

Bernard Roth

Holocaust Media Project

Interviewer: Barbara Joy

Date:

Place:

Transcriber: Peg Hughes

SIDE A
82
A: What you want?

Q: Sir.

A: Yes.

Q: Your tag just says Los Angeles. Where are you from originally?

A: Original from Czechoslovakia.

Q: And where were you when the war started?

A: And the war, I was at home. And they took me from home to the army and from the army they throw me into the Hungarian army. And from the Hungarian army they throw me into the German army. And from the German army I went out all the way to Russia.

Q: The German army?

A: In the German army.

Q: Did they know you were Jewish? Or are you not Jewish?

A: No, they didn't know. If I would be Jew, I would be killed long time ago. But this way I survived because I was a mechanic and I was working on the trucks. And from then on they...

I went with them all the way to Stalingrad. And from Stalingrad, they started chasing us back home. And I went and I went and went with them till I came to the [kar·põt·ten]. From the [kar·põt·ten] I saw I know where I am. Now I disappeared from there.

[93]

When I disappeared, then I figured I'm going to go home and see if I can survive. I came home. I didn't find nobody, none of my family, nobody at all. And I just figured, what shall I do? So, I picked myself and I went to Romania. And Romania, they give us a few dollars. And bought some clothes and then we bought some clothes. Then we went and I worked a little bit there in Romania by the Russian commander tour, because the Russian came in there and there were Russian there already when I survived. And then I just worked and worked a little bit till I picked myself up and I went back home. I went back home, I couldn't find nobody. So I went back to Germany and from Germany I wait for the quota to come to the United States.

Q: When was the last time you heard from your family while you were in Hungary?

A: The last time, I came when they took me out 1939 and in '41-- I was already out on the-- on the field and I couldn't hear nothing from them anymore.

Q: What town were you in in Czechoslovakia?

A: In Czechoslovakia, was in [Moon-kawch, Moo-ka-chev-ō].

Q: And that, of course, was invaded by Germany. And everyone was.

A: There was Hungary and Germany, yeah. Because we were Czechoslovakian and they chased them out and the Hungarian came in

100

[108]

and the Hungarian went with the Germans together in the war. And we were there. And we couldn't even talk good Hungarian. They "Just put on the clothes" and "Let's go." So we went until we talked a little bit Hungarian and then we entered the German and we helped the Germans to load the trucks with ammunition. And then we went up to all the way to Russia. And Russia we started-- They-- they started chasing us back, chasing us back that far, that we came all the way to the [Kar pōt ten]. And from there I disappeared. And I wasn't too much in the camps. I was more in the army than in the camps. And I was afraid to take my pants off or go to take a bath or something, they shouldn't find out I'm a Jew. If I'm a Jew, they'd just put a bullet in my head and that's it. And I would be no survivor at all.

Q: How did you... Was it... How did you feel being in the German army and knowing... Did you know what they were doing?

A: I know. I know. I saw. I was in [Kum-min-spah-dōsk]. And I saw what they did. They-- they dig a big hole. And they said to people, "Everybody goes out. And everybody goes to Palestine, because we don't want you here." And then they went out to the field. And they dig the hole first. And they start shooting them there. And they all fell in the hole. And I thought that I just fall with them.

Q: You saw this?

A: I saw that. And I— What could I do? There was my life or their life, so whatever. But if I would say something, they would throw me right in there. So I didn't say nothing. I just, I just clamped my heart together and I couldn't say a word.

Q: Did you know when you were first drafted in Czechoslovakia that...what the Nazis were like, what the Axis was like?

A: No, no, we didn't. We didn't know at all what they were like. No, we saw right there outside what they do with the people. They were so cruel. And-- and also they gave us these-- these band-- yellow bands. And they were walking around. That's why we recognized the Jewish people. Otherwise you wouldn't recognize them. I actually recognized the Jewish people. Whatever I could do: I gave them some bread. And I gave them some-- Nobody should see me if they walk in on those people.

141
But we were stationed in [Stan·yoo·slav·kō·la·mā·ah] and then in Leningrad. And in Leningrad the people didn't have any bread to eat. So we had some bread and I bought from the army, the soldiers—"Here, I give you a half dollar, give me your bread." So he gave it to me and I just throw it in for the Jewish people. "You have to eat. Eat." And then they came after me. I says, "Don'tt you come after me, because if they know I'm a Jew, they

[149]
150

kill me. I can-- I'd like to help you as much as I can. But," I told them, "Just stay there. Stay there. And at night, when I get the [pro-poo-skah], so I go out and I give you some." And I did. Every night I went out and I give them a little bread. Because they didn't have enough there. It was so bad. So, was a bad survival.

Q: Yeah. You were very lucky.

A: I was lucky. I was lucky that I was with-- was with the army. If I wouldn't be with the army and if they would find out I am a Jew, they would kill me in no time.

Q: The Czechoslovaks in the first army didn't know that you were Jewish?

A: The Czechoslovakians--no. But the Czechoslovakians-- They chased them out. The Germans chased them out. And then the Hungarians came in.

Q: I see.

A: The Hungarians.

Q: And they didn't know.

[158]

A: And they didn't know. And the Germans [ah-vah-dah] didn't know. They shouldn't know. Because and if they would know, they wouldn't be here today.

Q: So you were able to get from... Where did you get out of

Europe from? What was the last place?

[161]

A: [Moon·kawch·oo·wah, Moon·kawch] I went out from Europe. And I went to [Kawsh·kawch·ēts·ā] and from [Kawsh·ow] they put us on the train and we went out to Russia and we fight Russia.

Q: Oh. Oh. This was while the war was still on.

A: While the war was on, right.

Q: I was wondering how you got to this country later.

A: Later, they survived like I say. I survived and when I survived, then I came home and I would like to go to the cold. They say go to Romania. I went to the Romania. And Romania says, "We can't do much for you. We give you a few dollars to survive and then you go to Germany and register there." So I went to Germany; I registered there. And I was waiting in the camps. I was at the camps, oh, for about three years.

Q: The deport— the displaced persons' camp. That's right, you said you were waiting for the quota.

A: Yeah.

Q: —came here—

175

A: Was waiting for the quota. Then I came here in 1949.

Q: How have you been doing since then?

A: Since then, thank God. It's a pleasure to be here, you can kiss the ground in the United States.

Q: Did you get a job right away? Was it as a mechanic?

A: No, I didn't, but I was waiting a month or two. And then I got my job, a job. And I was working here as a mechanic. And now I retired already, 'cause I-- I bought myself a limousine. And I was working with the limousine a little bit. And you can get up on your feet here if you want to work. The United States is a golden country and a good land.

Q: Do you have children?

A: Yeah. I have two girls.

Q: Have you told them about the war?

A: Oh, the children? They know it. They know it. I told them. Yeah, they know that was a hard survival, because all the time they were talking about home: how I came, who come home, and who survived. And I told them my old friends are gone and I couldn't see them and they didn't come home. And I came home. I was lucky. I was in the camp for a long-- for three years. And I was working with the American soldiers after I was in the camp, would help them also loading the trucks. And this way I survived. This way we got a little bit bread and chocolate. And they give us cigarette. Otherwise we didn't have nothing. And that's why we survived...

Q: ...unless you'd like to add anything.

A: That's enough.

TAPE ENDS.

194