I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't think I have had much of a sense of humor. You didn't see many smiling faces, for sure. I think it is a very important question. It was perhaps more subtle, that I simply took advantage of situations, sabotaged when I could, but it was not really ha ha, funny, sense of humor. Some did, and that is something important. I think that is an important question, because under certain circumstances, you could afford to have a sense

of humor, and many of my inmates did, and that's something which to me which was a very profound experience to me in Blechhammer.

Some of my friends, close friends, staged a kind of play, kind of a -- what was it?

Q. SATIRE?

A. Well, cabaret, that's the proper designation, cabaret, a satire on camp life. And all of the SS came. And they were so impressed that one stood up, and that's something which is very important, because in a very specific consequences, after the war when there were trials against the perpetrators, and I was involved too as a witness, and things of that nature. And so this was so impressive. I will never forget it. It was just so professional, because, yeah, they are professional actors among these people too, one mustn't forget. And somehow there were props. They had found props and all that was just a parody on camp life, which included SS and couples, and dignitaries, "camp dignitaries".

These people were inmate functionalist, so it was so successful that these people, SS people, just behaved like human beings ( ) and one, after it was completed, and that's something which I wrote in my book too, stood up and said, we were told that you were sub-humans and this and that, parasites,

and ( ) Anyone under those conditions who can stage a cabaret or play of that nature is everything else but that. He stood up and said that in front of all of the other SS people. So, I said that's going to be the end of him. And then I lost him out of sight, and I said well, maybe something happened to him. But nothing happened to him at all. 3855

Q. WHY?

A. I don't know why, but he just survived the war, and then was accused with all the people, Blechhammer personnel, in which I was a witness, and was also questioned by a Nazi consulate general here in San Francisco as a matter of fact. Behaved like a pig, this fellow, too, you know, just absolutely the way he behaved, and he had to do it, but you could see he resented me and he wished me dead, son-of-a-bitch. I only can say that this way.

And so then in my research, I am in (Luveksburg) where these things are being done and where this is being legally organized and investigated, and looked at the file in the presence of the man who was in charge of (Luveksburg), now dead, very interesting, and I think very upright, good person, older generation, older than I, just you know, considerably older, and a very upright person who did what he could in order to get 3946

these people to justice.

So, then I came across this fellow, and apparently some other people who were survivors of Blechhammer, when they were witnesses, they witnessed these instances, they mentioned the fact, which I thought I was the only one who noticed or maybe all the other people might have died or forgotten, and he got off the hook, and nothing happened to him. He was not sentenced to any sort of -- which is kind of interesting, simply because he stood up and opposed.

Q. WAS HE KNOWN TO BE A KINDLY MAN --

A. I don't know. I never encountered him personally before. So, I had no dealings, I had absolutely no knowledge of his other activity. I had not come across him. Some other ones I had, yeah, but I described that in some previous situations.

So, anyway, that's kind of interesting, sort of a reflection based on -- so I was very interested in SS response, and when we came to Dachau, this -- out of a hundred people, about, approximately a hundred people were in one of the boxcars, and we talked about a thousand, ten boxcars, or twelve boxcars, I don't remember exactly, ten or twelve just about, out of just approximately on the average, ten to fifteen people survived out of a hundred people, maybe twenty at the

most.

So when we came, in the dreadful stage of rotten bodies and all that, we all were saturated with this. When we came, the SS guards, which was the reception, they just said, we have never seen anything, and treated us humanely, because they were moved. They just said, this is terrible, awful. They were moved. And they treated us humanely, I mean not necessarily kindly, but properly.

Q. DO YOU THINK THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN AFRAID NOW THAT THE WAR WAS ENDING?

A. They were horrified by the sight. That's my very distinct impression, because they had never seen something like that. They had never seen anything so horrible. I mean, they verbalized it.

All right. So, then a group that I became a spokesman, Dachau, had to register, fill in forms, register and this sort of thing. I had to do that, and talked about Blechhammer and all that, I still, as a matter of fact now, when I was there some few years ago, three years ago, I went to the records and found my name and this sort of thing, registered.

So then, for reasons whatever, some sort of a SS Captain came. I remember his rank. Someone started to talk to us and said, what is going on, or something



to some sort of a dialogue. And I was a spokesperson, not because I felt so inclined, but most of them were in worst shape than I was. That's why I was still in a position to even speak up and be conscious of what was happening. And I said, hey, we are in such a bad shape, because I had nothing to lose. I didn't give a damn. Either you help us to survive or you just have us shot, because we are in a situation. We can't further endure this sort of situation.

The way I talked, apparently, and again that was very important. That made a difference, you see, because how you can't see a person who is just so like you or just similar to you that he is just all of a sudden sub-human and all that. That was very important in all cases. That was a very important moment and an extremely dangerous situation which somehow got me off the hook, and that was very important. Because, you don't crawl and all that, but you just stand upright and speak up to them like eagles. And that impressed them, but if you came whining and all that they just finished you off. That was the tendency.

So I talked to them and said, that's the choice. He ordered that we would receive, that these people need to get special rations, and we did for about a week or two, and then he didn't enforce it. He didn't

come again. I never saw him again. Then it stopped, but that was decisive in terms of the survival of so many people, because if we had not received these things, we would have had no prayer in that particular state we found ourselves in.

Q. WHAT WERE SPECIAL RATIONS?

A. They were special rations. Well, they gave us white bread, they gave us more margarine, they gave us soup, and things of that nature. So, more than just a normal sort of person would receive. And we were sent to the sick barrack. The sick barrack was made up of so many Belgian, French, Dutch, and Poles and Bulgars, and Germans. And Russian prisoners of war were there also. And the interesting thing there is once we were there at the mercy of those people who were in charge of that particular part of the barrack, or that part, it was interesting that there was a tremendous especially among the French, and even the Dutch, and anti-Semitism was just unbelievable.

So, that was later on. Some people still got rations. You still could buy some for money, if you had some. Apparently some inmates had money and got money sent from their relatives from home to buy special rations which you could buy for money. There was one German fellow and he came to me and said, he was starting

to talk, and he said, I have got a lot of money. I am going to see to it that part of my money is going to be transferred to you and you can buy some provisions. And, so I was able to. At that particular stage, I bought some bloodwerst, blood sausage.

Q. JUST BECAUSE OF KINDNESS, HE DID THIS?

A. Absolutely no reason. He was a German inmate. And then Czechs came and they said, what can we do for you. We have books. We can make some books available. So, I got to know many Czech inmates who then after, played a very important role including the Arch-Bishop of Prague, a man called (Joseph Barron), and some other dignitary people, important politically and otherwise in very important organizations and all that, and one of the witnesses at Nuremberg, a surgeon called (Blaha), who then operated on my frozen feet and all that. He tried to save me as much as he could, and so these sort of things, you just made contacts.

But in that particular barrack, if people didn't come from outside -- those people were actually in charge and all that, and really tried to do us in more than support us and called us (Jewiff) and this sort of awful stuff.

Then an interesting point, all the Jews in Dachau were to be sent away. So, they took them out and

shipped them away. For some reason or another, they didn't take me, for whatever reason. I had some people who protected me, or whatever, I was not shipped because -- then they found these people killed in boxcars.

Q. WHAT MONTH ARE WE IN AT THIS POINT?

A. We are in, I would say, March, '45.

Q. WERE YOU THE ONLY ONE THAT STAYED BEHIND?

A. I don't know. I was the only one, yeah. I guess so. That was an interesting thing. Around March or at some time, they also distributed Red Cross parcels, terrific things, sardines, chocolate, you name it. I didn't get a single one. All of the French, the Lats and Bulgars, the Belgins, the Dutch, they got them, for reasons which escape me. The Czechs, I don't remember got any. I certainly didn't get any. They wouldn't share. They gorged themselves. Well, there was some justice in their gorging, because they died, many of them, because, they no longer could digest this type of rich food.

That was a very interesting thing, because after we were liberated, I had no understanding of it at that particular time at all, of course -- so after we were liberated, the person who had just been promoted to medical person in uniform of course, had just been

promoted to Major, and was in charge, medically speaking, of the camp which they had liberated, understood that, and therefore rationed our food, which we didn't understand. We resented it. We had starved under the Nazis, and now we were starving, after liberation, under the Americans. And that was precisely because he understood that we just simply couldn't take it, and that saved many peoples lives.

Q. WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF EATING RICH FOOD AFTER YOU HAVE BEEN STARVING FOR SO LONG?

A. Well, the symptoms were simply a terrible case of dysentery which couldn't be stopped and other symptoms --

Q. TERRIBLE STOMACH CRAMPS?

A. -- stomach cramps, whatever, vomiting, and you just simply dissipate, totally dissipate and die within a very short time. It's terrible. It's like poisoning, if you had eat poison.

Q. SOMETIMES THERE'S KIDNEY FAILURE, BECAUSE YOUR BODY CAN'T PROCESS PROTEIN IN YOUR URINE, SO IF YOU GET TOO MUCH PROTEIN, YOUR KIDNEYS COULD FAIL.

A. Okay. So, then again these two brothers actually were the Lieutenants of this, and they came for a visit. We could move around and all that and they said, here we are. We're your buddies. I said,

some buddies, and just kicked them out and said, I want nothing to do with you, bastards.

And so, you develop some sort of situations and relationships. Poor Soviet P.O.W.s escaped, and if they escaped, they caught them, and they didn't send them again to prisoner of war camps, they sent them to concentration camps. Apparently that's how they wound up in Dachau.

And he told me about interesting things. He told me about Soviet camps. He said, you know, the difference between these camps and Soviet camps, which of course I didn't know, I mean, we all have this idealistic notion about the Soviet Union, and it is all b.s. And so, he came for the first time and told me about all this and said, the difference between them is that there is a lot more food in these camps. And I thought, my God. All wide-eyed, I listened to him. I didn't know the other camps. Nazis learned from the Soviets, quite a bit, in terms of camps, and all that, because the Soviets had camps before the Nazis came into power.

Anyway, so one poor fellow, he was kind of a simple fellow and was starving and all that, and so he stole from fellow inmates, food. And that was the end of him, because they just beat him to death. So, he was not around for a long time. That was viewed as an

unpardonable criminal, capital crime.

Q. SO THERE WAS, OF COURSE, A WHOLE OTHER MORALITY?

A. Well, yes. Yes. But the morality, stealing, lying, cheating authorities, that's fine. Great. Then you're really crafty. You're doing the right thing. But if you do that to a fellow inmate without having the power to do it, that is to say, well, inmate functioning, and inmate functioning did it. And there were some people, I remember hearing in San Francisco, some survivor of Auschwitz say, well I was in a post office, big fellow in a post office in Auschwitz and worked on the provision of the SS, and he was in charge of the post office, incoming parcels, because we could get parcels. I got parcels to Auschwitz-Birkenau, which is just really something unbelievable, but we did.

Q. YOU DID?

A. Yeah. And I got from Prague and all that, and some of it was partially rotten, but who cared. Just, bread and old stuff, and within hollow bread and some other stuff in it, and I got it. I don't know how many I did not get, but I got it, actually delivered into the barrack.

All right. So, this fellow back in

Auschwitz, or Auschwitz-Birkenau, who is here, and who is quite a prominent sort of person, just talked to me about it. He lived in luxury, because before he gave up and the inmates came to pick up the parcels, they had to open it. And then those who were at the post office just took what they wanted and if they needed it, they took the whole parcel. And he said, I had a better life than if I had been outside. And he was proud of it. And that was the end of our relationship, because I said, hey, my God, I don't want to have anything to do with you anymore, no part of it. Very prominent, very prominent in San Francisco, well known.

Q. SO, AS YOU SAY, IT WAS AN UNDERSTANDABLE MORALITY THAT ANYTHING AGAINST THE AUTHORITIES IS OKAY.

A. Yeah. But if you were in charge and if you had the power, if you were a (functionalist) and stole, then you could do that with impunity. But if you were just a (mooshie), just one of the many and did that, it was a capital crime. SP 9070

Q. BECAUSE YOU WERE LITERALLY TAKING ANOTHER MAN'S LIFE BY TAKING HIS FOOD.

A. Yeah. But if you were in charge, then you could do it with impunity.

Q. SO, OBVIOUSLY, WHEN YOU GOT TO DACHAU,



DACHAU BECAME A COLLECTION POINT FOR ALL KINDS OF SLAVE LABOR.

A. Yeah, who came in from the east, who would be shipped, you know, the smaller the Reich became because they closed up on it from all sides, the more they concentrated in the center of still Germany occupied, well, Nazi occupied or by Germany. So then you got people from all directions.

Q. WAS THE NEWS GROWING AS TO HOW THE GERMANS --

A. Oh, yeah. Because you see, some of the people also worked in certain situations, the air raids, which we heard, and they came back from slave labor situations or industry and terribly injured, and rocket things they were involved in. And some people came, torn bodies and dreadful situations, air raids, and you name it. So, then, of course it became obvious, because we could hear it all. It was no longer some sort of hearsay where we could actually hear the action, but still we had no specific idea, and when they came and liberated the camp, I was virtually giving myself just about another week, if that, before I would have died, because I couldn't see anymore. I was virtually blind and all that and couldn't move anymore.

Q. COULDN'T MOVE?

A. No. None of my body. And so they came just in time. I counted the days until I would die. I was actually in a state of almost virtually a coma.

Q. WHEN WAS THE LIBERATION?

A. The 28th, 29th of April, '45.

Q. ABOUT HOW MUCH DO YOU THINK YOU WEIGHED THEN?

A. I was just a skeleton. I mean, skin and bone, that's all. 30-40 pounds.

Q. THIRTY OR FORTY POUNDS?

A. Maybe.

Q. YOU WERE VERY SKINNY AS A CHILD ANYWAY. THIRTY OR FORTY POUNDS, THAT'S THE WEIGHT OF A SMALL CHILD.

A. Just the weight of the bones and whatever internal organs, that's all. There was nothing, no fat, nothing left. Just like you see a walking x-ray. Well, in my case, I wasn't walking, I was lying x-ray, lying down x-ray.

Q. HOW WAS THE OPERATION ON YOUR TOES?

A. Well, twice. First of all, actually, one of the Dutch people happened to be a butcher, and also very anti-Semitic. So he took me -- there was in that particular barrack, there was a bathtub. He took me to the bathtub and took a knife and just cut off whatever

remnants there was. So, I was shouting and saying, hey, you know, just come and, -- he was a sadist, and I would say, help, I shouted, just come and finish me off. And he was mad at me and said, why don't you shut up and this and that, and started just cutting off. And then apparently some Czech -- that was fairly in the initial stage, and then the Czechs became aware of my presence, and I'm talking particularly about a man called Dr. ( ), who then became a friend of mine 4818 after the war and all this. I had some contacts with him and so they found out about it.

There was a Czech kid in the barrack and they took him and did a proper, what they had in Dachau, that was a proper and it was a surgeon, and he did what he could. So I took things, first this butcher, Dutch butcher cut my remnants of the toes and all that, blood all over the place, in the bathtub. And then he took me and I had no anesthesia. There just wasn't none. But that all was infected because they had no medication. It was all infected and full of pus, decay, whatever because they couldn't control it. They didn't have any medication.

So that all continued and all they did was paper bandages, made of out just paper and they put it on and nothing else, and so it was rotting, and it was

zapping me, my strength. I didn't bother to die with blood poisoning, I still don't understand it, sepsis, you know, general sort of sepsis, because there was nothing which would have prevented it.

Q. AND THE SPECIAL RATIONS HAD STOPPED ALREADY?

A. Oh, they had stopped a long time ago. We only had them for about two weeks.

Q. AND WHAT KIND OF FOOD WERE YOU GETTING?

A. Oh, just nothing, virtually. Very little. Some bread and watery soup, that's why that they were in bad situations, this German inmate and said, they had just a small cart with food stuff. And they came through all the barracks and sold the damn things. You didn't have money, but everyone had an account. Those people had accounts. They could buy it. They didn't give it to you. You had to have an account actually for money. And that's why this German fellow came and he made arrangements which was very difficult and he was able to do that, because he apparently had the proper contacts so that I would have an account, which enabled me to buy that food.

Q. AND THAT'S WHAT SUSTAINED YOU THEN?

A. Oh, yeah. All these sort of situations, sporadic situations of support, of

unsolicited and unexpected support, they made all the difference. They postponed your death, so to speak.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER HIS NAME?

A. He never told it. I never had an idea who he was. He didn't introduce himself, hey I'm so and so. Actually the nicest were the Germans. Actually the Germans were much more human certainly than the Dutch or the French. And the French, you know, they were neither here nor there, and it was awful, real bastards, particularly in a situation like that. And they are political. I don't know why, it is just unbelievable. I still have problems with it.

Q. WELL, I DON'T KNOW IF THIS IS THE PLACE, BUT THE WHOLE QUESTION OF HIERARCHY IN THE CAMPS, WITHIN THE PRISONERS THEMSELVES, THAT WHOLE QUESTION, I KNOW YOU'VE TALKED ABOUT THE TIMES. THE SAME HIERARCHY EXISTS.

A. Oh, yes. But, these people, their power stemmed from receiving Red Cross parcels. But they didn't have any special functions to speak of. These people just said I am very anti-Semitic, some sort of fascist ideologies.

Q. THEY DIDN'T FEEL COMPASSION AT YOU, THOUGH?

A. No. But they were very compassionate

with each other, supportive of each other. The various Dutch groups supported each other. The Czechs supported except that I was the only Czech in the barrack at that time, and the support I got was outside of the barrack. People happened to find out that I was a fellow Czech there, but I was totally ostracized, and I didn't get anything, and other people gorged themselves and died eating the Red Cross parcels and I didn't get a single thing. No one gave me anything.

There was one person who had some sort of lentils or some kind of dried food and always cooked himself regularly some sort of food, and whatever he had, lentils, or peas, or whatever, so he gave me the warm water, which he took out the peas and he gave me the warm water, and that was a big thing. And that was the only time I remember.

There were alot of ministers too, Catholic priests, and one Dutch Protestant minister. He was one who actually gave me things from his Red Cross Parcel and then tended to be concerned and share. I stayed in touch with him after the war, and he continued his studies and was a minister, but then he just switched and studied medicine, and then he died, died of some diseases or whatever. I was in contact with him after the war, and he was a person who was exceptional, and he gave me

things and shared, and was very concerned and kind. But all of the other ones --

Q. WHAT WAS HIS NAME?

A. I think some thing like, it started with M., something like Martiers, Martin, something like that.

Q. DID YOU EVER FIND OUT WHY CZECHS NEVER GOT RED CROSS PARCELS?

A. No. No. That's something I never did --

Q. SO YOU WERE SAYING THAT YOU WERE BARELY CONSCIOUS AT THE MOMENT OF LIBERATION?

A. Yes.

Q. CAN YOU REMEMBER THAT?

A. Oh, yeah. I can remember the liberation alright, because it came to me as a total surprise. Actually, I had given up on me. I said, I'm just ready to go. And although it was in the air, many people kind of already anticipated it, but we were not officially informed. We had no specifics to be sure, except of course we heard more and more of the noises, by virtue of the explosions and all these sort of situations.

So, all of a sudden, they came into the barrack, ran through it and looked at us, the people in

uniform, and then later, a few of the civilian people, politicians came, because Dachau was a very important place, high military officers and all that, so I can remember. Actually, it could have been Eisenhower and some other people too, but at that time, I didn't know them. I know the high officers, they just didn't stop. They ran through, and some stuffed at us some cigarettes and this and that, but none of them really stayed. They were all so horrified that they just ran through it. It was too much for them, for all of them. I have some sort of document which I have got, and I could see Patton and Eisenhower and after liberation, some camps.

Then, we got some Red Cross people in and I remember, they said you have to drink wine. So they just gave me some wine.

Q. WINE?

A. Yeah. Wine. They said, you have to drink wine and Ovaltine.

Q. OVALTINE?

A. Ovaltine, yeah.

Q. OVALTINE, THE CHOCOLATE DRINK?

A. Yeah, and these sort of things. And so that was distributed by Red Cross people, and then the Americans gave us some rations. Then the medical people came and looked at us, and then they found out that I had



a case of active Tuberculosis, and x-rays and all that. People with Tuberculosis, they had to have some special designation. At that time, Tuberculosis was just treated like, comparatively speaking, like AIDS today. And so you were a leper, because it was contagious.

I was very upset, because they still used me, as interpreter. You see, I was an interpreter, and so they said, you can't really continue because of this, and you've got that. Our beds, they had a designation, some sort of red ribbon. There was obviously no treatment, and food was kind of, so that people wouldn't die, and that was meaningful. I stayed many weeks before I could actually be moved to Czechoslovakia, which I was only back in June or July.

Q. WHAT WERE YOUR FEELINGS THEN WHEN LIBERATION FINALLY CAME?

A. I don't know. I was in such a state, it just didn't move me that much. I was relieved. Perhaps that's maybe the best way to put it. There was no ecstatic joy, which I felt, because I was not capable of it in the state I was in.

Q. MAY I ASK YOU HOW OLD YOU WERE WHEN LIBERATION HAPPENED, HOW OLD YOU WERE?

A. Eighteen. Of course, later on, I somehow fell into this sort of situation, and when I

started to move about and I was an interpreter, looked around and went into the surrounding places to explore and see what I could find. I went into the SS houses and just looked for things and searched, and was interested, talked, made friends.

Q. WHAT KIND OF THINGS WERE YOU LOOKING FOR?

A. Many things. I was always interested. I found a number of things, books and Nazi stuff, and all of that. And then of course, Dachau was one of the major warehouses for SS things, weaponry and all that, and that was guarded by G.I.s. I went inside and they said you really should go now. You shouldn't be here. Well, who cares? Some people took out things, and then they played with it and killed themselves. There were explosives which they were very intensitive, highly charged, highly charged things, so some of them killed themselves playing with that. After that, they were very strict. We were not supposed to go in there anymore, but it still could be done.

Then you had different responses from the G.I.s., and they said, well, can we do anything? I said I would like to have something to read. That was very important, and they brought me something to read. Then, they are supposed to not really communicate too openly

with the inmates, the American personnel, for some reason. So, some of the communication took place in toilets, so then they started to talk to me, which was very strange.

There was a Sergeant, I remember, and he enjoyed teasing the inmates. He had these sort of cigars made out of rubber and chocolate which if squeezed, it squirted, and people were starved, and their disappointment was much more than under normal circumstances. He got a charge out of it. He just really enjoyed that, fooling the inmates, then who were terribly disappointed, I mean fooling them and all this, just really cruel.

Another one said, I would just like to do a favor for you. He came and took me out to some sort of cubby holes with doors and then he took his machine gun and sprayed it and said, I killed a few SS people for you. Look there locked up in there. He just thought he was doing me a favor or something.

Q. WAS IT TRUE, THAT THERE WERE SOME PEOPLE IN THERE?

A. Yes. And I said that after the war, I have had interviews where reporters came and all that, and I said that and said, well, you are not going to print that. It's not a popular thing. Let's not print

that. These are some important things actually.

Then after a while, after over a month or something like not even that, then they moved out, because there was still war with Japan. They needed personnel, army personnel, so they moved them out where they would have occupation, for occupational purposes.

So they moved out, eventually, all American personnel. There were very few exceptions who were in charge, and brought in German prisoners of war and put them in charge of us who stayed there. And that was the last straw. And I have tremendous problems with that. And I fought it tooth and nail. But they were officially put in charge. It was just unbelievable, to save American personnel, which I can understand, but it's a sort of boo boo to put in German prisoners of war in charge of liberated inmates, and that was simply because I was still there in a state of health where they felt I needed to stay there before they could ship me.

And then finally I was shipped and all that.

Q. HOW WELL WERE YOU ABLE TO GET AROUND?  
WERE YOU ABLE TO WALK?

A. Oh, yes. Eventually, I could walk. I didn't walk quite normally. I just kind of hobbled around, but I did, and then it improved and the healing was relatively fast, because I got medical attention and

nutrition improved. I, so to speak, mended fairly quickly.

Q. YOUR VISION?

A. Everything, that was very fast. Yeah. That came back, and I could move.

Q. WERE YOU SUFFERING FROM OTHER THINGS LIKE NIGHTMARES?

A. Well, not so much in the camp, but then later on after liberation, quite a few years after, particularly in connection with the fact that we were supposed to meet all in Prague again, and we discussed that in camps, should we be separated, which we were. My mother stayed in Auschwitz-Birkenau, and I didn't want to accept the fact that the chances were, you know, although I didn't have any great illusions about it. But still my hopes were very high that she would have survived and we all would meet. And we did.

My father met -- he was already, of course, in Prague long before I did, because he was liberated virtually days after I left Blechhammer. But, my mother, of course, I expected, so we just went back in Prague.

They brought me to Belsen, and then American personnel in an American lorry, and they brought me to Belsen, and I was given some sort of paper or something, so I was still in striped, my striped pajamas. We were

in this open lorry coming back from Germany, and there was some Czech woman or something, and her response as we were just driving by was, oh well, you shouldn't have come. We don't want you back, some terrible stuff.

So then, railway wagons from Belsen to Prague, which is not too great a distance, so there was no great support. And then I went back to Auschwitz, which was very close to the main railway station, very close. I wanted to go back to see the apartment or the house on one of the major streets. Of all the places, this was hit during an air raid and destroyed, so I had no place to go. So went back to the railway station and slept on a bench up there until the next day. It was terrible.

Q. YES. IN YOUR PAJAMAS IN PRAGUE.

A. And no great support, nothing. And some had dreadful disappointments. What we did very frequently was some valuables you gave to friends. I went to some of the friends and said here I am. They looked at me disappointed and said, well, I guess you want your things, and had we known you would be back again asking for the things, we wouldn't have taken them to begin with. To hear this sort of thing wasn't exactly very encouraging. And some other people were very nice and gave me shelter and all that. But you know, the

reception was not exactly open arms, bad conscious, burden after the war. I didn't particularly feel that the reception was a very warm welcome. And although, people had you talked to them now, you could just see it in their eyes, which they have adjusted to the morality, and whatever.

Q. WHEN WAS IT THAT YOU GOT BACK TO PRAGUE?

A. Oh, it must have been sometime in July. I don't know the dates up to that point. It just didn't register at all, very rarely, even then.

Q. WHAT DID YOU DO AFTER YOU SPENT THE NIGHT IN THE RAILWAY STATION?

A. Well, I went to two various people whom I knew were there, were friends, and they gave me shelter. And I went to some people I knew and whose relatives I tried to find, but then they told me your father is back. And that, of course, was a great thing, because we understood each other. As a matter of fact, the relationship between my father and myself was the best in the camp for some reason or another. Prior to that, and after that, it was very rocky for some reason or another, differences, whatever, personality conflicts. Of course, I was overjoyed and all that, and because he already had been back for such a long time, he had

adjusted, but still the interesting thing, is that people, friends, took care and just supported and all that. That took place, but there was no great enthusiasm.

Looking back, at it, I didn't particularly experience great enthusiasm on their part for us having survived and returned. So then, we adjusted gradually and did alot of things. The first thing I did was just help some of my German friends who now were in the same situation we were in, or similar situations because they were persecuted, and these were people who were decent people who were supportive of us when we were in there. So that was one of the first things I did, help get them out of jails and prisons and camps, concentration camps, and being supportive, jails. And I did that, and that was one of the first things I did.

Q. WERE YOU STAYING WITH YOUR FATHER?

A. Well. No. Actually, my father was quite a ladies man, you know, a womanizer. He just stayed with some friends, ladies who took care of him, this and that. So I didn't exactly fit into his amorous types of situations. So, later on, when he was established, he made a choice and stayed with one person and she reluctantly also took care of me, but very reluctantly, because I was not her choice. She was more



interested in my father, and I was kind of a burden to her. She kept on telling me, I am doing this for you, and you should be grateful and I was not really up to it. She was a very cold fish. She had sex-appeal, but otherwise, a cold fish, and so we just didn't get along too well. We didn't have much in common. And the only thing she kept on telling me was, how much I do for you, cook for you, and she expected me to kiss her feet, which I didn't, and she never forgave me that I had not.

Q. WHY DO YOU THINK YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR FATHER CHANGED AFTER YOU HAD BEEN SO CLOSE?

A. Because he was purely (authoritarian) and very impulsive and impatient, and he was right and all the other people were wrong, and if they didn't agree with him they were just beheaded and lost souls. I simply didn't feel I agreed with him. I just simply didn't submit. And we had a conflict all the time. It was, you shouldn't study. You should go and learn something and get into something where you can earn alot of money. I was into catching up and finishing ( things so that I possibly could study. I was very interested in that. He said, why do you waste your time? You're stupid anyway. You are not very intelligent to begin with. I didn't let myself be influenced by that. These were some of the conflicts we had and I

persevered.

Then he was always very proud when I did exactly -- when I achieved, attained exactly what he had thought I couldn't. So then he was very proud and told all the people, my son and all this and that. And then I said, I'm going to get a Doctorate and he said oh come on, this is a bad joke. You shouldn't study, never should study.

So that was the bone of contention which continues to this very day, which was only different in the camps, wherever he cooperated in a very harmonious and very strange sort of situation. With my mother, it was very different. We virtually were so close, we didn't even have to talk. We just looked at each other and we knew what we thought.

BEGIN TAPE TWO.

Q. WE WERE TALKING ABOUT BLACK HUMOR.

A. The tendencies for people who have survived traumatic, very difficult situations, may develop this type of humor when they look back in a way which will see also the irony, the humorous aspects of all the tragedy. That certainly is not something necessarily limited to Jews, but limited to people who have done so well and survived it. And they can look back and see some of the humorous things which may

suddenly have escaped them while they are suffering through that.

But after the fact, I think one can develop, and that has some sort of an attachment and some sort of a distance from the actual suffering. You do that also when you go through a bad marriage. My God, you think you are just going to suffocate and it's a killer. Once you get through that, then you look back at these sort of things, you just see some of the black humor in these dreadful situations, the comedy, human comedy in these sort of things which were a killer at the time. But you are out of it now and you see from a distance, from a different perspective, but also the ridiculous comes forth.

That is, I think, an art which needs to be developed by people who are indeed in the real sense of the word, survivors. Because, if they don't they are not survivors. The chances are, they may commit suicide.

Q. IT IS A REAL ART, IN THE BEST SENSE OF THE WORD, DEFENDING THEMSELVES.

A. That's right. That's right because, you see, some of us and many of us, and more will in the future, the chances are, life is just nothing else but a struggle and defending ones self from aggressive forces of others or situations. It's a dreadful thing, and if

you can't find some sense of humor in the whole thing, you bury yourself.

Q. I'M THINKING NOW OF HOW YOU ENDED YOUR WRITINGS IN WHICH YOU SAID, YOU FELT THAT YOU HAD BEEN, I'M NOT SAYING IT EXACTLY, ROBBED OF A CERTAIN CAPACITY OF HAPPINESS.

A. All right. I think that's a very important and profound, stimulating question in a way, stimulating a lot of responses and alot of thoughts and alot of feelings to be sure. Depending on the age of a person who survived, and on the family situation in terms of the loss of family, there's virtually anything which you can somehow overcome and transcend emotionally and psychologically. But one thing I have not is the loss of an extended family which functioned well. That is something which I have not been able to come to terms with.

Now those people who are lucky enough, who have found some sort of a substitute family by virtue of having created it themselves for themselves are in a very different position. But those of us who really have been spoiled as far as extended family, immediate family, close family members concerned, and have not found anything which would come close in terms of family relations which they may have created for themselves

afterwards, they will find that this is the most difficult and tragic predicament and cannot easily, if at all, be overcome.

That is something which I still suffer from, because the loss was too great, and what I got afterwards was not enough to compensate the loss. I would say that's the tragedy of my life and very frequently, I reflect on that and still bemoan the loss and what I don't have and what I use to have.

Now, if people, for example didn't have anything which provides a meaningful and satisfying frame of reference to which they could refer or associate with later on in life, then they've got a different situation. But if you had something which I considered to be, at least to me, next to ideal situation, then I think the loss is more profound, and especially if you're not lucky to have encountered people who would have filled that gap. You are in a bad situation.

Q. SO, SOME LOSSES ARE JUST NEVER GOTTEN OVER.

A. No. No. To me, that is perhaps the most serious of it all, particularly when you're young. And when you were not ready to lose that family emotionally, psychologically and emotionally, when indeed you were not in that position where under normal

circumstances, developmental circumstances, your umbilical cord is cut, and you're not ready for it. I certainly wasn't ready for it. For years, I woke up or at night I wept because of the losses, primarily because of the loss of my mother who was the closest thing I've ever had in my life and I never could come to terms with that. It is still something which is churning in me all the time, all the time.

I think it's one of the problems of my generation, that is to say generation of survivors, the ones who were older, perhaps may have been slightly different, although there was no systematic study on that at all. So little has been done, alot of talk and alot of horror stories, and that's understandable because people need to get it out of their systems, but so little interpretation, so little interpretation. And if you look at all the things which you are generating in your project and to what extent it's going to be interpreted, who is going to interpret that, it seems to me that it is not all fruitful, is it, if it is not interpreted.

People are getting saturated with horror stories and somehow callased. And so where does it get us? I don't think it does get us very far, just listening to this dreadfulness, ghastliness, if we don't have a key to understanding and overcoming and

preventing. And that to me is what really motivated me after I was no longer in a position to continue my medical studies back in Prague, and I just was able to do that and starting it. I said, well the next best thing is, and I was in Australia and the United States and Germany, and I said the next best thing is to study the dissipating of social sciences which will enable me to better understand what happened and how it happens and what can be done to prevent it, because if I don't do it, I have wasted my life. What have I learned?

So many people just simply get lost, and get suffocated or drown in their suffering without really getting out of it to see what can be learned. And that's why I am doing what I am doing. That is why I felt obligated and I mean obligated, particularly to all those who have not survived, and people who would have indeed closed that gap which has been created by the loss of family, my cousin, my friends, people who were in their way geniuses, young musicians, artists, people of my generation, slightly older, who would have been ideal companions and friends. And that's why I said with a great deal of trepidation, and that's my reflected opinion that the best of us have died, have not survived, and we, the ones who survived, are not the best material of that particular group of people who went through hell.

I was very fortunate, particularly in Theresienstadt, but even Auschwitz-Birkenau, but primarily in Theresienstadt, to meet with people who were extra-ordinary in so many ways, talented, gifted, of the music, intellectually, scientists, human beings with tremendous humanity. Not a single one, not a single one has survived. None of my friends whom I have been closest to, not a single one has survived.

Q. SO, BESIDES THE ENORMOUS LOSS OF YOUR MOTHER, THE MASS OF THE LOSS OF SO MANY PEOPLE YOU CARED FOR HAS BEEN TOO MUCH.

A. Right. Overwhelming. And then, of course, you look at those people who really, you have put on the pedestal rightly or wrongly, I don't think wrongly, but I think rightly, because there is some sort of distance. I don't think I project some sort of things. I still have some of their products, poems, writings, thoughts, still available, and music. And if you just look at it all and see who are all of these people who created all of this under those unbelievable circumstances, who have survived, you don't find any, hardly any. I haven't. Not in my environment, I haven't. I'm sure there may be some, but they are not in my environment, and that makes it very difficult. And there is no substitute for it.



There are so many things which can be mended, and this is precisely something which I think is very important for me because I haven't come up with an answer. I haven't seen how these sort of things -- yeah, if you are lucky, if you really meet people who would be on a similar level of humanity and sophistication if you will, human accomplishment, talent, then I think you are in a very fortunate position, but I have not come across anything which would come close, actually. I feel deprived, and I feel very lonely because of that.

Q. YES. DO YOU THINK THAT SAY IF YOU WOULD MEET SOMEONE LIKE THAT, THE MERE FACT THAT YOU HAD BEEN THROUGH YOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE CAMPS HAS MADE SUCH A DENT IN YOUR LIFE THAT TRUE INTIMACY MIGHT NOT BE POSSIBLE ANYWAY?

A. I don't know. It's a very complex, very complex problem. I would say that in this regard, I'm not that pessimistic. I think it is possible, but the chances which may come along your way are remote, that you would find people. There is no question that you can, and I think you can relate and you can express, even though you may find people who may have had a very different type of experience, certainly very different from the one which one had when one survived the camps. I still think you can develop relationships which will be

meaningful and profound and deep. But to find people who will fit this sort of requirement or, if you will, this sort of situation, hope, are remote unless you are lucky and you just stumble across and see people, and here they are.

But in my life, there is some few. And either they are not excessive or they are different life situations. Simply, there is not enough opportunity for such an encounter and all that sort of thing. It sort of passes you by, so to speak. It is very difficult. It is a question of tremendous fortune and luck.

Q. AS YOU SAID, SOME OF THESE ELEMENTS WE'RE TALKING ABOUT MIGHT HAVE BEEN STUDIED, AND HAVEN'T. BUT WHAT THOUGHTS DO YOU HAVE ABOUT, NOT ONLY FROM YOU IN PARTICULAR, BUT FROM ANYONE WHO WENT THROUGH THAT EXPERIENCE AND HOW YOUR OWN PSYCHIC AND EMOTIONS WERE CORRODED, OR YOU HAD TO BE SO GUARDED THAT IT AFFECTS YOU EVERAFTER?

A. Well, I don't know whether we can come out with any sort of generalization. I think that pretty much obviously, the response would be from case to case different, probably. But obviously people who have been hurt a great deal, particularly in the most sensitive areas, we want to prevent any sort of hurt to recur, and therefore we'll be guarded, that's most likely the

tendency.

What I found out, in a very many situations, people with whom may have had a glimpse of the way you function and discovered your sensitivities, instead of really being sympathetic or empathetic, may actually use it to lash out and hurt you, because they know that there you are vulnerable, rather than to say, hey, I am going to be loving, or I am going to be supportive, or I am going to be this or that, which will compensate for that. Most people are so calloused they don't give a damn, one; or two, they will exploit that situation and turn it against you when it suits them.

The cruelty, the amount of cruelty I've experienced in people whom you have kind of disclosed yourself, just open up, and how they took advantage of these things and just to really stab you in the areas which still have not healed, which are still bleeding, it's just enormous. I've got problems with that, problems with understanding that people can actually be so cruel, understanding that you are vulnerable in these areas. That has happened, yes. That of course teaches you a few lessons. You say, hey, I'm in no position to expose myself to this sort of continuous hurt. I've had my share, therefore I won't expose myself.

That's a tremendous problem, because if you

don't expose yourself, and that's something which I of wrote as a kind of thought in one of my writings is to be (relating). And if you are not willing to relate, you won't be, and so therefore you just can't avoid it, because if you avoid it, you are not going to relate. You are never going to have an intimate relationship, and therefore not be satisfied in those areas which you really need to be satisfied most, emotionally, psychologically, sexually, whatever.

So, therefore, it's a self-defeating sort of situation and we have to open up and take the risk. That's what I have to do except I'm a little bit, hopefully, more prudent, because you learn to whom you will expose yourself and to whom not, but that's not very easy because people in very different situations behave differently and are in so many ways unpredictable. So, it's very different to access the situation accurately and say, hey, I am going to open up to this person. I have opened up to the wrong people very frequently and say, hey, what have I learned, in terms of human knowledge, in terms of accessing people correctly, and the mistakes I've made are just inexcusable, almost.

And so you become very cautious, yes. And that is something, perhaps which I think is very important to this cause, because I don't think many

people who interview or who come and talk about these things will go into these sort of depths. So many people who are survivors survived, but they are walking in the mist. They have not walked out of the mist and are still in a fog, a fog daze, and their level of consciousness is minimal.

Q. THESE ARE VERY DIFFICULT SUBJECTS TO TALK ABOUT.

A. That's right. But, I think it has to be. It has to be, because otherwise, like I said before, if you can't learn from this, forget it. If you can't learn from that, what will you learn from? And most of the people just simply don't see. They don't even understand what we are trying to do, some of us. They stay in the center, but they are just totally blind. They don't have the slightest inkling. They talk, blah, blah, blah, and all that, but absolutely have not understood, whatsoever, and that's very discouraging, very discouraging.

Q. IT SOUNDS TO ME THAT DESPITE THAT, THERE IS OPTIMISM, AND YOU BELIEVE THAT ONE CAN LEARN, ONE CAN ANALYZE AND ONE CAN APPLY.

A. Yes. Because, that's talking about meaning and (Victor Franko), and all this, and if you don't find meaning in life, it's hopeless. And many

sp

people can't and it's difficult to find meaning. I'm not trying to oversimplify that at all.

Q. NO. IT'S A STRUGGLE.

A. Sure. It's a terrible struggle. It's not something which you have once you have found it. It's something which you have to rediscover and work on all the time, just like you have to human relationships. You just can't, I have it, and let it go and move on. No, you have to work on it everyday. And if you don't, it's going to fall apart.

Q. SO THERE IS NO ABSOLUTE MEANING.

A. No. Absolutely not, because absolute meaning is Hitler. That's absolute meaning, and some bloody chauvinist Jews, fascists, or any sort of doctrine ideolox, absolutist ideolox, and no way. So, we learn, and if we just don't remain open and change perspectives as we continue to learn, we are doomed to be rigid and insensitive.

Now, also in terms of problems in terms of human relations and encounters, some few months ago, I had an interview with one of the local papers. It was a fairly sensitive interview, an older lady, fairly sensitive, relatively sophisticated and some of the characteristics which she described as an individual, conclusions, that I have no aptitude for small talk. Now

that was very important, and some people who know me picked it up. If you remain on the level of small talk, you are not going to be able to explore any depths, meaning all the things we've discussed, because that's not accessible. It's not in it. And because you are surrounded by people who lose themselves in meaningless talk, it is very difficult to find a partner with whom you can really talk about things and discuss them in depth.

That's again one of my problems, because I don't find these people very easily. They are just very few in between. Therefore, if you don't have anything in common with these people you will go through life in this sort of haphazard fog, in this sort of superficial fashion. There's not much left in terms of human relationships, and I think that's one of the things which are very important in human relationships in general terms because people may develop in different ways and somehow they don't keep up pace together. They will fall behind each other to the extent that they become estranged from each other, and they find out that they will be left empty handed and dissatisfied simply because they no longer satisfy each others needs, because needs have changed.

And that's the tragedy. It is something

which I see in this society. It is very easy to be friendly and all that on a superficial level, but once it gets to the nitty gritty, then people get scared and shy away from it and are unable to really explore it any further, and that scares the hell out of them. You are left with nothing but just yourself. That's something which I am in the process of learning, and I haven't learned at all. Learn to live by yourself and satisfy your own needs as well as you can, which is a dreadful predicament.

Q. BECAUSE OF THE LONELINESS?

A. That's right. That's right. Because you can see, hey, it doesn't get me anyplace. You may be surrounded by people but feel a profound loneliness.

Q. SO YOU STRUGGLE ALONG DAY BY DAY.

A. Yeah. I think you can say that, pretty much so. So, that's why I can empathize with, just I am still pondering about something -- we had one of our last encounters in terms of our center activity. It was a lecture by (Bruno Bettelheim). I had an occasion to talk to him and he pretty much expressed similar things from his point of view. It was an unbelievable loneliness. He had a family, a wife whom he was close to but his children totally removed, far removed, nothing pretty much in common, and his dreadful loneliness and his



physical condition and all that and no one to talk to and going around to give tremendous, fantastic lectures but not being able to heal himself in a way, by virtue of the fact he didn't have anyone to help him very much.

Some of the things he told me were just really terrible, you wouldn't believe, the fact that in spite of as well known as he was, he was a very lonely person, deserted. Then all the physical problems he had because of old age, deterioration and all, which then put him in a position where he felt he couldn't get out of it with all his knowledge and he committed suicide. It was just a terrible thing.

I have great understanding for him, because I think about some of these things except I don't particularly feel that I can do it, because all of the things which I am trying to develop and stand for will be destroyed because I would set a precedent which would eradicate all the things which I am trying to construct and build up. So it's not a solution, so I suffer and say, you know. People afraid of death, I'm not so sure they should be, there's a need to be, because there's a worse thing than death, maybe.

Q. BUT YOU WOULDN'T HAVE GONE OFF AND --  
SUICIDE.

A. Well, I mean, I certainly toyed with

the idea, absolutely.

Q. THE MAIN ARGUMENT THEN, IT WOULD DENY EVERYTHING THAT YOU HAVE WORKED FOR.

A. That's right. That's exactly right. I don't particularly think it's a constructive solution, no. But I have understanding for it, and I would never condemn anyone who do it, particularly in a justified situation. I think there are certain limits, why you do it and all that, but this is just up to the individual difference. You just can't -- but I certainly have understanding for it. I just really do relate to that as some sort of a solution, but I don't condone it, and I don't think this is a constructive alternative.

And that's why I feel it's a tragedy, in terms of (Bruno Battalein). It's a tragedy that a person, who was a significant to others to so many, a role model to so many people, finds himself in a situation where this is the only solution. Apparently to him, it was the only solution, otherwise, he would not have done it.

Q. SO THEN THERE'S THE QUESTION OF NOT ONLY TO LIVE ON ONE HAND, A HAIR OF OUR DESPERATION, HOW TO LIVE LIFE THAT HAS SOME RICHES IN IT.

A. Right. The riches, I think, more and more particularly in our situation where this reality has changed very much from the reality, let's say, from 20,

30, 40, 50, years ago. If you don't find the riches yourself the chances are, not many people will help you to find them. That's a terrible thing. That makes you a very isolated sort of individual. There's no question about the riches, but I think people have become less and less able to find them, and help each other to find them. They make it more difficult for each other, if anything, put so to speak, roadblocks in you way to find them, and that's terrible.

I think we live in a much worse world than the one which I experienced when I was a child in terms of precisely this sort of thing, help people support each other and satisfy each other's needs and develop this sort of concern for each other and compassion and the affection. I don't see it very much in this world, less and less in this nightmarish technology in which we spend more time and concern. I see that with my son, with things, rather than human beings.

Q. HOW DID YOU BEGIN TO PUT YOUR LIFE BACK TOGETHER AGAIN IN PRAGUE AFTER THE WAR? I'M SURE YOU MUST HAVE BEEN DEVASTATED WITH THE LOSS OF YOUR MOTHER COMPOUNDED WITH THE ( ) OF YOUR FATHER 250 AFTER THAT GOOD RELATIONSHIP, YOUR OWN HEALTH PROBLEMS.

A. My priority at that particular time was just to catch up with my education and what I missed.

That was to me very important. That was a priority, a long stretch. So, I concentrated on that against all the various odds because I had to work, there was no money left, nothing there, and I had to work.

I worked for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation, which was the Czech part of it. That was a very good job and all that. Simultaneously, I wanted to catch up so that I could finish my ( ) and all that and I had to do that during the night. Since we were all not that very well fed and I, at that time, had tuberculosis, and I had lots of handicaps and psychologically and of the emotional nature, but I willed it. I said, that's a very important thing which I need to accomplish in order to function and in order to be useful and be creative in some way or another in spite of the fact that my father dissuaded me as I have said already, he said you should do something else and you are not intelligent enough and all that. I just decided that I wanted to pursue that, and I done it, and then got active very much in a political life, very active, and certainly I would call it that, not just someone who sits back, but I was an activist, certainly by every sense of the definition.

Then the communist situation became a threat and I tried to oppose it with everything else and was

arrested and was for a few days in jail and beat up by communist officials and had just a hell of a time. The things I responded to just took up a shape. It was something concrete I could respond to and work with or work against, so that's what I did. Finally I decided that I'm not going to go through hell again. One totalitarian regime was enough and I could not prevail.

I talked to one people about this sort of predicament, and this one happened to be also a person I knew before the war and also he was in Dachau and he was then Arch-Bishop of Prague, called (Joseph Barron). This is a man I respected very much because of his humanity and not necessarily because of his Catholicism or whatever. He was a ( ) and a very important one. He behaved. He stood up to the Nazis, stood up to the communists, and he was just a very unusual human being precisely the type of human being you want to encounter, you have a need for.

So, I went to his palace there in Prague and I said here I am, brother. I said, brother, because we all called ourselves brothers, survivors, former inmates, brothers. So I said, Brother Joseph or Barron, whatever, I said I need to discuss something very important. I don't want to skip the country because of cowardness and all that, but I don't think there is nothing I can change

here, and he said, leave with my blessing, leave. And then he gave me an address and safe-keeping, and the address was in Italy. I was going by Italy and all that, which was exceedingly helpful.

I had tremendous support from mixed marriage situations where the wife was Czech and he was Italian and he happened to be a Colonel in the Italian military, the Special Guard. So they really exceedingly supported me, they housed me, and they helped me to get the boat to each of us to catch because that was paid from the United States, the trip to Australia.

Q. WHAT WAS THE ARRANGEMENT?

A. Well, these were distant relatives who happened to be, well not so distant actually, cousins, second cousins. They were the Jewish neighbors, ( ) actually the ( ) who supported (Hillbergs) study for all practical purposes then were all related at one time. So, this ( ) was born a pauper and was a cousin of my mothers and they were just people in Czechoslovakia, one of the richest, if not the richest.

So they left in time, as most of the rich people did because they are a different sort of ( ) and the formation and all that, and these people were very, very close in terms of network and family relations.

Q. YOU WOULDN'T HAVE A PASSPORT?

A. Yeah. I would have a valid passport, something, so they just put things in a suitcase, preferably I already have packed suitcase, which I don't. In other words, when we got the soup and the soup, well you have luck, as in Auschwitz-Birkenau it happened once or twice that we had pea soup with meat in it. So, I don't want to be the first, because then I get the water. So, I wait and let other people go, and just organize it and see it.

Q. HADN'T THEY LEARNED THAT SKILL ALSO?

A. Who?

Q. THE OTHERS WAITING IN LINE TO WAIT.

A. No, they hadn't. And that's the interesting thing because that's what life is all about. Some people have never learned these skills, and you know that they have taken advantage of their ignorance. You don't get rich by working hard. Not that I'm rich, but I could do things. So I'm an underpaid professor, which is not to say that I'm not open to making a fast buck, and that's what I'm doing.

For example, this is something which is important, also professionally. I have this some sort of recognition back in Germany, so this is the third or fourth year that I'm going to Europe and the Germans pay

for it, because I'm doing the Nazi stuff, which is terrific, because I think it's great.

The first time this summer, I was there for just one day actually working, well I prepared for it much longer, of course, but this broadcast which I considered to be very important, table talk, dialogue for the first time in public with formal members of the SS, some of whom were perpetrators, one of them, at least one of them. So that has never been done, so they say hey let's get into telling them about the SS and stimulate a discussion and response.

I consider that to be exceedingly important, because it's historic, because no one has done before. It's the first time. And I got tapes and all that and we'll see what will become of it, but I mean, apparently it has been sufficiently successful. It's being repeated. It's already the third time and they are paying. And I'm doing things which I consider to be very important. They may not be necessarily discovered now, but in the future they will be for sure, sooner or later. And I'm getting paid for it. I think that's good.

Q. NO HAPPINESS BUT SATISFACTION.

A. Happiness, no. But satisfaction, absolutely, because I'm attaining some of the goals I've set for myself and leaving something for posterity, and



that's exactly what keeps me talking about meaning and talking about (Victor Franko) and all these sort of things, his notions and his thought processes.

To me it is very important that I leave a trail, what do I leave when I kick the bucket? To me it's important that I leave something which may be useful to posterity, and that's the only thing which really keeps me going, because I don't have that much in life, in terms of satisfaction, because no one gives a damn, very few.

So, that's what I am doing. I have to create my own resources. They are meager to be sure, but at least I can say, well, my life, by virtue of the fact that I have survived at times, I say hey, I mean some people make such a big thing out of being a survivor. I don't know if that is such a lucky thing to do, is it to be in this situation. I am not at all convinced of that, and it probably would have been much easier not to survive, but since I am, I just am trying to feel I have not wasted my life. I derive some satisfaction out of that.

Q. AND RIGHTFULLY SO. IT'S GETTING KIND OF LATE, BUT I WOULD LOVE TO, IN THE NEXT SESSION, ELABORATE A LOT MORE ON WHAT YOUR LIFE HAS BEEN LIKE. I HAVE TO STOP NOW SO THAT I CAN GIVE CAROL A CHANCE TO ASK

SOME QUESTIONS.

A. I don't think she's prepared very well this time, because she's got her own Star of David to carry, Jewish star to carry. I can't say Cross, because she's Jewish, for reasons which I think to some extent escape her, but we won't go into it.

Q. WHAT WAS THE LAST THING YOU SAID? WHAT ESCAPES ME?

A. Why are you Jewish?

Q. WE ARE NOT HERE TO GET INTO MY LIFESTORY.

A. WELL, IT'S NEVER TOO LATE.

Q. I'M JEWISH BECAUSE OF THE HOLOCAUST, BUT THAT'S ANOTHER --

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS YOU WOULD LIKE TO ASK HIM?

Q. YES, IN A WAY IT MEANS GOING BACK INTO SOME MATERIAL, SO I DON'T KNOW HOW WELL IT WOULD FLOW.

Q. WELL, GO AHEAD. DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, JUST GO AHEAD.

Q. OKAY. BACK WHEN HE WAS TALKING ABOUT HIS LOSSES AND PAIN OF HAVING LOST HIS FAMILY, WHAT HE ENDS UP WITH HIS LIFE AS A CONSEQUENCE, I WANTED TO TALK ABOUT THE FACT THAT THOSE OF US WHO KNOW YOU AND THOSE OF US WHO HAVE BEEN AROUND YOU FOR SOME TIME IN THE

HOLOCAUST CENTER AND IN THE ( ) WERE VERY  
PAINFULLY IMPACTED BY YOUR STORY AND YOUR LIFE AND THE  
THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU.

IT BRINGS UP THE CONCEPT THAT NOT ONLY WAS  
THIS VERY HARD FOR YOU AND YOUR LIFE, BUT ALSO HAS A DEEP  
IMPACT ON ANYONE WHO WAS INVOLVED IN YOUR LIFE IN ANY  
CLOSE WAY, WHETHER IT'S A STUDENT OF YOURS, WHETHER IT'S  
SOMEONE WHO IS IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU, WHETHER IT'S  
YOUR CHILD, WHATEVER, THAT THERE'S THIS RIPPLING IMPACT  
THAT HAPPENS TO ANYONE WHO HAS CLOSE CONTACT WITH YOU.

SOME OF US FEEL WE THAT ARE WILLING TO TAKE  
ON THIS PAIN BECAUSE THE WISDOM AND INSIGHT THAT WE GET  
FROM YOU ARE A REWARD, AS A PART OF THE BARGAIN. BUT I  
HAVE A LOT OF ANXIETY ON THE FUTURE IN TERMS ABOUT OUR  
HAVING TO CARRY ON IN A SENSE, IT'S HISTORY, AND THIS  
PAINFUL ASPECT OF HUMAN NATURE. AND I FEEL THAT IN  
STUDYING THIS, I HAVE TURNED TO PEOPLE LIKE YOU FOR  
WISDOM AND FOR SOME STRENGTH OF CHARACTER YOU DEVELOPED,  
HAVING GONE THROUGH THIS, HAVING REFLECTED ON IT AND  
HAVING STUDIED THIS. YOU HAVE SPENT YOUR WHOLE LIFE ON  
IT, IN A SENSE.

I HAVE A REAL ANXIETY OF NOT KNOWING HOW ME  
AND THE NEXT GENERATION ARE GOING TO CARRY IT ON, BECAUSE  
EACH OF US WHO HAVE REALLY BEEN INVOLVED IN THE HOLOCAUST  
IN TERMS OF THE SURVIVORS, HAVE TAKEN ON SOME SMALL

ASPECTS OF IT, THE VIDEOTAPER, THE INTERVIEWER, I IN THE WORK THAT I DO, BUT I FEEL THAT IT IS SO INADEQUATE. AND IN FACT, IF YOU FEEL THAT A LESSON OF THAT TIME HAS NOT BEEN LEARNED, AND THE LESSONS ARE NOT REALLY INTEGRATED INTO OUR CULTURE AND INTO OUR SOCIETIES VALUES, I DON'T KNOW HOW WE ARE GOING TO DO IT. I'M STILL LOOKING TO YOU. I'M STILL LOOKING BACK IN A WAY, EVEN THOUGH I'M AN ADULT, EVEN THOUGH I'M BECOMING AN EDUCATOR, EVEN THOUGH I KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST NOW, AND I'M LEARNING MORE ALL THE TIME JUST BEING AROUND YOU.

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO CARRY THE MEANING FORWARD, AND I HAVE A REAL FEAR THAT WHEN YOU ARE GONE AND YOUR GENERATION IS GONE, I DON'T KNOW HOW TO CONTINUE.

A. Well, but you see, we can do only the next best thing, and that's what we are doing right now. And that's why I have a great deal of respect and am very supportive of projects of this nature. That's why we do what we do in the center, and if we can videotape these things which we will make available those things which we are discussing here from different perspectives, different points of view, different survivors and all that. This is a material which will have some degree of permanence.

You never can actually relate sufficiently

in the type of depths which reflects experience of that person who is the discussant or the person who relates that. That cannot be done. So, sure that experience, I think we do all we can to preserve the notions of those who are survivors and perhaps would be verbal and reflected on it, although I am not dreadfully optimistic on any survivors who actually reflected in depth about what actually happened to them other than dwelling, understandably so, on their suffering.

And, I would like to transcend that, as I said before, and that's exactly what is quite realistically possible for you to continue, or for anyone who wants to carry the ball and hand it, so to speak, or throw it to the next generation. And that's the best you can do. You can only do that much, short of having that experience yourself. Hey, you know, who wants that experience? I could have lived without it. It's terrible. I don't want it, but I have to live with it.

Now, also I think we should not become obsessed with the Holocaust. That's the danger, and that is also one of the reasons why my wife has left me, is because she had had her fill, in a way. That is one of many things, but still -- particularly if you don't relate to these things and all that, because I don't think we should become obsessed, and I think we should

have some other things in which we are interested in. I'm doing it because I am an educator, but I don't intend to stay within this sort of field and really concentrate and just think about the Holocaust. I think it's deadly. I don't think it's healthy. I don't think it should be done. I think we should have enough other things which we do, and that's why I am telling you so many things, let's do something, let's do things which will provide some sort of change.

Because of my role as educator, and because of the unfortunate incident that I'm where I am and feel obligated to that, and so few people can take it and carry the ball and do what I think I can do, I still am in a position where I have to do it. But I don't intend to do it forever. I may die in the process, but that's not intended.

Q. I ALSO HAVE THIS DEEP SENSE THAT SO MANY PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND --

A. Of course not.

Q. -- THE DEEPER LESSONS.

A. Absolutely. Absolutely, and that's for you and other people interested to make that, work on it, because we are not going to work it out. We just show perhaps some direction in terms of which direction to pursue. But I don't think we'll reap profound solutions.

I don't think so, but we're working on it. Other people will take it up and work on it some more without necessarily having experience which would be astromatiac. And I think that's what we need to do, and what you can do, and other people which is being done right now, with the help of the camera. People, obviously, if they would not relate to this thing and understand the importance of that and have enough optimism to say it will make a difference, they wouldn't be hear. I don't particularly enjoy dwelling on this type of past, for sure.

Q. ISN'T THAT SORT OF THE WAY HISTORY IS ANALYZED IN GENERAL, THOUGH? I MEAN YOU LOOK BACK AT ANCIENT ROME, OR THE SPANISH INQUISITION AND I THINK HISTORICAL DISTANCE GIVES US THAT PERSPECTIVE. THE FURTHER AWAY WE ARE FROM THE EVENT, THE MORE DISPASSIONATE WE CAN BE ABOUT IT. I THINK SOME OF US ARE STILL TOO CLOSE, AND MAYBE THAT'S WHY THEY CANNOT ANALYZE. ALL THEY CAN DO IS RECITE, THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ME. THEY GIVE THAT TO THE NEXT GENERATION AND THEY SIFT THROUGH IT AND THEY PASS WHAT THEY DISTILLED THEN TO THE NEXT GENERATION AND MAYBE THEY ARE THE ONES WHO ARE GOING TO FIGURE IT OUT, FIND OUT THE LESSONS, YOU KNOW, THE CORE OF IT ALL. I CERTAINLY DON'T THINK THAT THE CAESARS HAD THE HISTORICAL DISTANCE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY WERE DOING TO ROME ANYMORE THAN WE

NECESSARILY KNOW WHAT WE ARE DOING TO THE EARTH.

A. I think that is a very important point. The difference is that we have difference means to process history.

Q. RIGHT.

A. And they didn't have that. We have that, and to make videotapes of people who are still alive, for reasons which may escape them, is a very important contribution, because the old Romans or Greeks didn't have it, because if they did we may have learned more from them, the chances are. It's a possibility, isn't it? That's what we are doing.

Now who is going to view the material and put it together is another thing. To what extent it may get buried someplace and forgotten is another thing. It just depends on the awareness of those people who will stay behind. There I don't have a great deal of optimism because I think that more people have become more ignorant by the day. So, it depends on what they will do, but I only can do what I can do. All we can do is what we can do. If we do that to the best of our ability, we can die peacefully, so to speak.

Q. I THINK TOO THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THIS PROGRAM FOR EXAMPLE, WHO ARE HISTORIANS, WHO ARE DOING IT FOR THE HISTORICAL VALUE AS MUCH AS THEY



ARE DOING IT FOR --

A. But the historical value is valueless if it is not interpreted, and if we don't learn a lesson from it.

Q. THEY'RE THE ONES WHO ARE GOING TO INTERPRET, AND I THINK THERE ARE ALWAYS PEOPLE WHO ARE FASCINATED BY HISTORY AND MAYBE --

A. But that's not enough. To be fascinated by history is simply not enough.

Q. BUT IN ANY CASE I SAY I THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE HOURS AND THE PSYCHIC INTELLECTUAL AND EMOTIONAL ENERGY TO COME INTO THIS, AND WE CAN'T MEAN TO SOME DEGREE WE CAN PREDICT PERHAPS WHO WILL USE THE MATERIAL AND WHO WILL INTERPRET IT, BUT I THINK IT WILL GO FORWARD IN THE EDUCATION, AS YOU HAVE BEEN TALKING, JUST AS YOU HAVE BEEN DOING. THIS IS YOUR WORK. I KNOW IT IS EXTREMELY DRAINING, BUT A VERY, VERY VALUABLE THING THAT YOU ARE DOING.

A. Well, it's important for example since we are talking about it, the get-togethers which I missed, because I was in Europe, because you've had this reception and all that. I think that's very important. It just depends who is really going to get the recognition and all of these people will mix, who will be who and all that and sometimes the wrong people come out

on top you see. And that is something which we really ought to avoid if we can. But the more conscious we are of some of the ramifications and some of the details, you know, the better position we are to avoid that.

But I have worked with people I prefer not to work with, simply because I am in that position, it is very difficult to say, I won't work with you. And also, we have got survivors who it is just unbelievable how

( ) they are. They just haven't learned a lesson at all. They talk about a lecture and talk about it and just haven't learned a thing, other than trying to be the limelight and enjoy being in the limelight, and reap some rewards from it or whatever. 9200h

Q. I AM STILL TRYING TO GET OVER THE IDEA THAT SUCH A PROFOUND TRAUMA IN RECENT HISTORY OUGHT TO HAVE AS ITS BALANCE, SOME KIND OF PROFOUND BEHAVIORIAL AND CONSCIOUSNESS TRANSFORMATION THAT WOULD BE THE COMMENSURATE NATURAL BALANCE TO THAT. AND I THINK THAT I'M SO NAIVE AND IDEALISTIC IN A SENSE, BECAUSE THAT WOULD BE FAIR, AND LIFE IS NOT FAIR.

A. Well, but you see, I don't know exactly whether or not I would call it naive. Because I still expect it. I'm disappointed when people who are survivors behave in a way as if they have not learned a thing. And that to me is a terrible disappointment, and

so maybe I am very hard on them, but I think what the hell have you gotten out of all of this yourself before you just spout some sort of things or talk to other people and try to tell them about what you have experienced? And yes, I am getting very patient and rather intolerant, but yes, I still think we can expect it. If we can expect it from these situations, what do we have to go through before we wake up? And that, to me, is one of the crucial questions. What sort of suffering do I have to go through or survive before I wake up and start reflecting on it and behave in a fashion which will reflect some degree of understanding which will make a change?

Q. THAT IS PROBABLY THE ALL TIME QUESTION.  
WE SHOULD PROBABLY END AND START WITH THAT QUESTION  
AGAIN.

So, they left in time before that and with obviously a great deal of loss, but still enough to live terrific lives here. So, we approached them and they paid their thousand dollars first class cabin fare from Geneva to Australia and I didn't have a handkerchief but I had a first class ticket.

Q. DID YOU WANT TO GO TO AUSTRALIA, OR YOU DIDN'T CARE?

A. Well, no. See, first of all, my first choice was the United States, but it was a long waiting time because of the quotas, and that was not very high at that particular time, and so I couldn't get a visa. So, I had relatives, close relatives, my mother's sister and my first cousin lived in Australia and got there via England, because they left after the ( ) of Austria because they were Austrians, and so I met them.

Prior to that, I had a great great uncle who was a black sheep and he started a family there in Melbourne because he was a womanizer and did some things which the family didn't apparently approve of morally and otherwise, so they shipped him to Australia, which was the best thing they could have done to him. He instead of starting a dreadful family there in Prague which was doomed, so they just punished him, which happened to be one of the best things they could have done to him, to

really reward. So, his punishment turned out to be a reward. He married a Scottish lady and started a first biscuit factory in Melbourne and had a boy, I think.

These people were there then and it was a logical place to go, and I just did, which was a good thing. I have learned a lot. Maybe I should have stayed there.

Q. DID YOU HAVE ANY OTHER EMOTIONAL SUPPORT OR PEOPLE SUPPORT BACK IN PRAGUE BESIDES THIS ARCH-BISHOP?

A. Well, I had some people I had known since my childhood, and some of the people who were some sort of mentors, so I had some people. I had some people who were very supportive, but very cautious. They themselves were under pressure, because some of them were partially German and they had to leave. They got kicked out and had to leave Czechoslovakia because of that, and some other people were very provincial, but they were very good people too.

Some of the other people were just playmates of mine, childhood playmates and had developed in different directions which may or may not have had much in common. Then of course politics entered the picture, and many of the people then became prominists, which from the very beginning, I could see ( ) from Dachau, 3095

from this poor fellow who was beaten to death, and he told me he was the first to really expose me to the realities, not expose me, just simply explained the realities to me as they existed in the Soviet Union.

And so that to me was very clear from the beginning that this was another type of absolutist ideology with consequences which were exceedingly similar to those I had just survived. So I fought it and released my life and did a lot of things which other people wouldn't have. At that point I felt that by virtue of being a being a survivor I had tremendous obligations, and I just cannot permit myself to make similar mistakes existentially and politically and then those my parents may have made.

Also, my parents were actually not to blame, because I was to be shipped to England, and I have mentioned that already in the previous interviews. They really tried to be very responsible and saw the writing on the wall, but somehow it was limited to me rather than -- they had enough money, but some of them didn't want to part with some of the real estate and some of the things which were home, because they simply hadn't done anything. We were guilty of nothing. How much can really happen? There is not much which can happen to us because we hadn't done anything. We are innocent, and

that was a dreadful mistake, and understandable.

But many people don't understand that. If I don't feel any guilt and hadn't done anything and my resources are possibly limited, then in the other countries they are not going to receive you with open arms. In other words, the future is very insecure, although many friends, very close friends, and relatives are left. But they didn't, and my parents didn't. Because that was step they were not prepared to talk, but they prepared me to do it and but then fate, as it would, they closed the borders.

Q. DID YOUR FATHER CONSIDER LEAVING WHEN THE COMMUNIST CAME IN AS YOU DID?

A. Oh, yes, of course. But he was more willing to adjust. He didn't have any illusions, but he was more ready. He was successful after the war in terms of his profession. And he was very successful when I had him come to Australia. He was very successful in what he was doing, professionally speaking, and always somehow landed on his feet, so to speak. He was more willing to play the game, but I was not willing to play the game because I understood a little bit more than he did maybe about the consequences. And I am a different person, different personality, characteristics, disposition, whatever. So, I was not ready to do that, not to

compromise. I put myself into very bad situations, and the only way, short of being shipped to another camp, or slave labor camp, communist brand, was to get out which I did.

Q. HOW DID YOU MANAGE THAT? DID YOU GET FALSE PAPERS?

A. That's right. That's right.

Q. HOW DID YOU GO, BY TRAIN?

A. By train, yeah.

Q. WHEN DID YOU LEAVE?

A. In February, 1949.

Q. YOU HAD A FALSE IDENTITY?

A. Well, an identity that was shady, and enabled me to get out with impunity at that time, and lots of dealing and wheeling and all that. But, I learned that. That is something which I still do and I just practice. I still practice dealing and wheeling, and still do things in those which are not necessarily dreadfully immoral, because somehow I feel I need to maintain some degree of skills in case I need them. You know, I'm crazy in that way.

Q. DO YOU MEAN TELLING A PRETENDED STORY IN AN ANXIETY PRODUCING SITUATION?

A. Well, not necessarily, no. Not at all, but for example just to get into situations where I will



benefit without being seen or called or something. You know, I might be with a bunch of Generals or just a group of people who kiss each other and other things, and be kissing them and they don't know me from Adam. Or I simply could just be the recipient of some sort of benefits without necessarily having worked for it simply because I get myself into situations where I'll get it.

Q. LIKE IN A LINE AT A MOVIE THEATRE?

A. Oh, yeah. For example, I can get into any movie, virtually, almost any movie without paying. They don't see me.

Q. THEY DON'T SEE YOU? EVEN WHEN A TICKET IS EXPECTED?

A. Oh, yeah, sure. It's just, I'm getting a charge out of it too and also it just keeps me on my toes because I feel I need to get into certain situations other people don't from where you can benefit in one way or another, maybe material, psychologically, emotionally. I practice that because still it's part of the survival, survival skill which I learned in the camp.

Q. AND ALSO, YOU KNOW, IT'S IN YOUR REPERTOIRE IN CASE THE NEED ARISES.

A. That's right. Absolutely. For example, I wouldn't have a passport so that I skipped the country tomorrow, or something of that nature.