

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

LILY MAOR

Transcript of Audiotaped Presentation

Class of Professor Nora Levin

Date: June 11, 1981

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LM - Lily Maor¹ [interviewee]

NL - Nora Levin²

Date: June 11, 1981

Tape one, side one:

NL: This is June 11, our last class and I have asked Lily to tell us about her experiences in Hungary during the war. Mrs. Lily Maor.

LM: As a matter of fact, I'm, I am very, I am not speaking about this subject, not because it's so painful, because really I cannot imagine today, I cannot understand that I lived through these things and I still have a normal life and I am doing life as usual. Maybe one of the reasons, because I was very young and I came from a warm home. And it was everything so, so suddenly and so without thinking about it. Things are coming very suddenly, so you don't have the time to think about it and to know what going is to happen. Accidentally, today, the 11th of June, is the day when we have been transported to Auschwitz. Today is 37 years just accidentally. So today I began to remember and to think about it but really if you would ask me again how was it and how could we do it and after it to continue to live, it usually is very hard to say.

I am coming from a very, a middle class family in Hungary with normal-- the Jews have been in Hungary not very religious, as I have told the last time, Reform. In Hungary there have been three kinds of Jews: very, very Orthodox, like Meah Shearim; the between, and the Nealog.³ Nealog is something like the Conservative in the States now. So it is very important because of the background, and our family, with very good financial conditions-- a nurse from Austria. It was, as usual, a German education was very important in Hungary. So I knew even German even before I knew Hungarian, because the nurse was a German one-- not a German, from Austria. And, as usual, going to school, four classes, elementary school, and college [upper school] for eight years, and it was really everything ready for to continue, because I wanted to be a doctor of medicine. And I never had doubts that I can do it because, I was first of all, I was Hungarian. I never thought-- I knew, that my religion is Jew. I knew that I go to another synagogue, not in the cathedral like the others are going. Especially in Hungary there have been four different religions: Catholics first of all, Protestants and Reformants, and Jews. So it was not something special that I was a Jew, because others had different religions. So at the four class elementary school, it was not so important because it was as usual. But afterwards, in the *gymnasium*, which mean in the college [high school], when it was religion we went out in another class and we have our, our teache-- a special teacher for this thing. We happened to have a very

¹née Krausz.

²This is a transcript of a presentation by Lily Maor in Professor Nora Levin's class, followed by historical comments by Professor Levin. See also a second interview with Lily in 1988 and an interview with her husband Zenek Maor.

³Nealog Judaism is a mild reform movement within Judaism, mainly in Hungarian-speaking regions of Europe, which began in the late 19th century. The reforms were comparable to the more traditional wing of United States Conservative Judaism.

Zionist rabbi. He was a very modern rabbi, a Doctor Rabbi and he insisted that we should learn Hebrew. So when I came to Israel I knew already Hebrew. But I never thought that I shall use it. I even remember that we had been in the fourth--I don't know--14 or 15 years old, and we learned a lot of languages. We learned-- not English, English I learned privately-- but we learned French and German and Latin and Hebrew and we had been all of us very good pupils-- I mean the Jews. So he asked us, "I don't understand; you don't want to learn Hebrew?" So I told him, "Dear Rabbi, do you think I shall go ever to use Hebrew? Go to Israel--not Israel, Palestine?" Because I really didn't thought about it. Because I was first of all Hungarian, I was first of all Hungarian. I even remember the time of the *Anschluss*-- and the occupation in Austria and then Hungary became, received back the places of Czechoslovakia and we went to the border when Horthy, the Regent Horthy, was going in on a white horse. And I was so enthusiastic. All Hungary became-- they were receiving back all the places that have robbed from us. It was really clear for me because I am Hungarian first of all. If you have the hymn, Hatikva, so I was standing up, everything was clear that I am Hungarian first of all. Even we knew that there are some-- when I came to college it was no limitation. They made a limitation between them: so six Jewish girls in our class, and others have been Catholics and Protestants, other races and religions. And, as a matter of fact, we went in society life, social life, we had, we went together. My friends were from the Jews, as a matter of fact, but we had some dance lessons, together all of them, in school. We played together and even as a matter of fact we had been together, the Jews. And we had one girl that was converted, and she was very connected, more connected with us, than with the other girls. Then it came, the war came, the war began and really we knew that it was a war. We heard the B.B.C. on the radio, and we knew that Hitler is doing something against the Jews, but I think that we didn't really understood what is going on. I have to say something-- yesterday I have a cousin of my uncle, he is older than me and I spoke to him about all these things. I told him I am going today to speak about my story and to tell and he gave his opinion, and his -- not only opinion but what he thinks about things is different what I know what I remember and what I understand. I said, later, even in relating to the Kasztner⁴ affair and everything, I told Mrs. Levin that, I don't know, another approach and other understanding. Maybe, that it's because of my age, because I was 13 when the war came out so I had another approach to all the things. I remember different fragments of the time, of this time--I mean between '39 and '44 until we came into the war. I remember things when the Italian Jews had been deported transported through our town. Our town was on the way from Wien [Vienna] to Budapest and then the trains went north to Poland. So all the trains, and all the soldiers, the German soldiers had to go through our town. My town, which is called Győr-Raab,

⁴Rudolf Kasztner (1906–1957) was born in Cluj (then Kolozsvár) in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, most known for his controversial efforts to help Jewish refugees escape from Hungary in 1944. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/rudolf-rezsoe-kasztner>. See also the historical comments of Professor Levin at the end of this document.

and so I remember it was Yom Kippur, it was in '43, and we heard that some transportation of Italian Jews are on the way somewhere. I really didn't know of Auschwitz, I really didn't know they are going to kill. Maybe I didn't want to know. I don't know. Now, if I want to make it in my mind, to think it over again, I don't know why. We only know that we brought them some food. I hadn't been there, but people came to collect, and to bring them something to eat. And we didn't speak about it that they are taking them to kill them. So the beginning of '39 I went to the third class, I mean in college [high school] and we lived a real normal life. We didn't have any change. Went to school; went to cinema; went to the swimming pool and went everywhere we liked. My father had a shop for shoes and in '42 it was limited for Jews to deal even with leather shoes. It was a limitation, so he can't, he can't, he could sell shoes, but not this kinds of shoes what have been [unclear]. So he stopped to working, money was enough, it was not a problem and he thought that we will wait until the Russians are coming. It was really the thought, the real thought of people, "Never mind, we'll do what we do and we will survive." And I jump a little bit too quick but you will ask if you want anything to ask. Even I remember that maybe I can begin with the Holocaust because it is the largest part of what I remember and what I know. In '44 -- in the meantime, I went to school in the *gymnasium* for girls and this *gymnasium* was occupied by the Hungarians for hospitals, because they had a lot of wounded, a lot of soldiers because they had been in the war. And we learned in the school of boys who went in the afternoon. In '44, Sunday, we had no learning because Sundays was a free day. Was a Hungarian school, a Hungarian *gymnasium*, not Jewish. And I remember the 19th of March, '44. In the morning we had lived our flat it was very near to the main road, between Budapest and Wien so we heard a noise. In the morning everyone was sleeping, there was no school and no work, so I awakened. I heard a terrible noise from the direction of this main road, Budapest-Wien, and then we heard on the radio that the Germans had decided to give their help--I don't remember exactly the words--to help the Hungarians [unclear]. They came as helpers. And then I met my friends, my girlfriends, and we went out for a walk and we saw the cars of the German soldiers going through our town because they came through-- they had to go through our town, the main road. And we see such young, young soldiers because the older ones had been killed already. A lot of people, a lot of trucks and soldiers and we made very happy with them, you know, we really didn't understand what was going on. We waved to them, you know--it was not the first time, because the first time two years ago, or three years ago they went to Yugoslavia, two years ago. So it seemed to us that this is the same thing. Now they are going through, everything will be over.

The next day, in the meantime, there was only rumors--rumors in Kistarcsa, the place that they had been gathered together the people they had caught in the railroad stations. On the very first day, and it was clear after it in Budapest, all the Germans went to the railroad station, they didn't let the Jews to travel. On the very first day, and they took them to Kistarcsa, it was a place for gathering them, and they were the first ones to be

sent to Auschwitz. And the other day--look how stupid we have been--on Monday, it was the 20th of March, we went to school. I went to school, with my luck nothing happened. I went to school and I worked on a test in Latin and then the director came in and told, "I am very sorry to tell you"-- not to the Jews but to everybody-- "we have to free this room, this building, because the German Army needs for the soldiers. And we will let you know when you will have to come back again - when it will be over." So even the director said this is only a [unclear] thing. So I remember that on Monday afternoon, like in Israel, or Tuesday afternoon, the shops had been closed. And I went home, and I went through the main road in our town and everything was closed, but only by the banks there was standing German soldiers in black uniform, the special--I don't know what was the black uniform-- and the streets had been empty because it was a free day, not working, and then, I don't know why, suddenly I understood that something is going on. I ran home and my father and my mother-- I had only one brother, he was nine years old at the time. I came home and I told, "I have the feeling [unclear] we have to run away." Really I don't know why. I don't know why because I didn't hear anything, only what I have seen on the streets. So they calmed me and told me it will be all right. It will be over; we will survive. And then after two days I got a message that we have to come to school in another place and we began on the 11th of April our tests for maturity [matriculation]. So it was in the meantime, in the meantime, on the 5th of April, we had began to wear the yellow star. It began all the instructions for Jews and with the yellow star, and we had a uniform, a dark blue uniform so you can imagine. I put the yellow star on the blue uniform it was, everybody was seeing, not only me, so it was not only me. So we went to school and the tests for maturity [matriculation] began. It was in Hungary another way, not like in Israel, in writing and in verbal, and we came to school and we made in German and in Hungarian. And on the 13th it should be the test for Latin maturity test and it was the first time this morning when the Allies bombed Hungary. So I remember I was in school and suddenly there was an alarm and they had been told very loudly that we have to bring all the tests to interrupt and to go to the shelters. And I-- we lived very near to the school so I ran home and we went to the shelters and it was bombed and about 1,000 people had been killed on the very first day of the bombing.

NL: Excuse me, this was Győr.

LM: Győr, yes, "Raab" in German. But it has to be emphasized that the Allies bombed not the part where the people have been living but the industrial parts of the town. At that time, in Hungary, industry was "Jew-clear." It means that it was clear of Jews. But they needed the Jews to work in trucks and such things-- it was a part that the Jews had worked already. So between the victims there were only four Jews. By accident they lived very near to this area, of the industrial area. So it was a cause to say that the Jews had directed the pilot. They had seen a Jew who has been from Győr who left for the States years ago-- they have seen that he was sitting near the Negro pilot to bomb the town. You know the rumors. So, I speak about this particular thing, because on the other day, the

next day, it was a Thursday or a Friday, we had the examination in German, maturity test, and I was afraid to go. I didn't go. I give it up. I had forgotten, no after this, so I didn't go for the test and in Hungary it was rules, if you are not going to one test, you lose all the tests. So if you are not going, so you have to begin from the beginning. And they had the kindness in the school that they sent the sheriff, how do you say, the man who was in charge, you know the, no, they sent to all, no I think two of us came to the tests, I mean from the Jews and the other four not. So they sent to us, everyone especially, and they delayed the beginning of the test and they told us the tests are going on and we have to come. So I went to school; I had the test. You can believe the feeling was not so very nice, but on the way home, it was the first time that I personally, I met a woman and she was crying, "Jew, you bloody Jews, go home, go away from here. What are you doing?" Because we had yellow star. So then it was finished in writing the maturity tests and the other days, other weeks, was the maturity tests verbal. Verbal means it was, it was a committee of 10 persons and it was a chairman of the committee, very important the chairman, I shall tell why. And you came and you made examination every-- in mathematics and in physics, and even German, everything. And this chairman of the committee, he was a *Priester*⁵. He was a *Priester* who was the chairman, not only, he was a chairman of the school of boys, for the boys *gymnasium* and he was the chairman of the [unclear]. It was the kind of *Priesters* in Hungary, I don't know what it's called in another one-- it was and he had very big properties in fields and earth. He was even very rich. But I am coming back to the test. So we had the test and it was not so important and all of us had been very good pupils-- I mean the six Jews, and the one that converted. So we finished it and after we finished, it was between the end of April, and in the meantime we had been in our homes and we had been only limited in the yellow star and everything. And then they decided, by the tests by the maturity [matriculation] tests we saw that this chairman, Dr. Barnaby, the *Priester*, he was very kind to us. He understood that we are not in the same mood to make this test and given and all of them were very kind to us. So we heard that if somebody was going to work it was a fact that we did not know about Auschwitz, we didn't know about the possibility to go to work with families so we heard that if somebody is going to work, it can be rescued. So we went to work, not to work in an office, but to work in fields to make the work of peasants, to make the work, real working. So we knew that it was this Mr., Dr. Barnaby that he was in charge of this very big properties of fields and earth, so went to him a delegate of two girls went to him. And I was one of them, and we told him that maybe he could arrange that we are coming to his place, and it was about 50 miles from my town to his place and to work there, like peasants, to work in the fields. And he said, "All right, we are ready. You can come and you can stay over the war, how long it will take. It will not take so long," he told us. So we then were very happy. We went home and told all my old friends we had the possibility and he is ready to take us. And we decided that we began to prepare to go to him, and then in the beginning

⁵German - priest.

of May, suddenly we heard that we have to move over to a ghetto. Until the end of May we had our places in our flat. But at the beginning of May they began to tell us that at the end of May we had to move over to the ghetto. The Sighet Ghetto, they had been a place where the very, very religious Jews had lived. My town, the town Győr, was parted of three parts. There has been four rivers. It was a very nice town. The Danube, the Raab, was the name of the town. This place was called Sighet. Sighet means--how do you call it? Island. Island, yes, an island, and this place was a very particular place for the very religious Jews. And they decided that this place was the place for the ghetto. But you have to understand: first of all, this place was very poor. I mean, the religious were very poor. Very narrow streets and narrow places and very little flats. So it was not enough space and very few places was empty, because most of them had been Jews there. So we had to move over to the place of *goyim* if they had been there. So I remember that we offered, not offered we gave, our home, which was a very nice flat, very modern flat, for a Christian man who gave us one room in his flat of two rooms. Not one room--I am in error--we had two room flat. We had been together three families, with twelve persons, in one kitchen--no the kitchen was not in the flat but outside. And we gave over our flat for this person. So we move over at the end of May to this ghetto. We had the right to take with us only--no we had the right to take with us whatever we wanted. Just a second. No, in the meantime, I had forgotten before it, before the yellow star, we had to give over all the broadcasts, the radios. Not the watches, but all the jewelry that you have had you had to hand over, and your money, everything. But the goods you had in your home, you could take with you. But how many things you can take with you in half a room to put in? So we left everything and we went over and even we had, not a car, but a *agalah*, how you say *agalah*?

NL: Carriages.

LM: With a carriage with horses so we could take over whatever we wanted to that place. In this place we had no more than one week, one week, only for one week. After one week began the invasion in Europe, the 6th of June, and on the 7th of June we had only rumors because we got no newspapers in this city, in this Sighet, in this ghetto, and we had only rumors. We knew that something was going on, which was the invasion, in 6th June, and on the 7th of June they decided to move us over. You had to listen to it. It was the time--they came on the 19th of March. At the end of May we had been in the ghetto, on the 7th of June we had to move to another place, and at the 11th of June, which is today 37 years, we had been on the way to Auschwitz. So they made us from place to place. They could make it from the ghetto straight to the train. No, they made the suffering in such a way and they made it to confuse us. We were really confused because we didn't understand what was going on. So they came on the 6th of June, on the day of the invasion--had no connection but incidentally was the same day-- and they told us we had to move over in some barracks, some wooden houses. It was the place that nobody was down there. I only remember we went over, everybody said not to go there, that there are only robbers and only thieves, and very, very sick people. Don't even go, they are not normal people,

you know. And at this place we had to go over and we had to go over. The first time we can go by car, by carriage. At this time, first of all, we can only carry what you can carry by hand and all of the other things we had to leave in the ghetto. And from the other side we had to go by foot. So we went --ah, before it, we had to over a real examination to see we haven't got any jewelry, anything, and I have told Mrs. Levin it was not only a test to see what you have got in physical, but they made a test on the body. By a woman to see every place if you could hide something and it was under the inspection of the gendarmerie, the gendarmerie was between the military and the police. The gendarmerie-- they had been known as very cruel people. I personally had to laugh because at that time, before the Germans came in, when the German came in, we had been told if somebody had big flats they are coming, they are coming and they are putting in German soldiers to live. So my father decided that is better that we are taking somebody in, instead of the Germans giving us somebody to take in. So we had a young officer from the gendarmerie in our flat for the last three months. It means for two months, April and May, and this man was in charge of the place that we were going over. And he came to my mother and I was crying because I was afraid for the examination of my body. Don't forget, at this time girls of 18 are still children. I was a child at school, so I was very afraid and he came and I don't know what he said, but I was not tested. I went through without being examined, and I forgot in the meantime because it was going very quickly, but after the very first they came on the 19th of March, on the 20th, 21st of March, they began to arrest people. To arrest people. First of all the very rich people, first of all the people who had to anything with the law, because they have some lists in the police offices. And my neighbor is a very--I would like to tell a little story. Because it is very interesting. We had a neighbor. He was arrested on the very first day and his wife stayed alone. His son was in Israel already-- he left Hungary in '39, he was older than me six years and the other daughter was living in the country. They had some property in the country, so the old woman she stayed alone. So we told her that she should stay with us at the time and to sleep with us. Everybody was afraid to sleep alone. And then this woman, she had been with us all the time, until the ghetto. Then we came to the ghetto and then she was separated from us because we had only this half room for us and before I met her the last [time] she told me, "So, you know I am not so young and I am not sure that I will survive, but I am quite sure that you will survive and you will go over to Palestine. And I would like to ask you, if you meet my son, to give him my love, give him my love, that I thought about him." It was such a--like, like a--but I didn't think about it that I will survive or not survive and it was in '44 in May, and then I am going for work and then I was in the camps, in Auschwitz, and everything and I came to Israel--and I really had forgotten about it. Not forgotten but I didn't think about it. And then I live in kibbutz and in '49 we came to Haifa and then I suddenly remembered this story, this regards to give over, and I began to ask - "Do you know where he was living?" It is not like Hungary, everybody knows where everybody is living. And one said yes, I don't know, he's in Kiryat Shmuel, in Haifa. He is in the Notar [phonetic], some

policeman. Nobody knew where he was. And so I go for another two years and in '51 I went-- I brought my daughter to the children garden and I went to work, and suddenly I saw him on the other side of the street in the city of Haifa. And I began-- don't forget I was 12 years old when he left Hungary and he was a grown up man, so it means he didn't change so much. I changed, and I saw and I called his name, and he turned and asked, "Who are you?" I told him I was this girl from his town. He told me, "It can't be. You were a little child and you have glasses and you are so-." So I told him "Don't forget it was over 12 years in the meantime." So I had an opportunity to give him over the regards. Nobody came back and it was only regards from me that he knew about his mother. So it's a story in between.

So, on the 7th of June it was *Shavuot*, in '44. We had been taken over to these barracks, wooden houses, and it was a Friday, if I remember. Yes, it was a Friday, and in these barracks we had been only for two days, three days, a week the other people had been there for a week. And on Friday evening, the rabbis of the town called for to pray together. Nobody knew what was going on, you know. Suddenly we are in a room in the barrack room, dirty and stinking, it was a terrible place, and the rabbis called for pray and this was a very bad for them, because they called for praying without the permission from the Germans. So the other day everybody came and the other day on Saturday, all the rabbis had been gathered together and had been shaved off hair from on their heads and they had to go clean the water closets; this was the punishment because they called the people for praying without permission. And it was Saturday and nobody knew what was going on. Somebody made suicide and somebody-- it was a terrible chaos. Nobody knew what was going on. And then suddenly on Saturday evening, we had only one day of this terrible place, somebody came and told us, "People... [Tape one, side one ended.]

Tape one, side two:

LM: [long pause before side two starts] ...that we didn't use-- the very nice kind attention and permission of this *Priester* to go to work on his place, because we heard before we went to the ghetto that we will be able to go to work with the families. So we told him, "Thank you very much, very kind of you that you already to take us but we have the possibility to go to with our parents and families so we are, we prefer to go with them." So, really, on the 7th of June, the 8th of June, the 9th of June, we came to--somebody came, really an official came and said people who are under 46, 45, can prepare to going to work, working camps. And so we have to gather all these things together and tomorrow morning at eight o'clock you have to be by the train. Because you are going to work. And my father had been very happy. My father was exactly 45, so he was very happy to go to work there. So we get all our things, things we could carry with us, even less than we took to this place, and gathered together near the train at eight o'clock in the morning. Eight o'clock, nine o'clock, I don't remember exactly. And then we stood there for hours. We can't imagine that they haven't put the trains-- they have been trains for animals and for goods but not for men. So we waited and then they, they began to put us in the wagons. We had to sit on our things; there were no chairs or no nothing to sit down. And at the same time, the same gendarme man what I told you he was stayed at our place came and he looked for us and we told him, "*Le'hitra'ot* - we'll see you again⁶." He told, "I am quite sure if you are coming back I shall not be here." He was quite sure what was going on and then we came in and after a few hours we began to travel. And we traveled and traveled and traveled and we didn't know the direction, see, but we understood that we were going something in the north. And then Kosice, a town, Kosice in Czechoslovakia, and my father was traveling a lot and so he told, "Oh, it's very fine, you will see, we will meet the Russians on the way. You will see, we will." We did not know where we are going, but we are going very near to the Russians. And then, near Kosice, came in a Hungarian soldier and he told people who have anything, money, jewelry, even watches, please give it over to me, because you have to know, we are giving you over now for the Germans. Until Kosice, until the border, the Hungarians were detaining us, so this place, the Germans took us over. So he came in and was very kind to take all -- oh, I forgot one more thing. Near Ossa, it's a town on the way, there is a school for difficult educated children, you know, children, disturbed children, they let us out from the car, from the train into the W.C., because in the trains we haven't got anything. So we went out and then they shouted to us-- the children, you know, not children, young 15, 16-- shouted "Run away, run away, they are taking you to death," and believe me it was on the 12th of June or the 13th of June, we didn't believe. They shouted this to us, "You are going to death." So we went back to the train and we went and then over the border, the Polish border, we must have been in Crakow, and then we arrived at Auschwitz. I must make this more quickly.

⁶Hebrew expression.

We arrived to Auschwitz. It was written Oświęcim. Nobody knew. Not it was in, all in this one special train, that I was sitting, we had been 60 persons. Nobody knew, nobody knew, what was going on. Oświęcim and then we saw people with the striped clothes from the little windows and just didn't know what was going on. And my father told-- no, then came somebody in, from the striped clothes, people are told, "You have to leave everything and only to jump out." And my father told me, "Be careful, take clothes on you as much as you can, even two clothes, two coats." It was a summer day. I felt terrible because I was in with in three clothes and two coats and I don't know what else. And then we came off and we jumped off from the train and then they told men separate from women. I went with my mother and my brother went with my father. He was nine years old but he understood it was the men. And suddenly my brother was near us. We asked, "What happened?" They were told that the children should go with the mothers. So we went. We didn't know where we were going and in the line and then they-- we arrived to Dr. Mengele. I knew only afterward that it was Dr. Mengele. He was standing there like Napoleon, with his finger and he asked my mother, "Your child? Your children?" So my mother told, "Yes, both." She meant me and my brother. And he told, "No," and he send my mother to one side and me on the other side. My mother with my brother on the other side and I really didn't even tell her "Shalom," because I didn't understand what was going on. So she waved to me with her hand and said, "Lily, Lily." It was the last time I saw her. And then we went on to the other side, but we didn't understand. I speak very subjective of my place, because maybe others understood something, but that was what I knew. So I didn't know what was going on and they took us another place and another place that had a lot of men and they told us we had to put--you have to be naked, to put our clothes--so we didn't understand--what does it mean? What does it mean? I, a girl of 18 years, put off your clothes and men are standing around. How? I really didn't know what was going on. You have only to leave your shoes and to be without anything. So we did it; we had no choice. They shouted at us, the man in the striped clothes, "Do what they are saying because they can kill you." And we went in and closed the door and they shaved us from every side. We became shaved, without any hair, and without anything, and we went over, and we came in a room, a very big, a large room. After this I heard that could be the same gas room-- it was the same way. For our lot it was really a bathroom, a shower, and then we came in and we made a shower and then we came out and they gave us some clothes. They made the clothes-- they didn't wash the clothes-- they only did disinfection for the clothes. Disinfection it means that everything was on the clothes. I don't have to be very practical about what was on these clothes. So everybody gets some clothes, somebody of my measure, something was fitting somebody of eight years, so I was get something and we were all without hair. And you cannot imagine how is looking women without hair. The most terrible thing what can be done for a woman to cut off her hair. It is terrible. So we had been the clothes. And we went through and began the life of lines and counting, lines and counting, lines and counting. So we went in a place; it was a very

big W.C. and it was 100 places, the very first place we met in Auschwitz. There we went the first night. They gave us some bread. You couldn't look on this bread, but only on the first day. On the second day-- on the third day I was looking for this bread. On the first day I couldn't look on this bread and we had to stay at this place all the first night, sleeping on the earth, sleeping somewhere. I remember a woman-- she was very old woman-- she had white hair and she was cutting off the hair and she became a black clothes, very long and she was looking like a *Priester*, and I began to shout "What is a *Priester* doing here in this place." Really, really-- it is, I think about it, I really cannot imagine that it was reality. It looked to me like it was a story I was speaking, or a picture I had seen. And on another day they took us to another place. It was blocks; it was in Auschwitz, not in Birkenau. It was parted for many places. I was in A-3. In this place was a very big block: no beds at all, no chests, and no beds and no water closets. It was only in the outside was water closets, that you had to made out what you needed outside--to the eyes of the other people. No water-- it was coming a cart, once a day, once two days, bringing some water. And they made selection, everyone, every day. I had been at Auschwitz for three weeks-- six weeks, I mean from the 13th June to the 30th of July. So I don't know what to tell about it. Everybody, every four people had a pot, and in this pot you got some soup once a day to eat. Not to eat, but to drink, and they have been lines and every line this pot for four girls [unclear]-- I mean five girls. Every five we had a pot and from this pot we had to drink this soup. I can speak about all this what happened in Auschwitz. It was unbelievable-- I don't think that everybody can believe it could go over. They--there have been Kapos and there have been Germans and there have been Mengele who came every two days, three days, four days to make selections, and if somebody had a cut, an operation on his body, were selected straight away. We didn't know where--straight away. There have been some girls, *Shreibers*⁷-- it means [secretary of them]-- the Slovakian girls-- who was --speaking about the Slovakian girls--that they had made over very hard, very difficult time, but who was alive, they was in a position-- means position they had clothes, and they had to eat and they had in the meantime hair-- and they was between them who knew Hungarian, so from time to time they told us, "Be careful, you know that if you are not doing what they are saying you can be killed," and so. But they didn't tell about gassing. They didn't tell about such things. They only shouted cautions, you know, "Be careful and be obedient, so to come over." And I have some stories about my cousins I met there. It is not so important and on the 30th of July they made an *Appell* again. I had only one aim: to co-- I don't know why, I didn't know why-- to come out from here. I had the feeling all the time that I have to come out from here. So every time they would come to call for people for work I was ready to go. For every work. Only to go to work and it was really the best way. So the 30th of July they make a selection and they took us, part of the people, they took to gassing, and a part of us. Then--we go through *Lager* "C." *Lager* "C" was a better part there were better conditions. They had beds and when we went through, near *Lager* "C"

⁷Writers - German.

they shouted at us, "Where are you going?" So we told, "We are going to work," and they laughed at us. "You are going to work? You are going to be killed. Who is going to work, nobody is going out from here." And even then, didn't believe that there is a possibility that we are going to be killed. So we came in a shower room again, and a real shower again. We get some better clothes, some more fitting clothes, and on the other day in the morning we have been again in the train. And we went in the train, with this train, from Auschwitz to Bremen. You know Bremen is near Hamburg-- is a very big town-- and on the way we got to eat. In Auschwitz our food was once a day soup and a piece of bread. It was terrible to see it, to look on it, but afterwards it was better than chocolate is today. And then they gave us on the way some sausages and blue sausages. Everybody was wanting something the most in the mouth because we were not used to this-- six weeks, we, we had been without food. And then we arrived at Bremen and in Bremen they took us really for work! It was, they didn't believe, but it was really for work. And we had been 500 Jewish, Hungarian Jewish, we came to Ausch-- to Bremen and the first time after six weeks I had a bed, a bed for myself, only for myself. It was a, it was a-- I don't know how to say it was a bed, to sleep in a bed alone - in a bed. And we got something for food, some food, some bread. It was the same food-- it was better food than in Auschwitz-- but it was the same system. Soup and everybody has a pot for his food and we had a W.C. where to go. It closed where nobody saw you, and there was a kitchen in the camp. It really was a place not to live, but to survive. And then the Germans made very good use of us. The very beginning of the--no, at that time it was before the big bombarding of Germany-- it was the beginning of August. But they used us to take out from bombarded and ruined places equipment for doctors, equipment for dental surgery, equipment for who had money to pay for a company. They took 50 of us, it was a very cheap workers, [inaudible question from the class] only women, 500 Jewish Hungarian women, at the beginning. Then came to us 300 other women from Lodz. Because the Lodz Ghetto was evacuated very late and they came to Auschwitz even after the Hungarian Jews. So they had bring over to us 300 Polish women from Lodz and I have to tell you that they had been very, very, underconditioned than we. Because we came from our homes. Don't forget that we had been until the end of May ['44] under normal conditions and these women from Lodz they had been about six years under, under un-normal conditions. So we have no other kind of people. And this probably got for us many thing for working. From the other side we had the possibility to have some more food because we had in the town, we came in places-- it was in August and September-- in Germany is the fruits, the time of fruits, so we found in the gardens fruit and found some stocks. We found shops that was bombarded, and they left there their cheese and even-- it was a possibility, it was a wonderful condition. Suddenly we had something to find to eat and then I remember it was Yom Kippur in Bremen-- no, in the middle of August it was they began very much to bombard Germany and then we were--we had a lot of work and the other side-- I only remember that we all the time, we heard the alarms. Never mind, even we--but only to bomb as much as can be.

We had been taken in shelters. They had two different kinds of shelters, shelters so big, it was a very-- an invention of the Germans-- very high building and the shelter was inside. That was only for the Germans. We had shelters out. Accidentally, all time these big shelters had been bombed out and we have been alive, so it was the fate. I don't know how to call it. But in Yom Kippur '44, our camp was bombed out and nothing left behind, and the people who had been staying in the camp, people who had been ill or something, or had worked in the kitchen, they had been killed. [unclear] And then we moved over to Oberheide. Oberheide is a place 20 kilometers from Bremen and we-- it was very hard for us because from this place we had to go on foot, to the working place. Before, it was very, very near. Some of us worked in cement factories, you know, I even worked in cement factories and it was better work because you worked together with other German workers and we would get something to eat. It was the biggest problem was to eat. I remember only one thing, that I dreamed only for one thing: to have one piece of bread only for me. It was the highest dream--and then we worked. It was in the meantime, was coming winter, and winter was very hard and it was snowing and it was cold and we hadn't got suitable clothing, but the fact was that we survived. And then March '45, we all the time heard some rumors. In the meantime, in Bremen, when we went up for work, people asked us, "What have you done? Are you murderers? Did you murder your parents?" They didn't understand that women in such form, without hair with such clothes we are only-- the only crime that we are Jews - no more. They didn't believe us. Maybe they were-- there were people who came to the men who was in charge of this group and he asked maybe somebody can come to his home to clean up. So I remember we went two girls, another girl and me, to clean up his flat. He gave us to eat, and he asked me-- he couldn't believe that the only crime is that we are Jews. And then in March, began the Allies came nearer and nearer and then we had been in Delmenhorst, it was about 20 kilometers from Bremen-- they decided not to give us so over so quickly, so they decided to take us to Bergen-Belsen, to take us to Bergen-Belsen and they take again on the trains, the open trains. And we went to Bergen-Belsen and we had been on the way about seven days, by foot and by train, and we went through little villages, German villages. And I had wound on my foot and somebody told me-- I was sitting on the street-- so I was in the back a little bit so they told me, "Run away. Don't go with them. Run! The war is over; run away. Another day, another two days." So we arrived to Bergen-Belsen and we came in, and we arrived at night and we came in, and for the way we got some food. So we came in and they told, "Go in this room." And it was dark and we came in. There had been some Russian prisoners; they robbed us out. They took everything away. So we ran out from the room and I saw some people, not only me, all of us-- people lying in the yard, people lying on the earth, and the soldiers they are sleeping there. So we went there and we lied down. In the morning, when we awoked, they were all dead people. They were lying on the outside-- all dead people. So then we understood. We began to understand that our fate, in Bremen, even we had very hard to work. Even it was very hard, even a few people had been-- not

killed, nobody was killed. But some of us there had been two pregnant women who had been sent back to Auschwitz, but they left the children and they came back. They came back to us. And then one of us, we didn't know about her, but I heard that she is alive. But in our camp, in our special camp in Bremen, nobody was killed. Not killed on the place. Not killed and not--so we suddenly see that our fate was, in, if you compare with others, it was better than others. And then we had been freed in Bergen-Belsen. A lot of stories. It was seven days. And in this seven days, the last two days, they left. Hungarian soldiers had been in Bergen-Belsen and the Germans understood that if they are running away and putting down all the signs of being assassins and such things, they could be rescued, to be saved. Because after the liberation they brought back the same German soldiers. Women, the SS women, they were the worst. You cannot believe how cruel a woman can be. No man can be cruel as a woman can be cruel. They beat us to *Blut* [Ger. blood]. Because there the woman are the cruel-- so they run away and they left the place in charge of Hungarian soldiers and Hungarian soldiers kill some of the women-- not of our group-- they kill some people who went to the W.C. or such thing. And then came the liberation and I remember the day very good. I was so--we came out--it was a chaos. Nobody knew what was going on because the Germans left and the Hungarian was in charge. So nobody knew what was going on. The 15th of April and suddenly the doors, the gates are open. It was camps, camps, camps and it was a main road and I went out and I suddenly saw about six British soldiers. It seemed to be so large and so big mens I never saw before. Because, you know, I was a little one at the time. So they came and it was a liberation, and at that time was a lot of people who was dead because of lack of know what to eat and how to eat and everyone was hungry. And so that was the time of liberation and after liberation we stayed a few times in this Bergen-Belsen in the death camp and after they took us over to the camp of the soldiers and we lived there. And then I wrote, and even then, I wrote home to my parents. I wrote to my parents. I was a little crazy. I don't know what's going on. I wrote. No, I understood that maybe my mother and my brother, who was nine years old, they wouldn't come back. I was quite sure that my father would be at home, he was 45-years-old and a healthy man and then I got a letter from my uncle and he told me, he told me. He wrote me that nobody came home, that he is the only one. And then I decided not to go home. I decided it, so I have nothing to look for. So I stayed in Bergen-Belsen and came to Israel. And now only one thing I want to add about Kasztner because it is a very controversial problem. And I told you that I have spoken to my relative and he's not of the opinion that I am. And I am of the opinion that he was-- that he is guilty. I have the opinion that even not he and not his people, the rumor wouldn't be spread out that he can get rescued and that we can go for work. I am quite sure that part of Hungarian Jews could be--I'm not sure, maybe that if I should go to the place and to stay there, maybe I wouldn't be alive. Maybe the Hungarian peasants would kill us, I don't know. You can never say what is going on-- the fact that I am here and I am alive now. But I am sure that a lot of people would try-- he told me, this relative of mine, I promised him that I should tell you

that his opinion, too. To be fair, that I am quite sure that he told me that Kasztner sent his delegates to the heads of the communities, and that the heads of the communities, they have been guilty that they didn't want to tell the other people what is going on. So he had to caution people to be careful, run away if you can, because it's going. That's what he says, but the heads of the committees, they should be guilty because they didn't want to tell. So I told him that I know that he sent some trains with people, with choice people, even people that he said - Mrs. Levin is leaving now. [unclear] Even Mr. Calder, Dr. Calder, he is one of the people who has been rescued through Bergen-Belsen, with a train, with a special train-- not to Switzerland, to Bergen-Belsen, first of all. So I know, and I am, my opinion is until now that he was guilty and he was not okay. So I brought you both opinions in this case. It's very, very light to say opinions and to say what I should do if I have been. It's very hard to make a trial of this thing what's happened. But the fact that he saved people and saved a few, in my opinion, on account of the lot. But this is my subjective opinion. So I can tell you stories about another few days but please ask if you want to know.

Another voice: [Unclear] [comments by someone in class]

LM: That's right.

Voice: [Unclear]

The closing comments on this tape were made by Nora Levin.

NL: Just one other point, though. Kasztner and Brand and Tremont were working at cross purposes with--please stay, because we are going to ask you questions. This is just a little diversion. They were working at cross purposes with respect to the Jewish Council. At their mind-- this is now the Rescue Committee-- their mind was that they can possibly negotiate with Wisliceny⁸ and Eichmann because Wisliceny had called for Kasztner a few days after the Germans came in. The 23rd of March, he was summoned and he was shown a letter from Rabbi Weisman of Bratislava and in the letter there is the warning that Hungarian Jews will face the same fate as Polish Jews and the other Jews of Europe, but that it is possible to make a deal to negotiate with Eichmann and Wisliceny and that he, Wisliceny, should be trusted to negotiate. Because in Slovakia, you remember there had been a delay of almost two years while he [unclear] negotiated. So I think in order to put this in context, and there is a great deal of bitter feeling about Kasztner-- you know that he was murdered after his trial in Israel, [unclear]. But I think to keep it in context, we should remember that there were several lines of activity. The Council under Stern was compliant and obedient because they thought that by holding out for time, the Russians would come and the war would be over. The second line was the line that Joel Brand and Kasztner took, which was to try to rescue Jews by negotiating, and giving the

⁸Dieter Wisliceny, member of the SS, worked under Adolf Eichmann as a subordinate in transporting Jews to death camps. [*The Holocaust*; Nora Levin].

Germans money or trucks or whatever, depending upon the terms of the deal. And this much-discussed train, which included 388 people from Cluj, from Kasztner's town, was not the only group that was rescued. There were two train loads [unclear - more than one voice] 1688. And just to make the point further, the basis for that arrangement, which was worked out fairly early, before the massive deportations, was on the basis of the following: Eichmann said that if he would get five million Swiss francs that he would free all the Jews of Hungary and all those that were still surviving. Kasztner and his Rescue Committee apparently had a hard time raising some money to give as sort of installments towards this deal. So about 150 people from Cluj donated money. Then 388 of them were selected and including some of Kasztner's relatives, but in addition there was a much larger . . . [end]