

Interview with Avraham Kimmelman

12.31.2004, 01.07.2005, 05.06.2005

[RG-50.562*0009]

Tape 1

Question: Good morning.

Answer: Good morning, good morning all.

Q: I would appreciate it if... you could start with your name... and your place and date of birth.

A: My name is Avraham Kimmelman, I was born in Poland, in the city of _____ (In Polish), 1925. At the end of 1925.

Q: Something about your family.

A: Yes, a lot of things... we were a... regular and sm-- but small family, father, mother and sister, two and a half years my elder, my father came from an extensive family, I just calculated it had twelve children, and my mother's, nine children... since I brought it up, in the end, of all this extensive family... I... there-- I had only one uncle left, Haim, who has passed on by now, and there was no picture left, today I don't remember exactly what they look like anymore, only in a very very hazy way, and the only picture, nevertheless, that I managed to get with great difficulty, is of my

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sister. And... I also thought of bringing it here, since we're videotaping, it's on a case, a bookcase in my home. That's all I have... as a more visual memory of the family.

Q: The uncle who was left... did you have contact with him after the war?

A: Yes, a lot, he... the bro--

Q: Who's brother was he, your father's?

A: Father's brother, yes.

Q: Yes.

A: I, and my children, they were for him... the... the family anchor, we... tried, as far as possible, to give him a... a good feeling of... belonging... and of warmth, and I hope we succeeded in that to a degree.

Q: Was he married when the war broke?

A: When the war broke he was married, father of three, and... he was also left by himself, came to Israel, and married here.

Q: And did he found a new family?

A: And... but he had no children...

Q: And your sister's picture, how did you get it?

A: I got it... there came to Israel, in the early sixties, sixties, I think, '61, the brother of a... a friend of my sister's. That brother, he lived in the same building as we, he... came to me from... the United States, and to celebrate his arrival, that sister invited me, and by and by, she... looked through he albums, with her brother's help, and they found this picture. And that was unforgettable to me, that night, everything else was secondary. I had it enlarged, and replicated it, that heaven forbid the... only memory-- this documentation, one of its kind, won't be lost. That's what I have. So... if you're interested in... in my family history, and maybe also... everything actually having to do with my childhood: my father was an ultra-orthodox, as I rem-- remembered him, he hadn't always been like that, ultra-orthodox as in the Beith... um... in Jerusalem, I forgot... as... as... as in Meah She'arim. He was a Hasid of the Rabbi of _____ (In Polish), a Hasid... and you're familiar with this... this concept of a court, of-- of a Rabbi, and accordingly, he tried... he tried to educate me... my mother wasn't religious, she had come from an observant family, the previous generation had all been observant, and... her brother too, and... and... and her father, of course, they all had beards and sidelocks, but it didn't have the same significance that my father's ultra-orthodox faith had, yes? That's how it was. It was a way of life... but she already... was more of a modern woman, both in her views, and in her essence, I don't know exactly how it came about that these two got married, but the fact is that they did--

Q: They married despite the...

A: I don't know, it could be that--

Q: ...the differences, or did your father become ultra-orthodox later on?

A: Well, that's just it. I don't know exactly. He may have become ultra-orthodox only-- later, yes, and that caused friction later on, and I was between them and they had-- and it had implications for... for my educational path as well. So... my father's profession was... making... vinegar, he marketed vinegar to stores, bottled, that he had made himself... and... my mother, I'd say my mother was my chief provider, she made much more than he did, she had a salon for corsets and braziers, and all kinds of womens'... womens'... womens'... womens'... undergarments, and... she had... she had there... two-- two assistants, and... that's how... how it was for us. As early as age... four, I started going to the Cheder. It was customary, especially among families even less... less religious than... than... mine, and at seven my mother insisted that I go to regular, state-funded school, and it was somewhat distressing for my father, because I had to shave my sidelocks, and go bare-headed.

Q: A Polish school.

A: A Polish school. And... there was no problem with my sister, it... it was obvious, yes? She went to school.

Q: What school did she go to?

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A: Also a Polish school. She went to a Polish school from the start.

Q: Your father was less caring about that?

A: Yes, because... she didn't have to... change her appearance, or her behavior.

Though her girlfriends weren't Jewish, actually, but I don't know whether he might not have been aware of that... or whether it... didn't matter either way, his ambitions were... as I realize in hindsight, focused on me, yes? He perceived me as a very talented young boy, and... he had great hopes, it seems, for my future... and he saw me, in his eyes... [cough] in a certain way. And as I said, I-- don't remember h-- I think, three years, a little more even, I went to that place, the Polish one, and then he decided he couldn't take it anymore, and... I don't know whether he did it out of a very strong world view, or because of peer pressure, because he was part of a certain group, yes? As you know, you probably know... that the lifestyle, and the everyday details decide... how the community views the individual. You're judged by... by it... in every sense of the word, and... you must meet those standards, and... he has a son who goes to school bare-headed, and who doesn't have sidelocks, that's a transgression from the norms of the social group he was in, and he decided to put a stop to it, I d-- I was already, after all... I think I was eleven, eleven or eleven and a half, and he decided to send me to a Yeshiva in Krakow. I was... a boy who... a mamma's boy, and... I enjoyed a lot of warmth and was much protected, and maybe I was inclined to it, I probably had an inclination... to... seek protection, I wasn't especially brave, that's what I think, yes? Although, looking back I find I have made steps that... I wonder where I got the daring and the nerve and strength to do, but the way-- as I remember myself in hindsight, I was strongly connected to my home, I greatly appreciated the protection I got at home. And suddenly, I was sent alone, at

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eleven and a half, to Krakow. Krakow was about sixty kilometers southeast of us, that was already _____(In Polish?), we lived higher up, next to the German border, and... there I entered a Yeshiva that... that was called "Kether Torah". Again, that belonged to the _____(In Polish) Hasidic movement, as it were, my father was a Hasid of that Rabbi. And...you wouldn't believe it if I told you all how I lived there. My father rented a room for me, not so much a room, it wasn't a room. He rented a bed for me... with... with some family, where I could only sleep. They had, in all, I think, one room, for them, a bedroom and a kitchen in their apartment, and at night they'd roll out the mattress or the bed, I went to sleep and got up in the morning, and left. And that's how I lived there, in summer and in winter. Winter there was very cold, in Poland. But that was the norm. But that's not the main thing, the main thing is... the Yeshiva headmasters, they provided for... Yeshiva pupils like me, who came from other places. So how did they nourish me? Every meal, every day, you ate at somebody else's. And that was called, freely translated to Hebrew, it's "eating the days", in Yiddish it's _____(In Yiddish). That is, you're eating the days. Every day you're at somebody else's. Now, I, having come from a spoiled house, in the sense that I was very picky about food, couldn't, for instance, eat tomatoes, if I ate meat, my mother had to purge it of any trace of fat, if it had even a little I wouldn't touch it... I couldn't eat Schnitzel, or veal, or cooked onion, ground meat with cooked onion, that really made me, pardon the expression, vomit. And here I was at a place, where I had to eat whatever they gave me. About that I'll also tell you... an episode... which is funny... to me, yes? Sometimes it's even saddening--

Q: Just.... just if you could, please, wipe your lips a little.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: And... oh, yes, I was talking about food.

Q: Food.

A: Yes. So... I was going to tell you, that although... Jews did volunteer to-- it was the norm, to often invite... students who had come from the area, yes? To the large central Yeshiva, but sometimes they were lazy... usually on Sunday, if I came in for breakfast, then I got the bre-- pieces of bread, bread leftovers, which were very very dry. Yes? You could hardly eat them, and in that cold, in winter, you really had to have young teeth like I had, to even crack that thing... not to mention, if you got butter, you couldn't put it on it, and to eat you had to walk there and walk back, and all in a quite... s-- strict time frame, and sometimes it doesn't wo-- didn't work out so well... this is just to give you a picture of the general atmosphere in which... I lived, and yet I never felt... deprived or sad about it, I accepted it as a sort of... legitimate way of being, as a sort of formative way of being, as a sort of voluntary way of being,

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not... some randomness, or negligence, or indifference, but, as a way of life. You want to go to a Yeshiva, then that's how you got to do it.

Q: Y... you wanted to tell us about this episode, before I interrupted you.

A: Yes. so... about that, it turns out I wasn't... among the weakest of students, and usually, as I remember, in retrospect, I had... quite a bit of social success. I had a good voice, I sang well, and the headmaster immediately put me with some family, very rich. I remember he [the father] was a representative of the _____ (In Polish?) company, these were hats, very ve-- that is... a very famous company that made... hats... for... for men. And they lived in an extravagant apartment, I had never seen such a thing, lots of rooms, each one with its own special furniture, an special colors, and they had a son, an only son, and he wasn't so... bright, so they didn't send him, they didn't ex-- he wasn't exposed to his own weaknesses, but they taught him privately. And they put me with him, so I could... perhaps do homework with him, and they really welcomed me warmly. And immediately... they obviously started inviting me to meals. And I...for the first time, I saw a meal, of such extravagance, and... and... the maids were serving the food, yes? Though he was a religious person, but he was more of a modern religious person. And one day they served ground meat. Cooked. One whiff of that, and I was already feeling sick, and I didn't know what to do, and I was ashamed, I thought my refusal would be taken as an insult. An insult for my hosts. And I just waited for an instant of inattention, and shoved the meat in my pocket. And to this day I wonder, did they think I wanted to steal the meat, yes? Or

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were they really aware that something was going on here, that I couldn't eat. To this day I don't know exactly what they understood--

Q: Or maybe they just didn't notice.

A: Maybe-- or maybe they didn't notice, yes? I was so sensitive, I couldn't eat it no matter what. Even though I wasn't suffering, as it were, from an overabundance of... of good food.

Q: Did you want to go to the Yeshiva?

A: I had no opinion of my own, I was an obedient boy. I loved-- I respected Father, I loved Mother, I trusted them, I felt there was a disagreement, but wasn't aware of it enough, maybe a little later, and... I know that in-- later , that this matter caused my mother great pain, and she... was really really worried, yes? Even the thought that I was far away, in such a far away place all by myself, when, here... she protected me... wherever I went. So... still, I found my place there, I had friends, and... I was taken in by a family who had a son my age, and... I was at home there, and... I found my place in... in the community, in _____(In Yiddish), in the Beit Midrash, and there I discovered, really, the world of the Yeshivas. Again, in the eyes of a child, I was, after all, a child, eleven and a half, later twelve, I lived in... _____(In Polish)

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quarter in Krakow, this a quarter that today attracts... many tourists, not only Jews, Jewish tourists of course, because that was the quarter in Krakow that was inhabited by Jews. You could hardly find a non-Jew, except perhaps as a janitor. And... you had this... ex-- Jewish experience, of almost the fullest kind, because the Jews there, even the modern ones, still lived by-- the street was a Jewish street. Lots of synagogues, Beit Midrashes, lots of Y... Yeshivas and Yeshiva pupils, and the... fantastic sight was on Shabbath, I remember in _____(In Polish) Street, that's what it was called, that's Joseph Street... on Shabbath, around noon, when the... prayer was over, and the Jews came out of the Synagogues, I was already well versed, you could see all the youngsters and n-- not just the youngsters, marching in the streets in rows, that is, each taking up the width of the street. And there was-- each court had its own unique dress, by... by which, I could identify who belonged to which court. The _____(In Yiddish), and the _____(In Yiddish), and the _____(In Yiddish), and the _____(In Polish), and what have you, and... they had... some were all in white, yes? White socks, white tunic, or beige, and they had _____(In Yiddish) with... with... what's it called?

Q: Fur?

A: No, of course they had fur, but there were-- there was a kind of tall fur hat, it's a specific kind, it belonged to the _____(In Yiddish), the _____(In Polish), and those of the _____(In Polish) were pointier, that is, a kind of bouquet, yes? In the form of a bouquet. Or you could tell by the-- by the color of the cloth itself.

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And-- or, by the way they... the way they... wore the edges of their pants on their shoes. Some tucked them inside their socks, that was one court. Some just put them inside their boots... very few, of those who were real Hasids, had their pants on normally, yes? With the edges around the shoes, and, now, these were perhaps businessmen, who had ties outside the Jewish-inhabited area. So, I remember those rows, it was a real Hasidic march on Shabbath. Very special. And they moved as if this whole thing was directed by... some great film director, because people were bringing the _____ (In Yiddish) from the bakery, have you seen such a sight? These ones were coming from the prayer house, yes? After the prayer, and those ones were bringing home [the food], to prepare the Shabbath meal, yes? The warm meal. The--

Q: You describe it with a little-- lounging.

A: I wouldn't call it lounging, but in retro... spect I find in it some... some truth... a certain truth. I would even call it a sad truth, be cause we... the Jews, they were completely unaware of their own vulnerability, of their dep-- dependence, and of their inability to stabilize this situation and to defend it. And... I'm digressing here, and we'll get to that, the whole topic of the holocaust... before we started using the term "holocaust," we used "catastrophe." What else could we find... as... as a synonym, a synonym for... for "holocaust"? These things usually seem to happen suddenly, unexpectedly, you get this jolt, and it puts you into shock, you're shocked, and you say: "This is impossible, it's... it's... in my worst nightmares I wouldn't have imagined

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such a thing.” I, always think back to my childhood and also to this topic, privately for myself, that's what I think today, when I try to analyze things for [noise] myself, the holocaust was no surprise. It didn't surprise me. Surprise me, it didn't. I lived with that sense of insecurity, of... fear, of... hostility, for as long as I can remember, and the holocaust was only a reinforcement, in-- in the sense of giving greater force, yes? Of-- a reinforcement of this situation, in which, intuitively, without thinking about it, I didn't put any deed past our persecutors. When I was young, any *Goy* could scatter a group of Jews, especially re-- religious ones, to the four winds.

Q: How?

A: They'd go together, and this... little *Goy* came by, and, he'd... whatever, he'd just shake his hand with a stone in it, we'd run, we'd disperse. That is, there was this utter dependence on the will, good or not good, of the environment, the no-- that is, we lived... we lived as Jews, truly as Jews, with a Jewish lifestyle, inside a hostile environment, that... whatever happened, it was by chance.

Q: How did you feel this hostility?

A: First, by the fact that there were actually... instances of... of violence against Jews.

A lot... I felt it by the... by what was communicated to me, through the... the p-- the

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paper, there was Jewish newspaper, and... they'd tell me what was in it. There were trials, pogroms, and attacks on Jews, and this whole warped justice. I felt it... because I was afraid for myself, and I was persecuted, I was always running, I was light-footed, from a very young age, I'd avoid coming in contact with them. How- - how real this truly was, I remember, again, I remember, it... I had a completely spontaneous opportunity to verify it in... in the w... in... the autumn, it was the first autumn of the war, or was it... or was it the first spring of the war, we were still in our homes, and I remember walking alone, I never dared walking alone there before the war, I was walking alone, quite some distance from home, why? Because there was this abandoned foot... football field. Free.

Q: Some distance from your home in _____(In Polish)--

A: In _____(In Polish), to another street, yes. And... finally, I felt I wasn't afraid to go. And really, nobody... said anything at all to me. Usually, when I walked, even with my father, they'd taunt me, and I'd always run from his one side to the other-- the other side, yes? To avoid... some confrontation or contact. And here I was walking alone, and I felt pretty safe. And I had this ball, it was a ra-- we made a soccer ball out of rags, yes? We didn't have money to buy a soccer ball in... in that period, and... we played there with this other boy, and by and by a non-Jewish boy comes, and he wants to interrupt us. And I, I had guts, and I say: "Look here, pal, this isn't the time of... Poland anymore." That's what I said. In Polish I said to him. And it's really written in the note, because I think that this was a defining moment in my consciousness, yes?

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Suddenly, paradoxically, the Germans are in power, they're openly declaring their hostility.

Q: Towards the Polish.

A: No, towards us, the Jews, I'm saying, the Germans are in control of Poland, we know their attitude towards the Jews, and I somehow feel safer, in their shadow, than in the shadow of the... the Polish.

Q: Maybe because the Polish are also under occupation?

A: Yes, but I'm telling you what I told the Polish boy, I'm saying, I provoked him, I even, how to put it? Even _____ with gloating "Listen, the time of Poland is over." That's what I told him.

Q: Yes, yes, I'm just trying to understand what's behind this, maybe behind this is the thought: "You're also weak, the Germans got you, too..."

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A: Right, that is, I want w... I told him: "You can't be so cocky, anymore, now. You're not so strong anymore, you're not so brave anymore." Yes?

Q: Yes, but... going back a little, ear... earlier, in that period before the war, in which you describe living in a sense of fear.

A: Yes.

Q: Did they ever address this topic in the Yeshiva?

A: No. Never. The entire ultra-orthodox, Hasidic way of life, is about not dealing with everyday matters in rational ways, and using earthly... defenses, all you have to do is nurture your faith and study the Torah, and have a lifestyle that strictly adheres to the commandments, which have been codified throughout the generations. That was... both the answer, and the... the essence of Jewish life that... you don't deal, in a rational way, with fatal problems. Yes. If there are any fatal problems, they are those of... the spirit, of the other sphere, and you deal with them in another way.

Q: So did you have anyone to talk to about this feeling?

A: No.

Q: Not even at home, with Mother?

A: No b... I never posed the questions. It was introverted, it was suppressed... countless generations had lived with that feeling, yes? In... in Eastern Europe, it was nothing new, yes? Those who... tried to do something about it, were those who-- in-- who actually founded the Jewish... the Jewish movements, whether they were in the Socialist movement, who tried to join existing movements, and believe that maybe changing the regime and the regime's way of thinking [cough], would also benefit the Jews, or whether ... they were in the Bund movement, and of course the Zionist movement, yes? Which was... the main, strongest... strongest expression of... of trying to really deal with the fatal problem of the Jewish people, and trying to find an answer for it, yes?

Q: Did you have any connection with these groups?

A: No. I had no connection with the Zionist movement, again, I'm getting ahead of myself, but such is life, because... my sister, who was, as it were, a little older, and was also more mature, in every way, she was very talented, yes? And... very

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knowledgeable, yes? For... for her age, yes? And indeed... it's clear that some very very important future life was cut... cut short... short be... because of the war--

Q: Could you say her name?

A: Hannah. We used Hank'e, yes? I, by the way... I learned a great deal from her, she was to me a living encyclopedia, if... if I didn't understand some word or other, the answer was... obvious for her when I asked. I remember, also, when I was young, I would read the Comic books that... I expected... Buffalo Bill, I don't know if it means anything to you-- Buffalo Bill, we pronounced it Boofalo Bill, and so on, and whenever... I was missing a word, here and there, or the somewhat deeper... meaning of a word, I always came to her, and that was... for me it was the eighth Wonder of the World, yes? When I came to her and she knew everything.

Q: That... that--

A: So maybe I admired her through the eyes of a child, and maybe I made too much of it, but I don't think so. As much as I really try... to... straighten up my memory a little. And what's more, we were just talking about the topic on antisemitism... there was-- in our town there was a cathedral, because Poland is deeply Catholic, and... on Sunday, at eleven o'clock, no Jew dared go out-- on the sidewalk, outside... next to the

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cathedral, because it was mortally dangerous. They'd pray, and then they went out, and if they'd catch Jews, they-- they'd be in big trouble. That is, that was the atmosphere. You were defenseless. Come to think of it, the Jews, especially the religious ones, who expressed their Jewishness in the most natural way, they didn't hide anything, but were living really... living on... on the edge.

Q: Did you also feel... antisemitism when you went to the Polish school?

A: No. No. I don't remember any instances of antisemitism when I was... yes? That is, first of all, I remember, that wherever I was, socially, yes? But I don't remember any other instances with other Jewish boys, yes? And maybe it was because in that young age-- were, after all... really young children, it wasn't clear enough yet to... to feel... feelings of that sort. Yes? I could be hurt by other things, that they didn't pick me, for example, to lead a team in some... some sports game or some other thing-- that's another matter, but not on the basis of my Jewishness... and another, and another... formative experience, when it comes to antisemitism, was already... I told you that when I was young I lived in Krakow, and once in a while I came home for Shabbath. But instead of coming home for Shabbath-- that's a story, I'm going into a different story, yes? I-- as I said, I was born in _____(In Polish), the Rabbi of s-- of... of _____(In Polish), whose court my father belonged to, lived in _____(In Polish 35:35), that was about twelve kilometers from our town. You could take the trolley there. The was a real trolley. And some-- every once in a while, my father went to his Rabbi for Shabbath. And not only did he go to his Rabbi, but my grandmother also

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lived there, and my uncles, and my father's whole family, actually lived there in that city. So when I was living in Krakow, every few months, my father would tell me to come to _____(In Polish), for Shabbath, and meet him there. I didn't even come home to see my mother. And on Saturday night I went back. Why was this arrangement important? Because then I could join the Hasids, both on the way there and on the way back, so I wouldn't go alone, on the train, but with them. And this is what happened, once, on Saturday night, I'm going home, with a few Hasids, and we go on the train in _____(In Polish), and the Hasids take up the... the seats in one car, take the seats and sit. Well, the tr-- before the train starts moving, there comes-- there come-- co-- comes a group of... Polish soldiers, complete with weapons and gear, and pass-- and in the passageway, there stands one non-Jew, pretty tall, elegant, and the way he looks at us gives off, what you would call, displeasure, hostility, contempt, and perhaps enmity, in the first place he didn't exactly know what to do with these Jews who sat down and conquered the car, so he had to stand there and had nowhere to sit, and there stand... there come these soldiers. And then, how did he put it, whoever he was? That patriotism is the last refuge-- it was Walter, yes? He said: "patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels," yes? Well... he started talking: "How dare you take up these seats and not le-- not let our soldiers sit? And... he starts slapping the Jews, here and there, as if they were... nothing. He really slapped them. Humiliated them. And the soldiers joined in on the fun, and they set fire to... to the beards of two ultra-orthodox Jews, this, this experience, this... this wound, I have born... I have born with me my whole life. It only reinforced what I had already felt in a much more childish way, and much more... unexplained, that feeling as if we were living on borrowed time. We had no control over it. And neither were we doing anything, to try... and make our real situation clear to ourselves. I'm sure that's not

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how many other children felt, who were already living in modern families, and who spoke only Polish, I spoke both languages at home... and I spoke Polish mainly thanks to my mother and sister... they l-- didn't just live inside the Jewish concentrations, they went to Gymnasiums, all-- they already had some open channels to the more-- more open concepts. But what dominated in Poland was the traditionalist community. The notables, they were the Rabbis, all considered. Even for people who weren't religious, their anchor, their center of orientation, was the community. And those who wanted to leave completely, they had to do some much m-- much more radical act. I'm talking about the atmosphere at that time, which was a watershed time, I think, because many youngsters... suddenly started going-- going with their heads exposed, and I, as a boy, was even worried, I told myself: "This is bad. In the next generation there will be no more boys like me, with sidelocks--"

Q: You made a gesture describing a sidelock.

A: Yes. "And... and... and... with a skullcap." I was worried, yes? But... it's clear we were undergoing-- undergoing... changes in... in... in... the Jewish social structure. But still, what mattered, the line that mattered, was that of the notables, and these were, in one way or another, linked with the establishment, which always had, at its top, the religious authorities.

Q: One moment.

A: Yes.

Q: Could you wipe it a little?

A: Yes [talking].

Q: There was a siren. Do you want us to stop for a moment when these sirens come?

[talking]

A: What siren?

Q: OK. [talking]

A: Hmm?

Q: There's a school bell here...

A: Oh.

Q: Which can be heard on the tape.

A: And then he goes in (Q: He goes...), and then what do you do, you stop the...

Q: He came, we discussed whether we should stop the...

A: Yes.

Q: Or whether we shouldn't, and...

A: Yes. [talking] yes.

Q: Well, let's go. Are we running? Yes.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. So...

A: Yes, what else can I tell, in order to describe the... the context of-- of my-- of my childhood.

Q: You had this... episode on the train, which you were describing?

A: No, I was just in a state of fear, and... I felt this injustice, I felt the odds weren't even, they weren't even at all, there was someone who controlled everything, and another who was subject to his mercy, it seemed an impossible situation to me, I didn't know exactly what to do, I didn't make any real inference out of this matter, and I seem to have just aggregated it... added it to the aggregate of... my fears and my feelings... as... as a Jew, at least, as a Jew in... a religious social environment, yes? About the outside... world, which was the ruling... majority. That's h-- that's how it seems to me. But... it's true not only of children, but certainly of children, that we don't give such things a second thought, we go back to our little preoccupations, and think of other things too, we have other... experiences and feelings, yes? And... I moved past it, as I moved past many other... things... that's about what I can say...

Q: I wanted to ask you something else.

A: Yes.

Q: You painted a very picturesque image of... the rows of pupils...

A: Yes.

Q: The Yeshiva pupils...

A: Yes. And Hasids, yes.

Q: Walking the Krakow streets on...

A: Yes.

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Q: Sabbath, were you among them?

A: I was watching. It's very interesting, you as... asked a very... a very interesting question, Again, in retrospect, I see that I was never inside. I was obedient. I... would usually play by the rules, I was considerate, that is, I would do things, I would do them quite punctually, and I would pray on time, and I did everything right, but I was never one of them. I see that, now, yes? That I didn't belong. I was an outsider, yes? Even though I never did anything deviant, I was more of an observer, and I seem to have had some... some kind of judgmental view on it. I wasn't aware of it yet. But I participated, I lived inside that social environment, without being one of them. I... if there's an answer at all, psychology might provide it-- I told you that at home, yes? At home I didn't... didn't get... c... clear... clear messages from all sides, because my mother... had modern leanings, and she did things, that at the time would have been seen... if they found out, yes? It's very hard to describe these things today, but it... it's an act of treason, it's a very serious act. I'll give you an example, of what she did one time, yes? To show you the kind of duplicity I grew up in. She took me once, on Friday night, to the cinema. I remember the film I saw exactly. The first, the only film I had seen, it was called "the two... two _____(In Polish), _____(In Polish)," yes? I remember the name. Clandestine.

Q: How old were you?

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I was young, I hardly understood it, yes? I understood that it... it was a comedy, about... about... two women who... who look identical, yes? And... the comic situation is that... people don't exactly recognize which they're talking to and so on and so forth. But, go-- first of all, going to the cinema was, in... in... in my father's view, it was wrong, profane, forbidden, in every way. Going to the cinema? And... not to mention, doing this on Friday night, this thing which defies tradition, it's forbidden. Going to the cinema on Friday night?! Gadzooks! She did it clandestine, it was our secret. Still, I didn't-- didn't give it a second thought, and I still went to the Yeshiva, and I still prayed, and I still did everything, and my father was pleased, he... he thought I had a very promising future in... a guaranteed future in... in... in that world... so I grew up in a certain duplicity, and when this manifested itself, if it ever did, whether... my world view and my perception of things also stem from that, were affected by that, or not, these things I don't know exactly, I certainly can tell the proportions of these things, the quantification, these are things that... are very hard to analyze. But, I still feel that, still, she helped me a little to measure things, to weigh them, to test them, and not to accept them at face value, but on the other hand I am generally a... how to put it? A skeptical person. Not in a negative sense. Skeptical in the sense that that I always want to test the veracity of... things. I do this with truly prosaic things, as well as more complex ones, and it could be I was born with this trait, and therefore, even as a child I didn't blindly conform, yes? Not totally, as far as my views, and my emotional and spiritual identification, were concerned. I could do things very-- very precisely, mechanically speaking, even better than others, I always did. But I could also keep a little distance and observe, to maintain a... critical perspective on things. Could be.

Q: Your mother was skeptical?

A: Mother never asked q-- I-- I don't recall her asking any questions. She knew things had to be changed. Hers was a... a liberal orientation. One of striving to learn. Of acknowledging that the state of things was deficient. It was clear, that it wouldn't do to live solely by the decrees and way of life of... Jewish religious tradition. She disagreed with that. And... she was sharp, and... she expressed these thoughts. And that's why she and mother-- she and... and... my sister, yes? Were such good friends.

Q: You know, you're describing a very interesting character...

A: Yes.

Q: Of a boy, who is at once skeptical and obedient.

A: To this day. Yes. The... I don't-- there's no-- no-- not.... no-- there's no contradiction here. That is, I'm obedient... for a number of reasons. First, when you're in a social setting, and you want to belong there, you must be mindful of society, of your fellow man, yes? So you know that by breaking the rules, you would be breaking

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society's... society's peace of mind, yes? You would be injuring... social values, so you conform, even if you might disagree. If one isn't fighting for a cause, but simply transgressing to avoid some discomfort, then I, for one, don't do that. On the other hand, where possible I come out with my own ideas, and I also try to influence things, yes? So, I don't necessarily think there's any contradiction here, yes? I wasn't a rebel, I never was, but... I was able, slowly and persistently, to get my way, even if it took a while. Even if along the w-- way, I seemed to be acquiescent, in the final account I never abandoned my... main values. To this day, and this, also, I think, I learned in retrospect as well, I believe, my behavior in the camp. In the-- in the camp itself, yes? Because these dilemmas, they follow you all through life, if you're perceptive, if you're reflexive. If you're a person who... aspires to give his... his life meaning, as... as Leibowitz said. Yes? So... you're aware of these contradictions... I had several very typical examples of... of this when I was-- I was in the co-- co-- concentration camp, yes? Trying to stick to the things one... I don't want to say "believes in," that... that's too easy. When believes, one is almost giving away-- one has a ready alibi. One believes, so it's-- that is, one isn't responsible for it, for having a belief, yes?

Q: That--

A: "I believe."

Q: That's the skeptic in you talking.

A: Yes, I me-- I mean, what's "I believe?" I think it's hiding-- hid-- it's securing an alibi. I'm talking about the... the rules you stick by, out of a very deep awareness, and out of recognition that you... that you value these things, because you can justify the reason why they're important to you.

Q: What specifically do you mean?

A: For instance... loyalty, fidelity, for instance, being considerate about the vulnerabilities of others... if someone put their trust in you, and you're in a situation, you're in a dilemma, and... you must do certain things, which involve a choice, between two things, that's when you prove, how truly you... hold to your principles, how great of a man you are, or that you're a regular person, which isn't altogether unacceptable--

Q: A great man in your view.

A: Yes, great in my view, of course, yes. But still, there's some universal meaning, when you let your weakness rule you, and u... even.... use it as a good excuse for... for... for... your behavior.

Q: You know--

A: Yes.

Q: I don't mind skipping ahead a bit (A: I don't... yes), when you say these things, is there some specific example that you think of?

A: There are... very many examples of... of that issue, yes? Of... yes. I'll try to focus on a characteristic one now, yes? When I came to the camp, to (In German)_____, I met there my only surviving uncle. He was young, the youngest of... of... my fa-- my father's... of... of... of... my father's brothers... I had a special relationship with him, because he... was so... kind to me when I was little. He was also young, very active, yes? One of the unconventional siblings, yes? Because he didn't study in... yes. He was observant, but he went to (In Polish)_____, which was on the German border, and he dressed in modern clothes, he enjoyed soccer, yes? And I remember, he... used to hug me, and he used to bring me presents, yes? When I was four we went on vacation, in the summer, we went on vacation somewhere, and... I remember, when he and my father came for Shabbath, they hadn't been with us all week, they came for Shabbath, and he brought me a... a three-wheeled bicycle. A tricycle. I was so happy, yes? He brought me that. That-- these are the memories I had of him. And when I

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came to the camp, I met him there. I looked at him, and I thought "this isn't the same person." He looked like some hunted animal, he was a little swollen, and he gave off... fear. He gave off confusion, he gave-- he looked like some... undefined creature, hungry, who can't-- can't think of anything else, except food. He didn't say so, I saw it, he was looking, searching. He who had loved me so, whom I had loved so as a child, and... truly... such warmth, he'd hug me, kiss me, we'd sleep in the same bed, and... it was unthinkable. And... going in, I had a piece of bread with me. I went, and I gave him half that bread. I hate that-- he took the bread, ate it, and rushed off. And everyone around... said: "Do you know what you just did? You gave away life. You gave your life away." Bread, a piece of bread, was a matter of life or death. It's not something you give, it's something you fight for. In the camps you fight for a piece of bread. And... they didn't convince me. I have no regrets whatsoever, I'm so proud of that choice, almost-- I mean, as I said, our relationship [cellphone] was very special.... but... I was living in an environment where there was nothing, that solidarity didn't exist.

Q: Not anymore.

A: It didn't exist. And, all through the war, until the end, I remained-- not by chance, but because these things were very very important to me. I remained loyal. I was careful not to let people down. That uncle seemed to expect, I felt he expected, he came to me-- I'm telling you, like, I don't want to say that word, like a hunted animal, looking to be rescued. I couldn't-- I couldn't let him down. I knew that I had [bread],

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and he didn't. And that's what people would ask for in the camp... I had another kind of incident, where you wonder--

Q: One moment.

A: Yes.

Let's, let's wait a moment--

A: Yes.

Q: For the beep to end... we have some more time on the tape, we have six more minutes... yes.

A: Again, you're right, I'm skipping from one topic to another, and, perhaps, chronologically speaking, I should do it differently, yes? But... These things will become apparent later. It depends on how much time we devote to this interview... In one camp, I will get to where it was and how this episode came about, I... managed... I managed... to secure a daily bowl of soup. And the bowl, this addition, was a matter

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of life and death. People who didn't have, in the camp I was in, who didn't have any food in addition to the ration, you could predict the precise course their-- their bodies would take, within a few months, they became swollen, and... they very shortly... left this world. You couldn't live on what we had. Everyone tried one way or another. I managed to get the German who was in charge of the kitchen, in the camp I was in, it was a German officer, he gave an order, that every day I would come, at a certain time, after I came back from work, and I would get a serving of soup. There was... the one who was supposed to give me that soup, was this Jewish guy, who worked in the kitchen, I remember, he was this short, rectangular type of guy, yes? Very strong, he worked, so he could s-- scrape some food, which is why he was also very strong, and he lived in the same cell block with me. And I-- his bed was next to mine, that is, a bed, a passageway, and he... he'd come-- b-- he'd come back to the barrack very late, because he had to... wash the dishes, and... it was a very lucrative job, yes? People bent over backwards to get there, by the way, I managed to get there myself eventually, that's where he was. One eve-- one d-- one day, that is, one night, I was tired after this exhausting day at work, somebody wakes me. This guy. That was the... first time I heard of such a thing; he wanted to penetrate me, no less. He wanted... he w-- w-- wanted sexual gratification. And I refused, I mean, back then my moral world was still intact, intact, even though I, I had already been through several years of war. It was intact, it was stark, it was stable, I wonder how, but it was. I wasn't... too naive, but I was, shall we say, innocent. I was... that's how it was, I accepted it. I said: "Are you crazy? Go away, or I'll call the... head..." he says: "I'll teach you a lesson, just wait." He was something of a bully, and he went back to bed, and the next day, when I came for my bowl, he took it, and spilled the soup... I started crying, both because of the rage I felt, because-- because of the injustice, and because of the problem itself, a

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matter of life and death, he's depriving you, yes? I got over it. I didn't beg, I said to him, the words, I think, I even said the words: "you haven't heard the last of me," something like that. This indicates that... I somehow maintained some... some very important things. I'm sure that, mentally, they helped me not just in the camp, I think they also helped me in... all through the years, even to this very day.

Q: We... need to change the tape--

End of Tape 1

Tape 2

A: Yes, actually I wa--

Q: Wait wait, just a second.

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: We running? Running.

A: Yes.

Q: OK? Alright. Please.

A: Yes. Actually, what I wanted to say, is I dedicate this interview... to--

Q: What? What? Yes. OK, we're running. Please.

A: I wanted to dedicate this interview to my sons and my grandchildren, and the in-depth story especially to my son Boaz, my youngest, and... because of this fact, on this topic, It's especially important for me to tell him the story. I know that, all his life, he wanted me to tell him the whole story in an orderly fashion, but I thought he might not be able to take it. I was aware, I presumed to be aware, of his sensitivity, and I was concerned this might be detrimental to him. I have no problem discussing my past, but because I was sensitive to... to my son's over-- oversensitivity, I only told him these things indirectly. And I know, he expects to hear this story in an orderly fashion, and he asked me several times to write it down, and I told him: "I'll write it down when I feel ready, when I feel I have something to say." But since I'm doing this interview, I want to do it for his benefit, yes? And especially, and maybe I should start telling things a bit more chronologically, yes? And if in the process some questions arise, I will of course veer from... if that's alright with you.

Q: Very well.

A: Yes.

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Q: Now-- one moment, we have this... we-- wait a moment. Gone? OK, so let's rewind... where would you like to resume the story, we were (A: yes yes) talking a bit about your family...

A: Right. I want to finish the pre-war story. The story of my childhood and early youth, yes? Some of which I've already told, yes? Maybe not in an orderly fashion, because it intertwines a lot of issues, and I wanted to explain and substantiate each of them, and that naturally leads away from the orderly, chronological story, but, you could say my... childhood was a typical one for... observant and ultra-orthodox Jewish families, with one exception, that my mother differed from my father in her world view, and she tried, covertly, to steer things a bit off to the side, and it left some residue, and eventually, I would say, my mother and father didn't prove a good match, they... separated, and... that was the first crisis in my life, and I discovered... possibilities that had never occurred to me, I was torn between my respect and admiration for my father, and my love for my mother, and I had to choose which to go with...

Q: You had to decide?

A: I had to decide... and the Rabbi, that night, I remember, a winter night, asked me what I was going to do. And I said I wanted to go with my mother. This wa-- was preceded by lobbying, and... each of them tried to influence me, and when I said that, my father broke out crying, and I couldn't take it, and all night long... I stayed up

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crying. My pillow was soaked with tears. And I decided, early in the morning, to tell my mother that I-- I was going with father, and she understood. I didn't go to school. There was nothing else on my mind. I got dressed, it was winter, and ran to tell him the news. I got there, I remember, and the door was locked. So I walked on the edge of the sidewalk, on the verge, and gave myself omens: "if you can walk without falling, father will come." I wanted to tell him so badly, that I... I was coming to live with him... perhaps this is more to describe, mainly for my son's benefit, yes? To describe my childhood, and my sen-- sensitivity... [cough] and my family relationships.

Q: Divorce was very unconventional back then.

A: Yes. That true, but as I said, they probably agreed, the rabbis, that it was an impossible match, since he is a Hasid-- Hasid, like in Bney Barak, or Mea Shearim, he has a rabbi and a court, and his wife doesn't... doesn't-- doesn't wear... a wig, yes? Doesn't even cover her head, yes? And... she's modern-leaning, and... she's kind of a part of-- of secular society, generally speaking. Pro-- I didn't know all the reasons, I still don't, I was too young to know. In short, they divorced...

Q: Did she... belong to any secular organization?

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A: Y-- yes, of... of some... some political orientation, I'm not sure which, yes? I remember her occasionally saying that she was back from some assembly, yes? So it's safe to assume, yes? That all these things couldn't be reconciled, and they divorced, my s-- my sister had no problem, she had always been independent, and she knew exactly what she wanted, yes? And she didn't exactly...share my father's view of things, so there was no problem, but I was torn, and as I said, I took that step, and to... to make the story short, I'll say that two or three months later I got diphtheria, on my way to school, from my father's house, I would always visit my mother's house, because it... was very close to school. One day, before I got diphtheria, I came there and I saw-- sensed the smell of burnt milk, I saw, mother-- it was very very hard on my mother, she knew it was hard on me, because my father wasn't exactly the man to... care for me the way she used to care for me, she knew that, and I never complained, but she knew, and it was very very hard on her, and she cried, and I came there and she was on the bed, and she was crying, and meanwhile the milk was overflowing, and that taste, of... of... burnt milk, even now it just co-- covers my eyes with tears. That's stayed with me to this very day, that taste, of... sorrow. Made palpable in... [long pause] yes. And it told me, that taste, that my mother was in great pain. I loved her so much. And as I said, one day I got sick, and of course when I was sick I stayed with mother. Father wasn't in a condition to care for a sick child... and one night he came to visit. And for a Hasid, to pay a visit to his ex-wife's house, is deeply meaningful. Anyone who knows the ultra-orthodox way of life [knows this]. But I sensed, again, I was always strongly intuitive, I sensed something was going on, and indeed that night they told me they had decided to-- to go back together and... get married. And that was one of the happiest days of my life... yes.

Q: How long did the... separation last?

A: Not long. A few months. I think so, a few months. Maybe a year-- no, a few months. I was very young [sniff].

Q: How old were you?

A: How old, maybe eight? I don't...

Q: Approximately.

A: I no longer have a very precise control of... _____

Q: Anyway, it was before-- before you went to Krakow.

A: Yes, as I said, these are... somewhat defining moments, and... their memory is deeply ingrained, I don't know how accurate the details are and what the context is,

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but the the main details are very accurate, because I remember myself, moving on the edge of the sidewalk, yes? And... and... and... using my balance or my... my loss thereof, as an omen whether or not my father was coming back, I remember that precisely, how I... gambled... with my balance to tell-- to portend whether f-- whether I'll find father at home now, whether he's back already, or not. Yes.

Q: Where was your sister, during the separation?

A: My sister stayed with-- with my mother, yes? And I don't remember her giving off any indecision or sadness, or... or being bothered at all. Maybe she wasn't, but maybe she just didn't express it, or expressed in a way that I didn't understand, yes? She was older and-- yes? And she had her own interests and she was very-- s-- sociable... and... I don't remember, I don't remember her being concerned about this. I was.

Q: T-- during the separation, did you get to talking with your sister about it?

A: No, We never discussed it. Generally, in those times, and in that atmosphere, you didn't discuss it, that is, divorce, first of all, wasn't... a source of great pride, yes? That is, I was also quite ashamed of my new-- my new familial status, yes? Yes? It's not something that-- today, you talk about it, yes? Divorce and so on, no problem, but then... it was still different. So they got back together, so we went back to being a

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family, until... until the war broke out. And I can say, that my childhood, despite all these things, and others, was an ordinary one... and we had moments of happiness and bliss, I remember the holidays, all these holidays, at our house, we had a proper Shabbath Eve, the way it's meant to be, with all the cooking odors, and the tablecloth, and-- the house... was so beautiful on Shabbath Eve, although it was somewhat... somewhat gloomy on weekdays, and somewhat meager, and-- on the Shabbath it was a veritable palace, and... since my father was ultra-orthodox, we observed every ritual, and I knew the hymns by heart, and the prayers by heart, and, as I said, I-- sang well, and... these were-- we had... on Shabbath Eve, it was customary to invite the-- underprivileged to the Shabbath Eve Feast, he was a Hasid, he took me to the synagogue, I knew precisely... how everything worked... I would go, as I said, I would go with my father to spend the weekend at his rabbi's, where I also had beautiful childhood experiences, in yet another setting, not the family setting, because my uncle, my father's brother, he was an... an administrator for the Rabbi of _____(In Polish?), who was a wealthy man, and who had a text-- one or more textile factories, and a store, and my uncle, he worked as [cough] treasurer, I think, ____ anyway, by the time we started going, we had the rabbi's favor. What did his favor entail? The-- rabbi was a sick man, diabetic, and one thing, I don't know whether-- young people know, what it is to have a _____, yes? The ra-- the rabbi, one thing he would do for his disciples, was have a Shabbat Eve Feast. And he had a very long table, where you could sit, even sit close to the rabbi, if you had status, and if you didn't, you'd stand, and you'd have to grab a spot, yes? There was this b-- bench, where someone could sit on one side, and on the other side someone could stand. And it was a struggle... a how should I put it? Yes? A struggle for survival, to grab a strategic position, why did you need a strategic position? First, to

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hear the rabbi's religious dicta. Second, so you could net some of his scraps, but to do that you had to be close to his plate. As this rabbi, the rabbi of-- of... _____ (In Polish?) was a sick man, they built him a-- in... in... in that hall, they built him a partition, which created a smaller room around some of the table. Yes? So people didn't overrun him, he couldn't handle it. Still, there was access to his plate, he just had to move it. Since we were in his favor, because, as I said, my uncle was... involved in business there, we were always allowed into the smaller room when we came. Very f-- very few people were allowed in there, to the smaller room. And I stood next to the rabbi, and it was wonderful, my father al-- also liked to sing, so he was allowed to sing one of the-- hymns, and I-- I accompanied him, I also had a nice voice. These were my-- happy... childhood experiences... the holidays, for instance... the Feast of Tabernacles, the whole experience of building the booth, everything involved, including the thatch, the eating in it, these were our real experiences, that's how we saw them, and I lived th-- these things fully. One of the things I didn't like was, although I loved the Pa... the Passover, I loved the special foods... my mother made, but what I didn't like was the preparations for the holiday... as you know, households like ours made sure to cleanse every crumb of leavened food, and among the trickier things were the books, the prayer books, and...Mishna books, and... Midrash books, which my father would use on Shabbat Eve, yes? During and after the feast. He would study them. Crumbs would be left inside. So when it ca-- it came time to prepare the apartment for... for.. for Passover, one of my roles was to leaf through them and remove the... leavened crumbs. It was very cold in Poland at that time of year, even though it was spring. Sometimes it was truly very cold, and I remember the inevitable sensation of my frozen fingers, the-- I had to do this outside, not inside, yes? So as not to leave any leavened crumbs in the apartment. So I didn't like that

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and-- more so because it was my job, he always had me do it, he relied on me. I knew I would do it faithfully, yes? That I would turn every page, and remove the crumbs... I had normal childhood experiences, the Circus came, of course my father didn't take me to the Circus, but mother did. She took me to the Circus, and I had normal childhood experiences, I had both kinds of experiences, but neither kind was-- complete, because for that you need a family with unified views, which I didn't have. And I suppose that's the situation I was in when... the war broke, when... I a-- the year was already thirty-nine, and I was back home by then--

Q: Right, I'm missing something here (A: Oh, we're missing _____ yes), you were in Krakow?

A: I was in Krakow, and my mother felt it wasn't right, although I never complained, and she seems to have won out, and my father conceded that I come back, and that was just a few months, I think, before the war. I came back home.

Q: When did you have your Bar Mitzvah?

A: Around the same time.

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Q: When you came back from Krakow?

A: Yes. When I--

Q: At home.

A: When I came back from Krakow, yes. Yes. That's it.

Q: And was it a meaningful event to you?

A: Now... I remember it was-- I can't even remember exactly where it was, I think it was at home. There were tables set, I said something, I don't remember exactly what, no one gave me the preparation, but I knew I was supposed to say something, so I found something myself. But my memory of the whole Bar Mitzvah business is very sketchy, it hasn't stuck with me. That is, I don't remember it as some kind of formative event, or as an event of... meaningful substance of the kind I'd remember, so I've pretty much forgotten all about it, yes? Yes, I was quite childish, in certain respects, despite being thir-- thirteen, or quite naive, I wasn't... I wasn't concerned with external things, yes? As I said, I took what I was told for granted, I was obedient, I wasn't looking for independence... from-- from convention. And in that mentality, in that

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atmosphere, I still felt safe under my parents' protection, in their own differing ways,
yes? I went into the war with this _____

Q: But-- you left the Yeshiva in Krakow...

A: Yes.

Q: And you came back...

A: Home, yes.

Q: To _____(In Polish).

A: Yes. To-- P--

Q: To what, another Yeshiva? To School?

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A: Yes, there was-- they opened a Yeshiva in our town, yes, a makeshift Yeshiva, so I went there, yes? And... Actually, you could say, I never finished... a proper-- seven years' schooling, yes? I learned-- judging by my present knowledge, my schooling must have been quite thorough, but it wasn't lengthy enough, I can read and write flawless Polish to this day, and... my math was fine, for my age group at the public school, but I never graduated, because I stopped studying before going to the Yeshiva. I can't recall whether anything happened in between, but in the Yeshiva there weren't any-- profane studies. Yes. On the other hand, I learned quite a lot-- quite a lot of Mishna texts, and Gemara, and... they told me I wasn't... so bad at that stuff...

Q: And then the war drew close.

A: Yes, that is, I didn't sense the-- the war was drawing close, I did have enough awareness of political processes and events, I witnessed another rising tide of antisemitism, especially in Poland, it was the time of the _____(In Polish), a professedly, vehemently antisemitic political party, which was insp-- inspired, perhaps also supported, by the German Nazi party, and... they... were violent, and they actively manifested their vehement antisemitism by announcing a boycott, not as a statement, not as a rhe-- rhetorical thing, but immediately following the declaration they stationed gangs next to Jewish shops, unbelievable, yes? In modern cities, yes? On the German border, in 1939, this was after advances such as radio, and diplomacy, and... yes? They stationed thugs who didn't let gentiles go in, to buy from Jews. And if you tried to resist, you were beaten, we-- the Jews didn't resist by force, it was

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impossible. And the police didn't quite get in their way, and didn't quite... prosecute them-- I remember one very courageous incident, it just came to mind, I'd forgotten it, a very courageous incident involving a Jewish butcher, a Jewish butcher, they were actually a family of sizable people... I remember, they were blond, they actually had this Aryan look, yes? And they were... boycotted as well, why? Because they didn't want him to sell meat to non-Jews. I remember how, one of them, yes? I heard him tell it, I didn't witness it, he said: "Here is my whetted axe, and if they had dared set foot in my place, and if they had-- hadn't gotten the hell out, there would have been blood shed." He said: "I was prepared to do it," that is, father and sons, they were prepared to fight, and indeed they were left alone. I don't know why, perhaps they sensed that they were truly determined to fight, but apart from that the Je-- the Jews were defenseless, there was nothing we could do.

Q: But this incident you just described, how do you know of it?

A: Right, I don't remember exactly how I know-- I saw something, but I don't remember exactly how I-- whether I was pr-- present-- I was present for something. I don't remember exactly how it happened, I was present, it was on _____(In Polish) street, the street name suddenly comes to mind, which I've forgotten, it was _____(In Polish) street... yes? These beautiful people, a tall butcher, very beautiful, with his strong and tall sons who-- helped him, and something happened there. Maybe I happened to be around, and they drove them out by threat of their whetted axes. But that was an anomaly. An anomaly. So un... uncharacteristic.

Q: Is it a coincidence that you associate beauty with strength in this context?

A: Beauty and strength? Yes, I had this image-- I had-- I-- I had this image of... of-- of strength... what strength meant, yes? Physical strength was un-Jewish. The un-Jew was tall, sizable, blond, blue-eyed, strong, usually beautiful.

Q: So they, the butchers, their-- their being strong also made them beautiful.

A: No, they happened, yes, as I said, they also happened to be-- sizable, beautiful and blond, yes? I don't know how it happened, and also brave. In other words, they were the antithesis of... the common strain of Jew.

Q: And how did you feel when you saw that?

A: I... I can't quite say, I felt neither pride nor its opposite, I... was concerned with the situation itself. The situation was frightening. I was only thinking about what could have happened, actually, if it came to an axe fight. I imagined this-- this guy, even with his stature and beauty and blond hair, even him, wounded, yes? I wasn't concerned, yet, with some notion of honor, of Jewish pride, yes? That incident was so

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uncharacteristic, it was so-- so inconsequential compared to the totality of what I sensed, of what I took the Jewish situation to mean, that I was only concerned with the incident itself, and viewed from a different perspective, that of-- of-- of this potential violence, yes? For me, it was natural for the gentiles to dictate how things went. Almost natural. Unjust, outrageous, but... I didn't draw a conclusion...

Q: You said: "after advances such as radio."

A: Yes.

Q: Did you listen to the radio?

A: Not in our house, we didn't have a radio, but I listened here and there. Incidentally. Especially with the war closing they started-- gathering around places which had radios. The immigrants-- remember that in thirty eight... Hitler deported Jews, mostly Polish-born, to Poland, and we had many refugees come to our town, that was thirty eight, thirty nine also, and... our neighbor's daughter, yes? She came back from Germany with her family, and they brought with them things we wouldn't have expected to find in an average family, several bicycles, and a radio. Several radios. They had acumen, so they started renting their bicycles to boys such as us at an hourly rate, if you wanted to ride the bicycle, you paid. That was before I started riding

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bicycles, I didn't start until thirty nine, after the war broke out, yes? By then we'd stopped going to the Yeshiva, life had changed completely, and that's also when I started learning to ride bicycles. And that's where we-- where I remember listening to the radio. Yes. For the first time.

Q: Do you remember which broadcasts you listened to?

A: I remember they were reports of tension, tension between Poland and Germany, Germany was starting to make demands on Poland, and that tension... yes. That tension grew as we neared September of thirty nine, we heard a lot of political proclamations by ministers and generals, and that was, that was our preoccupation. These Jews didn't come listen to lectures and entertainment and such things on the radio, not people from my social circle, yes? There were many others who did. Not we.

Q: Did you hear any of Hitler's speeches?

A: I didn't. No.

Q: You only listened to Polish programs.

A: I-- I didn't hear any, yes. We only listened to Polish programs. I heard of Hitler, I knew he... he w-- was-- evil incarnate, but... I was already familiar with several antisemites who scared me just as much, I had heard of _____ (In Polish), and I had heard of the trails of... of some famous trails, and I had been living the-- this fear... for quite-- a lot of time. In other words, Hitler came as no surprise to me, yes? He was just a consummation, yes? For me, looking back, thinking things over, I say, they came as no surprise to me, they just scared me even more, yes? They intensified my existing fears, they gave them another dimension, here it was, just around the corner, and I'm helpless, and we're doing nothing. And I don't believe I felt I knew what exactly needed to be done, but I felt, I felt complete helplessness, and this indifference... this-- this infuriating helplessness, on the part of those who were supposed to defend themselves.

Q: Is that-- is that your formulation of the situation looking back?

A: I... I think so, because I told you, for instance, about... the incident on the train. I didn't blame anyone. The situation itself made me very sad and fearful. That is, as though I accepted this situation as a given, unjust, and... I was living in this sense of deep sadness, over our powerlessness to change things, over this-- this power... power im-- imbalance. This imbalance of powers. I remember, after the war, I thought that-- that I had cause for complaint, but of course... when you look at it more closely I didn't. As I said, we were taught to preserve Judaism, to observe the commandments,

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to live a Jewish way of life, we weren't taught how to defend these things if they were challenged. And... we don't see, apart from the Warsaw Ghetto, we don't see very many instances of people getting up and committing acts of bravery.

Q: Let's wait a moment for that beep to pass.

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: Right. On the contrary... I sensed we were subtly, perhaps passively, being taught to acquiesce, yes? Not to rebel. I mean, really, there was such-- escapism. Such... such denial... denial of... of... the existence of the threat. Else how could you explain, that a gentile boy could scatter a large group of Jews, and they'd go back about-- yes? They don't talk about it, you don't hear them complain about it, and they go back... about their business. No comment, not even-- a protest... I don't know if it was the same for non-religious Jews, who were already outside, who had already... opened a window, generally, to the outside world, who really did try to do something, by the way, we know that they-- I lived in... in another kind of society. One that didn't retaliate for such acts. That's how it always seemed to me. And this society was-- was not lacking in urges. I remember stick fights, among yeshiva pupils. Between one rabbi's court

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and another's-- so, these urges existed, but when it came to the outside world, nothing... this fact has been on my mind to this day, and... I'm not sure I have an exhaustive theory of it, I don't know what, if anything, can be inferred from it, because it... relates to many other questions about Judaism, and our role, and... and our... unique, fateful situation. It's all related to this topic, I have no clear answers... I have questions, I have questions, I have ruminations, I don't always have answers for... for these difficult issues. I eve--

Q: Would you-- would you like to present these questions you have?

A: Well, then maybe, because I said... I also want to tell a story, and since we're just getting into the war, I-- maybe we should p-- present... these questions later, when we talk about the... the... the tragic... and unique events of the war itself. But it's true that even at this stage, yes? I have questions. A lot of questions... when I ask myself today, for instance... about the way I was brought up to see Judaism as... as the center of the world, and our special role, to live by the Commandments, and the all-importance of preserving Judaism, in hindsight, I ask myself: "Why is it so important to preserve Judaism, instead of the Jews?" The religious Jew will reply: "By observing the Commandments, by preserving Judaism, you preserve the Jews." But there are questions still. I a-- I say to myself, the J-- the Jews are an old people, very old, with a history of... over three thousand years, a documented, continuous three thousand years of history. And... even before-- at its start, there were millions of us. A people that-- persists for so many years, should have numbered in the hundreds of millions today.

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We had large families, there was the commandment, "go forth and multiply," so, there were no-- planned families, no restrictions, that is, as other peoples had. Living conditions were no worse than for other peoples, who did multiply, the Chinese and so forth. So I ask, where are all those Jews? Well, it's true that... we were beaten by the Persians, the Babylonians, and the... Romans, and there were pogroms, and there were-- but how many could there have been? Only a fraction were killed in... such incidents. Where are all those millions of Jews? It could be, it could be that most Jews rejected Judaism. Judaism as... as defined by the authorities. Most Jews were unable, and unwilling, for their part, to live this kind of life, and since you could only be a Jew by having a totally Jewish way of life, they opted out. A minority stayed. So this minority preserves Judaism, it doesn't preserve the Jews. It didn't preserve the Jews, for instance, here is one of the-- the views that-- hypothetically, it may very well be that had a more liberal approach been taken, then Judaism would have disappeared. I say, had it disappeared, it would have been because it was inferior to other cultures. But very likely, had it been more liberal, it could have become a leading culture, because it was, at its core, a seminal culture, which the world has embraced. But not in this... absolutist form. And... this is what concerns me greatly, this way or that, and I don't have an exhaustive theory, because these things really are complicated, I can't rightly say what we should do today, with all this mess, yes? And... that's why I'm a Zionist. Not in the formal sense, I was never a part of the Zionist movement, or of a-- a Zionist organization, I'm a Zionist in the sense of saying, really, that... that... true Jewish existence, or actually Jewish national existence, if it stands a chance, it is only through independence, only through independence, and that... the alternatives are the continued preservation of Judaism in exile, closed off and, again, at the mercy of others, or its complete disappearance, much more likely in this free world. I believe

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that a self-respecting Jewish person, will seek to... emancipate himself among Jews, because he lives among Jews and not among J-- non-Jews. That's why, so far, this country has a secular majority, who don't reject their heritage, who recognize the role the Jewish faith had in their history, who would like to incorporate it into their culture, yes? And I would hope that, for later generations, this may be possible, today it's a little unnatural, today, to regard religion and say, that's a part of my culture, even though I don't... eat kosher, and even though I don't b-- b... live according to the 613 Commandments, but still, this is my heritage, this is my culture, this is the source of... some of... my... v-- my valuations, my... values, and of my whole world of... my whole inspiration... my... I mean... actually, the source of my cultural inspiration, yes? The... the.. the Jewish faith, it has several cultural aspects which I can-- embrace, embrace them along with my liberal views. Today this is difficult, because it's supposedly offensive to another kind of people, who believe the Torah isn't open to interpretation, yes? by each one of us, it's not open to a liberal-minded interpretation, that is, to an interpretation that results from some historical process. The interpretation is dictated to us, and for this-- for that-- we have interpreters, there are people who are allowed to make interpretations, and to decide what's true and what's false, and these are the... elites... the Torah elites, yes? Who hold hegemony over this matter. We don't know how this will develop. I believe, that a consolidated, autonomous people, which holds sovereignty over its daily affairs, develops a dynamic which determines what seem-- what seems immutable at present. I can't tell you how it will happen, because I see all the present difficulties. They are so great, that they necessarily create a schism, so that's how it is today, it won't be that way-- and-- I say with certainty, it that's not how it will be in the future, if we persist, and-- preserve this Zionist system for generations. Because I believe you can't create a culture, yes? by design, but that a

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culture comes into being. It is the sum of man's creation, yes? And that's why cultures are themselves influenced and transformed, because they accrue the experience of the ages, yes? Culture, any culture, anywhere, is always a living thing. A culture that tries to remain static... to not be open, to be very very closed, evidently shrinks. And its influence d-- dwindles. This is evident in every religion, especially Christianity, yes? It's evident that the Church, which was once very influential, today is merely tolerated, yes? It's voluntary, it has no power. People can at once be Christian, and adopt a culture as they see fit. I believe the same will happen here, if we persist for years and generations in living among each other. Amon-- I'm being very optimistic here, though, hoping that we will survive all the outside forces. That's another matter, of whether we'll be smart enough, and a little lucky, to survive for many... many years amongst ourselves so we can live our... our... spiritual, cultural lives, yes? Naturally.

Q: One moment, please wipe your... lip.

A: Yes...

Q: In other words-- you know, Freud said... Freu-- What? What? OK. I hear it. Freud said... if you're not a believer, and-- don't cut. If you're not a believer, and you're not a Zionist, and you don't speak Hebrew, what makes you Jewish?

A: Um hmm.

Q: He answered: everything else. So you, as-- opposed to Freud, say: sovereignty is necessary.

A: Yes, that is, for a... natural... Jewish existence, sovereignty is necessary.

Q: Yes, we--

A: To be Jewish against your will, nothing is necessary. What do I mean by a natural Jewish existence? An existence where, when you get up in the morning, you don't have to ask yourself: "what makes me Jewish?" "What makes me Jewish" is, actually, not one but two questions: what makes me Jewish in a positive sense, that is, what is it that I do-- to paraphrase Plato Sharon: "what have you done for the sake of Jewish?"

Q: "What have you done for the sake of the country."

A: "What have you done for the sake of the country, what have you done for--" what have you done for the sake of being considered Jewish, and another possible question,

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“what makes me Jewish, then-- if I don't have this trait, nor that one, nor-- what makes me Jewish, then?” So when can you--

Q: That-- wait wait wait wait. This is getting too loud, right? Yes, so what if we go over and... let's see what happens, yes. Yes, that's it. One moment.

A: Yes, did you record all this?_____

Q: There was a lawnmower working outside.

A: Oh.

Q: It just stopped.

A: Yes. But that's not a Jewish problem, is it?

Q: No, definitely not a Jewish problem.

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A: Yes.

Q: Well... so you-- were sharing a few of the questions that...

A: Yes, well, I believe these are questions that trouble us all, they are very very important questions, whether we discuss them or not, yes? Because... the question of our continued existence, becomes much, much more p-- poignant following the e-- events of the last century, and... and... the-- foundation of Israel has c-- created a whole new situation for Jews, and... the consolidation... of-- the diaspora, and... we're experiencing... ceaseless internal struggles, between competing views, and we're not always aware that this is all very natural, we nee-- but-- we need but keep praying that this is as bad as it gets, because it was so n-- n-- natural, so inevitable, when so many Jews came here, with so many different ideas of what it means to be Jewish, or, in some cases, with so little idea of what it means to be Jewish. So... it's always a question of what happens. These multilateral struggles go on and on, and we can't seem to find a compromise or bridge the gap between the different sides. And, as I said, I'm a very optimistic Zionist, provided, critically, and here I can only hope, I have no basis... for rationally predicting it will be so, I can only hope that we remain here for many years, enough years for something natural to come into being, something which wouldn't require all the extraneous things, the antibiotics, and the-- the insurance companies, yes? Something natural. Because usually, it's evident, a people tends to persist. Sometimes it's enslaved, sometimes it's conquered, but no one denies its existence. Usually, no one wishes to dissolve it. The o-- only people whose

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very existence is constantly threatened is the Jewish people. And I would like to hope that that essential, fateful change, which took place in the previous generation, namely the gathering together of the Jewish people, will give us a chance, potentially, to be a people whose existence is unquestioned, yes? So I could wake up in the morning, and if I ask the question, "what have I done to make me Jewish?" it would be as legitimate as asking what I have done today, to make me human. No more legitimate. Until then, we will always be preoccupied with our Jewishness, and its conflicts and problems, and I hope we have the wisdom, during this period, until this issue stabilizes, to be wise and... do things-- do things correctly... and time doesn't-- doesn't heal all wounds, time alone. Time needs a helping hand. And we will help, we will help it, I think there are a great many-- efforts being made in our society, trying to help time do its thing. Yes. I'd like to give you one example, of the kinds of things I... I'm counting on. When a people stops... stops defining itself through religion, and its purpose in life through religious observance, and instead defines itself as a nation, it must have... a much greater variety of... ways of life and spheres of activity. It must have both policemen and... soldiers, both colliers, if they have any coal, and oil miners, both cleaning personnel and electricians, it must have persons who do all these things. It can't have outsiders do them. Religious society can, because it doesn't pretend, nor is it... interested, it says: "We've defined our lives as narrowly as possible, and we're more or less self-sufficient." But a nation can't do that. So through these various activities, you develop and cultivate your... your connections. I wouldn't say our people [cough] excels in things such as, say... punctuality... reliability, discipline, but I believe that a nation acquires these through a historical process, out of necessity. They're not born traits. Life presents you with challenges. If you go on for years, for generations, meeting them, because you have

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to, then the experience becomes ingrained, and it becomes natural to you. Now, you can't come up to a people that's in the early process of becoming, and tell them: "look, why not be disciplined." Everyone agrees on that, but how to do it? But, if I build a factory, to make... say... automobile parts, yes? And I'm a supplier for some factory somewhere in the world, then I don't need any admonitions to be motivated to do business in a precise, timely, cost-effective way, yes? Becau-- I have a better motivator, namely, if I don't do it that way, I won't get to do business at all. And this fact is so stark, it must become ingrained in anyone involved in such activities. If you keep doing it long enough, it becomes a v-- a value to you, and you become punctual, reliable and efficient in other areas as well. That's why I predict, that if others allow us the time, we will develop a high, even, I believe, a very high proficiency in these areas. Because we're an ambitious people. We're not easily contented. We can't get enough. And... we're not good losers, and we'd hate to come up last, and to avoid that, not just once, but consistently, we would have to take up a suitable system of values and be-- behaviors, yes? that will allow us to develop our-- merits to... to... to-- excellence. I believe in our ability to do so.

Q: That is, you don't see a self-destructive potential in the present situation.

A: No. No. The situation I see was only to be expected, I'd say, I'm not that smart, but I'm very intuitive, always have been, and I predicted it. I expected even worse. It had to be this way. It had to be this way. These necessary adjustments to one another, they can't be just a technical matter. Just as a state or a nation isn't made simply by a

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technical declaration of independence. Our people's essence changed little, yes? when Ben Gurion declared the founding of Israel in forty eight. But he created an environment which could potentially allow us to transform ourselves.

Q: Even allowing for a little civil war down the road?

A: I'm not sure it will come to that.

Q: If it does?

A: I doubt it will... a national wa-- I can't see who would start a national war.

Q: A civil war.

A: A c-- civil war. The only ones who could start such a war, in my opinion, as... as far as I know, are people like in Mea Shearim or Bney Barak, that kind of people, they could declare war on another group, who are-- in the former's view, are the destroyers of Judaism, which, for them, is all-important. All those in... in between these two extremes, would be willing to compromise. They're on their way out. They express their distress... by saying: "somebody stop me, or else..." yes. I can't see a civil war

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happening. I can see conflicts, and if our leaders are... good enough... if they... can rise to the dramatic moments ahead, then they will be able to... they will be able to lead, how to manage, as they say, you must manage... a war situation, you must manage a conflict situation, you must manage such a situation with... in a-- in... in... with intelligence and in a correct manner. Because our shared interest, our ultimate shared interest, namely survival, is very real, whether or not you choose think about it. It's clear the Jews have no alternative. All the proposed alternatives are illusions. People say: "well, then we-- at worst, we'll just m-- move to Sweden." It's true that today an... individual Jew can move to S-- Sweden, and quite realistically he-- he could even become a minister there. But we're talking about a nation. The nation has no alternatives. The Jewish people has no alternative, its only alternative, as it were, is _____ we're already familiar with that alternative.

Q: Is everyone as rationalist about this as you are?

A: No, you don't have to be a rationalist. I say, I'm trying... I'm trying to sense, sense the... the path of history. I'm trying to sense the-- the... the... the... the... the ability of people to struggle with each other, considering the price they're willing to pay. And I see there's a clear limit, not because it's been agreed upon, but because each one of us, each of us Israeli Jews has his limits. There's no one who-- who has any real power, and who-- would let things get that bad. There may be a-- a few extremists, who could do harm, buy they can't shake the very real desire, there's a very real desire to preserve our country. And that doesn't mean that-- that... every-- every last one of us,

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yes? is willing to suffer, su-- and suffer, and n-- and not... not... get away, and not
flee, and not cheat, no, I mean, this will exist in the collective. It's natural, it's beyond
natural.

Q: I suggest we-- we... end on this optimistic note--

A: yes.

Q: And go back to--

A: Right. Yes.

Q: Back to-- because, anyway, we have to change the ta--

End of Tape 2

Tape 3

Q: We're running? We were coming to... the beginning of the war.

A: Yes. We were in thirty nine, yes. Thirty nine. What else can I recall, from when--
yes...

Q: Refugees, you said there were refugees.

A: Yes yes. Oh, that's it.

Q: What did they tell you of their experience?

A: That was right at the end... yes, of the period... I remember I was about to... about
to... yes. In thirty eight I was still in Krakow, and there I met refugees for the first
time, as I was standing, I remember, at the top, on some... on some synagogue
balcony, and in the courtyard were a multitude of Jewish families from Germany.
They stood there in the courtyard, and I saw the co-- the condition they were in, and I
wasn't really sure what was going to happen to those people, who were crowded there.

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I just thought: "I'm glad I'm not one of them." That I remember, yes? "I'm lucky I'm not one of them." And... that-- that's my memory of the first deportation, I think it was in thirty eight, of Polish Jews to... to Poland, from Germany, and the... second refugee incident I witnessed was in thirty nine, when Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia, and then came the first Czech refugees, on Saturday, August... thirty... it was August thirty... first, yes? August has thirty one days, right?

Q: Yes.

A: _____yes? Thirty one-- August thirty first, it was Saturday... or was it? Anyway, on some Saturday, right before the war, we housed some refugees from Czechoslovakia in our back yard, I remember, we served them some of the Shabbat foods, and again I told myself: "How lucky I am." It took one, maybe several days, and we were in the same situation ourselves. Though the war, as you know, broke out on September first, which was Friday. September first was Friday... but even before that, we had [cough] lights-out drills at... at night, and the authorities were trying to prepare the population for the ae-- aerial attacks, that was the... main terror, yes? Aerial attacks, and gas, there was gas, so in every building of... of importance, they had to prepare a room where you could go, take shelter, during an attack, and they had to be equipped, with bandages, and all sorts of quite primitive, quite simple means of protection, and I remember that in our backyard there was a synagogue of the... (In Polish)_____ court, and that was the room we used, and when the war broke out, and the... alarm went off, we, the children, ran to the synagogue. And... it was a

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somewhat childish experience of the was. It was fear mixed with what seemed like a kind of game, yes? Seemed not quite serious. That is, something was going on, but only we ran there.

Q: The adults didn't?

A: I never saw any, I don't recall any adults there. I don't recall there were any adults.

Q: The parents?

A: I don't remember where the parents were, I remember I ran there by myself, not even my sister came, I don't know what that was about. September first. After all, we didn't know the war would break out on September first, maybe they were each about their business, I don't know where they were, yes? And... somehow we got through the weekend, and on Sunday morning we packed our things and we all went to the train station, to escape, and to go deeper, yes? north-westwards, yes? towards Warsaw.

Q: Your family?

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A: My family, that is, my father, my mother, my sister and I, we took everything we could, suitcases, as many as we could carry, and when we got there, there was no room left. And eventually we managed to get on board an open freight car, yes? We were really the last ones in. We pushed and were pu-- pushed inside, where we stood like sardines, and we went. No one knew where, when or how we went, we just went in some direction. We ran. Because the earlier generation, the older generation, had, like those good old generals who are always fighting the previous war, a very good idea of what war was all about. In a war, they breach the border, and those who are on the border suffer. So you better get away. Well, they didn't know the... the Germans had paratroopers, and they were beating the Polish army to wherever they went... whether advancing or retreating, and so we... were rushed on trains. The Germans bombed the... railway, the tracks, or they were feared to, so the train went a little way, then stopped. Went a little way, and stopped, until we reached a place, after two days, I think, we had been traveling for two days, well, it-- it was autumn, very hot, September, very hot, I remember, my mother had this sunstroke on her neck, her skin was like an elephant's-- yes, I remember it clearly, the unbearable heat, but we had escaped. We had it good, that we managed to escape, and then we got to a place where they told us: "the train can't go on, the Germans have bombed the path, it's impossible." And then--

Q: Just-- just a moment.

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A: Yes. Oh right...

Q: Yes.

A: The--

Q: The train...

A: The train stopped, it couldn't go on, and... everyone left the cars, and so did we. And we went, where did we go? Everybody had... an idea. One thought the forests were good, another favored the open fields. It later turned out that, actually, many of those who went to the forests were killed or wounded, because the German bombers targeted all the hiding places, yes? And suddenly we found ourselves... on some road or path, multitudes of people, a river of people flowing endlessly towards-- I didn't know whether it was north or south, today I realize it was deeper into Poland, farther... farther to the north-west, and suddenly we came upon deserted cars. There weren't... an abundance of cars in Poland before the war, certainly not in rural areas, few could afford to have them, only the very rich, but there was no fuel. They had to go on. [we saw] Wago-- all sorts of things. And of course, tired people who couldn't go on, and so we went and went, and I was tired, so tired, but I kept going, going, and suddenly night fell, I can see it now, almost a pastoral image, the red ball of the sun,

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fields all around, the kind of road you see in paintings... that-- in nature paintings, and we were alone. There were just the four of us on the road. And it was dark, and no one was in sight. And I had no idea how it happened. It-- we-- we had just been in a river. A river of people, a flowing river of people, and suddenly we were alone. And the s-- the ball-- that ball of a sun, ca-- came more and more to resemble a ball of fire for me, and then I couldn't see the ball, but I saw the sky, I saw a fiery sky. And, in my imagination, I saw a conflagration, I saw the Germans there, blowing things up, killing, burning, and we kept walking, and walking, and walking, we re-- remained on track, as if it was fated, predetermined, out of our control, moving forward. We couldn't help it. As as we moved towards that red sky, we came upon a town, and I could see in the distance a few tiled roofs, and we came to a small bridge, over some stream. And there were soldiers there, Polish soldiers. Because a bridge has to be guarded during times of war. A puny, pitiful bridge. And as I looked on, my hat fell, and I instinctively ran to-- [get] the hat, and father caught me by the neck and said: "in wartime--" he had also lived through a few episodes during the previou-- war-- "in wartime, anyone who runs under a bridge is a traitor, they shoot him." Because that's why they put soldiers there, of course, to make sure no one-- no one blows this... this... this... passage up. And we passed, and somehow we reached a bakery. We had nothing left to eat, we had been on the road for some two days without food... and they let us into the bakery. We were so tired. I immediately fell asleep on some bag of flour, and... in the morning I woke with a start. There was loud banging on the door. It turned out to be a great many refugees who flocked to the door to buy bread. And my father realized the situation, so he somehow got a loaf or two of bread, under his armpits, under his clothes, and we left, and we got to the city of (In Polish)_____, where my mother's... sister, her sister lived. So it turned out they had known, I didn't

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quite know our destination, they had known we had to go towards (In Polish)_____, and it seems the train came... pretty close to that destination, and we just had to complete the journey on... on... foot, as I described. And there we stayed with her sister, it was hard, a small apartment, conditions were humble in Poland. They only had two rooms, if I recall, and a family of their own, somehow we lived there, obviously they let us stay, and while we were there, suddenly, it was midday, I heard shooting, explosions, and every such bomb, yes? every shell that exploded, I felt as though it went right through me, that's how scared I was, and-- but I was with mother, I had that insurance, and before long, the-- I saw through the window, and the window was-- opened to the main street, the act of the German army coming in. They were well ahead of everyone, they came from a different direction, and they took the city in a snap, and as they did so, they were already moving on, to take on another... another... destination. We-- we stayed for a few days, I don't know how father managed to get us food, every small thing seemed like some big miracle to me, yes? I had no idea how to even make a start in that chaos. I was quite naive, as it were, although I was past thirteen, I was quite naive, and quite childish about it, and... after all, we couldn't stay there forever, after the bad, the bad situation, became a little-- stabilized, that is, we got used to the hardship. The first day, you don't accept yet, it... it radically changes your way of life, but it's temporary. But when you've had several such days, you start getting used to it. So we decided to go back. No use going on, there was-- there was nowhere to go to. They had beaten us to Warsaw... and so... we got to... yes? on some wagon, tied to a horse, that was how people got around, there were [beep] no buses in that area... yes? Go on?

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Q: Yes yes.

A: On a wagon, we rented this wagon, and... on to... we traveled home. We got to a bridge. Now it was Germans guarding it, they stopped us and took father down. There was work to do, they t-- took him to work. And we had to go on... and we went a little further, and then he left us, the coachman, I forget the exact circumstances, anyway, we waited there. We waited and waited and waited and I-- I was worried, I said: "they took father away, will I see him again?" Yes? A few hours later, he arrived. He told us he'd just run off, managed to to run away-- he was-- my father a large man, and physically adept. Yes? Very much so. He also spoke German, because, when he was a young man, whether it was because he didn't want to serve in the Polish army, or because so many Polish Jews moved to Germany in the period between the great wars, and he was among them, and... he had spent some time there. He also had a brother there, in Hamburg, so... he spoke some German, I even remember he taught me this song, which sti-- still know to this day, a song in Berlin German, because he had also been to Berlin, and he wanted me to be impressed, that he had been there, and that he knew, so he taught me this song. And apparently he man-- managed, with his German, to get by, and he reached us. And then... we no longer had a wagon or anything, and we had to walk. And we carried along, I remember, father had managed to find some suitcase, and he carried and carried it, it was very hard and got even harder, because we went through the forest. He didn't want us to go outside the forest. On the other hand he said: "You know, if they catch someone walking in the forest they shoot him on the spot." Because he also remembered the stories from the previous world war, in the forest, under the bridge, they're all traitors, because they're

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hiding. And a traitor, yes? is shot on the spot. And I went with this fear, I could barely move my legs, and we got to some place called (In Polish)_____, and there they directed us to the court of some *rav*, some rabbi. And there we found... a place, a-- after s-- after such a long and traumatic march, we found a place where we could rest a little. And something to eat, potatoes, or something like that. We spent a night there, and I was constantly worried, "what will happen, what will happen," I wasn't sure what was going to happen. And... eventually we had to... leave, and, again by wagon, we came back home. We came back to... to our apartment, and we started hearing all sorts of stories, the Germans are here, and they go into apartments by random and kill people, mostly Jews, and terrorize them, and I internalized this imp-- this extremely strongly, I was prepared for that kind of fear, and that was my experience of the first days of the war.

Q: Did you find your apartment as you left it?

A: Yes, as we left it. We had a small, humble apartment, yes? in a building with Jewish tenants, which was next to the *magistrat*. The *magistrat* was the municipality, yes? And the municipality also doubled as the police station, and the local prison, yes? where they would put the drunkards, and they-- so we were safe in that regard... and you know how it is, after a few days you try to go back to normal. Before there came any other directives and instructions, people tried to return to their day-to-day lives, and to their normal preoccupations, though school was stopped. Finished. School was stopped, but the Germans got on top of things very quickly, and

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immediately started placing limitations on us, and in order to frighten and terrorize us, they made actions in the streets, they'd grab Jews, and as in all the famous pictures in Yad Vashem, they'd cut their-- mostly religious Jews. What do I mean by that? See, in Poland at that time a religious Jew was like... you see it mostly among the eastern Jews who came to this country. That is, people who aren't wholly preoccupied with the Torah, they would work and all, but they... naturally expressed their Jewishness, by their sidelocks and beards, and they were Jewish. The Po-- Jewish coachman in Poland was just like the [Jewish] coachman in Yemen. A synagogue-going Jew, not learned, not highly educated... in... the Talmud, but a a religious Jew nonetheless, these kinds of Jews. The kind of Jews that... the previous generation, that is, say, my... pa-- parents' parents, they were all like that... so they saw them as naive, in the positive sense of the word, that is, very innocent people, some were shoemakers, some tailors, some coachmen, some... bakers, yes? they did some kind of work which Jews did, and... they would be put on display, and the soldiers would cut their beards off, that is, humiliate them. They knew that-- how much their beards meant to them. Not as a matter of faith, even, how to say, yes? It was like taking away someone's way of life, to which he'd grown accustomed over many many years, in order to demean and shatter him, not to mention the violence.

Q: Did you witness such things?

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A: I did, yes. I would see it, and as soon as I saw it I was just looking for... a way to escape, yes? As soon as I saw such a thing I would run. It was on our street, so I would see it... and they did this occasionally.

Q: And you started mentioning violence.

A: Yes, violence, they'd ransack, they'd grab Jews... for work... hard labor, they'd whip them, yes? they'd have to pull carts. It was east to come up with means... means of humiliation and... and... torture... some were spontaneous acts, of soldiers who were stationed there, in the garrison, and some were organized, these were ordered by the Gestapo, yes? And they organized the terrorism, they made it more sophisticated. And the local police, I myself-- well, that was later... they grabbed me on the street, I had to carry me-- together with someone else, meat to... the police headquarters, yes?

Q: The local Polish police?

A: No, the...

Q: German police?

A: German, yes. The German police. There was a police force, the militia. Unarmed, yes? They were Poles. But the... armed police were Germans.

Q: Was the Polish police called the Blue Police?

A: No.

Q: Or not?

A: No, it-- mi-- the milit-- militia, yes?

Q: Militia. Yes. Yes... and what did they send you to get?

A: So... there was a policeman who ordered meat...

Q: A--

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A: I think it was for Christmas. Yes.

Q: A German policeman?

A: Yes, yes, it was for Christmas, he went into some [cough] butcher's, I remember, he was joking with the owner, yes, a voluptuous woman...

Q: What were you... what were you doing there?

A: I was passing by, yes? It was in our street, I was passing by, yes? I don't remember my exact circumstances, and he saw me, and immediately motioned me with his finger, that's all he had to do for us to comply, and he knew it, and someone else with me, they brought us into the butcher's, and I waited and waited and waited, and he kept joking with that woman, today I realize he was flirting with her, yes? That took at least forty five minutes, us waiting for him, yes? The-- and then we had to take the meat and bring it to the headquarters. On foot. Well, we weren't beaten that night, lucky us, but that was all part of... of the game. Well, we finally lost all our confidence, and the poor Jews who saw what was happening started shaving their beards. And suddenly I saw I-- c-- couldn't recognize my father. I had-- he had had a reddish beard, yes? a mustache, it was weird. My uncles, yes? my mother's... brothers, the-- they looked so weird to me, not... they-- started... they said: "anything, anything

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that gives the Germans another sign to identify us by, just provokes them further.”

And so, little by little, it began... people began to disown... their abilities, their confidence, little by little they began to narrow down their living space. Not going out unless necessary. Not showing unnecessary Jewish markers. Somehow, in the first few months, they kept the synagogues active... Jews went to pray and... of course, during the High Holy Days, yes? during the High Holy Days there was full attendance, and I don't remember why the Germans stayed out of the way, they stayed out of the way for-- it was too new, they let the Jews attend, in our area at least, yes?

Q: One moment...

A: I'm touching the microphone, oh, unintentionally, yes, sorry, yes. I'm not so...

Q: We running? OK.

A: OK, yes. And... soon, I remember the... the... the... Community, the Community became a very important institution... for us. Everything went through the Community. The Germans announced every day... made new announcements, decrees... I think it's over.

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Q: Yes.

A: Yes. Decrees of limitations, and of course right away the-- we had to wear an identifying mark, at first it was a strip, a strip worn on the sleeve, and eventually it became a Star of David, sewn onto the clothes, and... rationing, well, rationing wasn't just for Jews, but I'm describing my point of view, yes? all of it went through the Jewish Community, the Jewish Community got the ration, and was supposed to distribute it, and then came the age of the queue. The queues. Standing in queue. You couldn't go to school, you couldn't go to work, if you didn't have any, [cough] and you had to secure food somehow. So every day it's standing in queue. This was often my job, I stood there for hours, and there I began to... feel very very strongly the disorder, and the injustice of a Jewish queue. And this was a Jewish queue, where the Community was in charge, I saw people not waiting their turn, sneaking in, and there was favoritism, there was partiality, those who were close to the [people in charge of] distribution went in without waiting in queue, and sometimes they got another-- another ration, I was very very aware of this, it bothered me greatly, and I had to learn, I started learning, to fight, to deal with... this state of events. Not with the injustice, because I knew it was beyond my power to change these things there, but I was a-- I started growing up, I started learning that I had to fight for survival, so I had to be familiar with the-- the powers at work, and utilize the powers that I had, my sophistication, my guile, otherwise I couldn't survive. I guess that's how it started. What else can I tell you about that period? That is worthy of mention? We lived... next to the city's rabbi and my father, of course, would spend a lot of time in his court. He was a Hasid. And when... the Germans came, and the Jewish in-- institutions,

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particularly the religious ones, started crumbling, the rabbi, who... lead, of course, a deeply religious life, and he was a highly esteemed man, he was highly regarded by the community, and he had certain habits, suddenly he was faced with a situation where he had to go to the Mikveh on his own, the Mikveh was still ac-- still active.

Q: Active?

A: Active, yes? The Mikveh was about, I don't know, a fif-- fifteen, twenty minutes' walk or so away, and he had no one to escort him. So he approached my father, for me to escort him. These were peop-- that incidence-- I did escort him, but it's bothered me to this day, yes? I mean, our general situation was so dire, we had survival problems, food problems, while he, at the time, he had no wants, I... didn't like this order of priorities. He said, it was very important for him an-- he gave priority to... his being escorted, so he doesn't have to go... alone to the Mikveh. That has remained-- gave me [cough] I mean, it... stirred certain thoughts in me, certain questions, which I didn't complete, but it's a good example of the kind of world in which-- in which a considerable number of Jews lived. Of their priorities. And their inability to change in view of this grim state of events, the fact that the primary effort was made to find someone to escort the rabbi to the Mikveh on Friday. I haven't... haven't accepted it to this day. Not to mention accepting that it was my father who suggested it. He knew we didn't have enough to eat. Maybe he should've arranged for the rabbi, who had plenty, he still had plenty, maybe he should've asked: "do you have anything to eat on... on Saturday Eve?" And indeed, things were getting pretty tough. For me, being

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quite conservative, seeing that the soup wasn't the same, and the crackers mother baked weren't the same, didn't have the same ingredients, Saturday Eve wasn't right, the Feast wasn't right, there was a quite... quite offensive dissonance in the fact that, right now the most important thing was to escort-- for me to escort the rabbi to the Mikveh. And again, the act itself didn't bother me, on the contrary, but I thought to myself, in a child's way, a youth's way, that when people were so sad, when people were preoccupied with such important matters, the rabbi, perhaps, had other ways to be involved and to serve as an example. And again, I wonder, I don't know exactly what motivated that rabbi, he was just, I'd like-- he was a product of his education and of the society which raised him, and that... he was-- he was committed to a certain o-- to a certain order of priorities in life, it's reasonable to assume, so I'm not judging the man, at most, if I have any criticism, it's against that culture. Further against that culture, it didn't help, I never felt the community drew any encouragement, from people maintaining their old priorities. Had-- had it at least been, I mean, had it been a source of some optimism, some compassion, yes? of... of strength, of encouragement, in... in... such a dark time, I'm trying to remember, where were all those Jews, for... for whom Judaism was real, natural, yes? Everything... everything seemed to... disappear in the blink of an eye, and all those spiritual forces died out, they were nonexistent. There was no encouragement... maybe these forces, of all, could have been expected, in a crisis, to rise up and protect the people. But what mattered was to have a prayer quorum, and to have someone escort you to the Mikveh. I'm not mocking it, I'm just saying, this is what we'd internalized over the generations, it was among the salient features of Jewish culture. And indeed, that sector, that sector suffered a great deal, during the war, they weren't nearly as versatile, nearly as sophisticated, they didn't know anything about anything, and so they made easy prey

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for the Germans. They... they were very-- very easy to recognize, it was very difficult for them to hide under some... some alias, that public couldn't speak-- except Yiddish, couldn't speak another language... and during the war, in our area at least, they left no... how to put it? No trace. Suddenly people were without beards or sidelocks, seeking food. Seeking survival. And the new elite was the... head of the Community, and those who worked with him. You know, with the Jews, there had been some... some kind of s-- soc-- sociological hierarchy and... people's... stature... had been based on their education, and on their occupation, and their lineage, and it had all been quite expressed, this... this business, yes? The coachman had not been esteemed, yes? Nor had the coachman-- the coachman and his family regarded themselves as esteemed, they had accepted their stature. So... the... tailor, the shoemaker, the shoemaker... who had the shoemaker been? He had been, as a metaphor, a simple and... not very esteemed man, and suddenly I saw that, one of the most important people in the Community, a key personality in the Community, wielding a huge influence over things, was a former shoemaker. A tall, actually handsome guy, he got the job of-- because he was physically strong, he got the job of... I don't know what to call it, yes? a kind of regulator... an usher. That is. An usher for the Community. So in order to see one of the top people of the Community, or the Community head himself, he was your guy, and that made him a very important man. Now this phenomenon, of such people, who were more aggressive, who were more phy-- physically impressive, this phenomenon penetrated all the systems of Jewish life, including the camps. That's what you needed to have. And for one who grew up with another system of values, a moral one, religious or not, doesn't matter, a moral one, where you respect the values in which you believe, and you value a person by how much he upholds these values, by his capacity for learning and for knowledge, yes? the religious Jewish learned man

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was the... ultimate role model, ultimate... for the... Jewish elite of that time, at least in our society, by the way, in secular society you also aspired to be a doctor, a lawyer, that is, again, not of that kind of people. And these people, they came to be the most sought-after, the most important, the most powerful and the most influential. And they were able, when they were allowed, they were also able to both-- help themselves, their families, and their friends. And they were... the central people. Me, I didn't take this well. Suddenly I saw this shoemaker, who, according to my upbringing, should have been a meek person, yes? He was the one who was pushing, and hitting, and saying aye, and saying nay, and people whom I admired started ingratiating themselves to him. That is, my world order was ch-- changed in... this new situation.

Q: By the way, do you remember his name?

A: I don't remember, nor do I remember the name of our... (In German)_____ head, I don't remember that either, I knew it well, I was personally familiar with him, why? Because he was a friend of someone who... lived in the same building as me, and his name... well, a moment ago I knew his name and it's slipped. They owned mines, coal mines, that man had married my landlord's daughter, so he built them a villa on the fie-- on the property he... had on the back, and he also had a car, and a chauffeur, that was something--

Q: But wasn't the head of the (In German)_____ named (In Polish)_____?

A: (In Polish)_____ was in (In Polish)_____.

Q: Oh, (In Polish)_____ was in (In Polish)_____.

A: And this one was in (In Polish)_____, they were friends, now, what were their names? My landlord's was (In Polish)_____, and his son-in-law's-- very famous family, they had they were friends, and they came there to take.

Q: Yes.

A: The... the... mayor, he pursued this rich man's wife a little, yes?

Q: Um hmm.

A: Yes? She was a very beautiful woman, truly beautiful. So that was a factor as well, I somehow picked it up, yes? I didn't know exactly, but I picked up something along these lines.

Q: I'd like to go back a bit.

A: Yes?

Q: The rabbi you escorted...

A: Yes?

Q: Was he the... rabbi of... of... of...

A: Of the city. He wasn't a rabbi, he was a r-- *rav*.

Q: Oh.

A: You know the difference between a rabbi and a *rav*.

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Q: Yes.

A: A rabbi, he h-- had a court, his own court, yes? And he has a congregation of followers. He isn't elected. It's almost hereditary. I mean, it is hereditary. Unless they're forced to elect someone new, in which case it's a voluntary choice of a community of disciples, choosing their spiritual leader. Oh, let's put it like this. A rabbi is mostly a spiritual and a Torah authority. A *rav* is an official, a civil servant, yes? He oversees the city's implements of worship, and the whole issue of kosher food and slaughter, and the religious courts of law and such, he's in charge, and he is on the community's payroll. A rabbi holds a court, he has disciples, and they provide for him. There's a difference. A *rav* isn't-- isn't expected to be a predominantly spiritual man, he is expected to be a man of the Torah, because his job is to interpret the Torah, and teach the Torah, and know the Torah. Yes? That's the difference.

Q: In your family, how long did your mother keep that...

A: That salon.

Q: That salon for--

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A: As long as she could. Indeed, she was our provider. You could say we survived two years on her linens. She had, s-- she started a salon, so people would come and pick the linen. I just want to explain, maybe the younger of you don't know, yes? In cold countries, yes? back then, yes? people's appearance was mainly judged by their garments. And... people would slim their bodies not through exercise, but through... artificially, mechanically, so healthy ladies, especially healthy ladies, yes? they would wear corsets. And the corset had to be shaped so that, on one hand it slimmed the body a little, but wouldn't hurt, it would be tight but wouldn't hurt, so they would sometimes come three or four times to try it on, until every fo-- fold, yes? found its natural place. Now, these were usually people who were somewhat well-off [cough]. Because it was e-- expensive, to tailor-make something like that, so they... they would also... they would also come and pick the linen. Now, this was a semi-garment, yes? It's evident in all the novels from that... that period, that the woman, when she removed her upper garment, yes? she would present herself to the man by her undergarment, that is, the linen's texture was also very important, yes? Its quality, and its... its *dessin*, its... its design, so we had... we had a stock of... linens. And thanks to those lin-- linens, since you couldn't get anything, later on, there was nothing left, nothing left, not even matches, so that was our liv-- livelihood, it became a rare commodity, every once in a while she had an opportunity to make one, actually most of the customers were non-Jews, somehow, either they dared, or they sneaked in, I can't tell you the circumstances of each case, but I know that, what little income we had came mostly from my mother, because we had linens.

Q: But were these linens still in the salon, or at home?

A: Everything was at home. Every-- the house, the salon, they were one and the same

(Q: One and the same) for us, they weren't separate, yes? During the day it was a salon, in the evening it was a habitation, and on Saturday it was a kingdom, yes? With a white tablecloth and candles and so on. That's how we--

Q: Whom... whom were these linens sold to later?

A: As I said, the customers would pick the lin--

Q: Whom were they sold to? You say that later the linens were sold.

A: By us?

Q: Yes.

A: Yes, sometimes, when there wasn't any business, we'd sell to whoever... wanted-- had some money, whoever had some money, the same way many diamonds were

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sold, to whom? To whoever had a little money. There are always buyers. Always.

Even in the camps... in the camps, which were under supposedly absolute supervision, there was some trade going on, marginal, of course, very... marginal, but it was there.

Q: You said diamonds, that reminds me of the Contributions. When did they start in your town?

A: I remember it right from the start. Right from the start, I remember, we gathered up silver... whatever-- copper, they made demands, contingent demands, yes? And the Community-- that is, they were clever about it, they didn't just say-- go to the populace and say "give it over," because then they would have had to raid houses, that was too much work for them, they demanded a quota from the Community, and the Community demanded the public to fulfill it. And-- the public knew that, if they didn't do so, things will become worse.

Q: Do you-- you... do you remember your family taking things and bringing them to the Community?

A: We did, yes, we brought them, yes? I remember.

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Q: What... what did you bring?

A: Stuff. All kinds of stuff, silverware, silverware, candlesticks... jewel boxes... stuff.

The... things... things... that... that--

Q: Did you carry any of them? Did they have you take--

A: Not me. Not me. I w-- I wasn't involved in this, I remained a boy, it's funny, the war actually prolonged my childhood-- my childishness, yes. At least for the first year, the first year I still wasn't-- wasn't thinking about independence. I could help... at home, I remember my role, there was a time when all you could get, and you had to get them, were potatoes. Because we were in an area where they grew potatoes, they could-- that's what they gave us, as-- rationed, of course, yes? You stood in line, and you could get half a bag, or a bag of potatoes. Or, if you were more clever, and you had options, as we had with the linens, we could trade with a peasant and get onions and potatoes. Now, after standing in line and getting po-- a bag of potatoes, you had to bring it home. I remember I improvised some kind of cart. What with? Do you remember the tribi-- tricycle my uncle brought me? It broke down, and somehow the aft wheels re-- were preserved somewhere, kept. So I improvised, I found this broomstick, I built it somehow, and we used that to carry the potatoes, it would always break twice on the way, and I had to reconnect it, that was my role. I remember, in the first year, that... that's how I helped. But I was always under

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mother's protection. Only later did I become more independent, more active, but not yet.

Q: Where did you get the potatoes?

A: There were stockpiles, next to the train station or some other place, there was a... there was a grantee, just as there was a baker, for instance, you couldn't go buy bread just anywhere. There was a baker, appointed by the Jewish community, he would get all the flour, and he sold. You would stand in line by the window, and get a loaf of bread against coupons, when they were instated.

Q: In other words, the Jewish Community became a seat of power?

A: The Jewish Community was the hub which handled all the dealings between the authorities and the Jews. Now, it couldn't have been done differently. It couldn't have been done individually, no, there was no such thing. Officially, nothing was given to the Jews except through-- what else? Jews couldn't buy goods except from other Jews, because there was an immediate quarantine. Non-Jews weren't allowed in non-Jewish places. Jews weren't, that is. And so they slowly closed in on us, until we became a ghetto, and... destitution grew and grew. What else can I tell of... of... of that early time, that early time, that is, the first year, it was all transitions, all adjustments, and... coming to grips with troubles, I can't recall it exactly. It wasn't yet-- everything was

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pretty open. Fear was in the streets, you couldn't do anything stable, everything was random, they'd grab Jews, suddenly we'd hear: "so and so has disappeared, so and so is in prison," yes? That is, no one was sure what would happen.

Q: What were you going through, th-- it was a year since-- you stopped going to school.

A: I stopped going to school, and... as I said, I'd stand in queues, I'd hang out a little with friends in the yard, occasionally I would go, as I said, play soccer where I told that Pole: "the period of Polish rule is over with," that is: "you can't do what you used to think you could, Jews aren't what they used to be for you," that is, paradoxically, I was suddenly a strong, brave Jew compared to the Pole, that... truly, that made a deep impression on me, because I think it was a formative experience... it somehow passed, not... not in the big things. We could still go and visit out family, we could still use the trolley.

Q: Where, in (In Polish)_____?

A: In (In Polish)_____ and in (In Polish)_____, I had relatives there as well, all our family was there, even farther than that, you could still go. You could still go, it wasn't forbidden yet, it seems we could even still go on the train, and

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somehow we stayed in touch, yes? But after a year it started closing down, and, first of all, Jews who-- who weren't working, particularly young ones, were candidates for ship-- shipment to the work camps. So immediately Jews started organizing, yes? in work places. So one of the jo-- most popular and most important workplaces towards that end, was some factory where they would mend and clean the (In German)_____ uniforms. That is, they would come there from the fronts, yes? and they washed them, and all-- it was the time of the tailors. So there was an elite, suddenly, a new elite, the tailors, who used to be the (In Yiddish)_____, yes, the simple folk, yes? the negligible folk, which goes to show, yes? how world orders change under these circumstances, yes? And you would try to connect with a tailor. They would recommend people, they would give you work, and they would decide whether to give you this or that kind of work, more or less profitable, and my sister managed to get a job there. What was it called? It-- it had a name, a jargon.

Q: Shops?

A: What?

Q: Shops?

A: Shops?

Q: Shops? Shop?

A: Shop, shop, that's it. Shop, yes, I've already forgotten the-- she worked in a shop. Yes. And... that is, she was already protected, they wouldn't take her from her home, and obviously, when you're in this kind of predicament, and when you're unprepared to... handle things a bit more strategically, to look ahead a few steps, you take every new situation as static, that's how it's going to be, and you start building your life around the current situation, and do whatever you can to make the most of the current situation. And you don't realize that this is a temporary, dynamic situation, not really a situation at all. So the shop was this kind of situation. Because those who went there could, first of all, go out freely, that is they had an identification certificate, and no one would take them, no one would touch them, neither the Germans nor the Jews, yes? Because the Germans were committed to uphold their own decrees, their own laws, they weren't lawbreakers, and if these were their orders then so be it. It turned out to be a very important thing, for my sister to be there, and, eventually, she managed to get my mother there too. But that w-- was a little later. As for me, I grew bigger and bigger, and... my mother was worried. And again, our destitution was intensifying, my father couldn't do much with his vinegar business anymore, he had no raw materials, and the poor man was tall and strong, so whenever he'd go out the Germans would immediately grab him for work, particularly in the winter, they'd have him clear the snow, yes? so he stopped going out, he hid. Generally, all of life went down the drain in every respect. Even at home, we had nothing to hang on to.

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We couldn't even have-- we hardly managed to improvise the feasts, everything was improvised, there wasn't-- we didn't have the ingredients to make the traditional food, which was a very important part of the ritual of holiday togetherness. A holiday wasn't just about the songs, and the hymns, and the prayers, and the *kiddush* and the candles, this part was very-- it only became meaningful and whole when it was completed with other elements. By-- by coming home with the... festive synagogue clothes. It was all... one whole, all cut short, all broken, and these improvisations, yes? And... it was sad, what can I say, sad. It was sad. In short, one day my mother decided she had to do something for me, because she was afraid they'd take me away, and she has one sewing machine, she sold it, I don't know whom to, probably some peasant or something, and with the money sh-- she got, she managed to bribe some (In Yiddish)_____, there was a sizable (In Yiddish)_____ industry in our parts, in the _____ area in general, and she got me a job in some factory, which, originally, produced... agricultural... tools, I got a job there. The purpose of that job was, first of all, to protect me from being taken to a work camp.

Q: Were there many taken?

A: There were many taken, yes. Some relatives of mine, whenever they needed them, they'd no longer grab people on the street, they'd go to the community, and the community gave them a list. People were told they had to report, and people went. This question, of the-- status of the Jewish Community, morally and otherwise, and so on, is an open question, I know it's easiest to say they were all villains and traitors and

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whatnot, I don't see it that way, not black and white, it's very very complicated and very very involved, and there's not-- they say history will be the judge, but it won't, because it will never know the exact truth, just as it never knows the exact truth about human beings, who are such complex creatures. So... and history is also changed, by the passage of time, which causes us to develop some compassion, and some maturity, and some self knowledge, and self experience, and we change our views on tragic events, yes? So that's why I say, this whole question of the (In German)_____, I have no firm opinion, because I know there shouldn't be a firm opinion about these officials. I'm not talking about the rare cases where you could see evil just burst out of them, yes? gleefully. Some-- some-- with some kind of-- sick glee, or with... I wouldn't call it sick glee, but with sick satisfaction, and there were such people, and I've run into them, and they are actually the exception, not to generalize on all such officials. We mustn't forget that-- I'm on a diatribe here, not to mention that getting an office was also about-- a-- life or death. That is, those jobs which had to be done, and which weren't necessarily, a-priori negative, the ones which served a crucial logistic and organizational role in carrying out the German's instructions. If, for example--

Q: We (A: Yes) have to stop, because this is the end of the tape.

End of Tape 3

Tape 4

Q: We're rolling. You wanted to fill in a few things.

A: Yes. Yes, I thought I should fill in the time I spent in Krakow, however short it was, I think I passed over a few elements that seem to have been meaningful for me. One of them was, I told you I lived in the (In Polish)_____ quarter, which was a decidedly Jewish quarter, and particularly-- and a very religious one, that is, the mainstream was religious, and everyone else... yes? had to conform, or at least apologize for not doing so, and that was the general dynamic, everything was kosher, there were many shops selling implements of worship... there were peculiar foodstuffs, there was this drink favored by the Jews, especially the Hasidic Jews, it was-- was called (In Yiddish?)_____, it's a kind of... sweet honey drink, yes? somewhat intoxicating, yes? And when they-- the Hasidim were, say, after th-- the evening prayers, they stayed in the synagogues and the religious schools and had friendly debates, perhaps sometimes _____, they would add a touch of flavor to these really pleasant conversations, and occasionally they sent me to get some afterwards, they sent me and I got some (In Russian)_____, some... some change for it, or a little to drink. So that's how I participated in that experience. And--

Q: (In Russian)_____ is (A: It was a Russian coin, yes, it was--) a Russian coin, you meant (In Polish)_____.

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A: It was a penny, a penny, (In Polish)_____. And... I... I liked that quarter. Why? Because it was very friendly. I told I grew up feeling I was in-- in a very hostile and... somewhat frightening environment, yes? But that was a Jewish quarter, there where Jews everywhere, I felt no-- I had nothing to worry about, and I enjoyed just strolling the yards and alleys of that quarter, which, by the way, is very picturesque, it remains, I believe, a tourist attraction in Krakow, which is generally a good city for tourism. It had several very important Jewish sites, for instance the-- synagogue and the tomb of the *Rama*, to give you an idea, the anniversary of his death, his-- either that or his birthday, was the best day of the year for-- for Krakow's beg-- beggars. Because all the Jews, not only o form Krakow, but from all around it, flocked to... to the tomb, and... they g-- the beggars got a lot of mo-- collected a lot of money that day, yes? It was a kind of festival... a quaint festival, a Fellini-style festival, yes? of... of... *Rama* Day. And one thing I got from my pastime of... wandering the town, was-- the-- the-- I... also had frequent... morning strolls in that quarter. Early morning strolls. Why? You spent the day in class with the Yeshiva head, you spent the evening studying, practicing, together, memorizing, either with a group, in the school, or alone, and the same goes for the morning, early morning. Before the morning prayers, you came to the school to... study. I g-- didn't always get up on time, I sometimes ran a little late, I didn't like being late, anyway, when coming in the win-- win-- winter time, all was still dark, and when it had snowed, everything was covered in a white sheet of snow. And I walked those streets intoxicated with their beauty, all through the famous (In Polish)_____ street, surrounded by the many synagogues and religious schools, from which came the voices of the pupils, the yeshiva students memorizing with the

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melody, yes? the Talmudic melody, learning their chapters by rote, yes? And that was a somewhat unique activity, and I was very aware of that, one of my memories of-- childhood memories, yes? early... boyhood memories... in Krakow... there's another thing... every Friday, I would, after the prayers and the feasts, the feast, for which, usually, a different family had me over each time, I would go to... a certain square in... that Jewish quarter, wherein lived a rabbi who was a composer, and he was quite famous. He composed melodies for the verses, and in his (In Yiddish)_____, when he had his feast, yes? His congregation wasn't large, but... his apartment was too small for everyone who wanted to come in, so I, being smaller, and having some experience, would come early, and sometimes hide under the table, and after all the dignitaries were seated and had their places, I found a way out, and I was an avid fan of... his songs, and m... my father was so proud that, every once in a while, I could bring back to them, in the province, some new melody for a prayer or a verse, yea? That's another memorable thing for me, I even r-- remember a melody or two.

Another thing I wanted to say about that period in... Krakow. As I said, that was a true Jewish community, unalloyed, truly at home, and it lived its life, usually a humble, if not destitute, life... it's hard to... even imagine, yes? Ashkenazi Jews living like that, yes? People think... you know, when they come here, to this country, they always say things like, if they're from Russia, their father was a great trader in... lumber, he had lots of lumber. If they're from Poland, he had flour mills, if they're from Casablanca, they had a nice... hair salon, yes? Everywhere-- we never say we came from... from... poor families, humble families, yes? Because we aren't so very... proud of it, yes? So we start making things up, because nobody knows what really went on abroad. The truth is that the Jews, up to the Second World War, certainly up to the first, but, in certain areas, especially in eastern Europe, in-- until the last days of the-- interbellum

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period, yes? were mostly poor, hard working people. Some families couldn't provide food, food, bread, for-- and in... that agglomeration, that great concentration of Jews in... in... in... Krakow, I saw them living in these miserable habitations, with not enough room, so packed, in the-- everything in the same room, they did everything in the same room. The kitchen, the living room, everything, men and women, all in one room, and I remember this picture of an elderly Jew, a widower, who lived with his daughter, his beautiful daughter, not merely beautiful, she was, m-- mythologically beautiful. And she was a painter, and she l-- even though they only had one room, she lent me the bed to sleep in. For a while. And we became friends. And she told me things, and she to-- told me, she poured her heart, and told me, she was rebelling, couldn't accept, she couldn't agree with this way of life. She couldn't see the point in it. And it seems she also did some things which they didn't approve of, yes? to put it mildly-- and her father, he was a short fellow, also a beautiful Jew, the kind you only see in... in paintings, with such balanced, proportional facial features, and he yelled, and he cried, and she yelled at him. And that was a very dramatic picture of teenage rebellion, but the love and the obligation were still there, that is, it's not throwing things to the wind, it's crying to the heavens, yes? They both stood there in their grief, with me in the middle. And I saw that picture almost duplicated, almost carbon copied, in the Tel Aviv central bus station, in the... the early sixties. In the early sixties, in the central station, I saw this beautiful Yemenite Jew, with these curly sidelocks, and he was walking, almost trailing after his beautiful daughter, who was in modern clothes, with all her... her... temptations peeking out, this was a drama between a father and daughter, he thought she was losing herself to wantonness, and she was rebelling, she couldn't-- it was the exact same picture, perhaps with slightly different language. In other words, wherever we are we have-- the same dilemmas,

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and the same... same... same... same... disagreements, over the same things, because the basic problem, the basic problems are exactly the same, regardless of place or language. But what's more, there was even a physical resemblance between these two couples. And that really s-- stuck with me, during my childhood in Krakow, I mean, all of these, I say, are formative memories, yes? Because these experiences leave you... leave you with more than just a story, they leave you with this depth, which forces you to keep thinking it over and over and over and over, and see if you can find some... some anchor there, for something. What else can I tell about... about... about Krakow, off the top of my head, yes? Here's another thing for which I later-- found a corollary somewhere else: I was, after all, a boy, and suddenly I had to be independent, and I didn't quite know how, and I did have a lot of sympathy which helped a lot, but there was this time, I loved going to the Mikveh on Friday. School ended early, so I had time, and I loved water, but I didn't go to the swimming pool. For me, the Mikveh was the place to paddle water. I spent hours at a time there. They had a sauna, what they called a (In Yiddish)_____, and a Mikveh. And it was cheap, so I'd hang out there, especially during the winter. And I remember that, to swim, I p-- propelled myself, with my foot, my right foot, I leaned against the wall, and propelled myself forward. My foot hit this broken ceramic tile, and was injured, and I had this festering wound that lasted for months, yes? It would close at night, it would be reopened during the day, and it took-- I can't remember exactly wh-- what happy occasion ended it and when, when it... was healed... fully healed-- why am I t-- telling you this? Because this happened a-- again, in exactly the same way, not in the Mikveh, but in a similar way, that-- that is, it would close at night, and open in the morning, and the constant suffering, bleeding or pus, and this time it was in a work

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camp, so I was really helpless, I had only myself to-- to rely on, apart from random fate.

Q: Which camp was this?

A: It was in... (In German)_____. Yes. So, to summarize that period in Krakow, it was a period of early, actually of first experimentation with independence, which was forced on me, before I was ready for it, in which I, because of my temperament... couldn't ultimately adapt to certain things which were un-- unacceptable to me, morally or... or physiologically, and yet, could find those things which suited me, such as the... the composer rabbi I mentioned, yes? the... the safety to stroll, yes? in the... the Jewish quarter, it also had a market, where I went weekly, so I could participate in the life of some... s... some social fabric, freely, free of the terror I felt... I felt at home.

Q: Let's go back to where... we left off...

A: Yes.

Q: We were actually talking about the (In German)_____.

A: Yes, oh... we mentioned.... already... you could say, in the Jewish Ghetto, with the
(In German)_____.

Q: We haven't gotten to the Ghetto.

A: Yes... oh, we talked about the Community.

Q: But the-- yes.

A: Yes, it started with the community, yes? Yes. A-- actually our liv-- living room kept shrinking, until finally it was declared a Ghetto, with precise boundaries, very very small, you couldn't go out, and you couldn't g-- go in, without special certificates, these were instated a few months later, but it didn't change our lives dramatically, because the previous... restriction was so heavy, there was no income, yes? If [we lost] anything, it was an... easier access to the *goys*, the non-Jewish environment. So, I, I believe I already told you, at that time-- oh, did we pause on the
(In German)_____, or on my sister's job, in the shop?

Q: No, no. You said your sister found a job in a shop...

A: A shop, yes.

Q: And that later she arranged one for your mother...

A: Yes yes. Oh--

Q: And... we somehow got to talking about the (In German)_____. Because the Jewish Community, th-- the (In German)_____, t-- was actually gaining ever greater... power and responsibility...

A: Yes. Yes, it was actually... it was actually... the pipeline which channeled both what the Germans gave to the Jews, yes? and what they took from them.

Q: Did you, during that period-- I don't know exactly, when I say that period, I mean that first period, that is, the first months of the German occupation... did you witness any corruption in the (In German)_____?

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A: Back then... then... then the Community was just starting out, in those last months.

Q: First months.

A: But-- yes, in those first months, but, remember, yes... look, the concept of favoritism, or its application, wasn't invented in Israel.

Q: Nor was it in (In German)_____.

A: It wasn't invented in (In German)_____, it was a tendency, among Jews, because of historical circumstances, yes? They always had a stronger tendency, first of all, towards mutual help, yes? and mutual-- reliance, yes? Because we were... we were a minority. So... so naturally, naturally dealings were conducted on the basis of personal acquaintance. First d'abord(ph?)-- on a smaller, family basis, then... on... the basis of a peer group, yes? or, for example, synagogue... synagogue-goers who knew each other, and had a tendency to help each other, we called it favoritism, that is, yes? help on the basis of personal acquaintance.

Q: Partiality.

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A: Yes, if you will, partiality... and of course those who did this in... the average p-- people, they didn't see it as partiality, they thought: "yes, I know this person, why shouldn't I help him," yes? that, at the same... at the same time he could be doing someone else some injustice, direct or indirect, didn't occur to him, his intentions were wholly-- wholly... wholly positive. Only when... when you couldn't get something, except through personal acquaintance, anything, yes? even a temporary or permanent removal from the list... of people who were to be given to the Germans, and so forth, then, naturally, that too became corrupt, because there were those who bought that partiality with money, with money, or with something else.

Q: Did you know a someone like that?

A: I don't remember knowing anyone directly, but we discussed it openly.

Q: Yes?

A: Yes. I mean, if we needed anything, any Jew who nee-- he started by asking: "do you know someone, do you..." he never even mentioned that which he needed. "Do you know someone over there? Whom do you know?" And in... in this way, to make connections, to reach that source, yes? Or that-- that destination who m-- might, or

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should... help, through connections. So... it's not-- I mean, this wasn't a product of the war, the war made it much more meaningful, and that... made it much more memorable, because it was sometimes so fateful, yes? Sometimes this... factor decided questions of life and death. I was talking about another aspect of the (In German)_____, I mean, this technique, these are prosaic, trivial things, and you see them to this day, everywhere, they exist in any human situation, particularly where there's distress, there will obviously be mutual back-washing, sometimes it's a little accentuated in this country, this phenomenon, in-- in itself, whether it needs to be dealt with, well... that's another matter, I was talking about... in a few words, I wanted to question this stigma of the Community people, of what it meant to be in the (In German)_____...

Q: Yes.

A: So where were we? The-- first the... Jewish Community, yes? The Jewish Community, who... today we have this jargon [cough], the label of (In German)_____, and of course the (In German)_____ i-- was stigmatized [cough] and... we're already biased when discussing it as an institution, of course, or its officials, and I know that-- especially today, after so many years, we should... examine our generalizations, to make sure we're not doing an injustice to a great many people, yes? who might have even used their positions to help... or... at least, didn't do much... harm... I know the argument from principle, yes? that a person should be prepared to die before complying with German instructions regarding Jews. Well, that

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question should be-- that question must still be examined... certainly not at a time when your reactions are very very emotional, and you can't control your... your ability to consider the... the whole picture, and what you would've done, had it been you, yes? What could have been done, what should have been done, what the repercussions would be. I'll leave it an open question, because I only wanted to emphasize that, as for myself, I don't have this absolute prejudice, against these officials, because I saw them up close, I saw those who worked for the Jewish... police in the ghetto, and their motive was to extend their lives, or to delay their being sent to the work camps, or to protect their families, to get some more n-- food for their families, and the question was, what kind of harm they were willing to inflict in exchange, and here there was variability. They weren't all alike. Some were-- [cough] overzealous, and that's another matter, yes? But, all in all, we couldn't help forming a Jewish organization to represent the Jews. We couldn't help it, yes? Unless we wanted the Germans to keep killing Jews, until one was found who would do it. That's inconceivable. And anyway, this whole thing actually came into being in a somewhat slower, less dramatic fashion, it's not-- remember the Jews were already organized into communities, the Germans didn't invent them, they associated with extant entities, so we should look at the human dynamics, when, out of an extant entity, yes? suddenly, when you're used to dealing with certain things, you also become Satan's delegate. It's not simple, far from it. Anyway, in my case, in our case, I don't believe the Jewish C-- Community changed anything... that is, w-- was a factor [cough] in everything that happened [cough]. They could neither prevent it, nor cause it, at most they were m-- minor pawns, maybe they made it a little more convenient for the Germans, instead of having to come at night themselves, and round people up, they left it to... to... the Jewish police, and I don't know-- at least the Jewish police, when they came, didn't hit

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people, didn't ransack and-- the house, I-- the German police were different, later I'll tell you about my personal experience, to give you, as they say, a small sample. So, you could look at things this way, too, yes? I'm trying to see... with true intellectual ho-- honesty, I'm trying-- I'm trying to examine this phenomenon, of the (In German)_____, and the... and the... contemptible place reserved for them in the Jewish narrative of the Second World War, you sometimes get a feeling that-- we're happy to have this scapegoat, so we can reflect all the times when we weren't all so good ourselves, regardless of office. When one acted selfishly, and caused a great injustice. And there are such people, yes? So one can, perhaps, take some guilt off. That's also possible. Someone should look seriously into these things. Anyway... as I said that, at that time, my... sister and mother were taken care of, and my mother was very worried about me, now my father, he-- I-- it's hard to put it, he was also scared, he couldn't change his way of life, go to work, he couldn't... I can't-- I don't even know how he spent his day, he would come, he would go, he'd be absent, and they'd take him for work, and he'd sometimes volunteer for work, in the municipality, in the snow, and got some money for it, and as for little me, my mother took-- sold a se-- s-- s-- se-- sewing machine, that she had, and used the money to buy me a job. I think I started (Q: Yes yes) telling about it, this was in a tool factory, agricultural tools, and I... was put to work there, next to a press, a press that... minted a kind of rake, a potato rake. It's a kind... how to put it in Hebrew? A kind of jagged shovel, for tilling, yes? the ground around the potatoes, and later also... also pee-- peeling them.

Q: Was this when [cough] you were in the Ghetto, or earlier?

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A: This was when I was in the Ghetto.

Q: Then, maybe we could...

A: Yes.

Q: Th-- could we... about the transition to the Ghetto.

A: Yes.

Q: Did your family have to move, or--

A: Yes.

Q: Yes?

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A: Yes, we were ordered to leave our apartment, and we moved... deeper inside, yes? to an area that was more Jewish, and always had been, before the war, there were more Jews there... close to the synagogue, which in the meantime had become a We-- Wehrmacht stable, or was it the police-- the Wehrmacht, no, the Wehrmacht garrison, yes? They put their horses there, inside this... our synagogue. Yes. The municipal synagogue.

Q: And how did you get an apartment?

A: Through the Jewish Community. Everything went through the Jewish Community, and as always, those who benefited from favoritism got better, more-- spacious apartments, yes? It was about favoritism. I don't recall we had-- something like that, we got what we got, and it wasn't a big problem, yes? I was happy, because the place also had some kind of yard, and a shack, and a tree, yes? And... that's it. The-- that was out place.

Q: Where did you move?

A: Where? The same town. But to the edge of town.

Q: What-- what street--

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A: The edge of town, it was at the end of (In Polish)_____ street, and I forget the name of the street, the end of (In German)_____ street, it was on the way to... to... (In Polish)_____, to (In German)_____. That is, if you went on, through the fields, you got to... my workplace, work-- my workplace, it was actually in (In German)_____ quarter. And so-- it was actually convenient for me, I could walk. There was a problem-- I mentioned it a little. At that time, we were already prohibited from traveling, from getting out of... town, yes? We needed certificates, special permits. And I, since I had a legitimate job, that is, one that belonged to the (In German)_____, that is, the Germans seized the factory for themselves, from its Polish owners, and they were what was termed (In German)_____, that is-- you're probably familiar with this term, that is, they were the safekeepers of this factory, and they employed me there. Actually, I have a story about that place... the new German owner, he was with the SA... also, a quintessential German, a la Hitler, with a mustache, and with... this small forelock, he would... appear in different clothes each day, and at least twice a week in his SA uniform... at first, he hardly noticed me, and I hardly noticed him... one day-- I mean, I had been there for a few weeks already, he comes to me, and says: "Tell me, can you get me another Jew like you to work here?" And generally, afterwards, I w-- I was liked there, by him and his vice manager, who was this short German... very... very efficient, and shrewed, he handled the finances, and he was the factory manager in practice, yes? And he had some liking for me, too, yes? I felt safe, because I did good work, I fulfilled their expectations. And this had an effect when, one day, I got a summons... and such summons meant: "come over, and we will send you to some camp." Mother was hysterical, and she

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immediately ran-- she ran there, to my German boss, and he went in person to some branch of their work office, in (In Polish)_____, and he... had the whole thing called off, yes? So I had their favor. Now, if you will, yes? I worked-- maybe I should have made less tools, since it was serving the Germans, what I did, yes? Now I'm asking myself, and you, apropos the (In German)_____, I mean, what personal reasons I have to question it, probably the fact that, to be kept there, and not be sent to a work camp, they had to be pleased with us. With me. So there was this episode... and... the- - that spring, I would walk morning-- each morning, from my home to the factory, and that was the first time in my life that, for a long period, I truly lived in nature. I wasn't used to that. I enjoyed the fields, the sights, the trees, the blossoms, I was in heaven during those morning walks. I took wing, I flew, inside this great tragedy, and under these st-- strange circumstances, I was e-- engrossed in something else entirely, it seems surreal, yes? Going out of the Ghetto, going out of that [cough] cruel destitution, where nothing is stable, there's no safety, you're only dimly alive, and I go out in the morning with my head in the clouds. I got-- I-- I enjoyed this so much, I would get up earlier, when I got to the workplace... it was in a quarter called (In Polish)_____, [cough] (In Polish)_____. It-- it.. it was a somewhat disreputable quarter before the war, they had this name for it, which I won't repeat, in Polish [cough], but-- yes, that... ve-- very insulting. And I got there, and found that, since I was early, there was-- there was no one around [cough], there was a factory, and there was the building where the P-- Polish owner lived, and he had-- characteristically, they also had [cough] a field, and... and fruits, and I discovered they had... apples. It had been a while since I glimpsed an apple, not to mention eating them, and I got up in the morning, and I gradually made up my mind that I should climb the fence and pick one. I did this for a couple of days [cough], until one time,

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there came some new German, I didn't know him, and caught me. Now, bear in mind that time-- sorry, yes. At that time, the Germans had no problem rounding up Jews and sending them to whatever-- do whatever they wanted with them, and they had to make no excuses. But [cough] sorry.

Q: Would you like to drink a little?

A: Yes. But the Germans are big on order... you have orders, you have rules, and you follow the rules, the rules are that you take the Jews in a certain order, according to certain formulas, and there was such a formula for a Jew who committed an offense. Say, he crossed the... road, illegally, that's enough to put him on a list. I said: "here, he got me, I'll be one of those." And, the same day, I wasn't by my machine, I was roaming my thoughts, and I told-- I told no one, I didn't tell my mother back home. And for a week I lived this anxiety, and every night I waited for-- and every day I was at home, for them to come get me. But, later, I again met that German face to face, and he smiled at me, so I went-- I realized, he wasn't going to do anything about it, and I was relieved. So I told this story to my mother. And the way this war went on was that, we kept running into more and more predicaments, and each time we thought, if we got by the latest one, we were through. But eventually we realized that each new day had us missing the one before it... in... I worked there for a while, yes? until... one day... the Germans decided to line up all the Jews in the city, and change their identification certificates.

Q: By the way, going backwards a little...

A: Yes?

Q: You told me of an incident where... the German, probably the factory manager, asked you--

A: Oh no, that was the SA man, yes. That-- um hmm.

Q: The SA man. Who-- he asked you if you could get another someone like you.

A: Another Jew like-- like me, to-- c-- to come and work there.

Q: Come to work there. And did that ca-- do anything?

A: He was sort of ordering something from me; get me another person like you.

Q: And did you?

A: It wasn't a real question, it was rhetorical... and... as in "have you got another one of these-- get me one, I need another one like you to work for me."

Q: And did you do anything about it?

A: I didn't (Q: No) do anything, I didn't do any-- anything, and I didn't inquire exactly what he meant, I realized that he generally meant to compliment me.

Q: He was pleased.

A: To compliment me, yes, and perhaps I told myself that, maybe I was... I was... making some tiny, small contribution, to... to... to... Jewish prestige, yes? by-- by there being a Jew he was pleased with, yes?

Q: Now, that spring, you say you walked from home every day...

A: Yes.

Q: To--

A: In the winter too.

Q: To the factory.

A: In the spring, and in the winter, in the rain, I walked.

Q: W-- what-- what year was this, was it--

A: This was in forty two.

Q: F--

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A: Mostly, forty one and forty two, yes?

Q: Spring, forty two? We're already in forty two?

A: Yes, forty-- spring, forty two, yes.

Q: Where did forty one go?

A: Well, forty one... some of forty one I was already working, some of forty one I was working, but that was-- I think I started working in the fall, or in some less... favorable season, I wasn't-- I was probably preoccupied with other things, I can't recall any specific episodes of jobs in the spring, I just went, I was the only Jew there, I don't know how my mother managed to.. to sneak me in there, it was a small place, nobody noticed, and... that's it, it was discrete.

Q: Did you have some kind of certificate?

A: No certificate.

Q: I mean, you had to get out of the ghetto, to get there.

A: Oh, that I did. I got an employment certificate from my workplace, from the (In German)_____...

Q: Yes.

A: The I was in his employ, and that was alright, that was enough, yes? I could-- if I wanted to, I could also take the trolley, if I wanted to. But I didn't, both because it w-- it didn't exactly go to where I needed, and because I enjoyed the walk, yes? I was young, so you walk a few kilometers in the rain, it's not so bad, and the winter-- I was born in the Polish winter, so it was sometimes cold, but it was alright...

Q: What-- and at work... did you always--

A: Oh, yes, I think I forgot to say, yes, that for a while, in th-- in the first year, forty, it was, also, around l-- late spring, so... the Jewish Community, with the help of an engineer, this engineer in our town, named (In Polish)_____, they organized a school, a single school, for the youth. In the Community. Inside the Community

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building. It was a technical school... and I also went, again, mother, always practical, enrolled me, and there I started a little-- oh. The only place, where my studies continued a little, I started, I remember, the... first algebra, I studied there. I learned my first equations there... and a little technical drawing, and chemist-- I mean, that's how we learned. I remember. But it was only a few months before they took the whole thing down... yes. So time went by without very much meaning, with... chasing after food, and... and... and... and... playing with kids, and visiting relatives to the extent it was possible, and lots of boredom. There was nothing to do. At night you had to close yourself up in total darkness, no Jew would dare making some light in the house, even if he had-- the darkness-- lest-- because they were always looking, for some crack, some pretense, to drag him out of his house. So we tried hard to make ourselves as nonexistent as possible... there are probably other things that I don't remember so well, but the imp-- I do remember the important things.

Q: H-- how did you keep warm in the winter?

A: Keep warm, so... us, we used coal. We lived in an area-- we actually lived on top of coal. But... there were some very hard times, and all we could do... it was hard to get... solid coal, we gathered coal powder, you can use that for heating too, yes? That you could get. I wouldn't say we were cold, because we had plentiful... burning materials, yes? That-- I don't remember us being cold. We were hungry, yes? Nothing-- you couldn't buy clothes... not to mention entertainment, or anything else. No culture, no school, nothing to do except at home, really, as I said, I would... play a

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lot with my sister, she got me... novels, I read a lot of classics during the war, all of... Dostoevsky, and... I read Sienkiewicz, and... and... I read Les Misérables, at least twice, in Polish, in... in the ghetto... these kinds of things, I got them all through my sister, otherwise I would never have gotten to them, because it wasn't my area at all, yes? It wasn't my field.

Q: Where did she get the books?

A: She... she had spent some time in high school, and she had connections, she had connections-- she also had her own books, and she had male and female friends, and they could get the books. Eventually, the Germans forbade us having books... it was also a brave act, [because] my father, until... until the war came, never allowed me to read a book unless... it was a-- a sacred book, not even Yiddish books. Just sacred books. It was a tenet of my education, you can also see this in Bney Barak, in Mea Shearim, it's the same, yes? Nothing new here. And... we took it for granted, because it was a cultural value which went back a great many years. So only during the war, I mean, when I took down-- when I started transgressing, yes? That's... when I started to open up, and also discover things. Again, with the help of my mother, with the help of my sister... I began, in practice, really, I comple-- that is, I began, I began to open a window... into the world, of which I was aware, but which I didn't know... personally, I didn't know its concepts, and through these books I entered this new world, yes? And I immediately identified with it. It probably wasn't difficult for me, because I was prepared for it, yes? What with my... intuitive criticism, with my attempts to...

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analyze things... and with my analytical abilities, I felt an immediate connection with the characters and situations, they weren't-- that is, when I read them, it wasn't alien, it was human, yes? And it seems I realized that all my life I had been looking for... humanism, pan-humanism, not necessarily... J... J-- Judaism itself, yes? There had to be something which was both Jewish and human, yes? And it s-- it seems I always believed that there couldn't be something that applies to a person, any person, only if that person is also Jewish, yes? I had just been unable to express these things, I didn't know how to explain them, and through these... books, yes? I-- and I was also a little older then, I could gain some basic understanding, yes? So I... was exposed to... to this culture. And that reminds me, now, another thing. I mean, to give you-- again, when I was a boy, before the war, I liked to stroll in the main street-- first of all, our town had a main street, named (In Polish)_____, a very long street, where the-- the-- the trolley passed, and connected it with other cities, and there were a few side streets, of which one of the largest was (In Polish)_____, where I lived, and which had civic buildings, also an important street, with a cinema and all kinds of things. I liked to go down to this street, and stroll there, because it had lots of shops, it was very vivid, and it appealed to me. It wasn't my world, and if there wasn't a threat or some such problem, whenever there wasn't, I would go there. In... in the corner, I remember, the-- there was a two-storied villa, and in the evening, it emitted sounds, I didn't know what they were, and only later I found out it had been Cho-- Cho-- Chopin. And I felt such a connection to that thing. I felt such a connection to that topic. And it-- it was such a different world, and I also liked the... the Jewish Hasidic playing and music, yes? I liked it, and-- yes? It was something... celestial for me. I told myself: "look at those goys, and we say-- we avoid them, we disdain them." And this all came to me because-- speaking of strolling in the main street, mother told me

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that, when I was four... they got me a cane. A children's w-- walking cane. Just a toy, and one evening, the boy was gone. He wasn't home. And she panicked, she became hysterical, I told we live next to the... *magistrat*, the... municipality and police station, so in-- she went there, and cried, and one hour later, or more, some police officer came back home, with me, and... gave me over to mother, and said: "well, he was just leaning on his cane, watching the trolleys." So I had a soft spot-- I had a soft spot for that street, probably from very early on. Yes. And further down that street was that famous church which, as I told you, at eleven o'clock on Sunday, no Jew dared to pass, and in-- in the corner of our street and the main one, there was-- there was a villa there, from whence came the celestial sounds of Chopin.

Q: Where you fell in love with music.

A: Yes, I had always loved music, but-- of another kind, yes? But... yes. That kind of meaningful music really touched me immediately. And, later on, I tried to do something about it, I will tell you about that. Yes.

Q: We-- during that time, when, as you describe, the world was closing up around you... did your father manage to perform any religious activities?

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A: No. He was-- I felt-- he didn't talk about it, he would have... he would somehow have... holiday feasts, pathetically, there was nothing to eat, he improvised, it was very sad. It was very sad, the.. these holiday feasts... were... our house, at those times, was packed with sorrow, a sometimes thunderous sorrow, a depressing, heavy sorrow, you couldn't force a smile, there wasn't-- it was really an act of desperation, and he was at a loss what to do, I'm sure he was frustrated by not being able to help the family. He didn't know how, he didn't know how to handle these things, because he had lived... he had lived among people, yes? who never dealt with these kinds of things. He had lived in (In Yiddish)_____, in the religious school. You needed to have connections to more earthly kinds of people, the kinds who had shops, who had connections to peasants, who-- he didn't. And, to this day, I don't know exactly what his feelings were. His feelings were very grave, he would walk around alone, he was closed, and we almost never spoke. I wasn't old enough, or developed enough, to ponder topics of-- of... great significance. I'm trying to reconstruct his thoughts after the fact, yes? And... and.. reconstruct periods, but no analyses, yes? Today I can see these things. I'm not sure I could have had a meaningful conversation with him, even had he been capable of it, yes? And... and he was among the f-- the first victims of the ghetto, they took him very early, to the camp.

Q: When?

A: It was... late forty one, late forty one, yes? Sorry, forty one, or early forty two, I mean, forty one...

Q: And-- and did he come back?

A: Right, he didn't. Now, they took him-- he went quietly. The Jewish... policemen came, at night, he was on the list, the list which the Germans sent to the Community, and they had to provide so and so, and if someone hid, they passed over him, and took the n-- the next person on the list. And he went, he didn't argue... he--

Q: Do you remember the policemen who came to your home?

A: I don't remember the policeman exactly.

Q: One policeman.

A: I can't even recall anymore whether-- there were two of them, I think. No force was needed, yes? There wasn't w-- anywhere to run to, yes. And w-- one of the questions that come up, yes, why didn't you resist, we sh-- should first analyze the physical and psychological aspects of this situation, and their interactions. But, he went, he took--

Q: They came without-- they came at night?

A: Yes. He took his-- prayer shawl, and his phylacteries, truly, it-- he was a tall, erect man, that image was also horrifying to watch, he went like a little boy... who is-- innocently going to school, with... with his... with his... his satchel, he took his satchel, with his prayer shawl and his phylacteries... and again, I couldn't sleep, and the next day I--

Q: D-- did he say goodbye?

A: No, no he didn't.

Q: To your mother?

A: He didn't-- it was... he said it without words. Like you see in the movies... it was a very powerful goodbye, because it remained imprinted on us-- on me, anyway. It's not the kind of thing where we say: "we're parting ways." It's a kind... a kind... of deterministic acceptance of that which was expected. It was going to happen any

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moment, and now it did. There was no outburst of emotion. It was a continuation of some powerful feeling that existed in him, without screaming, without being uttered, it... harassed him in-- inside, it was about to explode, and... finally it came. The next morning, I-- I got up very early, and since I could ride t-- th-- since I worked there, I could ride, I could get out, I took the trolley this time. I heard they were kept in this orphanage, where they put Jewish chil-- orphans before the war, and they told me that they were all at the windows, they would peek out every once in a while, and you could see them. And fortunately, I'm mean I was very fortunate, and perhaps he was, too, that I managed to see him and he me. And he-- we could talk, it t-- we could talk, because I took a risk, I walked over there, everyone said: "what... they'll take you, too." I was naïve. It was very important for me, that he feel-- because we never said goodbye... and it was very important for me to tell him, som-- there's someone-- "we care about you. This didn't go unnoticed." And he was completely surprised, and I think he was pleased... and that was the last time I ever saw him...

Q: How long were you able to stand there?

A: It was dangerous. They didn't let them stand by the windows, either. They'd punish those who dared, they weren't allowed to look through the windows. But, we were-- we had already felt such great danger, everyone had already done something...

Q: You say you spoke?

A: Yes... and he said: "what, you came?" he didn't think... he was alone with his fate, and I hope that.. maybe this gave him a little strength... yes. Yes.

Q: Did you hear anything later?

A: No... I see this... incident now, a kind of closeup picture, wordless, such a powerful memory, he's in a dream, holding his prayer shawl and phylacteries, I'm down below in imminent danger, but ignorant of it... we're silently saying goodbye, and everything fades away [cough]. Have you... finished the...

Q: I'm asking about...

A: Oh... yes? So, this was my first goodbye, and then, again, since you can't... can't afford... you can't allow yourself time to suffer, to mourn, this is not a time when you... can even be alone with yourself, you've in a constant struggle, yes? No respite. It's not that you've finished something, and you're starting a new ch-- it's all a part of the same struggle [cough] for survival, all the time, you go on high alert, like a cat, at the slightest whiff of wind...

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Q: But you didn't know that for father this was...

A: There were a lot of rumors by then, we were past any... past any illusions. We knew, that being taken meant either a work camp, or somewhere else, we didn't know where, but in either case, it w-- it was very bad.

Q: I assume people were still coming back from work camps at the time.

A: No... only very young people. And only a very few of those, and only at the very b-- at the very beginning. I had a cousi-- a cousin like that, who was taken, and came back, when these things weren't yet o-- organized from on high, but they had to take care of some work, so th-- they opened... these improvised, temporary work camps, but not when it became-- starting becoming-- becoming a system, no one came back, they also didn't want it put on record, they wouldn't have wanted any witnesses who could tell of these things, their operations were completely opaque.

Q: When was father taken?

A: I told you, it was...

Q: Late forty one?

A: I started-- yes...

Q: And did you tell mother of your visit to the... orphanage?

A: Yes, yes, I didn't ask, I didn't ask for her permission, I told her after the fact, yes? I told her I saw it, and that was it. We... we didn't cry at home... that was it... we went back about our business, which was fighting for our... our... our life, for food... and... with time, I gain-- I started getting paid at my job.

Q: Let's, I suggest, we're at the end of the tape...

A: Yes?

Q: So let's ch--

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End of Tape 4

Tape 5

Q: Listen... OK? Not OK?..

A: So... yes, what was the question? I forgot where we were, yes?

Q: You finished with...

A: Oh, yes yes yes yes yes, I finished with my father's going away, goodbye without saying goodbye, yes... yes, I started telling you I worked for a salary, I got a salary, the Germans are very orderly, everybody got-- twice a month, in a paper bag, we got a salary, myself included, and... I was well-liked there, I felt good among them, considering the circumstances, my hours there were quiet. When I worked there, I had a feeling of safety. And I even... managed to help the family as well.

Q: Were you given food there?

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A: I wasn't given any food, but I was paid. I could buy it there, because the previous owners were farmers, and... you could buy things there, not necessarily according to... according to the rationing.

Q: And could you easily get what you bought into the ghetto?

A: Look, I walked through the fields. Again, the-- statistically, chances were high that no one would notice, there weren't any people around there, it was an actual field, and I felt at ease in nature, in that calm, and it was almost a straight line. Rain or shine, it didn't matter, even with the occasional marshes, I... dealt with it and I could carry things. I even came, at my mother's request, to be helping my aunt, who lived nearby, and she heard, I mean, it wasn't exactly a secret that they were in distress, her sister, who had three children, two boys and a girl and a husband, and... really the-- they were in trouble, both had already been in the camps, both boys, older than I was, older cousins, they're both living in Canada by the way, they've got extensive families, really very successful people, and I recently visited them there, so I told mother: "You know what, I'm not far from there, I can easily buy a loaf of bread," a loaf of bread was a matter of life or death for... "and I'll bring it there." And I did, I got her a loaf of bread, and she couldn't believe it was happening. The next day they took me. Arrested me. That is, that was the end of my time of ostensible independence, both on the job and a little outside of it. But the way they took me, I have to give a preamble to... that topic... there came a time, I can't say exactly what... what time it was, either it was early spring... or it was autumn, autumn? I think it was autumn. So they decided to

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gather all the Jews in the square, the Jewish Community square, there was-- that's where the square was, to change, so they declared, to change their identification certificates. And I want to stress, I think you know this, that without identification certificates you couldn't get food coupons, and without food coupons you couldn't survive. Because, to get things on the black, that was a challenge in itself, you needed money, it was very expensive, buying food coupons. And although it wasn't much, it was your survival. So e-- so everyone would come, right? That was a ruse and-- they really gathered us all up, and we stood and stood, that's the-- they had this method, the flanks were manned by soldiers, SS, with... bayoneted rifles, and they started doing their thing. Their thing began with sorting. That is, they sort you, after they sort you, you go over to some post, where you get a new certificate. Now, even though I was a bit more grown, I was with mother. In that respect I was very childish, childish, she protected me so much, and... I was connected to her. So I always kept by her side. And there the-- there was a selection, what you know as a selection, that is, sorting, without talking, yes? by hand movements, right or left, and they had groups. They sent my sister in-- to one side, and mother and me to the other. Mother wised up, I don't know how she wised up, and in some extremely clever trick she took me and pushed me, forcibly, and I suddenly found myself next to my sister, there was one Jewish policeman there... the polic-- the German... the... t-- t-- turned around, he... he didn't notice, and that policeman didn't say anything, and that's how I passed the selection, later we found-- and in the end I got a new identification certificate, and so on... everyone in my mother's group was taken away immediately, to that same place, the orphanage in (In Polish)_____, it was a kind of way station from which they would send people to the camps, this time it was to Auschwitz, it was obviously to Auschwitz, that's what everyone was saying, yes? By then--

Q: The name Auschwitz was already known?

A: It was already known, yes, in... forty two, yes, of course the name Auschwitz was already known.

Q: Do you remember the date of... this selection?

A: Well that... that would have been maybe in October or Nov-- it was probably autumn.

Q: After summer.

A: After summer, yes yes. Oh... Auschwitz was already known, also, _____ forty one, they talked of Auschwitz in forty one, not in these terms, but... it was known, it was also no far away from us, don't forget, geographically, we were next to Krakow, it's all in the same area. (In Polish)_____. It was-- it was a town with a large concentration of Jews, (In Polish)_____ was. So we heard rumors, and we went back home, before we went back home, when the selection was over, the... that... that

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crowd, I don't know who star-- like a choir, gave out a great crowd, only a great composer, or God, could... arrange... that kind of vocal expression, it was an "oh!" and weeping, like some agonized prayer, it's hard to describe, and that cut through the silence there, and it probably even shook the Germans there, the commanders, so to cut this thing short, almost immediately, they had the soldiers, the wall of soldiers, the SS, who had bayonets, shoot into the air. And... these loud barrages, yes? snapped us-- us back to... to reality. We got the coupons, and in that mood, that is, of not even being able to mourn, we couldn't even express this pain, we each of us went back [cough] on the way to our homes, and in one place we were walking with this group, people-- there was this tall Jewish guy there, either his parents or his siblings were taken, I don't know who, and he went into a frenzy, and with superhuman strength, he uprooted a section of this fence, I don't know how a human being could do that. He-- it was an image of... frustration and pain becoming an inexplicable physical force. And other people told him: "What have you done, now they'll take us, too, because you broke a fence." And we came home, my sister and I, father was gone, now they took mother, what do we do?

Q: Did you already know, on that day, what was going to happen to those who were taken there, to the other group?

A: Yes. Well, we already knew that-- I mean, there was already a technique, there were already rumors that they were taking people, sending them to (In Polish)_____, to (In Polish)_____, to... the orphanage, and shipping them

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from there, yes? according to their logistical plan, and the logistical options of the Germans, as to where they were being sent, we heard they were all sent to... to Auschwitz.

Q: The people who were put there in mother's group...

A: Yes.

Q: Were they the older ones--

A: The older ones, older, older and children. Older and children. After all it-- that's why, because I also looked very young, yes? I looked very young, I-- so, they put me together with mother, and perhaps also because we kept so close together. I was worried for her and she was for me, we had a certain naivety, and as I said, her... maternal instincts wised up, and she pushed me with incredible, incredible force, I... just stumbled into someone, or I-- I would have fallen over, and the Jewish policeman kept silent. I can't remember who he was... he was an ordinary Jew, who happened to be wearing the cap and uniform of the Jewish Police. I'm not saying he was righteous among the nations, I'm not saying he was something special, he was a human being. That is, th-- these people were no different from other human beings. None of them were. Despite the fact that they did the German's handiwork. They organized

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everything, they maintained order, they lined people up, they maintained the... grouping, according to the German's sorting, that they did, yes. And we came home, and-- I wasn't imaginative enough-- I didn't know what we were going to do. Without mother... I took the trolley again, and again I went to the orphanage, and there I met my cousin, they had also taken her mother, I mean my au-- my aunt, and other people I knew, and we were all in the same... the same... the same situation, we wanted to glimpse something from afar, there was nothing, we were warned that we had better go, we went back, after all we had to go back, where did I go? I went to my workplace. That day I didn't report for work. I got there and it was break time, there was no one in the factory, they must have all gone somewhere, and I stood outside and cried. Before the f-- factory gate, I cried. And... by and by, the work manager came, he was walled, I remember, he was called (In Polish)_____, he was a tall Pole, with these beautiful eyes, athletic, and he also liked me, I was... I mean, I was very well-liked there. Yes. And he said to me: "Avramek," he said in-- "why are you crying?" It was noon already _____. I said: "why am I crying?" I said: "they took my mother from me, what do I have left?" He said: "They took your mother away? She's upstairs, in the peasant's home. She's lying there, with a broken leg." And the story was, that this woman-- I'm moved... had jumped out the window at night. Into the darkness. She didn't know where to. She broke her leg, and she crawled on her knees from the city center to its edge, where I worked. At night. And they took her, they his her, and... it was a miracle. Just unbelievable. And they were so cooperative, they brought a wagon, with hay, we his her under the hay, and that's how I got her home [cough]. Fortunately... in... in a relatively short while, about two months, she could walk again, and she went back to work at the shop, that was very important, and we resumed our withered-- withered life in the ghetto. Together.

Q: Did she get any treatment?

A: I think later-- I don't remember. Over there she didn't get any treatment, they just

(Q: At home) dressed her wound, there at the peasant's home, but afterwards I guess she did, to--

Q: At your home.

A: At our home I'm guessing she did get treatment, I can't... can't say exactly, I think m-- my sister took care of it, I went to work, don't forget-- oh yes, I should-- I forgot all about this: even before this... they... organized an (In German)_____ at night, that is, to catch men so they don't... don't escape, don't slip away, and... and so they don't hide, so they'd surprise people at night, according to a list, with or without a German policeman, and that's how they... fulfilled their quotas, of people who were to be sent, either to work camps or to extermination camps, it was already starting, the extermination camps. And the Jewish Policemen must have said something, since my sister was very popular, as I said, she was very intelligent and very mature for... for... for her age, so there were some goings on there, and she knew there would be such an (In German)_____, she left her work, at night, she went out at curfew hours, she passed several checkpoints and got home, to warn me, I left the house, and hid

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somewhere, at her friend's place, in... in the attic, and she went back to work. And indeed, that night they came for me, and I wasn't there.

Q: Was mother there?

A: She was there. "Where's your son?" "Don't know." The next day I told this to... the German. The German, who was with the SA, and his vice manager, too. I told it to his vice manager because... so he said: "What's the problem? From now on you'll work outside-- you'll work at night," yes, today I-- he became my-- accomplice, "You'll work at night, and sleep during the day, because they do these (In German)_____ at night and not in the day time, and so I did. And for several months, that's what I did. I w-- I slept during the day, and worked at night.

Q: You slept at home?

A: At home, yes? This allowed me to sleep at home. Yes. So-- yes.

Q: I'd like to go back to mother's jump.

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A: Yes.

Q: Did she tell you what went on in the orphanage?

A: I don't remember whether she told me, or whether I asked her, or whether I was even interested. I... I realized I would never see mother again, and then suddenly there she was. Everything else must have seemed to trivial, it didn't even occur to me to ask her about what had happened, except the adventure, I looked at her with admiration, this woman, where did she get the strength, to jump into the darkness, break [her leg] and crawl, and she did it more out of a... a... a sense of responsibility, and commitment, for us, than for herself. That's how she was. Because she realized what... what... her absence meant for us. That gave her the strength to do it, to take such risks. It's just a story... it's like fiction, this thing. Unfortunately, it wasn't... it didn't... solve the problem, after all. But at least for the moment we thought we had some small victory in that war, that damned war. And... now I'm going back to myself, to... my story, so I told him, and he said-- so I worked at night, and I was their manager there. I worked at night, and I activated everything, I operated all the m-- machinery myself, and in the morning I would leave them everything, all tidy, and... and I g-- and I got paid, decently, and... and one day, I think it was forty three already, yes? spring, February forty three, or March forty three, I think it was March. When was the... Warsaw ghetto uprising?

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Q: In... April.

A: April? Then maybe it was April already.

Q: Or late March. Early April.

A: Later March, I think. I think it was late March. Something like that. Over there it was still winter cold, yes? In Poland it's still very cold during that time of year, and I... as usual, in the morning, I was asleep, that-- and my mother also worked night shifts half the time. That... that day, she had worked at night, so she was also asleep. She was sleeping in one bed, I in the next bed, and there was a knock on the door. I didn't hear it. Mother didn't either. And... after that, she told me: "I heard footsteps going away, I thought a client may have come to me," she actually thought it might be some client, so she got up quick: "Who is it?" Who was it? A German policeman. On a bicycle. Come to take me. He had probably called on me several times during the night, and couldn't find me, so he decided to be clever, saying: "maybe he'll be in during the day." Now, you can imagine, that was the last time I saw my mother, the state, the mental state in which I remember my mother, as we said goodbye under the circumstances I described. Where there-- there is every likelihood, the she felt guil-- terribly guilty, it wasn't the damned war, nor Hitler, nor the Germans, it was her fault they took me to the camps. I got dressed qui-- everything quickly, and in the meantime he looked around the apartment, and he found some... some... foodstuffs,

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beans or something, so, they were... they were trained, in order to avoid talking about me, he started questioning her: "Where did you get this? The black market?" and all kinds of things, so she also had to give him explanations, and in the meantime I got dressed, and he took me, and we left. The moment we left, I heard hysterical screaming, you could associate such hysteria, if y-- such screaming, if you want to imagine the voice, that could come out of, say, the painting... the painting by Munch, The Scream, yes? I heard that scream, it must have been an image of a woman screaming in exactly the... the same... the same... the same style. It was a mad scream. A scream of guilt, and pain, and injustice, a great, terrible cry! The German was shaken by this cry, went back in, and told mother: "don't worry, he's coming back." I was so thankful for that, although nothing happened, he lied, and... he could at least not have done this. He took me, now, there's a story about how he took me. He had a bicycle, he went up on his bicycle, and I had to run after him, and it was several kilometers, to the police station. And when I got to-- before the police station, he had to maintain appearances, it's unseemly for some... German in uniform to be riding a bicycle with some boy, youth, running after him. I was... I looked quite young, he dismounted, and when he came near the headquarters, where there were Germans, he started slapping and beating me, to show that he was... yes? To this day I don't know exactly what his deal was. Was he a Nazi or not, was he pretending, he wasn't... he had done his job, but here he was putting on an act. What with his telling my mother, he said it in German, and with his frequent stopping to let me rest, he only put on this act when I got there. So I sat there, and then a policeman came, gathered a few more felons, like me, but they weren't Jewish, they were thieves, or black market people, some three or four, who had to be sent to (In Polish)_____, to prison. And this was all done by t-- by trolley. We went on the trolley, I know why all these pictures

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are coming back to me now, because it's so significant, the policeman, too, was probably somewhat embarrassed-- they looked at me, I had-- I gave off this innocence, I was a good kid... I gave off good manners, in general... if I had any pictures from my youth, you'd see, everybody loves-- loved me. When I was young, and my mother had an... an assistant in her salon, yes? when she came, she wouldn't say hello to mother or anyone. First thing she would leap at me and k-- kiss me, that is, I gave off this gentleness, this nonviolence, suddenly a policeman was leading me around with felons. He felt bad, what did he do? He took some eggs, which were contraband, from this woman, and shoved them in my hands, and there he had a felon. Yes, they were taking me because I wanted to sell on the bl-- black market. That is, even he was a little ashamed of this situation, why on earth was he taking me, without-- nothing. And so I got to (In Polish)_____, and I think that was where I first heard of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, and they put me with a large group of Jews, I was separated from those felons, and put together with several Jews, we were sure we were going to be the victims of... especial abuse, in light of... that uprising, yes? And we waited several hours, and after several hours, in the late afternoon, a policeman came and took us to the train station, and we set out for the work camp, it had been a work camp, it later became the (In German)_____ concentration camp, which was next to (In Polish)_____. He was, I could see, a learned German, in times of peace... in times of peace he probably was-- could have been, maybe, some kind of teacher, or professor, whatever, or some-- or some sci-- scientist, he wasn't... he wasn't violent w-- with us, but he did his job, and took us to the camp, there were... there were-- I don't know, six or seven, I forget, two among them were... brothers. Two brothers, they told me they were from an ultra-orthodox home, they were older, I was the youngest, and when we came, into the camp, so... already the... the local

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authorities, who consisted, first of all, of the camp's German commander, and his assistant, and the... the officials, who were Jews, it was a Jewish-only camp, (In German)_____ was, there was... the... the-- headmaster, the inner camp's headmaster was (In German)_____, I remember, Jewish, and they were all Jewish, and they lined people up. For some reason, these two brothers, yes? to stand in line, yes? they wanted to be next to each other, but it didn't work out, because there all kinds of Kapos around, yes? division heads, s-- stand here, stand there, straighten up. So they started running around. Unthinkable, refusing an order in the camp? They immediately beat them up. And those poor wretches, they didn't know exactly what they wanted from them. And "turn right," that kind of thing, it was strange-- these terms weren't in their vocabulary, lineup, what's a lineup? They were probably, also, Yeshiva students of the... of the... of the... the k-- kind of society as I described, more or less, in my case, the German saw how the... the... Jewish Kapos were beating them. He went over, took them aside, and beat them. He beat them, saluted, and left the camp. Another somewhat unusual image from that war.

Q: Did he tell them anything?

A: I don't know whether he t-- I don't remember exactly what he told them, but this act spoke quite, quite eloquently, yes? I mean, he saw us, I wouldn't say... he saw us, himself as the policeman, the jailer, us the prisoners, his duty was to convey us th-- by train to the camp, he brought us there, and now he... he could see the beginning-- the ritual abuse was beginning, yes? And... he couldn't bear it, it seems. I don't know if it's

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a good idea to tell such humane stories of the Germans, of all people, but I'm telling you the facts as they occurred. What h-- what happened to that German later, I have no idea. Enough of them were scum that you can allow some occasional credit, you know... for one of them. And so began my... new... journey, in the camps, until my release.

Q: Here in (In German)_____.

A: Here in (In German)_____--

Q: When you came in, and they lined you up...

A: Lined us up.

Q: What-- did they tell you anything?

A: Yes. So, that night all they had to do was divvy us up, they probably had a lot of newcomers, they had to... organize us into divisions, we-- into divisions, and into barracks, yes? There were both barracks and divisions. The barrack was-- was a group of people who lived in the same place. The division, it was associated with a certain

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job. You go out on a job, you all belong to that job, and these all had superintendents.

The superintendents were all-- they were... the commanders were Jewish, I don't

know what they were called, the term "Kapo" didn't exist yet. They were called...

"heads." Some kind of (In German)_____, yes? Some kind of leader. And... we

had to obey them. Generally, obedience in the camps was absolute. It's not... it's not

conditional obedience, it's not negotiated obedience, because you come there without

any rights. You have no rights at all. Anything you do get, is in spite of your not

having any rights. That's what it's all about. In p-- in-- for the Jews. We're not

prisoners of war, there's no convention that applies to us, and if there is, it's ignored.

Yes? This directive, this instruction, and this pressure, was communicated to us

through the... Jewish delegates, like the ghetto had policemen, yes? whose jobs were

somewhat more sublimated, here it was glaringly clear, that's what they were to do.

The German soldiers guarding us, they lived outside of camp, in their own camp, yes?

Their headquarters, with their commander, the high command lived in that camp, yes?

and... in their own barracks. Yes. And the next-- it... it was my first evening, and since

we had come so late, they divided us up into barracks, without any instructions, what

to do, what not to do, we had to... t... come in the barracks, see what's there, get in

bed. The beds there had two levels, the mattress was hay, not a mattress-- not a

mattress stuffed with hay, a m-- just hay, and... you slept there... they immediately

instated a night watch, all night long, in shifts. And the watcher had better not f-- fall

asleep on-- on watch. Because if there was an inspection, he had to... to... well, what's

it called? To give... there's a name for it.

Q: To report?

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A: Line-- um hm. Stand up, yes? Line-- line up, yes? And report the situation, barrack number so and so, this many prisoners, this many present, and sir. That's what you had to do, yes? He had better not fall asleep, it was... now, since we were new, the... head-- the... these leaders, these young Jews, they had to show force. So they were always looking for a pretense to terrorize us. It was-- it was truly just to terrorize us. There was one, he was one of the deputies-- there were t-- the-- there was the camp headmaster, two deputies, and there were the division heads and barrack heads, there were several dozen. One of the two deputies was (In Yiddish)_____. I don't know if you heard, heard that name, he's very famous among the Jews of (In Polish?)_____. Moishe (In Yiddish)_____. He was from (In Polish)_____, and there... came in my transport a Jew, also from (In Polish)_____, he was a tinsmith-- oh, sorry, I'm touching it. He was a tinsmith, an honorable man, I'd say, a very beautiful Jew, beautiful, he was... he was nearing sixty, I think, had a somewhat heavy stride, but he was strong, a working man, he had a charming smile, a good, innocent man, and he came, and he knew this... the head-- (In Yiddish)_____ since he was a child. So when we came into the barrack, he said: “(In Yiddish)_____.” He ignored him. I remember it exactly, he ignored him, and someone already started beating someone, because he didn't come in too quickly-- quickly enough th-- he wasn't swift enough in jumping in bed, and everything had to be quiet, clean and neat within seconds, he saw this, so this Jew also got into-- into his bed, which was the upper bed, and later, this (In Yiddish)_____ did a lineup, a tour, a tour of terror. To show who was boss. And whom did he go to? That same Jew. And he started beating him. And the guy didn't get it yet, he said: “why are you be-- I

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didn't do anything," he said, "don't you recognize me?" The more he talked, the more he hit him, hit him, hit him, yes, until he couldn't go on. And... and he got the point. And that was our welcome, on our first night in the (In German)_____ camp. He had another deputy... deputy... the headmaster had, (In Yiddish)_____... one... (In Yiddish)_____. How I-- today, somehow I remember it, it's... a miracle. (In Yiddish)_____. If (In Yiddish)_____ was this youngish, handsome blond fellow, a little like Moshe Dayan, but taller, thinner, left handed, I remember how he would flog people, with his whip, always left handed, everyone feared him, even the... other officials, they feared him, anyone who was below him feared him, he like to-- liked to inflict pain, this (In Yiddish)_____, he had this cruel look, a... terrifying look. And I think he was a psychopath. If the other one was cruel, this one was just psychotic. He liked to beat the life out of Jews. And... this was the basis of-- what went on in the camp, living in great destitution, you're hungry, always hungry, always hungry, you're tired, you work nonstop, you sleep when ordered to, in impossible conditions, you mustn't give anyone a reason to find fault with you. Empathy is forbidden. You have to keep people anxious to survive. An-- anxious to survive. So, someone has to create that atmosphere. This wasn't the idea of those two deputies, they were too dumb, but they were very very good, as it were, in carrying out this concept... this concept. And that's how they controlled us. How many were there of us? I think six thousand people, all from our region, young people, and our job was to... work in setting up the (In German)_____ factories in the area. (In German)_____ factories made munitions, it was a huge concern, and in that place, (In German)_____, they built a modern, very advanced factory, from scratch, pre-planned, it was a huge construction site, and apart from us it also employed forced... forced labor, yes? Poles, Czechs, though they had freedom, they weren't in the camp, they'd go back to their

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own camp, which wasn't under any supervision, it was just a living quarters, they also got vacations, they also got packages, it was different, but they were-- they hadn't volunteered, they had to work there, craftsmen and so forth, and later there were also prisoners of war, Ukrainians, and even later there were Italians, and it was a huge huge camp. We would march several kilometers each morning to get there. That's how the mornings went, and you had a lineup, first there was a tally, it was a German ritual, by the book, the Jewish headmaster, he had probably been in the Polish army, he knew how to salute, and do that unmistakable knock with his boots, and give... report the tally, count everyone, see that all was in order, and then they'd let people go for a limited time, to get their... their... ration... bread ration, and off to work. And then march to camp. That's how it was every day. Rain, no rain, snow, ice, no matter. You did this every day. Dressed, not dressed, sick, not sick, unless you managed to get to the sick lineup at night, and be recognized by the doctor as unfit for work, and that only worked in a few cases, but it later turned out to have been good by comparison, because the doctor did have the prerogative to decide that you stay. To save you.

Q: Did you... did you ever (A: this happened to me once) stay on sick leave?

A: This happened to me, not in that camp, in another, a... so... it's a good think you reminded me, because I would have forgotten. This did happen to me, and it truly saved my life.

Q: We'll get to that. Meanwhile, morning lineup, getting bread and going to work.

How much bread?

A: How much bread? How much did we have? One hundred grams, one hundred and fifty, maybe, something minimal, which could hardly nourish you for a very short while, for breakfast.s

Q: Did you eat it right there?

A: That's the thing. I didn't. That's another matter. I divided it. And then all day you had this battle you were constantly thinking of the bread slices you were saving, yes? And you were the happiest man in the world knowing that, when you got back to camp, everyone else wouldn't have any, and you would still have that bread to eat.

Q: At work.

A: No, at home, even, at the end of the day, yes?

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Q: When you're back at the end of the day?

A: At the end of the day. So there was no food, and when we got back to the camp, after-- we worked-- we'd come back early, the workday was, say, including the walk and everything, fifteen hours, or more, fifteen or sixteen hours, and the other eight were for internal business and going to sleep. The bu-- this internal business included, th-- you got, when you came back you got... a bowl of soup, yes? Those were your two meals. A bowl of soup. Oh, I think that, in the morning, we also got coffee. If I recall. I think, coffee, to drink. The soup... was variably nutritious, but if you were unlucky, and server didn't stir it, didn't average it out, but instead took it from the top, then you were miserable eating the soup, because you got soup with nothing in it. These were our... daily challenges, yes? What soup we'd get. T-- Will we find something inside, will we find some piece of potato, yes? Maybe a piece of meat, maybe a piece of carrot, or not. For those who subsisted on these rations, and had no extra, you know it was matter of three months and they were finished, with such hard labor, so many hours, the hunger... caused swelling, and these young people, and illness, and weakness, and with the medical care available there, they didn't last. So... so... life there depended on [shaking] a lot of resourcefulness.

Q: One moment.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes, t-- don't--

A: Oh, I ke... I k-- keep forgetting, that's why it happens.

Q: No, you can do that, just not all at once...

A: Yes.

Q: If you want to change something with your shirt, then pause for a moment--

A: I keep forgetting I have this--

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Q: Pause your talking.

A: This restrictive thing. Yes. Alright.

Q: Yes.

A: So... it was all about... being resourceful, to get a little extra, and that little extra, it was critical. For your physiological survival... in that camp this was possible, because as I said, it was a construction site with some twenty thousand people, German workers-- of all kinds, and in certain cases, personal contact always trumps ideology. Relationships are formed. There were even relationships, there, between certain Jews and German men and women. Yes. So... when there are relationships, then... there are certain exchanges, including exchanges of merchandise. There were, among th-- among the prisoners there were those who had managed to bring with them diamonds, valuables, gold, and s-- and so on, yes? and they would trade. In exchange they would get bread, they would get rice, and they exchanged the rice, t-- sold a bit of it, again, to make some small profit, and there was this minuscule bartering going on. But as I said, all you needed was a little extra. If you had two more bread slices daily, you were saved. That was the heart of it.

Q: Where did they get... th-- valuable things as you describe? Valuables?

A: From home. They-- they-- they-- from home, and they his them, I knew one fellow, he told me he had diamonds in a small aluminum tube, and each day, he would push it into his intestines, yes? so that-- yes? and when the time came he took it out, took out a diamond, traded, and his needs were met for another while. And yours truly also did something like that, only less sophisticated, and all by chance. When they took me, I had on me, I had the salary I got, I never even had time to-- so I took this money with me. It wasn't much, but it was a start. And when we got to camp, after the first night, the next day they took us for another lineup, to show us the camp, to show us the rules, and they said – terrorism was already in the air – they said: “turn over any valuables, money and so on.” And when they told you to turn something over, they didn't have to say: “or else,” because we'd already seen what was going on. And I was in a dilemma. I was about to return the money I had. If someone had looked me in the eyes, they'd know exactly what was going on. And I decided not to do it. It could be that this money, over the years, later, saved my life. That is, allowed me to survive the war. I will get to that, I'm just saying that everyone, I mean, most of them, somehow managed to save something, because otherwise, if they couldn't get that extra, they just couldn't last.

Q: Where did you keep the money?

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A: Right. So, I kept... the money in a fold-- very naively, in a fold in my shirt. And it was a matter of whether they would... search me or not. And how thoroughly. And as I said, I was considered very trustworthy, usually, people would find me easy to trust. And I used it. I had to use some tools, the usual tools weren't enough to... to survive. So that's what I did, and... and even in the camp, after a few months, I felt safer there. A certain familiarity was formed, between people, and where there's familiarity there's some obligation. It manifested itself in tiny nuances. Even between... these... the ones in charge of running the camp, and the ones in charge of the cruelty, as well, when there's this personal connection, you feel a certain sublimation and-- of sorts. It's... human. It's inevitable. I used it, yes? whether... intentionally, or unintentionally, that's how it happened. And I had occasion-- or a few occasions to do things, I'll tell you about them. In that camp... yes. I wanted to tell a-- about some incident here, but I forgot a very important fact.

Q: Just j-- careful with the microphone.

A: Yes, I'll forget again, yes. Yes.

Q: By the way, how much money did you have?

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A: I don't remember how much, but it was enough to buy, maybe, another loaf of bread, or something. It... and... when you bought, you could also sell a little more... get something else in return, you can turn it into an asset. You had-- we had to learn this, yes? not to eat your whole asset immediately, but to turn it into something productive. The way you deposit money, and you use only the returns, not the investment.

Q: When you saved bread, was it ever stolen?

A: Right. So... this happened to me-- I had this experience, this experience, and that was already on the death march. That's later--

Q: So... let's keep that for later.

A: That's for later. Yes.

Q: Could you tell me exactly what you did-- (A: yes yes yes yes yes yes) you worked in (In German)_____, building a new (In German)_____ factory, what did you do?

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A: Right. But I'll keep telling you chronologically, because it will help me remember a few more things, I was telling you about that day, when we w-- we were briefed, and they wanted any belongings we had, and later-- yes. And later, that night, there was a lineup, at a certain time, where they were supposed to divide us into work groups. But--

Q: By the way, did some people turn over belongings? Give-- part with their money?

A: I don't remember exactly, I think they did. And it could be that... they were r-- clever, maybe they had more, and they just gave, I don't remember exactly, I remember the fight, the inner struggle, to give or not to give, and, going against m-- my... my... my... character, yes? I said: "come what may." I didn't even make a decision, I was just-- I remained passive. And... that night we-- were called to a lineup, where they would divide us into work groups. Because in that construction site.. there were d-- dozens, perhaps hundreds, of firms. It was a very large site, a very large building, and they needed all kinds of work. Mostly manual labor. Digging, cement, conveying bricks, and-- and... mixing mortar, and-- what have you. And helping the measurers, and the... carry-- conveying materials to the various workers, arduous work. What can I say? Arduous work, as the pictures show. In-- we arrived-- this camp also had a women's camp. And they were separated. It only went to show that-- it was a somewhat gentler camp. We weren't together, but there were still women. And there were also couples, who had been separated. There was... there was

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this couple, they were both such sweet, beautiful people, f... they were-- they were from around (In Polish)_____. Really, these sweet people, so gentle, and this was also the first or second day in the camp, so they, through the fence, talked a little bit, and he didn't hear the lineup bell. And the lineup stoop, and waited, because they would count us, and one was missing, and when one was missing, the world stopped dead in its tracks. After a while, when everyone was already nervous, this guy-- they found him. They brought him. And then they had to make an example of him, they took this gentle person, you had to see it, it's hard to describe how gentle this... this man was, so proportional and beautiful, and she was so beautiful, she didn't see it, and of course, th-- they took his pants down, and flogged him in front of everyone. Then I heard that man weep. And the world-- my world was devastated. Such a beautiful, good man weeping! And the more he wept, the more they flogged him. There was no compassion, no... no humanity, not even teaching-- not even... trying to teach anything, to make you behave better, even to teach a lesson, there was just beating, beating, beating, to give you pain.

Q: Who beat him?

A: They-- they were... I don't know, what were they ca-- what did we call them, (In German)_____, it's a group head. Group head. That's it.

Q: Jews.

A: All Jews, because in this camp-- all the prisoners were Jews. And there were group heads, there were block heads, and there were the... internal security officials, the two deputies I told you about, and there was the camp headmaster.

Q: Was he also a Jew?

A: All Jews, yes. So... they, in turns, as instructed by-- usually it was done by... it was done by... the internal officials, sorry, I forgot to say. There were g-- group heads, whose role was to manage the group outside of camp, that is, in the work site, make sure they arrived, in an orderly fashion, and reported when we came home, and bring everyone back to camp. And there others in charge of internal policing, internal order, and these ones carried out all the... punishments and such. Yes? So... that was the first time, I saw, how they would punish-- of course he was in shambles when they were through, and he had to stand in the lineup anyway, and... they finished dividing us into groups, and the next day he had to go to work, to the work to which he had been assigned... yes, that's how it was.

Q: And that... h-- h-- had a strong effect on you.

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A: It had a strong effect on me. I couldn't... I couldn't get that image out of my head, it seemed to me a perverted world, a world which my-- my imagination, my view of life couldn't contain. Although, as I said, I had grown up with fear, with hostility, nothing like that. Not an image where they take a person, already helpless, he's prostrate, he can't do anything, and you're beating him just to give him pain, to-- and the more-- the more it hurts him, you give him more and more pain.

Q: Because it was done by Jews?

A: It was done by Jews, yes.

Q: Was that why...

A: That, that-- of course, because a Jew could do this to another Jew, although, I later realized that they... once they had taken up this role, they felt compelled to fulfill it. Yes? There were those who overdid it a little, and that's another matter [cough]. And so-- it was... that was my first day and a half, in that camp, the next day, the routine started, going to work and back. The first day, I remember, I was assigned to some job, far from our camp, we had to pre-- pare a railway there. So you t-- take the sleepers, and you had to push stones under the sleeper. Yes? You know that picture, you push, you cram stones under the sleeper to make it stable, and they put the rails

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on top, to-- for the train. I worked, my hands weren't used to contain-- to holding that heavy pick, and of course they were covered with blisters. I wasn't used to doing that, for eight hours, almost without rest. At the end of the day, by the time it was over, and I was so tired, and we-- we had to go back to camp. It was our Jewish group head who lead us back to camp, but there was a German next to him. That German was a soldier, Wehrmacht, not SS, because this was a work camp, under the command of the German army, he just enjoyed torturing us--

Q: Wait wait. Pause a minute.

A: Oh, yes yes yes yes.

Q: I think that...

A: Yes yes. Yes. Where were we?

Q: Back from work, blistered hands--

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A: Yes yes. He-- he was a soldier, a simple soldier. And he probably felt like “a servant when he reigneth,” suddenly... suddenly he could give orders-- he was a Private, I-- a simple soldier-- he had to bring us-- and then, he did to us what they probably used to do to him in the army. Yes? Lie down, roll over – and we were after work – and run, and most dramatically for him-- for me, was when we had to run, and sing at the same time. And when he gave that order, and we started singing, I broke out in a hysterical fit of crying laughter. It was so grotesque, so inconceivable, that this man, a simple soldier, after a day's work, he was also tired, that's what he would do to us. For no purpose, he wasn't even a true antisemite, I realized he was just an ordinary fellow, he probably heard something at... at church, he wasn't one of... of... the ideological, aware Nazi Germans, who had been indoctrinated, he was an ordinary fellow, he found a group and... that's what he did, it was so funny, this whole thing, it was so s-- so sad. That was my first day, and so we walked to camp, barely, and did whatever, probably had the... the... the daily bowl of soup we'd get, I went to sleep. And all night long, all I had on my mind was th-- not to let any hay fall to the floors. I slept in the lower bed. Because if some official or other came in for a night lineup, and found hay, some hay on the floor, under the bed, you were in for it.

Q: But you didn't know this on the first night.

A: I did, because he told us, and he immediately gave us an example of his general regard towards us. He beat that man-- from his town, I-- I told you...

Q: Uh huh.

A: Not just hay. They said, they told us, how it was in... in... in the block, how we were to keep the block, and this included keeping it clean of hay, and we slept on hay, yes? not just hay. But he demonstrated that... in general... there was no room for negotiation, no arguments and no excuses and no evading, all there was was “that's how I want it,” and the only further deliberation was in the form of beating you to exhaustion. No explanations.

Q: When you came back from work on the first day...

A: Yes.

Q: And had a fit of hysterical laughter...

A: Yes yes, while...

Q: While.

A: While I-- I was constantly afraid he might see me in this state.

Q: So I take it they didn't... didn't catch you.

A: They didn't catch me. At least I kept with the group, yes? It was draining in itself, this whole thing, sometimes paralyzing. This whole state of laughing and... and crying. I don't know whether I'm getting the image across, as it happened. Laughing and crying, really, as... as intense as they get.

Q: That is, you realized that you were in a completely absurd place.

A: It just came out that way, I'm trying to explain my psychological reaction, to a situation, which was probably, yes? It was probably inconceivable. And I, I f-- I found myself, with my character, with my back... my background, I... I found myself in such a situation... and... so... little by little I began to accustom my hands to work, the blisters hurt, and in time they dried, and in time you learn to adapt to the conditions-- to new life conditions, hard as they may be. To the weather, to everything.

Q: We... finished another tape.

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A: Yes.

End of Tape 5

Tape 6

Q: ...ready please. Running. Alright Moshe? Good morning.

A: Good morning.

Q: Let's continue.

A: Indeed.

Q: You were telling... about-- actually, about your first... day at work in the camp, the walk back, the... fit of hysterical laughing and crying you had, and the return to the barrack, and your first night, the fear of hay falling. That's more or less where we were at.

A: Um hmm. Yes. Yes... First of all I want to say that I'm coming to this interview, and pulling everything I say out of some ancient memory of some... how many? almost sixty years ago, I didn't consult any memoirs, or other records, and... I'm trying to recreate both the emotions and the facts, as they occurred, I'm not certain that every

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detail is exactly as it happened, but that's the impression of it in my memory as I delve into it... to the proper depth. And when I describe the first day or couple of days in the camp, I'm trying to... to... to express to you these first feelings, which are the real ones I had in that strange place which I hadn't known before... in retrospect it turned out that, compared to the end of my ghetto time, this... this place, created, eventually, for me, a relative respite. It had a routine. It turned out to have an organized routine. Everything was predictable, and unless you ran into or... or got yourself into some peripheral trouble, you knew exactly what to expect. While in the ghetto, I had a feeling during the... the... the... time just before I left, of chaos. Something... something uncontrollable, being constantly helpless. And paradoxically, all through the war, I can see, I came out of one situation and into a new one, and these predicaments could be compared, to see which was better, so to speak.

Q: One moment.

A: Yes.

Q: Pause a moment, Dudu... yes. Yes.

A: Well, now I lost the thread.

Q: You... w... actually, you haven't started yet-- you haven't resumed the story yes, you were describing the... effort to remember.

A: Yes, yes. I was describing the effort to remember, and also-- oh, now I remember, I was comparing these two... unfavorable states, yes? And presumed to define some... some... some... order of preference... if you will, yes? Between them. And... what I--

Q: The ghetto and the camp.

A: That right. And what I wanted to say was that, this camp turned out to have order. Everything was predictable, and... what happened there... also happened according to a certain order, and not by random chance... for me... this situation was easier for me to deal with.

Q: Was that-- are these thoughts that you had then... at the time--

A: No.

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Q: Or only... later?

A: No. I-- of course, now I'm saying, in retrospect, when I think about these things, yes? I can also give reasons for them, yes? Why it was this way... this orderliness usually suits my character. When I'm in... an orderly situation, I'm efficient, I can use my predictions... and... as needed, and I-- that's what I did in that camp, it was very important, for me, to know the regulations, and the way things worked, and the protagonists – again, if you will – in... in this situation, all the officials, to know them, to... to learn their weaknesses, their sensitivities, and try... and try... to... function... accordingly. And... as I said, in retrospect this turned out to be something of an advantage, and I tried to make the most of it, to survive, and to survive in the best way possible. So as I told you about the-- the... te-- the terror of hay, or of a piece of hay, falling... perhaps to the floor, yes? so, in time I learned to make the bed... so as to assure that in this respect, yes? There's still a noise. Yes.

Q: OK, we're rolling.

A: Yes. I can't remember exactly where... we left off, we actually stopped twice.

Q: Chronologically, it was your first night in the camp. You were having some thoughts about comparing different places...

A: Oh yes.

Q: In the camp it was... clearer what was going on than in the ghetto. In the late days.

A: That... that became apparent gradually, not on... the first night, the first night was very frightening, as I described, and they did a deliberate display, choosing to beat an older Jew, specifically... one they had known, from back home, yes? to show a complete estrangement, and lack of compassion and consideration, yes? It was intended to... to put fear into us, and show us just what to expect if someone didn't do things exactly, exactly, absolutely, as they expected, or rather as they commanded, with no room for... personal interpretation.

Q: Are talking about the Jew who was beaten for not showing up for the lineup, the one--

A: No, no no. I'm... talking about the one who was beaten in his bed, on the first night.

Q: You haven't mentioned that.

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A: Yes, I did. I did, I also mentioned, I think, the name of the beater, it was after the first lineup, at night, when the German officer brought us, and were stoop up in a line, and I told you about the two brothers, who weren't exactly army veterans, they were probably Yeshiva students, and they wanted to stay together, and there wasn't... to stay together, and they started beating them, and then the German s-- stopped them, after that lineup, we were taken to the barracks, and in the barrack, we had our first show of-- th-- th-- actually, the second show, because the physical... violence began in the... lineup itself, in the lineup c-- courtyard, and it continued here... when... the J-- a Jew from (In Polish)_____, he-- he said to (In Yiddish)_____, "do you remember me from back home?" and he wanted to be.... friendly with him, so he immediately showed him his place by beating, incessant beating, yes? And the more he beat him, and the more he screamed, the more you realized the tragedy of the situation. This was beyond those beatings which humiliated you, yes? This was a complete lashing out, and he beat you, and beat you, and beat you, whether it was to assert his absolute authority, or to-- to also vent... his sadism, I don't know, exactly, it was probably a little of each. But what I told you later, about the man who was beaten publicly, in the courtyard, that was when he was late, he was late for the general, all-camp lineup, because he was next... next to the w-- the women's camp, and through the separator lattice, the separator lattice fence, he probably either lost the sense of time, or he didn't understand, as we did, that new form of... of... discipline. Not only following orders, but also learning what they may, or might be, and he wasn't aware of that, and he paid for it... with very great... pain and suffering, yes? for all to see, so that they would see and-- so that they would he-- hear.

Q: Could you repeat the name of the camp, where--

A: Its name was (In German)_____. It's interesting, how little I looked it up since then. I never looked it up on a map, but if I recall, it's in the (In Polish)_____ region. What is now (In Polish)_____. There was a camp in that region, and the... many people from (In Polish)_____, from my-- among others, many from my town were there. And again to give you an idea of the camp, it was a work camp, it wasn't an extermination camp, it was under the supervision and command of the German army, the Wehrmacht, and not the SS, and it was under military law. The Germans didn't deal with us directly, the German soldiers. It was the Jews who dealt with us inside the camp, the ones appointed by the Germans, and the camp's military commander would only come in to observe the lineup, to get the report, as it's done in military lineups. Later I'll describe the daily lineup... inside the camp, talking of which, I'm remembering the key personalities. Even their names, and I don't know, it's again a kind of miracle, because I have-- in general, an occasional difficulty remembering... names, even in things that happened here, ye? People whom I've known all my life, I suddenly forget their names. So it was organized this way, there was the camp headmaster, he was called (In German)_____, by his appearance, by the way he... saluted, I'm guessing he had some military background, in the Polish army, an impressive man, with an impressive voice, and by his side were... the... how to call them? Those in charge of internal policing. Internal policing included two tasks, obedience and order, and logistics. They also had to upkeep the camp. And I

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remember their names. There was one (In Yiddish)_____, that's the one I told you about, who beat his acquaintance from (In Polish)_____, there was (In Yiddish)_____, a man who gave off-- whose face gave off, as I perceived it, hostility, and cruelty, and inhumanity. He was always flailing his whip, by the way, the hallmarks of both (In Yiddish)_____ and (In Yiddish)_____, when they went out, were their whips, yes? They wore high-- high boots, and they liked to play with their whips, and this was also a hint of things to come, there was (In Polish?)_____, a very large man, with curly hair, and he was in charge of the internal workers, because they had to upkeep the camp, and... whether in the kitchen, and whether-- generally, all sorts of things, he was in charge, and he had a few prisoners by his side, from the camp, and then there were the group heads. They were in charge of getting people inside the barracks as a group, and especially of getting them out to work and overseeing them as a group-- overseeing them, as a group, at the work site, and then organize their return home. They were to go-to people for their groups, and its link to the Germans in the work site. So... this was how it was organized... of course, this whole... group, enjoyed certain privileges. First of which, they weren't beaten casually. Occasionally group heads would be flogged, if they veered from their instructions in a way that... the camp headmaster and his two deputies didn't approve of. Uh... I wanted to describe another man, a group head named (In German)_____. And... why do I remember him? Because this man was a German speaker, he was probably one of those Jews who... who were deported from Poland... be-- (Q: From... from Germany to Poland) from Germany before the war, he might have been born there to parents of Polish origin, or he might have himself-- anyway, he spoke German, and he spoke so quickly, and he tried to intimidate people using that rapid speech. He was a gentle man, he didn't beat anyone. I can't recall a single

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incident, of him hitting someone, and he took up this method, as he was also a group head, so his role obliged him to perform unpleasant acts to enforce authority and obedience, and preventative obedience, at that, that is, even before someone does something, you sometimes had to use beatings, to avoid the situation where someone commits some violation. And... and he tried to do it this way, and... and that's why I remember him, yes? This flush-cheeked fellow, with a mustache, this little black mustache, a very kind man. I don't remember, he was... he was thirty five, I estimate, thirty five, forty. Now... I already described going out to work on the first day, and generally, everything was strange, frightening... you still didn't know anything, and you also knew that you were in danger, a real danger, a real danger not necessarily to your life, but to-- your health, which, eventually, has implications for your life, you have to stay healthy, because there's no one to treat you, or to let you recover in more or less reasonable conditions. And... I don't remember how long this went on, going out to work... to casual work, as I call it, that is, not a steady job. Once it was digging ditches, for... say, gas or water infrastructure, or something like that. Once it was preparing an area for construction, it required-- removing the-- these were fields, usually, or brushlands, or... or they... were real fields, confiscated to allow this huge factory's construction... other times it was... unloading train cars, lots of mortar, and I, though not what I would call... I didn't quite look my age, and I was also a little... skinny, and... not very strong, in short, I wasn't a specimen-- people weren't usually impressed by my physical strength, by my physical stamina, I learned, in time, to unload bags of mortar, and-- mortar, not one, not two, but until-- yes? The whole day. That's what I did. And it turned out I could take it. It turned I was probably pretty well-built, physically, I didn't know this, and I could handle this... this... physical work... I worked in... I remember, (In German)_____, it was a firm that made

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mortar, it specialized in mortar for construction work, and that was... it was arduous work, it... I would say, (In German)_____ it was frightening, for any prisoner, because it the hardest kind of work under the hardest conditions. You had to both unload the mortar, pour it, and gravel, all this while working with machines, and you had to be in sync with the machine. You can't take a break. You work non stop, so I did that too... and-- until... until I was assigned to a firm, this was later, called (In German)_____. That is, Light... Light and Shelter, yes? That is, Light and Darkness, if you will, they were-- this was a farm that did both deep construction, and roof tiling, so they called themselves (In German)_____, and this firm used a special technology to cover the factories-- to tile the roofs. Both the materials, and the technology were special... and I was assigned there. I would say I was the youngest, and certainly in-- in appearance, the youngest person in the camp, and there was another one, I can't remember his name... he was roughly my... height, even shorter, and suddenly, in the camp, he started growing. And he became huge. And we were a duo. In that (In German)_____ firm. Now, how did people get their work assignment, anyway? For that I have to go back to the camp and to-- and tell about the daily routine. As it were, we went to sleep, and w-- we had to maintain absolute cleanliness under the beds, because there were night inspections, and it was up to... to- to... the person doing the inspection, if he looked, he would always find something, but of course if he found someone with a piece of hay, this was a cause for outrage, for beating, for giving pain. So, first, that was the situation I slept in. Second, there had to be someone on duty, to receive the commander, and report the tally. I used to remember the exact words I had to say, and that was another battle. A battle of being tired, after an arduous day at work, after walking there and back to the camp, after insufficient food, and being hungry, and you had to get up, on your turn, at a certain

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time, and stay awake, you can't go to sleep, you were in for it if the person doing the inspection caught in a state-- anyway, these were the conditions, for me it was, of course, a novelty, I later learned that these were more or less the... the arrangements in... in a military setting, yes? So... but there's a difference, we weren't soldiers, we weren't doing a... job which had... some explanation, some conviction to it, that you could identify with, of course there's a difference, but I'm saying, because we were under Wehrmacht military law, they had probably applied their own regulations to the camp, and topped them with the interpretations of... the Jewish heads, who also vented their... their urges, and maybe they-- thought this would allow them to preserve their status, and maybe also help them survive, I don't know about that. It could perhaps be. Now then, we would get up in the morning, we had to get up at exactly the right time, not one minute... later or earlier, everyone, when the person on duty woke you up, you'd jump out of bed, nor did you have a lot of time, anyway, you had to tidy up, you had to clean...

Q: Could you describe the bed? What was the bed like [cough]?

A: The bed was a wooden frame, with hay inside.

Q: What... what were the frame's dimensions?

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A: The bed... the frame's dimensions, what could they be? Maybe seventy centimeters.

Q: For one person?

A: For one person. And there were-- there was another level on top.

Q: Two levels?

A: On top of the bed, two levels. That is, on the bottom, a ground level, and an upper level. Two. I saw, it was a military-style barrack, we even had closets, yes? That... later on I realized what a luxury it had been, for each four beds to have a closet. There was a closet for each four people.

Q: And what did you put in that closet?

A: That's right. I, wh-- this, again, is another story, when I came there I had nothing, I told you, the... the... German policeman came, and surprised us in the morning, and I barely had time to dress before going with him... I'm-- I'm jumping ahead here, later

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my mother, I have no idea how, managed to contact some Polish worker, who worked in that s-- site, but he wasn't in the camp, he was work he-- a compulsory laborer, forced la-- forced labor, but not in the camp, he had to work there, but he got a vacation, and through these kinds of people she managed to send me food packets, twice, and clothes, the first time. I don't know how she did it. And I have more to tell later, about these packets. I just remembered. So where were we? The routine. So... in the morning, you had a limited time-- now, I can't remember whether we got the ration, the daily bread ration, whether we got it in the barrack, brought in by someone, or whether we went out, left the barrack, and stood in line by the kitchen. That place had a... the kitchen. I have one more thing to describe. The camp had a central lane, and it stretched out, that is, the barracks did, on both sides of... this lane, yes? With a few... alleys, yes? With a few alleys. And everything that went on in the camp happened in that lane. What do I mean by everything that went on? Again, I'm jumping ahead of myself, on Sunday, eventually, we started getting... days of rest. Sunday was a day of rest. And people gave off a feeling of freedom, and on that day, at a certain time, after the lineup, people would go out into the street, it reminded me of my town's main street, on Sunday, on holiday, people would go out, to meet each other. And since the-- since we had a neighboring women's camp, and there were c-- there were couples there, on Sundays they could even meet, they let them in, and they strolled along the lane. And people-- the prisoners would wear their best clothes, because some of them had brought suitcases with them, and they were allowed, still, to own clothes, and I also wore what I had gotten from home, yes? I changed, I felt like it was a holiday. And, occasionally, these days were even happy. In the sense that, they put up... if there ch-- there chanced to be some singer, some comedian, even some cantor there. I remember, there was (In Yiddish)_____. So... they

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improvised, improvised some social function. I mean, it was a different planet.

Suddenly, on Sunday, th-- there was this, too. On Sunday, we'd get up in the morning, our job was to scrub the floor of the... barrack. To... polish it. And get it impeccably clean, and at a certain time, you-- you had to stand next to your bed, and wait for-- for the inspection. And then the commander would come, he'd check, if everything was OK, then OK, and then he'd let you go to the main lineup, so you'd march out, to the central lane, in front of the camp headmaster's office, where he would observe the lineup. Otherwise, you'd be in trouble. Then... you wouldn't get a Sunday.

Q: What do you mean by otherwise?

A: I mean, if he found any dirt, if he discovered we... hadn't polished-- hadn't done it properly, whatever, it wasn't legally defined, it was all in the eye of the inspector, sometimes of his m-- his mood, so they'd get us for it later. That is, instead of getting a rest day after the central lineup, we didn't get one. Anyway, if everything was OK, we'd report, and-- report, in groups, yes? work groups, that was our group. That is, each person's group was the work group and not the barrack group. I think. Yes, sure, because there was a group head, he was also the one who supervised us in the work site. And... there was a lineup, the German commander came and received the lineup-- the report from the camp headmaster, like they do in the army, yes? And then we felt free, a little happier, and then they gave us the S-- Sunday soup, which was supposed to be a little more consis-- consis-- consistent, with... with a little meat, which we couldn't identify, sometimes pieces of-- I don't know what it was, and still, you

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needed luck, for the person giving out the soup to have the patience and goodwill to mix it each time so you didn't just get the liquid, the-- yes? without the... whatever was in there, sometimes a potato and a piece of meat, yes? Sometimes it would determine your good or bad mood, the nature of the soup you'd get, and then we were free. We went for... a stroll in the lane, yes? And people met, and there was smiling, yes? and couples, it was... out of this world, and that's how we'd spend our Sundays, later in the day, th-- there was usually some event, not one organized by the camp, a completely spontaneous one, and those were our Sundays [cough].

Q: Would you a--

A: Those were our Sundays.

Q: Would you stroll that lane?

A: I did, yes, and gradually, I came to know people, by the way, I recognized people there, and, by the way, I found two of my uncles there. There were two uncles, my father's brothers, on of whom, I think, I told you about, the other one was a deportee from Germany... because he--

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Q: If you say their names, we'll know which was which.

A: Oh yes, one was Kalman, he was the brother from my city, and the other was... Meir Hirsch, a deportee from Germany. Probably from thirty eight, and when I came into camp, I found them both there. They had been taken before I was.

Q: You met them on... those strolls in the lane.

A: No, I'd already... I's already known about it earlier, because whenever a new transport came, that is, a new group came, people would check to see, whether there were any acquaintances of their, family members maybe, yes? so they had come to see. So I'd already known, I also told you that, my uncle, when he came and I looked at him, he looked seemed so strange to me, and I gave him bread, and people couldn't understand how I could part with such an essential, vital asset, and I later found that he looked strange because he was a very strong, very athletic fellow, perhaps a little vain, and it seems he couldn't quite control his... urges, he was hungry, and he tried to steal a little from the kitchen. This was one of those things, that when they caught you they were really harsh, to make an example, and they beat him so hard, also on the head, he almost-- his head was a little swollen, it was all, it was all strange. Everything about him was strange, yes. And... also, he s-- he survived, but he was damaged. He had head damage. The other uncle... a Kapo, this one not a Jew, a Ukrainian Kapo, almost beat him to death. In another camp, later on. Th--

Q: Which you saw?

A: Which I saw-- again--

Q: So you'll...

A: I'll get to that, yes.

Q: I'd like to go backwards a bit, because you described the bed...

A: Yes.

Q: But could you describe the barrack?

A: Yes. The Barrack... I don't know if I could describe it, a standard barrack, that is, it had one entrance, bui-- always elongated, and it had a corridor, a central passage,

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running through it, and there were beds on both sides, two levels, and in between...

between... one bed and the next, there was a closet. That's all there was, there was

lighting, and nothing else.

Q: Heating?

A: Oh, there was heating... yes. There was a heater, the Germans didn't give us burning materials, and it was up to the... resourcefulness of a barrack's dwellers, to get the... those materials.

Q: Where could you get them?

A: Oh, that's... a whole... yes. People wou-- after all we were at a work site, we went out each day, and there, using various ploys, v-- using-- using-- vari-- a various array of tricks, people would smuggle things into the camp... every which thing, really, including food, and that was the only way, for those who had the means, who had the means to acquire such things, such as warmer clothes, or food, extra food, particularly that, yes? f-- food, those people were the ones who had managed to bring some foreign currency... jewelery-- jewelry, gems, diamonds and so on, these people bought and ate.

Q: Did you--

A: They also looked good.

Q: Did you have any of these?

A: I had nothing, all I had, I think I told you, all I had, and I didn't use it until a certain time which... which turned out-- which later turned out to be a fatal, critical time, I had German money, cash, that I had left.

Q: The salary you had gotten?

A: The salary I had gotten...

Q: Yes.

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A: And... it was a dilemma for me, because of my mental makeup, when they said to give everything you had, and... I even think I made some physical move, which, if noticed by one of the... the... the K-- the... how to call it, those two deputies of... those two Jewish officers, if one of them had noticed it, I would have been in for it. I would-- I-- first they would take all of it, and then I would also, probably, be punished, and again, this punishment always had implications for your survival. But, I decided to remain passive anyway, and in time I benefited by it.

Q: In the meantime, how did you manage to get more food?

A: Well, that's right. That's the story. That's the story. So, actually, for a time, I... first... oh, I started telling about the routine, no? Maybe we should just finish that, yes?

Q: Alright.

A: So as I said... in the morning, as it were, after getting up, after... leaving the barrack in good order, and getting our food ration, which was a piece of bread, I can't tell you exactly how much, a hundred grams, or something I-- roughly-- something... very little, I think wi-- th-- they added some little... some jam in gel form, or an occasional piece of... of... German blood sausage, a piece of that, and with that we'd

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report to the lineup, in the central courtyard, next to the exit, where the camp headmaster would report the tally to the German camp commander, and then we'd go out to work in rows, each group lead by its head, and with the German soldiers who guarded us walking by our side. There would always be two per group, at least, with bayoneted rifles, and so we'd march, in a very long line, towards-- a few kilometers, towards the construction site. Eventually-- I'll-- I'll just describe this part... eventually, when we'd gotten there, the group head would take us to the relevant work site, until-- and... he'd transfer us to a German work manager, and the German work manager would divide us or.. a-- assign us to various work functions, sometimes as a group, sometimes he's distribute u-- distribute us, depending on the nature of the work.

Q: How many people per group?

A: Per group, it depended. It depended, the groups weren't all alike--

Q: In the original group.

A: Pardon?

Q: In a work group.

A: No-- I can't say, because some were small and some were large, it depends on the... on which-- t-- to which work department they were assigned, there were, for example, (In German)_____, which I told you, was very hard work, cement work, it was a very large division, the group was very large because they needed a lot of people. But there were other groups, glaziers, for example, yes? there were also craftsmen, sometimes they were in very small groups, yes? so... so they were-- sometimes they'd combine such small groups, yes? so as not to have a group head in charge of only two or three people, but I wouldn't say there was... there was a standard, no, on-- on the contrary. There wasn't a standard for the number of people in a group. And in the end, after the... work day was done, which meant whenever the Germans decided to stop working, there was n-- there was no limitation on the number of hours they could work us, but once the Germans went home, there was nothing to do with us, and then, again, we gathered in the lineup courtyard, and were tallied by the-- by the head of the group heads. That is, there was this head of group heads in... in the construction site, who made sure no one went missing. Of those who went out.

Q: Did-- didn't the Germans finish work at set hours?

A: Set hours, yes. But there were... there were firms where, because of the nature of the work, they'd even work twenty-four hours a day. So they would rotate groups, yes? It was called...

Q: There were shifts.

A: What's it-- shifts. There were shifts, yes? And there were jobs where, for instance, they had to-- they had to be finished that same day, and couldn't be finished within normative working hours, so we'd stay, as long as it took. For example, if, at the last minute, some cargo would come, which had to be unloaded, usually mortar, and the train cars couldn't stay, because there would be... they would be short on means of transportation, they would have to be unloaded immediately, yes? so you'd have to stay until you'd unloaded everything. And then you'd return, sometimes as a separate group, to the camp, after everyone would be back already. But, generally speaking, the work hours were reasonably stable, unless something out of the ordinary happened, so I told you the-- more or less, everything was predictable s-- that was the routine. And... by and by, of course, certain other incidents occurred... even in... this area, as well, I had to learn the hard way how to behave, it was all, of course, in good faith. I remember one day, I went out, as usual, I went out with my group, and with the group head, and German came, to receive us, and he asked this question, he needed someone, for... for some job, he was n-- he required someone, and he asked who wanted to do it, and I raised my hand. And with him watching, the... group head walked over to me, and hit me on the face, with his whip, yes? and then he told me: "that's for me to decide, not you." And I learned, until you learned all these subtleties, of how to behave, you'd sometimes pay for such things. But anyway, I didn't view-- all these things, I didn't view them as mental torture. I thought it was a matter of

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discipline, and you had to accept-- to learn the regulations, the... the modus operandi, and I-- live by it. When did I experience the great humiliation that went on in this camp, which was a work camp? When for instance, on one-- I already told you about the man who was publicly beaten for being late to the lineup, that sort of thing. I remember on some Sunday, after the lineup, as-- as I said, after the lineup people and suddenly I saw this circle of onlookers, and in the middle I saw a man on the floor, whom I recognized, as... as... my townsman, he had been a boxer, which is actually somewhat uncommon [laugh] among Jews, he was very stout, this red-headed fellow, very strong [cough], and I remember he was called (In Yiddish)_____, he had been an outsider in out town, he hadn't belonged, yes? And suddenly this man was being beaten. "Beaten" doesn't cover it. He was on the... asphalt there, poor thing, rolling around, from side to side, can't find his place, and the more he moves the more they beat him. After that he fell-- he never recovered from... from this business.

Q: Who beat him?

A: It was (In Yiddish)_____ beat him. And it hurt me so bad, how could you, how could you beat... beat... someone this way, how could you be so tough? Not one inkling of mercy, this wasn't punishment, this wasn't deterrence, it was some kind of sadism, it was something I could never had conceived of, yes? until that moment, and then I felt it was intended to humiliate, no just-- to humiliate. And I was filled with rage, and I was filled with pain, and I was filled with humiliation. I also had a personal experience like [cough]... when, this one time... I'm jumping around,

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because... yes. This one time, in the construction site, this was a few months into it, I already knew how things worked, I m-- I knew my way around, I'd managed-- I had ci-- a few cigarettes...

Q: Where from?

A: That's the thing, I can't remember exactly where from, I'd already accrued some little assets. How? Because when-- oh, yes, so I have to go backwards. In one of the subsequent transports, there came another uncle. He was the husband of my father's sister. He was an uncle, his name was (In Polish)_____, what was the first name... he, also, he survived, and he brought with him a packed suitcase. He came-- he came to me, for me to try and trade a shirt for some bread or some food... I managed to do this three or four times, I always found someone there, who could do it, and then I got something from it.

Q: Where was "there?" [cough]

A: In the camp, in that same camp, (In German)_____, in that same camp, (In German)_____, there arrived a new transport, among whom was my uncle--

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Q: No, no. You met someone there who could trade with you.

A: Yes, inside the camp, in-- inside the camp, between the prisoners, there was always

(In Yiddish)_____. Jews--

Q: Wasn't it outside, in the work site?

A: It wasn't outside, no no. I didn't-- I didn't have direct contacts yet, only through Jewish prisoners, who knew someone, who had made connections in the work si-- in the work site, with people, including with Germans. They succeeded. And of course it was a risk, because whenever you brought something into the camp from outside – there were sometimes searches – you were risking your life, and as compensation for that risk they, also, demanded steep prices, it was natural. And I, as middleman, got some off the top from my uncle, yes? And this one time...

Q: Some food, that is?

A: Some food, yes, some food, of what he had gotten. He'd buy, and give some to me. And... sometimes, I wouldn't use my cut, but trade it, for instance, I remember that cigarettes and tobacco were... they were an accepted currency, they were very sought-

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after, and you could... you could preserve them, you can't preserve food, yes? How long can you keep food? So in this way... how did I get to talking about this?

Q: I asked you where you got the cigarettes.

A: Oh, where I got the cigarettes, but-- yes, but how did I... wh-- what was I going to do with those cigarettes, that I forgot...

Q: I guess, buy food, but... you wanted to tell about some incident where you had--

A: Oh, yes yes yes yes, now I remember. I remember what the cigarettes had to do with it. So anyway, I had-- I had a few cigarettes at my disposal, and that was a very very sought-after commodity, not necessarily in the camp, there were those in the camp who-- but then, it was a sought-after commodity for the Germans, for the Poles, for the Czechs, for everyone who worked outside the camp, who worked at the work site.

Q: Let's wait a second.

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A: Yes.

Q: Is it over? OK.

A: And then I met a worker there, a foreign worker, I think he was a Pole, and he asked me: "have you got cigarettes?" and then he said: "well, what kind of trade shall we make?" he offered me bread, or rice, I don't remember what, and we went in-- there was a place, a restroom, we went in the restroom, and as I was about to make the trade, there came... th-- a German soldier, he had probably followed us, and of course he confiscated every... everything I had, and what's worse, he reported me. That was his job, to report. And that night... after the lineup, you wouldn't be free, you would... go to a certain place, they called it the Cold Room, you know why? The prisoner slang for it was the Cold Room, and there, in the presence of the camp commander, they'd flog you. That is, they'd take off-- they had this special device there, to hold you in place, they'd take your pants off, and there'd be two of them beating you, until the commander st-- the... the German stops it. So I had that experience too. I was... very miserable, that... that night. Next day I went to work. My back, and everything below it, was a very complicated map, after that beating, it was all bleeding, and... so, I lived under a very... very harsh, very stark discipline, but I don't recall feeling humiliated because of it, that is, I wasn't humiliated. I felt I was being punished, I had broken the law, but when th-- their motivation was to humiliate you, as it was with that boxer, for no reason, it was just an act of sadism, that hurt me to the bottom of my heart, it took me time to recuperate from those kinds of events, but, as I said, that

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camp-- it was a work camp, and it was all about getting the easiest possible work, in the best possible conditions, and a little extra food, so you could survive, and avoid getting into trouble... whether intentionally or un... unintentionally. In--

Q: When you say e-- easiest possible work, in the best possible conditions, do you mean, this was what you tried--

A: This was what I tried to get, and eventually, it turned out, I somehow made it, relatively speaking, all relative. Because, as I said, I was, eventually, assigned to this firm (In German)_____, and they did roof tiling, and since they were building the (In German)_____ factories, very very modern, huge factories, they came up with a method of tiling roofs using boards made of condensed chips, these were rectangular, and th-- both... along each long edge, they had slits, they had holes, and they'd connect the boards to each other with steel bands, and Kit, that's how they'd connect them. In other words, there were wooden planks, they'd put those plates on top of them, and they'd connect the boards to each other with... this metal band, and Kit. They called it Kit. The... now then, there had to be a constant supply of these boards to... to the work site. That we did-- very often, we'd carry them on our shoulders. That was hard work. Because... if you do it once or twice it's alright, but when you do it for hours, your shoulders go... I would do this, and so would my young friend, I told you there was this other young fellow, and it was really terrible. Later, they found us... us both, suitable, to provide Kit, the-- that same Kit, that is, that served as glue... it went this way, downstairs they had the... the... the... the... what's it

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called? The m-- it's not a crane, there's... there's a technical term for it in Hebrew, this kind of lift, yes, a certain type of lift, by which they'd convey the raw materials to the roof.

Q: This pulley?

A: Yes, it was a pulley, but with an engine. Yes? It wasn't-- it was... it was electric, and we'd bring the Kit, t-- to... next to this elevator, where they'd mix it with water, prepare it for use as Kit, and take it up on the elevator, in buckets. Upstairs, there were other prisoners, who would... convey the mater-- these materials, the plates, that is, the boards and the Kit buckets, the the ones laying the plates, who were craftsmen, most of them Germans. Now this work was easier for us. We had this... crate, create, which-- carried by two... two wooden rods, on both sides, he would walk up front and I behind, or the other way around, and we would fill this crate with Kit, which was quite heavy, like mortar, and we had to keep the supply of this Kit steady, so that those who-- who made it into glue, yes? could do it without... losing any time, so we had to supply it, and make sure there was always enough. But, when we saw there was enough, we could afford to rest, it was forbidden, rest was forbidden, but still, in time, you also learn what you can get away with, and you know you can somehow manage, and we saw it as a kind of perk, some kind of work bonus, that we could sometimes rest, yes? Also, we found a good method, for conveying this Kit, with our measly arms, yes? and... and our sl-- sloping shoulders, we weren't especially strong, but we did it, and in time we also learned how to grow stronger and do it well... this...

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this work it was a job, a normal job. We even had a little human contact there, especially with the foreign workers who were Czechs... and the work managers, who were Viennese, two brothers, they had some human contact with us... and... first of all, it was less frightening. Less frightening. There wa-- there was no humiliation. Our wh-- whole relationship was proper, we did the job, and they told us what to do, completely humanely, and there wasn't a problem. And... one day, I... I was called up on the roof, there was a vacancy there, to convey the things they were bringing up the elevator. I wasn't used to that kind of work, where I had to be skilled in-- constantly walking on the wooden planks. If you stopped on a plate while it was still-- when the Kit wasn't dry yet, the plate-- this board would break, and you would fall a good few meters. And there were two such incidents, where, I remember, people broke their hands and legs, and they never-- they never recovered, yes? All in all, it wasn't hard work, but only if you were careful and knew how to do it. And in my ignorance, I suddenly found myself, with one foot on the wooden plank, and the other already falling down, and I felt someone grab my collar. And it was one of the Germ-- the Viennese, who caught me, he really saved my life. And... the n-- and so I say, from-- from that camp, I have memories of hard work, of... of... of hunger, of... of being denied basic human needs, I had no time to think of my family, there was no opportunity to, I was preoccupied with myself, and... at work, I somehow found some order, an order of some kind. And eventually, they came to like me somehow, and one day, they needed... to do something with that Kit. That Kit had to be unloaded from a train car, to free the car, sometimes it had to be done very quickly, and then you had to pile it up in a-- in a pile, so this pile could be covered with some kind of canvas, so protect it from rain. And there was one fellow, a work manager in that firm, I remember him, a very old man, with this pipe, yes? and white hair, and he called me,

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he said: "you there, you'll do this job. You'll take from-- from... the piles that... that came out of the car, you'll carry it to some... to some distance from the car, and you'll make a pile of it." And that became, for several weeks, my main role, that is, I wasn't part of any group, I was all alone, and I did my job, the o-- o-- the... the o-- the only supervision I had for my work, for this topic, was that man with the pipe. And... I was pleased to arrange the pile in a certain geometric form. That is, I was being creative, for myself. I made this pile, in the shape of a cone, he liked that a lot, and he sometimes slipped me some scrap of food. That kind of thing started. And... that firm, since it was a serious firm, they also had barracks, in the work site, and at noon, during lunch break, the Germans would go in their barrack to eat, and have their noontime rest, and we, the prisoners, in groups, were also brought there, they had built-- that is, they had built a large barrack to begin with, to make room for us too. It was strange, it was something special, that we could spend the break in there. It even had a heater. And... one day, I was there at noon, what do you do at noon, after all we didn't have anything to eat. I was just trying to... rest a little, and... gather my strength for the afternoon work, the later in the day it got, the harder the work became for me, and one day, I saw, that out of the-- that is, the-- the barrack door opened, and one of those brothers, not the one who had saved me, the other one, who was taller, I think, but younger, he called... called... called me out with his finger. He went out, and gave me, in some receptacle, some potato scraps, which he didn't eat. It tasted like heaven. It was so unexpected. And he did this a few more times down the line. And that was enough to prolong my life by many days [cough]. And with time-- I told you that on Sunday--

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Q: I-- We have to change the tape.

A: Um hmm.

Q: Let's pause a minute....

End of Tape 6

Tape 7

Q: Well... we're rolling.

A: Yes? Should I go on?

Q: Yes yes.

A: And that became a formal relationship... as a result of my getting a few more ci-- cigarettes into my hands, I saw he smoked a pipe, so I traded the cigarettes for some tobacco, and he was the happiest man alive-- I gave him this tobacco, and after that he felt obliged, each time, to seek me out, give me scraps, and when there weren't any, he'd almost apologize. So I had this daily extra, of-- a negligible matter... and it was so important, I had something to hang on to, it was this constant, alert expectation for something to come, there was a purpose in... in... in... this waiting for... lunch, and it made the day shorter... and... so I kept working with that firm, nonstop, I think, and I felt very very-- that-- that is, not very very, but much safer, in the work site, of course, that in the camp... one day, I got sick, I had a fever, and I probably had it so bad, that I couldn't-- couldn't go to-- they called it, the (In German)_____, that is, the... the infirmary, yes? And it was always a question of how the doctor would regard me, and

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he hospitalized me. They had this room-- a room with a few beds, this-- and he had me... had me... had me hospitalized--

Q: How did you get to the doctor?

A: There was, there was an infirmary inside the camp--

Q: You-- you mean, you got to the (In German)_____?

A: Oh, after-- yes, after work, instead of going to sleep, yes? I went there, I waited and waited, there were many, he took me, and hospitalized me.

Q: Was the doctor a German?

A: No, he was a Jew. This doctor didn't have a good reputation, he was also one of those who beat people at the drop of a hat, and it's hard to tell today, I didn't know him enough, and I didn't know exactly all the circumstances, to know how much he did it, really, with what measure of... indifference he regarded the... th-- ph-- the physical suffering he inflicted, I don't know, I don't remember him exactly, but

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anyway he hospitalized me, and I stayed there for two or three days, I think, and for me it was a vacation. I didn't go to work in the morning, I slept in a bed, it wasn't cold, and I got better food... it was a kind of strange re-- recovery-- recovery, from some disease. Before... I went to the (In German)_____, I mean, before I returned to camp, I already knew I wasn't feeling well, because the whole day it was-- I could barely stand, what to do with the money I had? Folded up in a fold in my shirt, when you went to the (In German)_____, the very first thing they did was take your clothes off, and sometimes... they didn't return your clothes. And, as I said, where we'd rest at-- during lunch time, there was a heater, and in front of the heater there was-- this board. And I-- no one-- when no one was looking, I put the money there under that board. And I told this secret to one member of my group. And when I came out of the... (In German)_____, and went back to... to... to work, I found things as I had left them, yes? he hadn't told, and... and I could in-- again... preserve this single asset I had, yes? My iron ration, yes? for a time of need.

Q: Why did you tell him?

A: Why did I tell him? Because, after-- first, I didn't know what was going to happen, I might never come back. At least he'd have it. Second... after all, you're in a place where anything could happen any moment, they could take y-- your whole group, or some of it, and transfer you to... to... some-- some other work division. You have no... no contract with them, no workers' union, nothing is certain. You naturally adopt, very quickly, a routine... a living routine, because, actually, you're yearning for it.

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And while I was working for that firm, yes? I had, when I think about it now, in retrospect, I had a feeling that my life was taken care of. I'd get up in the morning, I'd get what I'd get, I already knew how to he-- to... stand in the lineup, and avoid needless beatings, I already knew the march, I knew how to report, I knew what I was going to do. Everything was clear. It wasn't all pleasant, but it was all clear. But in practice, nothing was certain, yes? If there happened to be somewhat of a routine, it was completely by chance, uninfluenced by you, or anyway by your active attempts at influence. And so, I thought, he's real friend, I believed, I also believed that, if he had to take this money, he would pay me back. To this day I have no proof of this, and there were many things which didn't stand the test, like, for example, what I told you about, which was also very important, because for... I mean... it was a mental problem for me, and to this day it-- it's still bothering me, that that uncle, who had arrived in the camp after me, an innocent man, really an innocent man, a good man, he had been a good father, and a good husband, extraordinary, they had one boy, and he had always dressed elegantly, he would bring nice things with him, and one day, the third or fourth time, he gave me another sh-- shirt, to trade for something he needed, that is, food. And I gave it to one of the guys in the camp, one of the prisoners. And he stood me up several ti-- days, "you'll get it tomorrow," I realized, later, in retrospect, that he had cheated me. And my conscience towards my uncle-- I don't know whether he believed me, that's the questions, I didn't-- I didn't-- I didn't have any proof that it wasn't me, who took his shirt and pocketed the payment. He didn't say anything, he didn't complain, but I don't know what he thought. Deep down. And actually, this still bothers me today, because I had no possible way of proving that it wasn't me, that my intentions had been good, and always, each time I did this, I gave it to him, and he, of

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his own will, either gave me some or he didn't, and that-- that was my-- w-- my way of looking at it. So--

Q: You were telling about that... prisoner (A: Oh that, yes) whom you trusted--

A: My friend, yes? My friend from the (Q: You call him a friend, do you--) whom I trusted, who-- I mean, we'd become friendly, in that sense. We'd become friendly, you were always t-- t-- on the lookout for... for something to hold on to, and as I said, generally speaking, I was quite popular in my close group, where they knew me, they regarded me with sympathy and empathy, and... and fondness, yes? So that... it was easy for me to make friends, but I didn't know, how that friendship would stand a-- a true test, in such cruel conditions, when you're always hungry, you dream about food, you got to... to... to-- to sleep, dreaming about food, you get up hungry, you're constantly hungry, and if you don't engross yourself in work, or you don't have a job that interests you, then that's what you're constantly thinking of, is food, is food, yes? It's very hard to describe... to someone who hasn't experienced it, what it's like to go hungry for years on end. Constantly hungry... and to have as your only joy those times when you get a somewhat... thicker serving of soup, with a little more ingredients, yes? which gives you this satisfaction, of having eaten something more like a real meal. And... yes, I got my money back, and I kept it, and that... I had a use for it later.

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Q: You say, you try to make friends, and... you saw him as a friend, what meaning did... (A: A friend--) a friend, a friendship, have under the circumstances?

A: Yes. First, there was... you were alone there, and it meant a lot to have someone who sympathized with you, to share feelings with. Second, sometimes you needed material support, for instance, I, with that... boy, that youth, who was my partner and ca-- in... in conveying the... the Kit, the state of our health would vary from day to day... and you could do a little more for him, to make it easier on him. And it's happened. That is, when you have a true relationship, not material-based, and not completely estranged, you try to help... and you can, also... sometimes advise, if they're looking for someone, some connection... tell them, tell-- a-- it was all in great moderation, people wouldn't volunteer information, they were so afraid... for... for... their lives, that whatever information they had, they turned into some kind of implement of power-- power, yes? that... that they might benefit from. They wouldn't volunteer. And in such friendship, there was... you gave human warmth, and that was very important... and... and mutual trust... and if you were a sensitive person, living in such a world, with its a-priori lack of emotion, it was an asset... for those who needed it. Unless you were made out for being a lone wolf, or... or devoid of compassion, and I must say that I, over the years, was not indifferent to other people's suffering, and didn't shirk, as far as I could, helping... other people, not that there weren't people towards whom I felt less than nothing, downright hostile, because I didn't respect their behavior, and I saw them as corrupt... but that wasn't-- that wasn't the norm. I remember, there was a very beautiful man in my barrack, he had been a Hasid. I think he was upwards of thirty. Beautiful-- such beautiful eyes, I remember his eyes, and I--

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and... I tri-- I tried to imagine him, such a person, with a beard and sidelocks, all in beautiful, smooth black, in his holiday clothes, the silk gown, and... this beautiful, beautiful guy, the beautiful Hasid, I imagined him... he was very humble, had this shy look. He also... clung to me. I was younger, he clung to me. He looked to me for... some an-- an-- anchor. First, he knew I was also from a religious home, I could understand him, and I remember he consulted me, what to do on Yom Kippur, and I was his junior and years and experience, and he needed someone to tell him what to do, because he knew, a day of fasting, in the camp, isn't something you... go through, without... without repercussions... I had this other guy--

Q: What-- sorry, what did you tell him to do?

A: I told him I wasn't fasting, and explained why I wasn't, myself. Although I-- already... it had been a good while since I left religion, yes? But some things remain, imprinted, on your consciousness, on your soul, from how and where you were brought up. And it never occurred to me, until then, to eat on Yom Kippur, yes? It's not done. Whether-- whether you're a true believer, or whether you have some superstitions, some fears, or whether because it's a part of your way of being, of your connection to your family, to what came before, to all you've seen, of this experience, of Yom Kippur, so of course it's difficult to flip that switch. But under the circumstances, I was already aware enough, rational enough, to overcome the esoteric things. The things that are mainly about inexplicable emotions, and I was sure this was the right thing to do, that it was hopeless otherwise, I told him my story... but...

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he observed the Kol Nidreh prayer, in those conditions, with those large, shy eyes, he must have been so sincere, so sincere in what he-- in his Kol Nidreh prayer, and... still-- I still remember the feeling-- I understood, I felt exactly-- why, Kol Nidreh is such a loaded... Kol Nidreh is really the summation, the embodiment, the amalgam [cough], of everything a Jewish person feels in... in supplicating, in pleading, in regard to the holy ghost, to... to his God, to religion, and to tradition, to... to his h-- to his history, yes? And here I felt there was an added dimension, that of the dilemma, under what circumstances can I observe Kol Nidreh only partially, I'm probably going to eat... I remember--

Q: But did you ask yourself this, or did he ask himself?

A: That's how I felt, that he was asking himself these questions, I conveyed-- after all, I can only tell you how I felt, not how he felt, he didn't-- he didn't tell me, he wasn't a very talkative person in general. He'd mumble, he'd talk so softly, really, he was a literary persona, so lyrical in... in... his appearance. And... I chanced into a situation where these things had a concrete expression in that dilemma, of Yom Kippur, under impossible conditions.

Q: Where was it, that he prayed?

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A: In the barrack.

Q: Yom Kippur was a normal day, not a rest day.

A: A work day, but... Kol Nidreh is in the evening, after you're already back, you're already tired, you have to make the best of your time, get some rest, s-- sleep, lie down.

Q: And then, at night he (Q: He--) asked, consulted you?

A: He consulted me, yes?

Q: What did he have available to eat that night?

A: Not that night, but the next, he... in... that evening he didn't eat, there was nothing to eat, but he was conflicted about the next day. How to get through Yom Kippur, Yom Kippur isn't just that one evening, yes? it's also the next day...

Q: And you--

A: I told him what I was going to do.

Q: That you were going to eat.

A: That I was going to eat.

Q: And what did he do?

A: I don't remember exactly, I didn't ask him, because it could have been, at worst, a very embarrassing question.

Q: You don't know.

A: And I don't know... I'm g-- guessing, he ate. I'm guessing. Ate in agony. In very great agony. Not like me, I only had to overcome some... emotional holdup, one which... had largely lost its validity and strength by then, and I didn't... have any-- take away any-- any remorse, any disquiet, from this decision, yes? Because I was

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also at that rational phase, of trying to understand, and... I was [cough]... I was aided by this situation, this inhuman, impossible situation, which is very hard to infuse... to... to... to infuse with true religions or spiritual meaning, because, even then, you've proven nothing. You can only prove to yourself, and to do that, you have to decide, what-- am I willing to sacrifice literally everything, irrevocably, and do something irreversible, yes? when it's only this one time, because still it could be-- this could be-- - th-- could be-- there's hope that it will only be this one time, maybe next year things will be different... and I had another one, different, a short old boy, not really a boy, also in his thirties, who liked to sing, and I could sing... and... in certain situations, we'd hum... Hasidic songs, from back home. And his eyes would light up, he gave off such happiness in... that's what we had in common, and those are the things we could do-- we could do, apart from trouble and work, and the-- the beastial e-- existence, yes? This kinda unplanned, spontaneous spirituality, that's what we had with us. I didn't have... anything else yet, yes? to draw from, although, as I said, I-- during the war, I started educating myself, in Western literature, that is, I identified with it, but it wasn't mine yet, mine was... was... were different assets, which I expressed as I could, and as I believed, for example in... singing together, yes? with all the past connotations, and... we became close friends, and he told me... I saw such a skinny fellow, he did he get by, he in... especially in (In German)_____, which was so hard, a guy who, physically, was the complete antithesis of... of the slave labor in that place, and he told me that he was daily buying his survival using the diamonds he had managed... managed to smuggle into camp, in a tube, an aluminum tube or something, that he-- he'd push each day into his rectum, yes? And in that way he could preserve-- keep those things. And he was very empathetic towards me, and I felt that, in a time of great need, I could rely on him. That was never tested. It was never tested because,

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among other things, I'm not one to easily become reliant... I'm also very independent, and even with... _____ the few Germans who were gracious with me, that wasn't... reliance either, it wasn't a surrender, nor in-- ingratiation, it was simply my actions that caused, as I said, when I was still working in the ghetto, my behavior, and my work, made that German, that SA man, yes? A Jew hater-- he might not have been a very big... ideological antisemite himself, maybe he just went with the flow, being a bully, and he asked me to bring him another Jew like me to work for him. That is, he wanted to say: "look, you're good for me." [cough] I wasn't trying to ingratiate myself, but I did my job, the way I do it, by the way, to this day, I do things either because they interest me, or because I make them, I make them interesting. That is, in that sense, I created, no matter what I did, I told you about the Kit pile, I made, and I found, it seems, something c-- something creative, some creativity, in the way I built that cone up, from all sides, to make it smooth, and so it didn't slide over, and so it had a geometric base, yes? And I didn't do it for the Germans' sake. I did it for my sake, and that may have gained me the sympathy of the old German with the pipe, yes? who was the first to give me something to eat. And I didn't intend it, I was making it interesting, I had to while away those hours, anything else, anything that didn't interest you, left you only your suffering to think about. It was boring, it was tough, yes? You had to take--

Q: Let's just pause for a second.

A: Um hmm...

Q: The the frame a little, yes? Yes (A: Yes). You were saying, anything (A: Yes, yes) else, left you thinking--

A: And so the... and so it was, in human relationships, as well. I mean, you don't always have something concrete to give, but if you're creative, you c-- give something to people. Human relationships, in the sense of give and take, aren't always materially based. Sometimes you have a friendship, because you give off something, and it just rubs someone the right way and vice versa. And that's what I had with people in the camp. There wasn't any concrete, material gain, yes? of the kind you can quantify and measure, but only the... the real, platonic thing, and that Jew I would sing with, in some rare moments, there was something... something real, it was a connection, and I felt he could be my friend. I never once asked him for-- it was never tested, but I remember him as such, with a very warm smile, giving off a lot of... friendliness, empathy and sympathy, and so I (Q: Do you rem--) remember him.

Q: Do you remem--

A: I can't remember how he d-- disappeared.

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Q: Do you remember his name?

A: I don't remember his name. I don't remember his name, either-- I knew it so well, I don't anymore. I-- while I was telling this, I was searching my memory, that dormant repository, maybe I'll find-- I couldn't find it.

Q: When would you sing?

A: Yes, that's right, there were mo-- moments of joy. Look, it's unbelievable, the story of the holocaust, it's supposed to be a dark one, darkness, deadly dark, constant, unremitting. And still, people's nature is that, at a moment of re-- of some kind of respite, they can be joyful, they can be hopeful, they can plan for the future, and they can make human commitments, human gestures, and that's what happened with us. I told you that in this camp, on Sunday, there was sometimes this collective merrymaking, unbelievable, unbelievable, when you live in a camp where your nostrils are filled with the smell of rotten potatoes... mixed with the... the smoke rising from the kitchen chimneys, and the... and the... and a-- and a few other... e... establishments. It's... you... you live in a peculiar atmosphere, which must only e-- enforce a mood of depression, a mood of frustration, a mood of hopelessness, and you put that aside for one moment, and forget it all. You sing along. And must say, there's a song, sung by-- who was it? Not Uri Zohar, in the lead-up period to the Six Days' War, Yitzhak is w-- Nasser is waiting for Rabin. Do you remember that tune? That

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was one of the tunes we'd sing in the camp. I tried to remember the words, I forgot them. Some people may think, especially those we didn't know it, that here we have an original work, at least regarding melody, yes? the words are trivial. It's in-- they're not-- they're not a great work of art, but the... the melody was taken from somewhere that-- that-- I learned it in that camp, on Sundays, somewhere there, where all the prisoners would gather, and got their hour of reprieve, one or two hours of rest, and that's what we did. And as in the Sunday stroll after the lineup, as... people would dress well, they would dress smart, particularly the group heads, they... they would shave, and do their hairs, yes? There were also some beautiful people, some very beautiful couples, you'd forget where you were for a minute, it was a time of reprieve, and if you tell it, people say: "that's impossible." And yet, today, I can rate them by now, that camp wasn't the worst of them. It was a work camp, and those who were suitably built, physically, and were resourceful enough to get some extra food, they didn't need a lot, a little extra, and avoid... getting into trouble, where you were intentionally weakened, so... so it was a camp for young people, they could survive. They couldn't be pleased, they couldn't be happy, but the-- they had hope... that if nothing happened, they'll survive. There was a routine, including those little respites, which may have nourished us more than we realized, spiritually...

Q: That friend, you'd sing with...

A: Yes?

Q: Was he in your barrack, or in your work group?

A: He was in my barrack, yes. He was part of... my barrack group, yes.

Q: Next to you, or...

A: I can't remember exactly, it's pretty hazy, I remember this one time, I was on this side of the barracks, I find-- I remember my-- myself, on the other side, because I remember, whe-- after I was beaten-- how many did I get? Thirty, thirty such blows, in a row, he cut it short, I screamed so loud, I screamed so loud, it could be he-- at first, I think, he ordered more, and the commander stopped it. The German commander stopped it. And when I got back to the barrack, I see myself on this side of the barrack, on the lower level, and I received so much affection from my... barrack mates... and... a few months later, or l-- it's getting hard to measure time. There was-- in the same b-- in the same-- in the same bed, I remember, but this was after I recovered f-- it's, at that age, you'd recover, if you survived long enough, you'd recover, and apparently I was, physically, well built-- well built, yes? which was evidenced-- late-- later, at a selection, I'll get to that, so suddenly... I saw some-- some... some unusual activity in the camp. Turned out, they were expecting a visit by a delegation of... a delegation of the International Red Cross, and they got to my barrack, of course, at night, after return-- al-- I was already in bed, and... everyone

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kinda motioned towards [me], to the one who... they asked me some questions, they came over to me, and asked me some questions, of course, I didn't tell them the truth...

Q: Who asked you questions?

A: Who-- the delegation members.

Q: What language?

A: German, yes? We only spoke German... and they expected me to tell about the beatings I'd received, and I didn't.

Q: Who expected this?

A: My mates.

Q: From the barrack.

A: From the barrack. But I didn't. I couldn't afford to expose... my future to mortal danger. After all, they were leaving, and then... they had come to get an impression, and probably deliver a report, and a work camp, this kind of work camp, was the kind which you could, in wartime, report as reasonable. People come, breathing, living, they have beds, they even have closets, they go to work, and come back, and it's alright. They're hungry, OK, in w-- in wartime, millions, tens of millions, go hungry, it's not unusual. Your... complete absence of rights, your being absolutely dependent on someone else, when it came to your life and your... physical integrity, they weren't told this, yes? On the other hand, I did sing to them. Because my mates to-- said I could sing well. So I sang.

Q: Did they invite you to sing for them?

A: Yes. So right there, without moving, from the bed, I sang, I don't remember what song, I had a very rich repertory back then, I had very many songs, both Polish and Yiddish, and I sand this song. And... and that was it, and their impression--

Q: One moment...

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A: And I had a feeling, that I was doing a service to-- to the block group. That they wanted to show-- I looked like-- like a real boy, although I was a little-- I should have been y-- an older boy by then, and... apparently they wanted, through me-- through me... to convey this image, of a boy singing, in a barrack bed, in a camp. So they'd see it in-- and tell about it in... I was... I wasn't clever enough to know, I thought they wanted, through me, through my voice, I had a pleasant voice, perhaps a little... perhaps gain some sense of worth. Perhaps. I don't know. To this day I don't know. So that's regarding-- you asked me, what bed, what side, yes? So I don't remember, once-- once I see myself on this side, and once I see myself on that side, of the central corridor, of the barrack, the... central passage.

Q: But, since you mentioned it, what questions did the committee delegate-- delegates ask you?

A: How was... how was... how was the camp, how was the work, they asked prosaic questions, I can't te-- can't... can't recall the questions exactly, they were pretty... banal questions, they didn't ask any questions where... probably, maybe they-- where the answer, perhaps, could endanger me.

Q: Were they escorted by Germans?

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A: No [cough]. No, but they were escorted by someone-- wait, I can't remember. I can't tell you. I really can't tell you. There could have been one German... in civilian clothes, not necessarily military clothes...

Q: Do you remember--

A: So I guess-- hum?

Q: Could you... could you approximate the time, what d-- what date was this?

A: This was in forty three.

Q: When in forty three? Winter? Summer?

A: No, it was, so, late spring, I think, spring, something like that, and maybe it was... maybe it was autumn already, I can't say, anyway, it was forty three. Why am I so certain? Because it was still in (In German)_____. Because later, I wasn't in (In German)_____ anymore. It was still there.

Q: I'd like to return to this story you began, but never...

A: Yes, which story?

Q: I think you left of-- you were telling-- when you were telling about the daily routine, you said you would get a slice of bread in the morning.

A: Um hmm.

W: When would eat it?

A: Well. So... I wouldn't. Before I'd go out, I wouldn't eat, and I had to... i-- it was a battle. A daily battle. You knew you had a slice of bread in your pocket, you were hungry, and hunger, the meaning of hunger, wasn't one-dimensional, you must understand the meaning of hunger, it was hunger in... in the worst possible sense, and, in that state, I would tell myself: "No. You will divide your food. You'll eat some of it at a certain time in the morning, and you'll keep one slice for the evening." Like that. I couldn't always persevere, but I often would. I don't know whether it was a good idea, bad idea, that's what I did. That's how I did it. I wouldn't devour everything I had. If I were to analyze myself, I'm generally a person who maintains a large margin for error, on any topic. Yes? I told you I was somewhat of a skeptic, yes? I question

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things, I try to question things, and this was no exception, yes? "It's safer," I told myself, that if I felt weak during the day, I could... rely on some... some... some first aid, better to have it in my pocket, maybe that way... but, it didn't sp-- it didn't... it didn't spare me the pain which everyone had. Hunger, hunger and more hunger. That's what it was all about. You dreamed of hunger, of food, actually, yes? Sometimes you'd imagine the things you liked, to have been made for you... yes? You dreamed about food. T-- your head and soul could accommodate nothing else, when I think, how I could have thought so little about my family, both about what th-- what I knew they were going through, and what I didn't know, but could imagine they were going through, you were preoccupied. That was one of the things the Germans did to you... they left you no time to think of yourself. That, for all those years, there wasn't-- you had no time for that. And if there was such a time of reprieve, as in (In German)_____ on Sundays... it was just enough to relieve your immediate destitution, and loosen up a bit, that is, before you knew it, you were back in the bustle, of that tough routine, and you never spoke-- I know that... in my conversations with people, they wouldn't mention family.

Q: There?

A: Yes... we wouldn't mention personal things... nothing. Not that I remember, anyway. That is, it... it was characteristic, not only of myself. Were were always too preoccupied with ourselves... and so it went on, in that camp, more or less, there are some details-- there were in... in... in the camp, I remember, another episode, that... I

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think, in the autumn, of forty three, there came-- there came a transport from Holland. I remember their black berets, they didn't speak German, and for these poor wretches it was even tougher, also they had come from a subtler culture, and they really... suffered. Many of them fell, I remember their group head, appointed immediately, a handsome fellow, with a mustache, yes, jovial, and we, even though I wasn't so much more experienced than they were, I already viewed them, with a certain air of su-- su-- silly superiority, yes? That is, I already knew-- they didn't know yet what was-- what was in store for them, yes? I already did. I had already gone through those first steps, of fear and of trepidation, and bewilderment, and... and those first encounters with cruelty, yes? and with mercilessness, I thought-- I mean, look... they don't know what's in store for them... and this camp--- the camp headmaster, was allowed to-- to live with his wife. Inside the camp, the only woman, in his barrack, and that was the last time I ever saw a Jewish prisoner, who could live under the Germans, in the camps, with his woman, and that all ended in winter... winter forty f-- forty four--

Q: Wait, I... I see you want to move on to another camp, I-- I have a few more questions...

A: Please.

Q: If you will.

A: Well, I'm not moving on yet, I'm saying, I'm just saying it ended in winter...

Q: Yes.

A: Yes? We can still go back.

Q: There are a few questions... you told me about those Dutch Jews...

A: Yes.

Q: How... how did they adapt?

A: Well, I was already familiar with that process. You didn't have to observe them to know, because I had seen... I had seen this process of adapting, or failing to adapt, numerous times, with so many young people, in the camp, who... who weren't accustomed to discipline, and to su-- such hostility... and wouldn't always know how to behave, with sufficient intelligence, or-- were too inexperienced, to not get into needless trouble and that was surely-- they went through this same process, and most

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importantly, people who were forced into hard, arduous physical work, the very definition of slavery, yes? when we read the... the... story... the story of Israelite slavery in Egypt, and we im-- imagine some very hard pictures of the J-- of the Jews who-- of the Israelites-- of the Hebrews, who were driven to forced labor, yes? so... that's trifling-- trifling, compared to what could happen in that work site, that alleged work site, and-- the Wehrmacht, they weren't really very violent, there were violent incidents, but not frequently, there was no... de-- decreed violence, yes? an outright policy, yes? There was, sometimes this... this sadist indulging his urges, as it was with that Wehrmacht soldier I told you about, who I believe wasn't even an antisemite, he wasn't smart enough to be one, he was-- he was venting his own frustration, at home he had been nothing, and here, suddenly, he was in charge, of Jews, or of some group where he was in complete control, and he... had them run, and commanded them to sing, and roll over, I told you it got me in... in... in that hysterical state, where I couldn't tell which part of this was tragic, and which was comical, and which... was both. So, it was mainly that, you'd watch people dying, very very slowly, unless they got food. And-- they'd work, arduous work, they didn't have proper conditions, to rest, to recuperate, they didn't have enough food, to... to upkeep their bodies, and this process was-- you felt-- you suddenly noticed his legs swelling, little by little, his hands swelling, his cheeks swelling, and you knew how it would end. That-- soon he'd become ill and he... he wouldn't make it, he couldn't make it, and there was no medical help, and they wouldn't send him for recovery, that's it, that was the process.

Q: Did you use the term (In German)_____?

A: No. Not yet in that camp, (In German)_____.

Q: I'm asking about the Dutch Jews... because... it's said, that... the Jews who had come from the Polish ghettos, were a little more... accustomed to such harsh conditions (A: Right, right, right), whereas the Dutch had come from relatively comfortable places.

A: Right. So-- that's the thing. You asked me earlier about (In German)_____. Happened in that camp, because we were working there, with so many-- it was a site of some twenty or thirty thousand workers. Our camp had five thousand Jews. All Jews in our camp. And th-- many people from my area, from (In Polish?)_____, from (In Polish)_____, there were-- there were very many... small towns there, yes? By the way, our t-- our town was a small one, thirty five, forty thousand people, but that town had some... some... some German influence, it was by the German border, it was a modern town... it had... it ha-- it had relatively advanced technology, for the time, and a relatively very large concentration of Jews, about five thousand. That is, over twenty percent... and the... and the... I lived in a time when I could see how the youth were breaking away, they w-- they... they were, already, taking up an external culture, they were taking off their skullcaps, they were going out bare-headed... they were wearing modern clothes, they were walking... with girls, arm in arm, it was-- it-- these were crises, for... for traditional Judaism, yes? and... they hadn't been around long. It's true the emancipation had been going on for one hundred

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and fifty years, yes? but it was slow to reach that place, where Jews were living under a very pervasive, very powerful traditional influence, the... the... elites being rabbinical elites, elites of the Torah, even though the people might not-- in the Yeshiva, and these were the people. By the way, we were left, our group, our town, without any alternative leadership. It's true that, with the Jewish Community, the Community head wasn't exactly a religious person, but he wasn't a leader, he was this kind of supervisor... he made sure that he got respect, and... that there w-- there was money to pay the rabbi, or the kosher butcher, and so no, we had no real le-- leadership, and that's why, it's so disappointing, that the only leadership that could, perhaps, have said something... was also... silent. It took care of itself, of its own fears, yes? It didn't show leadership, there was no leadership, we were... we were completely leaderless, there were eventually a-- attempts, there were attempts to create... I remember, there was this guy, (In German) _____ his name, I remember his father, owned a restaurant, on our street, a kosher restaurant, he belonged to *Hamizrahi*, I met him, later, when I came here, I met him here, he tried to organize this Zionist, Religious Zionist group, he was from... *Hapoel Hamizrahi*, I couldn't last there... but, these were sporadic, unstable attempts, it was-- that wasn't a leadership, yes? It was this attempt, perhaps, to keep the youth busy-- what else to do? We weren't doing anything. We weren't going to school... so... how did I get to talking about this? The Dutch?

Q: Yes.

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A: Hmm? Pardon?

Q: Yes.

A: The Dutch.

Q: Yes.

A: I mean, we... we... we were already experienced in... circumventing life. Circumvent life. You had to circumvent it, so... we were already habitual (In Yiddish)_____. What's a (In Yiddish)_____? It's one who is adept at making connections, yes? and in that way... first takes care of oneself, but there are also scraps left for others. And the-- all these (In Yiddish)_____, and all that accumulated experience, went into the camp, and operated there as well, and allowed, not only me, but many like me, yes? to get an extra... they were, also, able to create connections with the camp authorities, probably even with the Germans, yes? it's the way things are, people who live together, they can't maintain their initial hostility indefinitely. That initial, cruel hostility, must-- it can only exist where there is no ongoing human connection. But, when there is such a connection, it must soften eventually. It becomes somewhat sublimated, and that's what happened, not only in that camp, but down the line, I will get to-- the instant some human connection is formed, you can

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see that I, myself, have formed human connections with no-- there was no-- I felt there was no prejudice, none whatsoever, they would just look you at eye level, and each of us did his thing, yes? They did what they could, nothing illegal, they did something human. Tiny things. So, the Jews, the Polish Jews, were a-- little more experienced, in this kind of circumventing, in trying... in trying to evade, to go around... the Dutch Jews, they had come from a Western culture, where everything was based on reliability, on things-- on meaningful words, there was no ambiguity, no-- no dialectic, they meant it, if they said, that "we'll see you three o'clock," it meant three o'clock, not five past three, not t-- two-- f-- t-- two fifty five, they meant it. This kind of people, when they found themselves in that kind of camp, they might tend to uphold the camp's formal decrees, and then they couldn't last very long, because they had no additional sources, to compensate for their basic, vital survival wants. And it was mostly about food, and about connections, to-- at work, so they could also take it a little easier at work. And so, statistically, they were much easier victims than... the other... prisoners in the camp.

Q: Did you notice it there already?

A: I noticed it there already, I think I also understood, I already understood why, yes? I already understood why, and I think I-- very rapidly, I mastered the techniques... that I-- the survival techniques, yes? and I saw them, so naïve... and the-- as I said, I had this feeling, of being a-- a man of experience, a seasoned man, who looked on as those youths were trying to hang on somehow, and to-- struggle somehow, and he

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concluded, "it's vanity of vanities, I've already seen-- I've been there, and I've seen that eventually, few make it." That-- that's how I felt, when I saw that group.

"Greens," yes? we called them "Greens," and this became a jargon, even after the war, yes? For example, all the new immigrants to Canada, the Jews... yes? were called "Greens," in... in the United States, too, "Greens," yes? "Greens" are naïve people, who still don't know what's in store for them, yes? They'll find out soon enough.

Q: And did they stay Green for long?

A: And they stayed Green. I don't recall... I-- later I, perhaps, I don't know, I-- because the camp-- as I said, that ca-- that camp was closed down, and they didn't stay long, and I don't-- don't-- d-- I can't remember, ever catching up on them, meeting them somehow. Maybe they were actually transferred to a different camp.

Q: Were any of them in your work group?

A: No. No. No. We were already established, veterans [laugh], and you didn't just take in s-- strangers, they probably formed new groups, and I don't know-- apparently-- in the beginning, these things may not be so stable, I can't say exactly... but... generally speaking, I described, the... the regard. Yes.

Q: I have another question. You described that relationship you had with the Jew who couldn't decide whether to eat on Yom Kippur...

A: Yes.

Q: And then, you gave another example, of-- I think you brought him up as an example of someone who consulted you (A: Yes, yes, that's how it was), yes? You gave another example, that friend you would whistle with (A: Yes. Yes. Yes.), hum tunes with, but you didn't say what he consulted you about.

A: Oh, he didn't consult me, the other one, no.

Q: That wasn't a case of--

A: He, just... he would tell me, yes? Sometimes... we'd tell stories... I don't remember anything of import.

Q: That wasn't the same kind of thing.

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A: There weren't-- no, not the same kind of thing. We had no heart-to-heart talks. No heart-to-heart, it was just... being happy together, and singing together, because apparently we had similar backgrounds, and th-- those songs, the songs spoke for themselves, yes? I mean, they would tell our story, yes?

Q: Did you sing in the barrack?

A: I don't remember e-- that, I can't tell you... it had to be moments when we were just the two of us, yes? for us to do it, yes? I don't remember exactly, I remember a place, I can't place it right now, maybe it will come to me, eventually, it's pretty blurry, his image, I can see exactly, I see his... smile, his bare teeth, when he's smiling, yes? He's smallish, and... round-faced, smiling... good eyes, telling of... a good man, yes? and he's so smallish, and... and he's smart, he's explaining how he, how he... how he survives. How he lives, he doesn't have a lot of strength, how he lives. Maybe he's also making bribes, to... to get transferred to a different group, that was also possible, yes? He was... he was smart, or maybe clever, maybe not smart, certainly clever, yes? and that's how he survived, until he disappeared from... from... my sight, I don't know wh-- when that was, but so long as we were together in the camp, I would meet him, and he was always in a good mood... in a good mood, that's funny, in a smiling mood, smiling, he didn't talk with sadness of the pasts, I don't remember anything like that, all the memories I have of him are in this mood-- maybe that, also, was... perhaps

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drew me to him, that he... he gave off... kindness, and some optimism. We didn't have to mutually spill out our troubles...

Q: Was optimism a rare commodity?

A: It was... an uncommon commodity, yes... uncommon. There was violence, there was... there was an effort... and effort to walk over corpses, to... not to mind, whether it was when standing in line, or-- in all sorts of things, yes? not to mind, to be first, to grab a place, and... it was-- I mean, that I-- for me that was-- I wasn't let down by this anymore, because I had already seen, in the ghetto, that this business of Jewish brotherhood, and mutual accountability, in the positive sense, not in... not in the factual sense, where someone makes me take accountable for your actions, that's not mutual accountability, I wanted to see mutual accountability in the positive sense, all Jews are responsible for one another, after all this is construed to mean, not that someone else makes you accountable, but you should feel accountable, towards your fellows, I didn't feel that... I didn't feel that, I felt the exact opposite, I felt that if anything was gluing us together, then, it was either very weak, or it was fake, or it was only good under certain, very specific conditions, which were untenable under any change, especially not when you had to function, and actually prove, this Jewish co-accountability, your... your connectedness, your belonging, under such difficult conditions. That, that is... the only way, to test the truth of this... assertion, the truth of this myth, which, for myself... I learned is largely nonexistent.

Q: And could you put that disappointment into words, did you have it back then, or is this... in hindsight?

A: It's hard to say, I think that, immediately, when the war ended, when the war ended... I could, already, express my criticism and put it into words, my in-- inward criticism, of myself, of ourselves, and that was mainly it. The outward criticism, I always gave secondary importance. I always thought, and still do, that that's the most important thing, both in private life, and in... public, national, social life, where you, first of all, question yourself. And your outward criticism, it can only come from the point of view... the point of view... or... or the level, where it's after your inward criticism, or, at least, in parallel to it... and... I've a great deal, a very great deal of thinking about this, and I still do, yes? which I apply to our... life, here, and find... find... not a parallel, I find a continuity, a continuity, a simple, solid, very clear continuity, between that unfounded, mythical solidarity, which we had... received a very provincial indoctrination in, and to this day, while I'm certain, that that solidarity still exists. I mean, the developing of that solidarity, it remains to be done, and a great deal of work and t-- who knows... how much... pain and suffering, remain to be had, before we truly achieve natural solidarity.s

Q: Because we don't have it?

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A: Because we don't have it.

Q: Because, even then, we didn't really have it?

A: Because we didn't have it, we ne-- ver had it, I believe, speaking of which, we had a negative version of it, that is... if you belong... say... to some sports club, and... they come to you, yes? and tell you, "you're worthless, you're total klutzes," and so on, yes? then you have solidarity with your team, yes? to survive, because you're alone, you ca-- that is, it's a kind of solidarity where you are, perhaps... branded as belonging to that team, and you're trying, by connecting, yes? to gain some strength. But the moment some team members manage to build careers, there goes-- th-- all this solidarity is unraveled, it's not real, because it must be based on something much deeper, much more positive, something that binds you, culturally, emotionally... and nationally, and ethnically, and-- especially... historically, by history, yes? That is, you must truly be bound very powerfully to your heritage, for that solidarity to exist, and sometimes it's weakened a little, and sometimes it's a little bent, it can't go away, yes? in times of distress. It can't not exist, yes? And I didn't feel that this solidarity, is strong enough, it didn't stand... this solidarity didn't stand, in my opinion, and in my experience, it didn't stand in the... the... desperate moment of truth.

Q: We've finished a tape. We--

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End of Tape 7

Tape 8

Q: Are we on the way? Running. OK, it's running. Did that keep happening? Their going in at night, in the evening, into the barracks, and... abusing people?

A: Of course. Of course. At night, in the showers, I mean, these were displays of power and terrorism, to keep all the-- camp unmates, in... this discipline anxiety, with a very wide margin for error on their part, yes? Before you even begin to think, you're already trying to anticipate the blow, even before you've done anything. So it... was natural that... when you had to run a camp, of five thousands youths, hungry youths... and have so-- have sovereignty over them, yes? there was no other way, I don't-- I imagine, that they had given it a great deal of thought, how to do it, yes? They had to keep everyone in a state of terror, a terror of being... on a precipice, and of... a constant fear of what co-- could happen at any moment [cough]... and towards that end, they had a few truly intimidating individuals, who happened to a-- also adopt this topic, as some role... which.... which was... somehow vital to do carry out fully, or they were simply sick individuals, and they gave free reign, to their emotional aberrations, especially, that (In Yiddish)_____, I saw him pounce, on a Jew in a... in the shower water, where we were, there, waiting in line, he took one, and just started beating and abusing him, for... no purpose, whatsoever, he didn't say what he wanted with him, just because, just because, just because, just because, just because, you can imagine what it's like when this... image, is also surrounded by people, and any one of them c-- could potentially be in his place, yes? Anyone, he could choose,

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as he pleased, he had no pretense, you had no rights, yes? And they tell you, that... that's the norm, that's the absolute authority, whatever happens or doesn't happen to you, is all arbitrary, it's none of your concern. So that... but as I said, with time, as the months went by, there, this feeling softened, because gradually you developed an acquaintance, even with the group heads, and they developed an acquaintance with us. And naturally-- we were all from the same area, we hadn't come from different countries, yes? So it became a little softer... yes.

Q: We can go on.

A: _____ a certain process, of sublimation, by the way... furthermore, it happened... it also happened with the Germans, with the worst of them, the SS, in whom, also, I-- I, anyway, could see a change.

Q: But that was later.

A: That was later, because we weren't in contact with them yet.

Q: And with... (In Yiddish)_____ and (In Yiddish)_____, it didn't get any better.

A: With (In Yiddish)_____ and (In Yiddish)_____, it didn't get any better, they were always on the side of-- myself, I met (In Yiddish)_____, in... in (In German)_____, he was... scruffy, was looking n-- not good, scared, and... I didn't tell on him. I'm sure that there-- there, the prisoners gave him his due, yes? as they did, with all those glorified bullies they had suffered from, in (In German)_____, we'll get to that, yes? They were no long-- by then they were nothing, and when they got one of them, they'd kill him. And I, for some reason, didn't. I didn't tell on him. I don't know what happened to him. I don't--

Q: You didn't tell on him, and have no regrets?

A: Yes. Yes. I didn't see... I didn't see him as... the p-- the problem, and the solution, yes? With a capital T. Not him. They problem and the solution, yes. That wouldn't have done it for me... I wouldn't see-- want to see him happy, doing well, yes? I'm sure he had precious little... someone gave him his due... yes.

Q: Well, we'll get to...

A: Yes.

Q: To...

A: Um hmm.

Q: To that, a little later... in the lane, on Sundays, life was a little different, and you say they let men and women meet.

A: Yes.

Q: How was this done?

A: It was done so that, so-- there were even... m-- married couples, and the ca-- the German camp commander, who was a Wehrmacht officer, yes? he was in charge of military operations, not... N-- Nazi or ideological operations, he wasn't operating, I perceived, and I think I'm not wrong, at that time, he wasn't... he didn't see himself as dealing with any issue, in his capacity as camp commander, other than commanding a prison camp. He treated... he treated us like prisoners, yes? Maybe not in complete accordance with the international... convention, on prisoners, because that required the-- the food to be better, yes? and... and more plentiful, but... this was my impression, yes? It wasn't my impression, that he was displaying any... any sadism,

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and any abuse, and any humiliation of Jews as such, yes? He was just running a camp... I also know, he would have, in his barrack, in his headquarters, our camp headmaster, and his wife, for dinner and-- I mean, there was even a r-- there was some relationship there, and who knows what they'd talk about, it could be-- they would certainly discuss this problem, yes? Maybe this wasn't how he saw things, I don't know, I'm trying to guess, I mean, intuitively, looking at that man, I saw his as a German, a quintessential German, doing his job, he was a military veteran, during wartime, and he was commanding this camp.

Q: So those women, how did they get into the camp?

A: Right, they'd let them-- they'd open the gate, there was this gate, yes? it was, merely, a fence, it...an ad-- the camps were adjacent.

Q: A women's work camp? T--

A: Yes, a women's work camp, in the women's work camp, they mostly did laundry, and c-- cooking, they... I don't know exactly what they did, all-- all sorts of jobs, no many, it wasn't a large camp, and... and spouses, whether married, or unmarried, girlfriends, yes? They'd come-- there weren't many, but it added some beauty, a little... it somehow softened the... the... the... depressed atmosphere, suddenly you'd see something a little more normal, young Jewish couples, even beautiful one, and..

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well dressed, and strolling, as they used to be, when I met them... occasionally, before the war, yes? Arm in arm, walking, and strolling, and... l-- laughing to themselves, and meeting, each other, this... this innocent, pleasant social even, lasting an hour.

Q: Did they check to see, who was a spouse, or were all the women allowed in the camp?

A: No, no, I never saw, anyone coming over freely, yes? It was very defined, I mean, it was either people who had been couples, engaged or just couples, or people who were married, married couples, who had been separated, in the... *aktion*, and sent to the same camp.

Q: And--

A: There were some who, I believe, managed to use connections, in order to be sent, as a couple, to the same place because this was a workplace, yes? A workplace... wasn't considered as harsh, because in a work place, you came to work, and since you came to work, you-- they maintained you, they wanted you to be, at least, in some state of functionality, if they starved you t-- to death, you couldn't be productive. So... that may have been another reason why they allowed... these hidden dealings. Perhaps they allowed them. I'm saying, I'm just guessing here. They had this very well defined

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role, under the authority of, I believe, their Ministry of Labor, and that... that was the _____ group, the _____ group, to build factories, munitions factories, such factories! When I look back, on the modernity, of those factories, in the forties, of the precision with which they designed, all the logistical systems, of... electricity, water, and so on, it was in ducts, which c-- could be covered, and accessed, yes? It was very well planned, very, yes? and I saw that factory, when it-- when they started building it, I saw the mortars, the cannons that came out of it, after being tested... so, they needed all those workers, and the Jews who were sent there, weren't intended, a-priori, for extermination, but for work, though with less freedom than the... others, and of course, much cheaper. They didn't pay us. They did pay the foreign workers. Not much, but they did.

Q: Your job, eventually, became exclusively in roof tiling.

A: In a company that did roof tiling, yes?

Q: Yes.

A: And I kept doing that, a-- doing that almost until... until the end... that is, from the moment I came into that firm, I remained there, and... and was wanted there. I was a diligent worker, as I said, most of what I did, later on, was mostly take it off the car,

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and... and... and arrange it in... pile it, here, this was also hard, physical labor, it wasn't so simple, first you had to take all that Kit, huge quantities, yes? out of a car, and then take it deeper inside, prepare the are, but I-- I had mastered it, and... I was accountable to no one, except that... that... old work manager, yes?

Q: That time you got sick... did they let you stay in the (In German)_____?

A: Yes.

Q: Two days?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Yes. Yes? As a result of that stay in the (In German)_____, did you recover?

A: Yes, I recovered completely, I also remember playing, there, Chess, I could Ch-- play Checkmate... and I re-- a vacation... a vacation, in, a Fellini movie... some... some vacation... in an ima-- in... in an imaginary world, a vacation in the camp, yes? To me, it seemed like a vacation, I didn't get up in the morning, and I was warm in

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bed, I didn't go out to the lineup. One of the chief features of... prisoner experience in... the camps, were the endless lineups. You were always in a lineup, and... in some cases, this ongoing lineup, it was also used by the commands-- the commander... not to address you, no t-- not _____ what was going on there, but to maintain discipline and order. You just stood, in a line, doe hours. Now, even in this camp, how many lineups per day? You'd get up in the morning, there was a lineup, you'd... go out on groups and reach the camp, there was a lineup, and then you'd report to the work manager, lineup, and then, going back to work, you... lineup, in the _____ courtyard, and then, you'd come home, you'd stand in another lineup, yes. So... it was always lineups, always being tallies, yes? To-- since every individual was so precious, to make sure not even one went missing, yes? So that's in this kind of camp, where they didn't devote time to lineups specifically, but, they were, a result of... of the routine. Of a military routine, that's how it had to be done. But there were, in some camps, I'm sure you've already y-- h... he-- heard about it, about l-- about li-- standing in lineups, for endless hours, in conditions of destitution, and cold, and... just impossible, and how people would coll-- collapse, yes? and fall, in such conditions. (Q: And in (In German)_____--)) that was later.

Q: You didn't have a lineup in (In German)_____.

A: We didn't have a lineup in (In German)_____, there, all in all, very few deaths, very few people, I can't say, to this day, why I had been favored, in that, I had a bad fever, and either he took pity on me, the... the doctor, I can't t-- I can't tell you. I

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didn't do in-- I didn't go there with some preconception, I went over because I wasn't feeling well, and they told me, (In German?)_____, go over, they encouraged me, my mates in... the work group. G... go over, and I did, and I stayed there.

Q: Did you receive any medications?

A: I can't remember. I can't tell you anything about that. I got more food, and it tasted better... and most of all, the security, the... the rest, you were in this... in this relatively humane atmosphere, you had a bed, not a hay bed, some relatively human bed, and you'd get up in the morning, and you didn't have to go out to the lineup, that's what I wanted to say, you didn't have to go out... yes? You had a trauma from... from... from... from that lineup, you'd get up in the morning, before you knew it, you were cold from not sleeping well at night, since you weren't properly dressed, and had no heating, th-- and maybe, in the middle of the night, you had also been on duty, and in that state you'd stand in line, you had to stand in line, that-- you had to stand up straight, it was a terrible trauma. Rain or no rain, snow, whatever, you'd stand in line. You'd stand in the lineup...

Q: Whom did you play Chess with?

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A: With the patients, the other patients, yes? who were there, more than-- one time, I can't remember whether I played with more than one person, I played Chess. I happened to know Chess, I had learned it from my father, he had liked... Chess, and so we'd play, he wouldn't like it when I beat him, yes? I have a few childhood memories of it, but I was skilled in it, yes? and at a certain time, actually, in life, later on, I played quite a lot of Chess... it's coming back-- I just remembered, because I played Ch-- Chess there.

Q: Was it an actual Chess set?

A: A Chess set, yes, Chess.

Q: A real one?

A: It was a real set, and it could have been the doctor who... encourages it, maybe some... some-- one of the patients had brought it with-- I don't know its history, yes? nor was I paying attention, it-- it left no impression on me, except for coming out healthy and finding my money again, there under the oven, these were my ob-- my objects.... at the time.

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Q: In the barrack, where you live, were there any... showers, bathrooms, or were they somewhere else?

A: No. No, no. Everything was public, and you didn't go to the showers on your own, you were lead to the shower, you would do it at a certain time, yes? in a certain way, y-- t-- you-- the... the... it... for... o-- other needs, there was a trough, several troughs, yes? outside, you'd go there in the morning, you'd wash up, wash your face, brush, or rather, wash, your face, you had no toothbrush, and you'd also do your laundry there, if you were sufficiently... aware, that you had to also wash your laundry, once in a while. There was no laundry service. You had to maintain your own cleanliness, both for healthy reasons, not to mention the aesthetics. Yes.

Q: And where--

A: And lavatories, also, same thing, lavatories, they were... outside, some place, you had to do it, quickly, under conditions, time constraints...

Q: Was it in another barrack, or in the open?

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A: No, it was, I can't remember exactly anymore how these-- how these lavatories were, I remember the trough, especially, the line of... yes? I can't remember exactly... what it looked like, I've forgotten already. I can't remember exactly, where the lavatories were. I'm sure they existed, but can't remember, exactly, where it was, and what it looked like...

yes.

Q: Were there--

A: I'm trying to... to remember, whether there was anything else noteworthy, about that camp, about (In German)_____, that... right now, I can't remember, maybe it will come to me later, and if you're interested, I will... tell of it. Right now, I believe, I told, more or less, what I, remember, from of that camp, of its atmosphere, of its-- routine, of the people, and... the conditions, these details, more or less, I have given you as they were.

Q: Except for the two packages you received from mother, did you have any contact with her?

A: Why, this was so tragic, mother, I think-- in August, they cleaned out the Ghetto. In August of forty three, I think so. And... they cleaned out, the ghetto, both those

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who were working in... ships, and-- didn't matter, and sh-- mother, in that short time, managed to find, first of all, a means of sending things, and second, how did she get the means? How did she buy the supplies? And these were-- these were considerable quantities, that she managed to send. Though the packages did arrive, as I said, through one of my uncles, who had, probably, been deported from Germany, and they would always arrive broken. Some was missing. He told me-- I, later, un... derstood, that maybe he felt bad, about taking some on the way, but he didn't have to bother, I invited him, and the other uncle, and I sh-- shared what I had with them, and that, too, was something of an unusual phenomenon, in... in the camp, that's what I told talked you about-- with you about, the sol-- solidarity, I mean, I was... a weirdo, I mean, it wasn't done, yes? every man for himself, when it came to food, there was no... no nothing, it was unheard of. And I shared with them. I remember, that-- on-- in that same oven, in the barrack, we managed to a-- to arrange some burning materials, I cooked rice, rice or... some similar material, I can't remember what it was, kouskous or something, something like that, and I invited my uncle, (In German)_____, to have it together. He ate, and went. He didn't talk, he didn't say thank you, I mean, he was so strange, it was like, pardon the expression, like inviting this animal, and giving them food, he ate, and he went... I had... strange situations like that... and k-- kept thinking, afterwards, I said, mother, she probably had to forgo every scrap of food, but that wasn't enough, she was already doing that. How could she had gotten it? What else could she had sold? How could she do it? And... all mothers are good, of course, everyone's mother is special, and mine was special, so I believe, and so I hold her... memory in my heart, devoted, you know, in the ghetto... and t-- outside the ghetto, Jews... weren't allowed outside at night, after a certain time, and again, I point out, that committing an offense, under the Germans, would entail... almost ultimate

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punishments. There was a time, they'd immediately send... extermination camps. But mother didn't sit idly, she saw the destitution, and she... tried to do something. This one night, inside the ghetto, it was dark, yes? she had gone out, probably to take care of some business, some time later, she came back, I looked at her, she was bruised, she had these blue bruises, under the eyes, and her hair, it was strange, she-- so as not to scare me, she... smiled at me, while I was looking at her, there trailed after her this... German policeman, wearing that famous hat, with a huge dog, he had caught her out, and got-- I mean, and she-- later, she told me: "and I saw him, so I ran, and I hid around some corner, and that offended him, he caught me, and he hit me, and he loosed the dog..." and she, so as not to scare me, yes? it was she who came over to me to calm me. With the German at her heel. I don't know, maybe-- also, he was moved by... the way, we were, both, here, she didn't scream, she didn't cry, he also felt she was trying to calm me. He did nothing further, and went... and then... instances of cruelty-- they were countless, I think that, with so many stories, of suffering, suffering, suffering, suffering loses its meaning, as Hannah Ahrendt said, yes? The... the banality of evil, yes? Because, how much can you... how much-- it's like going to this huge museum, how many times can you, in a single day, be moved by great works? How much can you take in? Eventually, it all becomes predictable. And we had to many troubles, every day, several times a day, I'm just trying to pick out, a few that stand out, in which I observe some meaning, beyond physical suffering. Some... devotion, some d-- some... some... some deep obligation, some humanity, some... some... some sense of responsibility. This... infinite identification, that, among other things, as I told you, that great cry, which I say, even Munch could not have expressed that scream of my mother's, when they took me away. That mo-- that morning, when she came to the door, and called that man back. That cry still echoes

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in my ears, so powerful, that it-- it even shook the German, and he went back in alone, the way he came, and left me with his bicycle, and I could hear him, from far away, saying like so: "He's coming back." "(In German)_____,," he told her in German... and in the camp, here, in the (In German)_____ camp, I'm telling you a few episodes, which I remember, which left an impression on me, and that conversation, with... that Jew, I think he was from (In Polish)_____, that beautiful religious Jew, such beautiful blue eyes, and he gave off such... you now what? he reminded me of this character, that sometimes th-- painters, who managed to give Jesus this very merciful image, very... he's not thinking about his suffering, he gives off... he's giving off such compassion for you, such softness, that character, giving off infinite softness, and I could imagine very well, how he had looked, and he, in his great distress, he was in a quandary, in everything his life was devoted to, everything he believed in, was, now, facing this grave dilemma, whom could he consult? not their seniors, not the wise men, he consulted m... yes. And so, I'm saying, we reached winter, I think it was already winter, either forty three, or-- winter forty one--

Q: W-- wait a second...

A: Yes.

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Q: You described this scene, where you got a package from mother with (A: Yes. Yes. Yes, yes yes yes.) rice. And you invited you uncle, and you cooked it on the over, in the barrack.

A: Right. This big, round oven, you know, with a chimney, if you know them, you can see them, for example, in movies from... "The Great Escape," you've seen the movie, "The Great Escape?"

Q: Yes.

A: You've got these ovens there, yes? (Q: Yes yes.) with the cimney inside, and... on top, there's some room. A heating plate.

Q: And there were a lot of other, hungry Jews in the barrack...

A: Yes. Yes. Well... the fear, was so great, that too, had to be dis-- disciplined, yes? So there was no violence, between-- at least, not too overtly, between people, and... there were-- moreover, I should say, that was al-- right at the beginning, and we were a new group... t-- we-- in my barrack, w-- t-- everyone was from the same transport, yes? new people. We still had some from home, yes? Even if we were hungry, it still

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wasn't this ongoing hunger, of many months. It was a recent hunger. Maybe that's why they still respected. C-- could also be, these people had also gotten packages, maybe, even, more than I had, I don't know exactly, I don't remember f-- fearing them.

Q: You could cook, and eat--

A: The-- the-- I cooked, and... we ate it there, yes...

Q: And all that time in (In German) _____, you were wearing the clothes you... had on from home?

A: They were... civilian clothes, anyway, we didn't get any uniforms, or anything, only what we had. Everything.

Q: Month--

A: They never provided--

Q: Month--

A: They never provided clothing.

Q: Months wearing the same clothes.

A: The same clothes, or... that, perhaps, was why they let, they allowed, packages of... of clothes in, yes? maybe that's why, they let people come in with luggage, as long as they handed over their jewelery, their valuables, money, and so on and so forth, but they left-- that could have been the policy, they weren't.... either they weren't prepared, or they didn't want to be prepared, so provide... clothing. I can't remember, still, what would happen, if someone tore his shoes, and so on, I can't remember any more, but I'll tell you this, I know exactly, I wore my civilian clothes, to work, and not to works, and so I had-- I could, on Sunday, a little, I remember, I would come, I had this very beautiful visor, I felt good, in that visor, and I... especially on Sundays, I would wear that visor, when we strolled the central lane.

Q: Was there a mirror?

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A: A mirror? In-- no, the barrack didn't have a mirror. But... the windows-- there was no mirror, you didn't... you didn't have one, but you could see in... in the windows, there were several windows, you could see _____. I didn't have to shave, at the time I didn't have a problem.... I didn't-- I didn't have to comb my hair, it was alright... there was a barber, though, there was a barber, _____--

Q: Were there lice?

A: There were no lice, because we'd been disinfected. They made sure of that. They made sure of that. The Germans. That was the first thing you did, they disinfected you...

Q: Did they do it regularly?

A: No. Then, they'd take you to the shower, once a week, yes? That is, they maintained hygiene, and in that respect, and... don't forget, this was in the cold, usually... that thing didn't really develop. Yes... they didn't shave us hairless, I think, yet, or they did. Not yet. No, I think they let us keep our hairs, for a while. In (In German)_____, I think, they left, they left us our hairs. That's why I remember these beautiful young men and women, yes? As th-- sorry. Sorry, where-- Moshe, yes? Yes?

Q: What... we're now talking about, close to winter forty three (A: Yes.), right? (In German)_____, (A: Um hmm.) What did you know about the war?

A: I already knew, that... of course, I had witnessed, great conquests in Russia, the great attack to the east, in forty one, because I had seen their soldiers, they had gone through our city... that was also a frightening sight, that army, those disciplined soldiers, like toy soldiers, passing with their equipment, c-- marching on, looking neither left nor right, huge quantities, and all so polished, and impressive, and some on horses, some on motorcycles, I saw them, marching eastwards, and after that I had no know-- I knew nothing, about Stalingrad, or about Al Alamein, no-- I was not at all-- I wasn't aware of it at all. Only in w-- w-- forty four, I started hearing, also, from the group heads, who had befriended the Germans, and they were telling them, so... some rumors came to... to... to our ears, I wasn't aware... didn't-- didn't exactly know what was going on... I didn't explain to myself, how I was going to survive. I didn't explain to myself, I always had some firm, wholly unfounded hope, that I would survive, and all I had to do was secure a little food. I'd look at my stomach, how much it... yes? that was this silly sign, yes? it's OK, it's still OK, it's within the limits of some... of some... reasonable situation.

Q: Did you have any prospect?

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A: I had no prospect. I'm telling you, I took it a day at a time, and I assumed-- must have assumed, that this couldn't go on forever. In the sense that, the Germans couldn't keep doing this indefinitely, forever, without something happening to them. I had this, some unfounded feeling... the moment I learned, that... the Western countries were in the conflict, the war, I had this feeling, that he-- eventually, things must change. And if they did, that might also affect us, if we lived. But, it was all unfounded. And I was detached, in general, from all n-- from all news of the outside world. And during those years, inside, where we were, the Germans were all-powerful, they seemed so vital, beyond vital. I remember... how they rallied the people, and they presented us this people, with its optimism, with its... arrogance, for example, the (In German)_____, that was the Nazi youth movement, they had movement-- they had work groups, they were conscripted during the war, they had to work. For a while. I remember, at the end of the day, when we were already so exhausted, constantly hungry, and yearning for the moment we could gather, in the courtyard, and m—and march back, they'd show up, these movements, they would be pushing, carts on-- on rails, rails... on... on these rails for light trains, they had apparently done t-- they were coming back home from work. Around every cart would be ten, or twelve, and they would be pushing. And they would be walking, and they would be so fresh, pink-cheeked, and dressed up, as if they had just... prepared for some parade, coming back from a day's work. With those shorts, and socks, yes? So fresh, working, doing patriotic, for the-- yes? That... that's what I-- that's what I saw there. So, (Q: And--), hundreds, hundreds of these people.

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Q: In (In German)_____?

A: That was in (In German)_____, yes? So they, also, had been conscripted for some task, in... in construction, either it was a part of their indoctrination, or they were really... filling some role of... working hands, I don't... can't know, but I'm saying, they... gave off a feeling, that all was well, and I didn't notice anything in the site. Only in forty four, one of the heads of the (In German) firm, where I worked, also an Austrian, from him-- I mean, not directly, through our group head, we heard, they were already having doubts, they had changed their manner. They were starting to-- starting to reveal their hostility, of-- towards the Na-- yes? that they didn't want it, yes? And of course, this was some small relief for us, in these sense that, they didn't make needless trouble for us. They didn't ease off on work, but... they did make less trouble.

Q: Well... I suggest we... leave (In German)_____.

A: Yes. That's all, yes? If I remember anything, I'll find a way to connect, to connect it, but I d-- I'm te-- telling you, I'm drawing it all from memory, from over sixty years ago... and... one day, I mean, it was, actually, one morning, it was snowing, everything was covered in snow, winter, it was I don't know--

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Q: Winter forty--

A: It was in-- December, November, December, or was it January, I can't tell you--

Q: But was it winter forty three, forty four?

A: Three, yes, right... we didn't go to the lineup, and didn't go to work. And... and they sent us to go... to undress, and run through the snow, to a certain barrack. And in the barrack there was a doctor, and he did a selection... yes? H--

Q: Did you use the term "selection" there?

A: Not just there, yes? "selection," after all, is a neutral term. A selection, simply means, to make... choices, yes?

Q: Yes, but, did you, there, call it a selec--

A: But, The Selection, The famous Auschwitz Selection, yes--

Q: No, no, I'm asking, there, did you call it a "selection?"

A: Did we ca-- did we call it a "selection?" I think so. I think so. I think, but I can't-- I can't swear to it, yes? Anyway, a sorting, it was a sorting, there was t-- there-- a doctor sitting there...

Q: And-- [cough]

A: He wasn't hostile, he wa-- empathetic, he sat there, as a person, doing his job, th--

Q: A German doctor?

A: German, a German doctor, _____.

Q: In-- in-- what kind of clothes?

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A: I think he was Wehrmacht, or white-robed, I can't remember.

Q: You can't remember.

A: Maybe, even, white-robed, sitting behind a desk... in an especially prepared barrack, and we went in through one door, all naked, everything, on the snow, from-- you-- ran from the barrack, it wasn't so simple, on the snow, with a pile of clothes, which you left, and then, you went through him, totally naked, he wrote down something or other, and you, took your clothes off, and they told you, go stand over there. And at the end of the day... there was one, large group, the largest, where I was-- where I was, apparently, it was still five thousand strong, it seems that we had eventually numbered more than five thousand, the Dutch had come, perhaps others, and... the rest, I couldn't see them. Among them, an uncle, the first, who I said was swollen, yes? He didn't-- he didn't come with me, the other one, did, he came to the same camp-- in the same group [cough]. At dusk, we were ordered, to take a stool, from the barrack, a stool each [cough], and so, with the stools over our heads, we marched on, we left the camp [cough] and we marched, for several hours, and got to a new camp, called (In German)_____. It was a few kilometers away from (In German)_____, still, close to the construction site, of the (In German)_____ factories, and in short, we moved, from a work camp, to a concentration camp, where it was the SS, the SS reigned [cough], with their ultimate aims [cough], when, meanwhile, or for an interim, we were, still, meant to be a workforce, until our strength was... ex-- extinguished, to continue the operation of... to co-- to continue,

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and... build those factories. I remember, when we got there, it was already dark, everyone with the stools over their heads, it was, also, not so simple, to carry that, all the time, and they put us in a lineup, everything was new, threateningly new, you were already accustomed to that camp, with all its dangers, I knew exactly, where was what, places weren't-- were less threatening, when you knew them [cough]. And then this SS officer appeared, on such occasions they'd always send this impressive, tall, arrogant guy, with his... impeccably clean clothes, and he, arrogantly, and... and frighteningly, said-- said to us: "You see? There are five thousand of you today... in one month, half of you will be gone." That's what he said... and I, I had no one to consult, no one to-- yes? I believed him, what he said, and I was truly afraid. And on the basis of that pronouncement, that promise, we were divided into barracks, larger ones... and these barracks had a different organization, they didn't have group heads, they had a (In German)_____, who was the barrack's master... he c-- he was omnipotent there, an absolute ruler, he was a prisoner, usually, they were prisoners... German, or other, criminals, who had been in a pun-- punishment camp, in some-- in some-- yes? And... the Germans, for their own reasons, saw them as... suitable material, to be sent here, to become (In German)_____, in the barracks, it was frightening, that... welcome, it was an intentionally violent welcome, and two things happened there, immediately. On the first day, or two. Even before I could begin to adapt to this thing... oh, I wanted to say, that-- sorry. Yes, yes, it was that same day, yes. We went into the barracks, and in my barrack, anyway, I had a (In German)_____, we called him (In German?)_____, he was a Ukrainian, not very tall, bald, this...

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Q: Doesn't (In German?)_____ mean fox?

A: Yes, a jackal.

Q: A jackal.

A: A Jackal, yes.

Q: A Jackal.

A: It means Jackal, (In German?)_____ means [cough].

Q: Yes.

A: He wasn't very tall, he was cruel, and he like to... beat people, torture them. No matter what you did, it didn't have to be much, you didn't-- you moved, perhaps, while standing there in a lin-- in a lineup, you... dared not breathe, there was this scene, of a father and son, how ever did they manage to survive (In German)_____, and

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come, father and son together, the father was quite old, the son was this very strong muscular man, really strong, the father was of the same ma-- the same... the same model, but alrea-- older, shorter, and frightened, and weak, and, perhaps, also sick, and he started beating the father, and the son, quite surprisingly-- this story sends chills down my back as I tell it to you, yes? because-- he stepped forward, and stood between this (In German), and his father, and ask-- he said: "I beg you, hit me..." he hit both him, and his father, for one minute, and then he calmed down and stopped... and I think the father was saved-- saved, thanks to that act-- it wasn't a fully thought-out act, of the son's, it was an act stemming from the depth of his commitment, and his upbringing, and his love, and... there are precious few stories like that. That is a real story, which I have experienced, which I have seen, and which made a huge impression on me, in the context of that great void where Jewish bravery should have been... that only goes to show the greatness of this man's acts, and of his bravery... and my own case was less... less heroic, with my uncle, the other one, the German deportee, and he also, in one way or another, wasn't to his liking, and he hit him, so hard, and there was no one to stand between them, a few days later he got sick, that is, couldn't go out to work, and then they sent him for final disposal. I never saw him since.

Q: Were you there, did you see him, being beaten?

A: Yes, I was present when he beat him.

Q: When he beat him. Where was this, in the barrack?

A: All in the barrack, in front of everyone, and you couldn't move, you-- it was all by design, inside-- it.. that barrack was built-- like so, th-- three sections, the main sections, that was the main hall, it also had this mess hall, and there dwelled his majesty, the (In German)_____, he had this niche in there, and it was like some cartoon, yes? A cartoon, where the prisoners would make his-- carry things from the camp, make his bed, and the one worked in-- in short, it was this... surreal... place, everything was surreal, and on each side, there were the... the... the beds, where we slept... the animal functions, we did in the main hall, there was this can, or bucket, and the duty officers had to empty this at night, yes? and were they in for it, if so-- some did, and some slacked off, and... then, either they were caught, or they had the cruelty to put the blame on someone else, and... they were really done for. The cruelty, at first, was so great... you could cut the fear with a knife. And I didn't feel it just in my... my barrack, I know, but that was where I had... I h-- I had the most-- direct experience of it. So, on the first night, we got into bed, with that painful experience, and the next morning, immediately, we had to give over all our luggage, on a field, so everyone had to put there all his luggage, and his clothes, undress, completely, and he'd get that luxurious, famed, striped, concentration camp uniform. The money was a problem, I solved it, I don't know how I managed it, although it was folded inside-- I had to undress, I guess, I seized a moment, when perhaps-- of inattention, on the... on the... part of whoever was supposed to o-- ver-- and how I managed, again, to fold it back in, and I had the new uniform on, I had slippers for shoes, like in the p-- w--

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wooden slippers, yes? wooden sole, and cloth, and... it was cold, cold doesn't cover it, it was truly cold. Winter, you had nothing, no undershirt, no nothing. Only y-- your pants, and shirt, and ha-- and hat, and shoes... there were many fatalities, th-- that time of year, and in that camp-- in that camp, there were not only Jews, there were also many Ukrainians and Poles. Prisoners. And when we came, they were already (In German)_____...

Q: The term (In German)_____?

A: It was there, already, yes, (In German)_____, already, we were using that term, they were really... all skin and bones, and the Germans, this wasn't enough for them, next to our camp, there was another, a punishment camp. That is, those, who even in that camp, didn't behave to their satisfaction, I'm talking mostly about the Poles, there we only-- I saw them, they had been transferred to the punishment camp. And in there... app-- apparently it was... Dante's inferno, apparently, pales in comparison, because this was... how do I know this? Because I met the prisoners, in the work cam-- in... the work site. They also had to work. They could hardly move, but they had to work. And for them, there was no privilege, none at all, no rest, no Sundays, nothing, yes? no heating, they were... walking c-- c-- corpses, few survived. Because that was a small camp, so they would take the... punishment-worthy out to that camp, and, either they'd dispatch them, or they'd expire on their own, and so they'd make vacancies-- that's what they told me, so they'd create vacancies for... for... new people.

Q: Did you see people-- d-- did you see corpses?

A: Corpses, I saw plenty of.

Q: Here, in this camp.

A: In this camp too, I was c-- saw corpses, of course, there were d... people who had died of starvation, of... of... of illness, and of... and of... and of beatings, particularly, for example, when there was an attempted escape, which there were, mostly not by Jews, the Jews didn't try to run, a Jew had nowhere to run to, because he-- I mean, if you run, you [don't] say: "I have a chance, I'll fall in with some Jews," but, a Pole, he could escape, he could fall in with his people, yes? So there would be an attempted escape, they'd get them, they'd almost always get them, and then they'd beat them to death, put him on display on a stretcher... it ha-- if it happened while we were away, they-- when we were back from the work site, marching like soldiers, then immediately they'd order, turn right, or left, you had to look, you don't-- they wouldn't just tell you, you had to look, look, closely, what happened, with a sign, "tried to escape," yes? so... this was one reason, there were others, yes? There was an incident, in that camp, and among Jews, one Jew had stabbed another, over some dispute, I don't know, and in the afternoon, the Germans made this display, I wasn't there, I was

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told this, not everyone had to go, there was this water leak there, so they tortured the stabber to death, by d-- d-- gradual... drowning, little by little, little by little, so he didn't expire immediately. And... there were plenty of incidents, some not e-- ending in death, but in incapacitation, in helplessness, in illness, in... being unable to last, it...

Q: Which were all things leading eventually to... to death, in these cases.

A: Right, so that's why, but that's what I'm saying. In the first month, there were hundreds, hundreds of bodies, I saw a lot of them, whether of... all sorts of causes, he had to... he was trying to make good on his... pro-- make good on his promise, there was real terrorism, I mean, during the day, you had to work, even the cruelest of camp commanders could do nothing about that, because that was, apparently, and order... a directive, a directive from on high, we had to go out, and be productive, but, later, he was king, he did as he pleased, and... human lives there-- depended on his goodwill, yes? or his... caprices, and in the beginning, he really kept his word, he actively realized it. But, as I said before, even in the cruelest place, on-- with time, once a-- a direct interpersonal acquaintance is formed, no matter its circumstances, or its purpose, they acquaintance itself, between the... prisoner and jailer, you know... there's this sublimation, of hostility, because hostility, when is it at its cruelest? when it's uninvolved, when there's absolute estrangement, when you see nothing in the object in front of you that you feel an obligation to. But, once... some acquaintance is formed, that has to relax a little, to re-- to cause a relaxation, in... in that uncontrolled, unrestrained cruelty. And that's what happened, eventually. Things were formalized.

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And one they were formalized, the inner personnel, who had been so cruel... also formed relationships, how? The Jews-- mostly the Jews, started bringing in... to camp, all sorts of th-- things they needed, drinks, some cake, some chocolate, that is...

Q: Where from?

A: I told you, how that went. In the work site, you had a connection, with the outside world...

Q: Did you keep working in the same places?

A: Pardon?

Q: Did you k--

A: We also kept, as I said, only... only the-- the camp was moved, but we kept going to the same work camp. That is, there were still connections, first, to the (In German)_____. They started bringing in, t-- there were also craftsmen, there, tailors, carpenters, glaziers, and... among the Jews, they started... sneaking into camp,

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it wasn't easy, but eventually, the guards were also not as alert. Alert. In the first month, it was terrible. Something like that, really, those who tried, they were caught, and... dispatched. But, eventually, their alertness also became a little... a little duller, that was natural. A person isn't capable of living in a constant state of stress, it's inhuman, it's impossible, it had to be, yes? and these... loopholes, these cracks, you'd exploit. They started bringing all sorts of perks for the (In German)_____, so they, already, had some kind of relationship, so, through them, there was, also, a relationship with everyone, that is, he was... he was also representing someone. It couldn't stay so impersonal. And furthermore, this dependency was formed, he expected them to continue, yes? so he couldn't... couldn't... couldn't... murder the egg- - the egg-laying chicken, particularly when they were golden eggs. So, first of all, internally, it was lessened, yes? and... again, you start recognizing people, by face, and by name, yes? you start-- you live together, you're living in the same place. And let me tell you this story, I had this experience right at the start. That was, again, a matter of luck, others, will say, it was randomness, providence, a miracle, what have you. That (In German)_____, he wasn't bright. He was... apparently, just some simple Ukrainian, a peasant maybe, I don't know, he was as in "a slave that he reigneth," he found himself in s-- such-- such a position of power, of absolute control, over human lives, over all the needs in the... in the barrack, and then, he had a caprice-- a caprice, on a Sunday, he was in a certain mood, and he had everyone sit in the-- room, it was a mess hall, also, r-- r-- that large room, the main hall, and he... asked: "who will sing me a song?" and I raised my hand. And I remember, I sang a Polish song, I can't remember the words, I still remember the tune, about a prisoner, yes? pining for h-- his sweetheart. Who knows who that prisoner was, what crime he had committed, and that's what I sang. And when I finished s-- singing, he bent down,

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took our a day's ration of bread, gave it to me. And from that day, I was a different person in the barrack, he was different person, in our relationship. I was no longer one, who should, or could, suffer random beatings, that was in the past... and... I'm just one example, because there were a great many other-- other examples, and one more thing--

Q: Wait, sorry, save that one more thing for the next tape, because we're at the end here.

A: Oh, OK.

End of Tape 8

Tape 9

Q: OK? Alright? I would like, for a moment, to go back to (In German)_____, because there's some... topic I didn't ask you about, and... here, it occurred to me, we should address it. You mentioned the father and son, that (A: Um hmm.) moving scene you described, and... you said, they were a father and son who had survived in (In German)_____, and got here, to (In German)_____. Would people often die in (In German)_____?

A: Less. Only those who starved to death. Very few died from other causes... illness, or beatings. There were some, yes? but few. Mostly, it was hunger, which extinguished people, who, for some reason, couldn't get some extra, those couldn't last more than a few months. Because it-- w-- because the food we got, was insufficient to sustain a person, in such-- in such work conditions. In such arduous physical conditions.

Q: And did you see them, wasting away?

A: I saw them, taking on a form which anticipated their ends, and the tell-tale sign was... you know, this kind of swelling, you could stick your finger, and it left an

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impression, what-- there's a medical term for it, I think, its... e-- edema, something like that, yes? anyway, that.

Q: And--

A: The...

Q: And-- and... did they die in their beds, or...

A: It's difficult for me to remember, they probably... they probably died in... personally, I never witnessed the actual death, yes? of those people, I only noticed, suddenly, they were gone, yes? And their situation would be recognized beforehand, and there were people who were more experienced, older than I was, and they also had a better understanding of this phenomenon, anyway, that's how it was, but there weren't many, I'm saying, there weren't many such incidents, yes? Even my uncle, who had been beaten so savagely, and seemingly, it affected, apparently-- perhaps, a little, his brain, but, they left him, still, enough strength, and with some little extra, which he, apparently, managed to get, beyond the half loaf I gave him, he could-- apparently, he, somehow managed, to get some extra, additionally, and he survived. For that-- for that period of time. And by the way, he survived, he lived through it.

Q: Yes. Well, back to (In German)_____.

A: Yes.

Q: You wanted to say something about the clothing.

A: Yes. So now, when I said, that... they undressed us, oh, they undressed us, they shaved us, with a bald patch in the middle, these were the concentration camp markings, they had rules, they had procedures, for marking prisoners, that is, we were, also, already, marked, we couldn't-- it was even harder to escape, because they'd immediately recognize you by the patch, and they dressed us in those famous uniforms, and it was really... very tough in the winter. Although you're young. Then, when you were working, you'd create animal heat, but you'd stand, and you'd stand a lot, and we had to find ways, and we did. We'd pad [cough] our feet, and our bodies, with... with paper mortar bags. And I'd like to tell you, that that kept us alive, in that respect. That is, all sorts of paddings, which we foun-- found, on the wo-- on the work site, we gathered those, to pad these... these... these clothes.

Q: Was that allowed, wasn't it an offense?

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A: Well... I never had-- I never had, the-- they would search us, I never had an incident, where they punished someone, for wearing some sheet of mortar bag, yes? Maybe they allowed... it, a-priori, because after all, they didn't want to kill every last one of us, otherwise, or they would've taken the appropriate actions, if they wanted us as... a resource, and a workforce, they might allow something like that. They would punish you when... they caught people smuggling things, trying to smuggle food, materials, and so on. One more thing, I wanted to say, that... they were very careful about... cleanliness, about hygienes, yes? and so, there would be disinfections, several times, we'd have to get into this chemical, very irritating, very unpleasant, and the showers were very very regular, and still-- very very calculated, warm, you'd have to stand in line, once a week, and you'd have to change your clothes at... at regular-- at... at regular intervals, yes? So that nothing could develop, also, from that direction, yes? and then, you'd take everything off, and you'd have to acquire new protective sheets. Shoes were a big problem. Those... s-- slippers wouldn't last, the cloth, and the wood, and-- but mostly the cloth, would tear. You had to march, with those shoes, to the work camp, a considerable number of kilometers, in each-- in each direction, twice a day, and mostly, in the r-- in the rain, in the winter, it was very tough... again, we'd find all sorts of ways, bags, all sorts of thing we'd found, there, on the work site, we'd pad it, and since we were, apparently, physically strong enough, we were also able to overcome that... problem, that problem... which characterized, that is, what made this camp different, from the previous one, as far as the da-- daily procedures were concerned, first, when you got up in the morning, you'd get your ration, in the barrack itself. And there were already... two or three people there, recruited by the (In German)_____, and the moment he recruited them, they were, already, better off,

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they would slice the bread. We'd get whole loaves, they had to c-- cut that, in slices, and here, again, they couldn't make all the slices quite equal, so some would be very happy, and others would be very miserable, on a given day, who had gotten the smallest ration, and I can't remember whether we'd get black coffee in the morning, or not, I can't remember, and... that came, also, with something on it, at first, again, either the sausage-- the famous blood sausage, or a piece of margarine, of-- or a piece of margarine. And with that, we'd go out, and report to the lineup, to-- in... in the lineup courtyard, for the lineup. And in the lineup, it was much more ritualized, it would take a lot of time, and the commander, he had this weakness, he'd come, and for several long minutes, "(In German)_____,” over and over again, hats-- hats off, hats on, and until he was pleased, supposedly, with the... synchronicity of these movements, it was, for him, a game... anyone, who wasn't standing upright, in his opinion, or who made some unwanted move, he would be in for a beating, that morning. And if, in his opinion, it was an even graver offense, then he would be given an exemplary punishment, as well.

Q: What-- what do you mean by that morning, you mean, on the spot?

A: It was in the morning--

Q: Was he beaten on the spot?

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A: On the spot, yes, they'd take him out, and... in front of all... if someone was late, for example, yes? that almost never happened, but, when someone was late, then... he was in for it... and then, we'd go out by a fenced path, this time, it wasn't an open path, as it had been in (In German)_____, we'd march through the fields, and by then I k-
- knew the seasons, yes? when the hay, when it was yellow, when it would start growing, that is, I was living nature, a little, and I told you, also, about my going to work, how inside all those troubles, I... took some comfort, in... in some beauty, which had an independent existence. In (In German)_____, also, I had the same experie-- I had these experiences, yes? and I could, instinctively, take... take... take... take pleasure in that. Here, we'd walk in a fenced area, and-- probably because, this was already, in the more... advanced... years of the war, and they didn't have enough manpower, so yes, the camp staff, and the commander, and everyone, they were SS, party members, but the escorts were, often, Ukrainians. Who had been recruited to the German SS. They were these companies, battalions, of Ukrainians, you knew the difference right away. They weren't clever, and they weren't c.. calculated in their cruelty, and-- they were, simply, cruel, because that's who they were. A German, he could be cruel, with some concept behind it, you could see, he was doing it.. and sometimes, he wouldn't even do it. The Ukrainians were, simply, cruel. They would beat people at the drop of a hat, just because. And... every day, you'd walk that path, five thousand people, to work, and that marching, in that way, was very tiring, very burdensome. Why? It wasn't a military march, where every walks in unison, so it doesn't matter, whether you're in the last group, or the first. That march was part civilian, part something else, to make things worse, the soldiers, they'd escort us from outside, we would be fenced in, and sometimes there would be puddles, so there was a delay, so sometimes, this long line, by the time you reached the end, there was a very

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large gap. The last ones, poor things, would always be running. They would always have to run, to catch up... to catch up with... and there were a great many tragedies there, a great many people were lost, because they couldn't catch up in... that race, as the... guards demanded. In the work site, it was the same, what happened there was, the Germans had appointed, for the work site, an overseer from among the prisoners, in the site itself. His name was Rosen. In (In German) _____, he had been a group head. A very short, blond, fair-eyed, handsome Jew. He was small, proportional, dexterous, smart and clever, really something. And apparently, he emanated this-- great assertiveness... and great charisma, and that was, probably, why he had immediately become, there, a group head, and here, he was selected to be the head... of the entire camp, in the work site. He was responsible for bringing them there, he was responsible for bringing them back. He was very very adept. That's the same Rosen, who hit me, as I told you, who hit me in the face with his whip, yes? I didn't begrudge him, for that, it was not at all personal. He did it, probably, to assert authority, to show who-- whom the prisoners should look to. That's how I understood it, although he was controversial, but, I took him for this person, who had a role, and he performs it. N-- not a pretty role. An inescapable one. And that Jew-- I'm starting, here, at the end -- he was so clever, so... charismatic, he created some very brave connections, with the Germans, of th-- in the site, and... a few months, two or three, before we left the camp, he managed to escape. That was a singular event, of someone getting away, and not being caught. Probably, some German, some say, even, a German woman, there were, also, women there, working in the site, yes? clerks, and engineers, and drafters, all sorts, it was a s-- c-- a huge work site, and once the-- some of of the factories... were finished, they had offices in them, there were a great many male and female clerks and people, they probably-- formed this brave relationship,

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and he was smuggled, off the site, and he was never found. I don't know what became of his, I never heard what happened after the war, whether he-- I'm certain this man managed... to do it. On the way back, again, we'd the same route, again, a lineup, and if everything was alright, which wasn't always the case, if everything was alright, they'd disperse you to... to your divisions, to your barracks, yes? and there, you'd also get soup. So there was a group, in charge of-- bringing the... the tools, the containers, from the kitchen, and the... the (In German)_____ and his aides, they'd pour you the soup, again, it was that same trauma, would he first stir it, mix it up a little, or would he... take only from the top, and the next morning, a gr-- that same group had to take these pots, very early, back to the kitchen, so they'd have time to clean them, and prepare them for refilling... in that barrack, when it was nice outside, they wouldn't let you in, they'd always have some of us polish all the stools, and all the furniture there, which was, always, kept gleaming clean, and the rest would loiter outside, wasn't, actually, anything to do, until they'd let you in, and let you go on the bunk, to pass the night... there were, also, duty officers, as I described, and that's how it went. Another thing, which was characteristic for that camp, and that was a first for me, I had never heard of it before, was the (In German)_____ phenomenon, I don't know if you're familiar with that term... when I came into camp, there were, already, as I told you, there were these (In German)_____ there, there was already a sign, there were, also, already, prisoners, several prisoners, there were Jews, as well, brought in from Auschwitz, or from other camps, and among them, children and boys. Younger, even, than I was. Not a lot younger, but younger. And they were brought in to serve the (In German)_____.

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Q: What did you call it?

A: (In German)_____. We called them (In German)_____. We attributed all sorts of things to them. Usually, these would be handsome kids, these... it could be, the Germans had other ideas, that... that, stands to reason, and... they were, always, lavishly dressed, they had ample food, they'd stay in the camp, they wouldn't go out to work, and... they had favor, by their being close to the (In German)_____. And they had conditions, good... living conditions in the camp... yes. And so the months went by, day and night, unvaried, on Sunday--

Q: Wait, you said, they had been brought from all kinds of places, including Auschwitz.

A: I heard there were some from Auschwitz.

Q: Did you hear that there? In the camp?

A: There, in the camp, yes, I heard it.

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Q: And what did you know about Auschwitz, in the camp?

A: We didn't know, we only knew it was a... horrible camp, we didn't know the details, it could be, these were people, who had gotten to the gates of Auschwitz, or to the initial selection, and were taken right away, yes? because there was-- there was a request, apparently, from headquarters, for people.

Q: Did you hear about mass extermination?

A: I didn't. I knew they were killing people, yes? I didn't know about the techniques, I didn't know about the crematorium, I didn't know about the selection in... Auschwitz, I didn't know the details. I didn't... k-- I didn't... didn't... wasn't familiar with the name Birkenau, I was ignorant of it. We were cut off. We were both cut off, and we didn't have the time, and curiosity, to attend to such things, outside of... the immediate concern, survival. Not getting beaten, not going into... traps, not going ill, if possible, yes? and making sure you had some clothing, something warmer, and something extra to eat. And... another thing, worth noting, in that camp, and, afterwards, I'll go back to another story, on Sunday, on Sundays, we wouldn't go out to work, not for our sake, but because all the Germans, all the staff there, wasn't working, so there was no one to oversee prisoners, like us, we stayed-- they kept us in the camps. So, to keep us busy, so, always, in the morning, they would make up all sorts of artificial things, to make sure we couldn't rest. One characteristic thing, summer and winter, it didn't matter,

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was cleaning. So you would scrub a window for some three or four hours. Clean it, if you got a window. Until... until you were done scrubbing it... often, on Sundays, the camp commander, would invite his family to his camp, which, usually, meant his wife and children, this restrained German family, like in... like in the pictures, well dressed, sitting inside... they made this balcony, there, for them, they'd sit there, and we would be marched... listen, this is an in-- incredible story, they'd march us like that. First the-- they formed us, of course... into a chain, of... marchers, yes? We were like... like... like a-- like in the army, in this formation. So, the starting point was, this place with a mound of sand, everyone would have to stuff their pockets with sand, stuff just the s-- th-- the sand from the mound, not from around it, into their pockets, and march with his group, to a certain spot, where they were to spill it back out. And they would sit there, on the balcony, I mean, he, his family, and a few other officers, and they... they would watch thi-- this act, performed for them by the prisoners, on Sunday morning. Can you imagine that? Can you see it in your mind? we were doing something silly, something childish, filling stuffing our two pockets with sand, from a mound, brought there especially for that purpose, it wasn't even useful work, yes? so, just to keep us busy in this way, before the commander, and the-- and his family... now... as I said, eventually, eventually, as the... weeks, and months, went by, and you started recognizing people, first by face, then, sometimes, also by name, the aggressiveness and cruelty started to soften a little... and... and you felt a little bit freer, and even the (In German)_____, it turned out, they were also people, who needed some human contact. At first, they had a job, to be cruel, and establish their status, and of course, to obey-- their masters, but, later, they would look for some connection. Some of them were prisoners, who were part political, part cr-- usually, they were criminal, but, some of the criminals were, say, there was a s-- a homosexual

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there. He was, actually, an artist, he liked theater, and there were others like him, and they wanted, on Sunday, afternoon, when we were, already, after the mo-- morning act, the moment you got up, it was either scrubbing glass, or marching before the commander and his entourage, and his family, plays. They would do plays. And oh how they'd improvise the-- all the costumes, I-- I remember, it was the... the... white horse, (In German)_____, yes? I remember the m-- the melody, eve, I remember the melody of-- [sings] it was the pl-- it was this famous play, and there was this one guy, among the (In German)_____, he was a German, probably a criminal, they brought him to be... to prepare the play, and he'd prepare such plays. And several times. And even the command-- the... the... camp command-- ers-- of the camp, even they softened, and they also wanted to do something for the prisoners, and we started getting this bonus. And I started getting, of my own choice, a bag of... of... (In Polish)_____, of... tobacco.

Q: Tobacco.

A: And you could have guessed what I-- what I needed tobacco for, I refused all the other options, all r-- f-- all alternatives, and took the tobacco, and that I would give to my German-- Viennese work manager, and for that, I would always get, for lunch, something. And... and it all softened a little bit. Less violence, less deaths. Eventually, yes? it all became more-- more-- a little bit more human, if you could even use that term... around that time, when it became a little more relaxed, I... was asked, in my group, on the work site, there was this guy, from my area, who was a clock smith.

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And he would advertise himself among the Germans, and they, when he got to camp, instead of sending him off to work, he stayed in the barrack, as I said, there were some barracks for the Germans there, and some for us, and there, in the barrack, he'd work, he'd fix their watches, their families', and he wouldn't fo-- he didn't... he didn't work. And... as a result, he also got, in return, he would get a lot of food... a lot of food, he had. And connections, and recommendations, and among other things, he fixed the-- th-- his-- news of him, reached the camp as well, so also, the Germans in the camp, they also gave him their watches to fix, and there was the kitchen commander, who was a German, a German prisoner, but a German, this kitchen (In German)_____, he also had him fix his watch. And in return, he had the privilege, to get food, a little extra food, from the kitchen, and he had so much, and he... liked me, so he said: "you know what, I have this watch, which I fixed for the (In German)_____, when you get back to camp, g-- g-- go over, and give him this, and tell him, I asked, if he could," give me soup. And then, I had, every day, I would go back from camp, I got an extra serving of soup. Extra life. And I prepared, to have some receptacle, that, also, wasn't so simple, the-- all these things had to be prepared, out of thin air. And alright, I wasn't pleased in other respects, I was cold, the work was hard, arduous work, all that, but there was-- there was food, that is, I could see, that my muscles were functioning. I was in the block, lying down, here too, down below, not on the bunk, down below, and next to me, again, across the passage, opposite me, there was this fellow, this firm, very muscular, very strong guy, and... and very energetic, he looked well. Why did he look well? He worked in the kitchen... how did he work in the kitchen? I mean he wasn't-- he wouldn't stay and cook all day, but, after work, and before work, he would work in the kitchen to-- cleaning the pots, helping there, and then, he would report to the lineup, go out to work, and come back.

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And that-- every day he had access to food. So he had food. Not only did he have food, he could give perks. And he extorted me sexually... he actually wanted to sleep with me, that was a first for me, I'd never heard of it, and I certainly didn't expect it in the camp, and he was very aggressive, when I rejected him, so he said to me: "I'll see you in the kitchen." He remembered how I would come to the kitchen, daily, and get soup. And indeed, the next day, when I came in, with my dish, he came out, already o-- with soup, grabbed my dish, and threw it-- I mean, th-- it wasn't a dish, it was this _____, and threw it away vehemently. I was left, both without that, and without a receptacle, that is, even if I coul-- wanted to com-- to come back, the next day, I didn't have what with, it wasn't so simple, you couldn't go to the supermarket [cough], or to Home Center, and buy a picnic cooler... at least, it didn't go any further. There was no more violence, and... you can imagine the rage I held in over this act, it infuriated-- infuriated me, in every way. Any way you... I mean, to-- with my makeup, all my moral value system was so far removed from such a thing, yes? He actually took some of my virginity, he... destroyed my innocence, the way he acted, and I felt welling in me an infinite power to resist him, because of it. Suddenly, I became this... feral cat, this tiger, I felt such superiority to him, and I realized, that was the extent of his power. He couldn't hit me, he wouldn't hit me, what else could he do? He had taken my food away, he had already done me ultimate harm, that was the extent of his power, he wasn't a group head, he wasn't a (In German)_____, that was the extent of his power. Suddenly, also, I felt pride, and such power over him, but I didn't know, exactly, what to do. And I don't know whether this was random chance, but shortly thereafter, I recognized, among the kitchen workers, who worked there, all day, my townsman. I don't remember-- I think, his name was (In German)_____, they were a family of... a father and three sons, all of them were... special. Blond, and

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tall, and very strong, very broad, and... that kind of people had a shot, if they weren't killed on the way, to g-- to get some position, yes? They were always looking for that kind of people, to be (In German)_____, to be group heads, to be in charge of something or other. And I recognized him, and he recognized me. But, favors were out of the question. Just recognition. And then, I remembered the money I had. And I came over-- I summoned my courage, and I told him: "listen, here, this is the money I have, let me work in the kitchen, in the morning, and in the evening, before going to work, and after I have been to work." And he said: "alright, I'll take care of it," and I started doing that. It changed my life. First of all, I wouldn't sa-- I wouldn't stand in the lineup for an hour, in the morning, I could, in my capacity as... a kitchen worker, I could come into the lineup at the last moment, so I sk-- I was spared the whole... "hats up, hats down," yes? and all the... and... all the anxiety, and cold, standing there... and most of all, I could get extra food, I became independent of the dish, I was... and I had a home, a job, and then the kitchen, the kitchen and... off to sleep. I wouldn't be vulnerable to things that would often happen, because you had nowhere to be, nothing to do between work, and... and really, that changed completely, that issue. So, as far as I was concerned, I was, already, better taken care of. I could, also, even, arrange some more clothes for myself, you get, here and there, some underclothes, yes? everything-- in that respect, everything changed.

Q: Was that because you had... you could give food, to a--

A: To myself. Just to myself, not give food to someone else.

Q: So how did you arrange the clothes?

A: Oh, yes, so... oh, how did I arrange them? But, I could, here and there, yes? It was dangerous, but I could do it, and in-- listen, you're in a group, where they have, already-- they feel they have affluence, and so, if they have something, they just give it to one another. You don't always have to give something in return. We would bring-- already, we were a separate group, yes? A separate group. I wanted to tell you something, in the middle, yes? there was this story, which I wanted to say, well I don't remember, I-- perhaps I will re-- I will remember. Anyway, that went on... that went on, I can't remember for how long, and h-- I mean, I had, again, this routine, of sorts, which was somewhat safer, yes? I knew I wouldn't starve, I-- I only had to make sure... not... not to run into things... into other kinds of danger, and then, one day, I was r-- working on those piles, I would always smoothen the Kit pile, that was my job, all the time, and fill it-- but they'd come and take some, and smoothen it again, so it looked good, and one day, after the... in... we were getting, almost, to the end... the end of the day, and I had to report for the lineup, I saw there, on a few cars... people were still working, and they were unloading some coal or something, and suddenly, one of them, one of the prisoners, threw something, a piece of coal, or whatever he had, threw it, threw it... and then e-- everything halted. Because the German immediately began shooting in the air, and shooting people, that is, they thought, this was a mutiny. And... this was a situation that... held me breathless. I was thinking-- I was sure this was it, they'd kill everyone, both because they were scared themselves,

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and because apparently, this was an acts, they couldn't accept, I-- until we-- lef-- in short, we stumbled back to camp in... very late, it took very long, and when we got to camp, then the grand act began. I almost fainted, I mean, I felt I was losing consciousness, s... they tortured us every which way, don't ask. Running, and... and kneeling, I mean, standing up, sta-- like so, you had to kneel and... hands up, it's torture, torture, and towards that end, furthermore, they this guy, who, apparently, had managed to get food, he looked really well, and it was thi-- this guy they chose, and they beat him, they flogged him, they almost took him out of operation, this man, they had us-- t-- they had us do these rolling drills, that is, you had to lie down, and roll, roll, roll fast, you'd go all dizzy, I fainted, because suddenly, you had to change direction, but, swiftly I... came to again, and it took me a few seconds, to figure out what was going on, they tortured us like that for hours. But, we came out, somehow, alive from that incident. That was the extent. That was the collective punishments, for one person-- I don't know what happened to the man, I think he was shot to death, I can't remember, I can't remember it, I only remember that tumult, with all the Germans, drawing together, and shooting, and shooting into the cars, and shooting into the air, a huge tumult. But, again, of course, despite of... this incident, things... went back to normal. It was, after all, the camp was too well organized, everyone knew their roles, including the Germans, and it could be, that they, out of inertia, didn't want things to change. And so it came to winter forty four, early winter forty four.

Q: I have a question, about your... your work in the kitchen.

A: Yes.

Q: After all, that... person, who... had abused you...

A: Yes.

Q: He was in charge of the kitchen, wasn't he?

A: He wasn't in charge....

Q: But?

A: He was like me.

Q: He was a kitchen worker.

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A: He was a kitchen worker like me, he had managed, before I did, to work in the kitchen, and in that way, he could get work, and benefits, yes? He had what I now had. I later learned this, yes? I didn't know exactly what it was, but, generally, I sought to be close to that place, because first, it was warm, in the morning and in the evening, it was warm, you weren't in the cold, and you were close to food, there was bound to be some. And I, only, what... they needed, were cleaners, for the... the pots.

Q: What I'm asking is, later on, didn't you meet him in the kitchen? Didn't he... also work?

A: He didn't w-- I can't... I can't remember, later, what happened with him, when I did meet him, he... he didn't abuse me anymore, he didn't want to go near me. Yes? I felt I had defeated him. Although at that moment, I had objectively been weaker than him, I wasn't. I disdained him, I had no interest, I wasn't even looking for revenge, he didn't s-- he didn't seem important to me, he seemed very contemptible. That's how I felt to-- contempt, w-- a very deep contempt, towards that man, that he could-- again, again, I discovered what a Jew could do to a Jew, under such circumstances, for me, Jewish brotherhood wasn't just an empty word, I had been raised to believe, that... that you'd never harm Jews, certainly not... maliciously, and when you had a choice. But I-- that was a formative incident, I would say, seminal, yes? You're in that age, when you're developing, you're in the process of developing, of... forming your character, by experience, things like that, they're deeply meaningful, in life, because it's a true, unexpected trial, yes? and you... use your powers, you display them, weaknesses or powers. And I, that moment, I displayed... I displayed power. That gave me some

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confidence... another incident I had, which I can't explain, to this day, there was this... guy-- the camp's chief (In German)_____, a Pole, to me, back then, he seemed so cruel, because I would see him s-- I would see him, how he would beat people, not just Jews, as he hit them, and abuse them, no mercy, no reprieve, and we feared him, he was a byword, with time, also, he softened, and when I t-- when I told you, they started having Sundays, with events, with plays, with men dancing, yes? There were... yes? Incredible that, in such a place, this kind of death camp, which... which bred an atmosphere of death, of cruelty, suddenly, there was this partnership formed between the oppressors and the oppressed, including him. And he started coming there too, and... when they'd give... cigarettes, or tobacco, there was a line. And I... I had a feeling, I could jump through the window, and bypass that long line. Suddenly, I felt a little more self-assured. I did it once, and it worked. The next time, I tried again, and was caught, by this man. He caught me, I already knew how he-- like so, strongly, like so...

Q: Be careful, the microphone.

A: Oh, yes... he looked me, s-- straight in the eye, and I looked back at him, and my look, it said it all: "I did it, what are you going to do about it? Go ahead--" I think, I neutralized him in... that gazing contest. He let me go, I can't explain it. I had committed an unpardonable offense, I subverted their order, but I had a feeling it... it was happy, it was this Friday-- Sunday, afternoon, it wasn't... it was no longer... a camp, it was something else. How I got out of that one alive, I haven't been able to

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explain to myself to this day. What does it mean? That this man, whom I perceived as cruel, with this dead-set disposition, that... no, it turned out that, in other situations, he acted differently. That is, he was also softened, by the fact, that he was suddenly in a human social group, which was preoccupied with other things, besides... aggressiveness and abuse [cough]. What else was especially noteworthy in that camp... I can't remember exactly... I remember this incident, just to show that, still, in... that apocalyptic situation, there were some slight moments of humanity. Human weaknesses had their effects. We had this one guy, also, from my area, very beautiful, and... there was this, German woman, who was... who d-- who did roof tiling for a living. There was such a profession, roof tiling, and she was called in, apparently, to do some repairs, some work, in our camp, on the barracks, professional work was needed, and of course, she had a right to choose an assistant, or several, she chose that guy. And they had a forbidden affair. And for weeks, she even prolonged the job, so as not to finish, so she could continue her... relationship with him. Yes? And that... in an impossible place, the last place you'd expect, you saw this... this kind of relationship. A German woman, it was forbidden for her, and still, the... chemistry... the interpersonal chemistry sometimes... often, would overcome such... prohibitions, yes? and maybe, also, the commanders were tolerant towards her. And I say, that's how... I got to late... late forty four, in the winter, a tough winter, and we had, already, heard, earlier, the Russians were coming, Germany wasn't so strong any more, they'd talk about it in the construction site, the Germans would talk about it, they were, already, themselves, they were preparing their alibis, trying to, and perhaps, thanks to that-- I told you about the group head who escaped, could be he rode that wave, of weakness, that wave, of many Germans, who were... reconsidering things, and who regarded this att-- empt, by a Jew, who wanted to save himself, now, in another light,

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and he might have benefited from that. As for me, I kept to my routine, and when I had-- when I wasn't at work, I was in the kitchen, that was the place. The kitchen. And as I'm in the kitchen-- when was it? Early January? I think so. Or the middle of January. I was in the kitchen, it was Sunday, Sun... sorry, no, no, no. It was... yes... Sunday morning, I wasn't in the kitchen. Sunday morning, I woke up, it was late, seven or eight, usually we'd get up at four A.M., and everyone was asleep. Something was up. And we weren't going out for any activity, in the camp. And then it turned out... Germany had problems, they didn't tell us exactly, but t-- there were, already, many rumors circling, and there were rumors, they were, probably, going to clear the camp... I, as usual, I had nowhere else, I went to the kitchen, and there I spent the whole day, in the kitchen, and at dusk [cough], I saw, all the kitchen workers gathering in the storehouse, and starting to ransack, to take. "What is it?" "We're leaving the camp." Well, then, I joined in [cough], I remember taking three things [cough]: I found a pair of rubber boots, that... rubber boots, a sausage, and bread. And I took those, and... shortly, we were formed into lines, marching out of the camp, and then the death march began... I had shoes, that was very important [cough]...

Q: B-- boots?

A: Boots, which I padded, of course, with all sorts of materials, because rubber isn't very good insulation, and I had food. And a sausage, that-- meant, you had a period, of many days, of life, if you had bread, then a few more days of life. So long as you

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could hold on to them. And with that I went out to... that m-- t-- m-- tha... [cough]...
that march.

Q: Before you went out, did s... someone tell you anything, why you were going,
where you were going...

A: I didn't hear anything.

Q: Which way...

A: All I knew was, I had to go with my group.

Q: And--

A: The same group I belonged to, when we w-- went... [cough] as we went out to
work.

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Q: And did that same (In German)_____ lead the group? Was it, still, (In German)_____?

A: Th-- no, it was, already, no... by then, there had been changes...

Q: Yes. But the (In German)_____--

A: I had changed barracks, there had been changes [sniff], but, it was, always, the (In German)_____, who was responsible for people going out to the lineup courtyard, and leading the way, there was always a group head, the same ones who lead us to work, yes? They were... they were the ones in charge of our march, as we left the camp.

Q: Maybe you should--

A: The (In German)_____ was only responsible for the block itself. Not outside of it.

Q: Maybe you should drink a little? You're coughing.

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A: Yes. I saw... yes... yes... and again, I had this absolute feeling, that, yet another chapter had ended. I had gotten used to that chapter... I had learned to handle it... and now, again, I was walking into the unknown, I don't remember exactly, whether I felt worried, or not, I was accustomed to being prepared-- being alert for change at any moment. I had no assets, I had to take with me the best, most useful things I could, and go. Clothes and food. That's what I needed. And I had these two things. And we started marching. And we marched, and marched, and it was snowing, and dark, and we marched, and every once in a while, the commander, of that march, would pass by... I can't remember his rank, in-- in a motorcycle with a sidecar, he was seated on... the side, and the driver, the soldier, would drive by, and back, to see that everything was alright, and back again, and we marched, and marched, and marched, and marched, I can't remember how long we marched, until we reached this place, and they told us to stop. And we did, it was out in the open. Snow... and... to sit down. I sat down, I dropped down, and fell asleep, and suddenly, I woke up, and I felt I couldn't feel anything, everything was frozen. And the sausage was frozen, and the bread was frozen, and my fee-- all was frozen, and in order to get up, I started to roll around. And I kept rolling, until I had thawed the inner frost, and nothing had truly frozen yet, and I got on my feet, and didn't go back to my previous posture again, and shortly, again, they rounded us up, and on we marched. That march, it's actually called a death march, because, first of all, you have to understand, it was a march of a great many very weak people. A great many people, who didn't have... appropriate... clothes for... such cold, such weather. And... you had to march at the pace they set, and if you lagged behind, that's what happened, there was a team of soldiers, all SS,

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that is, we were in a concentration camp, with all that it entailed... and they'd shoot. Anyone who lagged, who separated from the mass of marchers, very simply, they would take them down to... to... what's it called? to the lower margins, to the d-- to... to the ditches, that's it. To the ditches on the sides of the path, these were, usually, water ditches, yes? and there they'd shoot th-- shoot them, and that was that. I don't know whether they also had a technique for gathering the corpses, afterwards, I don't know, exactly, what they did with them. Now...

Q: Anyway, you saw people being shot?

A: Yes. I saw it more than once. Or, at least, I saw the people, and heard, immediately, the shots, it wasn't even a few hundred meters away. It was... they were at the end, the... that team, of SS soldiers, they were at the end of the... yes? and sometimes I happened to be in... among the last ranks, but we marched. And... what... made an impression on me, and probably not just me, wasn't the ones who were being shot, but, those people, who had no strength left, sitting and leaning against some tree, with their eyes saying it all. They knew their fates. I don't know whether there are... there are-- I'm sure there are-- painters who painted those images, I've never seen any, but, that is something, which is very difficult, I mean, it's impossible to forget something like that. A person sitting like that, waiting for death, I don't know what he's thinking about, whether he's thinking of justice, or he's thinking of home, or is he thinking of nothing at all? Is he indifferent? He... has accepted the end, he's not marching any further. And that image kept repeating itself throughout, people who

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had no strength left, they couldn't persevere any longer... with no one to help them, because there were some, few, instances [cough] of help, here and there, and one of which, is-- do you remember I told you that when... there was this alleged mutiny, when a prisoner threw some microscopic stone, and we came back into camp, so they chose this guy, who looked well, looked... yes? and... g-- and beat him, yes? and humiliated him for all to see. That man, at on-- on that march, at one of the stops, and that was... I don't remember, now, what day it was, after a very long, very exhausting march, there was this pause at certain d-- we got no food, we'd get, at most, something warm, some soup, or something like that, and I, secretly, nourished myself with the sausage, which, also, wasn't so easy, how to cut it, you had to improvise everything, you couldn't let anyone see, because if you did, they'd finish you together with it, and I will have, later, a story, about that, and we came, after-- I don't know how much time, or how many days, I don't-- we got to a place, and the commander, he put us into this thing, in... a ba-- that place where they put hay...

Q: A barn.

A: Barns. Inside barns. And there was hay. Paradise. There were the hay piles of the p-- yes? which they had collected, collected for the winter. A struggle for room, there wasn't enough room, so it was a struggle for room, I found some for myself. And... and I fell asleep. And by and by, I felt this struggle, it was like in Jacob's dream... and became somewhat more wakeful, and I felt there this hand, grabbing with-- discovered the bread... and we had this silent tug of war, neither said a word, and it

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was so fierce, that I only had crumbs left of the bread, it was already dry, I only had crumbs left. He couldn't take my bread, do you know how lo-- it t-- it... it took forever. That struggle, at night, he found it, in my pocket, and I wouldn't let him, and I managed, and I managed to keep him from taking my bread. And then it was all crumbs. Some of it spilled out. To this day I don't know, who he was, I didn't see him, how he looked, because the moment he failed, apparently, he slipped away, he moved, but that night... and... that night, there were... the SS shot into the barn. Shot, they shot, into it. That, perhaps, was another one of those acts of terrorisms, so that no one c-- n-- no one conceives of doing something, and whom did they hit, among others? That man, who had been beaten, during that incident. His leg was shot. And why am I telling this? Because he kept inching on, on that march, supported by this guy. And imagine, how hard it was for the person supporting him, why, he, himself, also, was an exhausted, weak man, and they kept going, and going, and going, I can't remember how it ended with them. So, that, again, is a special image, in that impossible situation, where there was a display of some humanity, some compassion, of... of mercy... in an almost purposeless situation. No... hopeless, how long could he keep going, on such a long march, with a bullet in his leg. With a wounded leg, where even people, who could walk, couldn't last? That march wasn't peculiar to us, because all the camps in the east were marched westwards... some were eliminated on the way, that you know, just, I was... I lived through that march, I don't know whether it was the worst of them, the commander actually... n-- my impression was, he... was trying to do something, yes? I didn't feel he... he was being especially cruel, he was doing his job, the result was cruel, but... and apparently, the soldiers, they had orders, not to leave any living prisoner behind on that march, and that-- that's what they did. And... after a length of time, we got to this place, called (In German)_____. That was the

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first time I heard the name... and as I said, I was, already, at a time, when each day, it seemed that yesterday had been better. You couldn't imagine how it could get any worse. Every time you'd think "that's the worst, it can't get any worse than this." And when I got to (In German)_____, I indeed felt that everything that had come before had been tolerable, had been reasonable.

Q: How long did it take, the walk to (In German)_____?

A: I can't remember now exactly. I can't remember exactly. I do remember one thing, that we got to (In German)_____ by train. And... how long we marched-- and to (In German)_____ we got on foot [cough]. We walked for several days, that I know, I can't remember exactly [cough]. Let me have a little water... it was a march, where you went down an endless, snowy path, all you saw was sky and snow, and a group of peoples, without faces, without feelings, just this group-- this walking mass, like looking at this wagon, being pulled along, m-- marching slowly, covered with this... this canvas, nothing, a mass-- a walking mass, not people. Yes? That mass kept going, march forward, on and on, and all you had was sky, and all you had was snow. The only food was, on some days, was snow. And I, with the scraps I had left, I nourished myself, and I knew I had this extraordinary advantage, yes? thanks to... those few marks I had up my sleeve, so I could work in the kitchen, and by chance, I-- wouldn't have-- it wouldn't have occurred to me, to go into the storehouse, and take things, but, once it was breached, and I saw no one was in charge any more, I took some too, not a lot, but I did, and that was enough to make the difference, the

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difference, between possible and nil. Between having a chance, and nil. And... it was tasteless, that sausage, it was frozen, everything was frozen, the bread crumbs were tasteless, but, apparently, still, inside, they h-- d-- they did something, thanks to them, I managed to get to (In German)_____ safely. At night.

Q: We've... finished another tape.

A: Yes.

Q: I--

End of Tape 9

Tape 10

A: [cough] I'm ready, I'm dressed...

Q: Well, it's been a few months since we last talked.

A: Yes, last time, was it December?

Q: January, sixth, or seventh, I think...

A: Oh, January.

Q: Because the first meeting was on December thirty one, and a w-- a week later.

A: Oh, March, April... almost four months (Q: four--), you mean to tell me, yes?

Q: Yes, four months.

A: You mean, it's been four months?

Q: Yes.

A: yes.

Q: And we need to get back into it.

A: Yes, we need to get back into it, yes.

Q: You were telling-- you got in your story, to when you reached (In German)_____.

A: Then wait a minute, are you inserting this... this intermezzo, in... in the q-- you're cutting this, no? Later.

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Q: It... it's on...

A: Oh, it's on the tape, yes.

Q: It doesn't bother anyone.

A: yes. OK. Please.

Q: (In German)_____.

A: Yes, oh.

Q: (In German)_____.

A: So... I don't remember exactly where I was at...

Q: You only said, you got to (In German)_____ on foot.

A: To (In German)_____. Oh, yes. Now, when I... try to remember, it's not so simple, both getting into the mood, and remembering the exact details, I couldn't really remember them then either... anyway, we arrived at dusk, it was dark, to the camp... it's funny, I had been to several camps, they all had this special smell. It's hard to define it. They didn't smell like air. They had something, which gave off this peculiar smell. A mix of disinfectant, of... of... people, of... cooking, of... it was a peculiar smell, I remember it exactly, there was this peculiar smell, it was dark, there were shouting, and beatings, it was dreadfully cold, it was... it was January, it was very cold, and after that famous walking of... the death march, those who made it, me included, were taken in groups-- were taken in groups, to the buildings. And we passed by buildings... which were still in construction, unfinished, no windows. And I thought: "Here, the Germans are preparing new buildings, to expand the camp, and we, of course, were to go into the... regular buildings, which were, oh... how do you call them? Barracks, barra--

Q: Wooden?

A: Yes, yes, I mean, wooden structures...

Q: Barracks, barracks...

A: Barracks. For wooden barracks, they were standard fare, yes? but, there I was buildings, which were of bricks, and eventually, I saw, they were putting us, in groups, into the unfinished buildings. There was nothing inside, except for a cast concrete floor, and so we w-- were supposed to... pa-- pass the night.

Q: In--

A: All, of course, with screaming, and beating, it was a very dense space, you had to go in quickly, and you had to grab a spot, and then, the... the... familiar scene played itself out, yes? of, what with all the shouting, and... pushing, people were pushing each ot-- other, and they didn't know exactly, which spot to grab, yes? what the best spot was, and eventually it turned out, all you had to do was grab an open spot. Those who couldn't, were... were in mortal danger.

Q: What do you mean by an open spot?

A: An open spot on the floor. The floor, it had a... certain defined perimeter, and people had to find a spot on the floor itself. But, once they first ones had taken up the

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whole surface, the whole area, people who had no room left, loo-- they looked for a spot, and couldn't find one, on the floor.

Q: They walked over... over... the people...

A: They walked, lay down, and then they were thrown around, there were those, also, who c-- who died from-- just from that, I mean, it was... that scene repeated itself, by the way, in (In German), every night, it was the same. Every night it was the same, a person would be left out, a person, or persons, weren't-- who weren't swift enough, or for some other reason, came in last, and couldn't find a spot, and then they were thrown off, because, you couldn't take this other...human body, on top of yourself, you could hardly breathe, and... on the other hand, once you had a spot, you felt safes, because it was fiercely cold, and with people packed together-- it was all wide open, you can imagine, it was as cold as, at least, twenty, twenty five degrees [Celsius] below zero, all wide open, in the winter, and with people packed together, you could tolerate that cold, yes? and-- even sleep at night. If you had to get up, it was like getting out of a can of sardines, it was an effort, I remember, I myself had to do something, my hand fell asleep, it was a... herculean effort, just to... to get myself out of that pressure, we were that condensed.

Q: What did you do, on the first night, when you came in, you had--

A: I grabbed a spot, I was lucky, I grabbed, that is, I saw, people were lying down, I lay down, next to the others, and grabbed a spot.

Q: W-- what physical condition were you in when you got there?

A: A very bad physical condition, of course, as I said, I was lucky, because I was equipped with a little food, I could survive the... m-- that... that march... at least, preserve my own strength, with this minimum nutrition, which others didn't have. And how much-- and... strength I derived from that food, and how... how relevant it was to... to my survival in (In German)_____, that I don't know, I assume it was, because people who didn't have it, were doomed, no doubt about it, because you couldn't take, both the beatings, and the physical efforts, we were subjected to, or even survive the night, and the fierce cold, and the hunger. And... that was the first night, I remember, and in the middle of the night, it looked to me, it seemed to me, it was the middle of the night, it could have been just before dawn, maybe four, four or five AM, it was dark, of course it was dark, they got us up, and out for a lineup. And that was one of the worst horrors of (In German)_____, were the lineups, and the fierce cold in the morning, you'd go out, wearing nothing, except those famous pajamas, and I was lucky, as I said, I ha-- I had rubber boots, rubber boots, which I padded with bits of paper and all sorts of things I found, and you'd stand there for hours. You'd stand outside for hours, because in (In German)_____ they had nothing to do with the prisoners... they didn't send them to work, it was this... halfway

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camp, apparently, that's what I make of it in retrospect, a halfway camp, which took in... prisoners from all... from all over, from various camps evacuated by the Germans, and from there-- I mean, it was a halfway camp, and from there they'd send people onwards. Some for death, some for another march, some for other camps. And so, in the... time we spent there, and I can't remember, exactly, how long I remained there, in (In German)_____, not long, the great horror were... the lineups. The morning and af-- afternoon lineups. They had nothing to do, so they'd hold us in a lineup, and in a lineup, you had to stand. You had to stand as if on guard. You'd be in for it, if they caught you in a posture the commander didn't like, when he came over. Your feet would be cold, your feet... freezing cold, and you had to move your feet, if only to get a little blood flowing... and people would be caught, and beaten, just for that, for hours on end. And when, once I learned the suffering of... of that... that standing in the lineup, it became a trauma, I-- I was ahead-- I mean, I would go to sleep, I would no longer, even, enjoy the rest, I wouldn't let myself enjoy it, because I was already anticipating what was to come, being torn ou-- out of the middle of sleep, yes? and taken out, from this warmth, to a s-- from... from... from a certain situation, which was, relatively, pleasant, into the fierce cold, and standing there, until eleven AM. From early morning, until eleven o'clock. At eleven, the Germany commander, the German officer, would come, he... would receive the tally, they'd count the prisoners, and then, we'd get something to eat, I can't remember anymore, it was one ration a day, no more, some soup, or so-- I can't remember, exactly, what it was, there wasn't... there wasn't even bread, and that's it. We didn't work. In between... I would, always, exit the ba-- that building, yes? That building wasn't numbered, and you had to remember, exactly, where it was, so you didn't go wrong, yes? That was a problem, and I went out, to stretch my legs a little, and-- and see, whether I could find some

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acquaintance, and by and by, I saw... what I hadn't seen in the previous camps, just, living corpses, walking around the camp. These were people with a wholly inhuman aspect. They... staring eyes... were they hallucinating, were they thinking of anything, were they in some sort of trance? People with... not one iota of fat, all... all... like a skeleton. A skeleton covered with skin. That, you could see on their face, that you could see on their... hands, because the rest was covered with... with the prisoners' uniforms, and I just went, and went, and I wanted to see if there was someplace I could bathe, yes? I mean... rudimentary things. And by and by, this guy called me over, one of the (In German)_____, who were... of... the camp staff, and he took me around some building, and there, I saw a line of corpses, people who had just died, of... of exhaustion, and my hands were freezing, freezing, and I was, constantly, just trying to warm them up, I didn't have pockets to... to warm my hands in a little, and he told me, to take their uniforms off-- their... clothes. I remember, I bent down, I wanted to take these shoes off, there was one, there, with shoes on, and I couldn't untie the lace, because my hands were frozen. I mean, I had no command of my joints... and... I had learned, a little, a little, during the years I had spent in camp, a little on how to evade, how to-- to take advantage of certain situations, I saw there was no one there, so I tried to... slip away, and then he came around the corner, and grabbed me, and told me: "would you like to be one of them?" I don't know what reconciled him, what... made him forgive me, he didn't even beat me, and he let me go back to that work.

Q: Was he a Jew?

A: No. No. He wasn't a Jew, he was someone. He could have been... a Russian, he could have been a Czech, I can't remember, there were all sorts...

Q: Do you remember what language he spoke?

A: German. Everyone spoke German, yes? because that was the Germans' language, and that was the language, in which the Germans... communicated with the... prisoners and... the prisoners had to... [cough] communicate, yes? in which. And so the days went by, yes? terrible days...

Q: Is that alarm here?

A: Which as--

Q: Wait one second.

A: Yes. May I?

Q: So... one moment.

A: Itsik?

Q: I... I'll remind you, let's... we can-- yes. That (In German)_____ who... forgave you, when...

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: You tried to slip away, did you continue to... do--

A: Oh yes, I meant to say that... I don't know what... I can't remember, exactly, what his nationality was, I can only say that, apart from that incident, all I can remember, right now, is the... is the... terrible feeling, in there, in that camp, which wasn't in previous camps, a feeling that there was no value, to any human being there. That it all-- whether you were done with, or whether you weren't done with, it was all so arbitrary, your continuing to breathe was so arbitrary, and your ceasing to breathe was so arbitrary, I mean, there was no order, no routine, not even a routine, the Germans, who had always maintained a routine, terrible as it might have been, it was a routine,

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you'd know the hours, you'd know the times, you'd know what they expected. No, nothing, everything was one big chaos, that's how it seemed to me, people-- especially, the way people would walk around, aimlessly, to and fro, yes? when I walked, I went looking for something specific, perhaps I also looked like that, from the outside, yes? I saw, living creatures, part living, part corpses, walking, staring creatures, and they seemed to be going nowhere in particular, no designated goal, and that was (In German)_____. And... whether you live, or whether you didn't, it was all... so arbitrary, it was all so... unpredictable, and you'd be at the mercy of this unseen hand, which could at any moment snatch you into the abyss. That's what I remember of (In German)_____, and I can't remember, exactly, how long we remained there, until, again, one night, to the lineup--

Q: O-- one second, before you leave (In German)_____...

A: Yes.

Q: Did you go back to... perform that?

A: Yes, after that... I went back, because... he... let it-- slip, he didn't beat me, he could have beaten me to-- to death, and that... it wouldn't have taken that much beating to make me a... dead man, because there was... little resistance in... the state w-- in the

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physical state we were in. In the physical state we were in. No doubt. And I resumed it, and I did my thing, I can't remember, until I managed, and... how long it took, I can't remember now, that image remained imprinted on me, how I couldn't untie the lace, I tried to slip away, and I failed, he caught me, and I expected the worst, and it didn't happen-- it didn't come. I resumed it.

Q: You said earlier [cough], there was a problem remembering where you had to go back to, to... to the booth...

A: Yes.

Q: To the barrack. Did it matter, which booth you went back to? Was there some kind of allocation to booths?

A: Yes, because they would-- they'd count, they'd count the prisoners. After all, the lineup, what was the lineup about? You'd stand, until the commander received, from the (In German)_____, or from... the prisoner in charge of the group, until he received the tally from him, and... he'd count, there mustn't be even one person missing. Yes? The entire camp would be on its feet, if someone went missing. And that ha-- had happened several times, that's the worst things that could happen to the camp commander, to have a prisoner missing... so, on that issue, there were no

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compromises. So that's why, you had to go back to that same place, where you would be counted, and complete the tally.

Q: Let's-- wait a second, for...

A: Yes.

Q: B-- beep to pass... yes... and... do you-- do you remember anything else of... what happened in (In German)_____?

A: I can't remember exactly, I'm telling you, I keep seeing that... surreal image, which I... which I can't... I can't remember anything like it, except in paintings, or, maybe, in literary descriptions, yes? strong enough to convey such a situation, it's a situation, which I lack the artistic talent to describe... K. Tzetnik called Auschwitz a "different planet," I think that doesn't cover it. It's... it's breathing objects, part living, part dead, walking around. Aimlessly. Maybe it's more like this insane asylum, sometimes you see, sometimes, usually in movies, when they depict insane asylums, non-v-- with non-violent patients, who are... walking around aimlessly, this way and that, and they have... an aspect... which is incomprehensible, to the average person. That's what I remember of... of (In German)_____.

Q: Did you have anyone you could talk to there?

A: No. No one. I can't remember a single person, whom, I was close with, or whom I connected with, or whom I could recognize, not one. That is, we came out of a camp, where after s-- such a long time, I h-- had know many many people, and by and by we got mixed up, and... many of us passed on, and when we got to (In German)_____, also, we were taken, in apparently random groups, I don't know exactly, I can't remember, a single one, at the moment, I can't point to one person, whom I would recognize, as having seen him in (In German)_____. I wasn't lonely there, I was threatened. I mean, it was, for me, a climax, a climax of the meeting between life and death, not incidental, not at certain moments, because... because I-- I was already accustomed to that for short durations, you were frequently in life or death situations, on the tip o-- on the tip of-- on the tip of some... kind of thing, but, here, it was all-- it... it was a constant thing, yes? All the time, and in... in... that dichotomy, yes? which I constantly faced, apparently I... fought, I... applied my... my... my... survival urge, and that why, I can't remember anything else, that, I remember exactly, and everything I told you, I picked up, not as a person who has time to observe, yes? and take in the situation consciously, but, these are the things, which picked up by the way, while I was facing these dire straits, and that, also, may be why, I can't remember anything else from (In German)_____, maybe something did happen there, I can't remember. It was a short period, but it was infused with this very, very intense feeling which I can't even describe, of an inhuman human situation. An inhuman human situation. Humans in an inhuman situation. Nothing human, as we

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know it, was displayed, expect for horror, and... and maybe that (In German)_____,
he was the most human of the lot, maybe , as I remember him, from (In
German)_____, how he... in his behavior, he let it slip, maybe, he gave this whole
inconceivable situation a positive human dimension.

Q: While you were in (In German)_____, were other prisoners brought in?

A: Constantly. Conscience. So, when I had spent a day there, I regarded those who
came the next day, as "Greens." They still didn't know what they were in for, yes? I
was already a veteran. It would only take one day to get the hang of it. With the entire
routine, condensed into one night, one night and one morning, you already knew
exactly what was going to happen.

Q: I'm going... back a little, before you got to (In German)_____, you walked for
a few days.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you know anything about why they were evacuating you...

A: I didn't know the specifics, but we understood, the... the Germans were retreating. But, we also knew that, the more anxious they became, the greater the danger for us.

Q: Did it occur to you, on that march, to try to escape? There were people, who thought...

A: No. You have to understand, that issue, of escape, was... esc-- that issue, could only have been relevant, or thought of, if you had some glimmer of hope that you had somewhere to escape to. For example, I remember... that... that head (In German)_____, in the (In German)_____ camp, I think, I even told you about that, it was this short Jew, very smart, very charismatic, who was at the head of all the thousands who went out to work, to the work site. He would take them out, he would bring them, yes? and he managed to escape, because he had formed a connection, so they said, I suppose it's true, he a-- he formed a connection with someone at the work site, where there were, also, many non-Jews, and they managed to smuggle him out in a truck, and he probably stayed in hiding, unless he was caught, with some fam-- some... some... some... some family, until the end of the war. That was the only way. A Jew, who didn't have personal connections, had nowhere to go. It made no difference, it was a camp outside as well. There were also Germans outside. And the... civilians, either because they were Jew-haters, or because they didn't want to risk it... you couldn't easily hide Jews without taking a risk... I mean, there was nowhere to run... so... you... thought, that perhaps you had a better chance where you were at.

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Amongst so many thousands, maybe, statistically, you could manage something. But, outside, you'd be on your own, up against everyone else, on your own, and if you had no countermeasures, no hiding place, no place, where you could expect, to be able to get food, to be able to lay your head, on... on some place, there was nothing you could do. So, that's why, this idea of escape, es-- that comes up, occasionally, not only regarding those who were on the death march, but, generally, why didn't Jews run away? They had nowhere to go. And those who... the-- and there were a truly tiny handful, who escaped, who hid, and everyone knows the stories of those people, who lived underground for years, but that's only true for a few individuals, and because they were individuals, they, somehow, survived. Had they been in groups, they would have been caught, that's obvious. So, there was nowhere to go...

Q: When you were in (In German)_____, did you know the word “(In German)_____?”

A: Yes. I had known the word (In German)_____ long before. Yes.

Q: Oh, right, I'm remembering you...

A: Yes yes.

Q: You mentioned it.

A: Right, a (In German)_____... was a prisoner, in a physical condition, you'd see, exactly, what he'd look like, yes? under his clothes, he was skin and bone, literally. He was a walking skeleton, while he could still walk. Walk. Next to us, in (In German)_____, I think I told you, there was a punishment camp. I mean, a concentration camp, that wasn't enough for the Germans, they also had to pu-- have a special camp to punish concentration camp prisoners, who misbehaved, yes? and who had not been sufficiently punished, in their opinion, by the camp commanders. So, they set up this camp, where conditions were... from the first, conditions were very bad, the... living conditions, and eating conditions, and sleeping conditions, everything was worse [cough]. And they would also be taken out to work, to the same work, and that's how I met them [cough], the vast majority, they were skeletons, I can't even understand, to this day, how they could, even, manage to do anything. And they did, actually, drop like flies. And usually, I would see them in the winter, next to some barrel... with embers, which would be there, not to warm the prisoners, but for other reasons, and they would be drawn to that place, like... cats, like dogs, to some... to some source of food, yes? they would know right away, from afar, they would smell the heat, and they would take a risk, they would risk their lives, just to warm their bodies a little, for a few seconds. There I would see them, and there we would talk, in secret, we weren't even allowed to talk, to them, but, with time, you also learned, to take risks, as well, yes? You were always in danger, and... you would, sometimes, see the danger passing, and... a person c... is, also, a creature of habit. So,

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it was even a risk to talk to them, it was forbidden, even to... go near them. So, I had been familiar with the (In German)_____ issue, we had been familiar with it, for a long, long time. I r-- can't remember, exactly, what was the source, of that term, what it had to do with people... of that kind...

Q: We were in (In German)_____.

A: yes, I'm saying (Q: G--), in (In German)_____, I have told you, I think, the whole story, I'm straining my... m-- my brain, and my memory, I can't remember... can't remember, at this point, any additional detail, or details, of my stay there, I only remember that, one night, they directed us to re-- p-- to report outside, to fall in lines, and march, and then, towards... towards some railway, where there were cars waiting for us, and as usual, you didn't get on peacefully, they'd beat you from behind, those who... could do it... did it, those who couldn't, would also be beaten, and you went up, and grabbed a good spot in that car. And I, as I was going up this way, being pushed this way, I had glasses, somebody hit me th-- un-- unintentionally, hit my glasses, and I lost a lens. And... that's how I ended the war, with this blurry vision, added to the intrinsic blurriness, of the state of affairs. That I remember, I remember the time from when I went on the car, and until the-- until the eleventh of April, as predominated by my glasses, with one lens, I remember that, all I had on my mind when they liberated me, later, practically, I still didn't know how-- it-- it was finding an optician, who could install a second lens. I had it done in Weimar, by the way.

A: What kind of cars were you put in?

Q: Open freight cars... packed, again, like... like sardines, with no hygienic provisions, and off we went. That famous image you see in the movies, Germans with dogs, with their commanders, scattered all over the platform, urging the prisoners to board, some of them charged with flailing whips, that whole image, exactly as depicted in movies, that's how this process of getting the prisoners on board went, it all had to be swift, orderly, in keeping with their timetables, with their orders, and cars were closed, and... off we went. With no provisions, with nothing at all.

A: On the cars themselves, were there SS guard?

Q: No. No, there was nothing on the cars... what did they have to-- what did they have to guard? They also had to suffer, to be inside there, no. They locked the cars from outside, yes?

A: You said it-- these were open cars.

Q: Open to the outside, yes. You had nowhere to run. Th-- they weren't concerned you might run away. You had nowhere to run...

A: And off you went.

Q: Pardon?

A: And off you went.

Q: And off we went. And went. And because these were open cars, I was, also, able to see some of the scenery. Some... the area we were going through, it seemed very very dark to me, I can't remember, exactly, how long rode, and we got in front of (In German)_____, and I remember, there was a field there, of... some crop, it was either cabbages, or it was beets, anyway, there was this guy, a German, who did something, I don't know, it was probably some scraps of-- it was winter, and he had gathered a few l-- leaves, and threw them into our car... and I caught a piece. It was all arbitrary. By chance. Also, a surreal image. In the winter, there were leaves, in the field, and he was throwing them in, and we... we were were catching them and eating them. I don't know whether everybody managed to digest them, I did, I don't know what happened with the others, it probably wasn't... it was weeds... edible weeds. Something, you could digest. And so we reached... (In German)_____.

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Q: On the way, as you went, were there any bombings, delays?

A: I can't remember anything, anything, I can't remember, from that journey, we reached (In German)_____ -- I can't even remember how long we rode, it's not so far, I think, from (In German)_____, and-- and maybe, that's why, it was inexpedient for them to march us, because, to march us, they needed logistics, they had to escort it with... with soldiers, with... yes? There was a problem, of people falling down, and they had to shoot them, and... and... I don't know what their considerations were, they got us-- they got us on those cars, and we got to camp... and... we reported to the lineup courtyard, and from there... from there... they lead us-- yes. There was no room in their barracks, it was all full-- why... why was it full? Because (In German)_____ [cough], (In German)_____ was designed for a certain number of prisoners, and... during that period, there were prisoners coming from various camps, which the Ger-- the Germans were taking deeper, inside Germany, and one of the camps, which... which was supposed to take in some of those prisoners, was (In German)_____. And they had no room left in the barrack, so they set up tents. Forget-- don't forget, it was winter, and a European winter in Germany meant snow, dreadful cold, we got into these barracks, there was nothing. The floor was just sand, there was nothing--

Q: One second, wait a moment.

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A: Yes... of, right... yes. Yes, so they set up these huge tents, sometimes with puddles inside, sometimes, even ice, which had slipped in, and everybody found a spot. And there, I rem-- I can't remember exactly, whether I spent a day there, two, or three, I probably spent a few days there, because I remember-- that was the image of these tents, that was the first image of (In German)_____, human life was meaningless now, people would actually die of exhaustion, or hunger, not necessarily from beatings.

Q: One second... it's double...

A: There prisoners arrived there exhausted--

Q: W... did you stop the camera earlier? Then, when you restart it, change the frame a little, alright? Um... in general, when you stop, it... you... and restart it, change the size a little...

A: Yes. So what, should I go on, or...

Q: Yes. Let's go on.

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A: Yes, as I was saying, people arrived in (In German)_____ exhausted, and they would just die of... fatigue, and hunger. What happens to a person [cough], who had no food, and who exerts himself, and who is subjected to such fierce ph-- physical effort, after several days of marching on foot, and when I would wake up, I would, very simply, be lying among the dead. They would just die during the night. Every day, every morning, when I got up, the dead were lying around me. And I got used to... surprisingly, or not, I got used to that. I would get up in the morning, I would find people, who were breathing, and talking, the night before, and they wouldn't be alive, anymore. Every day, we would be ordered, in the barracks, first to put-- I mean, gather up the dead, in crisscross, like they do with sleepers-- railway sleepers, yes? that's how we gathered the dead, in crisscross, several layers, so that, until they were c-- cleared, they wouldn't take up too much space. German orderliness.

Q: Was that in the barracks, or in the tent?

A: In tents...

Q: In tents.

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A: In tents, yes, it was in huge tents. There were a whole lot of people in these tents, because that was apparently their only option, at that time [cough], to get people under some... under some kind of roof.

Q: You're describing something which repeated itself for several days, getting up in the morning with the... corpses around...

A: Yes.

Q: What would happen during the day?

A: Now--

Q: During those first days?

A: Yes. I can't remember, exactly, what would happen, you'd go, there was no... no routine. That, it later turned out, was a little outside the camp, I mean, there was a big camp, it was divided into sub-- into... subcamps, by barbwire fences, you couldn't go through, and that was, probably, some arrangement for the newcomers, to make tents

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for the... additional prisoners who were coming in. So, during that period, there was no routine, and actually, I don't remember how long it was, before we reported for a lineup, and they took us to one of these camps, and there we went through [cough]... disinfection, I mean, you were disinfected. You went into... first of all, they stripped you. They stripped you [cough], and... you went... you went into this chemical bath, which was very unpleasant, apart from it... very distasteful smell, it also caused intense body irritation, for hours... and then, you got new clothes. And those clothes, you got-- together with the clothes, you got, also, this chit with a number on it. They didn't tattoo your number on your hand there, but, you'd get a number, a prisoner number. It was on some... I think, it was on some kind of... how do you call it? it...

Q: A tag?

A: This sort of ring, t-- some sort of aluminum tag, with a number etched on it, and you had to have it on your neck. I, together with a few others, was sent, after disinfection... to the clothes room, that is, to a room, from which they'd supply the prisoners with clothes. And that was a gold mine. First of all, it was cozy. It was a closed building, with clothes, you weren't cold, apart from that, you could choose your clothes, to suit your size, usually you'd just get what you were given. Sometimes the shoes would be... too small, the clothes too short, and I spent the whole night there, sorting through the clothes, choosing the ones that fit best, and I lost my tag. And I didn't know my number. And that was mortally dangerous. In a well-regulated camp, if you lost that kind of thing, wouldn't exist. So they'd make sure you really

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didn't exist. And in retrospect, it turned out, it was something... something of a help. Because later, they divided us into groups, and assigned the groups to the existing barracks. And there, you had somewhere to lay your head, as opposed to the previous places, these weren't beds for one or two people, but, again, this very large wooden surface, and there, you could-- you had room, on that surface. Again, we lay this way, like in a circle, yes? with our heads pointing outwards, and our legs inwards, and there... and every day, there would be a lineup, and every day... they'd call out prisoners by number, and they'd have to report, and I don't know, exactly, what they'd do with them. They might have called my number, as well, and I wasn't... I wasn't responsive to it, because I didn't know it. That might be why I stayed on, and on, I stayed on for a few days, and one day, I went over to the... barrack... head, he was a prisoner, and I told him: "listen, I heard they have barracks for younger people, for youth," I said: "listen, I'm young, I think I would up in this barrack by mistake, it's an adult barrack, is there anything you can do, to transfer me there?" and it worked. And that t-- I was transferred to a children's and youth's barrack, and that was probably another one of the... elements, which probably contributed to my survival in (In German)_____. Because in those barracks, for... those special barracks, we wouldn't go out to the morning lineup, which, as I said, was one of the traumas of camp life, where you would go out, winter or summer, in the rain, and-- or not, you'd stand there for hours, until the commander came to tally you. Our lineup was done indoors. The-- head of that barrack, he was this Czech, named Gustav, a political prisoner, he was a communist, a good man, a truly good man, and he protected us. He created-- it later turned out, he was part of a resistance, inside the... [cough] camps in (In German)_____, because that camp, it bears mention, was... was a camp for German prisoners, that is, it had been built at the time-- at-- at the time before the war,

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for enemies of the regime. And so, there were many political prisoners, they were very informed people, some were intellectuals, obviously many were learned, and they were, mostly, ideological people, and since they were veterans, they were appointed as the camp's inner administration, and among others, that Gustav, apparently, was one of them, and they had prepared there, for the end of the war, clandestinely. They already knew, they already knew, that Nazi rule was drawing to an end, and they knew the Germans-- or at least they suspected, that the Germans, at the last moment, could do something desperate, and set the whole camp on fire, and kill everyone, so they had prepared, they managed, even, to get weapons, and they were prepared, when the time came, to go out and fight against... against... against... German control of the place.

Q: You-- what you're telling me now, did you know it there?

A: No. I didn't know it. I only learned it a-- afterwards. I turned out, and th-- so they told me, he was one of them. He also had this deputy, who was Jewish, I forgot his name, he was also a communist, so he said, anyway, it was quite "in," it was "in" there, to be a communist, and... at least when it came to the internal administration, we felt protected there, because in previous camps, the internal administration was very very... evil, sometimes out of necessity, sometimes out of some independent sadistic urge, it's hard to tell, but here we felt... at ease with them, and they even let... us develop some sort of cultural life there. There was, in the camp... a Jewish writer, whose name I've forgotten by now, also a communist, and he organized, in-- in... the

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Jewish youths' barrack, we were mostly J-- Jewish youths, there were a few non-Jews, it was mostly Jewish youths, he organized this play-- play, I even remember the melody, of one of the... of-- from that play, it has, also, someone, saying something with... with a certain melody. I remember it. And... and so, if only to give you an idea, of life inside that barrack, itself, it w-- it was, really, something completely different from what went before [before].

Q: Let's w-- wait a second... what I wanted to ask you, you day that... here, for the first time, you felt protected.

A: Yes.

Q: That... and that... here... here... for the first time you f-- felt protected, in what way did you experience this... Gustav? You said?

A: Yes.

Q: What did he do to protect you?

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A: Look, first of all, what there wasn't, I didn't feel that barrack had an atmosphere of violence. There were no conflicts between the prisoners, and no... worry, and no terror of the barrack head. Usually, in previous camps, the barrack head would be the one who, to assert authority, would create an atmosphere of terror. With all that it implied. It could be verbal, and of course, it would be done by beating people at the drop of a hat, and sometimes to... to... give... give... an [cough]... example of what was in store, for those who disobeyed his wishes, whatever. Here, there was none of this, here, it was the opposite, yes? He it felt like you were at home, in that respect. No one was threatening you. No one from the... inside ever threatened you, not to mention did anything. And also, because we were young, there were no conflicts between us, there was no reasons, actually, yes? we got our rations. And we tried-- I mean, with the help of adults, as I told you, there-- was, also, a writer, who would, even organize some kinds of activities, even cultural activity, yes? To... keep us busy during the day. And the fact, that we didn't have to get up, and stand in the lineup for hours, which wasn't just physical torture, but, it was also about terror, about fear, because there would always be violence in that lineup. There would always be violence. If they caught someone [cough], who happened not to be standing upright, or who moved his head, or who didn't take his hat off in time, they would turn it into a provocation, beat somebody up for no reason, yes? We-- we were spared that. So that's why, I felt there, in that respect, I felt protected.

Q: You didn't work while you were there?

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A: We didn't work. We didn't work... we didn't work, there was no routine... for e-- for everyone, and for the whole day, yes? I mean, occasionally, there was this occurrence, we'd go out, we'd go in, yes? I can't remember exactly, how we spent our time... to... get you daily ration of... of... of... your daily ration of soup, you also had to stand in line, it was time consuming, yes? It was time consuming. We'd spend many hours up on our beds, they were... four level beds, I think, there were, four levels, or three, I can't remember exactly, because it was a small barrack, and there were many of us there, and... time passed there, at least in the sense that, you could turn your mind a little, to things beyond... beyond the compulsive preoccupation... comp-- compulsive, in the sense that, you were externally compelled to do it, not obsessive, not internally, yes? you were constantly compelled, in other camps, to be preoccupied with survival, yes? Here, you had time for a little more than that. You weren't in that state of anxiety, and for... we were generally anxious, we were worried about what was going to happen, yes? After all, we were under German rule, and we were aware of their regard for us, so, that was a general concern, but it wasn't immediate, and it wasn't personal. That's how time passed there.

Q: Did you participate in that play you... mentioned?

A: I didn't participate. I didn't participate.

Q: But you watched it, as--

A: I watched it, yes. I watched.

Q: And... all the... was it successful, did it interest people?

A: Yes, it played a very important role, the whole barrack watched... and identified with... the actors, but, there was one incident I remember from that barrack, an unpleasant one, and don't forget, we're talking about young people, some of them were as young as... eleven years, even, there. Who got there. And they had absorbed the violence, they had absorbed the... that atmosphere, of survival at any cost, and there was this one guy there, a Hungarian Jew, I remember, he was tall, maybe taller-- he was, I think, older than we were, he came into that barrack, and managed to steal someone's bread ration. And he was caught. Stealing someone's bread ration meant stealing his life. And for that, there was no forgiveness... and the children, I wasn't with them, the children w-- don't forget that I had come in quite late, I told you, how I got to that barrack in the first place, by my own initiative, and because I c-- I couldn't identify myself by number, because I had lost it, so I was... I didn't belong anymore, I was pretty left out. And they beat him, the way the (In German)_____ would beat th-- beat young people. I mean, no hold barred, children, I mean, as if they were imitating, doing an imitation, of camp culture. I told you, I me-- I met, just now, as I said, I went to Australia to meet, just now... some friends who had been with me in that barrack, and they reminded me, also, of this story, not all of it, the story of how

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they killed this... this guy. I don't remember they killed him. I remember they beat him, I don't remember they killed him. I think they didn't. After all, they were small children, they weren't strong enough. They didn't kill him, he was big. So... that, also, was a part, a part of what would happen to people who who spent a long time in the camp, and were unable to respond in any way, than by force, when able, I mean, this wasn't... about meting out justice, but, it was a response to someone, who did such a terrible thing... but, other than that, I can't remember any occurrences worth noting, inside that barrack, up to the tenth... the tenth of April.

Q: But... in these conditions, which were better, than previous conditions, did relationships start to form? I also see that you...

A: Yes, relationships started to form, which also continued after the liberation, that, if we have time, and if it's relevant, I could, of course, relationships were formed, I mean, as in every group, yes? some relationship become closer, because of... perhaps, common past experiences, common interests, or just interpersonal... chemistry, this always happens, and I had relationships, with a few friends, which have even lasted to this day, not intensively, but, once in a while, some of them come here for a visit, and I have just... renewed, even, I visited-- I renewed my relationship with people who... are living on the other side of the world. Some are living in America, they emigrated with... but, that's what I can tell you of that period, in (In German)_____, in... in the youths' barrack.

Q: It was quite a long period, I take it, you say, up to the tenth of April.

A: Up to the tenth of April. Yes.

Q: That's several months.

A: Yes. Now, what happened on the tenth of April? Even before the tenth of April--

Q: But, wait, in... several months, did anything happen, I mean, did any information come in, did you th...

A: I can't remember anything in particular, except for the fact that life proceeded quite routinely, and we were in the camp, in our barrack, there was some social life there, I can't remember exactly, what we did all that time, it's all pretty hazy... we could go out and walk around that part of camp, which was all isolated. I mean, it was segregated. Not i-- very isolated, it was a huge camp, but you couldn't go over freely, from one subcamp to another, unless you had a suitable... justification.

Q: And that was the youths' subcamp?

A: Yes. Yes. A subcamp--

Q: One barrack--

A: A subcamp--

Q: One barrack, or several?

A: There were several barracks, yes. There were several barracks.

Q: And when you'd go out, from the barrack, was there anything you could see?

A: Nothing. Nothing. It was boring, nothing. I kept checking my body...

Q: Microphone.

A: Oh yes, oh, sorry. Yes. I kept checking my body, whether I... was going down, whether I was maintaining the status quo, that was, for me, the measure of survivability, yes? how much I was, or wasn't, approaching the state of (In German)_____, I guess most people did it. I would, sometimes, do some exercises... testing exercises, bending down... jumping up, that is, things which had become effortless for me, these are things which we humans do spontaneously, there, it had b-- it had become an effort, because the... the food was so poor, even in that barrack, after all, there was no food, there was very little, and you were constantly hungry, day and night, you were hungry, so, we'd test-- I, would test myself, occasionally, test my reactions, my muscles'... but, other than that, I can't... can't remember exactly... how I spent that time, I spent it...

Q: Yes.

A: I spent it going from... from... from one hope to another.

Q: We're taking a break to ch--

End of Tape 10

Tape 11

Q: So...

A: Yes, I... was saying, that I can't remember, any noteworthy occurrences in (In German)_____ starting from... starting from when I moved to the small camp, the youth camp... and I can't remember, exactly, how time went by... what th-- the routines were... but, I do remember that... just before April, late March, we already knew that the Germans were in distress, that the Russians were coming closer, and it was so bad, that... they cut our food rations. There was no bread anymore, they stopped giving us bread. After all-- all, the bread, we got, it was our ration of life, there was no bread anymore. They started giving us soup, but they didn't give to us in the barrack, but, I remember, it was outside, and to get the soup, we'd get this chit, this tag, I have it at home, I didn't bring it with me, it says "BU", (In German)_____, and something else, but it was outside, there were trees, there was this b-- long line, and by presenting that tag-- by presenting that tag you'd get you... your bowl of soup. And after a... short while, they also cut the soup... and they just wouldn't give us food anymore, all they gave us, because it was, apparently, from the storehouse, was a piece of margarine... and... you couldn't eat that. Even with that terrible hunger, I couldn't eat that. I'd hold on to it, because you couldn't throw away food, and it would melt, inside the paper wrapping, eventually... I'd have to throw it away. And on the last days, there was no food at all. What can I tell you, I don't know how we... t-- I

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think, th-- on the last three days, there was no food... and so we reached the tenth-- the tenth of April, tenth of April, at dusk, we were directed, to gather in the lineup courtyard. After such a long time, of not going out, to the lineup, outside the ba-- the barrack, we were commanded, all of us, to go outside... and... there was a rumor, that the Germans were t-- taking whole groups off the line-- off the lineup courtyard, into the woods, and shoot them.

Q: We...

A: Yes, he asked a question...

Q: Yes.

A: If you'd like me to address it...

Q: He took the opportunity [laugh].

A: Yes.

Q: OK.

A: Because, it could be a part of the interview, what he asked, yes?

Q: Alright, we... we're rolling.

A: I'm ready, yes.

Q: So there was a rumor, they were taking out grou--

A: There was a rumor, that... the Germans were ta-- eliminating, now, prisoners, in the forest. And when they took everyone out to the lineup, I didn't go out. Me and another two or three. I didn't go out. And childishly, I climbed up, to the barrack's attic, and remained there. I had this very strong feeling, yes? that I mustn't go out, and I didn't. Later, I heard, I mean, that's what was actually going on. That night they took out many prisoners from the lineup courtyard, and shot them, and among them, there was one, who had... who had slept in the bed right next to me, on... on the same level... I don't know-- they didn't eliminate everyone, some came back, and so we spent the night, I came out of the... I came back out of the attic, and got back in bed, and we slept, and the next morning, at ten AM, we heard an alarm, we had already

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seen-- we already know what it meant, it was called "emergency alarm." Emer-- in German, "(In German)_____,," that is, enemy at the gate, and that alarm meant that the enemy was really very close. And... and then we heard shooting, it was very close, and explosions, and shortly afterwards, the first of the Americans entered the camp's gates, and... that day was the eleventh of April. And then--

Q: We... one second. One second. They Americans came in.

A: The Americans came in, yes--

Q: We rolling?

A: Of course, it took a while, until all of this reached our barrack, and then, I remember, the barrack head's Jewish deputy stood up on a chair, he was red-headed... I think, he was the one called Gustav, he... he... yes. He was the one called Gustav, the Jew, he was a Czech Jew. The... non-Jewish, Czech... barrack head, I can't quite remember his name... yes. And then, Gustav stood up on a chair, and said, with great excitement and emotion: "we're free..." I can't remember what all the other children and youths there did, there must've been shouting. There must've been crying, all I remember is, that was my loneliest, most miserable moment since the war broke... I became awake to the magnitude of the tragedy which had befallen me, and my people. That moment... I didn't dry, and I didn't rejoice... and I was turned all inwards... to that

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thought. Or to that th-- or to that f-- to that feeling. I realized, that... for other peoples, this meant going back ho-- home, and finding their homelands' scenery, and their families, I realized, I had nowhere to go back to... that's what I... can recall, of that dramatic moment, of liberation, when he stood up on a chair, Gustav, I remember, he had these... fashionable boots, of... which were in... in vogue then, at that time, before the war, during the war, those who could afford-- these... these black riding boots, he said: "guys, we're free..." as always there were those, who immediately knew how to try and take advantage of their connections, and had already left the camp, and had managed, I later learned, they had managed to get out of the whole camp-- ca-- ca-- camp complex, and had found their way to the SS barracks, and the... commanders' quarters, and there were those, who even managed to take something, unbelievable tales, and I wasn't there, I wasn't among them, it never occurred to me to do this, my thoughts were turned inwards, yes? to this deep and miserable solitude of mine... and.. that night-- I didn't tell you, how it was in the last three days before liberation... we saw the Germans were no longer in control-- oh, what we ate, yes, yes, that's what I forgot to tell. It was three days, after all. The Germans were no longer in control, of the camp, really, nor-- nor-- nor were they really trying to be. They had, next to our camp, our camp bordered on... on... the German's vegetable garden. There was a vegetable garden. And it had-- it was April, it had (In Polish?)_____. I remembered that, as a child, I used to-- love it so, how my mother would make (In Polish?)_____. We broke the gate, the German stood there, in the tower, and he did nothing. He didn't shoot, and we picked it and cooked it. And that's what I ate, once only, I think, for those three days. And that kept us alive, that (In Polish?)_____. But, since the... the gates between the subcamps were already breached, there was no effective central government, so I went. I went around, to see,

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and then, again, I saw that image, of people, corpses really, no longer walking ones, people who-- hadn't eaten, for more than three days, hadn't eaten. There was nothing. Maybe water. And many many many died. When you see the pictures, of... of tractors... scooping up piles of corpses, yes? they're mostly from those days. In the last few days, there was nothing to eat. Others died in the first two or three days after liberation, because, during that time, the Americans came in, and they realized, that what they had to do was give us food, they didn't realize, what food to give, and they.. confiscated this cattle, and... and pigs from the peasants, and made this very fat soup, and the prisoners devoured this, and the whole camp got dysentery. That was--

Q: Did you eat?

A: Pardon? And I didn't. Yes, I-- I got diarrhea, but I didn't get dysentery.

Q: Did you eat of that soup?

A: I ate it. I ate it, and I got gastroenteritis, I didn't get dysentery, and again, I can't tell you why. Why it was that I, somehow, overcame it, and remained among the few. There were many, thousands, thousands, some who died, and some who were immediately hospitalized. It... it was horrible, that image, as well, you see? You're liberated, and you become a pile of... of feces, and of stench, and of corpses, and of

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sick people, it's all-- that was, this thing, what happened in the first few days. And the Americans did it, because they thought they were doing the right thing. Only afterwards did they realize they had to feed us in a very controlled manner. And they did. As for me, I was truly fortunate, to have the strength to survive this... this disease, without being hospitalized. And indeed, after... a day or two, we were taken out of the camp, and... and housed... and... yes? they confiscated, of course, the whole SS barracks, which was... solid, brick buildings, and there we were... assigned rooms, four, or six, per room, yes? depending on the number of available beds, it was a barrack - a barracks, a-- after all, and... there, also, we started to improvise this routine... we wanted to enjoy our freedom, but still, our meals were served to us at fixed times, and we somehow maneuvered between these things, and started going out of camp, and I managed to arrange a bicycle, and I can't remember where from. Where I-- managed to arrange a bicycle. The camp, (In German)_____, was up on a tall mountain, yes? And... I don't recall any difficulty in... in... r-- r-- riding the bicycle, I would ride it down to the... adjacent villages, and I started arranging food, and there I met Germans, the Germans m-- met me, and I remember, inside... inside a farm... I went over, and... what could I barter with? We'd get from the American soldiers, we'd get chocolate, we'd get cigarettes, we'd get coffee bags, the Germans, when they heard the word coffee, they were willing to give anything. So I would bring this bag of coffee, and in exchange they would give bread, or they would give a sausage, or somesuch. And I would bring it to my roommates. So-- sometimes, another one of us would do this for us [cough]. We didn't know, exactly, what... what we were going to do in the future, weren't even thinking of the future, I knew, I had nothing to go back looking for, I knew, exactly, what had happened to my family, and I was living in this void, and in that void, as I said, among other things, I would go down to the villages, and I

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got to this certain farm, and by and by I was told th-- this woman told me there, she told me: "listen, there's this gentleman here. He would-- he would like to talk to you." So I went up, and there, this person, we could see he was someone... he was dressed in a very... noble manner, and had probably been some kind of office holder... in the administration, perhaps, we could see this was a very learned man, with a white mustache, a person-- a very impressive man, and he said to me: "I heard you were in (In German)_____." I said: "yes." "Why were you in (In German)_____?" I said: "because I'm Jewish." And he broke out crying, and he said: "I'm ashamed. I'm ashamed." And he cried like a little boy. And to this day I wonder, what he had done, what role he had played, up to that moment. Because he was in hiding, he didn't live there. He was in hiding there in the village-- in that... farm, apparently, with his relatives, he... was dressed like an urban man, and by his... manner of speech, and... the quality of his language, he was a learned person, he had surely been some office holder in the administration, or, perhaps, even some more weighty role in the Nazi government. It's unknown. These are some things, I can remember, I never reached a conclusion, but I'm sharing my ruminations with you, who what man was, how regretful he really was, what was he crying for? Was he crying for what, eventually, had become of Germany, after all, was he crying because he was truly ashamed, and tormented by scruples? I'll never know [cough]. I wasn't experienced enough, or mature enough, to have a conversation with him, and ask him questions, I was still at a time, a time of adaptation, after that shock, I had had on the day of liberation... when I was so disconnected from everything... and was turned all inwards, in my solitude, I began making this adaptation which wasn't a planned one. Maybe because of the group dynamics, in which I was, because we were a group of mates, and we started talking about this pretty dubious and childish future present. Childish. We didn't think

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of our families, we didn't think about the past, we lived in this kind of present, this childish, immature present, wh--

Q: Explain, what do you mean by a childish present?

A: Look, usually, after something like that, we should have thought, what we were going to do, what was going to happen, what kind of future, how we were going to connect with the past, how we-- I mean, this t-- this... we he had this huge tragedy, what were we going to do about it? A-- something serious, something serious about the past, about the future, we didn't think about it, we thought about the present. We even thought about... about girls, we were at the... the... the height of puberty. And... I mean, we thought about... en-- about... about the joys of life, about s-- about searching for good food...

Q: Isn't that natural?

A: I know, I'm just saying, when I think... when I think, that... that we knew so much about what had happened, and we knew about the Germans... shouldn't our instinct had been to have this rebellion now, this harsh reaction... when you're in this constant pressure cooker, the release should have been, like uncorking champagne, it should have made this... this blast. I can't remember anything of the kind. It was all so very

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low key. Not strong. No thought of consequences, nothing, anyway, on my part, no did I see any in my immediate environment. Maybe, it was because we were too young for that.

Q: And are these thoughts you're having now, or did you have them back then?

A: I don't think I thought much about anything, back then. I'm trying, not, to rumi-- to ruminate, yes? about those first moments, days, after liberation, yes? what it should have been like, a--

Q: What it should have been like.

A: There should have been this corresponding reaction, this natural reaction, yes? after... such a long, unending series of suffering, of torture, of sorrow, of humiliation, of hunger... it-- there should have been some emotional outpouring, and of action. Really powerful, this outpouring of a certain kind of power, and I can't find it. I find it, going to waste, in some very prosaic, very small things, and you might say, it's natural, I don't know. I haven't yet--

Q: I'm asking, I'm--

A: I haven't yet sorted this thing out with myself, and... I think about it quite often. How could liberation... I e-- I... I explain to myself, mostly, that... that sense of solitude I fe-- I felt, when I learned of the liberation. I see that man always before my eyes, standing on a chair, and proclaiming, in a dramatic voice: "guys, we're free..." this I understand, that I didn't cry out, because the way I'm built, I was... I was turned inwards to my feelings, I couldn't have felt anything else, yes? but solitude, because I was aware of my situation, I was aware of what was immediately in store for me. But... the very next day, we became preoccupied with trading coffee for bread, and... girls, and... we even laughed, and joked, yes? so that I can't understand.

Q: You started living.

A: Yes, I suppose. I suppose. I don't understand it. We started g-- going to the cities, we started... started... to participate in life. We were still hesitant, little by little, we weren't used to it, but, little by little, going into, of course, I forgot to tell you, that the first thing I did, the next day, we went to Weimar, to Weimar, or to (In German)_____, I think, to (In German)_____, by train, there was a train, and... next to (In German)_____, we had to get down-- that was before I had a bicycle, I went down on foot, I rode, and... in exchange for some ciga-- ciga-- cigarettes, I had, I bought... a new lens... there were all sorts of things, with the Americans, I remember we g-- they g-- gave us a ride, and... I went with these black

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guys, and they brought us to this airport... where there were... (In German)_____, that kind of stuff, which... which we experienced, they gave us... American clothes, I had a friend, who dressed like an American soldier, with a... a steel hat... there were, of course, some very emotional meetings with Jewish soldiers, including with rabbi Shechter, who... looked after us, and... who tried, really, to encourage us, and... there were... the Americans, when they came in, they... they... also, immediately set up their... cantine, their *shekem*, with dancing, and we'd also go down, we started t... taking part... I mean, there was a... a thing, of trying, to start taking part in life outside the camp... what else do I remember of that period, in (In German)_____? There were visits inside the... inside the... apartment of... of (In German)_____, of the camp commander's wife, where they found lampheads made of human skin, I don't know whether it was true, or whether it was just a tall tale, to this day, I don't know, but, that's what they said, and to us its truth was obvious, because we attributed all possible horrors to them, including also using human skin to make lampheads. I don't know whether it was proven or not, that's what I remember, I remember seeing a lamphead, I don't know whether it was human... I had a friend, we call-- called him... called him "(In Hungarian)_____,” this small, beautiful, blond guy, golden haired, with freckles...

Q: Wait, one second...

A: Really-- pardon?

Q: W-- w-- one m--

A: He had been in the shack with us, in... in the barrack, in the same-- in the same room, when we moved, when we left the camp and moved to the SS living quarters, so he was with us, in the same room, and we became part of a group, and we remained-- some of us, and we remained, some us, friends, even in the years that... that... followed, we called him "(In Hungarian)_____,)" (In Hungarian)_____ means David in... in Hungarian, I think, yes? this... very special guy, he had a charming smile, and... yes...

Q: Go on. Go on.

A: And he had a way with people, he met a Jewish American officer. We'd hang around there, in the American camps, yes? when... they gave us food, they... yes? they knew who we were. And he asked that officer, to let him visit the... prison room where th-- they had the SS people, who had been captured... captured during the liberation. The--

Q: And they were there...

A: After all--

Q: They were imprisoned there?

A: They were imprisoned there. Some, those who didn't manage to run away, and weren't shot, were imprisoned there. And he told us, later, why he made that request, and indeed, the officer allowed it, it was forbidden, he went down, and he made them do the drills which the SS had done with us. Hats down, attention, at ease, on your knees, n... roll around, and-- and he had them do the... and if you looked at that guy, that boy, he really looked like a boy, yes? that's what he had taken in during the war, yes? and apparently, he had nurtured this dream, of being able to do to them exactly what they did to him.

Q: He wanted revenge.

A: He wanted revenge. So that's what he did, he went down with him, and... and in the presence of that officer, he had them do these drills. He humiliated them. Inside the prison.

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Q: Did you have any thoughts of revenge?

A: I had many thoughts of revenge, for the duration of the war I dreamed about how I would avenge myself on those Germans, but specifically, because I always had... I always had a specific character, for me evil was never an abstract, not The Germans, it was this German, who had this role, and had done this specific act, and I was constantly avenging myself in him... in my thoughts. I don't know whether I was capable of carrying it out afterwards, but... during the war I was. And for decades, almost to this day, I avenge myself on them. Before I go to bed. I imagine situations, where, I repay them...

Q: You kill them?

A: No, that's no enough. No. I... give them sorrow... I give them mental torment, because killing isn't... isn't exactly the deed in question, yes? the... the Jewish people, I included, weren't just subjected to being shot with bullets, but to this prolonged torment, for such a long time, their due must be something similar. Give them sorrow.

Q: And when you say, you're surprised that liberation didn't cause an outpouring of emotion, is that what you're referring to?

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A: A-- among other things. There... no thinking... there was no thinking about going now, and taking a rifle, and shooting them, there was no interest in that. Because, apparently, I was turned too deeply inwards, to my condition, my miserable condition, and to the condition... and to the... and to the tragedy which had befallen my family. And-- to the tragedy which had befallen the Jewish people... I knew, things weren't changed... by liberation. They weren't changed, neither the past, not the present. And it's difficult-- it was difficult for me to imagine, at that moment, some future, which, perhaps, could address that past. Revenge wasn't on the agenda.

Q: You feel it should have been.

A: I don't know, it's a matter of character, I... I don't know, if revenge is... a natural, perhaps even vital emotion, then perhaps I'm flawed in some way. I mean, if that should have been a very important motivation, a very important motive, r-- right after the war, then, maybe, I'm flawed in some way, I'm built in a certain way, and... the need for revenge, it should have been immediate and concrete. I mean, if, for example, I had witnessed a German do something, and that German, he had an identity, and I could identify him, and be in a position where I could punish him, I would do it... back then, as I said, during the war I always had such very very distinct personalities, and I avenged myself on them in... in my thoughts, in... yes? in my imagination, but after the war I... I couldn't see... I... I didn't see in every German, once I met them, I didn't see them as my bitter enemies. Only when I closed my eyes,

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and when I gave it some thought perhaps, then I could, maybe, develop some theory, leading to his being a legitimate target for revenge. But not spontaneously, not immediately. Perhaps, in certain situations, yes? when you're in distress, and you feel a need to react, maybe then, I would have been able, perhaps, to shoot children, as far as Germans were concerned, but it had to be immediately linked to the circumstances. But, one this certain time gap had formed, I never found myself in a situation, where I felt feelings of r-- revenge, towards Germans as such. Per se.

Q: And when (In Hungarian)_____ came, and told you, what he had done, what did you think?

A: Then... I saw it, not as revenge, but as as a fateful irony, and... I really empathized, I really empathized with what he had done, I really empathized. I felt no need to do it, yes? For me it was, already, obvious, that Germans were beaten, and they were being humiliated, and they were suffering now, yes? I had no need-- I felt no need to do anything further. But, when he told me about that, I empathized very strongly with what he had done. I mean, it was something which, probably, I had imagined doing, in another situation, immediately. He did it after the war. And it's funny-- this boy, he w- - you'd see him, so sweet, yes? you could have imagined what he had thought, what he had felt, during the war, when he saw, how they were treating us. He repaid-- he repaid him in kind. He repaid the Germans in kind, through that drill he had one or two Germans do there. He told me exactly, all the terminology, which we were accustomed, for years, to hearing from them...

Q: Were there other... similar incidents?

A: Not that I remember. Not th-- not that I remember. Also, I can't remember-- it's very interesting, I can't remember, among my mates, my peers, and I c-- I can't remember, they were interested in the topic of revenge. It's funny, maybe the... _____ psychologists, I have no memory of that kind of thing. I don't remember this as the issue which interested them at the end of-- of course, they hated the Germans, but that wasn't the main item, the dominant item, on the agenda... there was already this youth-- youthful lust... the... will... the will to do something. Something positive, I mean... to get into a holocaust mood, there had to be something... something organized. It happened to us, it happened to me, eventually, over the next several months, when there would be a gathering, when people would talk, when they'd sing songs together, yes? that is, when we would return to the atmosphere of the holocaust itself, yes? But... as individuals, I can't recall... I can't recall us taking any interest in that.

Q: And, for that entire period, were you in that f-- that feeling of... depression of-- that depression, which you described in... the moment of liberation?

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A: That wasn't a depression. It was a feeling of a-- absolute solitude. That is... misery, not depression, I was always aware, I was, even, aware of that misery, yes?

Q: Did it last?

A: Look, it couldn't-- in my opinion, it couldn't last in the same potency. But it lasted. There's.... there's... how... how to put it?.. after all... you... s... the-- the potency of that emotion slowly... it doesn't retain its potency, yes? I'm looking for the term, because there's a specific term for it, just not in Hebrew, and right now, I can't find it, of diminution, of becoming tinier, yes?

Q: Su-- sublimation?

A: Su-- Ju-- that's it, right. J-- there was a sublimation of... oh, I-- yes. Sublimation? no... not subli-- there's another term, OK, I'll find it later, right now I can't remember it, anyway, I'm a lonely person. It could also be, my loneliness wasn't solely a product of the war, I could also have, one of my elements, I'm quite the individualist, and perhaps, there already is in... in my g-- in my genes, this element, of... of being on my own, and of loneliness, and it... was magnified by events, and it expressed itself in the most extreme manner at that moment, and I think it still exists to this day, not as potently, of course, not as potently, because life goes on, and there are a great many

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developments, and naturally, once I wasn't by myself, there are obligations, and there rewards, you reap, these obligations, by founding a family, by getting sympathetic and loving responses, you can't remain lonely unless you're indifferent to such things, yes? I mean, i-- if you're indifferent, then this is bordering on an unhealthy state, yes? but, this loneliness, c... is very very c... characteristic of me, yes? and... m-- my way of identifying with the holocaust is, also, a very individual, non-collective way, I don't remember whether I told you, that I rarely take part in... public events, to commemorate the holocaust.

Q: You said you wanted to talk about that.

A: Oh, did I? I forgot.

Q: Yes. About the expectation of holocaust survivors, to talk, and to tell, and--

A: Well, that's about ideology, but, now, I'm more about the emotional thing, yes? which is also one of the... the elements which explain, perhaps, why I have reservations about mass events, yes? having to do with the holocaust. Not that I with deny them to others out of ideology, but, why I don't... often... participate in them, yes?... me, I have my own private holocaust, which has preoccupied me all my life, in a completely individual way, which is apparently suitable for... for my emotions, and

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when we mentioned expectations, it's about conclusions... which, in my opinion, both dictate, both our regard for the holocaust, and the way we manifest it outwardly, but... here I'm on a wholly different level, on that level, of loneliness, which I identify in myself, as part of my character, yes? and... and whose-- whose most potent expression was at... at that moment in the holocaust o-- of liberation, which I can't really remember, because I remember almost exclusively that... that horrible, overpowering, almost immeasurable solitude, I felt at that moment. An insuperable misery, unrelated to any practical conclusions, not having had enough of life, not seeing no value in anything, but, misery, solitude per se. Like that... nowhere to go back to, nothing to hang on to, no one to rely on, it wasn't a true liberation, it didn't give me anything back, that liberation. The most it did was remove a threat to my life. And emotionally, that wasn't the most important element. Instinctively, it was. The-- the-- the survival instinct, the natural urge to live on, that was satisfied, it was no longer threatened. But, emotionally, that was not the most important thing, seemingly, for me, but... but my mental state.

Q: Wait a moment... how much longer did you remain in (In German)_____.

A: Not long. I can't remember exactly... I think that... that same month, I went to Switzerland.

Q: In April. How... was the trip to Switzerland organized?

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A: Right. Right. There, another coincidence. As I was coming back from one of my village sorties, to... the ba-- barrack camp, I saw a big crowd. So I went over, and I saw, someone standing, talking in English, and one of our boys, who had been at our block, I forgot his name, he was of German origin, he was a little older, and he was translating it into German. And that man, it turned out, was with the Swiss Red Cross, and... was announcing, that the Swiss Red Cross was willing and prepared to... house youths who were survivors of the (In German)_____ camp-- who-- who had been liberated from the (In German)_____ camp, for a recovery period, and who... who was interested. And I joined up. Like that. In that way. I... an outside fathering, not everyone joined up, I did, and we were-- I joined up with, I think, four hundred others, and we went to Switzerland. That's the story of moving from (In German)_____ to Switzerland. During the war, Jews would seek entry into Switzerland, and often... and often, they met with refusal... now, they came to invite us.

Q: And where in Switzerland did you go?

A: In Switzerland we went, first, to (In German)_____.... (In German)_____, they put us in quarantine. In a-- in a quarantine camp. Now, I, now, realize, yes? that this was... pretty normal for the time, for hygienic considerations, that when... people came from outside, and especially, after the camps,

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in order to make sure, they weren't carrying any infectious diseases, for that purpose, they'd hold them in quarantine for a time, quarantine is supposed to be forty days, a quarantine, I don't remember whether they meant forty days, anyway, that was the intention. And they did everything, in my opinion, in good faith, and insensitivity. First, that camp, it was covered in... barbed wire. Wire. Yes? It was fenced. Barbed wire. Second, its perimeter was guarded by the Swiss army, who in... their uniforms, and in their steel helmets, closely resemble German soldiers. And for some of us, this was unbearable. You left the camp, you're liberated, and you go back in the camp. And the quarantine, you're inside, in barracks, the external conditions were the same c-- I'm built-- I'm a disciplined person, and I eve-- I mean, I had some understanding, that this was standard procedure, I didn't take it personally, but, there were those, among us, who couldn't bear it, and they started rioting. And there was a strike. And eventually, the Swiss gave in, and broke up-- I mean, they let us out, yes.

Q: OK? Yes.

A: The Rhine falls in Switzerland, are there, in that area, lovely scenery, l-- lovely scenery, anyway, they gave in, and they started dividing us into groups, and after some... tuberculotics were diagnosed, they were sent to (In German?)_____, the healthy ones, were sent to (In German)_____, because... (In German)_____ was, again, in the mountains, another secluded place, but not a camp, it was this... *Internat*, very beautiful, in the mountains, and they spent a while there, not a long time. It was all really... a very short time. It was also... they weren't sensitive enough,

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there was... the head... the headmaster was a priest, probably a Protestant priest, I think, and when we ate, he'd start doing all his prayers, though he made no mention of Jesus, but for some of us-- on me it had... it had little effect, but it reminded some of us of the Christians a little, this was insensitive on the part of the Swiss, they didn't understand-- first, not all of them knew, it was all Jews. _____ youths and boys. Well, we didn't stay there long, and here, I should, just mention this phenomenon. From (In German)_____. Since we... were accustomed, for years, to going hungry, and if you had anything, you had to hide it, and keep it in reserve, for a rainy day, so when we came there, some of us, wouldn't just eat, but would also take some home, this was forbidden, and hide it in the closet. The Swiss, of course, saw this as... as something very very strange, unusual, until they understood, yes? that... we needed an adaptation period, before we could have confidence in people, and in the situation, where even if you hadn't taken food illicitly, and perhaps not according to the rules, yes? you would have enough to eat. But it was-- it was a struggle. But, still, we got through that period, for me this was embarrassing, I immediately assumed a different character, yes? I would even reproach my friends: "what are you doing? What kind of impression will we make? are ma-- are we making on them." But, they were acting on instinct, yes? that was their habit, yes? you had to take care of yourself, and never trust others. And from there-- as I said, it was... it was just a days, and then we moved to a beautiful place, it was called (In German)_____, it... it's a mountain above the (In German)_____ river, it's not from (In German)_____, yes? From that mountain, you could see both lakes, (In German)_____ lake and (In German)_____ lake. And there, before the war, had been an *internat*, for... for children from rich families, the parents would send them there to learn, in highschool, and also to get a special Swiss education, they'd come from all over Europe. Of

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course, during the war, that place was emptied, and the International Red Cross-- the Swiss Red Cross appropriated it for us, and there we began living an actual normal life. First of all, we started studying. From the first day. After all, there was school to catch up with. Our... schooling period had been taken from us, we hadn't studied for almost six years. And... and also returning us to somewhat more normal living habits. We were divided into groups, and each group had this mother and father. Some of them was-- were employees of the Swiss Red Cross, some were volunteers. One of them, I'm still in contact with her to this day. I had her over in my-- she was a kind of mother to us, she was only two years older or so, that was, also, a special story with her, and... and life proceeded like in a respectable Swiss *internat*, you'd study, and you'd do your part, you'd do homework, and that went on for several months, a very very important period. We would hike, and play sports, we even managed to put together our own soccer team, against a Swiss soccer team, of course, we took quite a beating, because we were really a ragtag team, and-- also... when could we have had the time learn soccer and become skilled? After all you need... experience. Yes, it was very beautiful there. Very beautiful. And at the end of that period, which was called the recovery period, yes? the Swiss-- the Swiss Red Cross, actually, had planned to take us in for a few months, and then disperse us. But, once they realized we had nowhere to go, they were stuck with us. But this h-- format, was no longer sustainable for them, and so, after a a few months, they had to decide what they were going to do with us. As for us, when asked, we wanted to go to Palestine. We wanted to immigrate here, all of us. But, it wasn't so simple. The English were still in control here, there was... the White Book, and then... they had to find something else, and in the meantime, the Jewish community became involved, and the Jewish community had political parties. And so, to disperse us, all the parties' representatives came, from

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Agudat Israel, and from Hapoel Hamizrachi, and from... Hashomer Hazair, and in-- and each of us chose, where... to go, and some went to some religious *internat*, and... I went to a place called (In German?)_____, it's on Lake-- Lake Geneva, Lake (In German)_____, actually-- Lake (In German?)_____, it's the... it's the same lake, Lake (In French)_____, oh, Lake (In French)_____, it's called, and there we got this kind of training. And I-- I stayed there for a while--

Q: Whose? By which party?

A: I can't remember exactly by which party, whether it was... his name is well known, the man, Akiva Lewinsky, ring any bells?

Q: Yes. Of course.

A: He was... he was the headmaster, he was with the Agency, Akiva Lewinsky, and there... we worked a little, we got some training, also, it wasn't a long time, it was a very short while. We couldn't immigrate here, because they wouldn't give us certificates, that was in forty five, don't forget, forty five, autumn forty five, we were in (In German?)_____, and towards... December, or November, I can't remember now, December... we went to Geneva.

Q: Still, at-- that training, what did you learn?

A: I can't remember now, there was Zionism, Zionist history, and songs, there was no... was there agriculture? I can't remember now whether there was.

Q: Because, usually...

A: Yes, right...

Q: Training meant--

A: Was there a farm there? I can't remember now. I think there wasn't even a farm.

There were two... two *internats* there, one religious, and one belonging to (In

German?)_____, to Hashomer Hazair, or to the... to the non-religious parties.

Anyway, the plan was to stay there a while, to prepare mentally, for immigration here, which we couldn't do. And then--

Q: By the way, were you just boys, there?

A: Boys and girls.

Q: Since when were you in mixed male and female groups?

A: I think... then, in training. Yes, beforehand we weren't together, yes, now I remember, that indeed-- that in Switzerland, also, they separated boys and girls, yes. S-- Switzerland-- Switzerland was co-- German Switzerland was very conservative. At the time.

Q: In the (In German)_____ camp, I take it-- I presume this was a boys only camp.

A: It was m-- m-- males, yes. We never met a single woman there.

Q: And... you're saying, that after liberation you became interested in girls.

A: Yes, German girls.

Q: German girls.

A: Yes... and I remember that, rabbi Schechter once gathered us up, in that same club which served as the... American soldiers' canteen, and he preached a sermon. He said that, among other things, after what had happened, we mustn't even have contact, yes? I, suddenly, felt this guilt, I blushed, but... yes.

Q: You didn't agree.

A: At that moment, I, apparently, did agree, but apparently-- I mean, I was a little ashamed, but... look... logically, we shouldn't have. Logically, we should have, generally, denounced this whole thing called Germany, yes? Logically. So, that's why, he, at that moment-- no doubt he was saying what everyone was thinking, no one could object, ideologically, to what he was saying, yes? but... we had our needs, and... it was very natural. It was very natural. And he wanted that, beyond overcoming nature, yes? for... for emotional and ideological reasons, our emotions, of course, because... each of us, he had his own emotions, and if he didn't feel that way, then you couldn't speak for someone's-- some-- s-- someone else's emotions. Someone who didn't feel that way. He realized, that this was how we should feel, yes? but, ideologically, he was certainly right, no doubt about it. And that's why, as I said, I

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blushed inwardly, I felt un... uneasy, but... we we had contact with them. Constantly. Even to trade cigarettes, either butter, or cheese, for cigarettes, that was, also, contact with a German, and not of the most respectable kind, yes? but, we were, still, in that interim period, a period where, all your life, and all... all your thoughts are focused, and oriented towards food. You're hungry, and for years, you've been hungry, twenty four hours a day. So you're all about food. And at that moment, you're not... you don-- you're not picky, I'd like to tell you, that in the c-- camp... the (In German)_____ camp, as I said, we had built the (In German)_____ factories, where they made mortars, and that was, already, towards the end, in forty four, I remember, maybe in autumn forty four, I remember, there was this ditch we dug. It was meant, probably, to contain all kinds of secondary infrastructures, because the buildings had already been built, these brown brick buildings, and there were already technicians, and engineers, working inside, yes? and I could see the windows, I could see the people through the windows, and I was in the ditch, and digging, and by and by, I saw this girl, with a parcel in hand, throwing it at me into the ditch, and those were potatoes... those potatoes were the most-- the... the most delicious delicacy I had in my life during that... yes? which she th-- threw at me into the ditch. I had no scruples, that this came from a German, yes? The food, it was the taste of life, the necessity of life, the life urge, it was life itself. Of course, it wasn't the same once you were liberated, but we-- when you're liberated... on the first days, you aren't free yet, yes? it's not a total change of mental state, yes? It's a change of circumstances which affects your mental state, and its effect is, apparently, gradual, certainly regarding getting to condition where you can analyze... where you can... s... sort through things, and be choosy, and concern yourself in moral issues... value iss--

End of Tape 11

Tape 12

Q: Ok... With your permission, I would like, before moving on, to go back a little, to a certain event you described, and if possible to expand a little on it. You described the... evening where they rounded you up to stand in formation in (In German)_____. That you didn't show up for the formation--

A: On April 10th, yes.

Q: You didn't show up for the formation, but hid in the attic.

A: Yes.

Q: And the next day, you learned, it became clear that indeed... some of the prisoners had been murdered.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you hear shots at night?

A: No, it wasn't so close by. They... marched them, executed them, and the Germans who escorted them, they went on, they ran away, they didn't come back to camp.

Q: How did you learn of this?

A: That's what people were saying. I didn't witness this business, I can only say that some-- I told you that some, one of which I even... one I even remember clearly [in German]_____ was his name, yes? Who had been sleeping right next to me, didn't come back. We didn't s-- we didn't see him anymore, yes? And he wasn't the only one. But he is the concrete person of whom I know that he didn't come back.

Q: That he went out to stand in formation --

A: He went out in the evening, he didn't come back. Because after the formation, usually, after the formation, you go back... you go back to the block. He didn't come back...

Q: Can you... estimate, approximately, how many prisoners from your block didn't come back?

A: No, I can't say, but... I heard there were many, not only from my block, that they took out many, and I don't know by which criteria, whether they took them out by groups, or took one person from each group, I... really don't have any details on that, I... heard about it, and it was corroborated by those who were telling of it... I have no proof... that could hold up in a trial, yes? I don't have the facts... of an eyewitness. I just heard what was being said, and it was corroborated by the fact that there was at least one person I remember who didn't come back, and from whom we heard nothing

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anymore, yes? And there could be no other reason for it, save-- except that he went out on April 10th and never returned.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes.

Q: Well, it seems to me that in your last story, we haven't yet-- we haven't gotten yet to the end of your training period in Switzerland.

A: Yes, that is, I-- yes, the training in Switzerland, since we couldn't go to the Land of Israel, and I remember, back then we all wanted to go to the Land of Israel, it later turned out that only some... some went to the Land of Israel, because it took several years, until we could go, so... so I, in... in a big group, we went to Ge-- to... we moved to Geneva. I just wanted to relate that, during that period, about-- short of six months, I was always in German Switzerland. I formed, also, a relationship, I even had a friend, who came from a Swiss Jewish family, from (In German)_____, and I... developed a special interest in the German language, because that was the language we spoke... and learned in Switzerland. And... during the war, particularly, during the time when I was in the camps, I had to be aware of the speech, and to the German spoken [there], I had to understand what they said. And... I developed some kind of affinity for this language, and even a great interest in it, and... I developed an affinity with this language. So that, for those six months, I was pretty knowledgeable on that topic, pretty knowledgeable about... about the Spe-- about the German language. The fact that I spoke-- spoke Yiddish, he-- he-- helped, of course, a great

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deal, and... I had great interest in th-- in... in this language. This I continued... this-- this interest continued to evolve in the next two years, and... I perfected it, and I knew German very well. Speaking, reading, and writing. I wrote, and perhaps can still write, flawless German... I'm jumping ahead of myself here... that in Geneva... I'd often go to lectures, and participate in debates, purely in German, organized by... by... how d-- how did they call it? The... The Academics' Club, and they, mostly, were Jews, refugees, from Austria, Germany, Hungary, they were very learned people, and everything there was on a very high level, so that I learned, also, the cultured... the cultured class... language, the highest-class language of Germany. And I really liked that. So, I acquired a language, during that time, I acquired the language, really, helped by my background of the time in the camps, where I learned the language, albeit the crude, everyday language, but I learned it, and the Yiddish, which-- which he-- which helped me. And my friend from (In German)_____, with whom I spoke German, of course, and later, I kept in touch with her via letters in German, and in this way, I strengthened this language, using the... things I've described... So we got to Geneva, in Geneva, as I said, they speak-- speak French, and I went to an ORT school. Not just me, my whole group, we went to ORT, and in ORT... we studied, that was a formal school, every day, from dawn till dusk, we lived in a dorm...

Q: Still under the Red Cross' responsibility?

A: Still, the Red Cross, yes, was funding it, yes? It was funding us all the time, actually, and... you could say that, mostly, in Geneva, I was exposed to Western culture. I was exposed and enchanted. It's true that Poland... wasn't, culturally, an

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underdeveloped country, but, the true democracy that I [first] encountered, that was in Switzerland. With all its attributes, and all its consequences, that is, that you're living in a country that's truly democratic, not just the system, but the people are democratic... and in this environment-- this environment offers you, if you're sensitive to it, if you feel the need, if you want, to do what it takes, it offers you many opportunities... to expand your cultural basis. And your educational one. And fortunately for me, I must say, fortunately for me, I was aware, I was receptive to it, I was sensitive to it, I recognized the potential in that opportunity, and I took full advantage of it, for almost eight years.

Q: How?

A: You could say that, for almost eight years, I was concerned with studying and... and... cultural consumption. Almost... almost exclusively.

Q: in Geneva?

A: In Geneva. Of course, I acquired an additional language... and I speak French... I studied in this language, after an acclimatization period, at first we studied in German, because I couldn't-- we couldn't speak any other language, but we studied French as a language, already, and afterwards we studied in French. And... there was an opportunity, really, to devote myself to this interest. I had no financial concerns, everything was subsidized, there wasn't a topic I didn't learn. From an educational and cultural point of view, this, of course, was antithetical to all that went before, and... you could say that I was born there, in a... in a certain way, I was reborn there. In that

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country. It's true... there were some episodes... which were a little strange, I was considered-- I and others like me were con-- considered refugees... even though we were guests of the Swiss Red Cross. It seems the Swiss, like the Germans, they couldn't find some paragraph, some rubric, to put people like me under. They, they ha-- they had tourists, they had people who came and... in... on a visa, people who were granted citizenship, pe-- refugees. There were refugees, [people] who had fled. First [of all], "refugee" wasn't a very respectable status in Switzerland, at that time, and we didn't... didn't have a status. So what happened? As a refugee, if you lived in a certain Canton, and as you know, Switzerland is comprised of Cantons, there were once twenty-four, I think, twenty-four Cantons, they have, I don't remember, exactly anymore, and each canton had autonomy, and together they make up the confederation, so if you want to go from Canton to Canton, you're traveling, you have to report to the police station.

Q: As a refugee.

A: As a refugee. That, of course, always brought me back to my previous situation, this business of... of police, and this threatening formality, yes? That's it. But, I understand-- I think I... here too, even if I reacted emotionally, sometimes, maybe, here, in a certain way, but I understood that this was how things were, it was a legal issue, not a personal one, yes? And it didn't affect me... substantially, yes? But there are people, who took this very very seriously. It was a period of a very personal growth, one could say, the Swiss period, and apart from taking care of myself, and I did, truly, filling my batteries, acquiring knowledge, and acquiring concrete things, which I could, also, later, make a living from, I was, also, very active... I was-- I sang

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in a choir in-- of the... in Geneva... I was in this... in this group, very well integrated, it was a beautiful period...I even managed to-- during that period, in the fifties, to visit Israel, and I funded i-- funded this... this trip, through singing, with two other students, in the synagogue, on Fridays, and on holidays. And we got paid, both for this, and for the rehearsals. So, from these things I made me some s-- spending money, and there was also enough to... to fund a trip like that, there, I met my first wife, and we got married in Geneva, in the synagogue, under Rabbi Saphran, and the choir with which I sang, also sang for us in the synagogue, and that's it, and in '52, in August, '52, I left v-- Switzerland, and went to Israel.

Q: During... all these post-war years... did you make any contact with... relatives?

A: Yes, good question, and really pertinent. So, there were, of course, episodes. I, of course, like everyone else, looked, I found nothing through the usual channels, through the Red Cross, through... what was it there? M-- there were all sorts of organizations there [coughs], international organizations, for relative searches, I didn't find anyone. One day, I was even onto some name, and... and I heard that he returned, existed, one Lejzerowicz, who had a bakery with his family, in my town, in (In Polish)_____, and I wrote a letter, in Polish, and never got an answer. I told them who I was, and never got an answer. But, one summer, it was summer, I think, '48, why summer '48? Because then there was fighting here, the War of Independence, that's how I remember it was in '48. I was asked to go to (In Italian?)_____, (In Italian?)_____ is in (In Italian?)_____, in the (In Italian?)_____ area, in the Swiss mountains, a ski resort... I was asked to go there, to some hotel in Montana, in that hotel, that hotel had been bought, or leased, by a

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Jewish organization, OZEH, maybe you've heard of OZEH, and it housed, for recuperation, young people from camps in Germany. At that time, a lot of Jews were returning from Russia, and from Poland, they came from Germany, they were in DP camps, what in-- was called, DP camps, next to those of ... the survivors [coughs] of the camps themselves, and young men and women, yes? They were brought to Switzerland, to recuperate from tu-- tuberculosis. Back then there still was tu-- tuberculosis. They got better, and for further recuperation, they were invited by OZEH, to that hotel which they leased in (In Italian?)_____, the hotel was-- abandoned during the war, there was no tourism, of course, and... and I was asked, to come there, and be a guide for them, du-- du-- during the holiday, it was summer, and I did what I did, with more, less talent, but, there I met interesting people. I met one person there, a writer, named (In Yiddish?)_____, you may have heard of him, he was a Yiddish writer, and he was-- he worked at "Kol Isreal", in the Yiddish department, he lived-- he came to Israel... we made contact, and even, I read... he a-- at his request, I read the book he wrote, before it went to print, to see if I had any comments, the-- or... yes? Or corrections. There I met (In Yiddish?)_____, the great Izik (In Yiddish?)_____. He was a unique Jew. If n-- you're looking for a "bohemian", a man of the *boheme*, then he was the personification of the bohemian. You went into his room, an awful mess. Bread on the table, together with socks... and... there were very, very interesting, and fascinating, conversations with him, a very, very sharp individual, sharp minded, a poet, and there's an anecdote that he was invited to Geneva to give a lecture, and he was fond of drinking, so, before noon, close to noontime, he went to some bar there, he ate, and also drank, on the way back he slipped on the ice, it had... there... he slipped, he slipped, there was ice there, because it's in the mountains, and broke his leg. And in this condition, they brought

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him to Geneva to give the lecture, yes? On a stretcher. And I met someone else who left an impression that stayed with me to this day, some Dutch rabbi, I don't remember his name exactly, and there was fighting in the Land of Israel, and we fo-- followed, of course... anxiously, tensely, the outcome of battles, to-- and we talked about the Land of Israel, I was a Zionist, that is, not that I ever belonged to any party, but I knew that I belonged to...to this particular world, and he told me: "there will come a time... when Jewish blood is spilled in the land of Israel, by Jews, over religious matters", that rabbi. He harbored such resentment towards the Zionists, the seculars, and that's what he said. I keep that in my mind, in my memory, all the time, and I hope it will never come true, even though we, sometimes, get into situations... it's close, it's very close, to spill Jewish blood, when the... result is a struggle of Jews against Jews. [That's what] I remember as special things from (In Italian?)_____... does that answer your question?

Q: I asked, if you had any connections remaining with... family members, with relatives--

A: Now, yes. Oh, now, oh. Why, I'm getting to the main issue. Now, among the guys and girls who were there, I met a man there, who was from (In Polish)_____, and he-- when he heard my name, he says: "Listen, do you have some relative in (In Polish)_____?" So I say: "No. What's his name?" "Kimmelman, Yechiel Kimmelman." So I remembered that I had a cousin named Yechiel Kimmelman, much older than I was, and that he had been, previously, a journalist on a Polish newspaper, (In Polish)_____, I think, or something like that, and I was not lazy, I wrote a letter, I said: "Mr. so and so, my name here is such and such, and I am in such

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and such a place, I am looking for any surviving relatives, maybe you're one, maybe you know?" A few days later, I got an answer: "My dear cousin" and so on and so forth, and then he told me, who survived. In view of those who did survive, I realized how many didn't, of my... my nuclear family, no one was left... but there w-- I knew about two uncles who had lived, but two uncles out of more than twenty that I had had, about cousins who were here in Israel, who had immigrated before the war, and about himself, yes? Who had also immigrated here; he was, later, the economics editor for the "Yedioth" newspaper. Yechiel Kimmelman, those who read it, back then... he was pretty well connected here, a good friend of Pinchas Sapir. So that's how I found out a little about relatives. And when I immigrated here, I found another cousin here also, completely by accident, and we remained very few, could be counted on the fingers of a single hand, two hands, and of course, they got married, children, grandchildren, that is, these families expanded, but it... it-- that's how I got some slight notion of the whereabouts of my family's remnants'. In (In Italian)_____.

Q: When d-- did you meet... Do you remember your meeting with Boder?

A: Yes, my meeting with Boder, I remember, it was in Geneva, and he came accompanied by his assistant, with a recording device, which it was the first time I had seen the likes of, and I was introduced to him, and he interviewed me, and I spoke German, I was interviewed in German--

Q: One moment, we'll wait for the... airplane, to pass... so, we're talking about the meeting with--

A: Yes.

Q: With Boder.

A: With Boder, yes. Now, I always thought, it could be that... I didn't remember well, I always had the feeling that he tried to manipulate me, so that I... so that I would feel and want to talk, by telling a lot about the device, and that he was trying this device out, and I felt that I was collaborating with him, in some scientific , technological test, on the device, yes? But I believe that I would have talked regardless, because I was open to talking, I never had a problem, talking, even though I don't babble indiscriminately, and not on just any occasion, and I don't live the subject of the Holocaust, as something that guides me in my daily life, but, I never had a problem, to talk, with the right people. I need a confidant. I need someone, who I think, who I feel is worthy, of hearing my story. I don't tell-- I don't talk about the Holocaust with just anyone.

Q: And with him you felt this way?

A: And I felt that he was empathetic, he... was interested not only in knowing, in learning about, he was interested in feeling the subject, that his interest, it wasn't... it was way beyond some curiosity... beyond some... some attraction to a sensational thing, but that he was passionate about it, that it was a subject he was touched by. As a scientist, as a researcher, and as a Jew, that's how I felt, and as such, I had an interest, even, in telling him, and telling him as accurately, as I understood it back

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then, as I could define... translate my thoughts, my emotions, into words, I cooperated with him. For years, I thought it was one evening. Later I found out that it took three evenings, that is, I spoke a lot o-- in-- I told a lot. I tried to describe, as best I could, what I felt, what I felt, as an accurate image, of our situation, although it's just a matter of my own accurate image, not the objective one, everyone, of course, has their own point of view, but, looking back, I think that, more or less, that's what people are telling. With variations in the details here and there, yes? But, overall, I think I succeeded in communicating, communicating... correctly, with a correct description, the... the conditions in which... I-- I myself, and the Jewish people, lived, during the war.

Q: Did you feel the he understood the things he [you] told about?

A: What do you mean, "understood".

Q: Understood, in the sense that, you were describing impossible situations...

A: Yes, that is, I always took some ???conficient???, some ???safety buffer???, to ensure that he understood, so I always made some... some addition, some filling up, for instance, I remember, this I remember vaguely, that I wanted to prepare him for that, he was going to hear different accounts, he was going to hear different situations, and he sh-- be ready to accept them. That is, he was going to find people... that he would find, for example, situations, where there was happiness, where people would laugh in the ca-- in the camp... yes? Which is being depicted as... an inhuman situation, impossible for living people, and certainly, not for happiness, and that he

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should accept it. When I told him, that when the camp commander was in a good mood, he would allow, in the afternoon, on Sunday, which was a day, when we didn't go out to camp-- to... work, because they had to give the Germans, the commanders, a day off, after all, they were also needed, to watch over us, so he allowed the camp inmates to... to.. to uni-- to gather, and... do something, sing, and there were people there who had... a talent for singing, a singing talent, there was, even, a Hazan [cantor] who gave Hazanuth [sang Jewish liturgical songs], and there was one person who could tell jokes, who was... who was... the... entertainment man. So, well, when he told a joke, we laughed. So how could you laugh in the camp? So I'm only saying, without getting into detail, I told him: "You should believe it, when people tell you factual things, it was all real". I wanted to ensure-- because sometimes, I had the feeling that if I told someone that this and that happened, then he would say: "It wasn't so bad, this whole business, they'd laugh there", yes? Or that, maybe, once in a while, for some reason, they gave additional soup, so people ate their fill of the soup, and I was afraid that people would understand that there was no hunger there, it wasn't so bad, yes? That is, I always-- that's what I remember, in one way or another, I remember, whether by these details, I always emphasized this point, "do understand that it's possible". I remember telling him... that... a person could eat a whole loaf of bread, in one bite, finish it immediately. I told him: "Believe that it's true, I've seen it. Even though it doesn't sound [plausible], that's how it is. The hunger was so great, it was insatiable. If someone got a loaf of bread, and he knew that this bread was limited, he'd finish it up." So... about all the other facts, of course I told him the facts, and the... the whole chain of events, more or less what I told you, and what happened in the camp, and the-- and the daily routine, and it's probable that I told some details there that I don't remember today, and maybe vice versa, also, but I told all the details.

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I told about the feelings, I told about... all the terri-- terrible experiences that I went through, and which I can't quite recall after such a long time, and about certain key figures, negative and positive... in the camp. I guess I told him everything. I have the... I have the interview in an English translation, which-- I have a story about, how I got it. But, regarding Professor Boder, I, after-- I totally forgot about him, I forgot about this business, and one day, I get a letter from him, and he says: "Listen, I've met a man named (In Polish?)_____... and... I tol-- we talked, I-- and he quoted-- he mentioned your name." He said: "I was so glad to hear of you, and I know that you're in Israel, and how are you doing, and..." and so on and so on and so on. But, before that, I forgot, before that there's something I need to tell. My wife, who passed away at a very young age, of cancer, we were "Jerusalemites", we lived in Jerusalem, that was truly my heroic period, in Israel, it was in Jerusalem, the first eight years, and... my wife worked as a secretary, for a person named Moshe Katan. His... original name is-- in France, he's a... in France, wa-- was Klein, and not Katan, and also, probably, not Moshe, and he's a very religious man, he immigrated here with his wife... form Holland, and he had thirteen children, one passed away, and he provided-- he was-- he was the only one who worked, a new immigrant, he provided for the family. We, in general, had some ties with all the French speakers, yes? I already spoke French by then, and my wife was from France, so we, generally, spoke French around the house, and all... our acquaintances were... so that-- and that's how she got, also, to be his secretary, this man, to provide for such a large family, he had a lot of jobs. He was a French teacher at the Alliance school, he was the director of-- at least, he worked in... in "Kol Israel", in the French department. He gave lessons, he was a journalist, he was... a librarian at the National & University Library, at the Na-- I think it was the National Library, at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. And all sorts

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of other Jobs s-- the-- he wrote articles for the French press, he had to provide for everyone. He was such a busy man, and his wife was so sensitive and so kind, that when she wanted to talk to him and he was busy, she'd slip him a note, she didn't... she didn't interrupt him. And she was his secretary. And they became close friends, and he liked to tell her all sorts of things, maybe spoke to her more, during the day, than to his wife, and one day, he told her: "Listen, I-- in the National Library, I found your husband's name." Then, he told her, about this interview with Professor Boder, this copy of which, apparently, this copy of which was sent to... to the National Library. That is as... i... as per convention. And I was very excited, and then I asked him, and he did a forbidden thing, he took out the only copy, I don't even know if I should be saying this on tape, he took the only copy out of the university, let me read it, I, of course, returned it, and then this whole thing came back up, and... that was an extraordinary experience. What?

Q: Yes, Sorry, it's... I was signaling to him about something.

A: Um hmm. It was a very moving experience, after all those years, to run into this thing, I was already in Israel. And as I said, before the Six Days' War, I get a letter from him: "Mr. Kimmelman, how are you doing, I got... I heard of you through Mr. (In Polish?)_____, and i-- and so on and so forth, and I would be very grateful if you... responded", so I wrote him a letter, that I was happy, and so on and so forth and so on, and... I told him about the-- what I found in... at the University Library, and I asked him, to send me a copy. By the way, he not only... interviewed me, and made a kind of translated transcription of the... of the interview, but he also wrote some book, in the form of a novel, also, which was called "I Didn't Interview the

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Dead", or something like that, there's a book like that, and there also, I play the role of a protagonist, so I asked him to send me a copy. And then, I think he replied that he had no copies left. I, the-- this written reply, I don't remember whether I found it or not, anyway, because I sent copies of the... of this correspondence to... to Washington, at Elizabeth's request. I was somewhat offended that the reply was so laconic, formal, "I didn't find a copy". That was the end of that. Years later... my son, one of my sons, both sons studied in the United States, the younger, who was in the United States, and who stayed there, I told him: "Boaz, listen, in Chicago, there is, there's got to be, in the archives, there's got to be a copy of these things. Please see, if you can get it." And he really did get me the copies, and since then I have copies of these things. I didn't have the privilege of seeing him, Professor Boder, because, the first times I went to the United States, it was in '73, I remember that-- I think he wasn't anymore, alive. So that's the story, of the interview with professor Boder. Now, I don't know, I want, still, he's not alive, I want to speak well of him, even though I... was offended, because I put myself in his situation, I say to myself, if it were the other way around, I would have went to great lengths, in order to make a copy of the micro- - [cough] films, or whatever was needed, to send an interviewee one copy of an interview, why, it's almost a life work, something like this. So, either he wasn't able to, for reasons unknown to me, or he wasn't sensitive enough to this issue, he was too concentrated, perhaps, on his research. This I'll never know, probably [cough]...

Q: Were these meetings with Boder, the first time that you talked, in a comprehensive way, or almost comprehensive, about what happened to you during the war?

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A: I can't say for sure. In such a way-- I remember two times, when I told in a very very comprehensive way, and when everything was fresh, and I remembered the details, and could recall the names of individuals, and so on and so forth, I remember two times. One is with Boder, the other is-- I have a very important memory, of that business, I told you, I... I was so hungry, for everything that had to do with education and culture during that period, and t-- to compensate, I participated in whatever I could, including - there was a week, called "a week... a week of..." how do I translate it in... to... to... to... Hebrew?

Q: What is the original language?

A: German, yes. It's... (In German)_____. It was called... it was called "A Week of Studies... of Youth Studies". Yes? Yes? Freely translated. That is, a week dedicated to youth studies. But, not studies about youth, but - the youth would study--

Q: For youth.

A: The youth would "conemplate". A Week of Contemplation for Youth. That's how they called it, and in typical Swiss fashion, it was done in the mountains, in some old castle, yes? And there came... really, youth-- that is, not exactly youngsters, yes? Young people, up to the age of twenty five, thirty, even, from all... all the countries who were in Switzerland. They were mostly refugees, foreigners and the likes, yes? And... it was organized by one (In German)_____, in Swiss... German, you don't say (In German)_____, you say (In German)_____, and (In German)_____ in Swiss German--

Q: Just a moment, one moment.

A: (In German)_____, in Sw-- in... in Sw-- in Swiss German, it means-- "wait a--" "wait a moment." So he would always make fun of himself, and he would tell all kinds of stories about himself, yes? Because he was always told: "w-- wait a moment, wait a moment." A man... he was a famous pedagogue, in Switzerland, and... a public figure, and he arranged this encounter. And during one of the recesses, at noon, we were sitting, very seriously, he, with his head bent forward, in a position of deep listening, and me telling. And to him I told the whole story. I don't know the circumstances, maybe I had a need to talk to someone, and I felt that he was the confidant, he was the person with whom I could create... this system of trust, where it's possible, and desirable, to tell this story. I needed to tell. You see-- I'm making a detour here, as opposed to the myths that people repressed, and didn't want to tell, and ran away from this issue, this topic hasn't been researched, and, these are all quite dilettante statements. There were all kinds of behaviors. As far as I know, people felt a need to tell, and did tell, and they had, also, limitations to telling about this subject. For example, when you're raising a family, and you have little children, and you're very conscious of their education, you are not so free, in telling all the horrors that you went through. Also, you don't always know, if you'll manage to tell it in the right way, and you're also not sure what the impact is, of horror accounts... told to young children. How often should you do it? And what details to go into? That is, many were wary, not of dealing with this subject, but of telling stories, out of this aspect too, and many were, let us say, of an introverted character, they don't tell of personal experiences to just anyone, and let us not forget, I think we've already talked about

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this, that the story of the Holocaust, for a person like me, is not just a... a national tragedy which I experienced, as a Jew, belonging to a collective, a collective that was targeted and humiliated, and murdered, and tortured, and beaten, and what have you, but there is also, here, a very personal tragedy. Now, I wouldn't dare to think that I would go-- I would walk on the street, and I would meet a person, who lost-- who had lost a son, who had lost a daughter, who underwent some kind of tragedy, and I would reproach him: "why aren't you telling?" That is, what happened is that the public has claimed ownership over all Holocaust survivors. That is, the Holocaust survivor isn't a private individual, he belongs to the collective, and he must tell, he must tell his story, yes? Because his story is the story of the People of Israel. And people didn't always realize that a Holocaust survivor is a private person, too, he doesn't tell everyone how he feels. And that's not because he's repressing, but, he, out of awareness, out of self dignity, out of... thinking that the person I meet might not be worthy, to see my weakness, all these considerations that a person makes, when he decides not to tell something that happened to him. In... if it's tragic, and if it's a sad thing, of any sort that's happened, not everyone tells that the girl left him, and how it makes him feel. Not everyone tells this to everyone. But, there was some kind of expectation, now people are slowly growing up and realizing that actually, the collective story can be told not by the Holocaust survivor, because the Holocaust survivor is personally involved, our national story is told by other institutes and people. Not the survivors themselves. The survivors themselves are witnesses, they... they corroborate the facts, they are irrefutable evidence, impossible to-- to refute, but, the story itself, the narrative, the educational part of this subject, has nothing to do with... a survivor. He can deal with it, but it's not his exclusive domain, it's not his duty, yes? Not more so than it is the duty of each and every one, who feels of this na-- of this nation, yes?

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That he came out alive, he's a Holocaust survivor. By the way, I've read-- when was it? Yesterday, in the paper, Ha'aretz, I think, that someone said: "we shouldn't be called '*nitzolei shoa*' [Heb. for Holocaust survivors, lit. 'saved from the Holocaust'], but '*sridei shoa*'-- '*sordei shoa*' [Heb., lit. 'Holocaust remnants, Holocaust survivors']]. Because, 'Saved from the Holocaust', that's every part of the Jewish people which the Germans simply couldn't reach. Every... every one-- the inhabitants... the whole Jewish settlement in the land of Israel was saved from the Holocaust, because Rommel didn't manage to reach here. It wouldn't have taken much for him to get here. It would have been exactly the same [for them if he had]." So that's why, if we [keep in mind] this thing, then, we, as human beings who belong to the Jewish people, tell of the Holocaust, and do with it what we do. A survivor is also a private person, and should be allowed to be a private person. And... I remember, several times, I felt [I was being told]: "Why aren't you telling?" There was this kind of question, "Why aren't you telling?" I tol-- I told myself: "Who do you think you are, for me to tell you? Do I demand of you to tell, if you wet your bed at night? Because you had some wet dream? Will I reproach you, 'why aren't you telling'?" I mean, it's tactless, yes? And... an unreasonable expectation, yes? From... from people, who think that... it's an interesting story, I need to tell it, first hand. I am obliged to tell him. And it's-- to some deg-- today it's a little... subsided a little, yes? Subsided a little, people are beginning to understand, yes? People are beginning to understand that it's not like that. And you should be very very careful in... in generalizing, about Holocaust survivors. I have a friend here, I don't know if this belongs in this interview, but I'll tell it. I won't say her name, because I'm not sure she'd like that. I have a friend here, whom I'd met in Switzerland, and... she is the wife of a well-known, famous husband, Fre-- she in-- she was born in France, and she is herself a... psychologist... and... she

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works with, works with Holocaust survivors. And we have arguments, we have disagreements about this issue, one day she tells me that there's a-- some Swiss friend of hers, also a psychologist, at any rate, someone who's also interested in Holocaust survivors, not even Jewish, I think, and he's come here to see, and to study, he's researching this subject, he's researched... and there's a photo exhibition in... in the Ci... in... in the Cinematheque in Tel Aviv - perhaps you know, a few years ago, there was a photo exhibition there - and that that man wants to talk to me. To interview me. I went to see what that was about. And I went to see. They show the families, their life stories, and today they're sitting, and telling, they have grandchildren, they have a home, they have a car, yes? And I spoke, later, with the man, and I said: "What does that have to do with the Holocaust?" That man, yes? Who... was a little-- I said: "you want to meet me, you're welcome, I just want you to know that if the plan is that you would write about me, that 'this is a man who has been through the... cir-- circles of hell, and has remained a normal person, and built a family, and he has children', then I'll pass. Holocaust survivors aren't... some kind of curiosity group, that you patronize, and you tell them their life story. What... what does that have to do with... a Holocaust survivor, who came here, and built a family, and you make an exhibition out of it? What's the big deal? What does that have to do with... with allegedly deep inquiry into the Holocaust? These are norm-- you want to say that they are no-- they are people, who have remained normal, and you're the man whose watching... with some satisfaction; 'There, you see? These people, they were in the Holocaust, and they've stayed normal.' That, of course, is only beneficial to those who need to have a patronizing approach to this issue, though they're unaware of it." I said: "I'll pass. You want to talk about the Holocaust? You want to talk about the implications of the Holocaust? You want to hear what I feel about it? Not only

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will I oblige, I'll welcome you to it. You want to photograph my private life? It's of no interest, what' so interesting about it? Take everyone, who's had some... s-- sad period in his life, r-- round them up, and photograph them, and see what has become of them. Will they even cooperate with such a thing? I don't represent the nation, what you've done, it isn't representing the nation, it's... taking a number of people, who have individual names, each of them, and... you made a photo exhibition of them. What does that contribute to... the study of the Holocaust? The one has nothing to do with the other. It's just creating a stigma, yes? Namely, that those who had once been in the Holocaust, at one time, there's an expectation for them to be different. Now, you come along, you want to refute this: 'You see? You thought [he was] different. Well, he's not.' Anyway, who do you... who gave you the right to do this? Me? You can't speak for me. Not at all." So this is what I want to say, that this subject, there's a misunderstanding, there has been and still is a misunderstanding, about the appropriation of Holocaust survivors by the public, by the public, who also are undefined. Why, there is, always, someone speaking for the public, who's appropriating the right to speak on their behalf, to express his own expectations, which are... absolute, of course, because it's him who is expressing them, yes? And... this is something, which shouldn't be done, which is almost insulting. I feel I can talk whenever I want to, I can also cry-- let me tell you something, that I, in this club, on Tuesday, we commemorated the... the National Holocaust Day, and I was asked, both to read a few selected chapters suitable for this occasion, and to light, we li-- we li... ce-- they made, they organized this ceremony, they lit candles. And I was supposed to light the first candle, and I started saying: "I'm lighting the first candle," and my voice faltered, and I started crying. So, it's not... it's not something that someone can ordain, it's-- me, my own private business, but, if you would like that I tell-- yes, sorry. That I

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tell you a story, and burst into tears, because you want to hear, because you're curious to know, who do you think you are? By what right? And don't start interpreting my willingness or unwillingness to tell-- don't be a half-assed psychologist. It's not your job, it's not even your expertise. So, I, specifically in this interview, find it fitting, really... to s-- yes? To make that remark, yes? If there are, still, people who think that they're completely removed-- that is, Jews, that they're-- it didn't... it didn't happen to them, but, they interview, they interview others, and they want to know what those others are feeling, and they also, by the way, give grades, they say: "that one... that one is repressing, and this one is benefiting", that is, you shouldn't... either you're a part of this matter, you tell your own story, and using the testimony, and... the existing documentation, or you're strangers, and then you need to get every individual's permission, if he is willing... so, one should be... in my opinion, one should be a little more sensitive about... about this. And I tell you again, I feel no inhibition, that is, to tell and to cope, with my personal tragedy, but I have a great difficulty... and also... a conscious desire... not to open up to just anyone, who wants to know my story. I choose for myself the people, to... to whom, I am not only prepared, but even willing to tell. Because there is a need to talk, from time to time. Because it's a part of my personality. We are a product of our past, and that past is heavy, and I have no doubt that it... it affects me, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Q: These things, that... right now... you said, about... the... expectation of Holocaust survivors... to tell, the demand, when you spoke to me, when we were preparing this interview, and during your correspondence with Elizabeth... and you said that you

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wanted to... you were willing to grant an interview, but you wanted, also, to say some things beyond-- did you mean these things?

A: Among others, Yes. Among others. Among others. I have, of course, other things that... I didn't prepare them, but, now when you mention it, because I have been preoccupied with the Holocaust my whole life, I'm not... not disconnected from the Holocaust, it's not something that guides my ev-- my everyday life, perhaps to some extent, but I am preoccupied with this topic, because I believe that that Holocaust... guides us-- this whole nation, the whole Jewish nation all over the world, and certainly in Israel, yes? All our actions, our... our... our ideology, our perception, our... of course, on a national level, the Holocaust is right at the center... at the center of the co-- the subconscious, of course... and it plays-- it... it plays a very important part, that we have not yet been able to measure, only future historians will be able, perhaps, to take the measure of the influence of the Holocaust. Therefore, it's very important that if it's in our power to direct the influence of the Holocaust, that we direct it towards a desirable end. Now, without going into the details of what is a desirable end, that is, to use the Holocaust, in a... in a very responsible way, yes? If we are aware that the Holocaust shapes us everyday, and that in the future we will witness the results of its influence. So, t-- that's why we have to use it correctly, if we're going to use it. If t-- it is possible to direct spontaneous emotions, if there is a-- if it is possible, and it is possible, it is possible to suppress, it is possible to interpret, it is possible to counterbalance, then we must do this very very responsibly.

Q: How does one do this responsibly?

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A: Well, first of all, one doesn't do it irresponsibly, such as when... when this topic is vulgarized. When it is trivialized. I... just want, to give an example, not of a common practice, but a-- a typical example... of... of the way we sometimes behave, and make use of the Holocaust. I was in... in Germany years ago, and back then the Germans would return the tax you paid for merchandise, if you had the receipts, if you... yes? If you were taking it out of Germany. And this was in Munich. And all the... Israelis gathered there, and I saw that, in a kind of... self degradation, some people asked for a tax refund on things which weren't eligible, because they were Holocaust survivors. That is, they were constantly sending out this message: "Look what you did to us, so now, make an exception for us". There were several times when I just wanted to crawl under a rock and die. Now, in our approach, our capitalizing on the Holocaust, it's terrible, what we're doing to it. Even at... at present, in all the political disagreements, in Israel, our... how should I call it? Our vulgar use of the Holocaust, it's almost as if it's our backbone, guiding our development, the backbone of the Ho-- Holocaust. It's in the background... the background of our whole being... of our whole being, of our outlook on national security, and on our independence... we're destroying, destroying this thing, vulgarizing it, making it into something... something... which loses its value.

Q: Excuse me, but we're finishing a tape, I--

A: Yes. Yes.

End of Tape 12

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Tape 13

Q: One moment, let's see if-- that's it... we're rolling.

A: Yes. Yes. Well, really... I often think to myself, the way in which we give expression to the Holocaust, and... how, in my opinion, it should be done properly. Considering its purpose... I think that the Holocaust... we should... it should be, first-foremost, a matter that's between us. It shouldn't be constantly used to reinforce our preaching to, and criticizing of, others. If the... if there's no self-induced remorse on the part of external parties, but only that remorse generated by our reminding them, then, not only is it useless, but it will also, in my opinion, ultimately be counter-productive. And if... the outside world, which was complacent, and is aware of the facts, isn't doing anything for its own sake, what can we do? I believe that there are conscientious people there, people who are giving themselves an honest, hard look, they should be helped, if necessary, they should be encouraged, to make their mark. We must tackle the Holocaust for our own sake... we must do this with humility, with the utmost possible humility, and with the utmost pain, and it must be treated with

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great sensitivity, as we always treat bereavement. More is not always better. The way in which we communicate this... this tragedy to younger generations, must be sensitive, without communicating some message of necrophilia. Without communicating some morbid message. It's not that we should re-- refrain from detailed description, but, we should do it in measures, and in a way, that will bring about a positive result in younger generations. I gave an example earlier, about Holocaust survivors, about whether they're talking or not talking... I have two sons, and, one of them is especially sensitive. And I know, the kinds of things that ca-- could, when he was little, give him fits of crying and anxiety. And I cannot, in the name of the Holocaust, and in the name of some general, undefined imperative, yes? Feed these horrors to him, in full, without making him sick, perhaps. The same approach applies on the national level, it should be done very tactfully, it requires a certain class, it almost, I'd say, requires artistic sensibility, and, between you and me, not everyone is an artist. And that's why the Holocaust can't be tackled by just any random irresponsible person, as if it's a public thing, and anyone can just reach into it and bag as much as would come out. And I feel that this is not how things are, and there's a lot of misuse of the Holocaust as a topic. There's a reckless misuse of such an important aspect of our national history, which is the most appropriate topic to be treated with awed reverence.

Q: Can you give some examples of the things that you... mention?

A: I have. I said... the Holocaust can't be remembered just in itself, without the historical context, and without inferring some positive message from it. Some

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optimistic message. If it's just a commemoration, if it's just lamenting what has passed, I don't see much use for it, and certainly not much future gain.

Q: Can you articulate that optimistic message that you'd like to infer...

A: Right, well, I was coming to... yes, just that. Now, I'm saying, first of all we need to agree that the Holocaust is a very serious issue, too much so, in fact, to feel sorry for ourselves over it, as we say, in a frivolous way, everyone mourns the Destruction of Jerusalem. I ask myself, if this thing... if, when I break the glass, in memory of the Destruction of Jerusalem, during a wedding ceremony, what message does that communicate? Not to people who are... versed in all the interpretations. That is, as a people. That is, what does the common man absorb? I don't know what he absorbs, he goes through the motions... he mutters the words... it's not necessarily something that... that... that... that applies to him. It's just a symbol... one of many, yes? Everyone is concerned, not with the blessing, and not with its meaning, but with whether or not the groom manages to break the glass. In other words, if you trivialize things, they lose their meaning. And the Ho-- Holocaust must have a meaning. Now, I... you ask me what meaning. It's not so simple to give... to-- to be very specific about it, yes? Because I am also not so certain, I know that I am not always wholly at peace, with-- at peace with what I see, whether in sc-- in school ceremonies, I'm not talking about the national ceremonies, it's the sc-- school ceremonies, or with professional lecturers, yes? It's... it's a statement without... without content. Without depth. Look, I think that I started the interview by telling you that the... Holocaust, not in detail, but in general, as a danger, as an attempt... as an attempt to destroy us, in the literal sense, didn't take me by surprise. I felt the danger, the-- the mortal

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danger, when I was still a little boy. So, I'm not the only one, and there were those who were greater, and wiser, and more experienced than I was, who were aware of this, and... Why was there danger? L-- I-- D-- Why had there been a mortal danger all along? Look, we're a minority, further divided into minorities, for two thousand years, we've been living as a minority, with a special identity. Without having anyone to support us. We have no power, we're defenseless. Absolutely defenseless. Anyone and everyone is stronger than we are, can do what they will with us, take the... most remote tribe in Africa, they, they've got support, they belong to... the people of Africa, and when you hurt that tribe, you hurt the people of Africa, and then... there's-- there's some degree of protection. They, even, have somewhere to run to. The Jewish people has always been completely defenseless. So, there was a time when, in order to protect, and to preserve Jewish identity, there was religion. Because everyone around us was religious, there was no place for seculars. The church dominated Europe, yes? So, they ha-- they had to be... Christian, not to mention the Muslim world, they had to be Muslims, and they still have to, up to this day. The Jews couldn't suddenly turn secular - there was no such thing. But, the moment there appeared, on the stage of history... people who were free from the church, and the church was actually pushed aside, as a major... as a major factor, the... Jewish, religious authorities, was not even capable of preserving the Jewish identity of most Jews. First, there's this contention, I've been making it for years, but, I've read in the news, suddenly, that someone made it, someone wiser than me, and I didn't know that actually--

Q: Excuse me, there's a problem here, you keep looking that way...

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A: Oh, and that way, too, yes.

Q: And it goes...

A: Um hmm. Oh, alright, oh.

Q: It doesn't look good on the screen.

A: Oh, it doesn't look good, yes. Oh, alright, good thing you told me, yes. So that person also did the math, and I, really, did the math, I say, the Jews, the Jewish people, has existed for so many years... with proven continuity, and such peoples, number today, if they still exist, many millions. Not dozens, hundreds of millions of people. The families were large. So... so the... Jewish establishment wasn't one-- didn't pre-- didn't preserve those Jews. Where are all those Jews? On the contrary, once the Jewish people became the only remaining people, which... which is defined by religion, and the nations which surrounded it could be free, most members of the Jewish people became secular. They couldn't adopt a different identifi-- identity, because the [other] nations rejected them, but they tried. But, they didn't want, first and foremost, to be Jewish, because being Jewish, that means being religious, and they couldn't identify with that. That is, when the religious establishment could no longer preserve the Jewish people, it could, at best, preserve the Jewish re-- religious tradition. Now... we-- we must realize that, that this extroverted identity, is really-- not that they're right, the anti-Semites, but it's asking for it. We were aliens, we l-- we lived in someone else's house, with strange customs, and anything foreign is threatening, and furthermore... we demand justice, and we demand rights, while

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being at the mercy of each and every *goy*, anyone can raise a hand and send all the Jews running. So, the Holocaust began a long time ago. Now, the worst happened, and the worst must teach us something, yes? That we must create s-- such a Judaism that will be sustainable, that will have a good chance to survive. And we will have a good chance to survive, not by being special, strange, and... and... and... and... and as such, both attract flies, and be threatening. And I say that the Zionist movement, which was founded in the... nineteenth century, is not-- the modern, political, Zionist movement, it was founded for a reason. I believe that they understood that Jewish identity must be given a different direction, for it to survive. And Zionism, at least up to now, has proven that many Jews, me, for example, who can't fit into the religious identity, could-- can be a natural part of the Jewish people, yes? Naturally, without being connected with--

Q: Sorry.

A: Yes. Yes. Without it--

Q: Please repeat that sentence.

A: Yes, I am saying... I was saying, yes, Jews like me, yes? Who can't be defined as Jews in the religious sense, because I am not observant, yes? The only way I can be naturally Jewish, is if a Jew has another identity, a natural identity. And the only such identity is Zionist. There's... there's no other identity. And that's why the significance of the Holocaust, as I see it, is that we must, now, do all that is in our power, to gi-- to give this identity a good, strong chance for independent existence. And that will not

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be served by self-isolation, and it will not be served by emphasizing what is special about us, what sets us apart from all other nations. Because that, in my view, is mortally dangerous. And it's been proven that we-- if we want to isolate ourselves, and not to be the general interest of humanity, if we are not a part of humanity, and, as a result, not an interest, that is, we don't belong to anything, then we are defenseless, we have no protection, except for the almighty, for those who believe in him, and say... what did... Rabbi Lau say? What do we say in the Passover Haggada? Yes? "In every generation we are besieged to be extinguished", yes? In other words, we live with a kind of... feeling of desperation, or risk, or danger, constant mortal danger, wholly dependant on someone getting us out of this mess. On that basis, it's impossible to educate a well-adjusted generation. A healthy generation. So, for me, the Holocaust, if it doesn't-- if we don't give it, also, a bearing, on Jewish existence, but only talk about what happened, about the pain, we are greatly diminishing its usefulness. Then, it is only useful for people who are in constant need to-- to whine about their troubles. I'm not one of those. I'm one of those who say that if something happened, we must learn some lesson from it and apply it to the best of our ability. That is the lesson I've learned from the Holocaust. The only lesson. Though I am aware that not all Jews can immigrate here immediately, because it's not humanly possible, for everyone to align themselves according to some ideology, I am saying, it-- if they don't come, they at least need to blush. They should know that they're not doing the right thing. You can't-- in my opinion, we mustn't accept these people's calling themselves Jewish, based solely on lip service paid in the form of some Holocaust commemoration ceremony performed abroad. It has no national significance, no historical significance, it's just the Holocaust in and of itself. Unless it's in the context of our long-term existence. And I want to understand... I want to

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understand the Holocaust, not as something that happened out of the blue. I am convinced that the Holocaust is the ultimate manifestation of what had been going on for generations, from the pogroms in England, through (In German?)_____ and (In Italian?)_____ and the deportations, and the Inquisition, and all the troubles we've had, for generations, and from which we had no protection. The only protection was to-- to run, and maybe to... to pray, that where we were running to, there would be someone, a little more tolerant. We didn't come with some birthright, some... some power, which allowed us to say: "Here, we are an interest. You do that to us, and we can retaliate." That's it. Th-- I keep looking that way, don't I? I don't know why. Maybe I'm trying to convince him [laughs].

Q: Gerard, Gerard...

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: D-- d-- don't look at him, so he won't...

A: Right. Right.

Q: Alright? S-- either s-- come closer, because...

A: Yes.

Q: It's just creating a problem.

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A: Now, and now I'm coming back to the point. Because for me--

Q: Wait wait wait wait.

A: Yes. That's it, fine.

Q: Hide a bit, then it'll be fine... no, you haven't yet... be... be right here, so that... he won't seek your eyes.

A: I was saying, because the Holocaust brings me to conclusions about existence, and about identity, we must not approach it inattentively, as if it were just another memorial service, just another *Kaddish* in some small synagogue. Instead, if we need to do something to-- for posterity, we must emphasize how important it is that, out of the Holocaust, we will-- will... we will rise to become a power, to become an interest in the international community, while I fear that our self-isolation is a mortal danger, it endangers the existence of... of... of our people. That's on a national basis. And, on a personal basis, as I said, everyone has their own private Holocaust.

Q: I'm trying to put what you're saying in order...

A: Yes. Yes. Yes. Of course.

Q: Not in_____.

A: Of course.

Q: You... speak about trivializing the Holocaust... but, it-- you don't mean that... the ceremonies are trivializing the Holocaust.

A: No.

Q: What do you perceive then to be a trivialization of the Holocaust?

A: I mean that there's a popularization of using the Holocaust, as a prototype for all sorts of things, and of-- of using our being a people of Holocaust survivors, to achieve things which require a much more thorough approach. Not as a result of generating pity, or shame, in someone else, yes? But, those things, we need to achieve them, by virtue... by virtue of our being an interest. Not by virtue of our being pathetic.

Because... because, being pathetic, you can only get charity, until the-- the donor tires of you. The benefactor. Even if it's your right to get this charity, the benefactor has the power. So, it's better to leave the Holocaust as something purer, something wholly ours. Now, I said another thing, that we mustn't emphasize, particularly where the Holocaust is concerned, the position of those who teach, as if we were teaching the world about values, about morality, about humanity, yes? Because we can only teach these things to the world by personal example, and certainly not by-- by talking.

We can teach the world about humanity, and ab-- if we are very humane, if we are very moral, and if we are very excellent, if we are good role models. But, not by telling them: "Look, we know what a Holocaust is, you did this thing to us, now be humane". They don't accept this, and they won't accept this. At best, they'll be ashamed, at first, to respond, and next-- and they'll just whisper "go to hell" under

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their breath, and the next time, they'll slam the door at us, and the third time, they'll slap us, perhaps. And that's wh-- that's human nature, to do so. We don't always realize it, we mustn't, on every opportunity, on every opportunity... a politician should think twice before mentioning it, to silence some opponent of his, we mustn't, to every... to every small thing, we shouldn't respond by mentioning the Holocaust, because we are diminishing it, we're teaching the world that the Jews and the Holocaust are one and the same, and that it's not so bad. And I say that the Holocaust is both ours, and... and theirs. They need to do it. To-- we shouldn't be involved in... in debates, where in Berlin to place a memorial, and what shape - in my opinion, we shouldn't be involved in that matter. That's none of our business, and neither is guaranteeing that wherever there once was a Jewish cemetery, and p-- and people there don't want us, that every such place is marked with a memorial. That doesn't do us any good! That's trying to commemorate the Holocaust by means of nagging, by means of provoking someone who is much more powerful than you are, and whose values you have no control over. He can put his values aside, and he can kick you out of his way. That's what I mean. And that's why we mustn't allow every petty politician to approach this subject by means of demagoguery. Because who-- what Jew will oppose the commemoration of a cemetery? Well, I ask you. And what Jew... will dare to say, "then we'll move the graves, then..." so, they're silencing... this potential Jew, they're silencing him proactively, with this argument. And people don't understand that we are doing a great wrong. We cannot revive, and we need not revive, the great Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. They didn't want us, it wasn't our country, at best we had a democratic right, only they weren't democrats. And even that is in question, because we weren't great democrats ourselves. As a minority, it was in our interest for democracy to exist. That's not being a democrat. That's being an interested party for

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democracy. And we still have a lot to learn, even in Israel, where we are in control, before we are true democrats. It's not that simple. So, we must deal with this subject, and the lessons to be learned from it, with great sensitivity, while looking at things very, very carefully.

Q: I-- I want to try and understand, in a certain direction, what you mean by sensitivity. I-- I'll give you an example, there's a trend, in recent years, of a lot of preoccupation with the Holocaust, in literature, in theater, and in the cinema...

A: Um hmm.

Q: I'm talking about preoccupation in Israel, there's also preoccupation abroad.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you see this preoccupation, as helping the matter? Hurting the matter?

A: I think that it's probably the result of some need. Generally, it's not about-- we shouldn't stop things that arise from a genuine need. We need to stop certain types of expression, which are harmful. But not the thing in itself. Why? On the contrary. We discussed earlier the things people talk about, or don't talk about, that is, when someone feels like talking about this subject, crying, yelling, he should. We mustn't direct... we mustn't direct the Holocaust discourse. That's not our role. The museums, their role is to preserve, to record things--

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Q: I'm not talking about directing p--

A: No, that' why--

Q: I'm now trying, not as... not t--

A: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Q: Not from the point of view of a museum, but as a person living in society, and sees the flood... of works dealing with--

A: Right.

Q: With this subject, do you feel they do justice to this subject, the--

A: No, it has nothing to do with justice, I'm saying, it's pe-- these are people who are bothered by this matter, and it causes them to asks questions, questions of identity, questions of behavior, questions of values, and they're dealing with a very hot topic, yes? Which has affected, and is greatly affecting, all our being. It affects everyone, whether they were there or not. You see, that it's, already, we're talking about a third generation that's preoccupied with it, not the first generation. Third generation. In other words, as the Jews were preoccupied with the destruction of The Temple long after the last of those who had been present was dead, because it was a part of their being, and an inseparable part of the attempt to explore the core issues and values of the Jewish people, through that destruction, so, of course, with the Holocaust, even

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more so, people are trying to get to the bottom of things. So, I am trying to make my humble contribution by saying that, in my opinion, I know which... which direction we should take the interpretation of the Holocaust, and I say the direction should be... to strengthen... to strengthen Jewish existence. To strengthen Jewish justice. Not st-- not to strengthen the Jewish plea for justice - when I say "strengthen justice", it's as though I'm taking the Holocaust and arguing with the *goyim* about it. Justice is on my side in relation to them. And I say, we should drop this subject, entirely. They used to have debates between Christians and Jews-- and Jews, yes? Between rabbis and priests, yes, to decide who was right. We always... we were always at a disadvantage. Not because they found good arguments, but, first of all, because we were a persecuted, despised, small minority. So, on the contrary, if we came up with a strong argument, we were despised even more for it. It's obvious. So, we mustn't repeat this, and make the same mistake, with the Holocaust. We shouldn't tell the world-- I say, when the prime minister, yesterday, I saw him on television, when he says: "While they kill-- they were killing the Jews of Europe, the world stood by. No one helped." I-- he needs to tell us that, not say it over there. Because really, he can't achieve the result that, if something happened to us, god forbid, the world, this time, w-- the world doesn't like Jews better-- doesn't like the Jews any better on account of the Holocaust. If someone thinks that, they're making a grave mistake. The world is prejudiced against the Jews, and if this ever changes, it will take a whole lot of time, and it will be not because we preached moral values, but because we communicated, over the years, that-- that we were an interest for them. We are concurrent with their interests, we're not... not contradictory to their interests. That's how the world works, that's how I understand human existence, in general. And that's why the crucial problem, for me, now, is this, of how to use the Holocaust in order to strengthen

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ourselves, and bring ourselves to this realization, this insight, yes? That we must strengthen our existence... and f-- for me, it's by no means a matter of saying-- saying more prayers, absolutely not. It must be different from what we've been doing for two thousand years, which not only didn't help, but only got worse as time went by. And I'm not speaking against religion, if anything, I may be, at most, against the establishment, against people who made... who made incorrect use of the fact that they were at positions of power. In the religious establishment. A-- by the way, they still do. There are still those who do. Religion is too-- is too serious a matter, to be left to pu-- popular manipulators. Populist manipulators. They're hurting religion, too, by the way. But mostly they're hurting the Jewish people. So, enough with vaingloriously proclaiming: "the religion, and its establishment - they preserved the Jewish people." They preserved a small part of the Jews, who wanted to be religious. That's true, no one's disputing it. But they couldn't have kept a person like me Jewish. And if it weren't for Zionism, I would not have had a solution. What solution would I have had? And that's what has been happening, by the way, for generations. We've been pushing away great, brilliant people, who gave-- who have so enriched-- the world's culture, they could have been Jews who enrich-- Jews who enrich the world, not... someone who preferred to think of himself as French, rather than as Jewish, and rather-- that person, in Hebrew, he should have enriched the world, through translations. That's what should have been. If only we had understood our situation. That's what I think. That's what I'm convinced of, and that's the source of my strength, to live in this country, and to believe that this-- this country, has... has a bright... a bright future, a good future, because there's a people here that's creative, and full of... full of ambition, and... and... and ability. And the question is, what do we do, until we realize all this potential, we need to survive until then, because we are in constant

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danger. Not only from the Arabs, from... from Jenin, yes? We are in constant danger, as long as we don't become an interest of the French, of the English, and interest, that's what it is about. And believe me, we have an excellent football team, that only helps us become an interest, for humanity. For... for this world, which is interested in football. We must encourage this... in our behavior, in our hospitality, in cleanness, in reliability, in... in gentleness, there's no... we... not a person who comes to Israel, must find it a pleasant place. That's our interest. Our interest is for them to find this a pleasant place, and say, "I can go to Switzerland, and to Belgium, and to France, and to Israel." And not as an exotic vacation, not as a one-time experience, and that takes a lot of work, over several generations. And we mustn't check the time, whether we're there yet, or measure every day, how close we have gotten to this goal, because it's a matter-- it's an educational process, and like any educational process, it takes generations, because it's really the creation of a culture, and culture is created spontaneously, you don't create it. In those countries where they tried to create a culture, such as in the totalitarian states, it failed. Culture is created spontaneously, and this happens when the-- when it simply emerges, yes? And then we internalize it, and it becomes a part of our personality. This is acquired, it doesn't originate from us. You can't be taught to be polite. You learn to be polite, and you internalize it over time, by necessity, because you must, I don't believe in preaching, I don't believe it works. Preaching doesn't work. But necessity does, and I believe that if we are true to the Zionist goal, we will yet have to fight for it for hundreds of years, and throughout that time, if we have-- if we have a good leadership, we will internalize the necessary values through need, through the need to survive. That's why I say, I'm optimistic. We already where... where industry is concerned, we are not the same Israeli Jews that we were fifty years ago, I had a cousin, who... tried to market-- he

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used to make linen, he tried to market it in Germany, they bought his wares, paid him, and said: "thank you very much", once. Because we were in the habit, as peddlers - the Jewish people was o-- a people of peddlers, everywhere, not just in the East, in... in Europe too - of selling once, and that's that. What you made, you made. But, if you want to sell repeatedly, and market yourself, and be preferred over other dealers, your quality must be excellent, you must have good prices, you must be timely and reliable, you need to be a... pleasant in... in... in conversation, you need to respect the... all the rules, without being forced to do so, and you need to do it with a smile. That's-- we didn't bring that with us, from... from Jerusalem. From before-- we didn't bring that with us, we need to learn it. We need to learn it so well, it becomes second nature. And those who don't understand this, they get frustrated all the time, and look for happiness in some other, nonexistent, place. Happiness is right here, I can see it, and it's so up to us. One of the little examples I can give, for instance, if I'm driving, and I need to go left, and you cede to me cordially, and later I repay you the favor, then we're even, you've lost nothing, I've lost nothing, you gained. But if I tell you "no, no, no", and later, also, [you say] "no, no, no", then we're even, but both of us are unhappy. And that we need to learn, to respond naturally, to naturally say, "please, go ahead". Now, I don't want to make here an analysis of our behavior, but I'm giving this example to show what I m-- what I mean when I say that we need to be an interest. We need to be a people with values, at the very least Western values. At least. We should ideally be even better. That way we'll be looked upon more favorably. And that's what I've been working on all... all my professional life, you can call it that, I've been working on this. Not by preaching, but by creating an infrastructure that requires a certain kind of behavior, a behavior... a behavior that also has an effect, perhaps, on values... so that's why, for me, the Holocaust, if it is to

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have a national-- national significance, it has to go hand in hand with the message-- that's my opinion, with the message I'm telling you about. Otherwise, it doesn't have the significance we want it to have, we can-- we can even add sacredness to the bargain, we had the Destruction of the Temple, and we have the Destruction of Jewry, of European Jewry, and if that's not enough, people are already saying "Pure and Holy" [Heb. For Martyrs]. We mustn't say that. Why w-- The Jewish people, which is a people, whom we can see up close here in Israel, were they all pure and holy? And if they weren't, does that mean they deserved to be murdered? That they deserved to be gassed in... in... in... in Auschwitz? Why do we need to add that in? Because there's already-- here, we can see the influence of our tradition, which can't be taken seriously, which isn't facing the core issue, suddenly-- that is, the-- this matter of sacredness, and if it's sacred, you don't need to draw any conclusion. It's sacred, and you need to pray to it because it's sacred. No. Not holy and not pure. It's the people of Israel, children, adults, women and infants, tiny babies, murdered in cold blood. W-- why add another superlative, where every word is superfluous? This is a classic case of "the best is the enemy of the good". Why? Because that's, to some extent, our mentality, and we can't let it go. How can you say the God Full of Mercy [prayer] if they were not holy? You can. My father wasn't holy. He was a human being, with his vices and weaknesses, and with his virtues. But not holy. And he was murdered... and we don't feel, what, perhaps, a person feels, who seeks the truth. For whom words are meaningful. We don't feel it. I've told you, it takes artistic sensibility, that is, those who convey the grand messages, they should have had the sensibilities of an artist, who, he has the truth, he has-- he is closer to the e-- to the search for truth than the average person. Certainly not politicians. Well, that's... that's a speech, not an interview, yes?

Q: So I'm taking you b-- somewhere else.

A: Yes.

Q: We can later return to...

A: Yes.

Q: To whatever we like, but there's one thing I wanted--

A: I want to ask a technical question.

Q: Yes.

A: You're interviewing me with the jacket.

Q: Yes.

A: And if I take the jacket off, is that a problem?

Q: You can take the jacket off.

A: If you show on television that I take the jacket off...

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Q The technical answer is this: whenever I want to edit the material so that you're seen both with and without the jacket...

A: Oh, oh, both with...

Q: I'll have to show this shot where...

A: Oh, s-- oh...

Q: But, if you're too hot, take it off.

A: Well, ok, maybe I got warm because of the--

Q: Take it off.

A: Self-generated heat.

Q: Take the jacket off if you like.

A: Well, alright, if... if it makes it easier for you...

Q: I--

A: I'll try to persevere.

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Q: D-- d-- don't s-- don't suffer, do me a favor, if you feel like taking off the jacket, take it off.

A: Yes, alright.

Q: I-- I would like to address-- to compare this interview with the one you gave to Boder, from one aspect... it doesn't really matter if there were some details that you remembered there, and here you forgot some name, or some incident, it's not so important... and it's natural that... now, after all this time has gone by, you can observe it from a greater distance... and there are things which you can now interpret, in a way that you couldn't back then, such as the things you've said now... of course, these are things you can say now, but couldn't say back then, and it's natural. But I am interested in comparing one aspect of the Boder interview with this interview. When you spoke with Boder, you were very angry at Jews.

A: Yes.

Q: Very angry. You spoke of the Jewish Police, and it... you described an incident, that they w-- even before... even before the camps, in... in the city, you described an incident where a policeman, or two policemen, grabbed someone and beat him... and... you described the incidents, which you repeated in this interview, in the camps, where Jews beat Jews.

A: Yes, yes. That, I described this time also.

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Q: An s-- yes, of course, but, in your descriptions to Boder, you emphasized: "This was done by Jews. How could Jews do that?" You were full of rage, and... and here, the rage is gone. Wait a minute, we have here... stop for one moment. One second... alright? An in... this interview, you haven't approached things from that perspective, not once.

A: Good question... I'm trying to give an answer...to a question which I haven't thought of, and I'm trying, now, to give an answer, based on what I'm feeling. First, don't forget that it was right after-- after the war. A few months after the war. It was all fresh. I was raised on the myth that Jews were generally good people, and... better-- I-- I-- I was really raised on [the myth of] the Chosen People. And I was raised believing that a Jew would never beat another Jew, not to mention batter him brutally, wouldn't inflict mortally dangerous suffering on him, and I was still carrying that... myth, if you will, for me it was an ethos. And suddenly I see, this (In Yiddish)_____ beat a Jew, which he knew from his hometown, an old man, and he talks to him: "Moishele", yes? As if-- and he beats him, and beats him, and he-- and it's beating, and it's unbearably painful, and he's lying up there on the bed, and... and he can't get out, and can't g-- get up, and he beats him, and he beats him and beats him. This thing shocked me. I associated that man with... with every possible dark attribute. I would drown him in... a barrel of water, if only I could. I would beat him back, beat him unconscious. So-- for something like that, immediately, I dreamt, I'm sure that I dreamt in bed how I would take him, I would put him in the bed, and do it to him. I met him, later, when he was a wretch, and I couldn't hurt him. You'd say, it's the same man, but it's in-- it's my nature, and there's a difference, between when you're angry and... when you're in a very concrete situation. So that was immediate,

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the-- the experiences were very powerful, the wound was still open, and there was even pus still. So, it's obvious that I would react-- that I should react that way, it would not have been normal for me not to react, when they had shattered all my-- my fundamental beliefs, I was-- I felt secure, among Jews, I felt secure, nothing would happen to me. I had never seen this kind of situation... in hindsight, how did you put it earlier? These things go through a certain refinement and sublimation. The sublimation, sometimes, stems from... from two things. First, with the passage of time, everything becomes grayed out, you stop seeing the images, but, mostly, in hindsight, your rational factor gets involved, yes? Which reduces the power of the emotional factor. That's natural. And indeed... I don't know whether my considerations back then were of Justice, it was more an emotional shock, which turned upside down... everything I had been raised on, everything I believed in, regarding that issue. So, it was a very powerful emotional reaction. In hindsight, you see things quite differently. I was just as angry, back then, with manipulative Jews, not necessarily those who beat others, but those who did it at another's expense, sometimes getting others beaten, because of violations they performed, and I couldn't stand it, and I, in hindsight, I don't justify it, and I say: "We mustn't, we must..." I spoke of one who was... about what we... what we need to be educated in, this is one such thing, but, I'm trying, as time goes by I'm involving my analytical faculties in this, my rational analysis, and I say: "What was he feeling? What was he thinking? Did he mean to get someone beaten? Maybe he thought he wouldn't get caught, and b- - he wouldn't get caught?" There are all kinds of-- that is, when you try to get into the protagonist's mind, yes? You see all the possible variations, and they are not always all negative, yes? It could be that...

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Q: But, I'm not talking about the reaction, that night, when you must have dreamt about doing to (In Yiddish)_____...

A: Yes yes.

Q: The same thing that he did to that Jew.

A: Yes.

Q: I am talking about the story you told Boder, which was a few years later...

A: Not so much, n--

Q: And, actually, after you met this (In Yiddish)_____...

A: Yes, in (In German)_____. D-- I--

Q: And you already let him go...

A: Yes. In (In German)_____ we met--

Q: You let-- let him go, and in your meeting with Boder you hadn't forgiven him, and in this interview you have.

A: Yes.

Q: And the forgiveness is not just towards (In Yiddish)_____ personally, but, the-- all your harsh criticism of the Jewish collaboration with the Germans, which you had during the Boder interview, is gone.

A: Yes. Yes. Yes. I can't remember what I said back then, I-- I'll repeat. I say what I think today, I can't remember, exactly, what I said back then. First of all, (In Yiddish)_____, I don't know whether I forgive him or not, maybe, under the circumstances which-- What I should have done, because I couldn't repay him myself, yes? I wasn't strong enough to do so, I should have ratted him out, I should have made a racket, and that was an additional step, yes? So-- but I observed his wretchedness, so that, even though I knew that he deserved it, he didn't evoke in me the same feeling of... of hatred, and of vengeance, as when he was the one controlling us with the whip, and was beating us. It's n-- yes. But, now, when I talk, I talk about... about all the so-called collaborators, in a generalized way... when I analyze it after the fact, people didn't go into it in order to be collaborators. They went into it because it was-- it was their means of survival. Indeed, ask any Jew, how come we didn't revolt? How come we didn't say: "Let me die with the Philistines"? First of all, we weren't raised that way, but, furthermore, everyone, to the very last minute, thought it wouldn't happen to him. Just like car crashes. N-- not that I'm comparing. Even if you're in danger, you think that it will somehow pass. Either the dog will die, or the landlord will die [this refers to a famous Jewish joke re the expectation of miracles], something will change, maybe the Germans will get beaten, that is, he didn't risk-- he didn't bet all he had, come what may. So that's why, when people were selected for the police, and they immediately understood that it entailed huge privileges, first of all, they

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could protect their families, they would get apartments first, they would get food without standing in line, and more of it, of course, so, this is why they got into it. That this entailed, later, actions against Jews, was a result of the situation, and not of their volunteering. Now, in hindsight, there's this approach: "I expect of every Jew that, in a situation like that, under no circumstances-- [that] he'll sacrifice himself, to the bitter ends." That, perhaps, is a justified assertion, speaking absolutely, but it's unrealistic, there's no such thing. Not in any people. There's no such thing in any people. That's why there's a difference between judging them for their actions, and judging them morally. Again, as a generalization, as a very broad generalization. I am certain, also, that for example, among the (In German)_____, among the community leaders, there were those, really, who were in a constant dilemma, and thought they were at least doing some good. I'll give you an example, of t-- of (In German)_____. The story of (In German)_____, I don't know if it was decided, I think it was decided, today it's more in favor of (In German)_____ than it used to be. But Kastner was accused that he neglected, I think, a million Jews-- the Jews of Hungary. Suppose that's true, so he had the right, in my opinion, to do this calculation: "If I do nothing, no Jew will be saved. If I do something, I'm not hurting any other Jews. I'm saving two thousand Jews. It's true that they are rich, they are my relatives, my acquaintances, but they're two thousand Jews." It's a difficult human dilemma, and that's why, the... the judgment of it, the judgment of it cannot-- cannot be simple. It's a very complex judgment, which only history [cough], if there is such a thing, for history to pass- to ru-- to rule, and pass judgment on him. I don't think-- I think we, as human beings, are limited, also, in our capacity to judge, and there are considerations both ways, and I, now-- you said, there has been sublimation, and... and... and... and... the strong emotions have subsided, yes? And I add to this some... some

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parameter of rational thinking, yes? When I no longer feel the power of the emotions beating inside me, yes? As strongly as I did then. So, in my opinion, there's no contradiction, the passage of time makes the difference.

Q: Do you mean that, also--

A: And indeed, we can see, also, in life, there is, for instance, a criminal caught, who did something twenty years ago, thirty years, were he caught thirty years ago, he would probably have gotten the maximum sentence. Thirty years later, the judges say: "In the meantime, he..." and so on and so forth, that is, they're not vengeful, yes? Because the emotions are not as strong. So, it would seem that I... surrender to this rule, this human rule, yes? That as time passes, you don't have the same feelings.

Q: Does this also apply to the Germans who murdered?

A: With the Germans, something really strange is happening to me, which I keep wondering about... you know, I'll say it again, every night I... almost every night, I... there was a certain period, in the last two years, when I've been preoccupied with the Holocaust. Now I'm back to it, again. I imagine ruling... Germany. I repay them for the Holocaust. Whom do I take care of? (In German)_____ and his family, (In German)_____, (In German)_____, all the high leadership, (In German)_____, all this leadership, I take care of them, not the German people. Because I see, now, today, I can't see the... the German soldier, of the (In German)_____, differently than I always have; a complete ignoramus, a brute, a drunkard, beats his wife, beats Jews. In other words, most of them weren't ideologues.

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They simply enjoyed beating Jews, and that wasn't new to me. The German soldier is... isolated, he didn't put people-- he didn't organize Jews-- shipments to... to... to Auschwitz. He killed a Jew here and there, he didn't... he didn't practice mass extermination, he practiced d... d... disdainning Jews, not even... not even hating them. I don't think it was hatred, it was disdain, and the Jew got in his way, and m-- "Go to hell". That's how it was. We were weak. That's my view of-- today, of things. Now, whether the German people-- the German people should be punished collectively, for generations, that's a philosophical question, so it's not personal, that is, if I meet a German whom I like, I cannot, now, take philosophy, into my own hands, I have these kinds of relationships here and there, I can't do that. I just know one thing, I told myself; if, right after the war, immediately, the day after liberation, it had been in my power to destroy all Germans, that's what I would have wanted to do. The very next day.

Q: All Germans.

A: All Germans. For me there was no distinction between a German and a Nazi, it was the same thing. Because I had only seen Germans who, the absolute majority of them, save but a few, did-- I told, also, of the few Germans I met, there-- they... they... they participated.

Q: That is--

A: I hadn't seen-- I hadn't seen the common people, not in cities, not in villages, I saw the soldiers. Soldiers and guards.

Q: There was a group who called themselves the Avengers Group...

A: Yes.

Q: Who had planned to poison-- s

A: To poison the wells, yes.

Q: to poison water wells in...

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Six major German cities.

A: I... I know one of them personally, very-- very well. I know _____ very well.

Q: That is, were they to succeed, they would've realized your dream.

A: Yes. Back then. But, all the Germans. Not just some Germans in some town.

Q: They tried... went for six cities.

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A: Yes. That's it. So... I see now, yes? I don't know what I would have said back then, about this business, it would have raised practical considerations for me, so what did I do? I say, I said, had it been in my power to destroy all Germans, all-- first, any-- satisfaction of-- of the lust for revenge, which is so legitimate, and so a-- so acute, this thing, when you are provoked for so many years. And it's so-- was so just, I would have done it. Since it wasn't in my power, I immediately switched to rational thinking, and thought: "They are going to be a very powerful superpower in Europe. And the world over, and we cannot, if we want to survive, we cannot afford to hate them, the harbor a hatred, to harbor a premeditated hatred." And out of that rational thought, I could approach Germans selectively. And start to find the humanity in them, and it does exist.

Q: Excuse me for a moment--

A: Both in the individual--

Q: E... look, we have, on this tape, five minutes left...

A: I don't-- [interruption]

Q: This is part of the interview. Sorry, yes.

A: Yes. And the... and... and the educational, formative factor, which should have implications for the future, and to which I want to give a... a decidedly positive influence, if we use it... if we approach it correctly. And this, as I have said in various

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ways and various phrasings, this is what was important to me in this interview, because my story is quite trivial, unfortunately... there are, I'm sure, people whose stories are much more fascinating than what I told, yes? I told, first hand, what I experienced, and I have witnessed a great many... very sad... affairs. So, actually, I'm just one more story, and if it has any historical significance, that there's another one, who, while still alive... gave his testimony of this subject, then I am happy to make my contribution to this documentary effort, but, mostly, as I said, I would like to say how I feel about the Holocaust, how I live, how I can maintain an optimistic outlook, on certain conditions. With the Holocaust serving as a background for this optimism, as paradoxical as it sounds.

Q: I thank you very much.

A: Thank you.

Q: Thank you for the interview.

A: Thank you. And happy Independence Day.

Q: To all the people of Israel.

A: You're welcome.

Q: OK.

Avraham Kimmelman

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End of Interview