

ADAM KRAKOWSKI
July 12, 2005

Tape 1

Q: So can you introduce yourself...

A: yes.

Q: ..say who you are?

A: My name is Krakowski, I am a survivor of the war, of the Shoah. I was born in Poland. I came to France in, in '46.

Q: Your first name?

A: --

Q: Your first name?

A: Adam.

Q: Adam. You're, you're from what city in Poland?

A: Lodz.

Q: Lodz.

A: It's the big industrial city in central Poland. The Polish Roubaix.

Q: Were you born in Lodz?

A: Yes.

Q: And your parents, what was your parents' name?

A: The same, Krakowski. Joshua the first name. They were from a city, Radomsko, that was a little further south, about a hundred kilometers south. But they immigrated to Lodz to take advantage of the industrial boom. Before the First World War my father created a small industrial concern. He made woven goods, cottons. His business was destroyed in 1915 already by the German artillery at the time. After the war ended he contributed towards creating a wholesale business for selling cotton. And he stayed until 1940 when the business was liquidated.

Q: Do you remember your grandparents' name?

A: No, I was my parents' youngest child. I had a brother who was 17 years older, and my father was the youngest of his brothers. So I never knew my grandparents, who died before I was born.

Q: Did your father have brothers and sisters?

A: Yes, he had a lot of, they were very big families.

Q: Do you remember how many there were in the family?

A: No. I know it was a big family, and many of them emigrated to Palestine at the time, before, before I was born. One of them was even the burgomaster of Jerusalem for a short period.

Q: What was his name?

A: They all changed their names over there. The name was too Polish. They changed it to Kaliv. One day in the early 60s I went to Israel and a cousin organized a, a reception, where there were about 60 people. They were all fairly close relatives who I was seeing for the first time in fact –

Q: Well, that was your father's family?

A: Yes.

Q: And your mother's family? Do you remember your mother's maiden name?

A: Yes. Her name was Rosenbaum. She had a brother who, who was a billionaire in Poland...

Q: Oh, really?

A: ..who owned dozens of villages, forests, saw mills, furniture factories. Unfortunately not much of it remains. One of his sons who survived died in Israel about ten years ago. And also a, a granddaughter who was hidden in a convent in Poland. Who her uncle got back after the end of the war and she went to Israel too. I think she's still alive. A few years younger than me. She must be about 70, 72 now maybe.

Q: And this uncle Rosenbaum, was he in textiles too?

A: No. Not at all! He was more a big landowner, the industry was wood, furniture.

Q: But did you know him?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Did he live in Lodz too?

A: No, he lived in Radomsko.

Q: Right, and did your mother have other brothers and sisters?

A: Yes, she had at least two sisters. One was, lived in Silesia and had two sons. One was a musician, a graduate of the Crakow Conservatory with first prize in violin, who was killed during the war. The second survived with forged papers. I met him after the end of the war in Poland. And he left for Australia. He left in the late '40s. I never heard from him again.

Q: And on your mother's side, you don't remember the grandparents' name either?

A: No, I didn't know my grandparents.

Q: What was your year of birth?

A: I was born in 1925 – just 80 years old now.

Q: And can you talk about your childhood, what language did you speak at home, what kind of education did you get?

A: Polish. Before, I told you I went to a private school. My father didn't have a very high opinion of State high schools, of their level. He preferred a private school. He often told me that he isn't sure he will be able to leave me a heritage, but at least he'd like me to be armed for the future with a decent education. Because already at that time, private schooling was relatively expensive. And at the same time I still had a brother who was two and a half, three years older than me. We went to school at the same time. And a brother who left for Paris to study medicine. So that was already, my father's expenses for his children's education were pretty substantial.

Q: And was this high school Jewish?

A: Yes. Not only the high school, in fact, I started at age five. Even the elementary school belonged to the same company. They had three schools, two for boys and one for girls.

Q: And the classes were taught in Polish?

A: Yes.

Q: And you had classes in Jewish studies too, in --?

A: Jewish history, religion, which I skipped starting from when I was little. There was one hour a week – that day I always got to school an hour late.

Q: Do you remember the school's political orientation?

A: It was apolitical. Maybe Zionist but nothing beyond that.

Q: Was it mixed or were there only boys?

A: No, no! There were three schools, so two were for boys and a third one for girls, three different buildings.

Q: And it was in the center of town?

A: Yes; I remember that on a national holiday we all went off to parade from the school to the main synagogue with a band with the school's flags. There was a kind of sermon by the head of the school.

Q: Did your mother work?

A: No. She had four children to raise, so...

Q: Your father had his own business, sales?

A: He had his own business until the first war. Then he was, he ran the business but it didn't belong to him, that.

Q: It was a sales business, not, not...

A: Sales.

Q: ...production

A: Uhuh.....

Q: And at home you spoke Polish?

A: Polish.

Q: Did you understand a little, did you understand a little Yiddish?

A: A little.

Q: Did your parents speak Yiddish?

A: When they wanted to hide something from me!

Q: So, you had a brother who went to Paris...

A: Yes.

Q: Why did he go off to Paris?

A: To study. There was a quota at the time in Poland. They didn't want to accept more than 10% of students of Jewish origin to the university because they considered that there aren't more than 10% of the Jewish population in Poland and if these quotas didn't exist I think that half the students would be of Jewish origin, so...

Q: And he was..

A: He left in '27. I was two at the time.

Q: What was his name?

A: Krakowski.

Q: But his first name?

A: Ignace.

Q: Ignace. He came to Paris.

A: He died five years ago. He died at the age of 91.

Q: And he did all his medical studies in Paris?

A: Yes, yes, he was a radiologist.

Q: Radiologist, so he finished medical school here.

A: Yes, he finished before the war.

Q: Before the war. Do you know what happened to him during the war?

A: Yes, yes! He was married to a Protestant woman who had the good idea to, in the building where he lived, she rented an apartment on the top floor in someone else's name and he hid there in that apartment. And he survived the war like that.

Q: In Paris?

A: In Paris.....

Q: Did he have children?

A: Yes, he had, two children, they're still here. He has a daughter in the United States now – who has three children of her own already and seven grandchildren, and a son who's also a radiologist and has a practice in Saint Quentin in the Aisne.

Q: What were your other brothers' and sisters' names?

A: My sister's name was Helen, she was killed in, in '41 in occupied eastern Poland, by the Russians when the Germans entered. The other brother, his first name was Alexander, he was shot in a camp in southern Poland in fact at the end of '43 where there were about 6,000 victims, the same day, were shot in a forest, after digging a trench to be buried.

Q: How...

A: In the spring of '44, the company where I was working, Daimler-Benz, was asked to send a commando of 50 men for a special job. It seems that in the spring it wasn't buried deeply enough, that it smelled. They had to re-dig the graves deeper

and put quick lime over them. It's later that I learned that my brother was among the victims of...

Q: Were you part of this little work commando?

A: No. No, but the others told me about it.

Q: And when did you learn about your sister's death?

A: And, through the letter from her husband, who was still in a camp, who died after getting bronchitis actually, from complications, that one of the survivors over there had written to me, because I could still correspond through the civilian workers who -- Poles who passed mail on to me.....

Q: Did your family practice religion?

A: Not much. I think, aside from, the former burgomaster of Jerusalem, who was in a religious party, I don't know of any other cases.....

Q: But did you go to synagogue even so?

A: I think the first and the last time, I must have been four or five years old. And my father brought me to a Yom Kippur in a synagogue that was crowded, we didn't even have seats. I was standing, I was very little at the time, I came up to the adults' belts, and all I remember: there was very little air, very little oxygen and it was the first migraine of my life. That I asked my father to leave the synagogue, I felt sick. And I think that's one of the reasons I became a non-believer.

Q: But you had a Bar Mitzvah?

A: Yes, but not a reception. I asked them to avoid the -- to do it in private..... In fact I thought the rituals were perfectly idiotic.....

Q: In 1939 when war was declared, you were 14 years old?

A: That's right.

Q: What grade were you in?

A: It was the fourth year of high school, that is, the tenth year of studies.

Q: And do you have memories of the beginning of the war?

A: Yes, yes. My brother who was three years older, at the beginning of the war, hearing on the radio that everyone who had gone through military preparation must leave the city with their army uniforms if they had any. That's what he did. He was 17 years old at the time and he went to Warsaw where he was taken in the surrounding. But he came home a month later, wasted, but alive.

Q: And do you have a memory of the arrival of the Germans?

A: Yes.

Q: In Lodz?

A: Yes..... it was an event after all.....

Q: Life changed then. How? How...

A: It became, it was gradually. How can I say it? Every day there was another measure against the Jews. We didn't feel it at the beginning, but every day we have the impression that they tightened the screw a little more. In fact I didn't stay in Lodz for long. In the beginning of '40, I think it was March first, there are two Germans in uniform, who came to our apartment. They said to pack the, the suitcases that we're able to carry and they took us to a disused factory for two days. Then we took the train, a transport of about a thousand people, we went to the south of Poland. My native city was annexed to the German Reich. They even changed its name from Lodz to Litzmannstadt, because in 1915 the German general who occupied the city was called Litzmann, so. And I went, so, the town of Nowy Sacz at the foot of the mountains in Poland which was the general government, after all. Which was, furthermore, no more independent than the rest....

Q: Well, it was the deportation of Jews, of...

A: Not really, because the majority of the population was concentrated in the ghettos, in one part of the city. It was simply the seizure of an apartment. Because they'd find a nice apartment and they'd annex it by emptying out the population.

Q: And you were with your parents then.

A: Right, and my brother still.

Q: Your brother.

A: My sister left Lodz with her husband and left for the Russian part. I mean, the part of Poland occupied by the Russians. At the time the border was still fairly fluid, but didn't have the intelligence to go farther, she stayed too close to the border. At the beginning of '41 when the Germans invaded Russia, she was caught in the net.

Q: There, she was killed.

A: Yes.....

Q: Did she have children?

A: A toddler who was born in the Russian part already, who I've only seen in a photo.....

Q: The city, the city where you were sent in March '40, was called Nowy....

A: Nowy Sacz. In German it was Neusambitz. It's about 100 kilometers south of Krakow.

Q: Was it already in the mountains, or was it still...

A: Almost, at the foot of the mountain.

Q: And there, what happened for you?

A: Well, what happened, it was first, you had to go and report three times a week to an office where the slave trader came, to do a job that day, unload a wagon of coal, of -- in fact just anything, a job. But that didn't last long. In May '40, before Paris was occupied, I was already in the first camp, but it was a work camp at the time and we kept our clothes still. We weren't so closely guarded, there was a hydroelectric dam in Poland and we had to flood a part of the valley, to make an artificial lake. Our task was to construct a parallel route on high ground because the main road was to be flooded. We had a construction site about 30 kilometers long. We were a group of 500. The work wasn't so terrible. Because a site that long, they couldn't watch us too closely. Working with a shovel, with a pick, sometimes with a pneumatic drill, there in the quarries to recover rocks to make the base of the road. I stayed a little over a year and then one day, I caught typhoid fever. They had taken me to a hospital in the city and which was a tiny hospital with about 20 beds and the part for the contagious patients had two beds. Where I spent a month, without being fed as a matter of fact, there was absolutely no treatment at the time for typhoid. I came out a month later as famished as a wolf, holding myself up, supporting myself with a cane because I had lost 30 kilos in the adventure. I could barely stand. They liberated me from this camp to allow me to recover. And I started a career as a private teacher. Since the schools were all closed, I gave private lessons, which enabled me to, to earn my living.

Q: What did you teach?

A: My parents were still there and my brother stayed in the same camp as, near, near the dam.

Q: Were you still living with your parents?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: They had an apartment, an apartment that...

A: We had a little two-room apartment.....

Q: Did your father work at the time?

A: No, he had no activity. I had to, although I was liberated from the camps, I had to still produce some kind of work at least once a week. There was extreme poverty in this city, where there were maybe 10,000 Jews. And a soup kitchen that served

5,000 meals a day, that gives you the, the proportion of people who made an effort to get a meal.

Q: Did you go to this soup kitchen too?

A: No, no A little later they offered me volunteer work as an accountant. I was in charge of the accounts of this company and I worked an hour or two a day doing the bookkeeping and that gave me the privilege of not going to do the forced labor. But all the time I was working I only ate one meal in that kitchen.

Q: And you gave private lessons?

A: I gave private lessons to children who were often my age.

Q: Did you teach everything?

A: Everything. Because schools didn't exist, the parents who could afford to pay wanted their children to get a minimum of education at least. And it went on that way until August '42.

Q: Was there a ghetto in this city?

A: Yes. There were two ghettos, even.

Q: And you were in the ghetto in fact.

A: Yes.

Q: Two ghettos?

A: Yes, because at the beginning there was one, and then they divided it. The city was at the confluence of two rivers, so it was pretty easy to separate one side from the other, all they had to do was close the bridge. There was a ghetto reserved for those who worked and a ghetto for those who didn't have a job. I think it was already in preparation for the deportation. But later on, when they did deport, they still deported everyone.

Q: How was life in the ghetto organized, do you remember? How was ghetto life organized?

A: Very badly. There was a little allocation of food that was ridiculous. I think 100 grams of bread per person per day. Very little of anything else. Food cards, there were food cards at the time when there were various categories of food cards. Pure Germans, Germans from Poland, "Volksdeutsche," that were called, and mountain dwellers, who were considered as a separate race, and then Poles and Ukrainians, and then gypsies and Jews. There was the strict minimum.

Q: And how did you go about getting food, if it wasn't enough?

A: But it's barely enough..... I remember, one day, I was given the job of unloading wagons for Germans, that is, there were wagons of sugar, flour that arrived. Our job was to take the bag out of the wagon, put it in a warehouse in a house, doing all that at a run. I remember bags of sugar that weighed 100 kilos. You had to take them from the backs of others, put it on your back, and running while you were doing it. The fun lasted ten hours and I was so angry that I called over friend next to me. On the other side of the wagon there was a wall that enclosed the railroad track. I suggested to him to take a bag of sugar, to throw it on the other side of the wall. He agreed. We did it, afterwards he worked. We found an empty bag . We went to get it. We poured half of the contents into the empty bag. Each of us took 50 kilos of sugar. We went home in the dark. I was so proud of having paid myself my salary for the day. I get home and my father who opens the door, asks me, "What is this bag?" I tell him. He says, "You stole it?" I say, "Yes!" That's the first time he gave me two slaps..... "That's how you act, you steal!" I don't know how to explain to him and then I couldn't resist the temptation to... He says to me, "You don't realize that you're risking your life with that." I said, "I risked my life all day, I'm not used to lugging 100-kilo bags on my back." I was 15.

Q: We'll stop now to...

End of Tape 1

Tape 2

Q: ...with this sugar.

A: Well, I brought it home. Afterwards my father was very happy to have, he made himself a drink with this sugar that reminded us of the time when there was still such a thing as tea.

Q: Was your brother still with you at that time?

A: My brother was in the camps already from '40 on at the same time as me.....

Q: He stayed in this

A: He stayed for...

Q ...work camp?

A: ..two years in this camp.

Q: On the dam?

A: Yes.

Q: Were you in touch with him?

A: He came home from time to time because it was a camp that didn't yet have the features of a concentration camp. No barbed wire, no guards, and we worked five and a half days. Saturday at noon there was a roll call, after the roll call we were free and often we walked to the city. It was 35 kilometers, it was a six-hour walk across the mountain. It wasn't legal, we didn't have the right to do it, but it allowed us at least to change our laundry, wash with hot water, not just with cold water.....

Q: Did you have contacts with Poles at that time?

A: Yes. There were a lot of Poles on the site. But in the end they weren't particularly nice. There was a hatred of Jews and very very violent anti-Semitism. I don't know what caused it, jealousy, because often they lived in buildings that, that belonged to Jews, or it was a little bit aroused by the sermons of, of priests, for whom we were a deicidal people, in any case, I found the hatred of Jews to be much more deep-rooted than among Germans, strangely – I found quite a few decent human Germans. Of course there were a few who were particularly ferocious..... There were, in fact, I remember an event in the spring of '42, they arrested 200 people. I think they found somewhere a list of members of a trade union. They arrested 200 people that they kept in prison for several days. They brought this column of people to the cemetery. They made them dig a trench and finished them off with machine guns. I was a few dozen meters from there by chance, I was giving a lessonto a young girl who lived right near the

cemetery..... I got out through the window on the opposite side. I don't know what it was due to. It's simply by terror to maintain the tranquility.... In any case, two or three months later they gathered the entire population together on the river bank. That was the selection, a guy who walked, who walked to the right and to the left, to the right and to the left and he came near me and asked me, "What's your profession?" I wasn't interested at the time in leaving my parents. I said, "I don't have a profession!" "How old are you?" I said, "I'm 17." "All right, you still have time to learn a profession." I was selected to survive..... Then another one came, "We need carpenters, cabinetmakers." I had a friend who was a carpenter, he said to me, "Come with me, we'll say you're a...." I said, "I'm a carpenter." So they sent me, a little commando, there were 30 of us, to a factory, it was a sawmill and factory for barracks. That is, they transformed the same boards into prefabricated barracks that were fairly easy to assemble. We could assemble, we could assemble a barrack like that in a few hours and if we had to, take it apart and rebuild it somewhere else. The first barrack, I had the job of building it also for us..... Then, they gave me the job of making the bathroom. A German came by with a pencil, a piece of paper, and made me a sketch and said, "You take care of it." Then I went to choose my wood, it's the first time I'd ever seen machines for woodwork, circular saws, planing machines. I prepared my wood. I built this barrack all alone, it took me two days. Afterwards he came. He said, "It's good but the roof, you have to, you have to coat it with, with tar so it won't rain in." He told me, "Go get a bucket of tar somewhere. You heat it...." It was a pretty decent barrack. Every panel had some -- a window, one panel with doors. The inside was hardboard planks. It smelled good of fresh wood. And it was a mountain valley. It was August so it was still pretty warm but we still had to heat at night. We built a stove with an old barrel and there was no shortage of wood so we heated. I went on until the beginning of '43 when they transferred us to another city where there was a factory of, of airplane engines.

Q: Wait, so, we are, we're in August '42?

A: Yes, I stayed until January '43.

Q: The ghetto is, is liquidated, disappears.

A: Of course!

Q: There is a selection right there...

A: That's right.

Q: ...in the ghetto, the selection took place, or...

A: In the ghetto.

Q: In the ghetto, between those who can work....

A: Uhuh.

Q: ... and those who..

- A: And the others.
- Q: ...those who are deported?
- A: And the others were deported two days later.
- Q: Where were they deported to?
- A: According to information I had afterwards it was Belzec in the south of Poland too.... It was an extermination camp.
- Q: When did you find out about Belzec?
- A: Later – through railroad workers I saw, Poles.
- Q: Later, after the war or during?
- A: No, no, during.
- Q: During the war. And your parents were deported?
- A: Yes.
- Q: And so, those who were selected for work, were there women also or were there only men who stayed?
- A: As far as I know there were no women.
- Q: They asked you to remake, build another camp.
- A: We just built the barrack for ourselves.
- Q: Yes.
- A: Where we lived. Inside the factory, inside the factory.
- Q: Inside the factory. And the factory was in the same city?
- A: No, no. It was about 30 kilometers to the south in a deep mountain valley and in the winter in December and January the temperature often went down to minus 20, it was really cold.
- Q: Do you remember how many of you there were in this --?
- A: Thirty.
- Q: Thirty! And the name of the city?
- A: Yes, yes. It was a sawmill right in the middle of forests.

Q: O.K., but there were no, you have no memories of this, of the place, the name of the place?

A: Yes of course. It was Nawojowa. The village next to it, this village practically existed thanks to the factory, there were no other industrial places.

Q: And the 30 people were only Jews?

A: Yes.

Q: And what were the living conditions in this, in this little camp?

A: Since it was very small it was relatively decent.....

Q: And what was the work you had to do?

A: In the sawmill, either manufacture parts of, elements of barracks, of, roofs.

Q: And you all lived in the same barrack?

A: Yes. It was divided into four. Inside there were two bedrooms, if I can put it that way, there were 15 people in each, on a single bed, a room that served as a dining room, and a room, we transformed into a bathroom if I can call it that. There was a series of faucets with some water running out, and the toilet was outside. My personal achievement.

Q: And did you know the prisoners, the prisoners, who were with you? Were they people you knew?

A: Some of them, not many.

Q: Were there any others from Lodz like you?

A: No.

Q: No!

A: Not a single one with me. We started with 30, then, one was killed, I don't know why, for no reason for that matter. And another who went into a deep depression. Who was practically completely lifeless. Who didn't move, didn't eat. They noticed it there. They delivered him to the Germans who came to get him. He never came back. We were down to 28.

Q: Who guarded you, do you remember who guarded you?

A: No one!

Q: No one.

- A: It was fenced off but we weren't guarded.
- Q: So there were no Germans?
- A: The managers of the factory, that, that belonged to a German group from Breslau that was called Hohberg-Holzbau, that ran this sawmill and this barrack factory.
- Q: It's, the name of the factory was Holzbau? Holzbau?
- A: Hohberg...
- Q: Hohberg...
- A: Hohberg-Holzbau Abziehen_____.
- Q: Did you know what, what, where the production was sent, did you know what it was destined for?
- A: To, well, to Germany, it was used for the army and for civilian purposes.
- Q: Were there Polish foremen and German foremen above them?
- A: Both. There were Polish foremen and above them, Germans. For that matter there were very few of them, you could count them on the fingers of one hand.
- Q: And you kept your civilian clothes?
- A: The original ones, yes.
- Q: Do you remember if you had a mark, did you have a yellow star, or --?
- A: No, no, not then.
- Q: Not then.
- A: No, no.
- Q: And the food, do you remember the food?
- A: It wasn't very rich, not very varied but well, you could survive on it.
- Q: Was there an infirmary or was there..
- A: No, no, no.
- Q: And were there Polish workers in addition to you?
- A: Yes, there were several hundred inside.
- Q: And you worked with Polish workers, or..

A: Yes.

Q: ...separately?

A: No, no, together!

Q: So, during the day, in the morning, you went off to the factory, or did you...

A: We were almost inside the factory.

Q: ...to the factory?

A: ...each one had his work station.

Q: Do you remember your own work station?

A: Yes. But I was there as a carpenter so they gave me special tasks related to carpentry. If they needed a piece of furniture, I was given the job of making a piece of furniture.

Q: And so 28 prisoners were left.

A: Yes.

Q: And what happened then?

A: Well, they told us they didn't need us any more. So they gave us to another German group. And we went to the city of Rzeszow.

Q: How did you leave, by foot?

A: By train, yes.....

Q: You, you, when was this? Was it in the fall of '42?

A: No, it was January '43 already. I remember an intense cold.....

Q: Were you able to keep your luggage or did you have nothing?

A: Oh, a minimum.... A few changes of clothing, that's all. We left in August, so, we didn't have so many winter clothes. But there, where we got to, there was a modern factory, built two or three years before the war. Well heated with central heating. It was, compared to the barrack in the middle of the mountain, it was still much more comfortable. Where I switched professions. I became a sign painter..... So I began a new career. The others made parts for airplane engines.... Assembling them, that wasn't for us. That was for others. And there was already a group, a group of Jews who had been deported there who came from the city of Przemyśl. That was a border city between the Russian zone and the German zone.....

Q: Can you tell us what this profession of sign painter was?

A: Well, in general it was to make, to make all sorts, to write the sort of prohibition, No Smoking, No Entry. I even allowed myself certain jokes. There were toilets there. And even there, there were selections. There was one toilet for everyone and one toilet "Nur für Deutsche," reserved for Germans. So I marked once on the bathroom "Nur für Deutsche - Eintritt Verboten" saying to myself that if they ask me about it I understood it like that. So "verboten, verboten" – the Germans didn't argue, when it's prohibited they didn't go in. The Polish women, the cleaning women who did the cleaning, they didn't know what that means, "come in, clean the bathrooms well." It was – it's a little trivial but in those days there was no toilet paper. They used newspapers. So there was a pile of newspapers. The Polish cleaning women, every day took a few newspapers, cut them in rectangles the size suitable for... So I noticed that no one went in there, I noticed that no one went in when it was marked "verboten." I started to go there every day to take the whole newspapers that weren't cut. And I knew what was going on. And I remember, one day I read a weekly called *Das Reich*, there was a long article, it was by Goebbels, who described all the strategic importance of the city of Stalingrad, that whoever will keep this city will win the war on the eastern front. And several days later, I had the other newspaper with the Russian offensive, how they encircled Stalingrad. I compared the two articles, the fall of Stalingrad and the importance of Stalingrad. It explained that between the sources of oil of the Caucasus, Baku and all the rest of Russia, there was no railroad line that, that worked. Everything was occupied by the Germans and the only way to get it out was the Volga. And the fact that the Germans were able to prevent all the river traffic deprived the Russians of their oil supply. And several days later I understood, all of a sudden, the importance of their defeat and it was really the turning point of the war and the fall of Stalingrad, the loss of several German divisions allowed the Russians to make a leap, I think, of 500 to 600 kilometers in several days.

Q: Do you remember how you were chosen for this sign painting work which was unusual after all, was it by chance?

A: It was purely by chance. I had learned it when making this map of Russia and one day the factory received an ambulance. So they had to write the name of the factory on the door. The director asked the research department there to make him several drafts of, of letters and none of them satisfied him. I went to see him and he asked me for drafts of letters. I had to mark the name. It was fairly long: "Flugmotorenwerk Reichshof, GmbH." On a car door I didn't have that much choice. I calculated that I had more or less two centimeters per letter. So I made fairly elongated letters. I showed him the draft on paper and he compared them with the others and he found my, my draft better so I was given this work too. And he was very pleased with the result and he had only one reward possible: a slip of paper for the German kitchen, to eat several meals in the German kitchen. And I got to know German cooking, it's stew with potatoes five times a week. Well, it was a change from our routine.

Q: You were able to eat in the kitchen where they...

A: They gave me my bowl, if you will, but with a meal that was destined for the race of lords.

Q: And the director of the factory was a German?

A: Yes. His name was Rohmstadt and he was, I learned this afterward, originally the head accountant at Daimler-Benz in Stuttgart. And he was sent to run this factory that belonged to them. For me, he was the example of a Protestant German gentleman. He was the first German, I think, that I met who shook my hand, who used the formal "you" form, not the familiar "you" form, who spoke, who didn't bark like the others and who showed himself to be human. I told you after I had written a letter to Daimler-Benz and of course they didn't, didn't satisfy my request, but they sent me a woman who ran or who was part of a company in Köln that did the work you do. And this company was in charge of investigating and writing a book on the history of the Daimler-Benz company during the Nazi period, from '33 to '45. She came to see me. She sat where you're sitting. She stayed a whole afternoon. And I told her that compared to what we went through afterwards this Daimler-Benz factory seemed to me more than decent and above all that I met the first German who I could consider a gentleman. And she says to me, "Yet he was a notorious Nazi. He joined the party in '33 as soon as the Nazis took power and if he was sent as head of this factory it's because he was politically sure for them." I was the first to be surprised. Several months later, they sent me from Köln the volumes of the history of Daimler-Benz. I learned that between '33 and '45, the CEO of Daimler-Benz had a Jewish wife. And there were several anonymous letters of denunciation that it's not right that the leading German industry is run by a fellow who keeps a Jewish wife. And the response came from Goering I think, who was responsible for -- that we have to close our eyes sometimes because he's a man who is competent in his field and it's better to keep him. Afterwards they sent me a second volume as a matter of fact, where they also quoted what I said.

Q: So in this factory, you had a can of paint and a brush and you went to paint signs on doors and walls?

A: Yes. And when there were no signs to make, there were two house painters, who sometimes asked me to give them a hand when they had urgent work to do. And I remember one day, the director expressed the desire to repaint his office. But he wanted it to be done between Saturday noon and Monday morning so that he could go in. The painters were in a hurry so that it would be dry and ready. After two rooms of the office, they took me along. And they did the ceilings, the walls. They told me to do -- there were doors -- to paint the doors. The doors were made of smooth plywood. I didn't know what to do because to do it on Saturday night so that it's dry on Monday morning. I was allowed only one coat, two coats wouldn't have dried and if you put too much paint it has a tendency to drip. If you don't put enough it doesn't cover it. So it was a dilemma how to do it. I asked these two painters for advice. They gave me advice. They told me, "You take four pieces of wood. You take the door off, you hammer the two pieces over and under. You put them down flat like, like a table. You put a good coat of paint on one side, you turn it over, you put another coat on the other side. It doesn't run and when it's dry you hang the whole thing up and paint the sides." That's what I did. For Monday

morning everything was dry. In the morning they come to get me. The director wanted to know who was responsible for the paint job on the doors. I said to myself, it must have run after all. I must have made a mistake. But well, I'm responsible for what I did. I come in. He asks me, "Are you the one who did the doors of my office?" I said, "Yes. But you have to excuse me if it's not perfect. It's not my profession! My profession is painting signs, not doors." He says, "On the contrary!" He likes a job well done, but he had never seen such a door where there is not a trace of a brush, where you had the impression of looking at the mirror! It's true that the lacquer was of very good quality, which he knew. He wanted to congratulate me for a job well done, a professional job!

End of Tape 2

Tape 3

Q: Did this company from Köln write the history of German businesses?

A: It was paid for by these businesses who maybe wanted to clear their name, a little bit of...

Q: And when was this?

A: Oh, it was after the hundredth anniversary of Daimler-Benz around '88.

Q: Can you tell us again how you got in contact with Daimler-Benz again?

A: Well, when they were celebrating their hundredth anniversary, they were advertising for, for their company, the oldest automobile factory in the world. The inventors of, since they were both co-inventors, Daimler-Benz. And they formed a partnership together. I think they filed the patents the same day. Then Daimler, I think, had a daughter named Mercedes. They called the cars Mercedes, Mercedes-Benz. So I wrote that before they acted so generous towards their personnel, they should have paid the salaries of the old personnel, that I am self-employed myself, I have personnel, and it never occurred to me to employ someone without paying them. Which was their case. But I saved this correspondence, it was pretty comical. You felt a kind of embarrassment. Then they invited me to visit the Sindelfingen factory, the first factory they had built near Stuttgart and that they'll cover my travel and hotel expenses. I thanked them, but replied that I'm used to paying my own hotel and travel expenses when I travel, but that I have other things to do than to visit their factory.

Q: And you didn't go?

A: Hum! Hum!..... Well, I remember a comical story with the Polish foreman who came from eastern Poland, from Poznan. And, all the Polish industry, heavy industry in particular, was either in Silesia or in the region of Poznan, which was very close to the German border. And before the war the governments decided to create heavy industry in the heart of the country, far from the borders. And the Rzeszow factory, of aircraft engines, was part of this project. There were machines that they bought just about everywhere, Swiss, German, English, even American machines. And the managers came from this region too, from Poznan from Silesia because the peasant population there in Galicia had no industrial training. So I had a foreman who spoke German fluently and he grew up in Germany because before the first war Poznan was part of Prussia, Germany, while he was still a Polish patriot, he was very proud reciting a Polish poem sometimes, often making mistakes, for that matter. And when he got stuck, I'd recite the rest of this poem. And he was so impressed that someone else -- which he had already forgotten, someone else, that he suddenly showed great respect, he had confidence, and quite a bit of independence. Aside from the factory there were also buildings that were reserved as apartments for the managers. It was almost entirely occupied by the Germans and he, the foreman, was also in charge of the maintenance of these apartment buildings. When there was a window to change, he had to send a glazier. When there was painting to be done, he sent the paint and

the personnel. And his salary was nothing extravagant, at the time, but what interested him was the bonus, which was paid in vodka, about three liters a month, and when he earned this, this bonus, he was beside himself. He had to empty them immediately! And to supplement his income, he had a colleague in town who bought back the paint cans or cases of window panes. One day he took like that, a little handcart loaded with paint cans and window panes, and a prisoner who pushed it. He followed on his bicycle, he was pretty well sloshed and he didn't notice that someone was following them too, behind. Just when they did the exchange, when he sold part of his paint cans and window panes, while he was getting paid, he was caught red-handed, by a policeman who was following him. He was put in prison. Well, that was a small sin! Everyone stole at the time. Everyone, the Germans just as well as the Poles. But he had the bad luck that several day later, two German officers were killed in town. In response, they shot 50 hostages. They took them from the prison, he was among these hostages. I had no foreman any more. Suddenly it was total freedom! I could choose my site myself, do whatever I wanted. There was someone who replaced him. He said, roughly speaking, do this or that or you know what you have to do. I told him, "Yes." So he said, "Go ahead." Under the factory there were cellars that weren't used for anything. There were doors made of loose boards. He gave me a job, to put a number on every door, if there's an air raid warning so that everyone knows where to go.. I was supposed to mark one, two, three, number the doors, all the doors were open. The cellar was totally empty. Except, I happen to see a cellar where the door is closed. Since I was curious back then, I went to get a big screwdriver, I lift the door a little, it comes off its hinges, and in a cellar there were pools of water, made of concrete, filled with, with hard water and full of chicken eggs. It was a way of preserving the chickens -- the eggs, at the time. There were no freezers, there were no refrigerators. For several months, there was an opening in the cellar, a hole about one cubic meter, we could open the window to air out the cellar. Over it there were bars. And the bars had a lock. So right away I made a little plan, I opened the lock, I make a mark with paint so I can find the right opening again from the outside. And I went back to the workshop, I prepared my plan. A big empty barrel of 200 liters, two pails, I put my two painter friends in the know. We said, we're going to find an extraordinary job for tonight, so as not to go in right away, do it when it's dark. We requested permission to do a night job, that we have something urgent to finish. Then, at night, we went each of us with two empty pails. I stood before this opening, I opened the bars. We went into the cellar, we filled the pails with eggs, automatically I counted. About 200 eggs can fit into a pail, which weighed about 10 kilos each time. We went back to the workshop, we put the eggs back in this big barrel. We made another trip, a third. And we rushed to get back to the camp with everyone with the night shift which got back towards two in the morning. We covered the barrel up, we went back to our barrack, the next day, when we came to work, we had to improvise something to cook the eggs. A bottle of turpentine with some kind of rag as a wick, we made a tripod out of wire, a pail filled with water. We put it on top of it, we lit the turpentine, it smelled a little, worse than gas, but in the end it went well, we boiled the eggs, hard-boiled eggs. We made feasts. Well, I calculated that you can't live only on eggs, even if you eat 20 one day, you won't eat 20 every day. Start giving out hard-boiled eggs to our pals. There were several thousand. It was also my revenge for, for work done. Then, we were without a foreman for several weeks. Then one day, an old guy shows up. An old guy, for me, back then, was

someone over 60! He introduces himself, his name is Schultz. He's our new head, our foreman. And, he tells us that he had a paint business in a big suburb of Berlin. He was married, he had a little girl a few years old. And one day his house was bombed, destroyed. His wife was killed, he managed to save his daughter and they sent him here as a -- to do his job. He was in shock, hardly spoke, and he sat at his desk and asked the question: "Do you know what you have to do?" We said, "Yes." "Good! Go and work." We came back for lunch and he was still sitting at his desk, without moving. We went to eat lunch, we came back, he was still sitting in the same place. So I ask him the question: "Aren't you going to eat lunch?" He says, "No." I said, "Why?" And he said he lost his food cards in the bombing and he'll have the new cards after the end of the month, in the meantime you have to provide food cards, and since he doesn't have any, he can't go to the canteen. And it was the 28th or 29th of the month. I said then, "You'll stay two or three days without eating!" He said, "Yes, I have no choice." But I said, "Listen, I'm going to try to organize something for you. There's no reason why you can't eat." So he says, "Don't worry about it:" I said, "I'll do what I can." Since I was rich with my eggs, I boiled them right in front of him, the hard-boiled eggs there in my pail, I gave him a piece of bread. I said, "I can't offer you anything else, but take this at least!" At the beginning, he resisted a little but finally he gave in. He began to eat the bread and eggs and I don't know what came over me to propose that. It was maybe a form of humiliation, to humiliate him, that it was a prisoner who feeds his torturer.

Q: It was an extraordinary paradox that it was a Jewish prisoner who feeds the German.

A: And then, I see my, my German, in the middle of eating, he starts crying, the tears fall from his eyes. I said, "Are you thinking about your wife?" And he says, "No." He was thinking about the paradox of the situation that he is a representative of "Herrenfolk." He says this laughing, and that it's a prisoner who feeds him in need. "Oh!" I said, "Don't think about it, we're, we're both in the same boat, even if we're on two different sides of the barrier." And he says, "It was damn stupid thing this war, we'll never win it! And we're starting to pay for it already!" I stayed with this guy for almost another year. He stayed my boss. Towards four o'clock, the factory would distribute a snack of a piece of cake to all its German personnel. It was meant for me! He never ate his piece of cake!.....

Q: He repaid you for what you gave him.

A: And he, he left me alone. He didn't give me any orders, I did really whatever I wanted. And I went everywhere where there was something to glean.

Q: In the factory, you lived in the factory then?

A: At the, the factory was surrounded by walls. It had a door on one side that gave out onto a forest and there, they built a few barracks. There were 500 of us. There must have been about five barracks. Each barrack...

Q: Were they wooden barracks?

A: Wooden, yes. There were a few capos, chosen among us, who didn't have much to do for that mater, who were in charge of the camps because they didn't handle the, the kitchen.

Q: So it was a small camp only for Jews?

A: Yes.

Q: 500 Jews.

A: Guarded by a few Ukrainian guards and the factory itself was guarded by the Volksschutz, as they called the internal German police, but our camp was guarded by a few Ukrainians.....

Q: And the living conditions in the camp?

A: Were fairly decent.

Q: Were decent.

A: Uhuh.

Q: But you had your own food?

A: Yes! They delivered to us there and there were a few guys who handled the cooking, well, the cooking was a soup we made, that was all.

Q: And so, you, you had extra food that you found in the factory?

A: And what we could steal, let's say! There was a cooperative that was meant for the civilian personnel, not for us, where they could buy different food with the, the food cards. But we managed to, to say that the ceiling was dirty, the walls were dirty and that it's the least they could do that where people go for food -- that it should be a little renovated! They told us that that's possible only at night since during the day it has to stay open. We couldn't have asked for anything better. So we did the job at night and we raided what we could..... That gave a, extra food.

Q: You stayed with the other 28 then...

A: No, there, there were 500 of us...

Q: 500, but the..

A: ...because there were others.

Q: ...but the 28 were there too!

A: Yes.

Q: And so, there were 500 of you and they were Jews who came, you told me, from...

A: Most of them from Przemysl.

Q: Yes, and do you have memories of certain prisoners, do you remember certain people in particular?

A: Yes, yes. There were, for example, the capo when we got there. He asked, is any one of you from Lodz? So I said, "Yes, I'm from Lodz." He says to me, "So am I." He introduces himself. His mother was the principal of the, of a big high school. What he was doing, I don't know, he became a capo _____. And he came to a stupid, tragic end. He found among the Polish workers, there in the factory, a connection that offered to, to hide him.... So he had to organize his escape. And he found a truck, at the time it was gas generators that had a supply of wood for fuel. He hid in a crate. He has this supply of, of wood in a truck that was supposed to take off in the morning. In the morning they noticed that his, he had disappeared. They started to check the trucks. They found him inside and he was killed immediately.

Q: He was killed on the spot?

A: Yes, on the spot.

Q: By the Germans?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: By the..

A: By the Volkschutz.

Q: By the Volkschutz.

A: Uhuh.

Q: Were there other escapes, attempted escapes?

A: At the end. Just before they evacuated us, it's in the month of June '44. We could already sense the, the end! And the Russian army was already in Przemysl, so about 50 kilometers away. They started to evacuate the factory and there, there are 24 boys who succeeded in escaping. Well, it wasn't so hard. The Ukrainians at night weren't that vigilant and there was just the barbed wire that all you needed to do was open a little. The next day there was a whole unit of German SS that came. They were more trustworthy than the Ukrainians. And, we couldn't go out towards the factory any more. The next day a train came into the factory itself. They loaded us onto the car and we left for the west. They evacuated us.

Q: You weren't tempted to escape?

A: Oh, yes. But then it was too late. And I was always convinced that the 24 who succeeded in escaping, they at least saved their skin. Because the Russian army was there a few days later. But most of them went to the nearby forest. And there were groups of Polish partisans there. It's the partisans who did killed them.....

Q: You found that out after the war?

A: Afterwards, yes. And five of them hid in town, in cellars. They survived.....

Q: Do you remember the name of the person who tried to escape, who was caught and killed on the spot?

A: Yes. His name was Yuri Streissenberg.

Q: Do you have memories of other people?

A: Yes, there was the, the head of the camp, Lagerälteste, who was born in Leipzig in Germany. And his father emigrated to Germany between the two World Wars. He was born in Germany. Before the war the Germans deported all the former Poles who were naturalized. So he was deported to Poland with his father. The father still spoke Polish, but he was born in Germany, he didn't speak a word of Polish, he spoke only German. He survived the camp, in fact I was with him until the end. Only, he disappeared after the liberation. He was afraid he'd get done in for his role as a collaborator, in a sense, I think he must have disappeared towards Leipzig, towards East Germany at the time. Because he told me several times that he's afraid that someone is going to try to take revenge on him.....

Q: For his role, not because of his role as Lagerälteste.

A: Oh yes, as Lagerälteste. There was someone else who...

Q: Do you know what happened to him?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Since '45... June '45, he disappeared. I didn't see him again. There was another one who was also a capo, who was rather stupid, his name was Grünspan I think, who was arrested in Poland after the war. He was on trial in Crakow. I was asked to testify in his favor. I wrote a testimony for the Polish court. In the end he tried to save his skin, but who *didn't* kill anyone? Who didn't -- I think he was sentenced to several years of prison after all, the Poles weren't kind to capos.

Q: Did you stay in touch after the war with people who were with you in the camp?

A: At the beginning a little, because after the war, you see, we were liberated by the Americans, but I don't know if it was on orders from higher up or if it was on the local level, they got rid of us a month later. They delivered us to the Russian side, saying that we come from Poland, we can be repatriated to Poland. So the border

was fairly fluid at the time, we could go back. I said to myself, if I'm already on this side, I'm going to go into Poland to see what's happening, if there are any survivors, you now. So there were only two of us who went back to -- stopped at Lodz where I stayed several months before leaving again.... Why did I leave? Because, because of a joke..... I was with some friends in a café. Someone offered me a cigarette. I didn't smoke at the time. The cigarette brand was Liberty. So I said, "No, Mister, I can't get used to this liberty." No sooner had I finished my sentence that I was surrounded by people in civilian clothes. "What kind of remark is that, I can't get used to this liberty?" I said that I'd said I can't get used to these cigarettes, they don't suit me. Oh! They'd understood something else. I said, "You misunderstood me." But after all! They left but I understood that it was time for me to leave this country.

Q: Was it the political police?

A: Yes. And I said if you can't make a joke any more, even a stupid one, if you're punished for that, it's time to leave the country.

Q: So did you, passing through Lodz again, did you find any people from the camp?

A: No!

Q: No.

A: No, but afterwards, going towards, towards France, I crossed Germany. I spent a few weeks in Germany and I went from camp, for no reason, from camp to camp because the Eisenhower administration created several camps where it was often suburbs with private houses. They emptied the German population, near Frankfurt, there was the suburb of Zeilsheim near Munich, there was Fernwald. So I had lots of friends there in Bergen-Belsen itself. And the former camp was demolished but the, the permanent houses where the SS were, they were preserved.

End of Tape 3

Tape 4

Q: You, you went from one, from one camp to another, from one DP camp to another and you found them there?

A: A few of them, yes.

Q: Where, do you remember, at Bergen-Belsen?

A: Bergen-Belsen, Fernwald, Zeilsheim. In Zeilsheim I even found the only survivor of my class next to me at the school that took advantage of, of an American decree to study. He registered at medical school in Frankfurt and it's the American administration that paid for his studies, plus a small stipend, if you will, so that he could survive.

Q: What was his name, do you remember?

A: Rosenblum, I didn't have any contact after leaving in '46.

Q: So, we come back to this camp, well, this factory, of Daimler-Benz, with this camp of, of Jewish prisoners. Did you have a uniform in the camp?

A: No.

Q: No!

A: We were still wearing civilian clothes.

Q: But you had a mark, a yellow star?

A: Not even.

Q: Not even!

A: No. And there was something like a clothing bank. All the prisoners who arrived with a little piece of luggage, with a trunk, they confiscated their clothes. And they had only what they were wearing. All that was kept in a storeroom. When someone had completely torn pants, they exchanged them for another pair, same thing for shoes.....

Q: And so you, you never worked directly on a machine or on a –

A: No.

Q: No. You always went around the camp doing various, various jobs.

A: Right.

Q: But the other prisoners worked?

A: Well, machines, lathes, milling machines, all sorts of machine tools.

Q: Did you speak German before the war?

A: No.

Q: You learned German?

A: I took English at school, ever since Hitler took power many schools adopted English as the first language instead of German. Before that, German was correct - - common..... But I learned German during the war, on my own.....

Q: So, we get to June '44, so you're speaking of, of the evacuation.

A: Well, the evacuation, so, they evacuated us, first they evacuated us to Crakow, where there was a camp in a suburb of Crakow itself, on a Jewish cemetery in fact, Plaszow (ph) it was called. Where I stayed a few days. There was, we didn't go to work there, we stayed in the barracks because, every time you got to a camp, you went into quarantine. They wanted to find out if there weren't any, any infectious diseases. And on the other side of the barbed wire, there was a house where there were Hungarian women, Jewish Hungarian women who came from Auschwitz in fact. I didn't understand why they evacuated them to the east not to the west at that time. And we stayed several days then we continued to the west to a camp of Flossenbug, which was above Bayreuth in Bavaria, on the former Czech border.

Q: When you say "we", it's still the ...

A: The same 500, yes.

Q:same 500 prisoners?

A: And it was a camp that was at an altitude of 1,000 meters. And it's June, end of June in the middle of summer. The water froze there in the evenings, in Flossenbug. When we arrived they took our clothes away from us, we were subjected to stripping, if I can put it that way, we remained naked as worms. They shaved every single hair off us, not only our heads but even on the body. And then we stayed naked for three days. And then, after three days, they gave us people's striped clothes. With the camp numbers. And when the administration learned that there are steelworkers, there was a Messerschmitt factory in Flossenbug that manufactured fighter planes. They were determined to keep us. But it seems that we were reserved as the property of Daimler-Benz, thatwe... They couldn't hire us. First of all we were in quarantine, we had to stay there several days. I remember, we were there on the.... At one point, they talked to us, if we want to go and work for, for Messerschmitt. And then no one was very anxious to stay there in – big camps always scared me. The smoke from the crematorium, they didn't gas there but they still burned corpses. That special smell of, of burned flesh, it made me outright nauseous. I preferred to leave for a commando, not to stay in a big camp, even though in general the food was better in the big camps than the small commandos. And then one day, they load us onto the train again

and we leave. Without even telling us where. And at one point we could get off to urinate when there was a stop, I see on the car the sign Kolmar, destination Kolmar, but written with a K. So I began to think. I know a Calmart in Sweden and a Colmar in Alsace, but it's written with a "C". I didn't think that they'd taken back the German name of Kohlmarkt, but it was really the... So I said to the others, apparently we're going to Alsace and we followed the road seeing the names of the train stations that we were crossing. And then we arrived in Colmar.

Q: I, I, do you remember the conditions of transportation. Was it cars, how?

A: Cattle cars.

Q: Cattle!

A: There were about a hundred of us in each car and it was more like sardines in a can. We stood up, very few could sit down taking turns.

Q: Did they give you anything to eat during the train ride?

A: Not much, we just got a piece of bread. There was no other food distribution. And, so the few days before we began to work. In the tunnel they installed machines, they were tearing out the others already and we could already hear a little heavy gunfire far away. But it was about 35 kilometers from the Swiss border. And there's one day, a boy who succeeded in escaping. He managed to get into Switzerland and he didn't want to stay too close to the border. He went into central Switzerland and he got picked up by the Swiss police who wasted no time delivering him to the Germans. Which I found particularly distasteful. In August '44, what's -- a good part of France was already liberated and the fear they had, the Swiss, of a German invasion was no longer justified. Only, the boat was full, a little, the feelings. He got a punishment of 25 strokes on the backside and he was sent off, they told us, to a disciplinary commando in Dachau. He didn't survive Dachau for that matter.

Q: So you arrived in Colmar, to the train station in Colmar?

A: Yes. There, first we crossed the city on foot, we, we had wooden soles with a piece of rag in front, on the pavement of Colmar, it made a deafening noise. They told us to take off our clogs, to walk barefoot, keep the clogs in our hands. I remember a vineyard where there were unripe grapes, but from time to time we went outside to tear off a bunch of grapes, which set our teeth on edge, that were really not ripe, sour. We didn't even clean off the sulfur that was on them a little. In fact we were right in the middle of Alsace on the Grand Ballon mountain and there, I ran the kitchen for several days. And then I submitted my resignation. Then they told me, "Go to the tunnel." I get to the tunnel where the others already had a job of some kind or other. They ask me what I know how to do. I said, "I'm a sign painter" based on my experience, then a German: "An artist!" and I said, "No, not an artist, an artisan, it's not an artist." "Yes, but it's the same thing," he says to me. He wanted me to make him a painting. He's going to get me the paint, he'll get me the canvas. He'd like a bouquet of flowers. I said, "I haven't seen a flower in five years." He said it doesn't matter, he'll give me a Werkschutz, a

guard, and I'll go and pick wildflowers. I went off with the Werkschutz, to pick flowers in the field, make a little bouquet. There were hazel trees, where there were hazelnuts that were nearly ripe, there were little wild apple trees that I picked a little of that too. We lay down, the Werkschutz and me, in the sun, then we went back. The other guy prepared an aluminum sheet for me in the meantime, he hadn't found a canvas. And the paint was lacquer that was used for spray-gun painting. A nitro-lacquer that dried under the brush with a little acetone you could dilute it. But in a few seconds it was dry. And I put that in an old tin can that served as a vase. I had my model. I do the painting of a bouquet of flowers. I don't think it's a masterpiece of painting. The German arrives, he looked for a minute. He left, without saying a word, then he brought back a dozen others. They all gathered around and I heard a chorus of praise, "Schoen! Schoen!" I immediately had another order, a second German who said to me he also would like to have a bouquet of flowers like that. I said, "Yes, but the flowers will be wilted tomorrow morning in the tunnel." He said, "Never mind, you'll go and get more." I became an artist.

Q: And you had never done that before!

A: No! A little at school..... So I make another bouquet of flowers and they brought me lots of food, packets of sugar, there was a sugar plant next door. And I never saw, during the war, one-kilo packets of sugar cubes. They brought me cigarettes, even though I don't smoke, I gave them out to the others, even bread, some.....

Q: So if we can just go back to the arrival, so it was in Colmar, you cross the city on foot...

A: Uhuh.

Q: And then, you...

A: In a house outside of town.

Q: Yes.

A: Isolated, in the middle of a field somewhere.

Q: But in Colmar?

A: On the edge of the town, yes.

Q: Yes.

A: And then afterwards they transported us by truck. So from Colmar we passed through...before Mulhouse we turned under the Grand Ballon into this tunnel next to it, and next to the tunnel, there was a normal camp already constructed.

Q: Do you remember the name of this camp?

- A: It was between St. Amarin and Wesserling. Two villages, it was between two villages.
- Q: What administration did this camp come under?
- A: Natzweiler, Struthof.
- Q: It was a commando of Struthof?
- A: That's right.
- Q: Did you know that then? You knew that it was a commando of Struthof?
- A: Yes, because we knew that the food came from -- it was called at the time Natzweiler... There was the German name, yes.
- Q: And can you tell us again what you mentioned briefly, I mean the arrival, you were appointed head of the kitchen?
- A: Yes, yes. It was pretty strange because they had us do a stupid exercise, pulling out weeds. People were so weak that they couldn't stand up.
- Q: They asked you to pull out weeds...
- A: Just to keep us busy, to....to keep our morale up.
- Q: And the people were so weak after...
- A: We'd been traveling for eight days practically without food and there, again, there was nothing.
- Q: And in Flossenburg, did you get something to eat, in Flossenburg?
- A: Yes. In the camp it was the normal camp food, yes.
- Q: And so they asked you to pull out weeds?
- A: Yes. So he sorted things out after all, the Oberscharfuehrer, I don't recall his name in fact. In fact he wasn't violent, he didn't brutalize anyone. He looked a little bit overtaken by the events, that he was given the responsibility. There weren't many of them. Five or six in all. And they had to watch us 24 hours a day. I think he was a bit overtaken by his responsibility. But anyway, I became head of the kitchen, but it bothered me so I quit.
- Q: Tell us how you happened to become head of the kitchen, because you already told me but it was off camera. So we didn't record it.
- A: I had -- the cooking, it was a pile of vegetables that arrived, so, carrots, turnips, well... any old vegetable that arrived, even potatoes, had to be peeled, put in water and boiled with a little salt, that's all. It wasn't really cooking of any kind

and the trick was to make the maximum of vegetables, the minimum of water to nourish these 500 famished people. It was even a, a bizarre story. There was a group of people older than us, I was 19 at the time, who came from Germany, who were German Jews. And they didn't think it was fair that in a cushy job like the kitchen it's young people, and especially the, they called us the "Ostjuden," in fact, it's a little condescending, people from the east. They considered themselves a little superior after all. Often they weren't wrong either. Ha ha!

Q: And they were prisoners who were with you?

A: Yes; who were...

Q: The 500?

A: Before, yes! Because they were expelled from Germany because they were of Polish origin. But afterwards they had gone through the same thing we did. But well, as they saw that the Oberscharfuehrer didn't bite, he didn't beat, they came to negotiate, that it would be more natural that people who are older and who speak German perfectly and not with an accent, should be in charge of the kitchen. So he thought their argument was fair. And he said to me, I stay in charge but I'd have these people as assistants. I said, "I prefer to resign, this profession doesn't suit me." So he didn't insist and I got the better end of the deal because I became an artist. But in the end, it didn't last long. They started to evacuate and next to us there was a tannery too. And the people who went to give a hand evacuating the tannery, when they came back in the evening they had a piece of leather to make soles. They brought that. The next day they had to go and see at the tannery. And I asked what they want to do with this leather, it could be a bargaining chip. But actually I don't know how and with whom. Some went to evacuate the sugar refinery and brought back a little sugar too. In short, the camp got rich in quite a bit of sugar and leather. That lasted a few days. We left again.

Q: Which means that you didn't stay very long in this camp of, of Daimler-Benz...

A: Well...

Q: If it was evacuated?

A: It was, oh, I think early October.

Q: Up till early October?

A: Yes. Well, the American troops were already very near. I think they had already taken Belfort. They weren't far. They evacuated us. As soon as we crossed Freiburg, crossed the Rhine at Freiburg, there was an, an air raid, already the fighter planes that machine-gunned the train and there were a few men wounded in the car by the American aircraft, we went all the way to Sachsenhausen near Berlin. It was the biggest camp I think, the oldest one in Germany. So the first roll call, and then we looked a little too, too stiff, too rigid, they came closer and every one had under his jacket a good piece of leather for soles, our guards there in

Sachsenhausen were happy because you needed tickets to get leather for resoling shoes in Germany. There, all at once, they had a lot. They confiscated it all.

Q: Excuse me, to go back to this, this camp near Colmar, so, near the Ballon d'Alsace mountain, in a tunnel, they set up a factory?

A: Machines...

Q: Machines.

A: Parts for making aircraft engines.

Q: And the factory existed already when you got there?

A: Partially, yes. There were some machines that arrived before us and others that arrived afterwards still. But I tell you it was a surrealistic story to see certain machines being cemented, embedded in the ground and at the same time others being taken away, ripped out. It was already really the beginning of the chaos, of..

Q: And you worked on these machines?

A: I didn't have time to start. So we arrived in Sachsenhausen, we stayed a few days waiting for Daimler-Benz to call for us. But they didn't call for us. A letter arrived that the machines had been destroyed and they relinquished their flock. They leave us at the disposal of other industrialists. So there are two that came forward. There was Hermann Goering Werke, which were steelworks near Braunschweig in Salzgitter, Stahlwerke Braunschweig, and the other one was the Fokker-Wolf aircraft factory in Bremen. They divided us in two, one part went to Fokker-Wolf in Bremen. I went to Salzgitter. It was a big factory, it occupied 40 square kilometers, with enormous buildings where the whole train went right inside the buildings, halls about seven stories high and at least 20 or so meters that originally were made entirely of glass, the roof as well as the walls. And as soon as the bombing began they replaced the glass with sheet metal. So we worked by electric lighting day and night. There they made bombs. That is, the, the bombs arrived from the foundry and you had to turn, there were three operations: the flat part, the cones of the tips, and the tail of... It passed each bomb through three machines. After, you filled them with aircraft explosives. So they put me in front of a lathe, they said, "Here is what you have to do." I was in charge of making the cones. There's a whole team of engineers that arrived with stopwatches. They timed how long each operation should last. You know on a lathe you have the possibility of taking off a tenth of a millimeter at a time, or you can take off a millimeter at a time. So they had us take off a tenth of a millimeter. It lasted much too long, the operation. They gave us the norm. It was in 12 hours, they needed 30 bombs. It was doable in three hours too, but you had to be careful not to break a tool. The tool was a piece of steel, a steel cube, a special steel, Widia steel that was very hard like a diamond. You could cut windows with it. This steel was a patent of Krupp moreover, the Widia. But it was, for the slightest thing it broke if we happened to take off too much metal at a time, we could, we could break it. They warned us, three tools broken in one day, it's sabotage and hanging. So we had to be careful about that too, and I became a metal turner.

Q: A new trade!

A: Ha, ha: Well, it wasn't hard, the machine was adjusted. We just had to do the rest. There was a little crane because you couldn't lift an empty bomb like that. It must have weighed around 200 kilos. There were the jaws of the crane that caught them. And then we went back after 12 hours of work. We went back to our barracks. There was another roll call, they counted us to see if anyone is missing and dinner. And then one day there was one of the friends who fell sick. All of a sudden he held his stomach, he has sharp pain from having too.... There was a Revier, they brought him to the Revier and a doctor, a Pole, a Christian Pole who had an unpleasant remark: "It's not worth it to bring Jewish prisoners in any case, sooner or later they'll be dead, so a little sooner, a little later." I found that so revolting that I grabbed him by his lapel. And I said to him, "A doctor, he had to take the Hippocratic oath, his role is to treat people, not to make offensive remarks." He didn't react, let himself be shaken, but I didn't see that a few meters further there was a German in uniform who comes near, asks me what it's all about. So I said to him, "I bring a patient and he complains that it's not worth it to cure him." I told him, "That's not his role as a doctor." So he says I'm right, to leave the other one, to go back to the barracks, because I said to myself, I'll never see him again, this, this guy will surely do him in. But the man in uniform was a medical student who was starting surgery. He said to himself, he has a guinea pig. He brought him into the hospital of the city, he operated. I learned afterward, he'd had an intestinal blockage. He was operated on, he pulled through. He came a week later, thinned out, weakened, but on his feet. They asked him what his profession was, he was a cabinetmaker, a talented cabinetmaker, and inside the camps there was what was called the Lagerkommando, a commando in charge of, of the camp maintenance.

End of Tape 4

Tape 5

Q: There was a Lagerkommando?

A: Lagerkommando. There were 16 prisoners there, from many trades. There was a carpenter, there was a painter, there was a plumber, there was an electrician, a roofer. Each one was given the job of, a glazer to replace a window sometimes, a capo of course. A capo of the previous generation who was there since '33, a veteran of the camps. And so this guy, when he arrived, they asked him what he knows how to do. He says he's a cabinetmaker. But there was no work for a cabinetmaker in a maintenance commando, but it was November, Christmas was approaching. And it was one of the Germans' obsessions to have toys for the children to put under the Christmas tree. So, the capo wanted to take advantage of the situation, he gave the cabinetmaker the job of making toys. The toys, it was a wooden truck for example or building games, it was pretty limited. So one day, since he knew that I was vaguely an artist, he comes to see me and says to me, if I want to come and see his capo, I could provide the work of a painter to paint and shellac his toys a little so they'd be a little less dreary and I'd have my extra ration of, of soup. So after work I went in there, I shellacked the toys, I even drew a Mickey Mouse that he cut out in plywood with nails when you pulled a string, it raised its arms and legs, I shellacked the Mickey Mouse, it was a big success. I was asked to do several other ones, only we worked 12 hours a day and with an hour of roll call before and an hour after and the time it took to wash up, I was starting to be short on sleep. I slept while walking, I slept while turning the bombs and I felt after all that I'm not well. I have to stop. So I said to the capo, "Tomorrow I'm not coming, I'm not getting enough sleep, I must sleep a little; otherwise I'm going to cause an accident at work." "Ah;" he says, "I can't force you to work, it's extra work after all." I told him, "I really like the atmosphere here, but I can't go on." So I didn't go back the next day, and not the day after, and then afterwards there was the head of the camp, I don't know his, his name or what his background was. We called him der Hauptmann, the captain. It wasn't a rank in the SS. He must have been in the army before. He came to take delivery of, of his toys too. Well, they gave him toys in unfinished wood. So he exploded -- what is this, soldiers who are under his orders gets pleasant, shellacked toys, magnificent, and *he* gets such a primitive toy. So the capo explains, the artist who, who did it, suffered from lack of sleep and didn't want to come and work here. And he said, "I don't give a damn if he turns bombs there, he just has to come and make toys full time at least until Christmas. And so they came to get me at the factory, I had more urgent things to do than turn bombs, make Mickey Mouses. I think I could have, still today, more than 60 years later, drawn Mickey Mouses with my eyes closed and shellacked them, I made so many of them.

Q: So you worked doing that in November until...

A: Making toys.

Q: Making toys.

A: Until Christmas.

Q: Painting them in fact, you didn't make them?

A: It's my friends who made them in wood..

Q: Who made them.

A: I did the...

Q: Was it a special toy workshop or was it in a room?

A: No, no. It was just, there was a place...

Q: Makeshift. A makeshift room?

A: Right. And the capo made money off it! They gave him a few perks and since he was a hardened criminal, gruff, he didn't talk much. He had a special Bavarian sense of humor. During the day, to amuse himself, he would take a piece of electric wire, he tied it to the door handle. And he went to the barrack where a few sick people remained. He said, "If any patient wants an extra bowl of soup, they can come and drink it in --"...When these people who could barely stand on their feet went in there they touched the door handle, they were shaken by.... Well, the typical Bavarian humor. I observed the scene from a distance, I didn't want to interfere. I depended on him a little. But finally, the next morning, I arrived in the morning already, not in the evening, I saw him at the window looking outside and when I got near he disappeared. So I said to myself, he's going to play the same trick. I took off my beret, I touched the door handle with it, through the beret, which insulates. I didn't feel the current, I pretended to see nothing, but I saw the wire hanging. He was a little surprised that I hadn't been electrocuted. He found some pretext if I don't want to go and get something outside. By then I was already sure. I went out and I do the same thing again, taking off the beret, but he couldn't stand it any longer, he grabbed it himself to check with both hands. He couldn't get his hands off it. He started to tremble. There was a fuse box on the wall, I ran there, I cut the electricity. When he came to, he asks me, "Why did you do that?" I said, "Do what?" "Why did you cut the electricity?" But I said, "You don't realize, at your age" -- he was 65 at the time -- "you could get killed! Here in this -- you can't joke around with the 220 volts after all." And he said yes, after all, I'd saved his life. Ah, I tell him, it's the least I can do. But since then his behavior towards me changed completely as if he had a debt to pay me. In addition it suited him that I stayed because he gave me a soup, but *he* got something else, more than that, from these toys. Once the toy season was over he says he'll find me another job so that I can stay here: make big black signs two square meters, write how many prisoners there are in the house, how many went to work, how many sick ones stayed, who the head of the barrack is, each day, he'll go and mark that down in chalk. But I didn't have the joy of doing this kind of sign for very long. Towards January 15, it was a Sunday I remember, we only worked until noon, not all day on Sundays. We came back to the camp, no sooner had we gotten back -- an air raid, airplanes, I'd never seen as many, there were several hundred....the first two dropped a smoke bomb by parachute...and all the others, one wave after another that came in between the smoke bombs, were dropping a carpet of bombs. The show lasted about half an hour, roughly, there must have been around 800

planes. I tried to count them, there were so many of them. The next morning we had to clear the, the ruins. The factory was totally demolished. The Germans tried to recover what was still possible to recover, but in the end there must not have been much. And that coincided with a cold wave... People went to work outside all day clearing that. I stayed and made my signs, only the victims started to number by the dozens, then by hundreds. The people couldn't bear the low temperature with pajamas on their backs, and, well, the dead had to be brought back into the camps because they had to be counted even if they were dead.... And little by little, they started to, to be short of manpower. So they came in the camp looking for freeloaders too. That was my case too. They told me the next day, you're going to go to the factory and clear the ruins. I remember, I went and my teeth were chattering from morning to evening. I couldn't control them, it was so cold. We found empty paper bags for cement, we put several layers between the coat and the shirt to protect us from the wind. But, when, touching a piece of metal, it stuck to the hand and the....It was really not fun. In the evening, I knew, the capo had an obsession, when the war was over, he wanted to open an, a workshop of, more or less what he was doing in the maintenance camp, saying that the cities would be bombed, the houses in ruins, it would all have to be restored. So I found the tools, the screwdrivers, the hammers. I brought them to him, because he was convinced there will be a shortage of, of tools. So the first day he gave me soup again, he says to me the next day, "If you find more tools, bring them to me." So I brought him some more tools. He says to me, "Listen, you'll stay here from now on, we're not going to work there." I stayed inside and kept warm while the others cleared the ruins. The cold wave ended in the meantime.....Only in the meantime the front started to, to move a little. The Americans on the one side, the Russians on the other, were approaching. We had to leave the Hermann Goering Werke. They evacuated us, but this time to a women's camp in Ravensbrück. A barrack had been vacated by these women. They bring us there. Under the straw things, on the straw mat there we found women's underwear, rayon stockings....

Q: How were you evacuated, do you remember?

A: By train as usual.

Q: Right.

A: It wasn't very far to Ravensbrück.

Q: You didn't go by foot?

A: No, no! It was still early April, more or less. So in Ravensbrück there's something bizarre, we were there two or three days then at the roll call they say, "All the Jews who are still here, take one step forward." Well, since we expected that sooner or later they'd do us in, no one went out. So he understood, he says, "Listen, this time it's different, there's an agreement that has been negotiated between Prince Bernadotte -- it's the first time I'd heard this name Folke Bernadotte, and Himmler. And all the surviving Jews can go to Sweden. They're going to evacuate us to Sweden. And since we didn't believe much in his words, he had the doors of the camp opened, there were three trucks that entered. They

opened the slatted side of the truck, there were Red Cross packages. And he says each one of us will receive three Swedish Red Cross packages for the trip. Then he opens a cardboard box, he takes out a tin can, kosher meat, kosher corned beef. And he says that you don't think after all that if it was to execute you that they'll distribute kosher meat! That was an argument that made sense. So we went out, each of us got three boxes, that each weighed between three and five kilos and then they loaded us on the train, we head towards Sweden.... Only the American aviation was already hyperactive, they practically didn't stop. We heard the noise of the motors practically all the time. They dropped their bombs on all the railroad tracks, the bridges. We drove for 10 kilometers in one direction, a bridge was destroyed, we went backwards, we took another route, there was another bridge that was destroyed, we traveled like that for 10 days. And little by little our boxes got smaller. Finally one day we stop in the middle of a forest somewhere, they tell us, there's no more possibility of going to Sweden. All the railroad tracks are destroyed, we can't rebuild them as fast as they're destroyed. We're going to unload you in a temporary camp. It was brick barracks still without windows, the windows hadn't been put in yet. No floor, sand on the ground. There were already about 5,000 prisoners in there. In general, Russians, Ukrainians. And there was one source of water, a pump in the middle. In the morning we went out with our bowls, we could pump a little water. We didn't know if we should drink it first or if we should wash with it. In addition we were attacked all the time by the Russians who tried to get their hands on what was left of our Red Cross packages. There were lots of deaths, no crematorium running. So they kept them on the surface like a pyramid, piled up as high as the second story....

Q: Do you remember the name of the camp?

A: Yes. It was Woebbelin.

Q: Where was it?

A: In the middle of the forest, isolated.

Q: Do you remember where?

A: W...

Q: Yes.

A: ...umlaut, B, B, E, L, I, N.

Q: Do you know where it is?

A: More or less, I saw because I knew we're in the Mecklenburg a little west of Ravensbrück. Well, we got there, yes. The corpses started getting black, stinking. And they went up to the second story, and we didn't work there. There was nothing to do as a matter of fact until the end of the month.

Q: The month of April?

A: End of April. And it was May second, here I remember the date. There are lots of planes in the sky again, then we see parachutists jumping. They must have jumped two, three kilometers past our camp, a little to the east. So we head out the door of the camp, there are no more Germans. They'd seen the parachutists jump too and they disappeared. So all the Russians who were there threw themselves on the warehouse, there was food there. They lit a fire in the whole camp to heat the things. It didn't interest me that much, I preferred to be outside not inside. So I went through the door, there was a group of us, several friends. We went in the direction where the parachutists fell. When we get to a crossroads of two roads, an American who's lying down behind a machine gun who starts yelling to stop, who are we. So I had some memories of English still, I told him we come from a camp that's about two kilometers from here. But what origin are we? I tell him, "We're Polish Jews." So he comes out.starts to hug us. He didn't know there were any survivors.to go a little to the east a few kilometers, there's a city that's called Ludwigslust, and he says, his unit is already in Ludwigslust. There's a rabbi there, a military rabbi, he'll be so happy to see us.....

Q: He was Jewish.

A: Yes. He was from New York and he had some Jewish expressions that he still knew. So we went looking for the rabbi, who we didn't find as a matter of fact.

Q: Ludwiglu...Ludwigs...

A: Ludwigslust, it's about halfway between Berlin and Hamburg.

Q: I suggest we stop here, maybe we can eat something.

A: Eat, yes.

Q: And we'll go on.

A: Yes.

Q: Maybe we'll eat something.

End of Tape 5

Tape 6

- Q I, I'd like to go back over a detail about the painting. You mentioned at one time that you had made maps or a map?
- A: Yes, geographical maps, yes.
- Q: And I'd like, can you tell me this story of maps?
- A: Yes. So it was at the time of the furthest advance of the German troops in Russia. They wanted to take advantage of their triumph to make propaganda, so we made a big sign. It measured about four meters by four meters and I drew the map of Russia with the major rivers, the cities, and then we made a small German flag on a nail and with the hammer we nailed it in according to the line of the front to show the advance of the German troops in Russia. It was around the month of June, July '42. It was really the farthest advance.
- Q: At the time you were in this camp...
- A: Well, I wasn't in the camp, I was recovering from my typhoid fever.
- Q: Yes.
- A: I was liberated but I did work that was recognized as beneficial to the public. I was up to my knees in water to remove, to make the river beds deeper to prevent flooding, especially in the spring when the snow melted around the city.
- Q: And who was the map for?
- A: The public.
- Q: The Jewish public or --?
- A: No, no. The Polish public. It was outside the ghettos.
- Q: Was it made in the ghetto?
- A: No, it was made on site.
- Q: On site, and it's you they asked to make it?
- A: First I drew it and then, since the painter didn't manage to follow, I gave him a hand.
- Q: And that was the beginning of your career as a –
- A: A painter, sign painter, yes.
- Q: Sign painter, right. There's a second element that, that I'd like you to tell about, it's the account of Treblinka.

A: Yes.

Q: When you heard about the gassing, can you tell us that?

A: Yes. So there was a fellow who was deported from Warsaw to Treblinka and he was in the commando that searched for precious objects to recover from the corpses: gold teeth, rings, jewelry, and give them, of course, to the guards, but he put a little to the side, he managed to bribe a Ukrainian guard, since Treblinka was surrounded by forests, the Ukrainian guard was able to look the other way so that he could escape. He managed to escape but he didn't find a place in the forest, he wandered around for a few days, he had trouble getting anything to eat. When he went into a village they'd identify him pretty quickly. He ended up in a ghetto. At the end they sent him to our camp.

Q: Your camp was the Daimler camp?

A: Daimler-Benz, yes.

Q: And there he gave an account.

A: Yes, he told...

Q: Did he –

A: Yes, he told me that, yes.

Q: He told you personally?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: What he had seen, what did he see? Did he see corpses?

A: Yes. He had the job of pulling out gold teeth from those corpses, remove the rings.

Q: So he'd seen the corpses arrive, come out of the gas chambers?

A: Right.

Q: Do you remember if he went into the gas chamber?

A: No, I don't think so.

Q: Do you remember his name?

A: No.

Q: Do you remember approximately when he told you this?

A: Yes, it was towards, towards the end of '43. And already at the time I'd been in prison for three years and I knew nothing about it. I knew that my parents, they were deported in, in '42, have very little chance of surviving even without being gassed. I knew a little bit about the conditions in the camps. To survive, you had to really, you had to be very strong and even that wasn't a sufficient guarantee, let alone being gassed.

Q: For you –

A: For that matter, I have the impression that many more victims died of hunger, sickness and exhaustion than in the gas chambers.

Q: So at the end of '43 you learned the details about the gassing.

A: The extermination, yes.

Q: In Treblinka.

A: Hmm.

Q: About what happened in Treblinka. Had you ever heard of Treblinka before?

A: No.

Q: No. And then you realized that your parents had probably been –

A: But I didn't have too many illusions even before that. But –

Q: And the name, the name of Belzec, that you gave us, when did you hear it?

A: I think when I was in the, in '42, after, in the steelworks, because there were several Poles who worked, who – one of them was also a former railroad worker and he said that had driven transports like that.

Q: But you knew the destination then, but you didn't know what happened in Belzec?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Although I suspected it a little.

Q: You had to wait for this very exact account about Treblinka.

A: More than a year later.

Q: So. Do you remember the other prisoners' reaction?

A: Yes, it was disbelief. We, we doubted the truth of the facts.

Q: Do you know what became of this witness?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: I don't remember his name.

Q: So we, we were at your liberation. So you meet up with the first American soldier.

A: Yes.

Q: Who you see.

A: At the crossroads of two roads, yes.

Q: At the crossroads of two roads, who starts to cry, so he sends you –

A: To the city of Ludwigslust, yes.

Q: And so you go by foot to Ludwigslust?

A: We arrive in the city.

Q: Do you remember the city, how -- where was it?

A: Well, it was a typical small German town. What struck me was that there were hundreds of women with baby carriages. I thought, where do all these children come from all of a sudden in the streets, and then I went near a baby carriage, there was no child, there was canned food in it. In this city there was a factory of canned meat and the population rushed into the factory to loot the stock. So I took a can too. It was my first meal as a free man. We walked around in the streets, there were lots of soldiers, we looked for our rabbi, who we didn't find, no one knew about a Jewish chaplain. In the meantime it was starting to get dark, we had to start thinking about finding a place to sleep. So we were a group of six. We started to talk about where we'd spend the night. So the first proposal was to go into, into the first apartment that we came across, chase the inhabitants out, take a shower and sleep in a real bed. Well, there were objections that we don't see any men. There are only women and children there. If there was a man he was missing a leg or arm, that we can't behave like them, we're a civilized people. This kind of discussion was really surrealistic. We voted, the majority was against. We shouldn't take revenge on women and children. We found an abandoned German army truck covered with a tarpaulin. We lay down in it and my first night of freedom.

Q: And that was May second, or?

A: May second.

Q: May second, 1945.

A: '45, yes.

Q: What physical condition were you in at the time?

A: Well, strangely, I was in good condition. I weighed myself a few days later, I still weighed 50 kilos. Which I consider relatively decent. I'd kept my muscles though I'd lost weight like everyone else. And most of all, I'd made an exchange in the last camps and a box of powdered milk for a pair of real shoes to a prisoner. Because I thought that at the last minute a pair of shoes can save your life. Sometimes you have to know how to run fast, with those wooden clogs you couldn't run.

Q: So you were in Ludwigslust on May second, you were still in the clothes...

A: Yes, in the striped clothes.

Q: In the striped clothes with the –

A: With the number.

Q: With the number and then the –

A: Triangle, yes.

Q: You had two triangles.

A: Two triangles, yes.

Q: Red and –

A: Yellow.

Q: Red and yellow.... So you spend the night, do you remember who the, your five companions were?

A: One, yes. We were, until I returned to Lodz we lived together, at the same time I was with him, he came from a large suburb of Warsaw, he was a tailor by profession. He died about a year later from high blood pressure. He gained weight too fast and couldn't take it. It's his widow who told me.

Q: Where did he die, do you remember?

A: In his bed or.

Q: But in Poland?

A: In Poland in Lodz. I know he had high blood pressure, he asked me at the time if I couldn't send him medication from here. I sent lots of medications, there was no problem. My brother asked the laboratory for free samples. They delivered whole

caseloads of samples to him. So all I had to do was mail them. Well, he survived a few months...

Q: And the others, do you –

A: The others, there was one who disappeared, who was head of, Verlagerälteste, a camp head, who was afraid for his life. The others, I – ah, there was one who was a former medical student, I still kept his photos, because at the beginning he was so weak that the American hospitalized him in an American hospital over there in Ludwigslust. And then, when he got back to Poland, he delivered, he sent me his photo before and after.

Q: And you kept these photos.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Do you have them here?

A: Yes.... The others, I don't remember their names.

Q: Do you remember the name of the first one you mentioned, who died of high blood pressure?

A: Yes, Goldberg was his name, Leon Goldberg. I remember him, because, back in the steelworks there at the Hermann Goering Werke, he got sick too and he recovered. I think he had pneumonia and they sent him to the Lagerkommando too to ask him what he knows how to do and he was a tailor. Now there was a, a strange fashion in the camp, elegance consisted in having bell-bottom pants.

Q: Yes.

A: Managing to get yourself a piece of striped cloth and make a triangle out of it. At first it seemed to me totally stupid, how can people have this kind of preoccupation under these conditions. But afterwards I understood. It was useful. It was the sign that you have a role in this camp, that you have the possibility of having these bell-bottoms on your pants, so you were more respected. You got kicked in the butt less than, than not having any. So he had the task of making these inserts in the pants. And when we were evacuated from there, when we went towards Ravensbrück, he was still very weak, we were only two Jews in the wagon. So I tried to protect him a little, to leave him some room near a window so he could even sit down and breathe a little. And afterwards he's -- he had the reaction of a dog who's been fed. And he followed me around, he wouldn't let go of me in Ravensbrück. And afterwards we returned to Poland. He asked me if he can stay with me because he has no place to go back to, anyway, there are no survivors in his family.

Q: So the evening in Ludwigslust you slept in the truck with your five companions.

A Right.

Q: And what happened next? One of them is admitted to the hospital?

A: Yes. We left him in the hospital and afterwards we went out again, we tried to, to talk with the American soldiers. And they told us that the city where we were is supposed to be transferred to the Russians in the weeks to come, that according to the agreements the boundary has to be along the Elbe, and since we're east of the Elbe, it will become Russian. So we took bicycles, because there were lots of German prisoners, columns that were being led, some of them pushed a bicycle. So I went up to the column and I said, a prisoner in prisoner camps, a bicycle won't do him much good, he doesn't need it. So he starts to sob, he's wounded, he has a wounded leg, he took an old watch out of his pocket and he'll give me a bicycle so that --- he'll give me the watch so that I'll give him the bicycle back. So I left him his bike. I took one from the next guy, the others took the same thing, and we headed west. We didn't have any maps, we found our way more or less by the sun. We biked 30 or 40 kilometers across the countryside.

Q: You, so you had several bikes? There were several of you?

A: Yes. Six bikes. Each one had his bike.

Q: Yes.

A: We stopped along the way at a peasant's house asking if we could spend the night. He said, "Yes, on the straw." So we spent the night there, in the morning the farmer's wife came, if we want to wash our faces to go to the well, to wash up and afterwards to go to her kitchen to have breakfast.

Q: Did that surprise you?

A: Not so much, because we frightened people. There were frequent cases of prisoners, especially Russian ones, who really behaved like conquerors, who even burned farms down to get revenge, to... So I think that it was out of fear. But we washed our faces, we went into the kitchen, there was a big loaf of bread, a big pitcher of hot milk, a liquid that looked a little like coffee, even butter, real butter, we already forgot that that existed, as much as we wanted, we could eat our fill. There was a magnificent tablecloth, I remember, embroidered with Hebrew designs. So we asked innocently, this tablecloth is beautiful, where is it from? "Well," he says, "well, they distributed it in exchange for textile tickets." So somebody was happy with it. But well, they were fairly decent, those peasants. I couldn't hold that against them. We went on. We got to a bridge over the Elbe, guarded by a few Americans and they prevented us from crossing the bridge, saying that the bridge had been mined and until it was cleared of mines they prefer not to let us pass. So we sat down on the ground, we spent the night out in the open waiting for them to clear the mines. But the next morning there's a truck that arrived, they told us to get into the truck, we went back to Ludwigslust. They didn't let us cross the bridge. They brought us to a German barracks that was empty, saying that we can go absolutely anywhere to pass the time. There was even, inside the barracks, a small lake with inflatable boats. I found a building that seemed better than the others, I think it was reserved for officers. So we opened the door with an axe, we went in there, there was a beautiful three-room apartment,

well-furnished, the closets full of clothes, they really left in a big rush, a nice radio that we were able to turn on. There were mainly American army programs. There was already no more German radio broadcasting. It was quite the life. So we divided up into three teams of two, two of us went to the Americans to give them a hand, take care of supplies and they brought lots of canned foods back to the house, two others were in charge of cooking, preparing the meals, and that former camp head, Alfred Israel, and me, we took bicycles, we'd go out into the countryside looking for fresh products, every day in a different direction. And the meals, we'd eat a meal every two hours. Eating was the only preoccupation. There was not only a real, but, I think, a psychological hunger. We'd lacked things for so long that...every day we went in another direction, we went to a peasant's house, when there was a chicken farm we asked him nicely for a chicken, who were so frightened that they gave, others had rabbits. One, one day, even gave me a pig and we tied a rope around its neck, we tried with one on a bike in front, the other behind with a stick, we hit the pig on its rear so it would get going, well, we had a hard time. We were about six kilometers away from our barracks, we managed to bring it back alive, we made it climb into the elevator. I was afraid, the three floors on foot. We shut the pig up in the bathroom and went to look for a butcher capable of slaying it. We found one who was a butcher, well, who sold mostly poultry, who knew how to kill hens and ducks and geese. Pigs, he'd never done. But he finally agreed to handle it provided we give him, someone give him a hand and some rope to tie up the pig's feet. So one volunteered, the butcher too. We heard screams, for a fairly long time, mixed, the butcher's screams, the pig's screams. When we went into the bathroom there was blood all the way to the ceiling and it was the pig's, not the butcher's. In the end he asked for a ham, he asked for the liver for his work. He was happy and so were we. But the six of us finished off the pig in a week.

Q: So then you gained back some weight?

A: Well, I weighed myself a month later, I'd gained 30 kilos. That makes an average of a kilo a day. We went to the city hall of that town all the same, because we had no ID papers. They gave us a little paper saying that we've just been liberated from the camps, that we say, we claim, that our names are such-and-such, we were born in such-and-such a place, on such-and-such a date.

Q So you remember the atmosphere of those days? Did you meet any other survivors?

A. Yes, there were quite a few.

Q Who came from other camps?

A: Yes, who came from the same camp.

Q: Who were liberated together with you?

A Strangely, there was a friend of my brother in Paris in this camp, who I used to see often before the war in Lodz, he was there, I didn't recognize him and he didn't recognize me either because I must have changed over the past few years. I found

him afterwards in Paris. We were all surprised, both of us, to have been in the same place and not to have recognized each other.

Q: So the place was Woebbelin.

A: Woebbelin, yes.

Q: So this is the, the days right after liberation.

A: Yes.

Q: Until the end of the war, until May 8, do you know how long you stayed in –

A: I stayed in Ludwigslust a month. And at the end of the month the Americans came in, they told us they're going to group us in one place to treat us, to take care of time. They told us to get into a truck. The Russians were four kilometers away. They plain delivered us to the Russians. Saying, "This concerns you, these are people from the east, deal with it."

Q: Were you surprised?

A: A little, I thought the method was a little offhand. But, well, everything was so improvised at the time, especially since some time before, I went towards the east by bicycle, with my friends and we happened to come across a Russian soldier all of a sudden. Who stopped us and he said, "OK, I'm going to take you to the Kommandantur, you're American spies and you come from the American side." I said that we're not spies, that we'd just come to look for food. He doesn't want to hear anything about it. He wants to take us in. So I had a packet of cigarettes in my pocket, American ones that I don't smoke in fact, I offer him a cigarette, he makes a contemptuous gesture. "That isn't worth anything," he says, "the tobacco isn't strong enough, it's tasteless." And he took a piece of newspaper out of his pocket, he made a little cone with it, he had scraps of tobacco in his pockets, stalks, that smelled really bad. He said, "But this smells at least, it's good, it's strong." So I had an inspiration, I said, "But that kind, tobacco like that, there are trucks full of it at the railroad station in Ludwigslust." So he pricked up his ears – What? Truckloads? No one wants to smoke them over there, everyone prefers the American cigarettes. So I said, if he wants, we'll go back, he gets us something for food and we bring a bag with these tobacco scraps. So he says, "It's a deal, how long will it take?" "Oh," I said, "for the round trip plan on an hour at the most." He said, "OK." He sets the meeting place, he went to a farm here. He brought back a live rabbit by the two ears and he gives me the rabbit. "Here, you have a down payment." I said, "How do you want me to lug around a live rabbit on a bicycle?" He took a pair of pants from a closet and made a knot in the leg, he put the rabbit in it, he said, "This is a bag." Well, we go back to get the tobacco, we come across an American soldier. He doesn't let communist spies in. I said, "We're not communist spies, we come from here, from Ludwigslust. Only we went looking for food." "And what did you find?" "But," I said, "a rabbit!" So I show him the pants, where there was a rabbit and he's all surprised. "What do you want to do with this rabbit?" I said, "We're going to try to eat it." "Do you know how to kill it?" I said, I'd never killed before, but well, I'm going to learn. "Do you

want me to fix it for you? I was a farmer, " he tells me, "in Texas." I said, "I have no objection." So he took out -- first he caught the rabbit by its back legs and he gave it just one slap. The rabbit was dead. He took out a knife, with extraordinarily elegant gestures he made an incision all along the leg, around the neck, he opened the stomach, he shook the whole thing, the skin stayed in his hand, the rabbit fell on the ground. He emptied out the guts. He says, "It's ready to go into the pot." I thanked him, he let us go through.

End of Tape 6.

Tape 7

Q: So you were able to return?

A: Yes, but a few days later, they loaded us onto a truck and delivered us to the Russians: "Sort things out by yourselves!" So the Russians requisitioned a hotel, they gave us a room for the six of us. Two slept in the bed, the others slept on the floor. At night they, the Russians came to search for arms.

Q: Do you remember where you were at that time?

A Yes. A German town next to it was called Grabow, I think, this town. They took everything they could: belts, because they had -- this victorious army had a piece of string for belts, even their rifles had a string to put on their -- they were really equipped like the army of an underdeveloped country, watches they found, of course, a box of matches, that too was fair game, that's perfect. I found that a bit outrageous, I pointed out to them there are enough German civilians they can steal things from, not from us who just got out of a camp, they didn't care, as a matter of fact they were a little bit Mongols, Kazakh, Kirghiz, I don't know, eyes a little like the Chinese. We weren't allowed to go out before six in the morning. At six o'clock in the morning I went out to look for the commander, to file a complaint, because I didn't think it was fair. He noted all that down, if I'm able to recognize the soldier. I said, I didn't think so, they all look alike to me, the Mongols, I can't tell them apart. But well, he still wrote a report in the meantime. They made a convoy still, a few cars, we left for the east, we bypassed Magdeburg, we went to Berlin, which we bypassed too. The train stopped in Frankfurt-an-der-Oder which was on the border at the time, which is still on the German-Polish border today. There they told us to get out and wait for another train that's going to Poland and on the same track, to wait for this one to leave and another one to arrive. So we walked around on the tracks, we see a few freight cars and a soldier in front of a car. We ask him what he's doing and he says he's guarding the car. And what's inside it? He doesn't know. We asked if we can take a look. He says, "If you want." So we open the door, there were bills that were still uncut, reichsmarks, bills of 20 reichsmarks but each sheet was about two meters by two meters, halfway up to the top of the car. So we ask if it's worth anything, he says, "I don't know!" I ask him if we can just take a few sheets, for a souvenir. "Ah," he says, "if you want, yes, take." So each of us took a few sheets, we folded them in two, rolled them up in rolls, then a while later there's a train that arrives. They tell us to get in, we leave. We arrived in the evening at the railroad station in Lodz. We're not allowed to go out at night so we have to spend the night sitting in the waiting room. We spend the night in the waiting room. In the morning I went off to look for my apartment. So I had a place to live already, I had the maid's room that the Russians got for me.

Q: Wait, so you arrive in Lodz at the railroad station?

A: Yes.

Q: And you get out and you go back to the address you had left...

A: The next morning.

Q: ...in March 1940.

A: '40, yes. And there were Russian officers there.

Q: Right. Do you remember the address?

A: Yes, I even have a friend who was in Lodz, who took a picture for me, even of the building.

Q: And the building is still standing?

A Yes.

Q: So what's the address?

A: It's Dombrowski Square, in the square of a General Dombrowski. And it's, it's strange because there were two Dombrowskis. There was a Dombrowski who was a general of Napoleon's who formed a legion in Italy and came to Poland. And there was a second one, a hero of the Revolution of '48, who was well-known for being a leftist and so even the Polish communist government considered that he was a man who was worthy of having a square, so they didn't even change the name.

Q: There was, there was a Dombrowski legion?

A: It's the General Dombrowski Square.

Q: Yes.

A: But since there were two in Polish history.

Q: Right. So you go back home, the apartment is occupied by Russian officers?

A: By Russian officers, yes.

Q: So you knock and they tell you –

A: So they gave me the apartment, well, the maid's room on the fifth floor. I go up there and they even gave me some furniture to furnish this room.

Q: But your parents' furniture was still there?

A: No. But it seems that the Germans who lived there during the occupation left the same furniture and it was the first Russians who occupied it, who, when they left, unloaded it somewhere, and those were organized somewhere else.

Q: Did you find any family objects, photos?

A: No, everything was emptied.

Q: Everything was emptied. You settle down in the maid's room in the building?

A: And well, I had to live on something.

Q: When was this, do you recall, when you went back to Lodz?

A: Oh, it must have been end of June.

Q: And was the city –

A: The beginning of June. End of May, beginning of June.

Q: Was the city intact?

A: Except for the former ghetto, which was more or less, yes, looted, well, the population took not only the furniture, but the doors, the wooden flooring -- all that was used for firewood during the war.

Q: Your parents' apartment was not inside the ghetto?

A: No, no. It was in a fairly middle-class neighborhood, let's say, opposite a park, a garden, it was very nice. So, walking around in the street, I see a sign painter. I go in, ask if he doesn't need a worker, I worked in the business. He says, "Yes. If you can do it for me, I just now got an order to put on a tomb," he says, "here lies so-and-so, died, etc., a black sign with gold letters." I do the thing for him. He says to me, "If you can come by tomorrow I'll have another job for you." He paid me an amount of money. I was able to buy some bread, go and feed us, me and all my friends. Then they told me that a Jewish committee has been formed and to go and see; it can be useful. So I went there to the address that was given, there was a window and a line of people who arrived, people arrived from all over Russia, those who were in Russia during the war, camps, survivors. I wait in line, they take my name, they take the address. I gave the old address, so they tell me, "If you want some aid money, you're entitled to it but after the end of the month. We ran out of this month's money and come back in three weeks and you'll have a little aid." I said, "About how much is it?" She says; "A hundred, I don't know, 40." I said, "What does that correspond to in terms of purchasing power?" She says, "About a kilo of bread." I said, "Well, that's not what I came for, but maybe for -- do you have an idea of a job of any kind?" He says to me, "What do you know how to do?" "Well," I say, "my last occupation was sign painter." He says, "I don't see what I can offer you, but in the main street, at such-and-such a number, there's a cooperative that has been formed. They might have something for you. It's a building cooperative. Go to such-and-such an address." So I went to the address, there was an empty apartment with several rooms on the second floor. In one room there was a desk, a telephone and a secretary. They introduce me to the president of the cooperative, who claimed to be an architect, who came from Russia, and this cooperative's job was to take the dilapidated buildings and renovate them, the

Q: Was it a Jewish cooperative, or –

A: Yes. To restore the buildings a little. They mostly needed carpenters, painters, masons, electricians, and they found me the job of making a big sign that here we do renovating. And the president says to me, "Listen to what I can offer you. I can give you an empty room, because there are lots of rooms that aren't being used for anything. You sort things out on your own, you do whatever you want and you give the cooperative a third of your earnings." I said, "That's perfect. It suits me." So with the small amount of money that I'd already earned I bought two cans of paint, some brushes and a little dissolvent, I dug up a piece of sheet metal somewhere, a rectangle of sheet metal, I painted it white with black letters, I wrote that here orders are taken for ads and other signs. The next day it was dry and I took a screwdriver, four screws to screw it on the door and a man who walks by. "Ah! That interests me, I'm a doctor and I just opened my office, it just happens that I need a sign for the house." I said, "It will take two days to do it." "That's perfect." Two days later I delivered the sign, I even put it up on the front of the door. He says to me, "Listen, I have a friend who is a lawyer, who is also opening an office." I built up a clientele of private clients. Afterwards there are some party members and every other day they held another demonstration. They needed transparencies, well, a canvas, preferably a red one, with brooms at each end, and make "Long Live May Day," whatever. There was a new Polish Independence Day in July and "Long Live Polish-Russian Friendship" etc., and these -- they were always in a hurry because the demonstration was planned at the most 24 hours in advance. So I always charged high prices because I had to work nights to deliver it on time. But it went fast because the letters had to be large. I had a new profession and so.

Q: Did you work alone?

A: Yes.

Q And you were still living in the maid's room?

A: Yes; right up until the end in fact as long as, after I wrote a letter to my brother's address.

Q: In Paris.

A: In Paris, hoping that he's either alive or that the letter would be forwarded if he's not there. And that was in June. In December I received a wire from Paris. Six months later he received the letter. He was still at his old address.

Q: The letter took six months.

A: Yes.

Q: But it got there!

A: It got there after... The wire took just one day.

Q: You must have been surprised.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you look for other survivors from you family in Lodz?

A: Yes. I found this cousin the chemist.

Q: Can you tell us his story?

A: Well, he hid in an underground bunker there and he was found. His brother-in-law knocked out a German with a brick and started to run. They ran after him, he took advantage of the chance, with his little girl, and he succeeded in escaping. He survived until January, when the Russians arrived. He died at an old age in fact, I think, he was 93. That was the branch of the family where they lived to an old age because his brother in London died at age 97. His daughter got married later. She went to Canada, I think, to Toronto. I haven't had other news since.

Q: So he survived in hiding?

A: Yes, in cellars.

Q: And after the war, did he stay in Lodz?

A: Well, he had a very nice position. He had, he was director of this chemicals factory and his brother was the owner of a big residential building. So he got an apartment in this building. For me, he was a man who'd made it. And when I decided to leave he gave me a tip. He gave me the address of a Russian colonel in Stettin. That was a border town, formerly German, on the banks of the Oder, but on the wrong side of the Oder, the Polish side, and from there, there was a highway all the way to Berlin. Well, this colonel had found a profitable profession. He had a truck where he managed to put between 30 and 40 people who wanted to go to Berlin and on the truck's cab he put a Russian sailor with a machine gun. He himself sat next to the driver in the cab, the others were standing. A covered truck, he didn't stop at the border. He'd go directly to Berlin and every trip he'd pocket about a million zlotys. On the way back he trafficked in saccharine, any old thing. Whatever he found in Berlin. I remember I asked him the question, if he'd been doing this work for a long time. He tells me he makes five to ten million in profit every week and there's no prosecutor in Russia who you can't buy for that amount. Then he thinks for a minute. Stalin himself, he says, you could buy him for ten million.

Q: So is it known what became of him this -- is it known what became of him?

A: I don't know, I never saw him again.

Q: You settle in Lodz, you find this cousin, do you remember how you found the cousin again?

A: Well, I don't know.

Q: Where?

A: Through the telephone directory.

Q: Through the telephone directory and he was in it?

A: But I looked in the telephone directory.

Q: And his daughter had survived, his little girl with whom he escaped?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And other members of his family?

A: No, they were all shot as soon as they were found.

Q: So he was the only survivor of his family.

A: Yes.

Q: Along with your brother?

A: But yes, there were others, more distant cousins who survived with forged papers. And on my mother's side, they were all blond with blue eyes. They really didn't look Jewish and it was easier for them to go unnoticed.

Q: How old were you, so it was the summer of 1945?

A: I was 20.

Q: You were 20. What was the atmosphere in Lodz, you -- what did you do, you were free, were you alone?

A: Yes. In one way, yes. Well, there were lots of Russians, wounded, sick, the hospitals were full.

Q: You weren't a communist?

A: No. And they walked around the street in pajamas, it's true it was summer.... And they were very glad that the war was over, that....

Q: And what made you decide to leave?

A: Well, I decided to leave when the Russians went back home. When I heard news of my brother, that he's alive in Paris.

Q: So you told us, me, that with the Russians, those -- you, you -- they traded on the black market, those who occupied the apartment, is that right?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell us about that?

A: So they went to Berlin, they found clothes there. First clothes, well, used clothes that I didn't want to deal with. So they went back and they made several trips like that with the same passes. And they made quite a bit of money and I made even more because I more than doubled my money every time.

Q: So it was an extra income?

A: Yes.

Q: You sold, you sold clothes?

A: Sheets of reichsmarks. I asked if they're worth anything in Poland. They told me no, we used them for rugs first, and then to light fires with. And then when it was time to go, I paid a lot to buy reichsmarks. They were good for another three years.

Q: And did you make contact again with the Jewish community after this visit to the Jewish committee?

A: Not once they'd given me the address of that cooperative, no.

Q: So you sold clothes that came from Berlin that were brought back by the Russian officers and you found your brother's address, his trace.

A: Right.

Q: And when did you leave Poland?

A: It must have been March '46.

Q: March '46. And what made you decide to leave Poland finally? Was it the communist regime?

A: No. No, because I earned a decent living. If you considered at the time that decent -- well, I managed to feed and clothe myself. Rents didn't exist. You didn't pay rent, no one paid rent, not electricity either, or gas or telephone.

Q: And you didn't get your parents' apartment back?

A: No.

Q: You never lived there.

A: No.

Q: The Russians, the Russian officers stayed there?

A: Uhuh.

Q: So in March '46 you decide to leave and so you go to Stettin?

A: First with this Russian colonel to Berlin.

Q: Yes.

A: There was a building there on the Russian side, the Jewish community had a transit building, like that. I stayed a few days. I visited what remained of Berlin. And then one day...

Q:: What zone – do you remember what zone it was?

A: It was the Russian zone in the east.

Q: In Berlin.

A: Yes. Then we crossed over. There was no wall at the time; you could cross over freely to the American side. There, there was the UNRRA at the time, that was the United Nations Rehabilitation, that formed convoys towards huge trucks where they, they put a hundred or so people. There was one single passport for the hundred people. We went directly Hanover where there was a center too. There, I met a girl who had a sister in Munich, who said, "If you don't know where to go," she said, "you can come to Munich, we have a room." So I make the trip there, I traveled a little through Germany, Hanover, Bergen.

Q: You said that you went from one displaced persons camp to another?

A: Yes.

Q: Is that what they called them, displaced persons camps?

A: That's right.

Q: You went from one camp to another a little by chance?

A: By chance, of course.

Q: You didn't have a precise purpose?

A: And then one day I succeed in phoning my brother from there. And he tells me, "If you have the chance, I have a friend who knows the general chaplain of the French troops in Germany. Go there to Baden-Baden."

Q: The Jewish chaplain?

A: No, the Catholic chaplain.

Q: The Catholic chaplain.

A: A Father ___ his name was, a Breton. "Find him there in Baden-Baden, maybe he'll make it easier for you to cross over." So one day I went to Baden-Baden. I had a problem with the language. I didn't speak French then. I found the chaplain. Luckily

he spoke a little English so we were able to understand each other. He tells me he'll facilitate things for me, he'll go find out from the French consul if he can get the permit. But in the meantime, I'm his guest. He keeps me at his house, he had a magnificent requisitioned house, with four-meter high ceilings, antique furniture, magnificent paintings on the walls. He tells me that unfortunately he can't offer me a room, a decent bed, but two armchairs put end to end can make a bed, they're so big. He kept me several days, he didn't let me leave. He made gargantuan meals, the soldiers who served with champagnes to start with and champagnes to finish. They lacked nothing, the occupying troops. One day there were horse races, he says to me if I want to accompany him to the racetrack. The French high commissioner at the time was General Koenig. He was in his box, a little behind, me on the side and watching the horse races. Then I stayed a few days, afterwards he tells me, "Listen, it could be fairly long. It can take a year or more to get the residence permit." I said, "Don't bother with it. I'll try to do it alone, all I ask you is to leave my suitcase at your house." He says, "You can leave it as long as you want." So I took a complicated route to Mannheim, from Mannheim I crossed the bridge over the Rhine. Ludwigshafen was already the French zone, I went to Saarbrück. From Saarbrück I took a tramway to Feldgingen (ph), between Feldgingen and Merlebach in France there was a beautiful forest. I got on the train in Merlebach. I had a hundred francs in my pocket. I asked, "How far can I go with this?" They told me I could go to Metz. I said, "Good, give me a ticket for Metz." It cost 70 francs I think. The train was leaving much later that evening, I sat down at the bar of the train station. I drank my first glass of red wine, which I thought was horrible in fact, I wondered how people manage to drink it, it's sour, it's not wine, and then once in Metz, I'll see how I can get further, and then I saw a couple, an old man with a young man, who were speaking Polish in the train. I ask in Polish where he's going, he says, "To Paris." I say, "Could I ask you to do me a favor?" He says, "With pleasure." "I want to go to Paris but I don't have enough money to pay for the tickets, can you lend me the money and I'll give it back to you the next day in Paris?" He says, "Yes." He had a moment of hesitation but he said yes. I said, "Can I ask you something else, *you* ask when the ticket inspector comes because my French isn't good enough." He says, "That will be alright." So he bought me the tickets. I arrived at the Gare de l'Est train station at five in the morning.

Q: What day was that?

A: Oh, I don't remember the day, it was early June.

Q: Early June 1946?

A: '46. And then I called my brother, I waited first for a decent hour so as not to wake him at five in the morning, so at eight o'clock. He says, "I'm coming to pick you up."

End of tape 7

Tape 8

Q: You arrive in Paris at five o'clock in the morning, you call your brother.

A: So he came to see me by metro.

Q: Where did he live at the time?

A: At the Porte d'Orléans, in the same place, where his grandson still lives. And on the way home we stopped at the administrative building, he took me to the prefecture. I filed a request for asylum.

Q: So you knew you wanted to stay in France?

A: Well, it was the first goal, afterwards I thought about going farther but in the end I told myself, here or elsewhere, nothing attracts me to America.

Q: How long, when had you seen your brother the last time? Before you saw him in '46?

A: Well, the last time he was home on vacation, I think, was in '37.

Q: Did you know his wife?

A: No. He had gotten married in the meantime. He had a daughter and he had a son already.

Q: He was a cardiologist, right?

A: No, a radiologist.

Q: Radiologist, right.

A: At that time he was an assistant at Rothschild, the Rothschild Hospital, also as a radiologist, afterwards he opened a private practice, on Avenue Wagram.

Q: So you lived at his place?

A: Oh, a few weeks at first. He had a maid's room that was vacant too, so. Then I rented an apartment and afterwards I came here.

A: So what do you do when you get to Paris and what is your first activity?

Q: My first activity was to learn the language, so the course at the Alliance Française in the evening and an electronics course at ORT.

Q: So you sign up at the ORT school very quickly?

A: Yes.

Q: Where was the ORT school?

A: At the Abbesses metro station, rue des Saules, in Montmartre near Sacré Coeur. But afterwards I found a job in a radio factory that was called Sonora and what interested them was not my knowledge of electronics but my relative command of English. Because they were interested in television, which had already made its appearance in America, but they were deprived of everything that had been published in the United States during the war years. So they gave me a whole collection of Wireless Engineering that was published between '40 and '45 in the United States. But they asked me to, to translate into French the chapters that interested them so as not to waste time researching something that Americans had already found by then.

Q: It was the French radio company?

A: I think there was some American capital in it.

Q: What was it called?

A: Sonora.

Q: Sonora.

A: It was in Nanterre.

Q: Do you remember when you started working for them?

A: Yes, I think it was in September.

Q: So you stayed at ORT only a short time?

A: Yes.

Q: And that's when –

A: It was a short two-month vacation.

Q: And it was at that moment that you met Mr. Boder?

A: Right.

Q: Do you have memories of that meeting?

A: Vague ones.

Q: But you remember that it took place?

A: I wouldn't be able to recognize him if I was face to face with him today.

Q: Do you remember when, when the museum of Washington phoned you?

A: Yes.

Q: They wrote to you, I don't know, did you remember the –

A: He asked me if I remember an interview, I said yes, of course.

Q: And you have no other memories of what he asked?

A: No.

Q: Because he tells that he looked for survivors and he was told to go to ORT, and at ORT they told him, "We have a survivor who just arrived" and it was you.

A: Hmm.

Q: You don't remember the conditions of the interview the manner in which it took place?

A: I remember, excuse me, I was impressed by the first tape recorder I'd ever seen.

Q: So you do remember that he recorded you?

A: Yes.

Q: How long did the interview last?

A: Oh, two or three hours.

Q: So then, you related what happened to you, your youth, in fact?

A: Hmm.

Q: Did you tell other people about this period?

A: No. You know, people tried to forget this period rather than stir it up.

Q: And your brother, for example, did you tell him?

A: Yes, in bits and pieces, not too much.

Q: And later on, did you tell about it?

A: Sometimes, when we were just reminiscing, when there was...

Q: But you never gave a complete account?

A: No.

Q: Except to the woman from Daimler-Benz who came to see you?

A: Yes, but she was mostly interested in what happened at the Daimler-Benz factory.

Q: And no one else asked you, no historians....

A: No.

Q: No video project?

A: No.

Q: Did you belong to a group of, of former camp prisoners and former—

A: No.

Q: None?

A: No, none.

Q: Did you go to any commemorations?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: I always took an interest in it by reading magazines, but...reading books too, but not to give my account. I was always convinced that no one is interested. It made me think of veterans who, who told stories. Before I got here, I lived in a building on rue ____, the landlord of the building was a former colonel of the army that had occupied the Ruhr in the early '20s where he brought his wife back from in fact, a German from down there. And when I lived in the house he was already fairly dodderly. He retired in '40 something I think. He built the house and lived off the income from the house. When he pinned me down in the staircase he'd tell me the event of his lifetime. It was the maneuvers in the Pyrenees that he did in 1899. So I told myself that I'm not going to ramble on after all, telling old stories to people who aren't interested.

Q: And you didn't, did you, aside from ORT, ORT was a Jewish school?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have other contacts with Jewish institutions, with the Jewish community?

A: With the Jewish community, yes. With my trips to Israel, yes. With -- a lot of my professional contacts were, the majority were with Jewish businesses.

Q: But they weren't Jewish organizations.

A: No.

Q: They weren't --

A: No.

Q: And so you're, you worked at, in this business, they asked you to translate magazines.

A: I had some problems because, you know that every profession has its jargon and there are particular expressions and I had a problem, I didn't have a vocabulary, a French-English dictionary. But I found at my brother's an English-German one and a French-German one, I translated through the German. From English to German, from German into French, because when there was an expression I didn't have. But I, I stayed a few months there and I found that the work was pretty monotonous. So I asked if there wasn't another job for me to do other than translate. Anyway all that, what they'd given me, was already translated. So they put me at the end of an assembly line to verify the radios. So there were women who did the welding who weren't trained, you see. They said to a woman, you have to weld a yellow wire, between this and that pole, a red wire there and there. Sometimes there was a shortage of yellow wire, they delivered green wire, the women were lost. The green ones, they didn't know how to weld. Sometimes there was a problem at the end of a line, it was my role to find the error, the breakdown. But well, it wasn't that much more interesting. And one day someone told me about hosiery, about making -- at the time there were several prospects, there were shortages of everything, I found a business that made socks. The man came from my home town and when I make him an offer, he says, "I'm willing to take you on as an apprentice." So I gave in my resignation at Sonora. I went to work making socks. He did things well and he took several rusty old machines out of a cellar and told me if I can take them apart, remove the rust, grease them and reassemble them. I did it. He explained to me how you turn them on and I started to make socks. So I worked for a few weeks, then afterwards there were power restrictions: we had no power two days a week. And so we worked 13 hours a day to do the 40 hours in three days. Because Saturday and Sunday were sacred. So I found that three days a week is not enough, I found a second place that had power restrictions another day in the week and I started to make sweaters on straight machines. I stayed two, three years. Afterwards I found someone who had given up the profession but he had the machines. He made me an offer: "I put the workshop at your disposal, you manage on your own, you do whatever you want, then we divide the revenue in two. You have no expenses, no rent, no electricity bill, the machines are here." I accepted that. I stayed two, three years, and finally I decided I can do it alone too.

Q: You set up in business on your own?

A: Hmm.

Q: Approximately when was that?

A: Oh, I set up on my own in '52.

Q: Rue Jean-Pierre Timbaud?

A: Not right away, at first I started in the Latin Quarter. Later I found that it wasn't well located, I moved closer, to rue Saint Denis, it was a residential building, they wouldn't let me work evenings, nights, I found premises on rue Jean-Pierre Timbaud that I eventually bought, so that enabled me to expand a little, buy more machines. The workshop still exists, but well, it's run by my successor.

Q: So how many years did you work alone? Did you have employees?

A: Yes, I had one employee at the beginning, then two, even at one time we got up to four, five.

Q: And when did you sell your business?

A: When I got to retirement age, I was 65, I thought it was enough. I don't want to get any richer.

Q: So you sold the business.

A: Hmm.

Q: And?

A: And even, I owned the building, afterwards I sold even the building.

Q: To your successor.

A: To my successor, yes.

Q: Were you married? Did you get married?

A: No, no. I didn't have time.

Q: Did you, what year did you get French citizenship?

A: Oh, it was fairly quick, I think in '54. Actually it was rather strange. I applied to be naturalized, they deferred me. When they defer they don't give the reason. They told me I can apply again two years later. So I apply again two years later and this time it went off without a hitch. No sooner had I applied than I was summoned, secret intelligence investigates, several weeks later, provide the medical certificates that I'm healthy, because they didn't naturalize people who were in poor health. So I provided the certificates that I'm healthy, then I receive my decree. I'm naturalized. Then, it was very fast, two weeks later, the draft board of the town hall of the 15th arrondissement for the war in Algeria, they needed cannon fodder! So then it was the opposite problem, prove that I'm *not* healthy!

Q: Did you succeed?

A: So they asked those who had a medical certificate or something to point out, to keep it in their hand. So I go among the 200 young men to the town hall of the 15th arrondissement and there were three of us with a paper of some sort. They took us out before the others, one had a hand missing, so they looked at each other, the members of the draft board, all right, exempt, the second one had a thick medical file too – exempt. I was the third, I had a vague paper, I'd had a lumbago once, the doctor told me, give a certificate, they glanced at it, "What did you do during the war?" I said, "I was a prisoner in Germany for five years." "All right, exempt."

Q: That was already at the beginning of the war in Algeria, so it was afterwards?

A: '54.

Q: '54.

A: Right.

Q: You were still young.

A: I was 29 at the time.

Q: And did you go back to Poland?

A: No.

Q: Never?

A: No, never.

Q: You didn't keep your Polish citizenship?

A: No. I relinquished it fairly quickly. I needed some sort of birth certificate one day. I went to the Polish consulate. I found that they didn't treat me nicely, they really didn't have the slightest bit of manners. They made me wait for nothing, afterwards they started to ask questions, so I said, "Listen, I waive my citizenship. I declare myself stateless. I no longer want to be a citizen of your country."

Q: And did you go back to Germany?

A: Several business trips and trips to testify before the court.

Q: So where did you go for the business trips? Did you go to buy machines?

A: Machines in southern Germany, in Tübingen. That's the city near Ebingen in Gutenberg (ph). Circular machines.

Q: They were knitting machines?

A: Yes.

Q: Circular. And you went several times?

A: Yes, yes. Because I bought machines several times and I went one day to the trade show in Paris. And there was a German machine exhibited there that I thought was years ahead of the competition. And since they didn't manage to sell a single one, I committed to buying the machine on display. They gave me a 50 % discount so as not to bring it back to Germany. And I found that it was really very good quality, it ran perfectly. Then some time later, they did manage to break into the market. They sold a lot of

machines, they even had sales representation in France, but they contacted me to tell me that when they signed the contract with the French representative, they kept a clause that they can sell machines directly to their old customers, so the old customers, I was the only one. So I could buy a machine without, without going through the middleman.

Q: And you, did you try to go back to the places where you were imprisoned in Germany, for example?

A: No.

Q: You never had that curiosity?

A: In '46, a little, but not in the camps. The only one was Bergen but I wasn't a prisoner in Bergen-Belsen.

Q: Because you passed through Bergen-Belsen.

A: To see friends who were there.

Q: When it became a DP camp.

A: Right.

Q: OK.... And did you continue to take an interest in the period, did you read books too?

A: Yes.

Q: And did you go to see movies about the period?

A: Less. I'm less of a film enthusiast. I prefer reading, where I can go back when I have a doubt about a page.

Q: So you kept in touch with your cousin in Lodz?

A: Yes.

Q: You told me you saw him again once.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Can you tell us about this, when he came to see you in Paris?

A: Yes, he was very worried. The Stalinist regime was not very kind, everything was suspect, you know, he was -- I think Stalin transmitted his fears to all his subordinates that there are enemies everywhere.

Q: What year was that, do you remember?

A: Oh, quite a few years ago, 30 years ago, maybe in the '70s.

Q: So he came to see you in Paris, he was on a business trip.

A: Yes, he was on a business trip, he was supposed to buy some chemical products from Rhône Poulenc, colorants, at the time.

Q: And that's the only time you saw him again?

A: Yes, and afterwards his, his daughter, who was leaving for Canada, stopped in Paris for two days. I saw her, she went on.

Q: Are you still in touch with her?

A: No. I was in touch with her brother for a fairly long time, the one who was in London..... Are you still filming or not?

Q: We can, he just cut.... Did you testify in trials after the war?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell us what happened?

A: Well, it was fairly simple, they asked me the question if I need a translator or not and I said, "I don't know. I think my German is good enough, but I don't know the legal jargon. There might be expressions that I don't catch." So they start to question me and he says, "You don't need a translator. You manage very well, we understand what you're saying perfectly."

Q: And so it was a trial on what occasion?

A: It was in the city of Bochum.

Q: In Bochum. You read in the newspaper?

A: That a certain Hamann had been arrested.

Q: So, Hamann, that's H-A-M-A-N.

A: Two Ns at the end.

Q: Two Ns. Do you know – do you remember his first name?

A: Heinrich.

Q: Heinrich Hamann who was arrested?

A: Yes. And that he is accused of unspecified wrongdoing. So I didn't know whether it's this one or not, but just on the off chance I write to, to the prosecutor of Bochum.

Q: Because you'd known a Hamann?

A: That's right, who was...

Q: When you were a prisoner.

A: ...chief of the Gestapo in this town of Nowy Sacz.

Q: So before, at the time of the ghe – when you were in the ghetto?

A: That's it.

Q: During that period, before August '42.

A: That's it. Yes. And even in '42 when he killed one of those 30, when we were together. It's him who –

Q: So you were present at what scene, at what crime of Mr. Hamann's?

A: Precisely that one, first, and then the mass shooting, it was he who organized the 200 prisoners too.

Q: So we'll go over that, you were present, the 30 forced laborers in the forest, in the sawmill?

A: That's it.

Q: One of them was assassinated by him?

A: Yes, for nothing.

Q: For nothing. And it's he who, who, and you were present?

A: Yes, we were two meters away.

Q: And he killed?

A: The 30 of us were lined up in two rows of 15, we were really right near by. There was even a comical scene, the lawyer of this Hamann was cross examining me and he says to me, "I found a contradiction in your testimony before and now. First, a year ago, you said that he took out his pistol and now you're talking about a revolver!" I said, "I'm sorry, *my* tools are more like a screwdriver, even at a distance of three meters I'm not sure that even today I could tell you what the difference is between the two."

Q: So you were present at this crime and then the crime of the mass shooting of the 200?

A: That's it.

Q: And when was this?

A: In the spring of '42. It was just before May first, we thought there was a connection between May Day and this execution.

Q: So he took 200 prisoners from the ghetto.

A: That's it, who -- they had nothing in common except the fact that they were all members of some trade union.

Q: And you saw the mass shooting?

A: But from a certain distance, from a few dozen meters.

Q: And you recognized him, he was there?

A: Oh, well, he was there, he ran the whole thing, but, in addition to the Gestapo, he mobilized the gendarmerie, the German police, because he needed more people to control all this crowd of –

Q: And so you read in the paper that Mr. Hamann is imprisoned, he's going to be on trial, you write directly?

A: Hmm.

Q: Of your own initiative to the prosecutor.

A: Prosecutor.

Q: Schwartzenwald.

A: I, I didn't have his name, I didn't have an address, just the town of Bochum.

Q: Bochum. And you get a reply, which is?

A: Because that's already afterwards, for the second one.

Q: This one is afterwards.

A: For the –

Q: Don't move, we're going to show them.

A: It's the man with the wooden leg.

Q: OK. And then you receive a reply and they ask you to come and testify?

A: They ask me to come and testify.

Q: In Bochum.

A: Hmm.

Q: Do you remember what year?

A: If I find the, the papers, maybe.

End of Tape 8

Tape 9

- Q: Bochum to testify at the trial and there –
- A: At the questioning, testimony – the trial took place several months later and I returned a second time at the request of the German authorities.
- Q: Was he sentenced?
- A: He was sentenced to life in prison but I doubt he served it.
- Q: So there was a second case?
- A: The second case was the city of Staditz near Hamburg, another bastard, there's no other word, who also killed, I was an eyewitness, three, three brothers in fact, I think.
- Q: Where did he kill them, also in the camp?
- A: In the camp, we had a roll call, we lined up all of us, they refused to carry out some order or other, to set an example he killed all three of them.
- Q: And so there, it's there that you were summoned?
- A: Hmm. But since there were no other witnesses I think they dropped the charges, said they didn't have enough proof.
- Q: That, that wasn't the same Hamann, it wasn't the same person?
- A: No, his name was Laferzen (ph).
- Q: Yes. And so you think he wasn't sentenced, but you went to file your –
- A: The investigating judge, well, I don't know if it was the judge or the prosecutor, told me, that they don't have enough elements to make a case, if I can find another witness. I said, I'm not as relentless as that, you know.
- Q: But you went to Germany to this town.
- A: I said you know if we were to find all the assassins the job is endless. The courts would be snowed under.....
- Q: I've asked you all the questions I had, if you want to tell something, add something.
- A: Yes, it might seem strange but I didn't harbor a particular hatred against Germans. Yet they practically exterminated my whole family, but I did after all keep a strong dislike of the Polish.
- Q: How do you explain it?
- A: I don't know.

Q: Did you suffer from anti-Semitism before the war?

A: Yes, yes, clearly.

Q: In what form?

A: If my father wanted me to go to a private Jewish school and not a State school, it was to spare me certain outward signs. There was a sort of ancestral hatred. It's not justified, as a matter of fact, from the historical viewpoint. It was in the 15th century that a king of Poland wanted to modernize his country a little bit, which was an agricultural country at the time, to stimulate trade, the crafts industry. He brought Jews in from the west to create trade, to create crafts, to allow exchanges and which really moved the country forward. And all of the Polish intelligentsia was Jewish practically. In my home town there were great violinists, Cherine (ph), who came from Lodz, Arthur Rubinstein, the famous pianist, came from Lodz, and Tuwin, who was the most well-known 20th century poet in Poland, was from Lodz, in all, everything that counted in the intellectual life, there was nothing to be ashamed of.

Q: What are your feelings about Germany in general?

A: Well, it was a paradise for Jews for centuries.

Q: And about France?

A: Well, you know it's almost obvious. This is the country that first did away with all the restrictions in Europe concerning the Jewish population.

Q: Did you have the chance to speak Polish after the war?

A: Very rarely.

Q: With your Jewish customers, for example, you spoke French?

A: With –

Q: Your Jewish customers.

A: French of course.

Q: Did they often speak Yiddish?

A: Yes.

Q: But *you* didn't speak it well?

A: They reproached me for my accent. I was told the same thing in the United States: "You have a very heavy accent."

Q: And have you gone to Israel often?

A: Yes, seven, eight times.

Q: Was it to see members of your family?

A: Not only, to see the country too.

Q: And you found some cousins in Israel?

A: Not tons of them, a few dozen.

Q: So most of the family is now in Israel?

A: The survivors, yes.

Q: Yes.

A: And I had in Switzerland too all the same, I had a cousin who left for Switzerland in 1913 to study math. When he finished his studies the war was on, he couldn't get back to Poland. He stayed in Switzerland, he became a math professor. He even became, in the end, vice-president of the polytechnic school in Zurich. He has two sons. One is a chemist, the other's a mathematician too. They both left for the United States. And when he retired he left too. He followed them to the U.S. They organized a lot of courses for him for math teachers. Because he'd published quite a few math books. He had a certain reputation. And one day he was even invited to the institute, well, the Laval Catholic University in Quebec. So he was happy that for once he'd be seeing a math professor who wasn't Jewish, happy to meet -- and the professor at Laval was called Levy.

Q: And so you went to Israel many times, did you visit Yad Vashem in Israel?

A: Yes, yes of course.

Q: You were never asked to speak, for example, in schools, before --

A: No.

Q: Students? Would you be willing to do it?

A: I don't know, I never wanted to.

Q: Did you speak about your experience in the family, with your brother's children?

A: Vaguely.

Q: Did they ask you questions?

A: Some, but not so many, no.

Q: I've finished, if you have something to add.

A: No, I don't have anything in particular to say, all that, it doesn't always come. While thinking, talking about something a memory can come back, but...

End of tape 9

Conclusion of interview