Interview with MICHAEL ZANCYCK
Holocaust Oral History Project
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Interviewer:
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Begin Tape 1, Side 1

Q: TELL ME WHERE YOU'RE FROM OR GIVE THAT HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE. . .

A: Okay. My name is Michael Zancyck. And I was born in Krakow, Poland in 1935. In order -- Before I get into my experiences, I'd like to make a few comments to set the stage or create a perspective, at least from my views.

First of all, I'd like to make a comment about the word "Holocaust." I think it is the most inappropriate word to describe an action which resulted in the systematic destruction of European Jewry. Holocaust means spontaneous combustion. There was nothing spontaneous about killing six million Jews.

I'm not sure who coined the word, but I would assume it had to be, it had to be someone who totally misunderstood what happened between the periods of 1939 and 1945 in Europe, especially in Eastern Europe. It most likely is a word that makes -- at least the American Jewish leadership during that period very comfortable because it means that all this happened in a very spontaneous way, rather than in a very systematic planned historical climax to history of anti-semitism. It is most likely comforting to whoever came up with the word that the spontaneity of the event was such that it looks like nobody in the United States,

American Jewish leadership during the war, knew anything about it. This is the furthest from the truth.

In order to view the destruction of European Jewry without placing guilt, it's very clear that Germans did the killing with a lot of help from some of their allies in Eastern Europe. But the guilt for the killing not only rests with the people who did it, but it also rests with those who had the power to stop it. But for whatever reasons, mostly political, decided that it was in the best interest of world Jewry, American Jewry, and the Zionist movement to assure that by the destruction of European Jewry, especially a Polish Jewry, because it was the most powerful political Jewish movement in the world until 1939. It would result in the creation of the state of Israel.

If I can paraphrase Benguri in his memoirs, he made a comment to which is very revealing. When he was asked about this, his feeling was that if it took the destruction of all Jewish children in Europe in order to create the state of Israel, he would be willing to pay that kind of price. Unfortunately, that's exactly the kind of price he paid.

Historically, Polish Jews were the most powerful Jewish group in the world until '39. Politically it was an anti-Zionist, very Socialist group. In the 1938 elections in Poland, the Zionists lost. The Bundist, who are the

Socialists, gained a tremendous amount of power.

In order to understand this, you have to realize that Jews ran their own political parties in Poland, and the Zionists had their own parties. They had people that stood up for election and to the Polish Parliament, as well as the Socialists.

The Socialists won the majority of the seats that were assigned to Jews. The Zionists were in a very small minority.

What happened between a period of 1939 and 1945 changed the political structure of world Jewry. The Socialists, the Bundists, were totally destroyed. The Zionists, in a sense, did something which they couldn't do by election. They managed to take control of the world Jewish movement and the state of Israel came into being.

This is the historical perspective that one has to look at for that period. We don't have the time now.

Q: WE CAN PERSONALIZE IF FROM HERE. IT WOULD BE REALLY GOOD. MAYBE START OFF WITH YOUR CHILDHOOD.

A: I will.

Q: OKAY.

A: But I think if anybody listens to this tape -- 10, 15 years from now.

Q: BY THE WAY, IF YOU'D LIKE TO DISCUSS YOUR AMENDMENTS RIGHT HERE, WE WILL HAVE IT ON TAPE AS WELL AS ON PAPER THAT YOU DON'T WANT THIS, FOR EXAMPLE, IN A BOOK.

A: Okay. I think it will be up to maybe the next generation to do some research about everything that I've just said. I think, at least for me, it's too late. I don't have the time. Getting back to the release form that I'm being asked to sign. I have no problem with most of it. There are a couple of amendments that I would like to put in.

One, that whatever is on this tape cannot be used in any radio documentary series or in any book that might be published without my permission. The reason I'm saying this, that I want to be sure that the other material that's being included is compatible with my views. I do not want to be included in the kind of traditional books that have been published, interviews that have been published on this period, 1939 to 1945, that really only tell half the story.

So that by signing this release, I want to be sure that the amendment that I've just talked about is included in any use of my material.

Going back to really what this interview is about: As I said earlier, I was born in Poland, in Krakow in 1935, which was a medium-sized city with a very large Jewish population -- had been until 1918, part of the Austrian-Hungarian empire.

My father was a lawyer. He was very active in defending Socialists and Communists in Poland before the

war. In a sense, to put it in perspective, he was sort of the Kunsler of Poland.

Q: KUNSLER, WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

A: Well, Kunsler is a lawyer.

Q: OKAY.

A: The one that defends all the left wing.

Q: WAS HE HIMSELF A COMMUNIST?

A: No. He was not. He just believed in human rights. He believed that these people had to be defended. By doing that, he made a lot of friends, especially the left in Poland, which became very useful during the war. Now we'll get into that:

In 1939, when the war began, my father -- maybe three days before the war -- decided that since he was too well known and if the Germans came into Krakow, he would be one of the first people arrested. Because of his political activities, decided to go to the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, he got as far as Lwow, the city is better known as Landsberg. The war broke out when he got to Lwow.

The Russians stepped into the eastern part of Poland, took over the eastern part of Poland, which also included Wolf. And of course, the Germans took over after a few weeks, managed to take over the rest of Poland.

He decided, after being there for a few weeks, that maybe he should come back. So he came back to Krakow. I

think it was towards the end of September or early October, 1939.

At first, life basically, at least in my memory, continued...

Q: I'M SORRY TO INTERRUPT. COULD YOU GO INTO A LITTLE MORE DETAIL ABOUT THE REST OF YOUR FAMILY AND LIFE BEFORE 1939. I'M SURE YOU WERE VERY YOUNG, BUT...

A: Right. I have a sister who is five years older than me. My mother was a concert pianist.

Q: REALLY?

A: We grew up basically surrounded by wealth. I had a German governess. We lived in an apartment house which was owned by my grandfather. And everybody in the apartment house was related to us.

Q: HOW EXTENDED WAS -- YOU HAD COUSINS AND AUNTS AND UNCLES?

A: Yes. They were all living in the apartment house. We also had a house in Zakapane, which is sort of the "Tahoe" of Poland. We used to spend winter vacations skiing there every year.

Q: SO AS A 4 YEAR OLD YOU WERE SKIING ALREADY?

A: As a 4 year old I was skiing.

Q: THAT ALWAYS FRUSTRATED ME WHEN I WAS 15 AND THESE LITTLE 4 YEAR OLDS WOULD GO FLYING BY BETTER THAN ME.

SO IT WAS A VERY NICE LIFE BEFORE THEN?

A: My memories are very limited. But the things I do

remember, it was. Of course that all changed when the Germans came in.

One of the first things that I remember of course was that since the governess I had was German, she disappeared very quickly. Some of the Nuremburg laws that had been prevalent in Germany were now put into effect in Poland, which was, for instance, Jews could not have Polish servants. Jewish lawyers could only have Jews as clients, couldn't have non-Jews as clients.

So the kind of effect very quickly was, that we lost-- it might sound awfully stupid at this point -- but we lost all our servants. And I do remember very clearly my mother I don't think even knew how to boil water. For the first few weeks we had a very hard time because she didn't really know how to cook. But she learned very quickly. The other things that very -- you know as a child that you notice very quickly is that we had to give up our radio. We kept the telephone for awhile, but I think very quickly we lost the phone.

Q: WHAT DO YOU MEAN IT WAS LOST, THEY TOOK IT?

A: Right. I mean there were basically laws being passed very quickly that Jews couldn't have phones, Jews could not have --

Q: DID YOU EXPERIENCE ANY ANTI-SEMITISM BEFORE THE WAR, YOU KNOW, GOING TO SCHOOL OR...

A: Well, I was 4 years old. I don't think I ever

experienced anti-semitism. Maybe I did and didn't know it, but...

Q: WAS YOUR FAMILY A RELIGIOUS FAMILY?

A: No, no.

Q: ZIONISTIC AT ALL?

A: No.

Q: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE JEWISH IDENTITY AT THAT POINT? I MEAN BEFORE THE WAR.

A: I think the only thing that sort of sticks in my mind is my grandmother, who sort of ruled the clan and lived on the top floor. And I know when I used to go with my governess to the park, she used to take along a ham sandwich for me. But I do remember that she did it very quietly so that my grandmother would never notice that we were eating ham. The only other thing I remember as far as religious is, I remember Passover, and I remember going with my father to synagogue on one of the Jewish high holidays. But other than that, we didn't go to Friday night services or Friday night meals...

Q: BUT YOU DID GO TO SCHULE, AND YOU HAD TO...

A: Maybe once or twice a year. As far as I said before, my father was a -- I'm not sure if he was a Socialist-- but he was the defense counselor to some of the biggest trials in Poland in the 1930s where the government was trying to outlaw the Socialist Party and the Communist Party. And many of the leaders of both of those parties

ended up in jail. My father was a defense attorney in most of those trials.

His law partner, who was my grandmother's brother, Dr. Leon Feiner, was the head of the Bundt in Poland and later on ended up as being one of the presidents of the Jewish coordinating committee of Poland in Warsaw during the Warsaw ghetto uprising.

So at that point, I think the only things that I can recall in late 1939, early 1940 that changed my life is losing my governess, losing all our servants, and not being able to sort of go to the park, which I used to go all the time. It became more of a quieter life.

The Germans, I do remember, the Germans in the streets. At this point, the Jews were not forced to wear yellow arm bands. It was sort of a period where the Germans were not really sure what they would be doing. And I think most of the Jews in Krakow were sort of waiting. Historical perspective, I think, they looked at this as another wave of anti-semitism that would disappear.

Q: WAS THAT THE VIEW OF YOUR PARENTS ALSO?

A: Oh, absolutely! I think my father felt very secure. He was not bothered at that point. He somehow thought that this would all disappear.

Q: HE WAS ABLE TO CONTINUE HIS PRACTICE?

A: He was able to continue his practice. I think at that point the only clients that he had, had to be Jews. I

didn't see any beatings of Jews or arrests of Jews at that point.

I do know now of course that most of that happened in smaller towns as the Germans came in, small villages where the majority of the people were Jews. As they went through, synagogues were burned, and then some people were killed during that period. But in Krakow, it wasn't that evident.

I think it started becoming evident to my father early in 1940 that maybe it might be a good idea to leave Krakow. We had a house in the country -- another house. We had one in Zakapane. But we had a house in the country, maybe 20 miles away from Krakow. So my father decided to take the whole family, including my grandmother and his brother and his brother's wife and son, and we would all move to this house.

Q: THE WHOLE FAMILY?

A: The whole family, out in the small village. But they were afraid to move during the day because of being noticed by the Germans. Somehow he managed to get some friends of his who are non-Jews to move the furniture in the middle of the night, loaded in the middle of the night, then moving during the day so that nobody would really notice that we were moving. So we moved to this little village.

Q: CAN I ASK A QUESTION?

A: Sure.

Q: DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR FATHER'S THINKING WAS BEHIND THE MOVE? DID HE SENSE THAT SOMETHING WAS GOING WRONG? SPECIFICALLY?

A: I think he did. I think he sensed, as we get into this -- at this point of course I didn't realize and of course I didn't understand. I think I was 5 years old. It sort of seemed like a game. But I think I wouldn't be here if he felt that nothing was going to happen.

I think my father knew in '38, '39, before the war began that based on what had happened in Germany to some of the Jews and based on the way that the Germans forced Polish Jews who had lived in Germany to be forced back into Poland in 1937, 1938.

And he was -- since he did again as I say, he had very active contacts, Socialist and Communist Parties all over Europe, that he must have been getting some information that at least gave him the feeling that things were going to change very rapidly because he set up this intricate escape plan for my mother, my sister and myself. He also acquired some very good papers for us. This was all done before, I think here, sometime in 1939.

That it was done before the war began or within days of the war.

So then when we moved to this little village and my father would go into Krakow, still go in everyday. We

were there for about six months. At that point the ghetto in Krakow was established. I think my father's feeling was that we would be much safer if we moved back to Krakow and actually go into the ghetto. Feeling that we were in a very small town, and even though he had a lot of friends there, everybody in the village knew that we were there. So that we weren't trying to hide at this point. So then he knew it would be much easier if somehow, if we put in, I guess they put in approximately 25,000 or 30,000 Jews in the ghetto.

That's what he decided to do, and we sort of moved lock, stock, and barrel into the Krakow ghetto. This was in the summer and fall of 1940.

Again, we were lucky because we owned -- my grandfather was a builder -- and owned a lot of property all over Krakow, actually all over Poland. And it so happened that one of the buildings that he owned happened -- ended up being in the Krakow ghetto. So that we, in a sense, went into a building that we owned, even though we owned it. In the apartment all of us, the whole family really, came in.

Now the only part of the family that was in this little village that decided not to come, was my uncle, my father's brother. He decided that he was not going to go.

Q: WHY WAS THAT?

A: Because his feeling was that he didn't trust the

Germans. He felt that his wife and son would be much safer.

Q: SO HE KEPT HIS WIFE AND SON OUT?

A: And himself out. And he managed at that point to get some false papers. And these were actually very good papers. Through the help of my father and his son and his wife had disappeared, so to speak, left this little village we were in, but not to the ghetto. But they left Krakow, and they actually -- they survived the war.

Q: HOW DID THEY SURVIVE THE WAR?

A: Basically the same way that we did. They lived as non-Jews. My aunt spoke fluent German. She ended up going to work for a German company in Poland, outside of Warsaw, and spent the whole war working for the company.

Q: UNDER FALSE PAPERS?

A: Under false papers. But my father decided that he couldn't live on false papers. Of course he never said that, but I from what I put together since then, he was too well know, he wasn't going to hide. And his feeling was that he was willing to take his chances. So we all, my sister and my mother, my father, and my grandmother moved into the ghetto.

My father was very active in the administration. He became a member of the Utinrof which is a dirty word nowadays for some, but the Utinrof in Krakow under its first term was a very active organization. My father was

involved in -- I guess he ran the welfare office, which was trying to get food to people who needed it as part of the Utinrof.

Q: AT THIS POINT ALL OF THE JEWS IN KRAKOW HAD BEEN MOVED TO THE GHETTO?

A: At this point, all of the -- I would say 99 percent, I'm sure some of them stayed out. Not only the Jews of Krakow, but as Germans did, they would take Jews from smaller towns within maybe a 50 mile radius. Actually there were even some Jews from Czechoslovakia in the Krakow ghetto.

Q: KRAKOW IS CLOSE TO --

A: Krakow is close to the Czech border and reasonably close to the Hungarian border. It's only 40 miles from Auschwitz which is very interesting. But it's right-- very close to the Czech border. It's about a 4-hour drive to the Hungarian border.

Q: Zancyck IS THAT A CZECHOSLOVAKIAN --

A: Zancyck is a pure Polish name. It means little castle.

So we moved into the ghetto in the fall of 1940. Then, of course, life changed very drastically. At that point, I was what -- 6 years old. They put a wall up around the ghetto. At first, it took in a good portion of a small suburb -- not a suburb, but a section of Krakow. When the gate went up and the wall went up, that's when, at least

for me, life started changing very drastically because I was used to, even at the age of 5, sort of running around Krakow getting on streetcars. And again, you asked me a question before.

The only first thing in late 1939, 1940 that I noticed is that Jews had to -- could not -- had to sit in the last car of the streetcar, and could not sit. There was one car on every streetcar at that point that was reserved for Jews. They couldn't sit in the front cars. I always went to the front cars. I never went to the Jewish cars. And even in the ghetto I found a way of getting out.

Q: OF GETTING OUT OF THE GHETTO?

A: Of leaving through holes in the wall, and I used to do that basically daily. And one of the reasons was that food was getting very scarce, and we had a lot of them-- my father's -- a lot of non-Jewish friends, who I would go to and bring food, especially bread and flour back to the ghetto. This was an ongoing thing.

Q: WAS IT DANGEROUS TO GO?

A: If you got caught, you most likely would have been shot on the spot. But this was where -- remember the ghetto, it was like a city in a sense with its own administration. It had a Jewish administration. It had a Jewish police force. The Krakow ghetto had the Jewish police force wasn't as forceful as some other ones, but they all had uniforms. They didn't have guns, but they

did all the duties that any policeman would do in any city. Plus they worked with the Germans when it came time to -- when they began to deport -- to assemble transports and deport people. They would always go.

The Jewish policeman were very active in working with the Germans. They would go along, and they would also guard. You can see pictures today from the Warsaw ghetto, for instance, of people being loaded onto trains. There were always Jewish policemen that stood at the exits to make sure that nobody would leave the square.

So that this went on and in the Krakow ghetto the Jewish policemen were also -- did guard duty at the gates, and they would also patrol the perimeters to make sure that -- especially black marketeers do not manage to get over the wall or through the wall without giving them a payoff. So basically it was an ongoing thing. I mean if you look at the Germans' statistics of the amount of food per person that was allowed in terms of calories in all the ghettos, because that was all uniform. Most people would have died of starvation within the first year if they had to live just on what was available to them.

So that it's all the black market, there was a very positive thing because it brought in a lot of food. Of course it was positive to only those who could afford the prices, or if you managed, like I did, to go over the wall and bring food in. And, of course, the poor suffered,

which is true anywhere.

Q: WHEN YOU DID THAT, GOING THROUGH THE WALLS, WERE YOU AWARE AT THAT TIME YOURSELF THAT YOU WOULD GET SHOT?

A: I don't know.

Q: WERE YOU AFRAID?

A: I don't know. I had seen people shot. Our house was right at the entrance of the ghetto so that some of the windows actually went out on the square that was not in the ghetto, so the main entrance. I saw people shot right on the spot trying to come in or run away when they came back through. The way some of these black marketeers would work is that there were working parties that would go out of the ghetto every morning and then come back at night. Some of them would try and mingle with the working parties and then come back. What the German sentries and also the Jewish police would do is they would search people as they came back. If your stomach looked too big because you put in a couple of sacks of flour around your stomach and you taped it, if they noticed it, they would pull you out. And if you tried to run, the Germans might shoot you.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME YOU SAW SOMEBODY SHOT?

A: Actually I saw so many people shot that I'm not sure when was the first time. So I knew -- but to me I think as a 6-year-old child, it was a game. I never wore the armband that I was supposed to wear. So I didn't have a

problem taking it off. I guess I was a defiant child when I was young. So it was a game. I would jump on the streetcars.

The only time I ran into a problem is when a couple of, I guess, youngsters my own age who had known me noticed me, and they started calling after me "Jew, Jew, Jew." That was only, in terms of doing that, that I felt any fear that something might happen.

Q: SO YOU ESCAPED FROM THOSE GUYS.

A: Right. And I would come back, and I would roam -- I'm not sure I really understood what was going on, but beginning in 1941, maybe mid-year of 1941, people would sort of disappear, especially children that I had known, friends of mine. They were there one day and the next day they were gone. Slowly I realized that people were being rounded up and being resettled or going somewhere because the ghetto kept getting smaller. At a certain point, I think maybe late 1941 the Germans, as they did in the Warsaw ghetto, they did the same thing in the Krakow ghettos since a lot of people had been resettled, so to speak, they cut the ghetto in half so that moved the walls.

Q: PHYSICAL SIZE?

A: Physical size. So the physical size decreased. We happened to be in the area that would remain the ghetto. So we didn't have to move.

But I knew things were going on. I knew that my father was taking precautions. For instance, I have a feeling that he, because that he was in the Utinrot, knew when the Germans were going to do roundups, in other words, when the transport was leaving and what areas of the ghetto they would be going in order to get their numbers, get the people. The most vulnerable, of course, were older people and children because you needed a work card. In other words, everybody in the ghetto had an identity card. If you had the right stamp on the card which said that you were a worker, that you worked, let's say, in an industry usually run by Germans, that had some military value like mattresses or even pots and pans, I mean things that were being produced that ended up in the German army, then you had no problem when you got stopped. But if the children were -- you could not get that if you were under 14 or 15 and didn't look strong enough to work, you wouldn't get that. People, for instance, in the professions like doctors or lawyers would not get that either -- or teachers, unless if they could do physical labor. So that the children were being kept more and more inside the houses. You didn't really see children running around the streets because fear of them being taken.

But I think my father must have known which sections, because I do remember very clearly one day I came home and I saw these big signs outside of the apartment house we

lived that this was a quarantine area. There was typhus inside, and it would be quarantine for, I don't know, 60 days. I can't remember the exact number of days.

Q: YOUR BUILDING, YOU MEAN?

A: Right. What I found out, of course, that there was just something that was done by the health department. I think my father got them to do it because the Germans were petrified of typhus. They had this things that all Jews carried -- typhus. And that all the ghettos were full of typhus. They would never enter a building that was quarantined, especially by -- again there was a medical department in the ghetto.

Q: KIND OF SMART, HUH?

A: So we got through that, and that basically got us into --

Q: AT THAT POINT YOU STAYED INSIDE?

A: Yeah. I stayed inside. And of course I certainly didn't go to school. And we had some...

Q: DID THEY HAVE A SCHOOL IN THE GHETTO?

A: I think they had -- I mean I know they did -- for high school. They did have underground schools. And they had -- I mean in a sense it was like a city. There were night clubs, supposedly -- not that I went to them. There was a symphony orchestra.

Again, it was like an assemblance of life, that was sort of recreated below the surface. It wasn't something

that you did very often. All of that went on.

Again, the people who had money, the wealthy, lived a hell of a lot better than the poor. The poor had to rely on what they could buy with ration cards that they had, which was very minimum.

These were the people who were starving. When you see pictures from most of the ghettos of children walking around dying from malnutrition on the streets of the Warsaw ghetto or the Krakow ghetto. Unfortunately, these were children --

Q: YOU SAW THAT?

A: Oh, absolutely!

Q: LIKE YOU KNOW A LOT OF STARVING --

A: What you saw is people just -- in the morning you'd see bodies if you walked in the streets. You sort of got to the point where you felt like you do in New York today or in San Francisco when you see a street person lying in the street. You might watch, at least the first time and see if you can help. But after awhile you become -- I hate to use the word -- immune. But you sort of blot it out of your mind. You don't even notice it.

Q: THESE WERE HUNGRY PEOPLE OR DEAD PEOPLE?

A: These were just people that some of them I think, malnutrition, some of them just gave up. I think some of them, women, whose children were taken who just basically gave up, didn't have enough to eat or the will to live.

Q: AND WHO DIED ON THE STREET?

A: And who died on the streets. And they would have these pushcarts, I think. I don't know who did that job, it was somebody's job.

Q: THERE'S LICE ALSO?

A: Usually two people when they would do one of those pushcarts, they go on, and somebody would pick up the body and throw it into the pushcart.

Q: THERE WAS ALSO LICE AND DISEASES?

A: I'm sure there were diseases. I think medical care, I'm sure at the beginning, was reasonably good because the percentage of Jewish doctors in Poland, at that time, was even higher than the percentage of Jewish doctors in this country.

So that medical care, and I'm sure legal care, was good too because there's most likely more Jewish lawyers. So medical care, I think, was reasonably good. The problem was getting drugs or getting anything like that. It was very difficult.

This was sort of the day-to-day kind of life. The things that sort of come to my mind that I would always see German newsreel coverage, Germans coming with newsreel cameras through the ghetto. It was as if -- they were fascinated by the way that the Jews lived. And there was a lot of filth when you have -- I'm not sure -- my guess is at one point there might have been 50,000 people in the

Krakow ghetto because they came from -- and it's hot from all the surroundings in an area that maybe could house 5,000 or 2,000 properly. So you have 20 people living in one room.

Sanitation was not the greatest because it just couldn't take care of these huge numbers of people. So you had a lot of illness. You had a lot of filth. It was a very dirty place in some parts. And the Germans were fascinated by that with a feeling that Jews carry disease.

This was something that they would bring their wives. You could see German women through the streets of Krakow. You could also see German children in Hitler youth uniforms running round. There was tremendous fascination.

I think it sort of helped them feel that what they were doing was right in a sense that these were really, as the Germans would say, Untermenschen. These were really sub-humans, and we were helping the world by getting rid of them. The world's been trying to get rid of them for 2,000 years. And here we were finally doing the job for them.

These were the kinds of things that went on.

Once 1942 came along -- the winters were really the worst because they were very cold. Heat was at a minimum. I think that's when most people that died, died during the

winter, between starvation --

Q: HOW DID YOU MANAGE DURING THE WINTER?

A: I think we managed -- I don't think I ever felt hungry, at least not in this period now. It might not have been the best food, but there was always something to eat. So I don't think I ever really felt --

Q: IN THE HEAT, TOO?

A: Always wore coats. The thing that I remember most is that I always wore. You want to stop it?

Q: SURE. IT WILL CLICK OR SOMETHING.

A: The other thing -- again, I'm trying to remember things. The Germans showed some interest in edicts, which I've always wondered why, but I think I know why.

All Jews had to give up the skiis because they needed skiis for the mountain troops. So there were lines of people with skiis. I remember standing in line with my little skiis. I could never understand why anybody would want my skiis, but they didn't make any difference between the size of the skiis.

The other thing they did is, fur coats, which women had to give up -- all Jews had to give up fur coats. I remember my mother had a mink coat that she did not want to give up. I think she waited until the last second. She had a big fight with my father because he was trying to tell her to go, and she said she didn't really want to. But she

finally did. But I think that was sort of -- even though again looking at it in perspective is totally meaningless. But to a person, if you're attached to something, it's not the question of value, it's a question, in a sense -- it takes something away from you. She did go and give up the mink coat.

(Break.)

Q: YOU'RE SAYING ABOUT YOUR MOTHER'S MINK COAT SHE GAVE UP.

A: Right. Up to that point I think she somehow believed that all of this would sort of disappear, what was happening. And I think the mink coat, that even though again it was just an item, really hit home in the sense this was not going to just disappear.

And I think at that point my father realized that, and I think he -- I found out later -- made all the arrangements. He knew the end was basically coming; that the Krakow ghetto was going to be liquidated; that most of the, if not all, of the inhabitants would be sent to Auschwitz, except for those few, the people that really worked, the young. Anybody really between the ages of 16 or 17 and 40, maybe that were strong that might end up in a work camp, which was actually in a suburb of Krakow called Pwashov. It was maybe ten miles from the Krakow ghetto.

Q: YOU WERE GOING TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT A PIANO STORY?

A: Right. We used to have -- as I said my mother was a concert pianist. We had a Beckstein piano, which was one of the greatest pianos ever made. I think maybe in 1940 we were still outside of the ghetto when a German officer who heard about that we had the piano, for some reason confiscated the piano. So there was another event in my mother's life that -- that had been in the family for a long time when she lost the piano.

So back to 1942, I think my father, at that point, realized that things were going to change very drastically quickly.

Q: COULD YOU TAKE A FEW MINUTES AND FOCUS ON YOUR FATHER AND THE UTINROT. YOU SAID AT FIRST THAT THE UTINROT WAS--

A: Well, the Utinrot --

Q: WHAT WOULD HIS ROLE --

A: I think again you have to put it in historical perspective.

Q: SURE.

A: The Jews in Poland were not -- were always sort of up to a certain point self-governing. That they had their own substructure even though you had the Polish government, you had all the departments that most governments have which would be welfare, medical, and that kind of thing. But the Jews basically had their own. So in a sense, they had their own cultural organizations;

they had their own self-help organizations. They set up every town that had a Jewish community would have a community leader; they would have a board. So they would take care of their own, in a sense.

If you want to compare it to anything, it would be the Mormon church in this country that basically do the social needs, take care of the social needs of their own congregates. If somebody's unemployed, they get help from the church. There is a group that will do that.

I think the same thing is true of Polish Jews, even those who lived in large towns, like Warsaw or Krakow. That you had a Jewish committee and you had a welfare organization. And so that all Jews -- maybe I should never say all -- but most Jews were registered with this Jewish organization. So that was in place when the Germans came to Poland.

What the Germans did is they took that structure and transferred it to the ghetto. In other words, what they said to the Jewish leaders is: Okay, you've been doing this for a very long time. You know, you have your own charities, you've got your own orphanages, you have your own schools; you take care of these things. We've, going to put you -- put a wall around this place, and we'll put you in there. We're gonna let you run your own little town, so to speak.

So, depending on the ghetto, now in the Krakow ghetto,

as it is true, I think, in the beginning in the Warsaw ghetto, the Utinrot, as the Germans called it, was really made up of the pre-war Jewish leaders. It was sort of transferred. In some other areas that were large, they had a president of the Utinrot and he decided he was a dictator. He was a very interesting character. But so the first -- and but what these people, I think, didn't realize very quickly that they were being used in a sense. What they were doing is, they were the tool, really, of German bureaucracy, a fancy bureaucracy. That in a sense they were part of the organization. That in a sense made it all right. Without them, the Germans would have a very difficult time.

In other words, if the Germans had to do all of this alone, the amount of people and bureaucrats that it would take, would be absolutely unbelievable. And it would have been a lot more difficult. Since these Jewish leaders were respected when -- End Tape 1, Side 1

Begin Tape 1, Side 2

they first came out saying that, you know, Jews were going to be resettled, and they are really going east to work in the country to work on farms and to work in factories.

My assumption is that a lot of the people who listened to that believed it because it came from very legitimate leaders that they were used to from before the war. The

Germans knew that, and they used these Utinrots in this fashion. And I think what happened as --

Q: THIS IS ALL INTERESTING BECAUSE LIKE YOU SAID, THE GENERAL CONCEPTION -- MOST PEOPLE IN THE GHETTO SAW THE UTINROT AS SORT OF A -- WHAT'S THE WORD -- NOT AS MUCH ON THEIR SIDE, BUT A CONSPIRATOR, YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN? YOU'VE HEARD IT.

A: Right. Oh, some of them were. Some of them -- not really the first ones. If you look at all of the Utinrots, the Warsaw and Krakow, Lodz, even. These were very legitimate Jewish leaders. Then as they left and a second group came in, because they either decided they weren't going to carry out some of the orders that the Germans, or the Germans felt that they weren't doing it well enough. Some of them committed suicide; some of them were shipped very quickly to extermination camps. The second wave that came in were very different.

Q: YOUR FATHER WAS THE FIRST WAVE ONLY?

A: In the first wave only. It was a very different group. Some of them were like the Jewish police. Some of the Jewish police were very decent. They looked at it as a job. It also was a way, they thought, especially when you got into '41, '42, when they knew what was happening. It could have been of surviving.

I think some of them did it for money. I think there were some very unscrupulous characters as there would be

under any situation. I think to try and judge what anybody did during the second world war, you've got to take it in terms of the context of any culture that you've got a certain percentage of people who would take advantage of a situation. If you have a fire in this country somewhere, there are people who loot. Or if there is a flood, there are always a small percentage of looters of people who are willing to go in and loot. And I think the Jews are not any different. I think
that's where the problems always arise; that the Jews are somehow more honest or different than anybody else.

They're not any different than anybody else. We have just as many thieves and murderers, I think, as any culture or any other group or religion or people. You had that during the second world war. So you have members of the Utinrot who looked at it as a way of saving their own skin or saving their family. Some of them most likely, when you got into later parts of the war, decided that it didn't really make any difference.

Q: IN YOUR FATHER'S CASE, WHAT LEAD HIM TO NO LONGER TO BE IN THE [UTINROT]?

A: Well, in my father's case, he was in the Utinrot until he was arrested by the Germans. I was just getting into that.

About October of 1942, there was a Jewish underground group in Poland, very active in Krakow. They bombed a

night club that German officers frequented. A couple of German officers were killed. A lot of wounded, but two were killed. So the Germans gave -- issued a warning that if the people who did this didn't come forward, they would take the ten most prominent Jews in the Krakow ghetto and shoot them. Of course, I found that out much later.

So one night in October in the middle of the night, actually I think it was Germans as well as a couple of Jewish policemen, came and arrested my father.

It so happened at that time, I remember I mentioned earlier, that his brother, my uncle, had stayed outside of the ghetto. But he came into that ghetto that day because he had some information for my father. He was leaving Krakow so he just wanted to say good-bye. He got caught in the same -- when my father was arrested -- he was also arrested with my father as well as eight other prominent Jews in the Krakow ghetto.

When I woke up the next morning of course I knew something was wrong. Nobody would tell me. So I decided I knew it had to be my father. I decided that I would start looking for him. So I left the ghetto, and I went just outside of Krakow, which was a labor camp. I knew, from what -- children know a lot more than adults do, that I had heard from all my travels outside of the ghetto, there was a place up on the hill where a lot of people were being shot by the Germans. So I went to this area,

and it so happened a truck pulled out.

Q: A WOODED AREA?

A: It was a wooded area. And it had -- it was hilly and wooded. I noticed a group of prisoners basically who were digging -- which I didn't know at that time -- were basically their own graves. So what they were doing is digging, each one of them, and when they finished digging there was a machine gun on the truck.

Q: WAS THIS A BIG MASSACRE?

A: Right. This was only maybe 20 people. This would go on daily. What I thought is that my father might have been taken there. He wasn't in the group. But I was sitting in a tree watching this whole thing. They opened up the back of the truck with a machine gun, and those 20 people were killed.

So at that, I realized my father wasn't there. So after the Germans left, I went back to Krakow, and I decided the only other place they could be was at the Gestapo headquarters in Krakow, which was also a jail. They tended to take people there. I spent the whole night across the street from --

Q: YOU HAD CHUTZPAH THEN?

A: Oh, yeah. I had a lot of that. Then in the morning, I saw them being led out and walking back towards the ghetto, or right outside of the ghetto where there was a square. There was also a train junction where the trains

would come in, and that's where they would load the transports out of the Krakow ghetto.

And I went in there. There were a lot of empty buildings. I hid in one of the buildings. I watched this whole thing. And my father and his group were to one side. As everybody else was loaded up, they were loaded on the last car of the train.

Of course, what I found out later, the train went to Auschwitz, which was only 60 kilometers, from Krakow not very far. At the end of the war, of course, we found that he was killed in Auschwitz.

So I went back home. Of course I think my mother knew, found that my father had put all the plans in place of how to get us out of the ghetto and where we were going to go.

So around the end of November, this must have been a month later, my mother must have gotten word from the people on the outside. These were non-Jewish Poles that were ready to take us out of the ghetto. I was to go out because they knew that I did this on a daily basis. I went over the wall, or through the wall. I would go through my usual way, and my mother and my sister would go out with a working party, out of the ghetto.

When they got to a certain corner, there was going to be a commotion. There would be an accident of a truck, a horse, and a buggy or something. And there would be a lot of screaming. This was all set up so that the Germans

would be watching this, and they could at that point --

Q: WHO WOULD BE DRIVING THE TRUCK?

A: I have no idea.

Q: ONE OF THE PEOPLE -- ONE OF THE NON-JEWS?

A: Right, the whole thing. The crowd mostly at that point had gathered on this corner trying to see what was going on. Then this group of Jews were coming along. They couldn't get through. The Germans were much more concerned with trying to clear this than with watching the column of Jews they had. They were taking them to a factory. My mother and my sister sort of -- this was all pre-planned -- very quickly disappeared. So we were out of the ghetto.

Q: REALLY? THAT'S AMAZING. IT WAS OUTSIDE THE GHETTO, SO SOME NON-JEWS CAME AND SLIPPED THEM AWAY?

A: Oh, right. Now, the person really that organized the whole thing was again another one of my father's law partners who ended up being a Supreme Court Justice in Poland who was non-Jewish. So he had set up the whole escape. And now a decision had to be made what we were going to do. Because we couldn't really stay in Krakow. We were too well-known. My mother was too well-known.

Q: CAN I ASK OF YOUR MOTHER'S CAREER AS A PIANIST: DID SHE TRAVEL?

A: No. She really didn't. When she married --

Q: DID SHE USED TO PLAY A LOT AT HOME?

A: She played a lot at home, and she gave sort of local, but she stopped. She was a graduate of the piano conservatory of music.

Q: WHO DID SHE STUDY WITH THERE; DO YOU KNOW?

A: I have no idea. And for years she didn't play actually. It's only 20 years after the war ended that she started playing again. That's a different story.

So at that point we outside of the ghetto. We had to decide what we would do. We couldn't stay in Krakow because my mother was too well-known. Somebody would notice us. So this judge who was hiding us decided first of all that both my sister and I needed some education in Catholic rituals; otherwise, we'd never survive. So they actually got a priest who spent a lot of time teaching us, especially me.

I think my sister knew. She had gone to a school before the war. It was a public school. But all public schools in Poland were Catholic schools. Either they were Jewish schools or Catholic schools. But she went to a public school which was a Catholic school so she had picked up, and she had to sit through a lot of the religious classes.

I mean Jews could go to it, but they couldn't be excused from these classes. So she knew a lot more than I did. I had never stepped foot in the church. So we went through this whole thing.

Q: HOW LONG WAS THAT?

A: Oh, maybe a month or six weeks.

Now the priest would only do this under one condition: That is if I was baptized. His feeling was, that he was willing to do this, but I had to be baptized. If I became a Catholic by being baptized, that he would be willing to help. Nobody was about to argue, niceties like that. So I was actually baptized.

Q: BY TAKING YOUR SHOWERS.

(laughter)

A: And as far as the priest was concerned, he wasn't really helping a Jew. He was really helping a Catholic. And that he could certainly do without any problems. So I went through and learned what you do in church -- the rituals, and do you take communion or whatever -- all of those things to the point where I became comfortable in walking into church without really worrying. And so at that time the decision was made that we should move to Warsaw. And the reason Warsaw is, because Warsaw was a larger city. My mother wasn't really known there. The chances of walking in the street and bumping into somebody that you knew were very slim. And again we couldn't all go together because you still had to be very careful.

Getting on a train -- we didn't know if the Germans had realized that we had managed to get out, and they did keep reasonably good records, especially of people that were as

well known as my father. Since his wife and children had disappeared that they might be looking for us.

Of course the Polish police might be looking for us too because that's another unique thing during the war and that is that all the police departments in occupied countries in Europe continued. In other words, the police powers were still there, and they actually worked with the Germans. Be it the French or the Dutch or the Belgiums, or the Poles or the Czech. The police departments remained.

They would do a lot of the work for the Germans. If the laws were passed, their feeling was as policemen that they were upholding the laws. If the law said that if you're supposed to go out and look for Jews and arrest Jews, then they would arrest Jews. Not all of them, certainly, but some who would look the other way. But basically, the Germans tended to use the existing structures --

Q: RIGHT.

A: -- available in those countries because they didn't have the manpower to suddenly create --

Q: IT WAS A WISE DECISION?

A: It was a very wise decision. So that you had to look out for, not only the Germans, you had to look out for the Polish police. But you also had to look out for a third group which were sort of the "blackmailers."

There were a lot of Polish Catholics who decided they could make a lot of money by looking for Jews. What they would do is they would blackmail the Jews. The Germans also had a bounty. I don't know what it was, but they would pay so much per Jew that was brought in.

So if you went in and said, "Hey, I think there are three Jews living next door to me." You'd get something for it. You'd make a lot more if you blackmailed.

Q: BEFORE WE GO TO WARSAW, YOU SAID IN KRAKOW YOU KNEW-- YOUR FATHER'S FRIENDS KNEW THE PEOPLE WERE BEING KILLED UP IN THE HILLS.

A: Oh, everybody knew. I think -- I'm always amazed at everybody claiming ignorance from Steven Wise to Ben-Gurion to Germans.

Q: TO POLES?

A: To Poles. It was absolutely no question that unless you were stupid to the point where you couldn't count, you didn't know the difference between two and five or 1,000 and 25,000, that you knew something happened. In other words, people didn't disappear. Every farmer that lived around some of these areas, like the area that I saw people being shot, knew that there were bodies there. And most -- kids knew because they would play in the hills.

Q: PEOPLE OF KRAKOW ACTUALLY KNEW THAT PEOPLE WERE BEING KILLED?

A: Without any question. I think Auschwitz, as I said,

was 40 miles, in 1942, was absolutely 40 miles away. There was no question that people were disappearing.

Q: DON'T SOME POLES CLAIM THAT THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE GOING TO CAMPS AND DIDN'T REALIZE THAT THEY WERE ACTUALLY DEATH CAMPS?

A: Well, early during the war I think that might have been true. I think 1942-1943 absolutely not. I think by middle of 1942 you'd have to be awfully stupid or totally ignorant, or on the other hand I think again that you have got to take the reality of life in Poland during the war. It was terrible for the Jews, but it wasn't that great for the non-Jews.

Food wasn't plentiful. There were shortages. There were medical shortages. Clothing wasn't available. Men were being picked up for forced labor in Germany. The Poles, especially in the cities, suffered. I think somehow their concern was for survival. I think everybody's concern in that kind of a situation is for individual survival. I think worrying about a whole or group was something that was a luxury that most people didn't do. You spent every waking hour trying to figure out, "Am I going to survive until tomorrow?" Even if you were non-Jewish, because if you were young and healthy, you would get picked up in the street. The next day you would be in Germany working in a factory.

There wasn't the luxury that we have today that we can

worry about -- oil spills in Alaska, fish and wildlife dying and spend tremendous amount of time, money, and effort and help in doing that. You can do that under certain circumstances. And the circumstances where your own life is in jeopardy, you're not going to worry about things outside of your own sphere.

Certainly not that Poles are blameless, but I think again the Poles and the Jews sort of lived side by side in Poland. They never lived together accept for a very small minority.

Q: HAVE YOU SEEN THE MOVIE "SHOAH"?

A: Yes.

Q: WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THAT?

A: Well, I didn't really like "Shoah" I have tremendous -- again this going back to my original statement. I think, trying to do something like "Shoah" in nine hours, without a historical context and without really understanding the history of Jews in Poland for a thousand years, paints a very, very dim picture.

When you see the peasants waving and doing this kind of thing as you did in "Shoah" to the passengers in some of those trains, trying to mark them so they are going to die, looks, when you see that, you say, "Oh, my God, how can somebody do that?"

If you put it in perspective, you have a peasant that most likely had at the most a second or third grade

education, the greatest influence on that person's life was the local priest. That person grew up being told by the priest that the Jews crucified Christ; that the Jews were guilty of killing Christ; that the Jews were guilty of basically the greatest crime that Christianity ever had. Where as a peasant, you borrowed your money from a local Jewish money lender, the Jew was the one who collected taxes on your land for the person that owned the land.

Jews were viewed very negative by peasants. To suddenly see these Jews going to their death was to them, was something they had always been taught; that the Jews were going to die for their sins. And here the Germans were doing it for them. So you've got to put it in that kind of perspective.

On the other hand, most Jews in Poland never made the attempt to assimilate, never made the attempt to really become part of Poland, of Polish culture. They kept, especially in the smaller towns, they kept to themselves. Most of them didn't even speak Polish, where if they did, not very well.

So they wore different kind of clothing. It was like a separate, two societies within one. They tolerated each other, but there was tremendous hatred on both sides. It just wasn't one-sided.

On the other hand, you have Jews in Poland that became

very assimilated. There were the Jewish generals in the Polish army. The one thing that Poland never did, it didn't stop Jews from attending their military academies. There were Jewish politicians, but that was a very small minority. So that when they realized what was happening to the Jews, what the Germans were doing, I think most Poles were very ambivalent because on the one hand, they hated the Germans. On the other hand, they looked -- they saw that the Germans were getting rid of what they considered "their" Jews. They would always call the Jews "their" Jews. The problem. So they looked the other way. This whole kind of culture also created these blackmailers.

Q: SO YOU WERE ON YOUR WAY TO POLAND?

A: That's right. You had to be very careful. So what happened is, we all split up. My mother went alone. My sister went with, this judge had two sons who were in their 20s at that time. One took my sister, and the other son took me. We all went on different trains. We met in Warsaw.

My mother -- this was early 1943 because I spent Christmas of 1942 -- that was very vivid. That was the first time that I really spent Christmas in the church and went to church. It's early 1943. We went from Krakow to Warsaw. My mother, I don't know how she did it, but she got an apartment. She didn't work. Again, we had, I

don't know how she did it, but she managed to take with her a lot of diamonds and jewelry and, I think, a lot of money because without money we couldn't have done things that we did. But she would leave in the morning and come back in the evening so that the neighbors wouldn't think that she didn't work because if you did that, they would wonder how she would support herself, and somebody would get the idea that we might have been Jews.

Q: YOU DIDN'T LOOK JEWISH?

A: No. I was blonde until I was about eleven years old.

Talking about looking Jewish, one of the things when this judge and this priest teaching me, one of the things that came out which I always found very interesting is that they were trying to tell me that one of the ways that, one of many ways, that somebody in the street could realize that you were Jewish is that for some reason--and they found that out from stories about Jews being caught in the street -- Jews tended to walk looking down. This was during the war, not looking up. Actually even that goes back to before the war when they never looked a non-Jew straight in the eye. In other words, they would not make eye contact.

It might really go back to Hasidic Jews, for instance. When they walk by a woman, they will never make eye contact. They would always look down. The idea was, you had something to hide. And that you would walk -- I

remember them trying to tell me, when you walk in the street and every time you see somebody, you look them straight in the eye. Walk straight, direct. Don't put your head down. Don't try and evade the gaze if they're looking at you.

Q: DID YOU SUDDENLY NOTICE THAT YOU HAD BEEN LOOKING DOWN?

A: No. But a few months ago, I forget the name of the book, but somebody wrote -- I guess it was an autobiography. They were living on false papers. That came out that a friend of theirs got caught in Warsaw because they walked by somebody and looked down instead of looking straight at them. It's very minor but a very interesting thing.

When we got to Warsaw, and my mother would leave us in the morning, she would come back around 5:00 or 6:00 so the neighbors would think she went to work. And we were given specific instructions that if she didn't show up-- the curfew I think was 9:00 and you couldn't be out after 9:00 -- where there was a name and an address that we had to go to if something happened to her and she didn't make it back by let's say 7:00.

One day -- that's why the blackmailers became so important -- we were walking, my mother and my sister and I, were walking down the street in Warsaw and these two men, in a sense, grabbed us into a doorway and started

questioning us if we were Jewish. We very clearly said, "no." But unfortunately the third thing was, -- as I said there were three things -- the other third was, I said there were three things. The other thing was circumcision. The most -- the only people who were circumcised in Europe were Jews and the British Royal Family, for some reason. Other than that, circumcision among non-Jews was I think zero. So that one of the ways that you could tell very quickly if somebody was Jewish, if he was a male, if he was circumcised.

So they pulled my pants down and of course noticed that I was circumcised. At that point, my mother paid them off and they let us go. But my mother was getting very worried. This was early in 1943. They might have followed us or whatever.

One day, maybe three days later, my mother didn't show up at 7:00 so we had our plans. So my sister and I left and went to this address, another old friend, another judge, actually, an old friend of my father's. We went there and spent the night.

The next morning my mother showed up. What had happened is, again she was followed by the same two men. They had seen her in the street and told her they had her children. In other words, they had gotten me and my sister, and if she didn't pay them, they would turn us over to the Germans. That wasn't really true, but they

noticed her walking alone. So she did. She actually paid the blackmail. They let her go, and she just managed to get back to the apartment before curfew. At that point, of course, she didn't know where we were, if they were really telling the truth.

So the next morning the only thing she could do is go to this judge, the address that we had, and she found us. This was very early in 1943, around maybe February or March. At that point, she decided we had to do something. We decided again that we would go back to -- what I mentioned before -- one of my father's law partners.

My godfather was his uncle, my mother's youngest brother. He was one of the Bundist leaders before the war, Dr. Leon Feiner, and ended up in Warsaw, when the war started. He actually came back from the Soviet Union. All the Bundist leaders went to Moscow in 1939. They were shot. All of them were shot by Stalin. But my uncle decided after a few days in Moscow that he was going back to Poland. So he ended up back in Warsaw.

He became the president of a combined Jewish organization that really took in the Bundists, Zionists. This was the umbrella organization that organized the ghetto uprising. My mother decided she had to get in touch with them because she felt we were in trouble; that these two blackmailers had found us. This would only be the beginning. So she placed -- she knew how to get in

touch with him. His name during the war, -- he used an assumed name, -- was Mikaliv Berosofski. There was an underground newspaper which was published by the Polish underground, the A.K. They had planned all of this before.

She placed an ad. I think what it said is Mikali, and they had a contact -- this was all first names -- and to contact this judge, whom he also knew. And he did. He came to see us.

This judge couldn't really -- he was a retired judge-- he couldn't really let us stay much longer, and at this point we didn't know what to do. So he said what we'll do is, we'll have to take you into the Warsaw ghetto for a few days, and then we'll try and figure out what we're going to do.

So we actually voluntarily went into the Warsaw ghetto, not through the main gate, but he went through -- if you remember "Shoah," if you saw "Shoah" there was a scene in -- well not a scene -- where, what's his name.

Q: NATAL, POLISH GUY, HE WORKED WITH THE UNDERGROUND?

A: No. This was --

Q: WHERE WAS THAT?

A: This was Mikali Berosofski. He was a professor at Georgetown University who wrote a book called <u>The Secret State.</u>

Q: IT'S FUNNY, I ACTUALLY MET HIM.

A: Okay. I've met him, too. He talked about this Polish-Jewish Bundist who took him to the ghetto, who looked like him, but that was my uncle. We went in the same way that he went in.

Q: THE SAME ANGLE THAT THEY SHOWED IN THE PICTURE?

A: Right, that's right. We went in. And so we went into the ghetto and he put us up in this apartment with other people and then tried to plan what was going to happen to us.

So what they decided to do -- and actually my father had really done this is that we -- up to that point we had been living on Polish papers that showed us as being Polish Catholics. They were perfect papers. But what my father managed to get in 1939 when he was in the Nabo is when the Russians came in, the Russians arrested most Germans, most of the ethnic, a lot of ethnic Germans. Somehow they arrested an ethnic German family that had two children about the same age as me and my sister, and they shipped them off to Siberia. With my father's connections, he managed to get their papers from the Russians, which included all of their birth certificates. And they disappeared. And he had brought them back, and my mother had them.

So the decision was made that we were going to start using -- it was time to go on these other papers.

Q: YOU DIDN'T WANT TO?

A: Well, we'll get to that in a minute. So we, after a few days, we left the Warsaw ghetto. Now I didn't -- I did walk around a little bit. This was just before the Warsaw ghetto uprising.

Q: IN 1942?

A: This was '43. This was like March of 1943, the Warsaw ghetto uprising was April 19th.

The filth, we talked about the bodies in the Krakow ghetto. They were all over the place in the Warsaw ghetto. And again, pushcarts, every morning they would load up. I could see it from the window of the apartment we were staying in. But we, within a few days, we went out the same way we came in. We found another apartment.

At that point, my mother decided we would wait a little while before we tried to leave Poland. The decision was made that we should leave Poland and go to Germany because my uncle felt that the Germans would never believe that a Polish-Jewish family could actually live in Germany as Germans and get away with it. They weren't looking for Jews in Germany.

As we waited, the Warsaw ghetto uprising began. And that changed the whole thing because a lot of Jews had gotten out, especially through the sewers. The Germans were spending a lot more time looking for Jews in Warsaw proper. So my mother felt that we had to do something very drastic, but she was afraid to take me into Germany.

One of the reasons, of course, was that I was circumcised. And one of the things the Germans did when you crossed the border from Poland into Austria, which was then part of Germany, they would disinfect everybody. So women went into one room, it didn't make any difference if you were a German or what your nationality was, but they had this great fear of infection. Not only Jews carried typhoid, but all these terrible Slavs were Untermenschen, too. They carried diseases. Of course, they'd notice that I was circumcised.

So, again she knew this woman, who didn't have any children who lived with her husband, who she thought might be a good person to contact to see if she would be willing to hide me. In other words, my mother would leave me in Warsaw and then go with my sister to Germany. Then the woman for a price certainly -- she lived with her husband -- agreed. She was also hiding another Jewish child about my age, maybe six months older. It was a girl. She decided she would take me.

Then my mother did another thing. What she wanted to do is, she only wanted to leave me for a little while and then come back for me. She decided what had to be done is that I had to be decircumcised. So they found a surgeon-- now remember this is in the middle of a war -- a Polish surgeon, who for a price was willing to do some plastic surgery, most likely which he never did before.

At that point, my mother, she set up the whole thing. She decided she had to leave Warsaw. The operation hadn't happened yet. She went to the Gestapo headquarters in Warsaw and showed her papers that she was ethnic German, and she used to live in the Russian, and she now found herself in Warsaw with two children. She wanted to go back to Germany to live among her own people, but her son was sick and she would have to leave her son behind. But she wanted to leave with the daughter and go to Germany. No problem, they gave her the right papers and she went to Stuttgart with my sister.

She also left this, they had a thing going with the woman that was hiding me and that is that if there were any problems, the woman was supposed to send my mother a telegram saying that I got sicker and she had to come back to Warsaw as soon as possible.

The operation took place. Unfortunately, they couldn't -- this was in an apartment house, they couldn't use ether because the -- you could smell that. They didn't have local anesthesia at that time. But, instead of ether what they used is pillows over my head.

There was a nurse and a doctor and a surgeon. It looked like it was successful. I was still totally bandaged. The nurse started blackmailing the woman that was hiding me because she knew that I was Jewish.

At that point, this woman sent a telegram to my mother

saying that precoded thing saying that your son is sick again, that I have to come back to Warsaw. So my mother again -- for anybody to travel, even Germans, during the war, especially between Germany and Poland, you had to get the police or Gestapo approval. She went to the local Gestapo and said, look, when I first came I did say that-- and they had it in writing that she had left a 10-year-old son behind -- and I've got to go back. So they let her go back. It's not that far. She got on the train and went to Warsaw.

The nurse was still blackmailing and so there was a problem. I'm not sure what happened. All I know is that my mother made contact with my uncle again, and the nurse never bothered the woman again.

But she had to get me out of -- at that point she couldn't come back empty-handed to get me out of Poland. I was still bandaged. It was very shortly after the operation. She decided she was going to take a chance.

Q. THEY USED NO ANESTHESIA AT ALL THEN?

A: Uh-huh. She somehow managed to get a German doctor in Warsaw to claim that I had chicken pox all over. They bandaged me. When I got to the border, I shouldn't be disinfected, and that worked. So we got to Vienna.

Q: THAT MUST HAVE BEEN A BIG RISK, YOU REMEMBER THAT PRETTY WELL?

A: Absolutely. From Vienna we went to this -- they

thought my mother had moved to this little town outside of Nuremburg where she worked in a factory. Actually my sister did too. My sister was five years older, but her papers showed her seven or eight years older than me so that would have made her about 17. She was old enough to work. She looked old enough for her age.

So they both worked, but they decided that I had to go to school. And I was a German. So I actually ended up enrolling in the local --

Q: YOU ALREADY KNEW GERMAN?

A: Oh, yeah. Remember I had a German governess. I was fluent in German. In fact, it was perfect there, I was an ethnic German living in Poland, born in Poland.

Q: SO THAT WORKED OUT WELL?

A: That worked out very well.

Q: YOUR MOTHER KNEW GERMAN ALSO?

A: Right. She went to school in Vienna. So when I went to school, one of the things I had to do was join the Hitler Youth because there was no way you could get out of this.

So, in a sense, I'm not sure how many Jews were in a Hitler Youth, but I'm not sure there were many. So I joined the Hitler Youth and got the uniform.

We used to have meetings. One of the things they kept showing, that's why I talked about the newsreels in the ghetto, is they kept showing these newsreels that were

taken in, especially in the Warsaw ghetto, to these children on the health hazard of the Jews. This is the way they live. Of course they never told them they were forced to live that way. But in a sense, that this is the way they have always lived. So this was like 1943. This was like the summer of 1943, the fall of 1943. We lived in a little town outside of Nuremburg.

A couple of things happened. First of all, my operation really didn't work. It got me through successful enough to get me through the border, but it really didn't take. I was still circumcised. I had to be very careful, going to school.

Now to most Germans, Poles would be in tuned to that, but most Germans in a small town, children at least, would have absolutely no idea about somebody being circumcised. I don't think that was a big topic of conversation. But when I went to the bathroom and that kind of thing, I had to be very careful.

One day, it was in the winter, I walked -- I don't know why I was carrying this -- but I was carrying some hot water in a pan and I slipped, and I really got scalded, and I still have a scar over here. I went to the doctor. The problem was that he wanted me to undress. I started crying, and he wanted to know why. I don't know why I did that. My mother explained that I was very shy. He somehow avoided -- he had no reason not to -- so I didn't

really have to totally, I just took my pants off. He fixed up my leg.

I also had, my sister always keeps on reminding me, a picture of Hitler over my head. So I actually forced him -- I played this role very well. When I came into the-- they had to give the Heil Hitler salute. I would say prayers every night to the picture of Hitler. But my mother decided that the war --it was the end of 1943 was going -- the Germans were beginning to lose the war.

Q: YOU HAD TO SAY PRAYERS YOU MEAN WITH YOUR HITLER FRIENDS?

A: No, by myself before I went to bed. I would always say a prayer to Hitler. Hitler was really the head, not only of the country, but the religion. It was a way of life.

Q: YOU WERE ALREADY WITH YOUR OWN FAMILY THOUGH?

A: Right. But I played this totally. It's the only way you could really do that. In other words, I mean I knew I was a Jew, but somehow I blotted that out of my mind. So this was just -- I was playing a role -- and I was believing the role. Otherwise, you couldn't really play it very well.

Then my mother decided that we were getting too comfortable, and she was getting a little worried that maybe I might say the wrong thing or something might happen. Maybe we ought to see if she could get a job

closer to the Swiss border, go into Austria. So she did. We managed to -- she got a job in an Austrian hotel in the Grossglacta Mountains, which is right on the Swiss-Italian border. It's about three miles from the Swiss border. The hotel had been turned into a restaurant for high-ranking German officers. So we moved to this, we actually lived in the hotel. The plan was that we were going to cross into Switzerland.

Begin Tape 2, Side 1

Unfortunately, about a week after we got there, a whole Jewish family had been caught at the border, and they were brought into this little village that this hotel was part of and shot in the square. So my mother decided it was too risky; that we would try and wait the end of the war out where we were.

Actually I became very friendly with some of the officers that were staying in this rest home, this hotel. They had jeeps. They would take me up to the border maybe 20 feet away from Switzerland, three or four times looking down into a valley on the other side.

Q: WERE THESE SOLDIERS WHO HAD BEEN ON THE FRONT?

A: These were soldiers that were wounded that came out of a hospital. These were high-ranking officers who then needed two or three months to rest before they went back.

Q: DID YOU HEAR -- IT MUST HAVE BEEN INTERESTING.

A: Yeah. And so --

Q: THE LAST WE LEFT YOU, YOU WERE BY THE SWISS BORDER MOUNTAINS WITH --

A: Right. As my mother felt that the war was really-- the Germans were losing the war; and the war was beginning -- should come to an end reasonably soon. Basically where we were living even in the mountains, the planes, you could see the allies, or the Americans' planes flying to West Germany. Bombers flew right over from Italy, the area where we were.

She decided we ought to start moving back East. So when the war ended, we would be as close to Poland as possible. Somehow she managed to convince again the local Gestapo that she wanted to move east, go to Czechoslovakia. And she managed to get permission.

We moved to this late in 1944 to this small town outside Prague, about 20 miles outside of Prague. I have no idea why she picked that. She got a job in a factory, and my sister had a job in a factory. I still continued to go to school and belong to the Hitler Youth.

There were a lot of Germans in this town. Remember Czechoslovakia was annexed to Germany. So as far as Germans were concerned, this was Germany. We were there until early 1945. The Russian army came in.

The things I remember about that is that all the

Germans disappeared. In other words, they all -- went-- flew -- started running away to West Germany because they were afraid of the Russians. We stayed behind.

I remember the day the Russians came in. A colonel in the Russian army with three soldiers came to our apartment, and basically they came to arrest us because we were pointed out by the local Czech population that we were Germans, and I'm standing in my Hitler Youth uniform.

The colonel came in. My mother had always hidden something, and I'm not -- and I never asked her, about a piece of paper to show that we were Jews, who we really were. It so happened that the Russian colonel was Jewish, and she convinced him. So he sort of took us under his care. Really what we wanted to do was to go back to Krakow which wasn't that far away, only a few hours by train.

So he managed to get -- we're now dealing with the Russian army -- all the papers that we needed. And we went to Prague first. From Prague we took a train which took like 48 hours because we had to change trains. But we finally ended up in Krakow which was I think within a few weeks of its liberation by the Germans.

Q: YOU HAD BEEN LIBERTED A FEW WEEKS BEFORE?

A: Right.

Q: YOU HAD BEEN AWAY AT THAT POINT FOR ALMOST --

A: At that point we had been away from November of '42,

and this was, my guess this had to be like April of '45, somewhere around in there.

Q: TWO AND A HALF YEARS?

A: Two and a half years, right.

Q: WHAT DID IT SEEM LIKE WHEN YOU GOT BACK?

A: Krakow was not touched. Krakow is an old medieval town. It used to be the old capital of Poland when Poland had kings. It also was the headquarters of the German government in Poland. For some reason, the war missed it in terms of destruction. Nothing was destroyed in Krakow, not even the ghetto. In other words, it didn't go through the kind of destruction that the Warsaw ghetto did. So nothing had changed.

Q: PHYSICALLY?

A: Physically nothing had changed. So we ended up going back to our own apartment.

Q: NO ONE ELSE HAD MOVED IN THERE?

A: Yes. The -- what do you call them? We had a janitor in the building that took care of the building for us. He decided that since all the Jews were dead, they were gone he moved into our apartment. But, of course, we got rid of him very quickly. And this judge that had helped us, a friend of my father's, had some of our furniture that he kept during the war. So we got some of our furniture back. Basically, for all intents and purposes, that's how the war ended.

Q: SO YOU WERE BACK? I DO HAVE SOME OTHER QUESTIONS.

A: Sure. Go ahead. Yeah, we were back, not for very long.

Q: CAN YOU TELL ME -- THIS IS ALMOST MAYBE MORE FOR MY CURIOSITY -- SO YOU WERE IN THE HITLER YOUTH FOR A PERIOD OF MONTHS AT LEAST, YOU KNOW?

A: Well, in the Hitler Youth most likely from late fall, winter of 1943, for about two years.

Q: FOR ALMOST TWO YEARS?

A: Well, a year and a half, right '43 to let's say early '45 right.

Q: HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE IT, DID THEY KIND OF --

A: I was once interviewed on television some years ago before the movie "Holocaust" was shown, and I was asked that. I thought I'd get myself into trouble. But basically, it was like the boyscouts with some added on. It sort of -- I think if you put a uniform on a 10-year-old and tell him he belongs to a great race and he's going to take over the world -- it was a paramilitary political organization that had some of the scouting benefits, like camping and doing --

Q: GETTING READY FOR INNOCENT FUN STUFF?

A: Right. The rest of it was in a sense -- well, you could classify it as brainwashing.

Q: WHAT WAS THAT LIKE? YOU HAD UNIQUE -- YOU WERE DIFFERENT AND THEY DIDN'T KNOW IT. YOU KNEW WHAT JEWS

WERE, AND YOU KNEW WHAT WAS ACTUALLY GOING ON IN POLAND, BUT THE PEOPLE YOU WERE WITH --

A: But the Jews were only a portion of the thing. The thing is, of course, it was how great the German race was, the Aryan race were going to take over the world. They were going to get rid of all of these Slavs and undesirable like gypsies and Jews.

Q: AND HOMOSEXUALS?

A: That's right. And we were going to run the world. Then we were going to use all these undesirables, like Slavs, to work for us. In other words, they were going to do manual labor, and we were going to be the great future race and Christianity got involved with that, that in a sense we were doing this for the world, for Christianity. And it was very anti-Communist, which was the other thing.

Q: HOW DID THEY DO THE BRAINWASHING?

A: Well, I looked at it as brainwashing in terms of, maybe not classical brainwashing, but when you take kids and tell them over and over again that they are better than somebody else and they're going to run the world. You're going to believe it.

Q: WHAT ABOUT YOUR GRANDFATHER AND OTHER RELATIVES, OTHER THAN YOUR AUNT AND UNCLE?

A: Well, my grandfather had died before the war. My grandmother had died in a Krakow ghetto. She got sick and died. She was old. So basically, she wasn't killed by

the Germans. On my mother's side, my grandparents might have actually lived in Prague. They were killed by the Germans, and I think my mother's brother. But in terms of very close family --

Q: YOUR MOTHER'S BROTHER, DID HE ACTUALLY FIGHT IN THE UPRISING?

A: No. He died in Buchenwald. He was in a concentration camp. But as far as my close relatives: my sister survived, my mother survived, my father's brother's son and his wife survived.

Q: WHEN YOU WERE, SAY ON DAYS WHEN YOU HAD TO SPEND ALL DAY IN AN APARTMENT BECAUSE YOU WEREN'T ABLE TO GO OUT, HOW DID YOU TYPICALLY SPEND THE DAY WITH YOUR SISTER? IT SEEMED LIKE MANY, MANY DAYS THAT YOU WOULD HAVE HAD TO --

A: Oh, absolutely. I think I read. I learned how to read without going to school. We just sat very quietly because we couldn't make any noise because we wanted the neighbors to feel that we had gone to school. In other words, you didn't want to -- and then when I was being hidden by this couple, they had this other Jewish girl they were hiding, they had built this false wall. You couldn't stand up. And basically you slept -- if anybody came to the door, we would very quickly --

Q: WHICH PLACE WAS THAT?

A: This was in Warsaw. This was for six months when my mother went to Germany, and I stayed behind.

Q: IT WASN'T THAT LONG --

A: So that we had to be very quiet. You couldn't really walk when the couple left the apartment. We couldn't really walk because somebody could hear us. So we had to be very careful. The amazing thing is, that I never knew who this girl was. I still don't know. I'm sure she's alive.

Q: YOU MEAN THE OTHER JEWISH GIRL?

A: The other Jewish girl who was being hidden. She had somehow escaped from the Warsaw ghetto. The only thing I knew, she came from an extremely wealthy politically active family, because the reason she was being hidden by this couple, they thought that after the war they would get a lot of money for her. All that we managed to find out -- I never knew her last name.

Q: DID YOU KNOW HER, THOUGH?

A: Oh, absolutely. We slept for six months in the same bed.

Q: WAS SHE OLDER?

A: She was about a year older.

Q: THAT MUST HAVE BEEN NICE.

A: So that, the only thing I knew is that somehow somebody flew in a plane to Warsaw and kidnapped her in 1945 and flew her out.

Q: REALLY?

A: So whoever her family was, they made contact -- this

couple made contact with them. I think she either had family either in England or in America. Whoever they were, somehow managed to get to Warsaw.

Q: FLEW INTO WARSAW, KIDNAPPED HER --

A: Kidnapped her, flew out of Warsaw.

Q: IT MUST HAVE BEEN FUN TO HAVE HER THERE?

A: But I have no idea. I think if I ever do anything, I'd love to find out who she is. I'm sure she's got to be, what, I'm 54, she'd be about 55. I'm reasonably sure she's got to be alive somewhere. But I have never really thought how to do that.

Q: HAVE YOU EVER GONE TO ANY -- THIS SORT OF GETS INTO PRESENT DAY THINGS IN YOUR VIEWS, BUT DO YOU EVER GO TO THOSE REUNIONS?

A: No. There is a reunion actually next month of survivors of the Krakow ghetto in Tel Aviv next month. No, I don't go to those.

Q: WHY IS THAT?

A: Again, because of what I said earlier. I think it-- how would I put this, without insulting anybody?

Q: DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. DO YOU WANT ME TO TURN OFF THE TAPE?

A: Are we on tape? Yes. Let's stop the tape.

But, anyway, my feeling about the people like Elie Wiesel, especially, I think that unfortunately -- and I've read everything he's written, I think Primo Levi of

writers is most likely the only one that comes close, that I can
at least read and at least feel some semblance of collectivity, so to speak.

That's why he committed suicide because I think he finally came to a certain conclusion about what had happened. I don't really think he could cope with it. He couldn't write about it. I think that people like Elie Wiesel who try to couch everything in philosophical terms who was a commando, in other words, he in Auschwitz pulled the bodies out and threw them into the crematorium. When then overfilled the crematorium, they burnt them. I have a tremendous problem with it.

Q: DOES HE SAY THAT HE ACTUALLY DID THAT?

A: I'm not sure.

Q: I THINK I HEARD IT A FEW TIMES.

A: The thing is, it's easy to sit here in 1989 and talk about what happened nearly 50 years ago, the human zest for survival, what people are willing to do. I'm not judging anybody. I think these people survived. If they hadn't done that, they most likely wouldn't have survived. And they have to live with themselves. I don't have to live with them. They have to live with their memories.

I think as long as you remain human, there's a certain point that you won't go beyond. In other words, certain deeds, certain things, like in "Shoah's" the barber as I

said before, shaving the heads of people as they were being pushed into --

Q: HIS ONLY OTHER OPTION BASICALLY WAS SUICIDE --

A: His only other option was to say, no, and become one of the one's going into the gas chamber. Then, they'd find another barber to do the work. He might say no, and then they'd find another barber.

But the thing is that to the Germans when they viewed that, here are Jews doing this to Jews, you see in a sense I think absolved them. In other words, the guards in Auschwitz who looked at Jews pushing other Jews into gas chambers, of in a sense, helping them to go in, shaving the head. They could stand there and say look, it's not us doing it to them. It's Jews doing it to Jews. They're willingly doing this. It wasn't really willingly. But from a physiological point of view, it sort of absolved them of the guilt.

In many trials that was brought up by concentration camp guards of in a sense, sure but look at all the Jews. They all went willingly. They were helped by other Jews.

Q: I HAVE TROUBLE UNDERSTANDING YOUR RESENTMENT TOWARDS THOSE WHO REALLY HAD NO OTHER OPTION BUT SUICIDE. I COULD SEE --

A: It's not the option of suicide. The option was, that I think if most of the people who helped in this machinery

of death or whatever you want to call it says no, we won't do it, it would have come to a stop, not totally, but it could not have functioned. It's like a production line. You need certain ingredients, certain people to sit on it to do certain things. If one person stops, the whole production line stops.

I think what would have happened is, I think that Eichmann and his henchmen would have had to rethink a better way to destroy the Jews because the Germans didn't have the numbers of people, plus they couldn't do that. I mean they literally could not do that. And Jews couldn't do it for very long. Basically all these jobs, it was tremendous turnover. You only did that for so long and then you were put into the gas chamber. So it wasn't as if these people didn't know that they're gonna end up there anyway. Some were lucky and they managed to survive.

Why they did that? Survival is one thing. You always want to survive another day or another two days because you think maybe something would happen. Maybe I really will survive, or maybe you don't even think about it. But I think it's -- so in terms of going to these meetings, I've never been to one. I feel very uncomfortable with most of the survivors I know because of that, because they have tremendous guilt.

Q: WHAT ABOUT IF YOU MEET A SURVIVOR WHO DIDN'T CROSS

THAT LINE OF, SAY RESPECTABILITY, HAVE YOU MET THOSE PEOPLE?

A: Well, I don't think I have. I think, first of all, very few people, I don't go around talking about this. The people that I know who are survivors have no idea that I have lived through the war in Poland. We never really talk about it.

Q: THE PEOPLE THAT YOU KNOW WHO ARE SURVIVORS?

A: Yeah, the few that I might know.

Q: THEY DON'T KNOW --

A: No, not really. I never really sit down and talk with anybody else that has survived, so I didn't go. I mean I thought about when they had that big gathering in Jerusalem a few years ago.

Q: WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED TO SEE SOME OF THESE PEOPLE THAT YOU KNEW IN THE GHETTO, CHILDREN, FRIENDS OF YOUR PARENTS?

A: I don't know. I'm still as I said, May 1st, there is this convention -- don't know how they got my name-- because I'm not -- but I got this thing in the mail a couple of months ago.

I don't know. And I've really thought about it. I'm not -- maybe at the last minute. But it's in about four weeks.

Q: THIS IS ANOTHER SIDE, SORT OF. HOW IS IT THAT YOU KNOW I SEE YOU LOOK AROUND, YOU HAVE DALI POSTER YOU HAVE

IN JERUSALEM AND OTHER --

A: Well, as you gathered from what I said in the beginning, I'm certainly not a Zionist. On the other hand, when the war ended -- right, well I was back in Poland in '45, but in '46 I ended up, we all ended up in England, in London.

At that time, shortly thereafter, we talked about, when the state of Israel started, I thought that -- not as a Zionist but I felt that I in a sense should do, since I did manage to survive, and I think in terms of my generation of children, a very small minority survived. Maybe one per cent of Polish children who were roughly the same age as I was. I thought I really owed something for doing that.

So I actually went to Israel when I became 18 because I couldn't go before because my family wouldn't let me go again. None of them were Zionists.

Q: YOU LIVED IN ENGLAND FROM '46 TO '53?

A: Right. I went to Israel and joined the Israeli army for about three years. I was there through '56 with the Zion campaign, not with any intent of staying in Israel because I have big problems with Israel. Then I left. I thought I paid my debt.

I had been back quite a few times so I did pick up some of these things, behind you, too. But that's strictly art. I don't hide the fact that I'm a Jew. I have some

good friends in Israel. But as far as --

Q: THIS IS JUST A POSSIBILITY, BUT DID IT FEEL WEIRD, I DON'T WANT TO USE THE WORD GUILT, HOW DID YOU FEEL THAT YOU WERE FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO SURVIVE AND ALL THESE OTHER PEOPLE YOUR AGE HADN'T? IT'S NOT NECESSARILY A QUESTION, YOU DON'T HAVE TO ANSWER THAT.

A: Did I feel guilty of surviving?

Q: YEAH, IT'S NOT A QUESTION THAT MAYBE I'M ALLOWED TO ASK.

A: No. I never felt guilty of surviving. What I've always felt is, that a lot more could have. I have always had problems with the fact that Jews, in a sense, didn't start fighting a lot earlier than they did in the Warsaw ghetto. This is where I have my big problems with Eli Wiesel and that is this philosophical, historical, cultural thing that this is another thing that we've lived through, many of these kinds of things, in the last 2,000 years. God would take care of us in the end.

I think the best story, and actually I've heard him tell this story, in Auschwitz a group of rabbis decided to put God on trial. They sat around and put God on trial, and they voted and found him guilty because of what was happening in the sense that he wasn't helping his own people. Right after they found him guilty, one of the rabbis got up and said gentlemen, let's pray.

I think that is the crux of the whole problem. That is

that somehow we felt that even though God was guilty supposedly of, in a sense looking the other way. And God could be the world. It doesn't have to be God, it's really the world is God. Somehow if we pray, somehow we're going to survive.

In all this slaughter, in all this murder, and all this mayhem, there was something good. What it is, I don't know. But that's Elie Wiesel. I think what we have to do is face the reality that, in a sense, and that's why I said, I hate the word "holocaust" because it's instantaneous combustion. This was a well-planned, well-oiled organization. It was planned to get rid of European Jewry. And with, in a sense, tacit agreement, like the gamblers that of the American Jewry or its leadership.

For some reason, again, it goes back to American-Jewish history, and that is you had this split in American-Jewish history. And from 1939, 1940, where you had the German Jews that came over earlier who felt themselves superior to the Eastern European Jews.

The American Jewish Committee was, for instance, a German Jewish organization that wouldn't allow non-German Jews as members.

The president, right at that time, in 1939, of the American Jewish Committee, was one of the Salzberger's, who was the owners of the New York Times.

If you look at the New York Times and go through, take

the years 1939, 1940 to 1945 and see how many headlines there were in the New York Times that talked about Jews in Europe. And if you look through that and try and see-- look at April 19th, '43 -- and see what page the story about the Warsaw ghetto uprising happened to be put.

The fact was it might have been done without any malice. But it certainly was done that the German-Jewish leadership in this country felt that if you get rid of Polish Jews, you'd get rid of a problem of anti-semitism in this country. You wouldn't have this vast numbers that could actually emigrate to America as they did and pollute their standing. So that's why in 1944 when Eichmann tried to make the deal about Hungarian Jews that if enough money was raised, the American Jewish leadership couldn't come up with $10 million which was very, very interesting.

There were two M series that Eichmann sent to Hungarian Jews that actually was supposed to go to Palestine and talk to the Jews there and were arrested by the English. The way they were arrested is because the Jewish agency actually leaked that information to the English and made sure that they got arrested.

So, and then you've got the Bucklau Conference of 1943, which is very interesting where Ben-Gurion managed to turn around everybody and claim that we don't want to spend any money on rescuing European Jewry. Let's keep all the money to create the state of Israel after the war.

You only had one group in this country which was run by a young Palestinian Jew who came into America. And, of course, he was part of the right wing, the Agum; that try to aroused the Jews in this country about what was happening. They tried to mainstream American Jewish leaders in every way possible, tried to sabotage what he was doing.

It's a very interesting era. That's really what bothers me the most about what happened, I mean besides the fact of the numbers that were killed, is how easily it was done and how everybody knew about it, at least in the beginning of 1942 and actually looked the other way, from Roosevelt down.

Q: YOU WERE SAYING IN THE OPENING THAT YOU DON'T MIND THAT THIS BE USED FOR EDUCATION. I WAS WONDERING, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR MY GENERATION TO KNOW ABOUT THIS, ESPECIALLY THE NON-JEWS, WHY SHOULD THEY KNOW IN DETAIL? WHAT DO YOU THINK THE LESSONS ARE TO BE LEARNED?

A: I think the lessons for Jews is, and I think they're true today as they were then, that American Jewish organizations are not representative of American Jews. A good example of that is what's happening in Israel today. You've got all these organizations claiming numbers and to represent and speak for American Jewry. Nobody really does. You see, they speak -- they're a very small minority who happen to have -- most of them -- alot of

money. And they donate a lot of it which is very positive. But they also control. They also control what happens.

For instance, the whole thing with -- what's his name-- the president of Austria is very interesting because in -- Waldheim -- because that's been known for years. I'm always amazed why suddenly the American Jewish Congress decided to release out that information. They knew that when he was the U.N. secretary general. It wasn't something that was hidden.

Q: WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER LESSONS OTHER THAN THAT ABOUT --

A: Well, I think the main lesson is that it could happen again. The Jews --

Q: THE JEWS OR TO ANYBODY?

A: It could happen to anybody. It could happen to any group. It could happen to any minority, either ethnic or religious, racial...

Q: DO YOU THINK JEWS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO TRY TO PREVENT IT IN OTHER PLACES?

A: I don't think Jews have any more responsibility than anybody else has. I think that just because it happened to us, it happened to the Armenians that in the sense we should be at the forefront anymore than anybody else should be. I think it's everybody's responsibility.

I don't think Jews are unique in that we should take this upon ourselves, which we've been doing. I think it's

everybody's responsibility.

I think the key lesson of the Holocaust really is: You don't follow blindly; you speak up. When you see whatever the injustice is, you don't look the other way. When you see that something is happening to your neighbor and it's not happening to you, don't look the other way because it could end up happening to you. So in a sense, we're all sort of responsible for everybody else.

I think if we understand that, and if we also understand that these things can happen in western countries. They don't always happen in developing countries -- I mean Germany from a historical point of view, was really a zenith.

Nobody ever believed, and if it would happen, it would never happen to Germany. Especially since German Jews were so well assimilated and part of German culture and the German political scene. The last place that anybody ever thought it would happen would be Germany. But the interesting part is that when problems occur, either economic or political, there is always the tendency to try and put the blame on somebody. As long as everything is going well, then you don't have to blame anybody, as long as -- and even in this country -- as long as our economy is doing reasonably well. But if we got into a deep depression in this country, I think you'd see a lot of hatred come out. Everybody wants to blame somebody else

for problems.

So it could happen again, I mean not in the same magnitude it certainly couldn't happen. I don't think it could happen to European Jews or even to the Jews. But it could happen in a much smaller way.

Again, of course today with the mass communication that we have, I think it would be a lot harder to keep things like that quiet, even for six months or six days.

Q: WITHIN A WESTERN COUNTRY?

A: Yeah.

Q: YOU READ IN THE SUNDAY TIMES AN ARTICLE WHAT HAPPENED IN UGANDA

A: That's right.

Q: FROM IDI AMIN AFTER, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE KILLED, I HADN'T EVEN HEARD.

A: Oh, right. You see that's so far removed that it doesn't even --

Q: OR CAMBODIA.

A: Or Cambodia, right.

Q: OR SOUTH AFRICA, TODAY.

A: That doesn't really affect us. It's totally removed. And I think that's how we rationalize the fact, or Ethiopia, millions dying of hunger. It's something we see on television, but it's so far removed that we don't really react. I think it's somewhat different.

Again, I think the point is, I don't think the Jews

have to be on the forefront of assuring any of this anymore than anybody else is. I think everybody should be doing this.

Q: IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING ELSE TO SAY, TAKE THIS CHANCE.

A: No.

Q: THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THE INTERVIEW.

A: Okay. Thank you.