

--who send him, a Czechoslovakian Jew, to the concentration camp. And he said, that Jewish boy said, if you send me to that concentration camp, he said, I'll tell everything what's going on. You know, what's going on, that we were buying with Scherwitz' approval. In fact, he used to help us get the food additional.

And that was for the Germans, for Scherwitz, it would be-- it would cost him the job. And that job is like that. For him, the job-- he didn't go to the front, and then he was promoted so fast. You know, he started out like a sergeant. Within three or four months, he was already a lieutenant in the SS because he had a good tongue, and he was going to the high officials and [INAUDIBLE] the production.

So he got scared. So about 10 o'clock, when we were in bed, the oberjude, Mr Sheinberg-- not the one with the tie-- came in and he said-- well, we were sleeping in a big dormitory. He said, you know what happened? I don't remember anymore the name from that Czechoslovakian Jew. He said they were working on the roof. He fell down, and he was killed. However, we found out on the next day that Scherwitz said he cannot send them to the ghetto, he said. Otherwise, the whole thing will blow up. And he ordered-- and he didn't want to kill himself, so he ordered-- there were other German boys who were working. Oh, they are working with the masons, with the masonry. He ordered them to eliminate him, you know. And it was a very shock, but I'm telling about the whole episode.

So I heard that Scherwitz made them work when it became dark. As a punishment, he made him work, him work, the whole group in the masonry, later. But he gave them a notion to kill that man. And when he was bending down, somebody-- I know that man. I don't remember the names that hit him with the shovel, with the flat over the head. So that's one episode.

Now, after that time was going on, and we were working. And it was pretty-- still the best place.

Well, did Rauchman, was he satisfied that the--

Yeah. Yeah. Well, he said it was an accident. He fell down off the roof. They know we were working and busy. And you know, German-- the German, he had evidently told him he punished him. This he was sending him this, and he fell down. Oh, yeah, they delivered the body, and the body had a flat-- and we kept on working.

Now, what happened? You know, as time goes on, the German idea was to eliminate the Jews. So from all-- they had to make, they called it, judenrein. You know what judenrein-- clean of Jews. So they used to-- we were 1,200. They asked 200 people. So each sub-- and there were a lot of subs, as I said, printers and weavers and the truck repair and car repair and trailers. Each shop has to give a certain proportion to make up the 200.

200 what?

200 Jews to give out to the concentration camp. And there they eliminated them.

All right, do you know what period or what time it was, what month or year?

I'll tell you approximately. When I read many times the stories about ghettos with periods, with dates, I wonder how do they know it? How do they remember? Because the state of our minds was so I don't know how anybody could remember dates. We did not remember dates. And why? Because we were equal to a bunch of sheep who are brought to the slaughterhouse, and we are going to be slaughtered. One part is today. When will be our line?

And I don't know. Unless there were some people who were either-- I was not. I don't remember dates. If I want to, I have to approximate. We didn't from any holidays or this. It was work, work, and waiting for when you are going to be called. And three, four months past, another 200. And again, each shop, each shop had a foreman. He would give the names. And it used to be we would entertain. We would line up in a line in the morning. And then Scherwitz would come, and he would say the one who are the list-- the list who were called should go four or five steps ahead. And we would go, and they would go away. And, you know.

We knew a lot of executions and this. And the one who went didn't know where-- if they are be eliminated right away. There were already beaten, and in all kinds of places where people were eliminated. And it-- to 200. And it went up. It came to about 600, when I was still there.

And here what happened. This is a very touchy episode. This was already about, I would say, in 1943, end of '43. And in our shop was-- the manager was a Mr. Lippert. He was an engineer. And he had, before, a bicycle and typewriter shop. He was there, and he had a son about 18 years old, asthmatic, very tall, slender, you know, but a sick boy.

So he was the manager, and his boy was working with anybody, giving a hand. Then was a Mr. Adamson, again, a father and a son. And they were in the type repair business. They had a shop like here an office. So there was a goldsmith, a very good specialist. His name was Khan, Mr. Khan or Kagan. Then was a family of three engineers, three brothers. And a Mr. Henkin and Gafanowicz, all that did-- that Henkin was an electrical engineer. And-- and here what happened.

And I was working with electric appliances and sewing machines what they brought down. You know, I used to make by hand parts if necessary. So that Mr. Lippert and Mr. Adamson, they had-- it was a father and son, a father and son. And we had to send away people. So Lippert wouldn't send his son, you know. And that Adamson said, if he sends his son, he goes with him.

And they were in-- and somehow, they were personalities, they were always fighting. So when many people were sent away, so Lippert wanted to send Adamson's son. And they were almost-- he want to fight. And he knew Lippert got-- he cannot do that. So what does he do? He sends both away, the father and the son.

And he comes to me. And he knew I was in the-- he said, Mr. Leibowitz, he used to-- you'll take over from now on the typewriter repair.

Your name was not Lebow there, it was what?

Leibowitz.

I see.

Yeah. So I took it over. And we were working, and then he saw how handy I am and this, and everything was nice. Not only that, one time he brings me-- and that Lippert himself didn't have good hands. He was a businessman with a lot of practice in business, or he knew about things. He was an engineer, but to do the things he-- and he respected me and this.

One time, Scherwitz brings from town-- and Scherwitz is the German manager. He used to go in town to-- on big-- talk to the big shots. He brings, one, a calculator. It was a Mercedes calculating machine from a German, a big one. And in that time, we didn't have any the electric or the-- now the electronic things or anything. It was like a computer in those days. And it wasn't working. You know, they had-- Germans had offices, and the war machinery is a lot of accounting business. And they had big offices with girls and with men.

And it didn't work. So he brought in, and Lippert was very [? handstand up ?] a little bit. Lippert was very-- a little nervous. And he said, he said, Mr. Leibowitz, maybe you can fix this. I haven't seen in my life such a machine. For me it was like telling me to fix a computer. So I told-- I told, well, I said, let me take a look.

So he gave it to me, and I turn it over. I screw the back. I look, and I look, I didn't even-- an electric calculating machine, I never have seen it. I see in a corner is like a couple, a little angle with a screw is lying around. Oh, and this I thought-- and I look, and I look, and I look, and I see where it is. You know, where it's missing. And I put it together, and it works. We tried it out.

But that Scherwitz evidently asked who fixed it for him, for Scherwitz to do things. And with the big shots in town was, for him, a big thing because he was coming and telling him that he was fighting for us, that he needed the Jews and they

are productive and they are specialist and all of this.

And this one thing, so-- and here what happened. It comes-- in a couple of months, again Roshman needs more men, more men, again 200 men, yes, big shot. And here, we had three brothers Kreunitz. They were all engineers. And how they get in? You know they didn't do anything, just because they were famous people evidently in Riga. I wasn't born in Riga. I was a-- and evidently, with protection they were there. And there was another engineer from-- he studied in Grenoble, France, an electrical engineer, Mr. Henkin, nice people.

And again, they were looking on how I work. And we were talking. So those three engineers, each one-- our shop was from the smallest one. So he gave one brother Kreunitz, and another brother Kreunitz, and three brothers Kreunitz. And then it remained like that.

Mr. Lippert and his son, you know, his son I wouldn't even expect to send-- nobody to send away his son. The goldsmith was one, and he was very important because Scherwitz used to bring them gold, what the Germans robbed or all this. They would melt it out and make all kinds of beautiful rings you don't see, or cigarette lighters and whatever, all kind of boxes.

There was a Gafanowicz, who was repairing the sewing machines upstairs in the-- he could. And it was I or Mr. Henkin. And here, Mr. Henkin wasn't a production man, productive. However, here was the oberjude. You know what the oberjude is, the manager of the whole shops. You know, Mr. Sheinberg, he was a brother-in-law of Mr. Sheinberg. Oh, yeah, Mr. Sheinberg had two separate house with his wife. And lived, you know, and then Rudolf. And he was a brother-in-law.

And I know for Lippert was a big decision to make. And I know, you know, Scherwitz used to give a couple of days to-- and Mr. Henkin was very-- Mr. Philipps, what was his name? Was very sad-- Mr. Lippert was very sad. And I could see. And I was said too. Oh, yeah, and in my times already, in the last time, they tried to erase the mass graves that you used to dig out the killed people from the mass graves and put wood, you know, and put the corpse and burn them. It was already at the end.

And even the smoke used to cover all Riga. And they used to do it about 10 miles away from Riga. You know, in Salaspils was where they used to kill off the people.

Well, how did you know what they were doing?

Through outside-- outside people used to bring in, like, he brought in the sand and gravel, and people-- oh, yeah, firemen, for example, used to come and check our sprinkler system, from outside, firemen with the-- firemen used to come. And he too, he used to do business with the Jews for valuables. So he used to come quite often.

So he needed young people. And we were better fed. Strong people he would take from our people and dig out the corpses and burn them. And that was-- this too we found out. They didn't want to leave any witnesses. And people would work on that job about two or three weeks. And either you would get a scratch on handling the dead. You would get all kinds of poison, or from starvation. So these people used to leave-- they dug in a big hole, and there they would sleep. And they couldn't get out without a ladder. At night they would pull out the ladder.

And boy, again, and I thought, who will he take. And oh, yeah. And we didn't know until-- the whole business, we would line up in tent. They would read when Scherwitz was there and a representative from the Kaiserwald, from the concentration camp. They would call, and we would have to go out. We didn't know in the last minute.

And I-- and I knew Henkin is his brother-in-law. And my gosh, here what happened.

The day comes. It comes. But with this I used to make up my mind, who knows how many will survive or if any, will survive. But that's the day. However, we had one hope that something in Germany will happen because at that time, at end of the war, the Germans had-- had the [NON-ENGLISH]. How do you say it in English? Had the-- well, they didn't have a lock on the front. We're bombarded them, and we knew that maybe Hitler will be killed. We hoped that the war

will be over suddenly, and maybe we will be saved.

Then another thing what, for example, I didn't want to do this bad work. I still die anyhow. A sudden death, I was prepared and all right with. So he called when it comes to the shop. He calls me out. The masters used to call out or, all right, or a German. I don't remember. And I go out. And well-- And after we were lined up, the one, Scherwitz, used to go over and look at everybody.

And usually he didn't interfere. He can do-- we have-- he has to give 200 Jews. Who goes? The masters, if they picked out-- and you know, that was the first time. And he comes to me, and he grabs me from my button. And he said, no, this is a good worker. He said, there is a guter arbeiter and pushes me back and pulls out Henkin. Naturally, it wasn't-- I would go, he would go, then who knew? But meanwhile, I was saved. And how was I saved? Because he found out who fixed that Mercedes calculator, and he remembered.

Usually there were a lot of people, you know. And I was working in a little shop. I never thought he laid an eye on me. But he remembered. And he said, this is a guter arbeiter. So I don't know. I think he remembered, unless Lippert told him or something. Or maybe even the oberjude, his brother-in-law. Anyhow, so I was saved there.

Of course, another one got on my place, but that was so unusual-- usual, you know. Yeah, another thing what I want to tell you-- the psychology of that life, of that period, was so tough. In peacetime, you cannot imagine how people think. The same, you can't imagine, for example, in normal days that a family, a father will give up his children, you know. But I saw it.

They said-- and already, when they brought the German Jews, you know, and I thought that they brought them with families. But they said children separate and then parents separately. And the children, they put already in a van, you know, in an automobile. And they said any parents who want to go with the children is all right. Some others went.

And I-- this I saw, when a mother wanted to go with her children, the husband holded them, and he said, wait. We don't know what it will happen. He said, if we will go out alive, we'll have children, something like that. They were crying. But this psychology, you save what you can. It was so inhuman. All human life was shifting, like you feel a battle of corn, you know, and one will fall out on the side and sprout again. And the others are grounded up in flour-- the same.

People were saving themselves if they could. Although, they didn't know what it will be there in the future. So that is one. So we have that one episode with the Czech Jews, with the Czechoslovakian Jew. You know what are these.

And oh, yeah, then comes another episode. It gave them very, very-- I would say it tension, with a lot of tension. We were-- at that time, we were already 600. And we were working. Oh, yeah, and Scherwitz comes and he said he doesn't give out any more Jews. And he said, I have papers. And he's-- and he tells that his-- the commander of the Eastern Front is his friend, and he has papers. He said, that we are-- nobody will touch us. And he said, well, in fact, he has papers to take us to Germany.

And he said there we'll go over with the machinery, and he has a boat already reserved. And he said, we'll set up a shop. And he said, you won't have to wear the Magen Davids. We wear those stars, and we have them, he says, in us, in us in German. We have them in our back. I said, we'll live. Nobody will know that you are Jews. And we'll survive the whole war.

This man was a rather unusual Nazi, wasn't he?

Right. An unusual Nazi, right. We don't know. And I'll tell you about-- I'll tell you. I know the whole history about him too. And here-- and we kept on working. And really, every-- we were happy because we are still alive and there. And we kept working. And Scherwitz, he brings all kind of committees with German big shots. And they go over and look. And he tells us in advance. He said, when he's bringing somebody, and the machine should not come this. And thought, you know? And he was there.

At that time, I don't know again the date, but the Russians-- it was past Stalingrad, and the Russians started around

Leningrad to free themselves. Leningrad, you know, is in the north. You know what Leningrad is. You have an idea.

Isn't that where your brother Max was killed?

No, he was in Stalingrad.

Stalingrad.

Stalingrad is south, but Leningrad was Petersburg, where the czars lived. And that's in the north. And that's not far from Riga. And this is near Murmansk, you know, when you see the European map. And the Russians broke through. And you see, Leningrad was surrounded. And they were starving and cannibalism, everything was. But the Russians broke through the front. But they started coming towards the-- to liberate the Baltic States.

Scherwitz was in town. He used to be in town, always with the big shots. And he was an organizer. He could get things, even for the kitchens. Food was, for the Germans, were-- were food too scarce, you know. He used to go in the country-- he had a car-- and bring sometimes meat or a calf.

Here's what happened. The Russians broke through the front and started to come into Riga. They came so close, about eight miles from Riga, that we could hear the bombardments from cannon bombardments. And Scherwitz is in town. We see a lot of the German army with cars and trucks, that they are going back, you know. And we knew that something here is-- so the whole-- with the Jews, you know. And at that time they were killing. Our place they didn't touch. But other places, where the Jews were spread out and living with Germans as workers, that they're eliminating and eliminating and this and that. And the concentration camp is almost empty already.

And we didn't know. We always were suspicious that they won't leave us for the Russians, that they will kill us off. And in fact, that was the idea, that they wouldn't leave us as witnesses or as helpers. If we are there, the Russians can take over and start working. We'll work for the Russians.

So here we take-- we hear and we see that something is happening. So people start organizing. And they said they may come and take us, and take us to Salaspils, you know, where this is like--