

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

ISADORE HOLLANDER

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Josey G. Fisher
Date: October 25, 1982

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IH - Isadore Hollander [interviewee]

JF - Josey Fisher [interviewer]

Date: October 25, 1982

Tape one, side one:

JF: This is an interview with Mr. Isadore Hollander, on October 25th, 1982, with Josey Fisher. Mr. Hollander, can you tell me where and when you were born?

IH: I am Isadore Hollander. I was born 1920, July the 26th, in Paris, France.

JF: Was your family from France originally, or from elsewhere?

IH: No, my parents were originally from Poland. They emigrated from Poland to Paris in 1919. Not legally. In those years you had to be smuggled from one border to the other. And because of circumstances in Poland and unemployment, my parents had already one child, a sister, she was four years older than I am, and desperate in work, my father had already family in France. And they told my father to emigrate to Paris and he was offered a job by the Rothschilds, well-known in...

JF: The Rothschilds.

IH: Rothschilds, well-known, rich people those years. And he began to work and make a living for the family.

JF: He was what? Employed as what?

IH: As a tailor.

JF: As a tailor.

IH: My father was a tailor, yeah.

JF: You say that they had to smuggle their way out of Poland. There was...it was difficult to get any kind of pass to leave the country?

IH: Well, those years maybe he would have gotten a pass or not, but France wasn't very eager to let in too many people from outside into France. But people smuggled themselves in and they were not citizens. Then we...

JF: Did you have to have papers of some kind?

IH: No, you couldn't have any papers. You just brought yourself through the borders. And people were, took you over the border into Germany. And from then on you were a little, you were traveling through Germany without papers. And those years was a little bit easy to travel in a country or to get from one country to the other smuggling. And then they had to have somebody from the German border into France. Somebody was awaiting already paid people which they very well knew the ways to go through the borders. And when they came to Paris, already after a certain time, they start to work. The company they work, or Rothschilds, they gave out a certificate or certain papers that they were only here for a time being to work.

JF: O.K., so those papers, then, would be what your family would have shown the authorities, had they questioned...

IH: The trouble is that they were already just authorized...

JF: Temporary.

IH: Temporary to work at the time.

JF: I see.

IH: Now, my father took sick. After I was born, my father took sick. He had tuberculosis. And those years in France I didn't, if you weren't rich enough, you didn't have enough money, they didn't bury you in a Jewish cemetery or in a separate cemetery, only in a mass grave cemetery like 30, 32 boxes down the row. And it was a big, like a big mountain, steep, whatever, with pictures, from every...

JF: Pictures of all the people?

IH: Pictures of all the bodies, all the dead people in the row. So my father was very much afraid, and as being a Jew, an Orthodox Jew, he didn't accept the idea for being, he knew, the doctors told him he's not gonna make it. And he was promised by the Rothschilds that they will put him on a Jewish cemetery but he couldn't believe that. So he picked up the family and left, went back to Poland.

JF: This was in what year, Mr. Hollander?

IH: In 1923, the beginning of 1923.

JF: Do you have any memories of Paris before that?

IH: I don't. No, I was only three years of age. And I have memories that my parents told me that I fell down a flight of steps and I was hurt. And I suffered till the age of seven from that fall.

JF: You, is this, you're pointing out a scar...

IH: Yes, yes.

JF: On your, the side of your neck.

IH: Yes. This is when I fell down. This is the memories which I left with me. But there were other things, the life is only what parents used to tell me, about anti-Semitism in France.

JF: They did feel anti-Semitism?

IH: They felt they couldn't observe Passover, the *seder*, with open windows. They were breaking the glass, you know, the windows, throwing stones in. This was already in 1920, those years. So, anyway, my father didn't trust nobody and he went back and in a short time. Within four months, three to four months, he passed away.

JF: What town did he return to?

IH: To Poland? Bendin. B-E-, I'll spell it in, it's plain with the way I talk, in Yiddish. B-E-N-D-I-N. It's in Yiddish. But in Polish was it with a "Z-I."

JF: Yes.

IH: But let it be in Yiddish, Bendin. I think it, only, gentile people won't listen to that. Probably mostly Jewish people probably. Bendin. Now he passed away in 1923 and we were left two orphans, with my mother. And it was very difficult for my mother to start up life on her own. She was a seamstress. She worked to provide us children with food and

whatever she could. And it lasted four years. After four years of being a widow she remarried. And it happened, it didn't turn out, the right marriage, which she had two other children with the, from the second marriage. And...

JF: What do you mean it didn't turn out right?

IH: It didn't turn out, the marriage wasn't a success. It wasn't a good one, but she had two children. As, being a child, I was seven years of age, I was very jealous. Whatever she did, even though I didn't know my first father, but it was a jealousy. I loved my mother, very. I was 25 years of age and I still cried after my mother, and I still, it's still not that, to forget. But after she married, then she had two children. My mother was forced to send me, to give me away to an orphanage.

JF: Why is that?

IH: Because my stepfather, not that I was grown up enough that I should understand that I couldn't get along with him, but it was a mistreat. She had only one child with him at that time. I had an older sister, which she was four years older, and she was 11 years of age. But it was a mistreat. It was a stepfather and he didn't treat right my mother. He didn't treated us children and me, being accepted to an orphanage, was the best thing what had ever happened to me. It was a very well establishment, well-known in Europe, all over Poland and Europe. And it was established with the Charter by one of the well-known Jewish people in Warsaw which he wrote, and he was a director of an orphanage, Janusz Korczak.¹ And...

JF: He was also, then, responsible for the establishment...

IH: No, he wasn't, but we accepted his charter, how to raise children, how to train us, how to make from us good people, educated people, because he used a charter. Children have to have a charter, how to act. When I was 11 years of age, I was a president from, I was the president of the board. And I ran an organization, like a children's organization. I read a constitution with paragraphs. And we all had duties as children. One child had to learn how to cook. Two children had to know how to make breakfast for the rest of the children. We were boys and girls. We were about 75 children in the orphanage.

JF: This constitution, you wrote or you read?

IH: No, this was written and adopted, from Janusz.

JF: I see.

IH: Korczak.

JF: I see.

IH: He was the one who wrote the constitution for children...

JF: I see.

IH: To govern an institution, like orphans. Now every institution has their own constitution, their own by-laws, and laws. But this was given and then we adopted it, by

¹The well-known neurologist who became interested in the well-being of children all over Poland and advocated advanced progressive ideas. He became head of an orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto and perished with the children.

Janusz, from Janusz Korczak. And we did very well, and it did to me special being there, for the time, till the age of 15. It did very good, because I was educated. I went seven years to public school. I went three years to night school to finish like a...

JF: Like high school?

IH: Yeah, to the grade of high school. And being taught a trade as a tailor. And...

JF: You said you were president of the...

IH: I was being elected...

JF: Your, the group.

IH: Every year. Every year we had an election. We changed. One year when I was president, the other year I could have been a secretary. We changed. We had a group and maybe the third year I wasn't on the board. Because we had 75 to 80 children in the orphanage. So it changes, but everybody had a duty, from the children, to clean the rooms we slept, to clean the bathrooms, to wash the dishes, to prepare breakfast, to give out dinner, to stay at the dinner and give out the dinner for the children, to hang the laundry. Duties was for every child to do. We played theaters. I was awarded when I was eight years of age. I was awarded for playing the theater...

JF: You were an actor.

IH: In the show. And in comedy and any other thing. And me myself, I have a very good sense of humor and I am very liked by people in a short, many people, in a very short time I am liked by people. And, but that's life, the way it's supposed to be, I think so. It's the way I was taught.

JF: It seems like you feel that you were taught a great deal of these characteristics at the orphanage.

IH: Absolutely. It gave me a good deed. That's a shame that I couldn't use any better ways, to be more educated going to school, but it didn't, time didn't permit. I wanted to grow up fast, to start to earn a living and help my mother.

JF: Were you seeing her during those years?

IH: I, yes, we were allowed every weekend, Saturday afternoon, to go home to see parents. Children who didn't have anybody to see, one child took the other.

JF: So you must have gone with someone?

IH: And we went, I went to see my mother. I went to see my aunt and I went to see my grandmother, one of my grandmother's, my father's mother. I used to go every Shabbas. And she had for me put away fruit, and anything she grew, the apples. She was, but I was the only orphan and she just, I was like an eye, an apple in her eye. She watched my *yahrzeit* I shouldn't miss, after my father. And in the orphanage did the same thing. We were educated every one in Yiddish and in those years we were allowed Hebrew. And the time went by till I was 15 and I had to step out from there.

JF: Were you also, you mentioned that you were educated in Yiddish and Hebrew?

IH: In Yiddish, very well in you know, *Chumash* and...

JF: Were you a *bar mitzvah* within the...

IH: We, I, from all those years I was a *bar mitzvah*. The only thing with *bar mitzvah*, we were called up to the Torah. I got my *aliyah*, and if I made a mistake, my rabbi hit me over my cheek, "Why did you do it?" And this was the *bar mitzvah*, what was a happiness.

JF: Oh.

IH: It was a happiness that I began to lay the *t'filin*, and I don't miss it till now. And I was raised Orthodox, and I am keeping up the Orthodox way of life all my years.

JF: Now the orphanage was supported by the Jewish community?

IH: The orphanage was supported by the Jewish community. The Jewish community was the leadership, the rich people. I mean, wealthy, very wealthy people in the city.

JF: How much of the city was Jewish?

IH: Well, the city had about I think, 85,000 population. And there was 90%, 95% Jewish, predominated Jewish, this town of Bendin. Well was there in Poland, they had a pogrom, and they could never come into the city and do any harm to the Jewish people because we were very well-united, very well-known as a big Jewish community.

JF: There were several wealthy families, including this...?

IH: Including, yes, very wealthy. Was a Baron Furstenberg. He had a zinc factory. Was a Schein. He had a cable and nails factory. Was a Jacob Goodman. He was one of the biggest hardware institutions in the city. We had, were big doctors, Dr. Weinscher. And, you know, we had a Jewish President in the city, which, called the Mayor, Ruberick.

JF: The mayor was Jewish?

IH: Jewish for a certain time of years. Now we, was, then we had a Jewish...like they call a...let me think, well what is the best to call? Like is a Family Service. What is a, Jewish Agency. Let's say a Jewish Agency, which was a part of charity in all Jewish activities in the city.

JF: Was this under the *kehillah* or...

IH: It's a *kehill-*, it was a *kehillah*, was a *kehillah*, yes. Was a Jewish *kehillah*, but this was a general organization which was, one was for charity, one was for sick people. And it's hard to explain in Yiddish. But in Poland they called it a *dobroczytnosc* [charity]. Doing, for the, doing help. Help. Jewish Family Service, like here.

JF: A service, mmm hmm.

IH: A service. A service to the people, most to the poor people. Poor people were very well taken care. I remember being in the orphanage and every Thursday night I had the [?] after dinner, and go down to the, that service building. And one of the very wealthy women, Mrs. Schein, but they called her Tsirele Schein, she was such a nice, out, you know, out-spoken, very softly. And she was sitting and handing out to poor people

money. And I used to stay at the door and let in and let them out. And next, and I can never forget, and I was the age of 11, 12 years of age.

JF: That must have been quite an honor for you to...

IH: It was an honor to be picked. Yes...

JF: That's, yes.

IH: We had a lot of good Jewish doctors in the city, which were very charitable. Dr. Taraszewski, he was a gynecologist, one of the first, and they were very active in the orphanage. They used to come twice a week, see the children, take them home to their home and show them better life. I remember riding on an elevator, which to me was something, going into a rich home and riding on an elevator. The memories, good memories. And then...

JF: During that time, with such a large Jewish population, did you have an opportunity to know many of the non-Jews?

IH: Well, I know Polish people. Matter of fact, in those years, beginning at the age of 11, 12, I start to join a very big Zionist organization. They called it the *Noar Hatzioni* [Zionist Youth]. And in an organization like that, I learned very big things in my life, which, leaders were educated. And they taught us the future for Israel, which the hopes, we were always having hopes that we will have a Israel. We didn't know if it would have been an Israel, or another name. But the hopes were there, Palestine. I remember in the city, we had *kibbutzim*. And we had *aliyahs* every year, to Palestine. And the organization worked very hard. And they all, they had a lot of organizations in the city.

JF: You mean there were groups from the, from your town that went to Palestine?

IH: Oh yes, yes. We had a lot of organizations. We had a big *Hashomer Hatzair*. We had from the left to the right, extreme left—Communists. By Jewish people is always different kinds—Communist, the Bund. You know what the Bund is, it's away from the Communism. Then we had the *Freiheit*. We had the *Betar*, which is the Revisionists. Big organizations, uniforms, the *Betar*. And we had Zionist, *Hashomer Hatzair*, the Stern Group. This was the star, I can't count. We had about 25 to 30 organizations in the city, in the town.

JF: Did you consider going on an *aliyah* yourself to Israel at that time?

IH: Well, as I say, I, when, the age when I left the orphanage, when I start to be an apprentice for a tailor, it didn't permit me any more. It didn't permit, because 1932, when the time become in Germany, with, already we know that Hitler is existing, and we start to learn little by little, reading the papers, and going down to the place where they used to sell the papers. And in the window they used to put in there, for the headlines, that in Germany Hitler was coming. And they're talking about confiscating from the Jews and, you know, get rid of the Jews. You know, that Hitler already left this *Mein Kampf* loose those years. And it became already, a misunderstanding. And here I am trying to learn a

trade, and seeking to help my poor mother, which you didn't think any more of leaving the country. But in 19-...

JF: Did...

IH: Yes?

JF: Did you think that what was happening in 1932 or 1933 in Germany was going to affect you in Poland?

IH: Well, we had foreseen things, because as stronger Germany became anti-semitic, Poland followed. Germany invested very much, a lot of money in efforts in the neighboring countries in Europe, to buy allegiance, and to do the same thing, to agitate. And don't forget, we had in Poland a law already in the Senate to take away slaughtering, kosher slaughtering, from the Jewish people, in Europe.

JF: There was a law in front of the Senate? Or it was passed...

IH: It was allowed to pass, and it was passed.

JF: It was passed.

IH: Yes. They only permitted so much slaughtering, not like they used to any more.

JF: When was that law passed?

IH: I think this was passed in 1935, after the big, good friend of the Polish people, Pilsudski, passed away. Then the things turned and Hitler put the power already in there because the Polish Prime Minister was a German, Beck. His name was Beck.

JF: He was a Nazi, you say?

IH: I don't know if he was a Nazi at the time, but he was traveling already, you know, in the ways to make certain agreements with Germany. Hitler wasn't yet in power, but it was already foreseen what is going to happen.

JF: How did you experience the increase in anti-Semitism during those years?

IH: Well, the experience, forming Polish organizations, anti-Semitic organizations. One was a folk organization. And the other one, it was two in our city, big ones. And we seen the way they rallied. They didn't march in the streets. Sunday mornings they used to stay by the church and hand out leaflets, anti-Semitic leaflets against Jews.

JF: Who did they get to hand those leaflets out?

IH: To the Polish people going to church. Polish people, Sunday, in those years, like in here, was for them to go to church. And the soldiers, we had an army camp, an artillery camp in our city. So the soldiers marched to church and by the church they let them loose. Some soldiers went in, some soldiers stayed outside. And this was the time to handle those leaflets out.

JF: Who was doing the handing out of the leaflets?

IH: Boys, hiring a little boy.

JF: Children.

IH: Boys, the age 15, 17, 18. They hired children.

JF: Teenagers.

IH: Teenagers. They handed out, he was my best friend. He says, "I don't mean you." Well he means the other Jew. You know, it was...

JF: Was he doing it because he believed in it or because he was paid?

IH: Yeah, he didn't know what he believed in it. He was told to hate the Jews. As every child in Europe, a gentile child, was, most of them taught to hate the Jew. They didn't know any way how to call us by name, if they saw a Jew. They called us *Ket* [phonetic] or Moses.

JF: Were these children, these friends of yours, in groups where they were taught these ideas? Or were they...

IH: Well, we don't know how they were taught, but part of it, I used to go to those rallies, where they used to have them in halls. And when they went out, they were a little bit disturbed with poison. And they used to try to attack, they saw a few little boys. I remember one night in the orphanage, I went home with another fellow and a girl and we came home a little late. And we came in front of our gates, which the gates used to be locked. They didn't have open the gates. And a few gentile boys were standing outside. And they throw [unclear] at us, and if we wouldn't have, know how to get away fast, probably they would have hurt us. Because we were Jewish.

JF: Did you think any time during those years of leaving Poland?

IH: Yes, 1936. I picked up a cousin, which he's now in Brazil now, same age, 1920, born. I made a decision to smuggle out of Poland to go to France. And I hitched, not too far to Breslau, Germany. And Breslau, which is called now Wroclaw by Poland, in Breslau we were caught. We didn't have any documents. And we went from, we left Poland. As soon across the border we reached synagogues. We sought help in the synagogues, Jewish synagogues, which in those years they, till '36, '37 over there you had still synagogues. But not...the way they used to be, just, you know, quiet. Not loud any more. We wished we had luck. But in Breslau we were caught. And we were taken in the police and we were already slapped by a German policeman. This was already a Gestapo in '36, '37.

JF: You were slapped.

IH: Slapped in the face, and we were told that they have their own pigs enough to feed, that they didn't need us. And luckily, we were lucky that they let us loose. And I couldn't go back home the same way I came. I had to go back through Czechoslovakia into Poland. And I was stuck in Poland. I went back and, usually to work, but we knew, we had already feelings that it's coming to a disaster for the Jewish people.

JF: Did you think that Germany was actually going to invade Poland?

IH: Well, we knew that Germany will spread. We didn't know when Poland or when any other country. We knew about that, when French start to build their...

JF: The Maginot?

IH: The Mag-, Magin-...

JF: Maginot line?

IH: Maginot line. And the other part used to build another line. And we knew that it's coming to a war, well, as being a boy 16, 17. But when I came back from Germany in 1936, I had to tell a lot of stories, because the Germans already began to be trained, when they walked in in a trolley car, in any public places, "*Heil* Hitler. *Heil* Hitler." You know? They were trained already.

JF: So you told these stories to...

IH: I came back and I told the friends...

JF: The community.

IH: To, not to the community. Friends, whoever I have friends. And a lot of people were naive. They didn't believe that it might happen here what happened over there. Same thing, the German Jews were very naive. They never believed that it will happen to them. Because when Hitler start to send out all the Jewish people, that they come from other countries, you know, they immigrate from other countries, so the German people still, the German Jews still didn't believe what's going to happen to them. Because they thought it's only that Hitler wants to clean out the foreign people that they don't belong to Germany. But it was, began to, foreseen a disaster. And people in organizations, leaders, they knew what's gonna happen. A lot of *aliyahs* left, those years.

JF: They were able to leave.

IH: They were able, because till 1939...

JF: There was still a...

IH: Still a Poland. So a lot of *aliyahs* start, began to leave, a lot of youth began to leave Poland.

JF: And during this time, then, from 1936 to 1939, you were working as a tailor.

IH: As a tailor, yes.

JF: You had no trouble finding employment?

IH: No, I worked at the same place where I was an apprentice. I slept over there. They fed me sometimes.

Tape one, side two:

JF: This is tape one, side two, of an interview with Mr. Isadore Hollander, on October 25, 1982, 27 Henley Road, Overbrook Hills, 19151. Phone number 649-2419. Mr. Hollander, can you tell me about the invasion of Poland in 1939 and how it affected you?

IH: Well, in 1939 I was age 19. And when the bad news was spread, or announced that Hitler had begun a war with Poland, especially most of the Jewish community, panic began to exist, which we began to worry and think what our future and our next move would be, what to do about. Unfortunately, we couldn't do anything about, because the borders were sealed and especially for a Jew to try to cross the German line would have been a suicide, killing. The Germans, within the next few days, as the war began with Poland, they arrived in our town, very disciplined and very well-educated how to occupy a town, very well-trained how to begin with the Jewish cause...

JF: Can you give me some details of that?

IH: Yes. Rules and regulations changed about Jews. Stores closed. Curfew started. We couldn't walk later than a certain time in the evening and not to get out in the morning before a certain time.

JF: When you said stores closed, do you mean Jewish places of business could no longer operate?

IH: No. They start to operate it under a black market, which it couldn't be open. A store couldn't be open. A Jewish store was, start to become, to get discriminated, not enough by the Germans, but by the Poles.

JF: So it wasn't officially closed. It was that it was avoided and boycotted?

IH: It was avoided to open, boyco-, no, no, it was closed for being scared to open a store, because not then after the Germans would take the advantage, but the Poles began to help themselves to take the advantage what they waited for. It wasn't enough time for them to wait, to get the opportunity that they should start it, to take away from the Jews what they have been waiting for many years, and they promised themselves that the time will come whatever a Jew builds with his sweat, and whatever a Jew made for his life, and helped the business community in Poland, then the Polak came and he helped the Germans to destroy all the Jewish efforts that they had put in in so many years.

JF: What would the Poles have done if they came into a Jewish store? Would they have confiscated the goods? Or destroyed the store?

IH: They robbed, they robbed, and if they could kill, they killed. And if they saw even a German did anything to a Jew, they stood by and they had joy. They were proud. They had a pride of it, that the Germans are killing Jews or hurting Jews. Time began very rough. We start to feel that we are in trouble. And it is, a lot, a lot to talk, and a lot to explain how the situation was, how things were carried out at the time of the occupation when the Germans occupied. Orders came out that Jews have to deliver all the radios. Orders came out that Jews have to start to bring up their gold or diamonds or

anything they possess. Every day was another order posted through town what a Jew has to give up, and bring it in to the Germans. They formed a Polish militia and they start to catch Jewish young people and elderly people to forced labor in town, to dig trenches, to pick up bombs that they didn't explode when they threw them on the city before they, when they invaded the city. All, every little things which was very scary for a Jew, a Jew had to do, under the supervision of the Germans and the Poles, helping them.

JF: What effect did it have on you personally? What were you asked to do?

IH: Well, I tell you the truth, I was 19. I didn't have much sense or maybe understanding or enough leadership at the time to come up with something in how to resist or how to fight. I learned later that it was formed a resistance organization in our town. And maybe I wasn't informed or maybe I couldn't, but I thought of a way how to escape, and how to try to save lives if I can. And it came to a time that I looked forward how to do it. Each time they rounded up Jews in town, if they rounded them up in Bendin, I ran to the other city where my mother lived. If they start to round up over there, I start to escape from one town to the other, to avoid a problem.

JF: What do you mean you rounded up Jews?

IH: They rounded up Jews, for slave labor.

JF: Oh, when...

IH: The Germans.

JF: When the Germans rounded up the Jews.

IH: When the Germans rounded up Jews...

JF: You escaped.

IH: I escaped from one town to the other. Not escaped...

JF: I see. You ran.

IH: It's a hiding out, running.

JF: Yes. Now, you said that you were not, at that time, you were not aware of the resistance, right?

IH: I wasn't aware of their forming a resistance in this city or surrounding towns, but I learned later that the resistance was formed. Unfortunately I couldn't do much, but it was formed with the intention to resist Germany. And they proved that later, that the Warsaw Ghetto did it, and other cities maybe. And we had a very strong resistance, especially in Bendin, because the city was predominantly Jewish, most, 95%. Well it came to a point that I was caught by the Germans.

JF: How long after the invasion was this?

IH: I was caught by the Germans in December.

JF: December of...

IH: December. I was trying to finagle and escape as much as I could from one hand to the other, to save, but it came to an end. I was caught. And...

JF: How were you caught?

IH: Caught in the city, picked up. So, you know, surrounded and they round us up, you know, and they just, and me and many more which they send them to another town which was a coal mine, called it Javorzno.

JF: Can you spell that for me?

IH: J-A-V-O-R-Z-N-O. It's near Crakow.

JF: Can you tell me about your experience there?

IH: Well, we were sent to a coal mine and we had to unload the coal from the wagons by shovel. I was 19, and had many other youngsters with me from the same town, from other towns. And I started to, I began to realize that it comes to a rough future. They didn't have yet the concentration camps ready. Probably those years they start to build them. Germany had concentration camps.

JF: Did you know that, at the time?

IH: That Germany had, because we had a lot of German Jews coming into Poland. Before the invasion, German Jews of Polish descent, 1939, 1938, 1937, before the invasion yet of Poland, they only tried to tell the Jewish people in Germany, "But we don't mean yet you [born in] Germany. Let's try to start with the Jews that they weren't born, they have Polish citizenship or French citizenship." And they deported them.²

JF: Right.

IH: They just chased them across the border and the Poles took them in. And...

JF: These people talked to you about conditions in Germany.

IH: We started to locate them, and they started to talk. But still, the German Jewish, the German Jew was naive those years. They didn't, still they couldn't get it through their heads what's going to happen.

JF: You think that the Polish Jews were more realistic?

IH: Right. We were more politically in activities, during the years before Hitler, with the *kibbutzim* in Poland, with all the activities, with Palestine sending Jews on *aliyah* to Israel for make a *kibbutzim*. In Poland we were more aware than the German Jew believed, what it might happen, with Hitler, what it did happen. Because the German Jew thought that their skin as a German Jew will be saved. It will never happen to them. And, well, but the German Jews, would start to be, when I was already in, on a coal mine, I foreseen a little bit to myself and I spoke to my other friends that this is a beginning of a tragedy. We are in troubles.

JF: Who was supervising you in the coal mine?

IH: Germans, with the help of Poles. The foreman was a Polak, but the German was a guard, with a rifle.

JF: And what was the treatment like?

IH: Not that rough yet. We got our rations, the soup and the piece of bread, and we slept on, yet on straw mattresses. We didn't have the bunks. I don't think that the

²This refers to the deportation in October 1938, of about 20,000 Jews in Germany who had come from Poland.

formation of those things began before 1940. The building the concentration camps, because they did prepare already concentration camps. But I wasn't aware much of it, what's gonna happen, but I felt that, that it's a beginning of a tragedy for the Jewish people.

JF: While you were working there, were you still able to have contact with your family?

IH: No. I, before I was caught, I notified my mother. I wanted to run away, before I was caught. And my mother didn't want to leave. She had two children. I don't blame her. My sister had three children. My brother-in-law didn't...

JF: Your brother-in-law...

IH: To leave.

JF: Didn't want to leave.

IH: Didn't want to go, and I don't blame him. He had two children, so I don't blame him. Three children. But my mother was still with her husband, how rough the time was in all the past years, but it's a husband. I realized later, in the later years, the reason of my mother having a husband. But my jealousy couldn't help enough, because I was too young to understand her reasons. When I got older I realized. But, when I started to see the troubles with the Germans, I got together with a few of my close friends, which we were trusted one to each other what to do. And I escaped.

JF: You escaped. How?

IH: Four of us.

JF: How did you do it?

IH: I don't know how we did it, but one of the Germans got hurt at the moment, a guard. We escaped with a deal that we separate, we're not going on together. Everyone finds their own way where to go. I couldn't tell my friend where I'm going. He didn't tell me. He says, "But we got to get out from here together. That's the only way we're going to get out." And we did.

JF: So there was...

IH: In the middle of the night.

JF: There was one guard that you figured you could take care of before you could...

IH: With we was taking care on a guard, and what reasons and what manners, and how it was taken care, I found out later if I didn't, that it is not to repeat.

JF: Yes.

IH: Moment. And I couldn't go home. I sent regards to my mother. I met friends in Crakow that I went back and I sent regards to them that I am not coming home. I am safe.

JF: How long were you in the coal mine before you were able to escape?

IH: I was in the coal mine by no more than 15 to 20 days. No more. It didn't last long.

JF: Then you were in Crakow.

IH: I was in Crakow and I met cousins. They are now in Brazil. I met first cousins. We met, we got together. And from there we seek the Russian side, the occupation of the Russians. And we, one night we crossed the border to the Russian side because Poland was occupied up to a, part Russia and one part Germany.

JF: You thought it would be safer on the Russian side?

IH: Well, I didn't think. I only thought to save my life.

JF: Get away from the Germans.

IH: And get out, because even I would fell into the Polish hands, I would have been in trouble.

JF: Where did you go, then, on the side that was occupied by the Russians?

IH: To Prsemy. The town Prsemy. [Przemysl] Of course...

JF: Can you...spell it for me?

IH: Yes. P-R-S-E-M-I, no, M-Y. [Prsemy] S with the dot on top. It's a Polish word too.

JF: Right.

IH: Prsemy. And this was across the Sun River, S-U-N, Sun River. And crossing the river I almost drowned. It was cold. It was in December. Very cold.

JF: How did you cross the river?

IH: Just in...

JF: Swimming?

IH: Into the river and walked.

JF: You walked through.

IH: I almost drowned. I was lucky. And on the other side the Russians were standing and awaiting us and shooting above our heads.

JF: Who were you with when you went?

IH: By myself.

JF: You were by yourself?

IH: No, no. I'm sorry. I was with my cousins.

JF: Your cousins.

IH: Yeah. My cousins, yeah.

JF: O.K.

IH: I was with my cousins.

JF: All right. O.K.

IH: There I...

JF: O.K.

IH: I was with my cousins from Crackow.

JF: O.K.

IH: And then we made the decision to go.

JF: O.K.

IH: I couldn't go back home, because there was a risk of going. And they already escaped from town. It was bad. Then we went to Prsemy and the first welcome from the Russians was a prison. Wet [pause].

JF: In the town?

IH: In the town of Prsemy they took us into a prison, the Russians. At that time it was the NKVD, the, not the KBG [KGB] but now it's the KBG [KGB]. At that time it was the NKVD. It was the national, you know, the...

JF: The security...

IH: Security. The national security of internal matters, like the FBI.

JF: And they interrogated you?

IH: Interrogated. But the first thing, we came into prison. I was already having friends in there from town, sitting in there, behind the bars. And even you thought that you're going to fall into the Russian hands, you're going to try to tell them that, "Maybe I will be safe if I tell them that I was a Communist in Poland. So maybe he'll save my life." So already a friend of mine said, "Listen, don't ever tell them that you were a Communist." He hollered it out to me in Yiddish. "Don't you ever tell them that you were a Communist. Because they pick everyone who says they were a Communist and they send them right to Siberia."

JF: Why?

IH: They have a policy that if you are a Communist in here, we don't need you in here. You fight over there where you were a Communist." That's the Russian policy. It's a very, I don't know, but you hear about and you listen about and the stories and here in this country how Russia is. And...

JF: You mean, they would accept the fact that you were a Communist? They would believe that?

IH: They would not believe me. They were, they interrogate you. They question you. But let's say certain people they accept. Certain people they did not. They knew, they was there, they kept, that FBI, or their intelligence, so much educated for that purpose, as which is any dictatorship has their education for that purpose, to interrogate, and how to interrogate. But I already, grabbed me and said, "I am a Communist." This side, I'm not, this side. But the first thing in prison, when we met that Russian soldier, the dirt and the unpleasantness of their behavior was outrageous. A plague became upon us in prison. And I want it to be recorded that lice alive ate us.

JF: Lice ate you alive.

IH: Lice ate us alive in prison. This was Russia already. We were taught that we will be saved. Running away from one disaster, we came into another sort of a disaster. I didn't say I was a Communist, because I never was and I never believed in it, in their cause and their laws. As I said before, I mentioned in my previous report that I was a Zionist and raised within the Zionist movement. But you have to start to feel the ways they live already. They were in Polish territory, and they let us out within a few days, out on the outside.

JF: Was the interrogation a rough procedure?

IH: No, not at those times. I was questioned only but not too much. But I said I wasn't a Communist. "And what did your father do?" I said, "My father was a tailor." "Is your father living?" I said, "No." And they said, "O.K."

JF: So, in other words, they tended to believe the people who did not pretend to be a Communist.

IH: Right. To be a Communist. That they hear, they knew, they knew the way you talk to them who you are and what you are. They let me out. I went out on the free and from there we picked ourselves up. We stayed a couple days. I had another cousin met over there which he says he wants to go back home, and which he left. He's not around any more. He...

JF: He did go back?

IH: He did go back, which is a cousin of mine, and he is not living any more. But the situation was that we went to another town, to Lvov.

JF: To Lvov?

IH: Lvov.

JF: Mmm hmm.

IH: This you know how to spell it.

JF: L-V-...

IH: L-, L-V-O-.

JF: V-O-V.

IH: V. Lvov.

JF: Mmm hmm. You were then in prison about how long?

IH: A few, just...

JF: Just a few days?

IH: A few days, two, three days, till they...we weren't the ones, a few people, hundreds of people start to pour in, into the side of the, their side, the Russian side. And after a few days we went to Lvov. And in Lvov we had to start to find out where to locate ourselves and we found a place in Lvov. We rented, we got a room, or I don't remember how we got that room. And we all got into that room. Everybody was hunting for their own way how to survive, to live. And we slept on the floor. And...

JF: Could you find work?

IH: No. No, you could find work, but you worked for nothing, for a dish of soup, for the Russians. Well, we find a way how to survive. We found, we found.

JF: How was that?

IH: We did a little bit, you know, business, odds and ends, a little business with the Russian soldiers, a little business here. It's all illegal, all not to be caught. If we were caught. Well, people start to register to go to Russia to work. The Russians start to register anybody who wants to go to Russia to work.

JF: Did this mean you had to become a Russian citizen?

IH: Well, not yet. We everybody registered, and we were sent to Russia, again to a coal mine.

JF: Where was this?

IH: Stalino, Dombas [Donbas].

JF: Can you spell that for me?

IH: S-T-A-L-I-N-O. We called it the region of Dombas. D-O-M-...

JF: N?

IH: N-B-A-S, Donbas. That's near, [pause] I was sent with all my cousins together. And in Donbas we split up. One was sent to one mine. I was sent to another coal mine. And then we, this was already the beginning of 1940. I am reaching, going into my 20s. And I was sent to the coal mine and here I see myself in an elevator going down for miles, three miles beneath the surface. And give me a coal crusher with a little shovel, and here is your hole, which is was already digged out for us to shovel it. And it happened I dropped mine, one of my galoshes that were given to me. And I moved out. And I says, "I don't want to go back. Kill me all right." So they put me up to mark the wagons which they came out."

JF: So you never did go down the elevator?

IH: I was down, but I never start to dig the coal the proper way, the way I, they told me, because I start to get a little bit more, how do they express themselves, guts, to start to resist, to fight.

JF: I see.

IH: Not to make any emotional things, but just to refuse. And it was, they were yet lenient. They weren't yet strict.

JF: What do you think gave you the nerve to start resisting that way, at that point?

IH: Well, I figured I saw the dead in there underneath, going into that hole. I was in the hole, but when I dropped my shoe to go out, pick it up, I says, "I'm not going back there." To myself. And I told the foreman. Which they tried to fight me to go, you know, but I resisted and I says, "No, not, just I will not." I says, "Do whatever you want. Do you want to kill me?" They were lenient. They weren't that strict to that cause, it was civilian Russians. It was no...

JF: It's not military.

IH: Military. Everything was in a civilian order. Looks like maybe they felt sorry and maybe they felt I am not good enough so they, I went up. And I started to mark the wagons. They come up number one, number two, marked by who sends up, you know? And it didn't take very long. We lived in, it didn't take long I decided I will not make it. I figured I will die young. It wasn't enough. I was young. I had strength. I had energy, but I see it took, my strength is disappearing from me. I cannot, I was a tailor. And I was trying to fight maybe to go back to my trade. But it didn't work and we picked ourselves up and we ran away from the mine.

JF: You went away with some friends at this point? Your...
IH: With, yeah, my cousins were there.
JF: Your cousins. You had, I see.
IH: We got together. Yeah, the mine was like a mile long from the [unclear].
JF: I see.
IH: They separated us, you know, not with...
JF: But not that far.
IH: No. But we got together and we...
JF: Wait, can I ask you a question about this mine? Were there primarily Jews working in this mine or...
IH: No, no, no, Russians. Russians. But they send us as laborers.
JF: I see.
IH: You see, in those years they didn't think, we thought that they don't think who is a Jew, who was not a Jew. But I've been up there, in the mine, at, sitting and eating lunch, in the, they call it the *stolova*, the dining room. I ask a Russian, I went over and I figured that every Russian must be a Communist. And I said to her in Russian, I says, "Are you a Communist?" So he said to me, "Are you a Jew?" It gives you enough answer, that the relations was between me and that Russian. Well, the story is we came back to Lvov. But it was already a illegal situation.
JF: You were in the coal mine, then, about how long?
IH: And we were in the coal mine about two weeks, three weeks. And we knew it's not gonna work.
JF: And what happened once you returned to Lvov?
IH: To Lvov? I start to hide out, to live again. I connected with the same people I lived before, and tried to make connections. And I, it neared to a situation with the war with Germany. It started, the war.
JF: The Germans started...
IH: Started, in that times...
JF: Getting closer.
IH: Yeah. Well, we didn't know it but I didn't want to stay in Lvov, because I was registered from Lvov, to leave Lvov, to, when they took me out, so my name probably was on the police or whatever.
JF: I see.
IH: So I went to another town, to Rovno.
JF: To?
IH: Rowno...R-O-W-N-O, Rovno. And I was with nobody any more, no cousins, nobody. And in Rovno I started to find myself, to see, to survive again, to live. And I stayed in Rovno for a while.

Tape two, side one:

JF: This is tape two, side one, of an interview with Mr. Isadore Hollander, on October 25, 1982. You were telling me about your experience in Rovno.

IH: In Rovno, well I start to see that I shouldn't be caught by the Russians, and I start to find a way of living with the, among the Jews in Rovno. And I did odds and ends to survive, to live. I lived in a room. I worked here a little bit. I worked there a little bit, to make life go and just to stay away from the Russians.

JF: So, Jewish life in this town was relatively undisturbed, then, by what was going on?

IH: Well, it was undisturbed, but not that much by the Russians, not even in Lvov. But as me being already in Russia and escaped from Russia...

JF: You could have gotten into trouble then.

IH: I could have gotten into trouble in Lvov quicker than in Rovno...

JF: Right.

IH: Because the Russian system in those years didn't work very well. If you ran away from one city to another, they lost you. You got to run. You had to run. You have to be able to run, to get away from them. So, the war broke out in 1941.

JF: You lived in Rovno then...

IH: I was in Rovno.

JF: For...

IH: The time period, 19-...

JF: Close to two years?

IH: Well, no, '40, '41.

JF: 1940 to '41.

IH: '41, yeah.

JF: O.K. That was the winter, then, of 1940.

IH: '40, and then I became 19-, till...

JF: Until June of...

IH: June, 1941...

JF: O.K.

IH: Till the war broke out between Russia and...

JF: During that time in Rovno, were you worried?

IH: I was worried, about my home, about my mother, about my sisters. And I was worried, we didn't know that the Germans yet, because we knew that a pact of non-aggression was made between Germany and Russia. So, we didn't expect that things will become in a, such a blitz, and in such a fast hit the way the Germans hit Russia. So we lived.

JF: Were you with anybody at that point?

IH: No, by myself. I, I...

JF: O.K. You had been separated from your cousins.

IH: Nobody. I just made myself life between among the other Jewish community in Rovno, under the Russian government.

JF: Was there any way of getting word back to your mother...

IH: No, no.

JF: At that point?

IH: Since then, no, no contacts, there were no connections with anybody in my family.

JF: And did you have any kind of knowledge, while you were living in Rovno, of what was going on as far as the concentration camps were concerned?

IH: Yes. Well, we knew. News was leaking.

JF: It was leaking.

IH: News was leaking. As a matter of fact, that time before the war, I start to become an active member in a resistance organization, which it was illegal by the Russians, because you know by the Russians you cannot organize anything. But we were trying maybe to organize things against the Germans or work for the Jewish cause. And it wasn't much effort. We couldn't have much effort, and we couldn't do anything too much because we didn't have support.

JF: You were trying to organize against the Russians?

IH: I didn't organize. It was already...

JF: In process.

IH: Had against the Russians. We organized, we tried to organize a resistance in case, with getting the news what's already going on in Germany.

JF: Oh.

IH: So we were trying to see in case whatever it might happen, let us be united and let's have a cause for something to be ready for.

JF: So that you were...organizing in case the Germans did invade.

IH: Right. In the same token, the Russians already start to pick up Jews with calling them capitalists, to liquidate their wealths, their wealth of whatever they built through the years, and send them to Siberia, families, send them out, arrest Jewish people. Anti-Semitism in Russia began to show, in those years even in Stalin time.

JF: Well you were also living among Poles at this point.

IH: Well, Ukrainian most.

JF: Ukrainians.

IH: Ukrainians most.

JF: And what was the attitude of the Ukrainian population towards you?

IH: Well by the Russians, they were afraid. It was still an order that not to call anybody "Jew" and not to, and so, but the Russians, if anybody was like a rich man, they took him away.

JF: What about the Jewish, the organization of the Jewish life in the town? Was that permitted to continue...

IH: No, no.

JF: At all, under the Russians?

IH: No, no, no. Everything was illegal. You couldn't meet ten people. You couldn't meet a *minyan*. It was an illegal procedure. But they weren't that harsh against you yet.

JF: Did you do it anyway?

IH: We met. We met. We had our causes. It was...

JF: Were you able to meet for religious reasons?

IH: Yes, yes. They...

JF: It could be worked out.

IH: It could be worked out. We had a *minyan*, we went to a *shul*, we did. They didn't yet, weren't harsh, because Stalin didn't hit right away because I think the feelings in Russia was Hitler. They still had a Jewish ambassador, Litvin, in the United States and he had still a Jewish son-in-law, Kaganovich, a Jewish brother-in-law, Stalin. It wasn't that, but the rich people who were before rich, they felt already the Russians hurting. War broke out and panic began again. I'm in the same shoes and in the same hole as I was in Bendin in 1939. And...

JF: People started running again.

IH: People start to run. People start to look for survival. People became panicky. I had already a lesson. And I had to start to think, "What shall I do now?" No more running, and no where else to run. The only thing was for me to run east into Russia, if I would have been able to make it. But as soon the Germans occupy, you couldn't run. Because they chased the Russians so bad that nobody could have had a chance.

JF: What was this German occupation like compared to the one you experienced in '39?

IH: Rough, very rough. Right to begin with, in the first place...

JF: Different.

IH: Different. Not like in Poland. With the idea of a destruction. Destruction...

JF: When they came into Poland in '39 you did not have the feeling of...

IH: Not had the feeling...

JF: Immediate aggression?

IH: I...didn't have the experience. But being in Rovno I had my experience and I told the Russian Jews, the Polish, the Jews in Rovno, I says, "I am already experienced." I said, "I lived already that time through. Other than now, it's our disaster." Well, a lot of people didn't believe right away. You know, this is all kind of people. You're living among people, you have all kind of opinions. It came, within the next two weeks, a ghetto full, already in Rovno. Because they had already ghettos in Poland, before. So the Germans were already experienced. They had a test. They had already their, their army came in with

a set-up, a commissioner already, “This is this. This you’re gonna do it right away.” So their experience was already handy, that they could, they didn’t have to form anything. “This is what we want, and this is what we’re doing.” So I was between amongst in the ghetto, in the Rovno ghetto, and life became [unclear].

JF: The ghetto in Rovno, then, was established within two weeks of this...

IH: Within two weeks of the occupation there was a ghetto, immediately, and it didn’t last long.

JF: Were you able to work at that point?

IH: I was a laborer, a slave, by the Germans. Work...

JF: Outside the ghetto?

IH: Took us out, trenches to build against the Russian bombardment and do this and clean up town. And there is a lot to talk about, but I, certain things I cannot mention, and I will not repeat. But it didn’t last long, unless I say that we began to form, when I felt that the news leaks out, that we began to form a little resistance. And we picked up ourselves, close to ten people, maybe a couple more, and we ran from the ghetto into the forest.

JF: These were ten men?

IH: Ten. We had a woman between us, and we went to the underground.

JF: You went to the underground.

IH: Yes. This was the place, the only solution. A matter of fact, to begin with, we had Polish soldiers, which they helped us to situate in the underground. Yes. Maybe for their sake, maybe for their safety, to have more confidence and more company, they helped us.

JF: Polish soldiers helped you?

IH: Polish soldiers which they escaped yet from the Germans, during the war with Poland. They were still in the resistance, some of them. They didn’t wear the uniforms, but they were left also on the Russian side. When we came into the forest, we met a lot of resistance. We only had to watch ourselves just for three people—for the Russians, and for the Ukrainians, and for the Germans. This was our lookout.

JF: So the Polish resistance at that point was...

IH: Well, they had...

JF: Was supportive.

IH: They had already partisans, the Polish. Yeah, and they’re not supportive [?], they helped us, they situate us in the forest, in the underground.

JF: So, were you then part of a Polish resistance group...

IH: No. No, no, no...

JF: Or a Jewish...

IH: No, we didn’t want to unite with them. We always stayed over there. I didn’t trust them. We didn’t. We always had to be separate. We’re hunting for our food separate. We knew from each other.

JF: When you went to the resistance in the forest, had you connections with a group at that point?

IH: Nobody yet. Nobody. We were...

JF: You just ran.

IH: Our group...what the Poles let us into the forest.

JF: You had a connection with this Polish group in order to get out?

IH: With the Polish group, yes, to...let us into the forest.

JF: I see.

IH: Forest, because matter of fact, two days after our escape from the ghetto, the ghetto was liquidated.

JF: Oh.

IH: It was very fast. In Poland in Bendin when the ghetto was liquidated the last in '43. And in Rovno it didn't last long, because see, the German had a strong opposition over there, the Russians. Even they chased them.

JF: How long, then, were you actually in...

IH: Till '19-...

JF: Rovno before you escaped to the underground?

IH: About a month or two.

JF: Oh. And then what happened with this resistance group, this...

IH: Nothing.

JF: Underground?

IH: We...didn't do anything. We just...collected certain ammunitions for our protections, because we used to send out at night time people to collect food.

JF: Did you join up with an already existing group?

IH: No, no, no. We...

JF: It was just the ten or so of you...

IH: From the ghetto.

JF: A new group.

IH: From the ghetto. As I said to you before, we already had the leak out of Germany what's happening, so when we start to form certain ways to get ready. But we never knew what's going to happen that fast. We never expected it that Germany will attack Russia that size, that quick, because they had a pact.

JF: The pact.

IH: The pact. So who knew about how fast this will happen? But feelings from leaks out from the German side what they're doing already to the Jewish people, young people in mine age, 25, 30, 19, 18, and there were youngers, we couldn't still try to persuade elderly people. Because if one was an older man and he was religious, he waited for God or you know, help. And he couldn't have the same effort as a young fellow and say, "Well, I'll go with you." A lot of elderly people did later try to hide out by the Ukrainian or hide in people's... But being in the forest we have only one way of survival,

living in the ground in a bunker, covered up with trees, with grass, and see that life should go on to survive whatever it come out. And in the same forest, later on during the war time, Germany and Russia, maybe about five, six times the Germans occupied and the Russians occupied then the Germans occupied, you know, fighting, chasing one and each other forward and...back. And we were in the ground but we couldn't show ourselves day time, you know? We had to go out in night time, go into forest, to town, countryside and see to survive, to bring food. So it was a disaster, dog food, hunting for other food, anything we could have gotten to make survival.

JF: So the war itself was going on around you.

IH: Right above me. Right above our heads.

JF: In the same area, in the forest where you were hiding?

IH: Right. Now before the end of the, before the end to the German surrender for Russia, before, before, I mean after Russia started to succeed in the war against Germany, we already became stronger with more people, and there will be time to help to destroy German property and odds and ends.

JF: That was after the war turned, you...

IH: The war turned into the Russian stronghold. We already had more power, more ammunition was collected, you know, other incidents. We had more people already. We became already more powerful to strike against Germans.

JF: How many people, then, did you have in those years?

IH: When I went away from them, we had already about 45 men, 45 men in power.

JF: And it was after what point, about what year, did you start to do some sabotage?

IH: 19-...the end of 1942.

JF: And what kinds of things?

IH: Destroy German bridges, help to destroy. Maybe I wasn't involved much in the dynamiting and those things, but it was a help. Anything anybody helped was done. And so there was more courageous people than I am. I was a little bit maybe naive or too young, to have to take a rifle to go start to shoot, to kill. But yeah, if it came to it, but you have to do it.

JF: Now when you were organized to do the sabotage, were you linked up with any other resistance groups?

IH: No, no, no, this, we became, yeah, well, then we had connections. Then we start to learn to which forest this group is in, which forest this group is. But we start already to get more knowledge from each other and we start to...

JF: There was more communication between...

IH: More communication between the groups, the partisans, the underground.

JF: Were these all Jewish partisans, or were you also connected to the Polish groups?

IH: Well, then only we fought with a few Polish groups, yes. We fought together in communication, but not together. We never trusted to be together with any Poles or any Ukrainians.

JF: So you would communicate through the Polish groups or the Ukrainian groups, but you would not fight with them.

IH: No. We never trusted that. We always wanted to be on our own and carry out on our own. We had to run, maybe, from one spot to the other to get change of location. It is things that you cannot recall many things what went on. We lived like pigs. There were no facilities, no, you know, that wasn't pleasant, and it's not pleasant to repeat sometimes.

JF: When you were living as a partisan, was there any effort or any interest on the part of the men in your group to having any kind of religious life?

IH: Yes, yes, well, we believed, we still believed that God, we had...we said prayers sometimes. We used our time according the time and the month and the year. We knew when a holiday was. We did a lot of things in religious ways.

JF: What happened when there was a holiday, for instance? Can you give me an example?

IH: Well we said, on Yom Kippur, we fast. We didn't eat a whole day. We didn't have what to eat, but we didn't eat. We knew. We knew when it was a holiday. We knew any time it was. On *yahrzeit* I said *kaddish*. I remembered my father's *yahrzeit* and I said *kaddish*. We had, we made a *minyan* and I, and everybody else did. And other people, you know, were free, free believers. If they didn't believe, then no one interfered with the other's life.

JF: Were there any women in the group?

IH: One woman was to begin with. This woman, she had to go with her husband. They was a young married couple. And then we joined more. It helped, you know, preparing, cooking and not too many.

JF: But these were all generally men between their late teens and what, early 30s or...

IH: 30, to the younger age, younger age. Not...in the middle 40s or in the middle, late 30s. Only younger people which had a little more courage and were more courageous.

JF: What about the native population...the civilians who were living in the towns around you? Were they aware of your existence? Were they helpful in any way?

IH: They were, a lot of them were, they did, were aware, but they didn't know the hideouts. They didn't know about where we were. We couldn't trust. We had people going out—they looked like gentiles—between the Jews, going out to hunt for food. And they had connections with Poles in certain places, with Ukrainians, to deliver the food in exchange for gold or for whatever it was. And this was, but one didn't know from the other where we're coming from and where we're going back to there. And this was all always performed at nighttime, all in the middle of the night the most.

JF: Where did you get the goods or whatever that you needed to trade for food?

IH: Well...

JF: Was there foraging that went on a little bit?

IH: It's a lot to talk about. It's hard to explain. Jewish people find a way how to get out. Our past history tells us. We had...

JF: To survive.

IH: We had a way how to survive.

JF: Yeah.

IH: We fight, and we, the only thing is unity. As long as we're united, we survive. One individual can do nothing.

JF: When you were in connection with these other partisan groups, were you able to find out how the war was going, and what was happening in western Europe?

IH: Well, we heard the news. Yeah, we had the news. We had news, a lot of news. We had, first of all, the war between Russia and Germany. This was the most, our...

JF: That was your biggest concern.

IH: Concern, important things to us. Then the news, then we didn't have enough time to concentrate what happened on the other side, but we knew that already death camps are existing.

JF: You knew about the gas chambers...

IH: Yes.

JF: And the death camps?

IH: We knew already what Hitler did. We knew already the preparation for the cause. And already Hitler, the minute they start to fight with the Russians, already he builded in Lublin the Majdanek camp. And this, you know...

JF: You heard a great deal about Majdanek?

IH: I was in Majdanek. I wasn't in camp, but I was after the war. Now when I come to the story after the war diminished with Hitler, Russia began to chase Hitler back and the Russians occupied. I didn't want to fall into the Russian hands and tell the Russians that I was in the underground and I was this and I was there. So I went into Lublin and in the same place, in the Majdanek concentration camp, we was in the same barracks the Polish Army formed, the Polish Army.

JF: This was in what year?

IH: '43 already, when they headed back. And they began '44. '44 when they start to chase back.

JF: Wait. The Russians started pushing the Germans back.

IH: Back. In '43 they start ups and downs. And then they became the power with the help of the United States on one side and the other Allies in pushing back the Russians [he means the Germans]. I went out on the freedom and I wasn't on the, I was on the free already, out. And we started to live, you know, we start to breathe the air.

JF: In other words, the partisan group broke up.

IH: Right.

JF: In about 1943.

IH: That's it. That's, well soon the Russians chased the Germans out and the Germans never turned back. I start but I still wasn't, didn't want to fall in into the Russian hands.

JF: Now, why did you go to Lublin? What had you heard?

IH: I heard that in Lublin is forming a Polish Army [organized by the USSR], which it's going to fight against Hitler, a Polish Army, the present Polish Army. And I seek to go to Lublin, which I passed a few Polish towns that I was a Jew, the first Jew in certain little towns. And I remember having here a neighbor, a friend of ours from that town, and I'm telling her how I picked up the Jewish *siddurim* and the *chumoshim* from the ghetto part where they used to have a laying-out a spread. And I used to burn them, bringing to the certain place and digging out a grave. See, they were burned, half-burned. So we dugged a grave and we buried them.

JF: You buried them.

IH: Buried them. And I tell this lady, it was Mizoch [phonetic], a little town. Well then I enlisted myself in the army.

JF: So the army was forming the barracks of the old...

IH: In the barracks of the Majdanek.

JF: Of Majdanek.

IH: We slept on the same bunk beds where the people were there in the concentration camp.

JF: Was there any evidence left in Majdanek?

IH: Yes. Evidence! The ovens were still there. And there was a *big* ditch with people covered with lime, that the Germans didn't have a chance to burn them. And it reminds me of an anti-Semitic remark from a Polak, when we stood by that ditch and we looked at those people. And he said, "See, all the Jews are in here." And I showed him and I picked up the cross from that ditch. And with that cross I showed him that it was nun's clothes from a nun. And then...I, how you call it, the habit.

JF: The habit.

IH: The habit. And I said, "Is it Jews? Or it was meant for you too?" And he had to shut his mouth.

JF: He knew you were Jewish.

IH: Yes. Well, I didn't hide that I am a Jew. Well, in that Lublin the war came to an end and they were ready to send us out.

JF: So you trained then on the grounds of Majdanek?

IH: I was trained with anti-aircraft, in the Polish Army. No shoes.

JF: What was the relationship—you told me this one instance—generally, what was the relationship between the Jews who enlisted in the Polish Army and the non-Jews?

IH: Well, at the moment I didn't think of any relationships. But on the other hand, I was on the lookout.

JF: You were still suspicious somewhat.

IH: I was, I am suspicious up to the day, and until the day I'll die. I don't trust the name *goy*.

JF: But at that point you were united against a common enemy.

IH: I had to be united for the only purpose that I want to take revenge.

JF: Uh huh. Against the Germans.

IH: Against the Germans. And the second, I watch myself for the Russians.

JF: Was there any discrimination as the army was forming?

IH: It was. It was discrimination, but not very well open. It was, I was a Jew. I was recognized as a Jew and I was proud to be recognized as a Jew. I wore the eagle on my head, with the Poles, and I went to a six-months school, to learn anti-aircraft.

JF: Where was the school?

IH: In Lublin. They just trained us separate from the other ones, because coming back, the little education I had before the war helped me, and I enlisted. After six months we were ready to go into the fight, first line.

JF: This was in 19-...

IH: Already in 1944.

JF: '44.

IH: '44. We were sent up to the Warsaw front when the Germans and the Russians, we were under Russian supervision with the Russian officers.

JF: In the, at the Warsaw front?

IH: In the Polish Army but with the Russian officers, right. But I only wanted to wear the Polish uniform, not the Russian uniform, for that, for certain reasons. And at that time I was already twice in Warsaw, crossing the Vistula and going back, chased back and going back, when that uprising was from the Polish Army in Warsaw¹ and the Russians told us not to cross the border. Stay back. So the Germans killed the Russians the way they did with the Jewish ghetto. And when the Poles didn't want to help the Jewish ghetto in that time, so the Russians didn't want to give a hand to Polaks. And they held us back. They said, "No, don't cross no more. Stay here."

JF: Until the Germans took care of the Aryan side.

IH: Care, took care of, right. And after that we crossed and I was behind Warsaw 50 miles. And I was also in bunkers living as a soldier.

JF: Did you, then, see Warsaw after the destruction?

IH: I, not very much. We didn't have a chance. We were right away transferred behind the lines. But then I came into Warsaw. We was only 50 kilometers away from Warsaw that one day we went to Warsaw just to visit Warsaw, as soldiers. From the bunkers we had furlough for a few days, you know. So we went into Warsaw with a couple

³This is a reference to the Polish resistance in Warsaw in August 1944, which the Russians failed to support.

Polish soldiers and one more Jewish soldier was with me. He was a sergeant. And we went into Warsaw and we visited Warsaw.

JF: What section were you in, the Aryan side or the Jewish side, the ghetto?

IH: Well, I went to the Jewish Committee in Warsaw. And already we met Jews. I met already, I already confronted Jewish people from concentration camps.

JF: Who had alr-, this was...

IH: This was already...

JF: Who had already returned to Warsaw?

IH: Apparently people from certain camps, that they were freed by the Russians.

The Russians freed camps before the Americans. You know that?

JF: About what year was that, or what month was...

IH: '44, '44.

JF: About what month? I'm sorry.

IH: At the end of '44.

JF: The end of '44.

IH: The end of '44. But it wasn't yet the end of the war. Still are going on too, because the end of the war was in May, 1945, and it was the surrender. Well, we met already and it happened that...

Tape two, side two:

JF: This is tape two, side two, of an interview with Mr. Isadore Hollander, on October 25th, 1982. Address: 27 Henley Road, Overbrook Hills, Pennsylvania, 19151. Phone number, 649-2419. Mr. Hollander, can you continue after your experience in Warsaw, in '44.

IH: Well, in Warsaw, and then I went back to my camp location and we got the news that we are going out on the first line into Lodz, to...

JF: This is at the end of 1944, now?

IH: Well, it, right, the beginning already in 1945, that we are getting ready to go into the front to the, to Lodz, Poland. And they moved us up to Lodz. And it happened that I was the first Jewish soldier to Lodz.

JF: What did you find?

IH: Well, I didn't find too many Jews yet, because all the people from the eastern part of Poland, extermination. I started to think about where was east and west. East, Germany was east. The eastern part of Poland was in the German territory, concentration camps, which didn't come in too many yet, because the war was still going on. But we found quite a few Jewish people in Lodz. And we stationed in Lodz for two weeks. And being a Jew, we got a lot of information about Poles which they became *Volksdeutsche*, German, tried to help the Germans destroy the Jews. And we found out about them, the *Volksdeutsche* people. And the time came for revenge, which it was illegal procedure to do it...

JF: Because you were technically part of the Polish Army.

IH: Because I was technically part, and I had a little bit power. I wore a uniform. And I found more Jewish soldiers already, in the army. I found Jewish officers in the Russian Army which they were trusted already and they already knew the problem what Hitler did. And they start to feel with us, the Russian-Jewish officers, giving us a help. And I think a part of those anti-Semites during the war time helped Hitler to destroy the Jewish population in the Russian ghetto on the land where the Germans were occupying. I think I started to feel better that I can take the revenge, which we did. I think that cause was carried out, carried out very well, that I can remember what I did.

JF: You feel good about that.

IH: I feel good. What I could have done it. What I did and I hadn't done, to take revenge.

JF: You, how many people were involved in this?

IH: Well, we were in the army. We went out every night, for a little bit pride. We were a little bit, we had a list. We had by Poles giving us lists of all those names.

JF: The Poles helped you with this.

IH: The Poles helped us. But it wasn't Jews. But I had a list. We found a tailor, a Polak, he helped us, gave us a list of the...

JF: These were civilian Poles.

IH: Civilian, but they used to help the, they used to cater to the Polaks because they say, "We are better Polaks. We are with the Germans."

JF: So they were angry at them.

IH: And they were very angry. They were glad to give us details. Because they as civilians couldn't do much. All right, and they, then the Germans, but we had the opportunity with the help of Russian-Jewish officers and connections, that they helped us to do what we wanted.

JF: How many people? You went out in small groups or...?

IH: We went out just two, three soldiers at night. We didn't carry anything, not a rifle. We had anything what we are doing with us. And I had to close my eyes. I tell you the truth, as a Jew I was very disturbed to do what I had to do. But...

JF: You didn't use a gun, then, to make it quiet, to keep it quiet?

IH: We did use guns.

JF: Oh, you did use guns.

IH: We did use guns, but I had to close my eyes and ask God for forgiveness what I have to do, because of being a Jew. It was a hard bite. It was the very worst, worst thing in my life, what I had to do, and see what I'm doing. Then after I got used to it, as the war went on to the end...

JF: But you felt committed to doing this?

IH: I...yeah. That was my commitment.

JF: Yes.

IH: That's why I enlisted myself. I wasn't, I didn't have to enlist myself...

JF: I see.

IH: To become a volunteer to do, but I did it because of revenge. And I wanted to do it. And I did it.

JF: And did it feel satisfying to you?

IH: I felt satisfied. As it went on, I felt satisfied. And we didn't touch no civil people. We didn't kill no German civil people. As the war went on, we finished with Lodz, we went in farther, into Stettin, into Germany. And I became a little bit more known by the Russians as a Polish soldier, that I can read a map and I can try to lead them. And I had become a little bit better taking care. I wasn't for a while in the first line. I was with the officers in the back, helping them, reading maps, carrying them. The Russians behaved themselves abnormal, with raping German women and hiding German women. And the way they carried it out was a disgrace, to see it.

JF: The Russian soldiers did this?

IH: The Russian soldiers, the Russian officers. The Russian, not Jewish.

JF: What about the Poles?

IH: Well, the Poles...when I came into the German territory there was no Poles there. Already German people, and you know, they went into panic. It reminded me of 1939 when we went into panic.

JF: But when you went into German territory, you were not with any other Polish soldiers?

IH: Yes, Polish soldiers. Yeah, we were in the Polish Army.

JF: You...

IH: Well, the Polish did the same thing.

JF: That's what I mean.

IH: They robbed, but they didn't behave themselves as much brutal.

JF: The Russian soldiers were...

IH: Yeah but we had the orders. We couldn't do it.

JF: I see.

IH: We weren't allowed to do it.

JF: I see.

IH: But the Russian soldier...I mean, Polish soldiers went out too, but the Russian soldiers were brutal.

JF: And the Russian soldiers were not under directives not to do that.

IH: They were. Stalin, I mean, gave out orders not to touch the civilized population, the one without the uniform, but the revenge was there. The Russians are...

JF: The first line [unclear]...

IH: That...kind, first line, hungry after a woman. And they that type of a people, in general, that type of a people. I learned very much about Russian life. And...

JF: I'll bet you did.

IH: And it is all true in my...filming, in my head, that runs true. Very much I learned. And they were brutal. A matter of fact, I had to be an interpreter, to talk to the woman, and which my conscience never permit me as a Jew to touch a German woman. I would never think of it, to have guiltiness to be with a German woman. But I had to do it because I had from a Russian General, from a Russian officer an order. "Talk to her, lead me to her, bring me to her." And I used to stay outside and wait for them till they come out. And they were very brutal. Very brutal. The same thing what the Germans did to Jewish girls. They picked out the nicest Jewish girls of the town and they all had a good time with them and they killed them.

JF: So the Russians did the same thing after...

IH: The Russians did the same thing. They could have gone 50 men to one woman till she was dead.

JF: Oh my God. Very brutal. It was a very bad, a very bad memories about that.

JF: Yeah. I can see that.

IH: And as life went on, I was in the first line and the war ended.

JF: Were you fighting at that point?

IH: I was on the first line. In that time we were like back, and then they switched us to the first line back. You know, it's like...

JF: They rotated you.

IH: It's hard to explain how a war goes on. It was an offensive and you attempt. After the offensive if you're alive they send you back for rest three, four days. They send another group into the offensive. That's the army system. And we fought till, then they transferred us down to southern Poland, into Sudeten. And by the time we came there we didn't have fight any more, capitulation of the Germans. I have certain pictures that I took that, shaping up and decorating our cannon with flowers and sitting there.

JF: This was at the tail end of the war that you went out to...

IH: At the tail end of the war. This was...

JF: To Sudeten?

IH: The end, and from there they shipped us already to a army camp in Poland. They called it Leszno.

JF: How do you spell that?

IH: Leszno. L-E-S-Z-N-O. Leszno, Pozen, near Pozen, near Poznan, where now it goes on all those things now. And we were in a army camp and they offered me very things to stay in Poland. They want to give me farming. And in the same token I found out about my home town.

JF: What did you find out?

IH: I got a furlough. First of all I got a furlough. And by the other token I got connected with one of my cousins, which is now in Brazil. And I learned about another of his, one of his brothers living also in the army. And my cousin was in the army. As we got lost, during the time, we connected. And so, and I came home to Bendin for furlough, after the war.

JF: What is that word that you're using, "follof?"

IH: "Follof" is...

JF: Oh, Furlough!

IH: Furlough.

JF: Furlough, oh, O.K.

IH: Furlough, it means, a pass.

JF: Thank you, yes, O.K.

IH: To go, furlough, to go.

JF: O.K.

IH: And I came home, and we, I located mine wife, with her sister.

JF: You were married?

IH: No, not there. I...wasn't married. I...

JF: You weren't married at that point.

IH: Located my now, my, now my wife.

JF: I see.

IH: I located her coming home from a concentration camp.
JF: Did you know her before that time?
IH: I know my wife. We're related.
JF: I see.
IH: We're related.
JF: So you, that's when you happened...
IH: I knew her. I knew she is six years younger, but she don't, she didn't, to me, no matter to me because she was six years younger.
JF: I see.
IH: But I found her with her sister. I found one of my other cousins which his wife is now in Philadelphia. They have two children and he passed away a few years ago, seven years ago. He was home already, and we start to find family, we start to look for family and that's what we found, a little, an uncle I found, another cousin, he lives in Niagara Falls. And we began to concentrate.
JF: Did you find out about your mother?
IH: No. I know my mother was gone. I know my sister was gone.
JF: You never found out specifically...
IH: I, never, because I knew, this is it. I tell you, I didn't search, because the news, which came from other people which they were in the same camp, was related to me that she is gone.
JF: So none of your immediate family then survived.
IH: No. I was left with no...
JF: The step-sisters or the...
IH: No, nobody.
JF: No one.
IH: Nobody. And I never searched, because I knew that this is, was it. I wish I can maybe still somebody will pick up themselves and maybe, because a lot of people went to Sweden from camps. You remember that Graf Bernadotte used to help people...
JF: Yes.
IH: Taken out through Denmark and...
JF: Yes.
IH: It was a big help, which I found later a second cousin in Sweden...
JF: Do you still...
IH: Who communications. No, we lost communications.
JF: But did you have any hope that perhaps somebody had gotten out?
IH: I, hope, hope, I have now hope.
JF: You still hope.
IH: I hope. I hope. But I found a lot of youth right after my mother and I am saying *kaddish*. I keep her *yizkor*, you know, and for her parents. And I was in the army. I went back to the camp and I was promised things to stay in the army and which I afterwards

I again had foreseen the Russian rules of Poland, you know, Communistic ways. So I was trying to seek a way how to get out of Poland.

JF: You couldn't resign from your position in the army?

IH: I did. I was freed. But I didn't get a pass to leave Poland. I escaped in my uniform.

JF: You escaped from Poland in your uniform?

IH: In my uniform, but I have already a release from the army. But I had to change my clothes on the borders, which I took my wife to be, with her sister, with my cousins. And we smuggled to Germany, through Czechoslovakia. We were in Czechoslovakia for a while, in Bratislava, in a town. And every morning we went to Prague. And every morning we went to see in the Jewish, was already a Jewish, they called it in Jewish *Gemeinde*, that Jewish Council formed. And on the walls we were seeing signatures. "I am so and so. I was here. I'm going there."

JF: Notes, you were seeing.

IH: Notes. And we found that my cousins were in Prague and they went to Munich, which they are now in Israel, our cousins. And we start to move. Then we went to another city, Bratislava, and from there we went and we got out, out of Czechoslovakia illegally, into Germany, Bavaria. She was already with me, and her sister, and one of my cousins, which is now in Brazil.

JF: How long did this trip take you, to get out of Poland into Germany?

IH: Well, we left in Poland after Yom Kippur. After Yom Kippur we left Poland, after the high, after the Jewish holidays, after Succoth we left Poland. We ran away from Poland. A matter of fact, one cousin in Brazil, which is in Brazil, he was still in the army and not released. So we took a false document to Kielce. And if you heard about that, Kielce was a pogrom. We went to Kielce in the middle of the night. We took him out, put him on the train. And already clothes was waiting in Katowice for us and they were already in Katowice with another cousin. And we came into Katowice, and we changed his clothes, we gave him false documents, and we all left Germany together. We all left Poland together. And we came into Germany. And in Germany we stopped in a town. When we crossed the border we took a truck with wood and were, he took us into town. And we met already people, Jewish people. We are talking Jewish people. And he says, "Where are you going?" I says, "We want to go to Munich." He says, "Why are you going to Munich? We have a DP camp right here in this town." It was Degendorf.

JF: Degendorf?

IH: Degendorf, Bavaria.

JF: How do, what is that, D-E-...?

IH: D-E-G-E-N-D-O-R-F. Degendorf, *Ober* Bavarian, Upper Bavarian means. It's *Ober* Bavaria. And we have in, as soon as we walked into that camp, they told us who was there, and we already have our friends from hometown, from Bendin, being in that camp, the DP camp. One name was Gutman. I think he's not living any more. He lived in

Israel. I saw him ten years ago. A...relative to me through my sister, mine, a brother-in-law to my brother-in-law, was in camp. He was, his wife already was diminished, I mean, killed. And he was there already. And they took us in in that camp and we started to located ourselves among the other people and I started to become a part of the camp. And I worked on the police force in the camp, in the DP camp. And on February the third, 1946, we got married. And we sat and married the way my wife wished ourself, and she had a married [unclear]. We didn't have anybody to give us away, but it was all [pause], people, strange people, you know? Friends, strangers. And...

JF: Let me ask you something about the DP camp. Were people able to talk about what had happened to them during the war?

IH: Well, we talked. And I'll come to it, because this was the beginning in that camp that we only were three months, four months, till we got married. It was a organized very well wedding. Her sister, the same day of the wedding, my wife was very much surprised, getting a telegram, finding two brothers in Canada, living, which they left Poland. [A woman in the background says, "1930."] 19-, one left 1930, one left 1936, or it was '35. And we're still on good relationship with them. They're still living over there. And we got married and we tried to join the community as Jewish people in camp. And we had certain gatherings. We started to keep up *yartzeit* and we started to demonstrate. And manifestations again, whatever it happened, we began to remind our past in the camps.

JF: In what way?

IH: *Yizkor*, talks, speakers. There was left a lot of educated Jewish people among us.

JF: But you talked about, in groups...

IH: In groups.

JF: What had happened?

IH: We talked in individuals and we talked in groups, everybody contributed their problems.

JF: They shared their experiences?

IH: They shared their experience. We talked. But we start to live life. We had dances. We formed theaters. We had...

JF: Yiddish theater?

IH: Yiddish theaters. We had cantorial concerts. We had start to bring life back to survival. We formed *kibbutzim*. I was in the *Haganah*, working for a short time, helping for the cause. I did a lot of things my wife never knew, and, till she found out, she stopped me because she, her hopes were for emigrating, to see her brothers, to get together in life. We start to correspond between ourselves. It was a help through the UNRRA, to get her brothers, you know, to connect with the Joint Distribution, you know.

JF: Wait, it was through UNRRA that...

IH: With UNRRA they connected the brothers, because she...

JF: Oh, that you found the brothers at all.

IH: Yeah, she had only in her memory a street in Edmonton, Alberta, a street! And we start to give to the agent, to the American, you know, agents, to the UNRRA people...

JF: Yeah.

IH: Names.

JF: To locate them.

IH: Hollander, Philip Hollander, or Morris Hollander. And they were in Canada, in Edmonton, Jasper, Jasper Avenue. We didn't...know what. But it came to a certain time that we were connected.

JF: Let me ask you something. The talks that you had, the sharing of the problems as you described it before among the people in the camps, do you think this was helpful...

IH: Yes.

JF: In establishing...

IH: Yes.

JF: The new life that you...

IH: Establishing in Israel. This was helpful. Because we start already with the cause for Israel, for Palestine. [his wife: "*Aliyah*, for going out."] Palestine *aliyahs*, sending ship and kids to Cyprus.

JF: But in talking about what had happened during the war, by sharing those experiences, how did that affect the people in the camp? What...

IH: Well, we were affected already. It didn't hurt us any more. We were trying now to connect the past problems with the...

JF: With the future.

IH: Future.

JF: So what did it do to talk about it? Did it help relieve...

IH: It helped us...

JF: You?

IH: To relieve, and unite us. And thinking about a future that we shouldn't remain in Germany, one thing.

JF: It helped give you strength.

IH: Strength. And that's where we started to smuggle out people, *aliyahs*, children, to Palestine. It gave us courage. We formed a navy brigade in Degendorf.

JF: A navy brigade?

IH: A navy brigade in Degendorf. And they had a ship, an old German ship, on the Donau. And they trained. A matter of fact, I lost a good friend over there. He drowned.

JF: The name of the ship was...

IH: We didn't, I don't know. I don't know the name.

JF: Oh.

IH: The man who formed this, I...can't recall, it was Stillman, whatever it was, he is a big man in Israel now.

JF: Now what did the navy brigade do?

IH: Train, for...navy, the young kids, 21, 20, 19...

JF: Yeah.

IH: Trained them as sailors.

JF: In order to get Jews to Israel?

IH: To go to Israel, to get used. This was...formed in Degendorf, in that camp, a navy brigade, on the Donau River. That boy came from Russia, and he enlisted himself and he drowned. But he is still there in the grave in Germany. I have a beautiful picture of that boy, because I knew his sister, his parents I knew, from before.

JF: So there was a German boat that was used...

IH: A German boat contributed...

JF: By whom?

IH: Well the German, the German had an old boat on the river. It wasn't a...war boat, but it was a boat from another [unclear].

JF: Did they know what you were going to use it for?

IH: Well, maybe if they did or if they didn't...

JF: They didn't care.

IH: They didn't care. They care less. But they were cooperative. That government, but this was with help with the American...

JF: O.K.

IH: If not with the Americans, the help wouldn't be there.

JF: Right.

IH: It has to be the honest way.

JF: Yeah.

IH: Well, we had a lot of Jewish-American officers, you know, in the government, Jewish people, in the American government. We have to have all the connections for those things. I remember I was taught karate and jiu-jitso. You know, for purposes. I was young. I was on the police force in the camp. But...[Mrs. H.: This was to be able to keep the camp in order.] My...wife was seeking for a future not to remain in Germany...

JF: You...would have gone to...

IH: And to see her brothers.

JF: To Palestine?

IH: I would have gone to Palestine. I was registered to Palestine. My wife's sister was already, sent the visas from two brothers to take her sister. And I was already married. And I was registered to the United States and to Palestine. And Palestine was a risky situation for me. But it came up, United States. And I went to the Consul and I was already awaiting the visas. They know that I'm coming. So my wife became pregnant,

which we avoided to have a child on the German territory...especially us. I don't care who else, whoever did or didn't. But me, I didn't want to have my child on the German soil.

JF: But you felt comfortable in getting pregnant when you knew that you were leaving.

IH: Well, I knew already. Well, a matter of fact, at the edge of her pregnancy, we got our papers to leave, which our child, our three children were born in Philadelphia, thank God. So...

JF: Why did you come here?

IH: Why? That it came up, that to come in here. It didn't came up for... [Mrs. H. interjects that Canada didn't let in the married couples] Then, that married couples was complicated. And then this was a different, there's a little story involved, but it's not warranted to talk about. I don't care. I have my own, I made my life the way God gave it to us. Coming here, we're not sorry. Being in New York, I was six weeks in the HIAS, taking care of us, sheltered very well.

JF: What month and year was it, then, that you came?

IH: 1947, December the 25th, Christmas Eve, December the 24th, Christmas Eve, we arrived.

JF: And you were with HIAS for six weeks in New York?

IH: For six weeks in New York, taking care by the United Service, Jewish Family Service. And it came out an order that they don't want to have all the immigration, the immigrants, gathered in New York, that they have an order to spread all Jewish families all over the United States. A matter of fact, I had to go to Milwaukee, which I hesitated, because I had some distant family in New York, from my parents on both sides. And the final decision was made Philadelphia.

JF: So you went to Milwaukee first?

IH: No. I didn't go.

JF: Oh, you didn't go there.

IH: No. I...opposed. Not that I refused. If I had to, I had to, you know? But they were very nice, and they cooperated. And I came here to Philadelphia, which the Jewish Family took care of us.

JF: The Jewish Family Service?

IH: Service took care of us for a while, which we were very grateful. It was one of the biggest helps, up to date I think. And I thank God I am now on the Passover League in the Jewish Family, a member of the board. And I think I paid my shares back.

JF: I'm sure you have.

IH: And I'm still finding ways how to help the Jewish cause, in the vicinity. I'm involved in many, a lot of activities, which it works for the Jewish cause. My wife is involved, belongs to ORT, belongs to other organizations, to the *B'rit Sholom* movement. And I am a member the *B'rit Sholom*. I am a member of Independent Young Men, a member of the Association for the Holocaust, Jewish Holocaust Survivors. And we are

doing the best. Our children are also married. We have eight grandchildren. We're proud of them. We're proud of my family. My son, the youngest, just became a chiropractor. So everything wound up with all the *tsuris*, with all the bad experience in life, went up to a happiness. But we have to seek it should continue the way it is, you know. Fight for unity. [Mrs. H.: "The most wonderful country is America."] And America was good to us. [Mrs. H.: "That is, besides Israel."] Were good to us. America was good to us, what we're seeing and hearing, we know what's going on. We know with whom we're dealing. We know who...the atmosphere surrounding us. But, we still believe in good. We still live in good. We still live in free. And the main cause, that we can help our brethren.