

*2 copies  
enclosed*

1 INTERVIEW WITH: Sam Weltsch  
2 INTERVIEWER: ~~(Unknown)~~ Judy Wellisch  
3 DATE: (Unknown) *Summer, 1985*  
4 PLACE: (Unknown) *Carmel, CA*  
5 TRANSCRIBER: Peggy Canterbury

6  
7 My name is Samuel Weltsch. I was born in Rzeszów,  
8 a town in western Galicia, belonging at the time of my birth  
9 to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At this time Kaiser Franz  
10 Josef I was the emperor. When World War I broke out, big  
11 parts of this region were overrun by the Russian armies. My  
12 parents left before the Russian armies invaded this part,  
13 because my mother was pregnant with my sister. And out of  
14 stories from my parents I know that they left the town by--  
15 with the last train that went to Vienna.

16 Vienna was completely overcrowded and we had a room in a  
17 Christian family. And when this lady saw my mother in her  
18 condition, she told her she has to look for a room in a  
19 hospital to give birth to my sister. But women at this time  
20 when they heard something of hospital, that was the end of it.  
21 So apparently my parents had relatives living in Berlin, and I  
22 assume that through correspondence they were in contact and  
23 they knew that it was quite possible to get apartments in  
24 Berlin. So we left in September 1914 Vienna and went straight  
25 to Berlin. My sister was born then in November 1914.

**PEGGY CANTERBURY**

ROVING COURT REPORTER

Office 349-3870

TUSCALOOSA COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Res. 553-8831

2

Ext. 405

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA 35401

1 My father was inducted in Berlin into the Austrian army  
2 and fought during World War I at the Italian Theatre till  
3 1917 when he came suddenly back.

4 My parents had a very hard life establishing themselves  
5 because the time after World War I was very hard for everyone  
6 and specially for us refugees in Germany. I received my  
7 whole education in Berlin schools. I finished the Abitur on  
8 a Humanistic Gymnasium with among other things languages:  
9 Antique Greek, Latin, and French.

10 By pure coincidence we had a Christian clergyman who  
11 taught even Hebrew, so I learned from him Hebrew in modern  
12 pronunciation, how it's used now in Israel. I had a very  
13 thorough Jewish education because my parents were strict  
14 Orthodox. And on top of it, the Jewish community in Berlin  
15 entertained throughout the whole city schools for Jewish  
16 children who had to go there twice a week and on Sunday  
17 morning. The last years as a more or less grownup between  
18 fifteen and eighteen years old, a special teacher, or a Rabbi,  
19 came to our public Gymnasium and taught us everything that we  
20 had to learn at this stage and this age. Because one class  
21 was not enough--you have -- Sometimes more or less to  
22 accomplish the age groups, he put together two or three  
23 classes Jewish boys so this teacher had enough pupils to--

24 INTERVIEWER: Teach?  
25 --teach. I finished school when Germany was at the height of

1 the inflation. People who worked received their payments  
2 every day and brought home--

3 INTERVIEWER: Every day? That's unusual.  
4 They brought home packs of money. If they didn't buy the  
5 same evening for this money a bread, the next morning they  
6 only could buy a roll for the same amount. The inflation  
7 ended up with--in 1924 by restructuring the money, giving one  
8 unit for a billion units. People lost all their faith and  
9 people lost all their money that -- Only people who had big  
10 property--were big property-owners or had big stores with--  
11 full of material or merchandise and didn't sell it had back  
12 on it. They received later on more or less their value back.  
13 My father lost everything. I supposed had to go on to study  
14 on university. My mother wanted me to be a medical doctor.  
15 Whose Jewish mother doesn't want her son being a medical  
16 doctor? I liked it very much, too, but I couldn't make it  
17 because we didn't--our family did not have the money anymore  
18 to pay university. And on top of it, we were foreigners. We  
19 never became German citizens. We remained foreigners. And  
20 after World War I when this part of the country we were  
21 living in became Polish, we became automatically Polish  
22 citizens. I do not talk a single word Polish till today.

23 I was apprenticed by my parents in a ladies' garment  
24 factory and to make it short, I ended up around 1932 being a  
25 buyer for a big department chain in Germany that had a

1 hundred twenty-eight department stores scattered all over  
2 Germany by the name "Alsberg Konzern."

3 1932 and 1933 were very bad years, especially for Jews  
4 who had a little bit insight, who saw it coming what  
5 reactionaries can accomplish. Underground the Nazis were  
6 already marching before--long before they came to power.  
7 There were always fights going on on the streets between  
8 Sturm-troopers, police, workers. And as always, the Jews  
9 were victims even as innocent bystanders.

10 In April 1933 after Hitler was in power since January,  
11 the first outbreak took place in Berlin. The SA troopers  
12 were posted in front of Jewish shops, smeared the whole  
13 windows and doors with big Mogen Davids and the word "Juden."  
14 They were specially posted in front so no Christian or other  
15 customer could enter the shops. My parents had a grocery  
16 store in Berlin and made a very hard living out of it. We  
17 children had to help from the--my earliest memory always my  
18 parents in any way we could. And at the time my father  
19 passed away in 1929 and my mother was with three children, I  
20 being the oldest; my brother one year younger; and my sister  
21 seven years younger than I am.

22 We had already from my mother a song knowledge about  
23 Zionism and Judaism. She used even to sing a German song  
24 out of the time of Herzl. I give only in rough the  
25 translation from German into English: "That beautiful land

1 at the blue seashore that was our fathers' homeland," meaning  
2 Israel, or Palestine.

3 In November 1933 all Jewish employees in this big  
4 merchandise enterprise I was working were thrown out from one  
5 day to another. The whole Konzern had to be sold to Aryans.  
6 I don't know if you people know -- They called all Christians  
7 Aryans. To Aryans, so that's the right--

8 INTERVIEWER: Aryans.

9 --pronunciation. So my Jewish shopowners or--had to sell  
10 almost for nothing and we Jewish employees were simply thrown  
11 out. I only remember the sentence in my report letter that  
12 everyone received, at the end of the letter. I give it  
13 first in German: "Wir müssen Herrn Weltsch wegen Umstellung  
14 unseres Betriebes fristlos entlassen." That means, "We had to  
15 relieve Mr. Weltsch without giving a time limit because of  
16 transformation of our business."

17 It was very hard at this time for any Jew to get a new  
18 job, because the same time this big enterprise had to be sold  
19 out to Aryans, others had to follow and everyone who saw what  
20 was coming had to prepare his own future. I knew by education  
21 from my mother, being Zionist instructed, that I had no other  
22 way, as we saw really what was coming that the Nazis,  
23 especially since who had ever read Hitler's book Mein Kampf  
24 could take out of it what he would fulfill, and he really  
25 fulfilled all his promises out of this book.

1 In order -- I started my preparation to go to Israel.  
2 At this time I joined a group by the name of Hier-ha-luds.  
3 Hier-ha-luds means pio--

4 INTERVIEWER: Punitive?  
5 Pioneer.

6 INTERVIEWER: Oh, pioneer.  
7 It means pioneer to English. So the Hier-ha-luds prepared  
8 young people going to Palestine. Palestine was under British  
9 Mandate and the British had strict rules for immigration at  
10 this time already, too. So only people who had a trade in  
11 hand would be able to work or if someone could not prove by  
12 letter that he had--he was a trained person had to go to this  
13 Hier-ha-luds to agricultural training.

14 My future wife I met in the Hier-ha-luds and she was in  
15 this kind of agricultural training on a big farm outside of  
16 Berlin under the supervision of the Jewish community in Berlin.  
17 This big farm belonged by luck to an American Jew. That made  
18 it only possible that Jews could be trained there as  
19 agricultural workers for Palestine. There were about three  
20 hundred persons, boys and girls who trained to go to Palestine.  
21 And after they received this training, then they were  
22 processed through the Berlin-Palestina Amt, going to Palestine.  
23 And it had to be proved to the British consulate that these  
24 people had received the training, otherwise the British  
25 consulate would not give permission to enter Palestine.

**PEGGY CANTERBURY**

ROVING COURT REPORTER

Office 349-3870

TUSCALOOSA COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Res. 553-8831

Ext. 405

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA 35401

7

1 To make one observation that I remember very well, in  
2 the beginning at least through 1938, almost everyone had--  
3 could have gotten out if there would have been a possibility  
4 in the world to get in someplace. Suddenly all borders of  
5 the free world were closed to Jews. Everyone had special  
6 immigration laws, special requirements. And even going to  
7 Palestine, the British Mandate power gave out only ten  
8 thousand certificates per year for working people. And in  
9 order to get in there, as I started before, my wife went to  
10 an agricultural training that took about one year. They  
11 really had to learn everything from the scratch. She got up  
12 at three o'clock in the morning to milk cows and all kinds  
13 of different work. And they had to maintain their own  
14 housekeeping, laundry. Everything had to be done by the  
15 people who were trained there. And this training was to be  
16 a preparation for living in Kibbutz in Israel.

17 I personally, being very handy, found apprentice place  
18 with a Jewish plumbing company in Berlin. This company could  
19 still work. Even my co-workers were mostly Christian. And I  
20 have to admit they were not Nazis. We encountered very often  
21 on a building place Nazis and I had to go out not to be  
22 involved in their discussions. But everyone who had open  
23 eyes could see what was coming.

24 When I finished my training as a plumber after three  
25 years in 1936 and my wife finished her training as an

**PEGGY CANTERBURY**

ROVING COURT REPORTER

Office 349-3870

TUSCALOOSA COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Res. 553-8831

8

Ext. 405

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA 35401

1 agricultural worker for Palestine, we received from the  
2 Palestina Amt in Berlin our certificate to go to Palestine.  
3 We got married three weeks before we left Berlin. And not only  
4 did we remain married, but every boy who received a  
5 certificate to go, even not willing to marry, had to marry a  
6 girl in order to save one more person. Even they were  
7 prepared and they knew that they can get a divorce right away  
8 in Palestine. But every certificate was valid, either for one  
9 person or for a couple. In order to save one person more,  
10 the so-called marriage as opt. And almost every ha-luds was  
11 forced to do it in order to save one more person out of there.

12 And now I have to infuse something that I hope and pray  
13 it never happens in anyplace in the world. Many Jews didn't  
14 even have enough money to pay for all their fare to go  
15 overseas. They hadn't had a good living as any--as normal  
16 person--employees, all kind of enterprises they had. And I  
17 give a special example out of the family of my wife. There  
18 was a cousin of my wife's father who was rich enough, who  
19 could have given perhaps to two-hundred or more persons, each  
20 of them, thousand British pounds. Because in order to enter  
21 Palestine at this time without any training, without any  
22 reservation, if a person could provide or show of being in  
23 possession or having in an account a thousand British pounds,  
24 could enter Palestine with his family and could have been saved  
25 this way. But like this case and many other cases, this

PEGGY CANTERBURY

ROVING COURT REPORTER

Office 349-3870

TUSCALOOSA COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Res. 553-8831

9

Ext. 405

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA 35401

1 person didn't want to get away from--of her money or didn't  
2 want even to--that relatives should know that she has this  
3 much money. They gave nothing. In the end they were stuck  
4 and they took their own life and Hitler took simply all  
5 their possessing and money and what they had away.

6 To bring one more thing: All persons who were  
7 interested tried to get out with many different ways. There  
8 were even Jews who had money enough who went to Shanghai.  
9 Because in 1937 and '38, Shanghai was an open city, so if  
10 they did have money enough, they could go to Shanghai. We  
11 have quite a few remnants who survived Shanghai and came  
12 late on here to the United States. That's an aside line.

13 My brother made it in 1938. He came to Palestine  
14 as a so-called capitalist, as I mentioned before with this  
15 thousand pounds. This was all that our family owned. My  
16 mother was left behind and later was sent to Poland in to  
17 Tarnów. There apparently was a ghetto there. We received  
18 from her the last letter over the Red Cross in 1941. From  
19 then on we had no sign from my mother. Apparently she either  
20 died or got killed in a concentration camp or even in a  
21 ghetto. She didn't make it perhaps to the concentration  
22 camp. My father-in-law, because he was a soldier in a  
23 German army in World War I, was sent to the concentration  
24 camp in Auschwitz--not, no. I'm sorry. I had -- I'm so  
25 distraught now that I made a mistake. He was sent to the

1 concentration camp in Austria. The name of this concentration  
2 camp was Theresienstadt. We know it now from the movie that  
3 had been made where -- This actress, what's her name?

4 INTERVIEWER: The actor?

5 Yes, actress, British actress.

6 INTERVIEWER: Vanessa Redgrave?

7 We know it from Vanessa Redgrave playing a part in a movie.  
8 This describes the concentration camp that my father-in-law  
9 was brought to, but he died there of an epidemic. We know  
10 this for sure because a relative survived this concentration  
11 camp. Three sisters of my wife's--unmarried girls--remained  
12 in Berlin because of lack of money and not having no one  
13 living in the United States who could provide them as a  
14 sponsor or as an affidavit or anything like this; had to  
15 remain behind. And they perished. We don't know how and  
16 when. We are sure they have been cast in one of the  
17 concentration camps because if they would have been alive,  
18 they knew our address in Jerusalem by heart and would have  
19 written to us or tried to get in contact.

20 Of my father's family, there were more than two-hundred  
21 persons still living in Tarnów in Galizien. The only person  
22 out of this family that remained alive is the youngest sister  
23 of my brother, because she was a nurse in the hospital in the  
24 concentration camp. She survived Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, and  
25 Auschwitz. And all the stories that are coming out, we know

**PEGGY CANTERBURY**

ROVING COURT REPORTER

Office 349-3870

TUSCALOOSA COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Res. 553-8831

11

Ext. 405

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA 35401

1 only from a friend of her that both survived out of a special  
2 trick. They were hiding whole nights on the top of the roof  
3 of the hospital when they knew that the Germans asked the  
4 people to come to the hospital to receive checks or special  
5 examination or shots or something like this. And they  
6 knew out of experience that as soon as the crowd was collected  
7 together in this hospital, the Nazis simply rounded it up--  
8 rounded them up and put them in cattle cars and cart them  
9 away, right away, without asking any question--transported  
10 them right away to the extermination camps. All this was  
11 done with deception. I don't have to point this specially  
12 out because history already brought it out in the open that  
13 every trick that only existed the Nazis used--used deception  
14 to mislead the people so they could follow without having  
15 special measures to round all those people up.

16 My aunt--the younger sister of my father--when she  
17 remained alive at the end of the war, she still went back to  
18 Tarnów, to the city where they came from, and she thought she  
19 might found someone who could give her any information about  
20 relatives or something. There was not a single soul alive  
21 anymore that knew the family. Everything was completely--  
22 not only destroyed but everything was gone. There was nothing  
23 left anymore and all the people who she found there were  
24 completely new: Polish, Russian--all kind of convert after the  
25 war. And it was like a--like a flood over the world. And

1 finally my aunt made it after long treks and together with  
2 other refugees who survived it, and she finally came to  
3 Palestine to live.

4 My -- As I told before, I left in 1936 for Palestine.  
5 My brother could get out in 1938. Before my brother, my  
6 sister was lucky enough to marry a Palestinian who came to  
7 visit his parents. His parents perished, too. And my sister  
8 and my brother were later on together with me in Palestine.

9 Only to repeat one thing more: When we left Germany,  
10 we left with very heavy heart. We knew it might be the last  
11 time we saw our relatives. And in most cases it was the case.

12 I pray and hope it will never happen anyplace else in  
13 the world that Jews are so persecuted and rounded up like it  
14 was during World War II in Germany and Poland. And I want to  
15 add one sentence to it: Almost everyone could have gotten  
16 out in 1938. But later on when World War I broke out,  
17 everyone who was there was simply--

18 INTERVIEWER: World War II.

19 --World War II broke out, in 1939, everyone who was there was  
20 simply trapped. No one could make it anymore in any way.  
21 And I have only one admonition to all Jews: to help Israel;  
22 to give as much as they can and to help Israel. It should  
23 remain and become stronger and stronger. Anything we went  
24 through can -- I hope and pray it will never happen. But it  
25 can happen anyplace in the world, even in the most

**PEGGY CANTERBURY**

ROVING COURT REPORTER

Office 349-3870

TUSCALOOSA COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Res. 553-8831

Ext. 405

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA 35401

1 progressive countries--in the most progressive society. It  
2 can happen anyplace in the world what happened in Germany,  
3 and this would be the only place where Jews could save their  
4 life.

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25