

Interview with HERR and FRAU SUSSMAN

RG-50.569.0026

In German

(Tape 1, Both sides are poor)

Tape 2 Side A

0:02 Some events at Auschwitz

A selection was imminent. A Pole told him that a gas chamber was demolished. Belgian doctor told him that Jews are primitive. Had a person who “read cards.” They gave her a deck – many came to obtain ‘information’ from her.

Difficulty with washing shower. It was important to wash for hygienic reasons. But kapos made a list of whoever came.

0:83 Conditions in Auschwitz

She cannot describe the atmosphere: fear and smell. Some managed to keep morale and dignity. Language was “camp-German,” i.e., a mixture of German and Polish. Terrible atmosphere. Episode of girl who was clubbed to death because she kept her dignity. Episode of Germans shooting girls in knees. Everything hung on a thread.

Prisoners were psychologically hurt. There was no cleanliness, no greenery, no culture. Women who were shaved – were sunburned during roll call. They had to walk on broken glass and were infected. There were 60,000 women in Birkenau with 3 latrines, which was insufficient. Could use only in the morning. Was very cold and many could not go. Polish gentiles came – so Jews could not use latrines. Only after talking to Polish communist leader were they allowed.

SS also abused their ‘dignity’: they hit, tortured, killed, degraded. After selections, unfit were locked in guard room. When they took showers, it was uncertain if water or gas would come down.

3:12 Camp Cracow

The camp was several kilometers from V1 and V2 factories. She worked with steel saw machinery – 12 hour shifts. Figured how to sabotage machinery. SS investigated, she said she was capable of better work. Was reassigned and again sabotaged the machinery. She said she was a technician. SS needed dental work, so she offered to do it.

4:80 Escape

Escaped with a French girl from the underground resistance. In the dark and in snow, stayed out in field when all were gone, walked away. Went to forest. Catholic priest refused to help. Came to another work camp. Were shown a barn where they could stay. Inmates brought food – stolen from farmers. Also stole clothing and were given 40 DM and shown a train.

5:10 End of Recording.

### Side B

0:04 The way to Switzerland

Took train – 100 km at a time. Were in Dresden (Saxony). Went to Evangelican church. Were given 350 DM. Received food and ration cards. Were advised to go to Switzerland. Ten days by train and foot before they got to Swiss border. Saw border lit up. Embraced the Swiss guard and walked into Switzerland.

1:03 Liberation of Mr. Sussman

In camp was in very bad condition. Women workers helped him: gave him new clothes and food. Worked with typewriter that could also transmit. Was not allowed outside. Heard Russian guns. SS decided to liquidate the camp. He decided to stay: built a shelter in coal storage and stayed there until liberation.

1:78 Switzerland (Mrs. Sussman)

She told the Swiss about Auschwitz. They did not believe. Were taken to Schafhausen prison. Swiss brought journalists to hear her story. The Staats president interviewed them. They then were three days in prison for illegal entry and were sent to a refugee camp in Basel. Had food and were sent to Montreux. Jewish delegates came with offers from Germany: exchange of prisoners. She refused so as not to prolong the war. Red Cross visited them to hear about gas chambers. She convinced them to send packages to prisoners. They wrote to French Embassy and were invited to Geneva.

4:13 To France

Was in Paris, contacted some old friends. She investigated whereabouts of husband. Found out that he will be in Marseille. Traveled there.

5:20 Reunion with husband.

He was there working. They met. They returned to Austria. He worked to organize an exhibition of Resistance.

5:89 End of recording.

Tape 3 - Side A

0:02 Paris

In camp, two people were missing. Affair about packets. The Sussmans had a choice of being shot or going to Auschwitz. They opted for Auschwitz. They had forged papers, had to be very careful in Paris. There they were arrested, but Gestapo knew their real names. People were helpful and did not reveal that they were foreigners. Warned them. Offered to hide them. They worked for the resistance in Paris. Survived two Nazis in Paris. Used French forged papers. They taped illegal posters.

2:00 Camp

Somebody hid a 7 year old child in camp. The parents were caught but survived. Have good positions in Rome.

2:43 Thoughts

They imagined what would happen if all KZ inmates except one would remain . People would have a bad conscience. Every German has a dybbuk. They would make believe that no one was a National Socialist.

Auschwitz cannot be described. They did not think they would survive, but always imagined what would be after the KZ. Several survivors would be required, not just one, because one would not be believed. They did not think that there would be anti-Semitism, and did not believe a revival of National Socialism. They thought one could always protest the deniers. But persistent deniers actually never spoke to survivors. It turns out that anti-Semitism cannot simply be stopped.

4:15 End of Recording. (Side B is blank.)