

HOLOCAUST MEDIA PROJECT

Interview of Simon Stemer

Tape begins: (Note: All words in parentheses are phonetic.)

-- is Simon Stemer. I'm born Poland in the town (Kros-in-staub) in the -- when the war broke out. Is couple days later some German airplanes come to our town and they throw some bombs on the railroad and in this time was killed about fifteen people, Jews and Gentile. On the 17th of September the German come into (Kros-in-staub). Is in the same day where they come in, they took out in one day's span ten Jewish people and they shot them right on the (ark). They said the Jewish people shot a German officer in the town.

The German was in (Kros-in-staub) about five, six days. Later the Russian come. They left -- the German left and the Russian come in. The Russian come in. They ask the Russian how far they going. They said they going to (de-vah-sal), to the (vis-wah). And they said, "There's a possibility maybe you will go back?" One Russian officer said, "If a Russian step is of some place, they not going back." This was taking about a week. The Russian announced they going back; they moving back to the (boook) and who want to go with them to the (boook)? In the other side (boook) will belong to Russia and this side (boook) will belong in Poland, will belong to Germany. They put away (drox). Some people went with this talk to the other side (boook).

I have over there in (Va-din-i-a) -- I brought a -- I was married over there. They have a business, drygood store. They very

successful, only in the time in the war they close up all the business. And I was saying (indecipherable).

The Russian announce the old people, when they come from Poland, they should get passport and to be a Russian citizen. The people was afraid to take the Russian passport. They leave it go for three, four weeks and later they bring some transport, train, and they took all the refugees where they was from the other side (boook) and they send them away to Siberia.

I was hiding in this place with other three guys; it was a cell, an attic. Some (ain-ko-wuh-dair-man) from the Russian find out this attic. And he said to us, "We -- you will go like this to the train with no luggage because you are -- " They call us (spek-o-lahn-tay). [Ed: "speculators," perhaps?] They call us -- like people doing some blackmarket. And they took us down and they get together all one place and we were waiting for a truck to come to pick it up. It was not too far to my brother; I escaped and went in the brother's house. And I was not going (car). I'm staying to my brother's house till the train left. The other day the train left, the same night maybe left, and we go out in the street and nothing happened.

Later they hang up papers in the street, the old people what they left, they should take passport. They will get a passport with a paragraph 38. 38 paragraph mean you cannot live hundred kilometer close to the border. You have to move out in this town pretty close to the border.

I took a passport with a paragraph and I left (Ladinia) and I found a nice town to live, (Kos-to-pal), very beautiful, nice place to live. Over there in (Kostopal) I rented a room with some private people. We was three friends. We was living together over there and we was doing little bit business on the free market. I suppose over there a free market. We was doing little bit business.

Before the war start is one day I am walking in the street; some Russian men comed over and say, "Come with me." No, I don't know what to say. He was not looking like a policeman or some (indecipherable); just he said, "Come with me." He took me to the City Hall. I come on the City Hall. He asked me where I'm working. I told him I'm not working. "You have to go to work." This was two weeks before the war broked out and they take Germans. I went to work in a factory what they was making furniture. I worked over there two weeks. I don't even get paid.

And the war broked out. Some of my friend from my town was over there. They decided to go with the Russian. And some friends of mine, we decided we will not come with the Russian because if they don't have too much food in the time then, as was no war, we hardly will get food in the time in the war. First, they need for the soldiers so that they will have a big army and, second, a big population, as it was in this time about 250 million people in Russian. And we decide not to go.

We was staying in (Kostoppal) and we saw the Russian army

was coming to (Dol-vo-nov). This was twelve kilometers from (Vos-to-pol). Was coming so many soldiers and so many ammunition, and they start the war that Friday the 21st. When they start the war they was going to (Lurds-krev-rov-no). Was taking eight days, day and night; the Russian was going to fight the German. Was not taking too long. This was taking about three days. The Russian army went back. They got very hurt over there. In a day and a half they was through going back and they cleaned up what they have still in (Kostopal) and they left (Kostopal). And the German comed in three days later.

The German was in already in (Kostopal). Was no fight; only they come into (Kostopal). A couple days later was a grocery man by the name Goldstein; he was a very rich man and he have a wholesale grocery. Somebody throw in in his basement a gun, by the window there, a window there they throw in a gun. And the German come to look in his house for ammunition. They come in and they said somebody said they have ammunition. He said he don't have ammunition. They went down in the basement and they find a gun. They took out the man maybe a kilometer from the city, two German guys, and they told him to lay down and they shot him and they left. They don't took nothing, just the clothes like he was going. Later some people, when dark, and they buried him over there.

Later the Germans, they called the (ge-bitz) commissar; start to call the Jew to organize a committee and the committee to give people to go to work for them, for the German. I went

to work with my friend and it was over there in this place more people working. They was calling (truk-torn-us-stahn-si-a). We was over there to work.

My friend, he was married. Saturday -- we was working Saturday over there, too. Saturday his wife is coming over and she say, "Don't come home for lunch because is some German in the city and they catching people on trucks. They taking people to work." We went up over there in the back yard. We have something, a couple pieces bread, and something we ate over there, lunch. Later we stand up and we want to go back to work after lunch. We see is coming in by the gate (o-krine-ee) [Ed: "Ukrainian," perhaps?] police and German Gestapo. I said to my friend, "Maybe we will run away." One guy by the name (Kare-ter) is -- he said, "What do you have to be afraid? You working here. They will tell me to work in another place, I will work in another place." I runned away and I hided over there in a toilet. I was sitting in this toilet for an hour and a half. The toilet was outside. An hour and a half I go out. Is what the other people -- everybody was cleaned out. Even this guy what he was managing, he was a Polish guy, was not in -- he's -- I don't have -- I don't know what to do.

Right next door was living some kind of (krine-schpinner). I don't know these people, only I went in and I was asking maybe I can get little bit water to get a drink, because I was working over there and I don't see more my friend and I don't know what

to do.

Meantime, over there was working a carpenter, a Gentile, and it was three Jewish painters was painting the house over there. And they bring in some chopped wood. As I start to help them to put together the wood, to straight out -- this was a Saturday. About 4:30 the carpenter was sitting on the roof and doing something over there. He said in Polish, "Run away because the Gestapo is coming." The Gestapo comed for this street people where they was painting over there. They don't know I am over there. As I went in, in a shed was two cars over there. I was hiding. I was behind this store hiding.

And later as it got dark I went out. I come out. I was hungry. I went in to this lady and I asked her maybe she can give me something to eat. She give me little bit milk and bread and I ate it up. I don't know, her husband was the vice president in the (o-krine-en) committee and he was working in the city. He told me, "You can go home. Now it's quiet already." I was not be able to concentrate at what he mean, only he said -- told me like this, so I went home. I come in the house. Nobody in the house where I was living; just the (o-krine-en) police was in and they was grabbing what they want. They was looking for things for to eat. They asked me, "How do you get here?" I said I was working; I come just from work. I lay down. Nobody was over there.

In the morning I got up. I don't see nobody in the whole

street. Was taking a couple hours, some people start to come together. This was taking about three days, four days, was already about fifty people together, because they was hiding. They was hiding, the fifty people. The other people, they took away and they shot them. They took them out to the woods.

I was working and this day -- no, this was -- the other -- no, then I come home, is -- we was in this -- they took away just the men. And the women was hiding. Still was the women. The women start the whole week to go to the Jewish Committee and -- to give them support for the kids. The Jewish Committee went to the German officer what he was running the town; asked what to do with the women with the kids, they want support. He said to get a list, to tell the people to get registered and they will see what to do for them. This was a Tuesday and Wednesday. They made up this -- two days, and people was staying in line and get registered.

In meantime somebody -- when the people was staying in the line, somebody said probably they will be sent away to -- for work. Is everybody runned away from the line where they was registered, where there was registration, and everybody went off. And nothing!

Friday (indecipherable) -- send the people where there was work; he send them to go. Friday morning I was going to the Judenrat. Is somebody coming (indecipherable). The police, they said -- the man's name was Mr. (La-hot-kee). He need ten people for do some work in the police -- to clean up the yard over

there. We come over there and we work till lunchtime. We cleaned up. We did what (indecipherable), only going back from lunch I saw some (drox) [Ed: perhaps "trucks"] with German staying in the street. I was thinking maybe they passing by the town and they will go. I don't know -- we don't know -- I don't know nothing. I went back to work.

We should go home 5:00 o'clock. We see it's 5:00 o'clock. A policeman coming out and start to walk around. While he was walking, he didn't say nothing. Later we got through with this work what we have to do, he give us to chop some wood. We chopped the wood till it's get dark. It's get dark, he said come with him to go. He took us down in a basement over there. Was -- we was twelve people. Was two benches, a little room, a basement, and we told him we saw no water, no toilet, no nothing. And we told him maybe he will give us little bit water. He said, "You don't need it." Well, you cannot do fight with the police. They locked us up.

Was taking about half an hour, they come -- they open up the door over here. They opened the door. Three (okrinen) police coming in and looking (indecipherable); somebody have a watch, somebody have a good sweater, somebody have a good pair of shoes, they took it away. They closed up. Meantime, we hear is coming (okrinen) police more in other places. We hear is more life on the place, on the (ahrp). Like it was a half an hour later they opening again the door. Another three (okrinen) police coming

in. They look for something, too, to grab. They was taking what they could and they lock us up. Like we saw -- we saw is already -- we will not be more alive; probably they will kill us in a minute. Is what the Jews -- they have a prayer before they dying. They said God to forgive him if he did something wrong. They -- other people was not so much educated in Jewish, in Hebrew; is I told them what to say and we was -- everybody talk -- said the same what I said. And we was waiting any minute to -- to take it out and get to get shot. Shot or killed. We was thinking we will not go out more alive.

About 10:00 o'clock sitting -- and we was praying to God to make it faster because if our time is up, why we have just to wait for tomorrow. Leave it -- if we have to get killed, kill us right now. About 10:00 o'clock we hear they said, "Boys, take the shovels and we will go." Oh, we were sure they going dig holes for us. And we was praying to get killed faster, to take us in a minute. As over there was one -- this was a whole night we was sitting like this and praying and crying (indecipherable).

Over there was a factory. 6:00 o'clock they was making noise; the working people know to go to work. We know it's 6:00 o'clock. It was already daylight. And we hear it start to be noisy on the -- on the ground. We see police and German; they talk German; they talk Ukrainian. We don't know what is going on, only we was sure they come for us; pretty soon they will come to take us. About 7:00, 7:30, we hear already a lot of people was

crying, hollering. And we don't know what, only people -- there was over there a little window. We saw people passing by our window from the town, in this town (Kostopal), and these people from the town. And we sitting inside. And we just hear the noise what is going on till about 11:00 o'clock. We was over there sitting. We hear they opening up the door. They opening up the door and we went out in the hallway and we was staying. Was staying (indecipherable) in this -- and this Gestapo comed over with the (okrinen) police and said, "Young people," the (ge-bitz) commissar said, "Young people, they need to go back to the basement." We went back to the basement, only the basement was not locked.

A half an hour later is by the window we see some Germans stop. And some (okrinen), is one (okrinish) policeman, showed the (ge-bitz) commissar here is sitting -- he called us Communists. We are Communists and to get killed. The (ge-bitz) commissar made with the hand like this and they left. We was sitting over there till about 1:00 o'clock. We hear -- yes, and we come out and we was in the hallway staying. We saw in one side was staying the Gestapo with ammunition ready and the other side was (okrinen) and we supposed to go behind them. Only we went back and they went to the holes where they was digged and they was over there the way to go. We was sitting over there till about 1:00 o'clock. Was not too far away, maybe -- maybe one mile.

We hear shooting. The shooting was taking about two hours. Later we hear it was quiet. And we sitting, not locked the door,

and we was little bit hungry. We saw it was already about 5:00 o'clock. Yeah, after 2:00 o'clock is coming in a policeman and tell us, "You be quiet; you will go home alive." This what he said to us. We don't know nothing. We sitting till about 4:30, 5:00 o'clock. We are hungry. We go out; we see the same policeman and we ask him maybe he can do something; we are hungry. He took two of the (indecipherable) and was a pump over there, a pump over there and we took little bit water and we went back in. And we were sitting till it get dark. We going -- it's get dark. We see this guy what he took us, (Lahotka), what he took us (indecipherable). We asked him, "Mr. (Lahotka), we want to go home." "Oh," he said, "you are still here?" He was thinking we are killed already. He went in in the police and he comed out and he said, "You can go home."

We come out; no shoes. The people was looking out because the Polish people, they was thinking they killed all the Jews. Meantime, they see some Jews walking around; they don't know what happened. I come home again. Nobody in the house. Nobody in the house. I'm looking around in the street. Nobody in the street.

In the morning I go out. I don't see nobody. Two, three hours later some people start to come together, about five or six people. Only it was taking about three days, was fifty people. They was hiding. They was hiding, about fifty people. In this time was the high holiday, was Yom Kippur. It's in the morning we got together, these people what they was left, and we do little

bit praying. And we had to get about 5:00 o'clock together to finish the praying for the day.

And everybody went to work. We get together some -- one guy what he was working for them in the City Hall, he was a printer, only he know something about journalism. He was working for the City Hall. He comed on and he said they told him over there they will make for these people what they are left a ghetto in the shul. Over there in the shul they will make a Jewish ghetto. I hear like this I will be in the ghetto; will not be so good.

In this town is the people have -- one have a car; one have two cars. Was a little town and everybody had his own milk and they have --they don't have a stockyard in this town. They took together all this town -- this cars, and they want transfer us to (Rolno); was about thirty kilometers from (Kostopal). I saw they took together the cars and they go with the cars to (Rognov). I took a stick and I was going between the other people where they was taking the cars to (Rognov). I come into (Rogno). The people -- I told the people what has happened in (Kostopal). They was not believing it's possible for such a thing to happen. They were thinking, oh, I'm crazy or I'm laughing at them. Nobody believed me, what I said. I tell them (Kostopal) is cleaned out, maybe forty or fifty Jewish people still over there, and they will make a ghetto for this in the shul. They was not listening.

I went to the committee there, the Jewish committee over there. I went over there to give me a passport to go to (Va-din-

i-a) to my brother. I have -- my brother was living in (Vadinia). This was Monday, I think. They told me, "You come tomorrow and you get it." They will get it for me. I come the other day. Is the German march in the same day in the morning to over there. And they told they need warm clothes for the German soldiers and to bring the clothes what somebody have, (pauz) or heavy coats, any kind, blankets; to bring this for the German.

And I don't have to whom to talk more on the committee because everybody got in this time nervous, because till this time was quiet. They got nervous. I decided I will go to (Vadinia) to my brother. Only the Jewish people was not allowed to walk out in the city. They have been around and if somebody see you out the city, you get right killed. I decided I will go in the night. And in the daytime I stay in the (indecipherable) till I come to Vadinia.

I come to Vadinia. I have over there a cousin. I have my brother over there and I have a cousin; he was a little writer in Hebrew. I told him -- his name was (indecipherable). I told him what happened. Oh, he was laughing, too, and he told me the Germans, they not doing so good. He heard -- he talked to somebody. Somebody have a radio; they was listening. They got hurt in one place and they got hurt in another place. It'll not take long; the Germans -- will be no more Germans. They will get -- they will lose the war.

And I was over there in Vadinia. I come to Vadinia. Then I

was over there, it was a different life. You go out in the street, people staying -- stand (indecipherable) and people doing little bit blackmarket. The people, they was going to work, only they was managing anyway to bring home and to have what to eat. They was managing not bad.

Once I went out -- My brother was working in factory where they made flour; flour mill, they call it. It was what to eat in the town. This was -- in the house was what to eat. You have always flour, something; it was what to eat. Only one time I went out in the street and I saw such a beautiful apple. I bought it, maybe four- or five-pound apple, and I bring it home. They was expensive, only I had one and I know I will not live anyway long. Meantime, I will eat an apple. Is my sister-in-law said, "Simon, what are you doing? You know what you did? You bought the apple, such expensive -- " I said, "(Kee-tul-a), I don't see if I will live too long. Meantime, I will eat up a couple apples, what I don't need the money."

And in the meantime they was still over there quiet and I went to work in this place what my brother was working. He took me over there and they -- I was a good worker and they were satisfied. This was not taking -- about two months was taking, they was talking they will make a ghetto in (Lude-ma). They will make a ghetto.

Now, was over there two parts in the city. They make two ghettos, one in this side and then the other side; in the richer,

they call it, the other side city. I asked this guy, (Hy-an), "You see? What do you say now?? Theyygo make a ghetto." He said, "See, such (a-did) tin poles. How long this poles are safe? Four weeks, six weeks, they will fall down." I was looking and I am -- and he was older like me and he was an educated man and he have -- he was talking to a lot of people what they know more poli-
 tic, like I know, but I was listening to him. Only he was in a bad shape. Was nothing to write. And he was a man with a beard; he could not go out to work. I help him sometime out, little bit flour, little bit sugar, some kind of a soup; I had -- I tried to help him out.

Well, this was going like this till this was -- till October -- August, till August '42. And I was working in this mill with my brother and it was not -- we was living all right. In some families when they make the ghetto they put in maybe in a small room -- if you have two rooms -- ten, twelve people. They make it -- they took them out in the other places where they lived, out of this place where they make the ghetto, and they put them into these families.

Exactly to my brother -- she have a cousin; he was working in the Committee. Is they don't put down nobody to where we was living alone, by ourself over there. Later they come, when these people where they work -- they was from the Judenrat, from the committee. They hang up signs all the people what they working by the German -- some kind of produce, they will not work more

because the German said the Jews they were -- maybe they will put down poison in this food; is no good to keep Jews in these jobs. All the Jews get fired from these jobs. They have to go to other jobs.

Couple days later they took off all the people what they was going out to work. About thousand people was going out to work every day. Of course, you don't work every day, just a couple times a week. Is about a thousand, maybe two thousand people was working in different places. They said they took them out and they need to make (tum) -- they give the committee plans they want to make behind --Over there was big woods around; behind this woods they want to make a place for tanks to stay over there. And they give them the plan: They need three big holes, forty yard by sixty yard and three and a half foot deep, three and a half foot deep. And all the people have to go to work to this place to make these holes.

And if they said everybody have to go to work, I said, "I'm not going to work and I'm not going to dig a hole for myself." People was working over there five days. And I walking around the five days; I know the time is short. Pretty soon they will kill all of us. I have over there one friend, a young guy from my town, same age. I went over to him and I tell him -- his name was (Shauk). I tell him, "You know what I will tell you? According I see what is going on, we don't have a possibility to exist here. Maybe we will run out from the ghetto. I want to have somebody

to keep me company. And we will go in the woods. We will go see where -- " because anyway it's not -- I don't know what he was doing. He had probably money. I don't know what he was doing. And he said no, he will not go. As I -- he said no, he will not go. "I will not go either. I will not go by myself, one person."

Only after six days I decided I will go out to take a look how this look where the people are working over there. I went out. It was just six kilometer to go. I was young; it was nothing long. I went out over there and I saw the holes and I was looking around and I told the people, "I think these are the holes for us." "Oh, no, they show the plan what they need." They was not believing and they was not thinking because the (ge-bitz) commissar had promised -- All around was already killed the Jews in around the towns. Only he promised this time will the Jews not get killed because they good work, that they working for the German. And these people were believing. I was not believing. I said, "I don't think so this is the truth."

Only the six days when we walked home, everybody have the shovels. (Indecipherable) It was dark already. Is this friend of mine, (Shauk), is coming over. He said, "Simon, you see what is going on? They will probably take us away, some kind of execution. We don't know what they will do, how they will arrange. Maybe we will run out from the ghetto." I said, "Well, you will go now."

The German Gestapo was all around the ghetto already. And

the (okrinen) police and (lit-ee) police was coming in from all the side. Any way you will go out, you will get right killed. "Well, I will go now." "I will not go." [Ed: If this seems to be unclear, he is indicating his own indecision over what to do.] And in the morning about 4:00 o'clock was already around the ghetto to the police and the Gestapo. They was watching the ghetto, not the people to run out. If they want maybe do something against them, they was watching already and they was waiting for the morning to get ready for the job.

About 7:30 -- the usual is everybody have in the house -- make for themselves a place for hiding; if the German will come, not to get them right now. My brother make in his house a place for hiding; was a small place. For two people was place to go in. Only his wife cannot go in; she have two little children. Is he went in by himself. And I went across the street with another boy and two women. He have make over there -- they make in a chimney -- they was out -- in the hallway was such a heavy chimney, we make it something to go in in the roof, in the attic in this chimney like nobody can saw if it's -- and we took out one brick to have -- to get in little bit air and to have little bit light. And we went in -- till the day we was sitting.

About 7:30 we hear they come in, the (okrinen) police. And over there where we was sitting was an old man, maybe 75 years old. He talked to this Ukrainian policeman, "I'm an old man. What do you need me? Leave me home." He said, "Come, come, come,

you have to go." They have to go. He went. And they start to take ghetto, the people, in the trucks. And they take him to the jail. They have a big yard over there in the jail. They took him over there. And from over there they have trucks for they took him out in this place where they have the holes. They took twenty people in a truck. Four police was on the truck. And they was little but little transferring to get killed.

When they bring them over there, they was around staying police, watching. They told him to take off the clothes, to put the clothes away. (End of side one of tape; continuing on side two:) They took him out over there and they took away the clothes and they were staying in the line and going on to turn in these holes where they was over there, lay down. Was a German Gestapo with a machine gun.

Q You could see this from where you were hiding?

A I can't see it. I just hear later what this was. They told me later how they was doing, because some people was taking away the clothes from over there. They was working; the Jewish people was working and they later told me, when we have the other ghetto, what has happened to the other people, because I was -- I don't have even to -- what to eat. We was not be able to go out to get something to eat.

They take the people from the ghetto to the jail and from the jail they was other trucks; they transferring. This was going on two weeks, was taking, because this was (indecipherable) town

people, Jewish people in this town. It take two weeks. And they got cleaned up everything.

Only like we was sitting in this hiding place, we don't have water. Is not far was going a small river what the people throwed in all the dirt. They not -- never use this for their own, but we don't have a choice. We went down in the night and we was getting little bit water. If you put him in a glass, you saw the bugs, little bugs up and down, and we was drinking this water because we don't have nothing else. And we was getting up in the yard some vegetables, cucumbers, radishes or something. And from this we was living the two weeks.

Only Sunday they was not doing nothing; they was resting. Sunday we was thinking they resting; we will go out little bit -- be in the attic to get little bit air. We open up the bunker, this hiding place, and we went out and we sitting in the attic and we see a policeman is coming up, (okrinish) policeman is coming up. Of course, the people in this building where they were, they had hat and satchels, (dit-ins) kind of a good, and they was laying in the attic. This policeman saw it middle of the week and he was not be able to take it then. He come Sunday and he saw. And we saw him. We runned back in this bunker, in this hiding place, only he saw where we runned in. He opened up and he hollered, "Come out! Come out! Come out, come out;" I was out the first. Later two other one was out, only we runned away. And the fourth person; he took away.

And in the night we got every three together to the same place, every three -- It was in a different place hiding. All in the night we got together and we was not staying more in this place. We was -- we know from the other neighbors where they have a hiding place and they took them away from over there. We went in another place. And we was over there about two weeks, till fourteen days.

Later we hear some Jewish boys going around and say -- was talking, "Come out, people, come out. There'll be no more selections. These people what they are alive, they will live, and nothing more will happen to these people." Well, they was about thousand people was coming out; they was hiding. And a thousand people was coming from the small towns around, from the woods; they was hiding. They was coming around and they make a small ghetto for the two thousand people. And this was going around like this; people was working. Was not taking too long, maybe about three months.

Friday morning -- All around is -- was no wires around because the ghetto was big. Only this place what the people was living was stand around with (okrinish) police and the German. And this was no place to ran away. We had prepared over there a place for hiding where we was living. We went down in a little place, twenty people. We was standing over there so pressed like it was not possible to move. Was staying over there, it was taking two days.

Q Where was it in the house?

A Hmmm?

Q Where in the house was it? What kind of a place was it?

A It was a building, and in the basement we make from the chopped woods we put down in the front -- and later we make a wall to look like the basement. And we moved away little bit of wood from the wall and we make over there a hole to go in. We passed over the woods and we go down and we was over there hiding in this place, about twenty people. And we were standing.

Two days later I hear somebody is talking Jewish in the house. We then -- we hear somebody is talking Jewish! I went out and I saw my friend -- of mine. I asked him, "What are you doing here?" He said, "We getting together this stuff what is left. And we taking -- together they took off [Ed: "over"?] our school and they took together all the clothes and they put it over there. And they taking together." I asked him, "Maybe you can do something for me?" He said, "We will pack up here. You be here at 12:00 o'clock. We take you in the truck and we take you to the third ghetto where the school is. They making a third ghetto over there." He took us in the truck, 12:00 o'clock. He told me to take a bundle and to go to the truck and to put it down and to sit down over there and "They will take you to the third ghetto and you will throw down in the school the merchandise and the truck will come and they will load them up in another place." We did it like this and there was a third place. There was! And

it was taking not too long, about a week they got cleaned up, the places. And they took out these people; they shot them. This was just two thousand. They made it in the same way; was just about two thousand. Was not taking too long, about a week, maybe six days, something.

Q They did this the same way; they dug the holes?

A Hmmm?

Q They dug the holes, made them dig the holes and that's how they did it, the two thousand people?

A Yeah, they make in the same place holes and close to them they got killed, only they make more holes over there. And I don't know who made these holes, only they made it. They had it already made. And we was in this little ghetto. Later, about two, three weeks later, they said they will just allot the people -- this was people what they have trade; they got out such a certificate. Here is a working man; he have a certificate. And these people what they don't have certificates, they will get killed.

I have the brother; my brother was alive at this time. And be over there a man what he know -- twelve kilometer from over there was a working camp, (Schtup Meyer Schupe) was the name. They supposed to get together the old metal, the broken tank, the old ammunition for four years, to clean up all the territory what they have that the German took over. And he said, "We will go over there and they will take us in, because we don't have these papers. They will kill us."

We went in the night. And he know this place to go in, not to go by the gate where they stay a police -- a German or a police man watching, only he went the side way. In the night we went in over there. In the morning we went out and we told him -- this man what he was running over there -- he take the people to work; he bring them back, count them -- he talk him -- he had three people that the German -- what they want to work; they come; they want to work, to take us to the group. The German said okay. He was taking us to the group.

We was worrying we was living in a (bunk) over there. And everybody managed to get something to eat. They don't give us too much food. Only when you was driving around, you was going with the truck to get this metal, you stop by some farmers. You always was getting some clothes in the ghetto, what they had left they bring in, the clothes; is always you get some clothes. And by this clothes you get some food. And you was living not bad.

Only some people they got sick; maybe about six people got sick. They don't go to work. Is one Saturday come down a doctor. It was a Polish doctor. And he checked the people, the sick people. Nobody know. I went over and asked the doctor what he say. He said they will be okay. They will give them something and they will be okay.

Only two -- it was two boys, young boys, they was carrying water from the pump to the kitchen for the German. They got to stop to carry the water and to go in the bunker and they said,

"This bunker will be throwed in a bomb because -- and they will kill everybody who is in the bunker." Me and my brother, we runned out from the bunker and we start to look for someplace to be. We went to the farmers. We was -- for one farmer we was a couple days. Another farmer. But one farmer said he will keep us. We was over there two weeks. Only he was -- for him some girl -- Polish girl was working by him. She said she don't want us over there. She found out he was keeping us on the attic. She comed out and say, "If you will not go away from here, you have to know I will call the police and they will kill you." We saw is bad. Only we decided we will go back to (Vadinia), to this little place, to this little ghetto; maybe we will manage something.

Meantime, Monday morning they come with a truck. They took out the sick people, how many people was sick. They took the people, what they carry out the people, with in the truck and they shot them. They took them out not too far from the bunker even, and they shot them over there and they buried them over there. And the other people was going back to work.

Only we went to (Vadinia). When I comed to (Vadinia), this guy what he was my friend, he was in the committee. I went to see him and I asked him, "Do me a favor; maybe you can do something for me?" He said he will try for me, for my brother, to allowed us to be over there. They allowed us to be over there. This was in May, 1943.

We come back to (Lud-man). We have over there about five,

six hundred people. They was producing over there, making shoes for the German, making liquor, whiskey, making clothes, making leather. They had different manufacturing. They figured out different kind manufacturing. And we work over there by the German. And not everybody was working. They send me and my brother to a factory where they making bells [Ed: "bottles"?]. Bells! For water, for wine or something like that. And we was working over there.

Always, before we went to work, we stopped in this school. We get some kind of a little cloth; we can get some food. We was working over there eight people. For this cloth what I took out from this school where they had everything together, I was getting over there from the farmers -- this was not far away -- a lady I was getting (care) this cloth, and she gave me different kind of food what I want, sometimes meat, sometimes fish, anything. And I cook for the people. Later we eat up lunch and I walk little bit. And this was going like this.

It was -- only the people anyway was scared; was scared. They was thinking -- because all around was no more Jews; just in (Ludma) was about five, six hundred people. Is it not a possibility to leave these Jews and the other -- this one is good and the other is no good? People was thinking to run away, only the committee was calling meetings and explaining, "We doing the -- Hitler said in this time, this territory, they start already to go back from Stalingrad. This territory what we took in three years,

it will take the Russians six years before they will get back." The president of this committee, he said -- he talked to us: "We doing for the German so much good. They need us. They will not do to us nothing bad." They -- because people was running out and they have some places for Gentiles to stay. They pay them; they have money. They pay them. And they was thinking to say -- only this guy said, "If you running in a boat and somebody don't have what to do, he have a nail, he is making a little hole in this boat. Water is coming in and everybody is drowning. Everybody is getting lost. If this one -- these people what they running out, if this -- I don't know if they run out today five and tomorrow -- this can bring -- they will kill us account these people what they runned out, because we will not be able to produce. And the (gebitz) commissar that's (gen-nen-guy) will see the Jews are running out. They will kill the other one, but they will all run out.

This was taking -- Yeah, and this guy, his name was (Kool-ish). This (hel-bok), this (gebitz) commissar, was by the name Kraus. He was living with him very good. He was giving him a lot of money, because they took apart the houses in the ghetto; they find a lot money hiding in these houses. She give him some of -- when he was keeping -- and he was telling him he said so. If something will happen, will get to happen, he will give him -- know something coming up, will be time to run out, he will let him know. This what he promise. Till the 13 of December, 1943, this was a Friday morning, is a (feersh-baum). It was around

police in German already by this little ghetto. In the (feersh-
baum) they throwing to this guy (Koolish), the president. They
killed him. He said he was so -- not sure that (Krauz-er) will
tell him.

And they finished up -- We have a little -- the place where
we was living, we have a little place, a bunker, to hide. We went
in seven people over there.

Q What was that place like?

A This was in the little ghetto. It was in (Vadinia), in the
little ghetto.

Q What was the hiding place like?

A The hiding place, we make two holes, one hole -- (arp) of the
building we make two holes outside, and this was in the ground.
This was -- and the top was the soil. And we make a dip about
six foot lower to hold it. We make two such holes. If they will
come to the first hole, they will see nobody is in; they will
think they took it out and we will be in the other hole. This
what we make two, because if they will look in there, you see the
hole and nobody's is, and we will be over there.

We was over there till Saturday night. Saturday night every-
body had prepared for some Gentile a place to be. Two people walked
out. They don't come back. Other two people walked out. Later
we was me and my brother, and a lady was. We have to go north.
The lady have a place to go south. She went on her way. And she
make it to the place what -- she make it to the place what she got

prepared.

Only I was so knocked out from this bunker, I was not be able to walk. I fall down, so slippery outside; was in December. And my brother walked away from me, only he say he don't saw me; he come pick me up. And we start to go again. We want to go this place. Meantime I fall down again. And he went. He went. I was laying and thinking like this: "I'm laying here already half an hour, an hour; the police will come pretty soon, pick me up, and my brother is probably already by this place what he have to be, what he have prepared." And I'm not be able to go. I was laying two hours and I am not going and nobody come to pick me up. This was in the nighttime. I decided to go back in the bunker. I took some water and I took some toast. I find this and I -- in the house where they're laying. As I was eating one toast a day with a half a glass of water. And this was reaching me till January 2nd.

Later I don't have -- I don't have more what to eat. I was out of food. I had to go out. I know if it's day, if it's night. In the daytime I hear people passing by. At night I know it's quiet. And this was quiet; I know it's night, because I don't have no light. I don't have nothing over there. And I was laying over there till I have what to eat. I went out. I should go not. I come out first and just across the water, a lake over there, thin ice; the ice is not frozen enough. And I don't know where to go. I was lost. I'm going and going and I don't know where I'm

going. I saw not far away a little light. I come closer. I saw is a little stand over there. This was so gross -- so big like that, the toilets outside like today. The construction have the little toilet, also, so big was a stand over there, and it was like -- . Come exactly a German patrol! If he saw me coming, he got scare I'm going to kill him; he start to shoot. Only this was night. He don't hit me and I runned away.

And I was running and I don't know where I'm going. I don't know where I'm going. Was already till 4:00 o'clock, I come across a church. I come across this church; I know where I am. I know what my place, where I am. I sit down, was probably about 4:00 o'clock. I rest up little bit and I think what to do.

Not far from over there I know a Gentile was living and he want me to come to stay by him. Only we decided -- but, of course, I know he have more people over there. We decided to be separate. We took the other place. Only if I'm not far and it's already start to get light, will be not so good as I will go into this. He was living on second floor. This was not possible to go in to him; to give a knock in a door he will hear was impossible because he was in the second floor and all around was close; is nothing to find.

Only right not far from there was a shed. I said, "I will go in the shed. What can I do?" I come in the shed, I see -- I hear a piglet over there. I can go -- if the pig is in, the boss will come to feed -- . Was not taking too long till about 7:00

o'clock when it was light I hear somebody's open the door, coming in. I stuck out my head. I see this guy is in. Leon, his name was Leon (Ga-cheece), a tall fellow, a Polish fellow, tall. I said, "Leon, I have a whole bunch of money, a big bundle of money." I -- I start to kiss his hand. "Please help me! I just come out from the ghetto. Take me down to this place what you had prepared." Okay, he said okay. Meantime he went up to the house. He bring me down little bit whiskey, bring me down a bottle of tea and ~~that~~ and I ate this up.

And I falled asleep. I was sleeping till he comed and then I -- time he bring me supper. He wake me up. I ate up the supper and I asked him, "Leon, take me down." He hear. "We will see. We will see." They -- the people -- he was asking the people what to do, or to get me in or to leave me go, what is better? They was afraid to take me in, maybe they will catch me; and they was afraid to leave me go, maybe they will ask me in what place I'm coming. Is he -- in the morning he bring me breakfast. "Leon, take me down." "Sit."

In the night we come down. He said, "Simon, come." I went with him upstairs. They give me water and a place to wash up. They don't have such a bathtub like they have here. Warm water and I wash up. I have a shirt. I was wearing a shirt, was so dark like this one. And three weeks laying in the ground, it was so dark like this one. He give me another shirt to put on. And he took me down over there to the place where this was prepared.

Over there was sitting seven people. And we were sitting over there. I was paying him monthly like ten dollars in gold.

Q What was that place like?

A Hmm?

Q What kind of place was that where you were hiding then at his house?

A This was dugged out a hole in the basement, out in the street where the sidewalk is.

Q So underneath the sidewalk?

A In the wall they took out the bricks. And they dugged out over there. And they put on heavy poles. And they put on lumber on top poles. And they put on this thing to hold the soil not to fall down, not to break down. And over there we make places for to sleep for the people, and we was sleeping over there. They put on a little bit straw. They make two -- one line and a higher line. And we have a little table. And they bring the down -- and over there in this bunker we have dugged out a hole what we was using for a toilet. And we dugged so deep we got water. We got over there water and we got the toilet over there. We were sitting over there till July.

July was the Russian in; July 21st was the Russian in. They come in, the Russian, so I was thinking I will go out and I will see a Russian. I will kiss his hand, his feet, because he bring us back to life. Only I walked out, I see two little Russian boys, maybe twelve, fourteen years old, going with machine gun. I

got scared for them. Is I don't went and I don't say -- .

Only later we meet some officer, Jewish officer, and he bring us in food and we took another apartment. Is -- was a lot of empty apartments. Was the Gentile what they was working with the German let us have the apartment. We took our apartment and we was living over there.

I was very sick. I was not be able to work. I was -- I have a cousin in Chicago, I guess was my only hope to come to United States. And I will go in some kind of a hospital. I will see my cousin and I will go in a hospital and I will lay in a hospital. For how long I will be able to live, I don't know, because I was feeling very bad. Only little by little I come -- I was feeling better. Only when I was so sick I was in the street. I was not afraid to go down. Some guy coming over from the registration, from the military registration from the Russian, to come to get registered for the --

Q For the army?

A For the army. I was not afraid because I know I'm not be able to work; they will not take me to the army. I come over there. Is exactly was a doctor what I know from before. He went with the Russian. He come back and he was over there. And he said I'm good for the army. I asked him, "Doctor, how you can say? I'm not be able to work. How you will take me to the army?" He says, "Take you in the hospital. We will cure you and later you will be all right, because we need soldiers."

If I hear this, is not so good. Is Poland -- Poland was already -- Lublin, till Lublin was fallen. Here was Russian, the (boook); and over there they give it to Pole, the Poles over there. As I get (ah-prop-ols) to see the family on the other side, and I will come back. And when I get (ah-prop-ols) over there, I was staying over there. They -- nobody was bothering my age to the military. And I was over there. I was over there. Little by little I start to go out in the bazaar and do little bit black-market. And I was not in a bad shape.

Later they took up (Tschurch-ing). They went up Germany. Poland took (Tschurch-ing). (Tschurch-ing), I and another friend, we said we will go to (Tschurch-ing); maybe we will open up a business over there. We was eleven people, what we was the first one for to come in after the military to (Tschurch-ing).

(Tschurch-ing) I open up a grocery business. I start to get merchandise in different way. And this was not far from (Bit-goisht) so I went to (Bid-goisht). They bring -- and I have a store (fin-rush).

I have a girlfriend before the war. We should get married before the war broked out, only they started up a war. We was not getting married. (Ho-la.) She had three sisters and one brother. Two sisters was married and the sisters have already eight kids. My two brothers was married; they had six kids. And I have two sisters, younger ones. One day I get a telegram, staying in the store. I get a telegram: "I am in (Helm). Come to see me."

Signed, Bernice. My eyes was -- I -- I -- I -- I -- I don't hear nothing! I asked the people if they know something by her, because some people was out in the camp. And nobody know nothing about it.

Q How long since you'd seen her?

A Oh, I don't see her from '39. Before the war I saw her, on what time I don't -- because she was in Poland. As I left the store -- I have two partners in the store. And I went over there and we got married. Right -- the other day, we got a wedding, a little wedding, and we got married and I took her to (Tschurch-ing).

In (Tschurch-ing) we had the business for another six months and later we went to Berlin. [Ed: maybe "Bedzin"?] In Berlin we was -- I have money; we have a nice -- couple thousand dollars made in (Tschurch-ing), and I was doing little bit business in Berlin, too, and it was not so bad. Later, in '46, was allowed already for some people to go to United States.

Was thinking -- we was think to go to United States. We applied papers. And then she start pregnant. She was in the third month or fourth month; is law said not to take in a board pregnant woman. We have to wait till the baby gets born. And the baby was three months old and we come here in July; I think this was the 21st. 21st was our lucky day.

And we come to Chicago to my cousin. Come to my cousin. He have a candy store. He took us in in this -- Behind the candy store he have an apartment house. He was living in apartment.

And I went to get a job. I got a job by some department store that was over there, a small department store, about twenty-two people was working. And this boss what I was working for him, he saw in me I am a good worker. And she said if I want to be his partner. He have two kids, only he have other business; he don't need nothing but the kids. He will take me in. To be prepared, some day we will go to the lawyer to sign up (ahksh).

He was a good -- he was telling me this story, only I don't make enough to make a living. He told me he pay me thirty-five dollars a week for his servant. Later, the other way we come -- my son; before it was a girl. I told him to give me a raise. He paid me already maybe forty-five dollars or fifty dollars. It still was not enough with two kids to live. I said -- told him to give me a raise. He said three months later. I work in this place twenty-one months. And this was not possible to make a living. And this what he said, but about (de-shin), "Listen, if you don't tell me nothing, what I -- what I have to ask you?"

I decided I will go buy a candy store someplace. I come here with more like fifteen hundred dollars. Only if I have thirty-five dollars, we have to live. They was -- used up little bit our money. I'm not talking now good English; I'm already thirty-five years here. In this time I don't talk English. Is -- is I ask over there -- I work in a place where the place was open Sunday. In Chicago they have, if you know, (A-mek-fost) street. Over there Saturday and Sunday is very good business. With any-

thing you go out, you can sell.

I told the boss maybe he will give me off a day, one day in the week I want do some business, side business, because I don't have enough. He ask me what day I want. I tell him I want Sunday. He said, "Sunday I will not give you because the best day for me is Sunday."

As we was start to talk to find our candy store, after twenty-one months to find a candy store. We find a candy store for seven thousand dollars. I have fifteen hundred. This man what he was selling the cigarettes for this store, he know it's a good start. He will borrow me three thousand dollars. I ask the man, "How you can borrow me three thousand dollars? You don't know me." He said, "According I see you, I trust you three thousand dollars. You will not run away with the store."

Only I have already a start for the store, but I still need twenty-five hundred dollars. In this place my friend was working over there, too. He saw that I'm going around and I'm thinking. He asked me, "Simon, what are you thinking?" I told him I want to buy a store for seven thousand dollars and I don't have enough money. I have forty-five hundred dollars. He said, "I have thousand dollars. Here is the thousand." The other day he bring me -- and he want no check, no nothing to sign papers. "I trust you." As I have already fifty-five hundred dollars.

I have my cousin in Chicago. He was in the candy store business, too. I went to him to borrow me fifteen hundred dollars.

His wife was against for me to go in business. She said, "You still have time a couple years later. You will -- What the rush?" She don't want to borrow me money. Only he went with me to the bank and he signed for fifteen hundred dollars, to pay fifty-five dollars a month for thirty months. And I will have -- and I have the money to go in the store.

Bought the store and I paid; went to the lawyer. And I called up my boss, "I'm not coming to work in the morning." I called. The boss was not in; the son. I told him. (Moosh) was his name. "(Moosh), I'm not coming to work more because I bought my store." Well, he listening. He was all right. He was all right. In the night the telephone ringed, the boss calling, Mr. Robbins was calling: "Simon, what you did?" I told him it was for me hard to make a living and I went in my business. He said, "This what I promised you and you going in your business?" Well, I told him I did it because it was hard for me to make a living.

In the candy store was very hard. I took a store for sixteen hours a day, living in the back, seven days a week. Was very hard work. "Only for you is something diff -- " I was working over there hard, too, because he make me manage of him -- stockroom, and I was working hard over there, too. If after this is -- I told him -- and we -- no more! We don't have nothing what to do. We was big success in the store. I make big success till -- You through?

Q Just about -- yeah.

(End of tapè)