

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

ARNOLD SHAY

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Bernice Zoslaw
Date: 1978

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Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

AS - Arnold Shay [interviewee]
BZ - Bernice Zoslaw [interviewer]
Date: 1978¹

Tape one, side one:

BZ: The following is an interview with Mr. Arnold Shay, a survivor of the Holocaust. Mr. Shay, when and where were you born?

AS: I was born in Poland, February 16, 1922.

BZ: Please describe your childhood and family life.

AS: Well, I was the fourth of five children; family life--I guess we can describe all of European family life--very close knit. The father naturally was the king. As a matter of fact, in our house we never addressed our father "you" it was always "sir".

BZ: Is that right?

AS: Oh, yes. It was an insult, never "Dad". And we would say like in Yiddish you would say, [unclear], "Let father do this," or "Let father do that," always through a third person. But we loved him dearly, we loved him dearly. Mother, if that is the word for *tzadakes*, you know--I guess this was her.

BZ: A righteous woman?

AS: A very easy-going woman, righteous--yes. A very righteous woman. They were very religious people but no fanatics, mainly because my father was brought up in England and Germany and every kid was--it wasn't like we were four children, let's say when I was born was the fourth one, it wasn't like we were four children, it was like everyone was an extra one for himself, everyone had to be taken care of specially. Mother felt that this was the duty of the parent, just to watch every kid separately. Of course, after all, no two are alike.

BZ: She understood that?

AS: She was a very smart and intelligent woman. My father was a very intelligent man.

BZ: What did your father do?

AS: My father was a tailor, not that he wanted to. My father was really--he had in the beginning, when he came back from England, when he came back to Poland--he opened up the first ballet school.

BZ: Ballet school?

AS: Yes. He was a dancer, but in those days it wasn't nice for the *mishpuchah*.

BZ: Oh, for the family?

¹The tape was not labeled with a date. Given that most of Bernice Zoslaw's interviews were done in 1978, we are confident that the date of this interview was also that year.

AS: The family, you know after all the brothers and sisters were all religious and here he has a dancing school and boys and girls danced together, so he gave it up and became a tailor. In my opinion, he should have never have done it because you don't do things like this. I could never ask my kids to give up anything because of me.

BZ: Yes.

AS: Not yet would I give up anything because my brothers don't like it.

BZ: Yeah.

AS: But this was like in Europe.

BZ: Right.

AS: You did it, you know, just because to keep the good name. It's a family.

BZ: The family was really respected there?

AS: Yes.

BZ: What was the extent of your religious education, and your secular education in Europe?

AS: The religious education I think pretty good which we all had, we all had in Europe. You had to be really either from a very low class, or a very, how shall I say, non-believing family--not really to get the Jewish education--otherwise, we all got a good education. As far as public school, I finished public school. I finished high school, which I made up in the evenings.

BZ: You worked during the day?

AS: Yes. I made it up in exactly two years because during the summer I worked hard. The first summer, I went through an examination, and I went into the second grade. There was three grades; I don't know what you would call it, high school here, or whatever it is, anyhow I had 10 years of schooling.

BZ: Ten years of schooling?

AS: Yes.

BZ: Did you plan to go on to college, to university?

AS: Yes. As a matter of fact, I had a scholarship, and I couldn't accept the scholarship because I didn't have the 10 cents for the trolley car to take me to [unclear]. Not like here I had a scholarship to [unclear] to an art school and I couldn't accept it because I didn't have enough money you know to--just for the trolley car.

BZ: Was that your ambition to be an artist?

AS: No, my ambition was what I started later on by *leyen en trop*.

BZ: Oh, that was...

AS: Yeah. I was the only one and it's a funny thing, I always wanted to follow my father's footsteps, and I followed my father's footsteps as being a tailor--the only one in the family.

BZ: Is that so?

AS: Yes.

BZ: Did you belong to any Zionist organization?

AS: Yes. I have belonged to the Zionist organization as long as I can remember. As a matter of fact, when I was 14 years old I was already a *rosh ha'kvutza*, I was a leader of the Zionist organization.

BZ: Did your family belong too--your brothers and your father?

AS: My younger brother followed me a little bit, my older sisters belonged to the Beth Jacob, you know, Bais Yaacov and my older brother belonged to the Agudath Israel. He was the religious one, not that he is now. As a matter of fact, my brother was supposed to be ordained. He is really educated in Jewish things.

BZ: Did you ever experience antisemitism before the rise of Hitler?

AS: I don't think I knew what it meant to live without antisemitism. I think we ought to go back to the question you asked me before. Okay, what was the question?

BZ: Did you belong to any Zionist organization?

AS: See, here on this I have to elaborate. Even though we lived in poverty, and I especially came from a very poor home. And educated as the kids are, and I think we were the best dressed kids in the city too, but I come from a very poor home. But Zionism was a way of life, as poor as we were, I think we had a nicer youth than the American youth, we had a richer life.

BZ: From the spiritual evaluation?

AS: Spiritually. Now, every youngster belonged to a Zionist movement. It could be from the extreme right or the extreme left, but everyone belonged to a Zionist movement. And our whole life really revolved around the Zionist organization.

BZ: Did they belong because of the situation in Poland, the antisemitism? Do you think this was a big factor in their belonging?

AS: It may have been a factor, but then on the other hand, we were brought up Zionist. You had to come from an ultra-orthodox home not to belong to a Zionist movement--from a real orthodox home.

BZ: They were waiting for the Messiah?

AS: For the Messiah? Yes. But ours was only a delight. I said, we had a rich life. The life was beautiful not only rich, but it was beautiful. Because even Friday night, after we came from services, after we had dinner, it was still nice to go out to the organization and spend a few hours with the boys and girls. We had a good time even if just to dance a *hora*, to catch up with a few lectures that we missed during the week, if we didn't have time to listen to them. It was always something new, primarily intellectually, I mean. There was always something new and besides this we could spend a good time. At home there wasn't much to do. We could spend a good time over there. It was better than television.

BZ: Very wholesome?

AS: Oh yeah, oh yeah, and it's a funny thing, we would say sometimes, "Oh! I am going up for 10 minutes." Here you meet a few friends, you go into a discussion about Israel, or about life in Poland even. You can sit two or three hours and forget

yourself. And naturally, when we came home the next day, we would chew it over with our parents and try to get their opinion on it. And I especially had very understanding parents. We could discuss every phase of life with our parents, and this enriched our lives.

BZ: And you said you experienced antisemitism?

AS: Yes. Oh, yes. See, don't forget one thing. Poland, in my opinion, was the most antisemitic country in Europe.

BZ: What do you attribute that to?

AS: The main reason, I think, is illiteracy.

BZ: Illiteracy?

AS: Yes, the Polish were on the lowest level where intellectuals were concerned. Then, they had no radio, no television, naturally. The newspaper--not too many of them read or could read the newspaper. Their whole life was revolved in the Church. Now see, if they had constant preaching antisemitism, this was all they knew. I think the Polish Church is to blame for most of the ills in Poland.

BZ: Even keeping the people ignorant.

AS: Yes.

BZ: Yes, they wanted it that way.

AS: Yes, they wanted it that way, sure. Because a priest was a king.

BZ: Yes.

AS: Sure. He was everything. He supplied the news. He supplied your thinking. Everything was the priest because, actually, he was among the educated people and naturally the plain farmer, you know even the working man, which was illiterate, looked up to him.

BZ: Kept the Church entrenched by keeping the people ignorant.

AS: Yes.

BZ: Did Nazi propaganda in Germany before World War II affect your standing with your neighbors? Did any of that filter back into Poland, what Hitler was saying in Germany?

AS: What Hitler was saying in Germany was nothing new in Poland. I think Hitler could have learned something from the Polish, yet. It did filter through, we heard it, there weren't too many radios in my city. I remember we had one radio, so the guy used to leave it on the balcony, so the whole street was assembled underneath and listened to the radio and listened to Hitler's speeches, and all this. But Poland didn't need any help from Hitler, they had their own way of antisemitism. It was never too nice.

BZ: Do you want to describe anything or elaborate on that?

AS: Yes, I can elaborate in this respect--you know when certain so-called writers about the Holocaust, which in my opinion very few of the people that weren't there had the right to write about the Holocaust. That's the way I feel because it's only hearsay--picking up a few stories here and a few stories there, not knowing which one is

right and which one is wrong. But, all those writers that come out with the statements that Jews should have left, have the very wrong idea. First of all, we couldn't leave. The ones that could leave that had the money, did leave. But they were so minute, we had so few wealthy Jews that it didn't amount to anything. Secondly, let's say there was enough money for one kid to leave. It was Europe, family life was altogether different. You wouldn't leave your parents.

BZ: This shows they were closely knit.

AS: It was a closely knit family. Then another thing, they blaming us, those American intellectuals, Jewish-American intellectuals, those so called writers for not leaving Poland, knowing what was coming on. There are too many things involved. I will try to bring out as many as I can.

First of all, we never thought there was going to be the destruction of the Jewry.

Secondly, we lived for 1,000 years with Polish antisemitism and nothing could have been worse.

Thirdly, I know a lot of people that are going to listen to this record are not going to like it, are not going to like what I am saying now. Our leaders, and especially, I consider myself a Zionist. I think I was born a Zionist, but especially the Zionist leaders were bankrupt. Zionism was bankrupt before the war, and if they like it or not, I will repeat it again and again. And the funniest thing is, we were brought up to dislike Jabotinsky.

BZ: Is that right? He was militant?

AS: Yes.

BZ: And you were brought up to dislike him.

AS: Yes. And now, I wish we would have listened to him. As late as '38 maybe even '39 Jabotinsky was in Poland, and he cried, "Please leave Poland; there is going to be a massacre. You have no place here." And if those Zionist leaders would have stuck together, more would have been saved, more would have left because there was still time to leave.

BZ: They didn't have the vision?

AS: Maybe they had the vision.

BZ: They couldn't see how?

AS: Party struggles. Party misunderstandings. Everyone wanted to be the leader. You know let's not kid ourselves, we have three Jews, we have four parties. It was wrong. It was very wrong. We have to admit it to ourselves because the Zionist leaders could have helped us. We were just followers. We followed the Zionist leaders, but we had great men. We had men with intellect, with knowledge. They should have told us, they should have told us. I am sorry, I just can't believe that they didn't know it. I can't. I won't buy it. I have somehow feelings that the leaders, the Zionist leaders, knew that it was going to be bad. And didn't do too much, that's why I said that Zionism was bankrupt. I could go on and on for hours you know, but I don't know if too many people

would like it. It's just my feelings, and I always felt a free thinker that whatever I think, I am suppose to say--so I am doing it. I am embarrassed to say that because I was a Zionist.

BZ: But as you say, you looked to your leaders.

AS: Yes. We looked to our leaders, and I think it--they misguided us.

BZ: You think that they knew what Hitler had in mind--such a massacre? Jabotinsky knew.

AS: No. Jabotinsky knew. Let's not forget one thing about it, I want to keep the records straight. Jabotinsky was militant.

BZ: Yes.

AS: Most of the Jews weren't. So this in itself would make us believe the Zionist leaders because Jabotinsky would say that only with "Blood and with the sword--*ba-cherev oo-badom*," we could get our country.

BZ: I see.

AS: It didn't sink in.

BZ: It didn't sink in because it didn't follow your line of thinking.

AS: No. it didn't follow our line of thinking. We were brought up that we would buy land from the Arabs. They would sell the land, and they were willing to sell.

BZ: Yes. Yes they were.

AS: But it was too long of a process. I was against Jabotinsky and I believe now that Jabotinsky was the smartest man alive.

BZ: But even with the land that was purchased--the White Paper then...

AS: The White Paper, sure. It was a slow process.

BZ: Yes. Even with whatever land you had you were denied immigration.

AS: Even with the land, we were denied the immigration. The English didn't want us. They stuck with the Arabs.

BZ: So nothing less than militancy would have worked?

AS: Nothing less would have worked.

BZ: It was [unclear].

AS: Listen, I am not for violence, but I still think without the *Haganah*, without the *Irgun*, and without the Stern Group, no, we wouldn't have what we have now.

BZ: I think that's been borne out. Yes. Did you want to elaborate for me about the manifestation of antisemitism by the Poles. You know, tell us different things about what they did.

AS: It would take too much, but I will just give you a few examples, Poland was very, very antisemitic. Just to give you a few examples: Sunday when they would leave church, we lived on Trabayinska which Trabayinska means in Latin "church". So we lived right next to the church and when they left the church on Sunday, they were so

heated up from those speeches of the priests that they were ready to kill the Jews right there and then.

BZ: Every Sunday?

AS: Yes.

BZ: It didn't have to be Good Friday?

AS: No, it didn't have to be Good Friday. Any time was good for them to kill Jews or just cut beards or beat up a Jew. It so happened that in our town we had more Jews and they were a little afraid. We had guys, you know, that could take up any of the Poles, so we kept them a little bit low. They use to come in from other cities. Most of the time when they came in, you know, they had to leave with the hospital workers.

BZ: Is that right?

AS: Yes. Yeah, with the emergency worker, but there weren't too many cities like this. But antisemitism was born in. They sucked it in from their mother's breast, antisemitism. Every lullaby and every story was filled with antisemitism, was filled with venom against the Jews. It was just--I think too much to talk about. Poland was antisemitic and this is it.

BZ: Neither you nor your family made any attempts to emigrate before the war because you were poor?

AS: We couldn't have. We couldn't.

BZ: Because you were just financially unable?

AS: We were financially unable.

BZ: Please give the date and describe the Nazi invasion and conquest of your community.

AS: Well, we lived right on the Polish-German border. We were the first ones to be hit. The war broke out September 1st. September 3rd, we had already the Germans in our city. It's funny the same night they called the boys already to clean the streets. And you know, it reminds me of a little thing--that they caught the boys and between us were some Polish boys. Right there they showed antisemitism, the first day. They would say, "*Ja nie Jude*," I'm not a Jew. You know, in half Polish and half German because they couldn't speak German. The only German that was spoken, was spoken by the Jews. Right that day they would point out, "This guy is a Jew, this guy is a Jew," to help...

BZ: They would help them.

AS: To catch them for work. And it started out right away with the arrest of Jews. I remember in the square we could see a couple of days later, we could see Jews killed. Oh they would say they walked after six o'clock, there was [unclear], you know, there was a time limit when we could...

BZ: For the Jews?

AS: Yes.

BZ: For the Jews, a special curfew?

AS: Yes. A curfew. Or they would say this Jew tried to kill a German. See, we have to understand one thing; that a German could kill a Jew, just put another notch in his gun without having to account for it to anybody. They would kid around yet when they would meet in the evening: "I killed so many Jews, I killed so many Jews." And they had good help. They had plenty of help from the Poles.

BZ: The Poles?

AS: Yes. I can say that and it's not because I am bitter against the Poles, but I can say that the Poles, the Ukrainians, Latvians, and all those countries, the Balkan countries, killed more Jews than the Germans.

BZ: Then, were the Jews even singled out for special treatment by the Germans almost immediately?

AS: Yes. We were caught for work right away. It started out right away with the Jews living on the main street, one side of the street only. The nice houses were taken over right away by the Germans, and they were just taking the furniture that they didn't like and throwing out through the window. The Jews were caught in the street to move the Germans into those apartments or the houses. Yes, it started--it started out right away. And then let's not forget it, about two weeks later, we had already--not quite two weeks, maybe 10 days later--we had already the burning of the synagogue.

BZ: That fast?

AS: Sure. We lived between the church and the synagogue and our street went.

BZ: When they were catching people on the street, the Germans, to shoot them at random, were they always men, were they generally the men and the boys they shot on the street in the beginning?

AS: Yes, yes; but I remember when they burned down the houses, I remember that time a cousin of mine lived in the same house, in the same apartment building where we lived. She had the baby in her hand and she got a bullet in her leg. She fell with the baby. They were spraying her with bullets, so she couldn't bend down and pick up the baby. I never knew what happened. I never saw her again.

BZ: I guess this question is pointless. What was the reaction of the non-Jews to the sufferings of the Jews?

AS: Oh, they didn't care. They would stand around to see the--you know--when we were caught to work, to clean the streets, and the stories that you hear that the Jews were called to clean pavements with toothbrushes, it's true!

BZ: They are all true.

AS: Oh, yeah!

BZ: And the Poles stood by and enjoyed it?

AS: Oh, yes! They enjoyed the fun.

BZ: It was a circus for them?

AS: Yes. To them it was a circus.

BZ: Were you in a ghetto?

AS: Yes. I was in Bendzin Ghetto.

BZ: Bendzin?

AS: Bendzin, yeah.

BZ: Would you spell it?

AS: B-N-D-Z-I-N.²

BZ: Would you describe life in the ghetto and how you managed to survive with all the deprivation? Did your family all live together in one room?

AS: Yes, we were burnt out because they burnt down the street from the church down to the synagogue with the synagogue. We had to move, and we got a room in the Zionist movement of Gadonia. They had a few rooms, so we got one room and there were about eight rooms with only one entrance, so it depends where you lived—five, six families could pass your room, whether or not you wanted them to pass.

BZ: This was the ghetto?

AS: Yes, this was the open ghetto.

BZ: The open ghetto. That's what I wanted to establish.

AS: Yes. And we were burned out on a Saturday night. We had no clothing. Mother caught the tablecloth and this was all she had. Father--my father wore a jacket and a pair of long johns, and we kids, we had on just nighties; so when we moved into that apartment that they gave us, one very, very tiny room. Very tiny. When we moved in there, somehow we organized one pair of shoes so the whole family had one pair of shoes. The rest of them had to stay home.

BZ: Did the Germans put your house on fire or just burn it...

AS: They just burn--the whole Jewish quarters were burned out. And life was very, very bad, we had no means of living. Father was a tailor, but too many people needed clothing at that time. You can understand that nobody wanted anything. We--during that time we organized a little clothing, like a jacket and a pair of pants. I remember when it got cold, we didn't even have socks. Somehow, somebody--and this is the God's honest truth--somebody gave us diapers and I used the diapers as socks to tie my shoes around. I was so embarrassed because we were a very proud family. We were always dressed very nice, the best. And here we had to walk around like this. But the worst part came when we had to make a living. Nothing was coming in, and we had to stay in the streets and sell cigarettes or Mother would make potato cakes, and we'd stand in the street and just...

[Tape one, side one ended.]

² Also spelled: Bedzin, Polish spelling. According to a 1921 census the Jewish community of Bendzin was 62% of the population.

Tape one, side two:

AS: We were not used to something like this. So, the embarrassment was great, but we could not ask the parents to go out and do it.

BZ: Ah, you were protecting your parents?

AS: Yes. So, we would go up and do it. Come to think of it, I was the only one, as much as I was embarrassed, the only one that would go around in the square and sell something. I would take from somebody, you know, a few loaves of bread, and try to sell it to make a dollar. So, the first time I would buy one bread, I would make money. I'd make enough, you know. He would give me two breads, two loaves of bread. Do something just to bring in a dollar.

BZ: How old were you at the time?

AS: Seventeen.

BZ: Were you able to sell outside of the ghetto at that point, or did you do all your selling inside?

AS: At that point, we could still go out of the ghetto.

BZ: Yes, the ghetto was open?

AS: Yes.

BZ: But, did you go outside to sell?

AS: No, we didn't have what to sell. The Poles didn't need anything--the Poles didn't need anything. Quite the opposite, we would give away--I don't mean my own family because we were left with nothing, but the Jewish families that still had their little gold, or the jewelry, would give it to the Polaks, in order to get something from them.

BZ: Please describe--was the ghetto finally enclosed, so that you couldn't get out?

AS: Yes. Later on the ghetto was closed, and we were all put into the suburbs. Now, the suburbs in Europe was about a thousand years old. Houses that were falling apart, and I have to admit the Poles didn't like it as much as we didn't like it. They were uprooted from their homes, and we were put in there. Naturally, as the years went by--as the months went by--the ghetto would shrink. More youngsters would leave for work, more people would be taken out, more people would die, more people would be killed, and they pushed us more and more together.

BZ: Putting you closer together. Eliminating streets altogether.

AS: Yes, eliminating the streets.

BZ: Would you please describe the passive resistance in the ghetto?

AS: Now, the resistance was always--I, I am very much opposed to it when people write about it that there was no resistance. There was resistance. It's true the Warsaw Ghetto uprising will go down in history because since Bar Kokhba³ we didn't

³ Simon Bar Kokhba: the leader of the Jewish revolt against the Romans in 132-136.

have anything like it. But we have to understand the ghetto uprising was in 1943. By a teacher just having a Hebrew school underground, or a Jewish school underground was resistance.

BZ: What was the penalty for that?

AS: Death. By somebody teaching a trade to the youngsters because there was no school for the Jews, was resistance. By a kid of seven, eight or six years old going out to bring in a piece of bread for the family, was resistance.

BZ: You were really supposed to die?

AS: Our Jewish writers don't want to admit that this was resistance, but even Heydrich noted to Hitler about 1942, now quoting, "I put the Jews in the ghettos, no food, no water, no sanitary facilities, and they just refused to die." I think it was the greatest compliment that Heydrich could have paid the Jews because this was resistance.

BZ: That's right, because you were supposed to die, that was your function--to die.

AS: That's right, but we did somehow everything possible, everything possible not to die.

BZ: And would you describe how you helped each other to live spiritually and religiously in the ghettos?

AS: We still used to meet in private homes--the Zionist movements--and tried to think--the funniest thing was, you know, just come to think of it, as a matter of fact those people are now are in Israel in very high positions in the government. We used to meet in their house, their apartment rather, and still talk about how we were going to make Israel bloom, Israel blossom; how we are going to settle in Israel; still had this thought of Israel. But at the same time, how we can organize in Poland, occupied by the Germans. How could we organize life. Now, the interesting point is, I will go back a little bit before the war, before the war broke out. I guess, you know, that Hitler just sent out the Jews that were born in Poland, or that were Polish nationality, that was born...

BZ: ...from Germany?

AS: Yes, from Germany. Now, a lot of them came into our home town. The Zionist movement saw to it that we find rooms for them. We saw that they lived a little bit decent; we would go to families that had four or five rooms, big apartments and ask them if they could give up a room. We very rarely met with a family that would say no, they wouldn't give up a room. Then the Polish government, before the war, when they were expecting already something, took the Jews from Upper Silesia. Upper Silesia was the border with Germany. Took the Jews from Upper Silesia and sent them deep into Poland. The excuse was that they might collaborate with the Germans, knowing full well, that it's not true. The Jews would never collaborate with the Germans. And this in itself made it harder for us too. Because we had to find room for these people. We had to settle them somewhere. We would send them into some Jewish families, and in this project, the Zionist movement too was very instrumental. I remember our society, our organization,

Hanoar Hatzioni,⁴ sent out special groups to pick those people from the station. We had a room ready for them to take them up, to introduce them to the families and tried to make best of it.

BZ: As a Zionist, you were part of the work?

AS: Yes. I was very much a part of it.

BZ: Do you have first-hand knowledge of any other resistance groups, who were, you know, people that were planning on active resistance, and were a part of it. I know there were terrible reprisals. I know that anything that was done resulted in terrible reprisals.

AS: The resistance was everywhere, every town, every city, every hamlet, or whatever you want to call it. There was resistance. It just depends how you pictured this resistance. To some people it may not mean too much, but I remember just one factory used to be a button factory. The Germans took it over, and we found out that they were going to make some kind of ammunition factory, and it was a big building, and we blew it up.

BZ: Ah!

AS: A small thing--a train would come in for the Germans with food, special food. We knew when the train would come in, we would raid the train; if we couldn't raid it, we would blow it up. The small things that may have looked insignificant in the eyes of people that weren't there.

BZ: They didn't know what it took them.

AS: They didn't know how much guts it took to do it. It was just plain and simple. If there came in food, the Poles were the first ones to get the food. Let's say a transport full of fish, smelly fish would come it, but it was something. We were hungry, we would eat it. Just to bribe a German to let the Jews into the lines, knowing full well that the minute the Poles saw us, recognized us, they would say there's *Jude!* there's *Jude!* and no matter how much a German was bribed, he would have to throw us out. Or, we had curfew; we could walk till six o'clock. We could go out after six o'clock to steal something, some food. Where would we go? Primarily to the station, because we knew that the few loaves came in with some food for the Germans or the Poles. So just go into the station and steal something. We risked our lives every minute of the day and primarily of the night. Or, just to go down to the railroad station to steal a bucket of coal, to steal a few potatoes, to put a few potatoes in the pocket, when they were not looking. I remember one day, we went down, my younger brother and I, we took a sack of 50 pounds of potatoes. And I was never a strong guy, my younger brother is much stronger than I, so he said, "Arnold, you are only in my way, just leave this sack." So, he took the sack by himself on his head and he carried it home. It's hard to explain what this meant to us, the potatoes.

⁴ Hanoar Hatzioni: Zionist Youth Movement established in 1926.

BZ: You were starving people.

AS: Sure.

BZ: Were many people dying all this time?

AS: Ah yes! Constantly.

BZ: Was typhus prevalent then at that time?

AS: No, but all kinds of other sicknesses. And then you know, there were so many different faces. When in the beginning we were called in, you know, the armband, we had to put on very early. The order to put on the armband came December 1, 1939, with the blue star. So right away you were limited. Now, it wasn't just the armband but when you came to get your armband you had to pay a *kopfsteuer*, the head tax. It wasn't much. It was only two *zlotys* but if we were a family of seven, 14 *zlotys* was a lot of money; but this wasn't everything yet. I came home, I'll never forget it, I came home and I told Mother, I said, "Mom, it's very wrong to go down to get the armband to register." And Mother would say, "Why?" I said, "You know, I don't think they had a list of all the Jews. When we come down to register, they take our names. If they would have a list they would notify us to come down for it. Which means that they really didn't have a census." And they couldn't have had, now thinking of it now they couldn't have had because a lot of people fled to other cities. They may have had families in other cities. They fled to other cities, which means, as I see it, that you can see that you didn't have any census. Now, let's say I wouldn't go down, I wouldn't register because I would think that maybe I could slip out of the ghetto, maybe I could slip in between the Poles, maybe I won't have to wear the Jewish star. So, it came to the second phase of it, when they started handing out ration cards. If you weren't registered you didn't get a ration card. So if we were a family of seven, if two wouldn't register, the seven would have to live on the ration card which was small enough; we had to live on the ration card of the five. It's just too hard for people to understand it, you can't put it in books, you can't speak about it, you can't lecture about it because it's beyond human comprehension. And any other resistance, why we didn't stand up. It was plain and simple. First of all, we didn't think that they were going to liquidate the Jews completely. As I mentioned before, we were use to antisemitism, and thirdly, where could we run? There was no money. We couldn't take a train to go somewhere. The Jew was watched everywhere. We couldn't run either. The only thing that we could do is to help ourselves inside. Now a lot of people say--as a matter of fact, I just hear this last Sunday, a confrontation with an Israeli. He said, "If you knew what was going on, why didn't you take a gun and shoot the German?" It's very easy to say. It would have given me the greatest pleasure to shoot the German in the ghetto, but nobody can realize life in the ghetto. First of all, if a German was shot, the ghetto was tense. Which means that every 10th Jew was taken out to the square. Now by that time we had already about 60,000 Jews in our ghetto that was brought in from the smaller towns. No, for me being a wise-guy to shoot a German, it would be the murder of 6,000 Jews for one German. Now is it worth it? It wasn't worth it. Now, another thing,

like I said, we didn't know that they wanted to liquidate the Jews. One Sunday morning Merin, the head of the ghettos, all the ghettos in Upper Silesia came to our ghetto. I remember he stood on a wagon, and he came out with--well this is a little late to run already--first he would come in and say, "Listen, we have to give up all the gold. We have to give up all the furs." Another time, "We had to give up all the brass." Another time they needed clothing for the Germans, and this and that, and then he comes with a story, "Well, we need youngsters for work; they would make money." Now, you have to understand--I think it's easier to understand now for the Jews because it is happening the same in Russia. When the Germans came in all the Jewish properties were taken away and all the Jewish businesses were taken away and a *Treuhander* [a trustee] was put in. Which means right away we lost our work, we lost our businesses, we lost our homes. Naturally, we became parasites, the state had to support us. So, if a leader from the ghetto came and he said, "Listen, the youngsters will go to work, they will make money," everybody would grab at it--"I'll make money, I'll send it home so my parents could live on it." Family life was different, we couldn't tell our parents to go to work because we knew if they would go to work the Germans will kill them. It was easier for us youngsters to go to work. That this was a bluff, we didn't know, and I am sure, I am convinced, not God forbid that I am trying to find excuses for the leadership, for the *Judenrat*, but I am convinced that by the beginning they didn't know it either. They did later on too--knowing already that the Jews would never come back. But we grabbed at a straw, we felt, "Well, we will make money, we can send home the money. The parents could live on it." But it was getting worse and worse. The [unclear], you know, it was interesting, I just got a book called *Min HaMeitzah*, Out of the Depths, where the Orthodox claim that they were the only ones to save the Jews. They were the only ones not to collaborate. It's a lot of malarkey, they were the only ones. Like in Palestine, you know, when Israel became a state, when Jerusalem was encircled and they thought that by staying at *Kotel Ma'arvi*,⁵ you know, and praying.

BZ: That's going to do it.

AS: That's going to do it. Well, the same thing in a ghetto. I don't want to talk about the Orthodox, but they didn't do nothing, and if they helped a Jew, they helped only an Orthodox Jew, because we were not considered Jews, we were Zionists. We were not considered Jews. I may have been a better Jew than him, but in his eyes I wasn't a Jew. So, we couldn't get help from there either. Not only would they not help the Orthodox Jews, and I can say it to anybody and I don't care if they will dispute it or hate me for it, but in my opinion the Orthodoxy hindered us yet because whenever it came to a discussion and all the Zionist movements would get together with the religious movements and we would talk about resistance, they would say, "We are going to bring on the wrath of the Germans. It's going to be worst. They are going to kill more Jews."

⁵ The Western Wall, formerly known as the Wailing Wall.

And, naturally, in the ghetto, we didn't want to go one against the other. So, we would listen and again it would go from bad to worst. We did what we could. It's true we didn't do much, but I don't think the blame could be put on the people in the ghettos. The outside didn't do much. We didn't get help. Even if we wanted to put up armed resistance, we didn't have the arms, the Poles wouldn't help us.

BZ: If you wanted to flee, where could you flee?

AS: We couldn't flee anywhere because a Pole would hand us over to the Germans for a piece of bread. Even if he had to give the German a piece of bread, he would do it. It was his pleasure, so we didn't have no help from the outside. Inside we couldn't help ourselves because it was fruitless to fight the Germans. Then the world is coming now all of a sudden "not enough resistance". We, the Jews that were never used to fight, were supposed to hold back the Germans. Where was Czechoslovakia? Where was Poland, three and one-half million people? Where was Austria, the rest of the occupied countries? Some of them were armed to their teeth. France with the Maginot Line that they stepped over, as if it was nothing. Just imagine that it took the Germans longer to subdue the Warsaw Ghetto than to occupy any of the countries. They expected from us to fight the Germans. They expected from us to win the war when all those countries were falling under the German boot and what--they resisted. Later on after the occupation, some of the countries, Denmark, Holland, but they still were under the Germans. So we could do much less, much, much less. As a matter of fact, we couldn't do anything because the outside wouldn't help us. Inside, we didn't have the means for resistance, so whatever we did, I think we performed miracles. No matter what we did in the ghetto, we performed miracles.

BZ: The suicide rate here was low, wasn't it?

AS: Yes, it was low. You know, you bring me to one thing that I would like to mention now. It bothers me when primarily the Jewish clergy, the rabbis come out with statements that six million Jews went *al Kiddush Hashem* for the sanctification of God. It's a lot of malarkey. I don't think that anybody would give his life for the sanctification of God, not even the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. When there was an uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto, they knew very well that they cannot defeat the German army. They did not fight for the sanctification of God, they fought that we the survivors could live in dignity. And then--you know, it's the first time in history, people don't realize [unclear]. It's the first time in the history of the German army that they had to retreat for reinforcement towards the ghetto. The first time in history when they had to bring in the Air Force. Where were all the other countries? That handful of Jews. Do you know that the amount of the people was much less people than we think there were in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising? Very few of them, really.

BZ: Most of them were liquidated at that time?

AS: Sure. Very, very few fought at that time and the ones that were there didn't have enough guns or ammunition.

BZ: Most of them...

AS: So, this was the most historic stand. Sure, the Poles try to deny it now, they say it was the Warsaw uprising. I was in Auschwitz when they brought them months later in, when they brought the Poles in from the Warsaw uprising. Sure, the Warsaw Ghetto uprising was the first one, nobody dared to stand up against the Germans till the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

BZ: I think Goebbels wrote in his diary at the time that it is surprising how the Jews can fight when they have guns. It's amazing that the Jews can fight when they have guns.

AS: We see it now in Israel. They can fight, don't worry.

BZ: They believed their own propaganda.

AS: They just didn't believe in killing. We always thought that by negotiating, by talking, we can do more. But, as you say *ein brehra*. If there is no other choice, you know we can fight too, better than anybody else.

BZ: Would you describe the deportation and the life in the camps that you were in?

AS: The deportation was the most horrible thing.

BZ: How long were you in the ghettos before you were deported?

AS: I was in the ghetto until 1943. I have to explain this. I was in and out of the ghetto; I was going out, I had where to hide. The deportation really was the most horrible thing--the cries and all this. Now, at most of the deportations, I was inside the ghetto because my mother was leaving.

BZ: Your father?

AS: No, my father was killed on his own bed. They wanted to take him away, and he said, "You won't take me out of here alive." Well, they accommodated him, with a rifle butt. They broke all his ribs...

BZ: Ah.

AS: ...and he spit out the lungs. This was April 28, 1942. That time they took out a lot of people from the ghetto for different minor crimes, and they were deported. Then came August, 1942 where there was the big selection, all the people had to assemble on the *Umschlagplatz* which was *Sokol* boy's group. There was a sport club called *Sokoah* and they had their own field. On this field they had the ghetto. At that time I was there with my mother. I had come into the ghetto about two days before. My mother was hidden in a bunker and I came in to bring in food. I remember sitting on the roof saying, "The Germans are coming into the ghetto," and I knew it was no good. Well, the Germans came in and they took out people from another bunker, and I remember looking down from the roof--I know the people, I don't want to give names because somebody is still alive from them.

There was a woman and she said, "If you let my husband go,"--to me the husband was sick--"I'll tell you that there's another bunker." And she showed the bunker where

my mother was, and they took out more than 20 people from this bunker. They were all taken down to the *Sokol's* place. I think I have to go in a little bit to explain all this why she got into the bunker. After they killed my father, we made a sub-basement where the people were hiding. We had the entrance through the oven. We could take out the wall from the oven, you know--where to bake--what you call the hearth. From the back of the oven we could take in. This was the entrance to the sub-basement. But even living in there was horrible. I remember I was there with my mother, we drank our own sweat; we had no water, we had very little air, so we would wipe and wring out the sweat and drink that salty water. One woman had a baby and the baby was crying and she choked the baby.

[Tape one, side two ended.]

Tape two, side one:

AS: ...so staying in the bunker was no use because they would die anyway. And then when they took Mother out of the bunker, I came down from the roof and I went with her to the *Umschlagplatz*; we laid all night. It's too much to describe the horrors that were on over there. Lots of children just drowned in the rain. And I remember I was just laying down and water was coming into my ears, that's how deep I was laying in water--soaked through--and we saw the Jewish police running and the SS running and finally they set the selection for the next morning, and they took away my mother. I saw where they were taking my mother, and I wanted to go with her. All I know was I got hit in the head by a Jewish policemen. He saved me at that time. But when I woke up my mother was gone, and I was still laying in the mud. They let me go because I worked at that time in the tailor shop in the ghetto. They were arrested August--they started August 12. They didn't leave for Auschwitz till August 15. And they were liquidated, all of them, in Auschwitz, August 16. I have the exact dates from the *Policeshaft* in Auschwitz. And then, naturally, I didn't have anything to do in the ghetto anymore, and I was most of the time out of the ghetto.

BZ: Did you pass as a Christian?

AS: Yes, quite often. I was still bringing in some food...

BZ: To help the people in the ghetto?

AS: To help the people, yes. Then September was another selection; the big selection. Somehow, I remember I got caught in the selection; I don't remember how. I came in for something and I was caught in the selection. When I saw what was happening, I can picture it now, when they started taking out the dead, the ones that died of heart attacks and what not, I just took my raincoat on my arm, and walked out as a conductor in the car, and didn't come back in the ghetto. It was sheer luck, because I had no identification at that time. After that time I tried to stay out of the ghetto as much as possible. Then the liquidation of the ghetto. Now, before I get into this, I would like to mention that the leaders of the ghetto were arrested in June. They were called in to Katowice. I can give you the names: Monik Merin, Chaim Merin, Hani Charna, Dr. Liberstein, and there was one I don't remember--it was Finklestein or something. He had come in from the Warsaw Ghetto with a mission. I think he was from the Joint and he couldn't leave, or he didn't want to leave the work, or anyway he went too. This in itself is too big a story to go into. It would take hours if I give you the whole story. I happen to know the whole story, as a matter of fact I have written about it. Because Jews were going to internment camps and Monik Merin, which was the head of all the ghettos, didn't like it because he wasn't paid off for it. When I say going to internment camps, Jews paid for foreign identifications as they were brought from South America. So they were not sent to concentration camps but to internment camps, with their clothing, with everything and the Red Cross took care of them and they got everything. But there were

very few that could afford it. But anyway, the leadership wanted to get paid off for it, and Monik Merin was very much against it. As a matter of fact, it's known that one transport was supposed to leave Sosnowiec about 100 of them, and Monik Merin squealed on them and they were all sent to Auschwitz to the gas chambers. The odd thing about it was Monik Merin was accused by the Germans for helping the Jews leave the ghetto. All this he stood against, he was accused of. We know that all they from Katowice directly they were brought to Auschwitz and shot on the blank wall, June 26, 1943.

BZ: All the *Judenrat*? All of them?

AS: All of them, the head of the [unclear] and the liquidation of the ghetto in Bendzin started on August 1, 1943. I was caught August 9 at night. I came to the ghetto. I didn't know that the ghetto was *Judenrein* already. I was caught coming into the ghetto, was arrested. I came to the police. I was tired already from running. We were arrested, three people, two boys and a girl. I said that I'm a Jew. We were all transported to Auschwitz. I got my number, the other two were killed.

BZ: They didn't get a number?

AS: No. They still denied...

BZ: If you were going to be gassed, they didn't give you a number?

AS: No. They still denied that they were Jews.

BZ: They still denied that they were Jewish.

AS: But then a new life started in the heaven of Auschwitz.

BZ: In the heaven of Auschwitz.

AS: You can't call it hell because hell is not that bad; even hell can't be that bad as Auschwitz, if you want to believe it. And naturally, the first few days I just didn't care, just wanted to die that's all. I figured, well so many Jews weren't, what am I still doing. But pretty soon people got wind of I that I could be of help, and it's a funny thing, not until after the war did I find out--the oddest thing about it, not until here in Philadelphia did I find out that everything I did over there was set up by the underground, that I had [unclear].

BZ: You thought that you were doing it on your own?

AS: No. I just thought that I was getting good jobs because I am lucky.

BZ: And everything was set up?

AS: Everything was set up. They put me in positions where I could get some information.

BZ: They knew you were a good man.

AS: Like for instance, you mentioned about the potatoes [unclear] I worked in the kitchen, who could get in the kitchen?

BZ: But they saw that you got into the kitchen.

AS: I got into the kitchen and became a big shot in the kitchen. As a matter of fact, I was personal cook for the SS man from the kitchen. I was--we called it [unclear]. I was his [unclear], I polished his shoes, I cooked for him, I washed for him--everything;

and this meant already bread. It meant already that I was prominent and I could go in the kitchen. I didn't have to be afraid of anybody, could steal some potatoes because I had access to everything; I had better food...

BZ: The underground saw that you got that job?

AS: I didn't know it until here in Philadelphia. One day I went into a watchmaker to put on a watchband at Strawberry Mansion with my brother. He had a swinging door and when he came in I noticed somebody, I said, "Who is that man in there?" So the watchmaker said, "You don't know him, he just came yesterday from Paris, he is a Frenchman." Going out I said to my brother, "I know this face." So my brother said to me, "You know you always think you know people, you met so many people in your life that you think you know everybody." Well, I didn't argue, we had a baby that time, went to my brother's house for dinner. Going back we took a trolley car, I didn't have a car and in the corner that Frenchman sits. I look at him and he looks at me and I hollered, "Ribeles" and he said, "Arnold." And since then he was every night in my house. He was the leader. He died here in Philadelphia. He has two sons here. And, somehow, they used to push me, I used to get the best positions, the best positions.

BZ: Because they knew you had been an active Zionist?

AS: No, they knew that I was active in the ghetto too.

BZ: In the ghetto, yes. But because of your Zionist activities you naturally...

AS: I was, I was active, I didn't sit still.

BZ: Yes.

AS: I just couldn't sit still. I always had to do something. And the funniest thing is, I am not trying to make a hero out of myself, I never really thought about myself. I thought I have to live because they need me. And on the other hand, I thought well I am alive because I am helping them. It was a *meshugas* [Yiddish: madness] I just didn't know. All I knew was I had to do something, I had to help somebody.

BZ: You think that idealism stems from your Jewish education?

AS: Yes. Yes, positively, no question about it.

BZ: Your Torah education...

AS: Not the Torah education, I am not religious. I don't believe in the Torah education. I believe in the Zionist education.

BZ: In the Zionist ideology?

AS: Yes.

BZ: Very practical.

AS: Yes, very practical. We were brought up--and you know the funniest thing is, no matter where I will go in the world, no matter where it is--I could go to Australia, I could go to Germany, I could go to Poland or anywhere else, I find people from my home town. Most of the survivors are from our section because we tried to help each other.

BZ: Oh, is that right.

AS: And not knowing, Monik Merin saved more Jews than anybody else. He saw that he's collaborating with the Germans and he sent our boys and the girls to labor camps, to slave labor camps. And most of them survived in the slave labor camp because the rest that were left behind went to concentration camps. I think he would commit suicide if he would know what he did.

BZ: He really didn't have your best interest at heart, after all. It just worked out that way. Do you think that the fact that you talked German was a factor in helping your survival?

AS: In a way. It's funny you know, it helped when they needed an interpreter. Again, it must have been the underground because they pointed me as an interpreter. And, I was an interpreter for the Russians, for Czechs, for Hungarians, for Polish.

BZ: Now this was in the camps.

AS: In the camps, in Auschwitz, this was in Auschwitz. Yes, yes. Then I was-- I guess you know that I was a guinea pig.

BZ: No I didn't know. Medical experiments were done on you?

AS: Yes. Medical experiments were done on me. And, then after I came back I went back to the hospital, and this I know for sure Ribele did it, Rubin did it, because he was the watchmaker over there. I became over there a *frayger* nurse. What I have seen over there nobody has seen in this life.

BZ: You became a nurse?

AS: Yes.

BZ: In Auschwitz.

AS: Yes, in the hospital.

BZ: For people that had experiments performed on them?

AS: No, they were in the hospital for different operations. I saw an operation they did on a guy, on a Pole, that I will never forget. They just turned his brain. I remember the operation, I was standing at the operation where they knocked out a piece of the skull, put in their hands, just turned the brain. They wanted to see how long he would live with turning the brain. I saw an operation where they took out a piece of bone here and they took out the whole spine, and put in that bone. They wanted to see how long the man is going to live with an unmovable spine.

BZ: Was Mengele in charge of all these operations?

AS: Mengele was in charge. I was operated by Dr. Tiller. But it isn't that Mengele did all the operations. He had doctors [unclear].

BZ: I guess the idea--well I guess the idea...

AS: They all did. They all had the ideas but most of them were so senseless, so senseless that you have no idea.

BZ: Did they use anesthesia when they operated on patients?

AS: No! On me not. They ties my hands and feet to the table and cut me open.

BZ: What do contribute your survival to--the pain alone could certainly have killed you.

AS: Stubbornness.

BZ: Stubbornness?

AS: Yes, resistance.

BZ: Do you think that the will is so strong?

AS: Yes. Yes. I think the more they hurt me, the more I wanted to live. The more I wanted to live so that one day I might be able to repay them. I figured they can't kill everybody. Somebody has to stay alive so why not me.

BZ: After the operations was anybody nursed by the Jews or were there Jewish people in a position to help you at all to recover?

AS: Very little.

BZ: There was no way...

AS: No, very, very little. Very, very little.

BZ: No way?

AS: They were going out to work for the next day so the kids would see that they don't see my blood, you know, you must have read the article you know where I sewed it up myself with wire.

BZ: Yeah, with wire.

AS: So most of the time the boys would just walk in front of me, or in back me, so it wouldn't show the blood.

BZ: So the SS wouldn't see it.

AS: Yeah, because we didn't have any water to wipe it off.

BZ: They would kill you if they saw you?

AS: Oh, sure, it would have counted against you. I was assigned to the gas chambers, and a girl paid for me for my life.

BZ: Is that so? A girl paid for your life.

AS: She threw over a [unclear] small sack of gold, diamonds and I was taken out.

BZ: Did she get it from the pile of clothes that the Jews had left?

AS: Yeah, that's where she worked. She worked in the [unclear]. This girl is alive now too. That's why I can't mention her name. I was supposed to marry her after the war. She was older than I, only a year older. I found out later that she had a baby, and she got married during the war. I guess I didn't stick to any of the promises that I promised the girls.

BZ: You spoke of the *mentshlekhhkeyt* [Yiddish] that was in the camps. Would you describe it in more detail, if you can? First of all would you say what *mentshlekhhkeyt* is? Would you define it first?

AS: To define *mentshlekhhkeyt* is just one human being helping another. I'm very much surprised at all the books that come out. They stress the collaboration of Jews

or if we don't want to use that strong word, "collaboration," helping the Germans against the Jews and so on. For I've yet to see anything of the real *mentshlekhhkeyt* for one another. The real feeling for one another from the people in the camps, and there was a lot of it. There was a lot of it. Again, I don't want to put myself in the picture, God forbid, because there was hundreds like me, and there was hundreds that did much more than I did. I always feel that I didn't do enough, not because I didn't want to do, God forbid, but because I couldn't do it. I will always feel that there should have been done more, but there was a lot done. By just like you mentioned, you know, when I walked out stealing a few potatoes, I didn't steal them for myself because I could never eat that many. My stomach was shrunk already. I stole the potatoes knowing very well I could be killed for it. But at the same time, I knew that the boys were waiting in the block for me to bring it in. I knew they were waiting because they had less than I. Even at night when I came home, which by the way I didn't sleep with the rest of the inmates. We had a special house, a special block in the front near the *BlockFührer Stube* where we slept because we worked in the kitchen and they were afraid because we would bring lice into the kitchen. The SS use to come in and so on.

BZ: Ah, oh.

AS: But even at night I would be the last one to leave the block to go home to eat something. I always felt, "Well maybe somebody will come over to ask for a piece of bread." You know, it's a funny thing, until you brought up that this the gentleman that told you about the potatoes I use to steal in the kitchen, I swear to you I didn't remember.

BZ: He said your clothes were bulging with potatoes.

AS: Yeah, there is so many things that I did in the camp and I just can't remember. Not only this, I think I don't want to talk about it because it's putting me in the picture as if I was the only nice guy, I wasn't. There were a lot of people like me, more than we will ever know, because a lot of them died lately. But there were a lot of people that would do the same thing. We use to prepare at night the meat, to cook the horse meat. So, it was easy to steal the kidneys, the liver, from a horse, it was big. I would cut it up in pieces and fry it, and then bring it on the camp. As a matter fact, I still have--this is from an axe...

BZ: Oh, my goodness.

AS: I wanted to take out the marrow. You know, from a horse, from the leg. I wanted to take out the marrow, and I hit the axe, and the axe fell off.

BZ: Lucky you didn't take your hand off.

AS: This was because I wanted to bring in some meat. But I did. I did bring in meat. I remember one SS man brought in once, what do they call them, the bunnies? The bunnies?

BZ: Oh, the rabbits.

AS: Rabbits. He brought in about 15 or 20 rabbits. He said, "Cook me some." So we took off the skin. We took off everything to prepare them. So what can he eat one

man, one, two rabbits, maybe a few, the rest we cooked, we took them over to the camp for the people. Oo, it was a holiday, they hadn't seen meat, God knows how long. And which this too, that I never remember. I used to stay in the kitchen, and they received a square--well, you know, it just came to me, this is God's honest truth. They used to receive, the cooks, a square of margarine to throw in about 500 liter, a big kettle. And I would wait until somebody would turn around then--it was boiling--I would stick my hand in and put it in a rag, like this in a rag, and put it under the jacket. All of a sudden, I would get a belly ache, you know, I would have to go to the toilet.

BZ: Ha-ha!

AS: You know, it's the funniest thing, the people that were with me in the camp remembered a lot more than I did. Than I remembered.

BZ: You were just conscious of the need.

AS: I remembered we found a friend that married my sister-in-law's sister. And I tried to explain to him who I am. I wrote to him and told him I am Arnold, the son of Alexander from Bendzin. I got a letter back from him. He said, "Not only do I remember who you are, but I remember that when we came in, when I came in to Auschwitz, you gave me the first piece of bread." He was the one where I learned tailoring. I set him up a shop. I went around to all the SS, and told them that one of the best tailors from Poland came in. They gave me a piece of a room, and they put in a sewing machine, and he was making clothes for the SS. He never forgot it. He just died last year. He never forgot it.

BZ: And he taught you to be a tailor in the camp?

AS: Yes.

BZ: In the camp?

AS: In the ghetto.

BZ: In the ghetto. He taught you to be a tailor in the ghetto?

AS: Yes.

BZ: Was he a part of the underground in the camp?

AS: No. He came in from another city. He had married from out of town and he came in from another city. He came in with his brother-in-law and they told me they brought a transport from Shanev [phonetic]. So, I figured I knew some people from Shanev. I'll go in and I found first his brother-in-law. And he told me Itchar is here and I went over to Itchar. I didn't recognize him. He use to be strong like Goliath. He looked liked nothing. So I went over and asked him, "Are you hungry?" and he said, "Yes, we didn't eat for a few days already." I said, "Why they count you out of here?" and I brought him--you'll have to excuse me--I brought over and stayed in front of him and opened up the zipper, you know, not the zipper, we had buttons, from the fly and I took out from the fly and I took out pieces of bread, and handed everybody a piece of bread. I never remembered these things. You don't think of it because I did it, you know, just...

BZ: Naturally.

AS: Naturally.

BZ: You didn't think of yourself as a hero. You saw the need and you just...

AS: I knew that I could steal, oh, I use to steal, was I a *gonif* [Yiddish: thief]. It's funny never for myself I would steal.

BZ: Just for other people.

AS: I could steal an extra shirt for myself to make and extra caps I could look nicer. I wore a suit, it was a striped suit. I cut up two suits, from one suit I made patch pockets and I made an extra cap. It had to be just...

BZ: No kidding, is that right?

AS: Even then I saw [unclear]. Then we didn't have what to do, I didn't go out on work. I was sitting on the camp--I use to make hats for others and give them to the people that worked in the kitchen. So he said, "Arnold, I need a hat." So I made him a hat and I said, "Put this on, I need 10 soups." So I would call in friends and he would hand out 10 soups to different friends. I would do for another guy. As a matter of fact, I don't want to mention his name because the guy lives here in Philadelphia. So I made him a hat, I said, "I am sending in two guys, I want soups for them." He gave them soups. Then his brother worked in the kitchen too. His [unclear] was already in Dachau in *Lager*. So, he said, "I'll talk to my brother. You make him a cap, and I'll give somebody else soups." And I myself was hungry.

BZ: You were hungry but you were busy arranging for everybody else.

AS: I didn't have a shirt. In the middle of the night I broke into a [unclear] and stole about 20 shirts and gave them out to the boys, because my girlfriend worked in there and she told me how I could get in. A Hungarian girl. She told me how I could get in.

BZ: So there was plenty of resistance in the camps too?

AS: Oh, yes. And when I am talking about myself it isn't just me.

BZ: You are pointing out what went on.

AS: Yes. It isn't just me there were plenty of them. I can give the best examples you know, when I bring out these things. In Auschwitz, I had a man that was from the *Chevra Kadisha* [burial society]. His name was--I can't think of it--Shulem Plavis. So he came over and said, "Arnold, [unclear] of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, can you do something, let me stay here, have a *minyan* [Hebrew: 10 adult men needed to have a public prayer service]?" I single handed bribed the guard to leave 10 religious people in there. But believe me there was more to think than the God.

BZ: There was more to it.

AS: To think...

BZ: To think of than to *daven* [Hebrew: pray].

AS: To think than to *daven*, then because prayers couldn't help us.

BZ: But because it was important to those people you arranged it.

AS: I knew, I couldn't care less, but I knew it was important to them.

BZ: And from Auschwitz you went to Dachau?

AS: From Auschwitz we were shipped to Oranienburg. Then Sachsenhausen, then to Dachau.

BZ: For you were...

AS: We went to *Lager* 11. We were not supposed to survive. As a matter of fact, Muhsfeldt, who was the head of the crematorium in Auschwitz, came looking for us. We were the last of the 1,100 from Auschwitz, they wanted to liquidate us.

[Tape two, side one ended.]

Tape two, side two:

AS: What were we talking about?

BZ: Do you agree that most people do not realize how strong the will of the human is? How much it can benefit them?

AS: See, it's a funny thing, a lot of people gave up because there was no future for them, they didn't see any future for them. Now I believe that somebody has to survive, so it may as well be me. Others said, "What's the use? Today he's gone and tomorrow I will go. So why suffer more, it is better to go now." A lot of people couldn't help themselves. I mean psychologically, to talk themselves out of it. I will give you later something to read what they said about me. I was the opposite. When we came back--and this is what people said about me--when we came back from work, no matter how hard it was, and when I saw that the boys were down, this too we can include in *mentshlekhkeyt*⁶, when I saw the way the boys were down, I would gather them around and we'd start talking about girls, about life at home and how we use to go out with this girl and how we used to fight with this boy about this girl; and what we did in the Zionist movement; and throw in a few jokes, and we would fall asleep. Anything to take their minds off hunger. Because it was no use thinking of it, the more you thought of it the hungrier you got. And this in itself was a help, this in itself would give the other guy a little more will to live. Now, not everyone was in a position to help, but there were a lot that were in a position to talk to the other guy. Not that it helped any, you were still hungry, but at least the day went by, by it. Now, it could be a little other *mentshlekhkeyt* if somebody was a foreman and see, well this guy is down, don't take it out on him, don't make it too hard from him. There would be people, there would be others--well that would go according to the Auschwitz code court. We had a code in Auschwitz, that we had to save the young ones.

BZ: That was your code.

AS: Yes, we had to do everything for the young ones, if we stole something, we had to give it to the young ones first. Because we felt this is the future. The old was--even if he was alive, he can't do anything more for Judaism. A young one may do something. So our main purpose was to see for the young ones to survive. But at the same time, if you saw an old man hungry how could you go by and not give him something even if it was like it was called in Auschwitz, a waste, which in a sense it was a waste because in another couple of days he would go. But you had to understand the psychology. I can remember passing by block number three. Block number three where the people that were assigned already to the gas chambers. So we would go by. You wouldn't hear cries that said, "Help me, I want to live," but you would hear cries, "Give me a piece of bread." All they could think of is that they are still hungry, maybe they

⁶Yiddish: Decent, humane behavior. Worthy of respect. Honorableness.

didn't want to believe that they were going to the gas chambers. They were naked already, their clothes were taken away from them in a cold barrack. They what the end is, but they still cried, "Give me a piece of bread." And if you would throw in a piece of bread through a hole, they would kill each other to grab it. Sure, you saw some people that would stay and *daven* not that it helped them. Talk about *mentshlekhhkeyt* I think I could attribute this to *mentshlekhhkeyt* as much as anything else. We had in Auschwitz a Vilna *Troupé*, I don't know if you have heard of it. It was a Jewish group of actors, and they were the best. The Vilna *Troupé* was the best. I remember the head of the Vilna *Troupé* was supposed to go to the gas chambers. They took his number down. We had an SS man Kurbanik [phonetic], he was the hangman, and he was the one that would accommodate anybody that wanted to die. And that guy from the Vilna *Troupé* which I can't forget, I was standing right there, said, "Please do me a favor, I know where I am going, but I want to die in front of my friends." So I told him, "Okay turn around," he turned around and zip, a machine gun, gave him a few bullets and he fell on the floor. That's what he wanted, he was lucky that he could die in front of his friends. Maybe, it was too much of a *shanda*, too much of a shame to go to the gas chambers. We had, we put up shows in the camp.

BZ: Shows for the people's morale?

AS: Yes, for their morale. We put up shows and we finagled the SS, that they would bring in yet. Okay they came in to watch it too. And from nothing we would make it. We had a few Frenchmen that would come up, whether they were actors or not I don't know, but we would put together the different shows just to make the people forget a little bit. Not that everybody could come and naturally the prominents would come in, but somebody would sneak in already, somebody would see him, at the same time the actors would get a piece of bread extra. We had boxing matches.

BZ: You had boxing matches?

AS: We had soccer games on Sunday. I played soccer, soccer was the Jewish boys, all little kids, we played against the *Maurer* against the Masons which was Poles. Six footers. If we won they would beat us up.

BZ: Is that right, they would beat you up?

AS: But we did something for the morale and the boxers use to be the Greeks.

BZ: The Greek-Jews?

AS: Yes, knock their brains out so the SS men would have a little laughter, but at the same time they forgot us. They didn't take it out on us. There are so many different things you can't remember everything, you know, but there are so many different phases of *mentshlekhhkeyt* that was going on. You would see a guy crying so you would go over. You would find out if a kid got a good job working for somebody, so we would go over and tell him, "Don't go working over there. He's a homosexual he will kill you."

BZ: You did try to protect each other as much as possible.

AS: People don't realize it but we did. We ourselves didn't realize it.

BZ: No. It was very, very human under very inhumane circumstances.

AS: Under inhuman circumstances, under murderous circumstances. Under beastly circumstances. We did one thing, our boys, when we came into Auschwitz it was still prevalent, but they would stick--they saw you with a pair of shoes, they would put a broomstick on your neck. Step on it, just so that they could have a pair of shoes. Now when we came to the camps, well we couldn't fight the Germans, but we could fight the other inmates. So if an inmate did something like this he didn't live too long. I remember we had a *Prjetchka* [phonetic] a Russian, just liked to kill Jews. So we got a signal with somebody from the other camp that the other guys was going to bribe him with a bottle of whiskey, so I went over to him and I said, "*Prjetchka* they are calling you from the other camp, they have whiskey for you." He went over, he wanted to take the whiskey, somebody else pushed him on the wire, this was it.

BZ: Mmm hmm. Would you say that the code of *mentshlekhkeyt*, which of course is a Jewish code, would you say that there was anything operative like that among the Christian prisoners? Do you think they had a code among themselves or was your code strictly like a--you know, because you were Jews, because of your ideology that yours was operative?

AS: You know, I haven't seen it in the camps, except with the Jews.

BZ: Except among the Jews, this is what I wanted to get at.

AS: There are books written now, where the Poles, for instance, claimed that they helped out the other Poles. I haven't seen it.

BZ: You didn't see it?

AS: No. I know one Pole will kill the other one just because he received a package from home and he could have the package.

BZ: And you didn't see anything like that among the Jewish prisoners?

AS: No. I know we had a Pole, Vyatek that would walk around the camp with his hand under his jacket, and I don't want to use that kind of language, he would say, "You SOB, what did you think you came to Auschwitz, to live?" The Pole would talk like this to the other Poles. And the Poles had it better. Let's not kid ourselves. They received packages from home. They received warm clothing from home. They even, the clothes that they received in the camp was warmer than ours. Their uniforms was even different than ours; they were lined, while we just had the zebra suits that was just plain...

BZ: Cotton?

AS: No, it wasn't cotton, was home spun made from wool. Ours was thin one and theirs was a heavy one with a lining.

BZ: They were suppose to live.

AS: I have it, I have it here.

BZ: It was the Jew that had to die there. So you didn't have to be warm.

AS: No.

BZ: It was okay. You were supposed to die there.

AS: Listen to this: I didn't know that you could write home a letter from Auschwitz until I was liberated. Because we didn't have the privileges anyway. I remembered writing letters for the Poles. I thought they were special. But now I see that every Pole could write home. Naturally the Poles couldn't write Polish, not yet German. We wrote in German. So if I would write a letter for the Pole, he would give me a piece of bread. He told me what to write and I wrote home. When he received a letter from home, he would give me another piece of bread to read the letter for him. But the code of *mentshlekhkeyt* you could notice only among the Jews. And I will deny till my last breath, if the Orthodox Jews will tell me that they helped, that they are the only ones that didn't collaborate with the Germans, that they are the only ones that helped. They may have helped, if they helped, they helped only the religious ones. While we didn't care. I would do more for a religious Jew because I felt that this is his belief, and he's ready to die for it, so I would help him no matter what his belief was.

BZ: But you all were determined to see that Judaism would survive?

AS: That's right. We were determined to see that a Jew survives no matter how much it has to cost us. No matter what the price, and we did. We did. Most of our boys that survived, survived because others helped.

BZ: Because others helped?

AS: Yes.

BZ: Yes. It gave them a reason to survive too, didn't it? It made life more meaningful, more...

AS: Yes, we knew that we had to accomplish something.

BZ: That's right you knew you had to accomplish something. Were there many children? There weren't many children in the camp?

AS: No, I remember only one camp where we came in to Sachsenhausen I saw children. But otherwise, I was like among the children...

BZ: Yeah you were among the children.

AS: ...and I was 22 when I was liberated. There were a few younger ones than I but they were bigger, they were built...

BZ: So they could do men's work?

AS: Yeah, but it was hell on earth. They dehumanized us in such a way that we weren't human anymore. A Polak could take a Jew--was the same inmate as I--could take a Jew and tell them, "Watch my package over there, I'll give you something for it." That guy was at the package, he could eat it. He wouldn't touch it. He was already like a robot. He would only watch that nobody else steals it. If the Polak gave him a piece it was all right, if they didn't give him a piece it was all right too. But he was already like a robot, he couldn't function by himself. And do you know what it meant for a guy like me that still had all the faculties, going around talking to friends that I went to school with, to

cheder with and see all of a sudden they are not the same. Nothing helped, I could talk to him and he would just cry. "Why do you cry?" and he didn't know why.

BZ: What percentage would you say stayed strong? You know...

AS: A very small percent...

BZ: A very small percent...

AS: A very small percent, I don't even dare to estimate the percentage.

BZ: Most of them became like robots after a while?

AS: Yes, especially from the concentration camps. You don't have too many, most of the survivors that you see, not from concentration camps, from labor camps.

BZ: From the labor camps.

AS: Sure, how many do you see with numbers? Twenty, 25, can't compare it with those you know like in the labor camp where you worked and you got food.

BZ: And also you did know about the chimneys, you know right there.

AS: Besides we lived with it. We smelled it every day. I was at that time a nurse in the hospital when they took out the last 6,000 gypsies to the gas chambers. Just to listen to the screams, just to listen to all this you could go out of your mind. I was sitting at the window, I'll never forget it. I was sitting at the window looking out because in the hospital we had a window, in the barracks in the camps we didn't. I was looking out the window and I saw them put them on trucks and taking them out through the main gate to the gas chambers. Tomorrow no more gypsies.

BZ: Were you acquainted with people in the *Sonderkommando*, were you acquainted with them or were they in a different...

AS: The last *Sonderkommando*, I knew each and every one, they were from my home town. They were the ones that blew up the crematorium. They were the ones that shoved in the head of the crematorium alive in the oven.

BZ: Um-um.

AS: The leader of it was Shaia Goldstein a boy from my home town. I will never forget it. I remember the two brothers, the Kirschenfelds, that worked over there. They were neighbors of mine. I remember each and every one. Each and every one. I remember going into them, they would bring me a piece of ham if they would find it. They would bring me a can of sardines that they could smuggle out or something else because they knew there was a time when I helped them. And they knew too that if they give something to me it's not just for me.

BZ: It's to help someone else...

AS: And then I was [unclear], I was like a watchman in the tailor shop so I supplied clothing for the people that run away from Auschwitz.

BZ: Oh, you supplied them...

AS: Oh, yes.

BZ: Oh, certainly it was government clothing...

AS: After the war I met a guy with his girl that I supplied them clothes, and I saw this man dead in Auschwitz.

BZ: You saw him dead in Auschwitz.

AS: Dead. With a sign "*Ich wollte ausraussen*." I wanted to run away.

BZ: To run away...

AS: They probably killed somebody else and put them out. I was with my sister in Bratislava and going out from a restaurant somebody hollered, Noldek. I knew if its Noldek, it's a Czech. I know him. It was Rudin from Block 24 that I gave a suit to run away and he married a Czech girl, a Slavic girl that run away with him from the women's camp. I think her name was Moncica or Moncie, I don't know what it was exactly, but I met him, was dressed beautiful. As a matter of fact, he gave me at that time a book that he had written, *Oswiecim*, Auschwitz.

BZ: Auschwitz?

AS: Yes.

BZ: Was there contact between the two camps? Did you say that you were in contact with some of the people in the girls' camp?

AS: Yes.

BZ: But there wasn't some contact. Did the underground maintain a contact?

AS: Yes, the underground maintained a contact. Yes, there were people that could--oh, we even had SS men that they used to take them over for the whole night.

BZ: Is that right?

AS: Yes, to sleep in the girls' camp. The womens' camp.

BZ: So there was love there too.

AS: Yes.

BZ: Affection and love...

AS: Yes, yes.

BZ: And human relations and human feelings.

AS: And those are the girls that sometimes, you know, dreamed of it, "Well this will be the boy that I will marry after we are liberated." Some of them did.

BZ: Some of them did?

AS: Yes, but there were very few. I think you could count them on one hand, the fingers of one hand, who had such privileges that could go over, because you had to pay heavy, heavy bribes. You had to pay sometimes as much as five 20-dollar-pieces to go over for a night at the women's camp.

BZ: And the money could really only come from these things that the Jews had taken off when they arrived into the camp.

AS: Those were the girls that supplied the [unclear].

BZ: They were--because all of the outfits that you people had was gotten from the Jews.

AS: Right.

BZ: Yes, when they came into the camp.

AS: They were the ones that supplied us with the money. They were the ones that supplied us with the gold and other things. So later on we could bribe. I don't want to mention names because most of them are alive now and right here in America.

BZ: The girls are alive...

AS: The girls are alive and the boys are alive.

BZ: You could imagine what the penalty would have been if they had been caught because that would...

AS: No, it would have been the penalty just catching, first of all it was after hours, then to go into the [unclear] they had to hide underneath the bundles of clothes, and then as an SS man had to come in and see a Jewish boy with a girl together.

BZ: Um-mum.

AS: Would have shot them right away.

BZ: Um-mum.

AS: And there was different cases. There were cases where boys from the camp lived with SS women.

BZ: Is that right? They were considered--to secure privileges for other people or just to make it better for themselves?

AS: For other people, no, no, no. I know that this same guy that lived with a German girl with that SS woman. Plenty of times he wished that he was dead.

BZ: Wished he was dead? But this is what he thought he had to do.

AS: Because the boys looked at him different, the boys looked at him as if you are selling yourself just so you could live. And life wasn't...

BZ: And that wasn't his purpose...

AS: No.

BZ: It was to help other people.

AS: Not only this, the purpose was that by staying with her he could get out a lot of secrets. And now this is practically the only guy that I know of that knows the name of all these SS because nobody in the camp had a mind to remember the name of an SS man, besides who would know the name of an SS.

BZ: Yes, they are asking for names, do you know any? They are asking for names for the SS. Do you know...?

AS: So but it was looked at different in the camp until the boys realized that a guy like this that lives with an SS woman lives for a reason...

BZ: For a higher purpose.

AS: Yes. It isn't just sex, it isn't just to go in. Because it was impossible--let's put it this way, we're adults. It was impossible for a Jewish boy to have fun going in you know, even to have sex with a Nazi woman that was a pervert. [unclear]. Oh, they were sick, they were sick.

BZ: And the men perverts too?

AS: They were sick, men--the German inmates, yeah were perverts too.

BZ: The German inmates were perverts.

AS: Yes.

BZ: How about the German SS, I know one had a homosexual [unclear].

AS: There were a lot of them but most of them had no reason because if you want to prescribe you know, as--because they didn't have women, it's not true because they had women. They had enough women to go with. But the funniest thing is that an SS woman like this, which was at that time about 19 or 20 years old. She could have had--she was beautiful. She could have had any of the SS men.

BZ: But she wanted...

AS: But she wanted that Jewish boy.

BZ: She wanted a Jewish boy.

AS: A Jewish boy that looked like a kid and acted like a kid, and it was just for him to get out some food or some information from her. Or when he would go on the women's camp he could bring in some clothing and give it to the girls. The girls are now alive in Israel.

BZ: There were little boys that were rounded up for the pleasure of one of the SS men there I think, little Jewish boys, and then they were later liquidated.

AS: Yeah, it wasn't the SS men it was mostly the German criminals.

BZ: The German criminals?

AS: Yes. The German inmates.

BZ: The German inmates that took these little Jewish boys. And I thought they were [unclear].

AS: Yes. They took them as [unclear], it was called [unclear].

BZ: Oh. I thought it was the SS men, I was wrong.

AS: No, no. The SS men didn't need them, they had their houses. And they could have any woman they wanted.

BZ: But how were the criminals allowed a privilege like that? To get these little Jewish boys?

AS: It isn't that they were allowed the privilege, it's just that nobody cared.

BZ: Nobody cared.

AS: The SS men didn't care as long it was a German. It was a criminal, it was an inmate, so he took in a Jewish boy to help him, to cook for him, to wash for him and he used him too.

BZ: I thought all along that there were little Jewish boys, who lived with--I thought I had read that but it was a mistake...

AS: I'll show you later on a document, a sworn document submitted in Bergen-Belsen after the war.

BZ: So from Auschwitz, how long were you in Auschwitz?

AS: 1943 and 1944, we left January, 1945.

BZ: Was there any mention? Well, you say that the *Sonderkommandos* if they found something they would give it to you because they knew you would do good with it, a piece of ham or...

AS: It wasn't just me but others too, yes, yes.

BZ: So for the hell they were in...

AS: I don't know if anybody was allowed to go in. I used to go in their barrack. I remember, you know, I never thought of it. Honest to God. I used to go into their barrack and sit and talk with them.

BZ: They were in another place?

AS: They had a separate barrack.

BZ: They had a separate barrack but in your area?

AS: Yes, in the camp, yeah.

BZ: In your area of the camp, yeah.

AS: And I would go in.

BZ: Then do you know some that have survived?

AS: I don't know of any that survived.

BZ: None of them survived too long, anyway, they used to always replenish.

AS: As a matter of fact--yes, replenish--somebody just sent me--they carried a special insignia *Sonderkommando* and...

BZ: Yes, and you got one.

AS: I got one. Somebody just sent me in one.

BZ: You wonder how they remained human at all, you know, in the time that they survived.

AS: They didn't live long. [unclear].

BZ: Yeah, because that was the plan of the Nazis, they weren't to live long. How they retained at the time any humanistic characters, you know, they were...

AS: Like Poland is trying to deny now that there was a Warsaw Ghetto uprising. They wrote a book about Auschwitz underground, there is not one Jewish name, yet, Poland all the pictures that they show that were taken by the underground is done by Josef Szmulewicz. And he again didn't mention any names. Oh, I was furious when I read this book. I was furious, it was in Polish. But there isn't one Jewish name in it and yet the Jews were the most active ones.

BZ: And I know they used to keep the people out of the underground, out of the Polish underground. You know there are two undergrounds, the home army and the peoples' army.

AS: Yeah.

BZ: And they use to keep the people out of one of the undergrounds, didn't they, the Jews?

AS: Yes. Sure the AK.⁷

BZ: There were so antisemitic--even if they could have been helpful to them their hatred just wouldn't let them. So from Auschwitz--you were in Auschwitz for two years, and then you went to where, the next camp?

AS: Cranienburg.

BZ: Did you generally march or did you generally...

AS: No, we didn't march, we walked.

BZ: Between all the--what else could I say...

AS: I know, I was just kidding.

BZ: Yeah, but that was the way you went from camp to camp. Marching.

AS: Yes, yes. We were on one march 31 days.

BZ: 31 days?

AS: Yes. Thousands upon thousands died over there, thousands upon thousands. In between we would catch an empty train, so we would go up with the SS, and we would ride a little bit, then we would have to jump off because the Americans were bombing the place.

BZ: You jumped off and walked...

[End of tape two, side two.]

⁷ *Armia Krajowa*: aka AK and The Polish Home Army. Formed in 1942, AK was the armed forces of the Polish Underground State and the Polish Government in exile. [Wikipedia]

Tape three, side one:

AS: The things you were talking about before--about the AK. It's interesting to know while you weren't here, it gave me a little time to think. They had fights among themselves, too. Political fighting.

BZ: Now, this is the home army?

AS: The home army with the army underground, yes.

BZ: Were they--they fought with the communist underground?

AS: According to the books they were very active and believe me, I knew exactly what was going on in Auschwitz. I did not see that much activity and I knew that they existed. I knew that they were there. They have blown it out of proportion, now. They are coming up with names, I wish I could interview these people myself. I would make a monkey out of them because they didn't do what they make believe now that they did. But besides this they had friction because there were two factions actually; one pro-communist pro-Russian Army and one against. As a matter of fact, the Russians would help the underground that was for Russia while they wouldn't help the other ones. Now, according to some writers towards the end, they got together on different issues just to fight the Nazis together. Which in my opinion they didn't do a damn thing; except that some of them run away which was for them very easy. Because you have to understand one thing, if a Pole ran away, and the other Pole saw him in a uniform from Auschwitz, or if he told them he was coming from Auschwitz they would help him out. It wasn't so with the Jews, even if he was in the underground. I can give you names from Jews that ran away because I helped them. I gave them civilian clothing to run away. It's true that most of them were caught. I remember one from Krakow. I don't remember his first name, but his second name was Kuz'ma. K-U-Z-apostrophe-M-A. He was from Krakow, and I gave him a uniform to run away, and he was caught. Later he was hanged, we were all at the hanging--I think I am going slow because I think I have to visualize--have a photographic memory. I can remember every incident like this. But we know that when he was outside he could have been helped, not only him, but a lot of them. We had one guy, I don't remember his name, but he was the *Blockältesten* on the quarantine camp, Block #3. We called him the boxer, a Jew, a strong guy; and he ran away, and he was caught too. He was caught because the Poles squealed on him, and I know of a lot of Jews that were caught being outside already. Now, here I am talking about Polish Jews that spoke Polish. And the Poles would just turn them over to the Germans. In the books, first of all, they don't mention any Jewish names, except when they show pictures, taken by a member of the underground. Shmulevitch...

BZ: Who was a Jew.

AS: Who was a Jew. I knew he was a Jew, and so do they. I know in one book, I saw where they write towards the end already that they didn't make no distinction, if it was a Jew or not a Jew. They are full of malarkey, they made a distinction, a big

distinction. The help they needed from the Jews, but they never helped a Jew run away from camp. We, the Jewish boys helped the Jews run away from camp.

BZ: And then you had to pray that the Poles didn't kill them after they got out of the camp.

AS: Right. And how! We had to pray for a [unclear], and I worked in the *Schneidenai*, the tailor shop in the D Camp in Auschwitz, and I was somehow dragged into it, not even realizing that this is the job I was doing was for the underground. And I was told I need a suit that would fit a guy this size--a civilian suit. Now, I don't want to play innocent. I knew that time that it is for somebody to run away because we had already a lot of Jews that run away from camp at that time. But I guess I just didn't want to think about it. More or less, I didn't want to be involved, probably, knowingly, maybe because if I would have known, maybe I would have thought well, I don't know if I am helping this guy to live or to die because if he gets caught, you know, he may be shot. But we had to take the chances. We had to take those chances. I remember too when Kuz'ma was hanged after he was caught, and it's very interesting, I think I ought to bring it out. It's funny I remember it all those years. We had an SS man that was from Upper Silesia, from my parts. He was the hangman. He was the one who would kick the chair from under them. He read it in Polish and in German. The guy want to ran away and he's been hanged for the crimes committed and this and that. You know, they always found excuses...

BZ: They always made it legal.

AS: Sure it was legal. Oh, yes. To them it was always legal. But I remember before he kicked the chair, he said--I am trying to translate it, he said it in Polish--"*Pomscicie mojej krwi*," "Take advantage from my blood." And the last word was "long live a free independent Poland." Now this, was already, and we knew it, I mean the people that were involved one way or the other with the underground, or was helping the others, knew already what this meant because it was that time very bad. Poles were killing Jews left and right. And here he wanted to show that the Jews were going to his death and he still is a good Pole. You know, and he said, "Long live a free and independent Poland." And that SS man which I remember--even his name Korvanik. Korvanik went over and he kicked the chair. I've seen hanging which by the way I want to mention here. You know, according to the law after a man is hanged, and he's alive you are suppose to let him live. I have seen hangings in Auschwitz where the rope broke, and he was alive, and they hung him again. When they hanged somebody in the camp we all had to assemble in front of the camp where the guillotines were and to watch, not that it made any effect on us. No, just didn't bother--you know sometimes we envied these guys, not sometimes but most of the times we envied these guys.

BZ: By hanging they were through?

AS: Yes, they were through with the suffering. But we envied them, too, that they had the guts to run away. At least they did something, you know. Also, I couldn't

say that we didn't do because a lot of us that stayed behind, we had jobs to do in the camp that was more important than to run away because we didn't think of our own lives. Again, I'm not trying to make a hero out of myself because most of the times the jobs that I did, I didn't think even that it had anything to do with the underground. I was just told, bring me a suit, I brought a suit; do this, I did this; I did whatever I was told to do and this is it.

BZ: But they placed you in this position because they knew that you would...

AS: I think--you know it's a funny thing just lately, I started thinking about all these things. Why did I get all those good jobs in the camp? Why was I put in all those good positions? And believe it or not sometimes by Poles.

BZ: Is that right?

AS: Yes, by Poles this I have to say, because I remember the first job I got in the kitchen, in the quarantine. It was a Pole that came over and he talked to me. I remember we were sitting on the ground. We were talking, and then he said, "You know what, I like you, I think you will come in the kitchen, you will work in the kitchen." But he said, "You better work. I don't like Poles and I don't like lazy guys." I said, "I will work as long as I can get some food." He said, "Food you will have plenty." And he himself later on gave me different orders--like I had to take food to certain guys. I had to take food to the latrine. To certain guys that gave me cigarettes in exchange, so that he would have smoke. And I remember--things are coming back, the more I talk about it, the more things are coming back. I never really got into it that deep as to remember what I did at the camp. But we needed cigarettes, we needed gold, we needed other things to bribe the SS.

BZ: And they were very amenable to bribe?

AS: Oh sure, each and every one.

BZ: Each and every one?

AS: Each and every one. We would give one SS man, we would give gold dollar pieces--20 dollar pieces. He would bring whiskey. The other guy would give whiskey so he could help a girl on the women's camp to get some food; or to help a boy on another camp to get some food; or get a guy out from the *Krankenhaus* from the hospital because a selection was coming. Only we were afraid that he may go to the gas chambers. My own life was bought by a girl.

BZ: With something she bribed?

AS: She bribed an SS man, I don't know if I should give the name or not because this girl is alive now. As a matter of fact, we have here right in Cherry Hill, I have friends that happened to know this girl very well. And I just found out about a month ago that this girl lives somewhere in San Francisco. And she threw across the wire from the counter from where she worked...

BZ: That was where they sold clothes...

AS: A whole bag with diamond and gold to a guy that took me out and I was supposed to go to the gas chambers. I will never forget this girl.

BZ: Where were you at the time you were supposed to go? Were you in the hospital?

AS: I was in the hospital.

BZ: You were in the hospital. Was this after the operation they performed on you?

AS: It was much after the operation because after the operation I went to the hospital as a *Pfleger*, as a nurse. I worked at the hospital as a nurse. And this too, I was sent in--now, I know for sure specifically to do a job because over there work a guy by the name Rubin Middleburg, who was--I think he was the leader of the underground. He was a watchmaker, and he fixed the watches for the SS men. And they would bring him constantly watches, you know, they got from the people especially from the Jews. Now I think I have to explain here when I say from the Jews that they robbed from the Jews. Because let's say, when a Pole came into camp, his clothing went to a special room where they saved it for him when he is set free. The jewelry, the watches, the clothing, everything was kept with his name, not so with the Jews. That's why all this that was in the camp was from Jews, because the Jews were destined for death. And going back to Middleburg, he would come over--he wouldn't come over himself, he would send somebody over to me and said, "Arnold, I want to see you." How he would just pump from me--"What is this guy doing in the hospital? How is he? How long do you think he would have to stay." And a funny thing, that I didn't realize it then, he knew exactly when there was going to be a selection, because that guy he inquired about was set free from the hospital a day before the selection. How come? There must have been something. He must have bribed somebody because this didn't happen once, it happened thousands of times, and then when I met Middleburg here in Philadelphia, we were talking about these things. He said, "Arnold, you didn't realize the help you were to me." I said, "I didn't know what I was doing. I just know that you told me you need this, you need that and I did it." And it seems that this was the reason I got those good jobs because to get the job as a *Pfleger*, as a male nurse in the hospital was something big--something real big.

BZ: Did the SS ever go to that hospital if they were sick?

AS: No.

BZ: This was strictly a Jewish hospital?

AS: No, not a Jewish hospital. It was for inmates.

BZ: For inmates.

AS: Yes, because we had Poles over there, we had Czechs, we had others.

BZ: And when they were making selections from the hospital, it was the Jews they took out to kill. They let the Poles stay. Did they let the Poles stay?

AS: Oh, sure. They let the Poles stay. They would give them help, they would make them well, except if he was politically dangerous for them, or if they knew that he worked with the underground then they would get rid of him. So they would give him an injection.

BZ: Which was really a good way to die.

AS: Sure.

BZ: Compared to the gas chambers.

AS: No.

BZ: Was anybody ever gotten out of the Block 3--Cell Block 3. Isn't that where they were when they were going to die, to be gassed?

AS: Yes.

BZ: Did they ever bribe somebody to get out?

AS: Yes. I myself bribed Kurvanik. We were in Block 3, I am trying to think of the names because they may be alive. One, I think is alive for sure. His name was Blachauks. He was from Bendzin from my hometown. I can't remember his first name, I remember where they lived; I remember what they did at home; the father was making those for the horses...

BZ: The saddle?

AS: No not the saddle...

BZ: The bridle?

AS: Yes, the bridle for the horses. They lived on [name of street unclear], this I remember. I took out him. I hope he has a chance to listen to this tape sometime. I took out one of my best friends, Abram Schuster, we went to school together and he was my closest friend.

BZ: Such a young boy destined to die.

AS: Yeah. I took out once, I had a change to take out only one single fellow, his name was Itzik Greenbaum. I don't think I'll ever forget these names. This was another boy that went to school with me. Now, quite a few stories I could tell about these things over there because there was a Jewish policeman that when I came in with Kurvanik, this Jewish policeman has a brother now alive. That's why I can't mention the names. But if this brother that is alive ever listens to the tape, he would know exactly who I am talking about because he knows the incident. And when I came in with Kurvanik.

BZ: Where did you come into Cell Block 3?

AS: To Cell Block 3.

BZ: You actually walked in there?

AS: Oh, yeah. And I could take out that night, I think, only two guys. And here somebody jumps down. They were stark naked already. Everything was taken away from them. He jumped down and he said, "Help me!" and in the spur of the moment, I knew right away that I could help only two guys. Why should I help a Jewish policeman who

collaborated with the Germans, and this one especially sold my mother. My mother went to the gas chambers because of him. August 12th, 1943, when we had to get together to assemble. All the Jews had to assemble and then they took the people that were destined for Auschwitz. They took them to the *Yiddishe Gemeinde* and they held them back there. My mother had at that time good papers as a worker in the kitchen and she could have left. This policeman took my mother's papers and he said he is going to help her. Meanwhile, he took out a woman by the name of Plauvis. I am giving the name because if somebody listens to it from Bendzin I do want them to know about it because I know that a lot of people from my hometown know about this policeman. He took that woman out and I think he got at that time some 10,000 *zlotys*. Which is an interesting thing that I want to add here. When I came to this country, I came to Dallas, Texas. One day they called me from the Federation and said that a Rabbi Plaus that wants to see me. He's from my hometown. I never heard of that name, naturally I took a trolley car and went down. I wanted to see who it is. That Rabbi Plaus was the son of that Mrs. Plauvis that was taken out on my mother's papers. He came especially, he was ordained at that time here in the United States, he is a rabbi by now in the United States. That's again why I mentioned his name and he came at that time to Texas to see me even so he did not live in Texas because he knew the story and he wanted my forgiveness. His mother didn't survive either. I don't know if my mother would have survived. But that time I was hurt because she was sold out for money. And I told him, I have nothing to forgive him. It's not his fault, it's not his mother's fault. His mother wanted to live and she had money...

BZ: She didn't realize that it would be instead of somebody else that she would live.

AS: It's the fault of the Jewish policeman that took the papers from my mother and gave her and let her go because she had good papers. We called it a *zonda* [phonetic].

BZ: This was because she was a worker in the kitchen?

AS: Yes. She was a worker in the kitchen.

BZ: The *Yiddishe Gemeinde* this was before the *Umschlagplatz*. This was a-- would you define what is a *Yiddishe Gemeinde*.

AS: The *Yiddishe Gemeinde*, this was the *Judenrat*.

BZ: The *Judenrat*, they went there before they went to the *Umschlagplatz*.

AS: No. No it was on the *Umschlagplatz*.

BZ: Oh, I see...

AS: There where the *Judenrat* had their headquarters there were houses in the back. That's where they kept these people, they kept them till the 16th of August and the 16th they were transferred to Auschwitz. As a matter of fact, I ran after the train, I couldn't let myself seen because I didn't wear the Jewish star, I didn't want to be caught but I ran after the train, I couldn't see my mother. But after this my father's stepsister had a note that my mother threw out from the train written in Yiddish to that policemen and she wrote him, "*Zol nist keynan upstarben for my kind's aveyles.*" "For the help that you

have given my son, I hope that you couldn't die for it." It was a curse, no--that he should suffer and not be able to die.

BZ: He should suffer but not die, not even be able to die.

AS: He shouldn't be able to die for the hurt the he is causing me because I was the only child left at that time. So when he jumped down, I am going back now to Block *Drei* [three], when he jumped down that time...

BZ: And he was the very person.

AS: ...and he told Kurvanik, the SS man, that he's a relative of mine, and Kurvanik asked me, "Is he a relative of yours?" I said, "No, I don't know this man." I didn't want to help him. You see it isn't that I didn't want to help him, but I could take out one or two people. That night I could take out two. So I figured, why should I take out the murderer of my mother when I can take out an innocent young boy that went to school with me that I really loved. And I can never forget it. I just turned around after Kurvanik left and I said to him, "*Upgebbene zachen*," "It's a paid debt." As if to say, I owe you this one. And it's odd, he was strong, real strong when he came to the camp. He got a big position right away. He went with the selection that they picked the strong ones.

BZ: To be killed?

AS: To be killed. Isn't it odd? If you believe in fate or not...

BZ: Or divine punishment.

AS: He went with a transport of strong ones because when we went--you know, which reminds me of something that I didn't remember for a long time. When I came to camp, we didn't have a kitchen yet in our camp. They were bringing their food from another camp and since he was so strong, he was among those guys that would bring the food. And he had two brothers with him on the camp. And naturally, he stole some food for them and as God is above us, I was so hungry that I fainted at the assembly and he brought me food and I didn't want to take the food from him. I said, "I'd rather die than to take food from you." It's not that I hated him so much, it's just that I was hurt that he could have done it to my mother, knowing her so well and knowing who my mother was. Because there weren't too many women like my mother. And at that time, I couldn't say I was happy that I did it, at that time, to see him go the same road where my mother went. I can't say that I was happy because I never wanted to see anybody. I never had that much hate in me, but I have to admit it didn't bother me.

BZ: Rather than an innocent person go, you felt that...

AS: I felt that I'd rather take out an innocent person that never hurt anybody.

BZ: Right.

AS: Right, because the Jewish police, I didn't think too much of anyway. No, I didn't. In my opinion, the Jewish police--not that I want to be the judge or jury, but in my opinion, if we didn't have the Jewish police, it would have taken the Germans at least five times as long to round up the Jews. Because, just take the mentality of the people, a Jewish policeman thought the same way that we Jews thought, while a German did not.

Which means if a Jew was hiding somewhere, a Jewish policeman would know, because he saw the same way as we did. You don't have to be a psychologist. It doesn't take much, you know, to come to this conclusion.

BZ: He would know where to look.

AS: He would know where to look. And if they had to deliver a hundred people--he wanted to be a good guy. He would see that he delivers a hundred people. He would get them no matter where or what.

BS: Do you think that they knew at any time what the end result was for the Jews that they were sending off? In the ghettos?

AS: Yes. Yes, because we knew it all already by that time, when the Jewish police--you know, in '43 we all knew already.

BZ: By '43?

AS: Sure, we all knew exactly where they are going because few left from us. We knew exactly where we were going. Now, we knew that this--and we had, just let's say that wished instead of the concentration camp, instead of Auschwitz, they send us somewhere to a labor camp where it would be a little easier.

[End of tape three, side one.]

Tape three, side two:

BZ: Did you know that these kids that were at the camp were there by reports that came back to you from the escapees?

AS: Yes, at that time we knew exactly. We knew already what was happening.

BZ: And this was in 1943?

AS: 1943. We knew that people were going to their death--we knew that Auschwitz has crematoriums. We knew a lot of things.

BZ: So the German's plan to deceive you didn't really work too long?

AS: No, they didn't.

BZ: Because they didn't plan on any escapees.

AS: You know, I think I am mixed up, this wasn't August '43, this was August '42.

BZ: '42? You mean you were already in 1942?

AS: Yes, this date will have to be changed, it was 1942 not '43.

BZ: August '42 when they took your mother away?

AS: Yes, because I was caught in '43.

BZ: Yes, you came back and you were caught as a Christian. You were not...

AS: I was not caught as a Jew--I was caught as coming in--I remember the mark on the paper [unclear] *dos Ghetto*, that I came in to rob the ghetto.

BZ: Did many Poles do that?

AS: Oh, yeah! I have here posters from the wartimes where it shows. It gives the names with the age and everything. And it gives them being hanged for robbing the ghetto after the Jews left the ghetto. And you have even doctors--I'll show you the posters.

BZ: They hung doctors, too?

AS: Yes, Polish doctors that went in to rob the ghettos. Everyone wanted to take a piece.

BZ: Yeah and I guess the Germans wanted to keep those assets for the Germans?

AS: Sure, the Germans wanted to keep it for themselves.

BZ: Were the police in the camps, the Jewish police, were they ever helpful there or were they the same ilk?

AS: Where? In the camps?

BZ: Yes. Did they have Jewish wardens?

AS: No. Yes. Oh, yes, we had Jewish block wardens in the camp. Let's not kid ourselves--who became a block warden? A guy that the SS liked because he was a good murderer, and that he helped them.

BZ: They were cruel.

AS: They were cruel. We had some prominent Jews or at least sons of Jews in Auschwitz. And there are quite a few books that are mentioning one of the *Blockältesters* in Auschwitz, and the name was Holfbein. He was a murderer, a collaborator and everything else. He thought he would survive, and he didn't give his real name, Holfbein wasn't his real name.

BZ: That was the name he went under in the camp?

AS: That's a name that he came in with because people think that he was even embarrassed of the Jewish name because it didn't help him and since his father was a very prominent Zionist.

BZ: Did he become a collaborator with the Nazis?

AS: Yes. He called himself Holfbein. I can give the names. His father was Izchak Greenbaum, one of the top Zionist leaders. And, in quite a few books you will see the atrocities that this man committed over there. I knew that he was in Auschwitz. I knew that he was a *Blockältester*. I knew that he was a *mamzer* [Yiddish: bastard], no-good--no. But I read in some books it was just awful. And the funniest thing is--that even the Poles--he tried to be good with the Poles that had the same positions and even they wouldn't accept him.

BZ: [unclear].

AS: And when there was a Selection, he tried to get in with them because the Poles didn't stand for the Selection.

BZ: And they wouldn't let him in?

AS: No, they didn't want no part of him.

BZ: Did he survive?

AS: I heard a story that he survived and his father saw to it that he went to Israel--to Palestine at that time--but he was finished off that time.

BZ: Is that what the Israelis...

AS: Not the Israelis but the survivors caught up with him.

BZ: What percentage would you say, one percent? I am sure that they couldn't all become policemen, but I mean what percentage would even want to collaborate, would you say?

AS: Well, not that I would want to make the Jews any better than other nationality, we are all human. Everybody wanted to survive. Like, I had a man sitting here from the *Judenrat*, from my hometown, sitting right here where I am sitting now. And I had here my brother-in-law and my wife sitting here. And I remember when we were talking about the police, the Jewish police, and my wife was very proud at that time. He said to me, "Arnold, I want you to know that you were the only one that refused to put on the white cap." The white cap was the--we called it a white cap because it was a white cap that the Jewish police wore.

BZ: And this was the man from the *Judenrat*.

AS: The man from the *Judenrat* sitting right here in this room.

BZ: And he said you were the only one? Now this was this in the ghetto?

AS: In the ghetto...

BZ: You were the only one? You refused to be one of his officers.

AS: He said that he knows of me as being the only one.

BZ: So it was offered to you and you refused.

AS: Yes, I was offered to be a policeman. I didn't want to be. I was a little kid. I never thought that anything like this would be open to me because you needed money to bribe people and all this. I didn't have any money. But they were looking for intellectuals--you know, even at that because I worked in the *Judenrat* when the Germans came in, in the beginning. I was writing out the *Kopfstewer*, they needed a secretary, so I was writing out the *Kopfstewer* which means the head tax which we had to pay. I was writing out the names. As a matter of fact, I wanted to make an extra two cents a piece. So, I was even delivering them because you received a penny for writing them out and, too--it was a temporary job.

BZ: You could earn two extra pennies.

AS: I could earn two extra pennies. So, if I delivered 50 of them I could earn an extra dollar.

BZ: How did you survive in your day? Was there smuggling or were you--how did you get through? I know the rations were starvation rations because...

AS: Yes, they were starvation rations.

BZ: So, how did you survive there at all?

AS: First of all, I got into the *Schneider Zamel Werkshtetl*, which was a big tailor shop. About 9,000 people worked there. I was in a small group, custom tailors. I wasn't a tailor then but there was tailors that worked one time or another for my father and they were really covering for me. But at the same time, I was learning the trade and I was with the custom tailors.

BZ: Did your father have a big tailoring establishment?

AS: No, very small, he worked by himself.

BZ: I see.

AS: I think--before I could remember he had help. But as long as I can remember he worked by himself. And, since I was with these people, they would send me to deliver the suits to the big SS men that we worked. I would get a special pass to go into the Sosnowiec, to the heads of these people that were running the ghettos. And I knew each and every one by name...

BZ: Jewish people...

AS: No.

BZ: The Germans...

AS: No, the SS, the Gestapo, the ghetto...

BZ: Who were running the ghetto.

AS: Sure. I don't think you would find a handful of people that would know the names that I knew. I knew Knoll, Ludwig, Mohl; I forgot at this time, but there was quite a few names. And I use to deliver the clothing after they were done, and this was good. First of all, I would get a pass to go on the trolley-car which ran outside of the ghetto to go to Sosnowiec. And they had headquarters in the *Dulog*. *Dulog* is an abbreviation for *Durchgangslager*: Transit camp. They kept the people in there before they sent them out to different labor camps or even concentration camps. And I would come and I would deliver the suits in the--it would give me a chance to see some people that were in the *Dulog* just passing by. But at the same time, it would give me a chance that when I delivered the clothing I would get an extra piece of bread, I would get a few potatoes, even sometimes a piece of cake or cheese. I remember I would come back and since I had that special paper that I was going to Ludwig, or that I was going to Knoll, so naturally, the Germans wouldn't stop me they knew that I went to deliver something.

BZ: They wouldn't examine it?

AS: No, even if they would have examined and they would have found something, I would tell them that I am a tailor, and because it was cancelled from the *Schneider Zamel Werkshtetl*. And the paper would speak for itself where I am coming from. And I told them that and they were satisfied from the clothing and they gave me a piece of bread. And some would let me go through with it, and some would take it away just for spite. But it helped a lot because when I came back you know I could help others. And then one way it could help the shops were outside the ghetto which means the police would pick us up at the gates of the ghetto and take us outside the ghetto. Oh, they were watching us like hawks, but I was a little kid, I could always sneak out. And I had the Jewish star on the jacket, on the coat, as a matter of fact, I have a picture...

BZ: Wearing the...

AS: Where I wore the coat. I showed the coat like this open because I wanted to have a picture with a star.

BZ: Is that right?

AS: So, I always carried a coat with me. In the summer I carried a raincoat, in the winter I had a heavy coat going out of the ghetto, you know. When I wanted to run away from the transport...

BZ: So, you would cover the star.

AS: ...I would put on the coat, cover it and I knew Poles out and sneak in, give me some food, give me some food to take home and when they would come back--the transport would come back, I would sneak back in. I was lucky, I guess. I was never caught. I got a few times kicking when they caught me the last minute, but they didn't realize that I run in from somewhere else, so I could get a kick in the behind because I wasn't in line.

BZ: But they didn't realize--you were daring, you were young...

AS: Oh, yeah, I couldn't do it. Oh, I had guts. I could take a trolley car and go somewhere else without any papers. I didn't have any papers, nothing. And just go somewhere else. Just go to Katowice because I knew a few *goyim*. I had an uncle that lived in Katowice before the war, and I knew his neighbors, and I knew a few *goyim*. I would go to those Gentile people, you know and organize some bread and make some deal with them. I guess when you are young, you are daring. I couldn't do these things or maybe it was just because I didn't care. We were a family of seven, I was left alone. You don't care anymore.

BZ: By this time your family had gone away?

AS: Oh, yes, by this time everybody, everybody, yes.

BZ: And you were left alone?

AS: Yes.

BZ: I think that makes a big difference when you don't have anyone to live for.

AS: Oh, the daring thing--my brother is a witness to it. I think my brother survived because of this. I would send my brother ration cards to a labor camp.

BZ: Is that right?

AS: He was in the labor camp, and I would buy ration cards on the black market and send him ration cards, and he would be a dealer in rationing cards. They couldn't get nothing for the rationing cards in the camp, but he would give the rationing card to an SS man in the camp. That SS man would buy food for him on the ration card and bring it to the camp for him. And it's a funny thing, my brother was at that time an electrician in the camp. I would write to the SS man, to Katowice, and my brother would have a code name, my brother's name was *Lichte Fritz*, Little Light.

BZ: Light?

AS: Yes, because he was an electrician.

BZ: Oh.

AS: And the SS man didn't want to get in trouble, so I would write to this SS man, I would write *Lichte Fritze* in care of--I'm trying to remember the address--I remember the address. I will have to ask my brother because he still remembers the SS man. And I would write in care of this SS man's name. This SS man used to come home for weekends, then he would take the ration card and the letters to my brother, and my brother would deal. As a matter of fact, my brother would send money back because I needed more money to buy ration cards on the black market. So, my brother used to send back money with this SS man. The SS man would write me. As a matter of fact, somebody was caught with these ration cards in Blechhammer, in one of the camps. And that SS man saw to it that my brother is sent to another camp before it gets to the main source where the...

BZ: Where they started out.

AS: Where they started out. Where the ration cards are coming in and he couldn't write to me, and I was getting out of my mind. So, the SS man's wife wrote to

me a letter, not to worry, that there was something in the camp and that Bernard was sent to another camp. This is the guy that [unclear]; that Bernard was sent to another camp. I would send packages from outside the ghetto to my sister who is now alive in Israel. She was in Czechoslovakia in a camp.

BZ: In a labor camp?

AS: In a labor camp, yes.

BZ: And you were sending her packages. The Jews were not allowed...

AS: And I think it ought to be on tape, too, which is an interesting story. I would send in a little jewelry from my mother that was left. Not too much my mother didn't have much, or a few marks. I would send it. They were allowed to receive the wash powder.

BZ: Oh.

AS: So, I would open up the box, clean, and stick it in the box. And one day, I stuck in a picture of myself. The last picture taken in the ghetto. I stuck in my picture in it and a few marks and a few other things. And this box was opened up by her *Lagerfuehrer* which was a woman, a young woman, a young SS woman. And to show you the distorted minds that these people had, she gave my sister the whole package if my sister would let her keep my picture. She kept my picture and because of that picture she gave my sister extra rationing in food.

BZ: She fell in love by mail order.

AS: It's interesting and after this I was still sending packages. I figured no matter how much they'd take out she will get something. She did get something, even if you had just the wash powder it was good, too.

BZ: As long as you were in the labor camps you were able to receive packages of food.

AS: Yes, in the labor camps.

BZ: But in the concentration camps...

AS: No.

BZ: Only the Poles.

AS: No, but I couldn't send them from the ghetto. I would go outside the ghetto under an assumed name.

BZ: The Jews from the ghetto were not allowed to mail anything out.

AS: I had this picture. This picture is signed for my sister, it was a picture in color. I was a young kid. I wasn't bad looking. She must of thought that I was good looking.

BZ: It was your picture? Signed by your sister?

AS: My own picture signed by me.

BZ: Signed by you...

AS: For my sister, signed by me.

BZ: That she took, the SS woman took?

AS: This was the picture that the SS woman took.

BZ: Yeah, she fell for you.

AS: It was my sister's luck because this way she could receive some packages and the SS woman was a young woman. Maybe she wanted to show off to other girls she has a boyfriend, or whatever, you never know with these things. Or just because rather--most of them had distorted minds. Just to keep a picture on her desk. So, by hook or by crook, we tried to get out packages. You know these things come little by little come to my mind. I should really take these statements down on tape from my brother and my sister while they are still around because for posterity we need this. We need this for posterity.

BZ: Yes.

AS: Because our boys and girls are going very fast. So many are dying out that it scares you. Have you any questions?

BZ: Were there any tensions among the Jewish groups so that resistance was made more difficult by the Jews.

AS: See, as I stated before our ghetto has more of a kind of a passive resistance.

BZ: Um-hum, just a survival resistance.

AS: We had just a survival resistance, yes.

BZ: But you did blow up trucks and trains?

AS: Oh, yeah, these things were done. I won't say that I personally did it but these things were done. I could've brought out--it was called the [unclear], where we had our own little plot where we could grow on our own vegetables. It was toward the end of the ghetto Shladula [phonetic]. And over there the underground would really do all the work. So, I could be a runner for different things to supply different things you know, but...

BZ: What do you mean exactly that only the underground could do all the work? Could you elaborate or describe?

AS: Yes, I can describe it. Now, different organizations have different parcels land over there where they could work on.

BZ: Were they all Jewish organizations?

AS: All Jewish organizations, Zionist organizations.

BZ: Were the Bundists over there too, did they have a parcel of ground?

AS: No. the Bundists didn't have a parcel of ground.

BZ: So, which groups were they--the Zionist...

AS: The Zionist, the *Hanoar Hatzioni* had a parcel of land. The *Hashomer Hatzair* had a parcel of land. The *Gordoniah* had a parcel. Primarily, you know, the most of them the Zionist of the middle of the road or the right, not the extreme right, not the religious right. That's what I would like to bring up. I know I am going to make a lot of

enemies but I don't like lately the books that I am reading that's coming out of the Orthodoxy. I don't like it a bit.

BZ: Well, excuse me, the Zionist were training even before the war.

AS: Yes.

BZ: To become farmers so that they could go to...

AS: Oh, yeah. Oh, yes, it was only the Zionist. It was only the Zionist as a matter of fact, we had the same thing as the boy scouts.

BZ: As the boy scouts?

AS: Yes. And when we used to go to summer camp to *Moshavah*--it was called *Moshavah Kaitz*, the summer camp--we train. It wasn't just a vacation, we had scouting. We had labor training. We had Hebrew language training. We had sometimes days and even a week where it was *rok Ivrit* [only Hebrew], where you had to speak Hebrew only. And we learned farming. As a matter of fact, later on, you know, it started out where you worked already like to a *kibbutz*, where you had to learn--which was called...

BZ: It was in Poland though. Like a *kibbutz* like camp.

AS: In Poland. Yes, *kibbutz* type. It was called *Hakhsharah*. If the war wouldn't have broke out in 1940, I would have been on *Hakhsharah* because I had the preparatory work done. I was on quite a few *Moshavot Kaitz*, in summer camps where we were preparing. Now, it's too much to go into the kind of work over there, but it was preparatory work. And naturally, it was Zionist indoctrination and no two ways about it because this was the main principle. And I am not going to deny it. The main principle was all of those camps was the Zionist indoctrination, except where the Orthodoxy was concerned. Now, as far as the ghetto goes, this is what we started with the parcels of land that we had over there that we helped. All those Zionist movements would gather over there. We had sometimes meetings in private homes but it was hard because we had to have a few guys standing outside watching, if an SS man isn't coming or a *Schutzpolizei*, the the German police, isn't coming. I remember we used to meet quite often. As a matter of fact, I can mention his name Zev Lundner, he's now--he and his brother are now big men in the government in the State of Israel. They are very high positioned. We used to meet in their house for meetings. And I would like to mention here too that his sister--one of his sisters that I saw practically every day in Auschwitz--she was in Auschwitz. And I used to drop off food and other things for her that she would have to eat. She is now in Israel. And her husband is too something in the government. But she herself is very active. She has an older sister--I'm trying to remember their first names--yeah, Itka and Rifka--I am mentioning these name because these people are alive. And I stand behind everything that I am saying here. I used to drop off food. I used to bring in clothing from the tailor shop, from the men's tailor shop. We used to bring clothing to the women so that they would fix over the--I would always have on the wagon, shoes. She would tell me, "Arnold, a few of our girls are walking around without shoes." So, I would go into the shop and tell the boys, listen I need three, four or five pair of good shoes, and then

while we were pulling the wagon, I would just let the shoes drop near a Block and somebody would pick them up. Naturally, those SS people that were going with us had to be bribed. It wasn't as easy as I am telling the story now...

BZ: They had to look the other way...

AS: But this in itself was resistance.

BZ: Yeah.

AS: And we use to meet in the house because we all belonged to the *Hanoar Hatzioni*, and discussed different things. Naturally, some of the youngsters like I wouldn't be drawn into the main secrets. The rest would be discussed over there where they had the parcel of land, in Shladula [phonetic]. Over there would be like the headquarters and from over there it could go out. But as far as the Orthodox, they were more of a hindrance than a help. They were always telling us that we are bringing the scourge, what would you say in English?--of the Germans on us by doing something against the government against the Germans. We were better off to let it go as it is. Maybe this way more people would survive. Which wasn't right because they kept us back, and if we did something against the Germans and let's say a Jew was caught and hanged or killed, they would say, "See, those godless Zionist did it." They didn't count the lives that we saved but they counted the ones that died of the two. But you know, to save life, life had to be sacrificed, too. Because actually, we, the ones that tried to save life was sacrificing our own lives. But they didn't see it this way.

BZ: At that time were there reprisals, too?

AS: Yes. Oh, yes.

BZ: So then other people that weren't Zionist, if the Zionist, you know, were the cause of someone getting killed, the German getting killed, they would kill many Jews.

AS: Many Jews, yes.

BZ: Naturally. So you can understand, you might not agree, because ultimately all the Jews were killed anyway.

AS: Yes.

BZ: But you could understand the Orthodox thinking in that respect, but then other people felt that way, too. They always weighed whether they could kill the Germans...

AS: Yes, but you couldn't just sit on your hands and not doing anything.

BZ: Yes, that's right.

AS: This was more frustrating knowing that we could do a little bit. I'll tell you another thing and I can't forget it. We had a guy living in the house where I lived, the name was Markowitz, Markovich, yes. They were wealthy people. They had everything, the man went and worked with the Jewish, with the *Judenrat*. Now the books that are coming out from the Orthodoxy, that none of the Jews were working in the *Judenrat*. It's a big lie. We had plenty of the Orthodoxy that worked in the *Judenrat*, but

they would help their own people only. See, when we--a guy like me, which was called by the Orthodoxy godless because in the ghetto I didn't have time to go *davening* into the synagogue, I had more important work to do. To save someone's life was more important; to steal a piece of bread or a few potatoes was more important than to pray to God.

BZ: They really didn't know their Judaism.

AS: No, they didn't.

BZ: Because life was paramount...

[Tape three, side two ended.]

Tape four, side one:

AS: See, it was frustrating enough the passive resistance because really armed resistance--people don't understand armed resistance was really impossible. First of all there was no arms, secondly, the Poles would not help us--we know what happened to the Warsaw Ghetto, and thirdly, which I should have put first, the biggest consideration was to save lives. And we knew the reprisals. So if I wanted to be a wise guy, wanted to be a hero and kill a German--I would have to live with at least a hundred Jews on my conscience--so we couldn't do this either. But besides all this, you know it's interesting the Poles say in their books that the Polish underground wanted to make an uprising in Auschwitz, but the leaders saw that it's fruitless. "It's no use, they will all be killed, it won't help them." There was no uprising. Who blew up the crematorium in Auschwitz? Jewish boys, boys from my home town. The leader was a guy that was a wild boy at home. You would never think that he would do something like this. Shaya Goldstein. He was the one that shoved in the *Kapo* from the crematorium alive. In the oven. Sure they were all killed but they blew up a crematorium.

BZ: They saved a lot of lives by doing that.

AS: Yes. And they knew that they can't survive. The same thing like the Warsaw Ghetto. The Warsaw Ghetto uprising wasn't an uprising to defeat the German Army, it wasn't an uprising to win the war. They knew very well that they were all going to be killed. But in my opinion the Warsaw uprising was, and not like the Rabbi said, "*Al kiddush Ha-shem*." I don't want to hear this! I don't like to hear it. "*Al kiddush Ha-shem*" what they say, "For the sanctification of God." No, they did not go for the sanctification of God. I would call it "*Al kiddush Hanishma*," they went for the sanctification of our names. They went--they did the uprising. They went to their deaths so that we the survivors could live in dignity. And when I talk about survivors, I am not just talking about me, about myself, about the ones that came out from concentration camps.

BZ: You're talking about Jewish people.

AS: The Jewish people, because each one is a survivor. Because if the Germans would have won the war it would have happened the same thing to every Jew everywhere. But people say we didn't do enough, there wasn't enough resistance. We have even Jews that say we didn't do enough, there wasn't enough resistance.

BZ: Jews that were not a part of the Holocaust, really. Jews in America that make those kind of comments.

AS: Yes.

BZ: American Jews.

AS: Oh, even if a survivor makes this it bothers me and I will tell you why. France, with the Maginot Line, fell like nothing under the German boot. Czechoslovakia that was armed to its teeth, it was known to have the best army in Europe. Where was Poland?

BZ: In a week it fell.

AS: The Polish people supposed to be such fighting people. They fought a thousand years for their freedom. Where were all these people? Where was all the resistance from these people?

BZ: So what did they want from unarmed Jews?

AS: So, the unarmed Jews were supposed to be the one to defeat the Germans? So they're telling us you knew that you were going to the gas chambers anyway. Sure. Maybe I knew that I was going. My mother knew that she was going to the gas chambers, but she saw me on the other side, so she knew maybe I would stay alive. So, she would gladly sacrifice her life just so I would stay alive. This people don't mention. And another thing that bothers me--books are written by the most prolific writers. My opinion, none of those goddamn writers have a right to write books. None of them have a right to write books about our lives. They weren't there. They don't know what was going on. They don't know the reprisals. They don't know anything. They have no idea what was going on. But still in all, the Jews were the first ones to put up resistance against that mighty Germany--not the Poles, not the Czechs, not any of the other occupied countries. Sure. They all had undergrounds. They all had resistance movements--Denmark, beautiful. You know, we are talking about Holland, had a beautiful resistance movement. Do you know that Holland had more collaborators than all of the occupied territories?

BZ: More people collaborated with the Germans.

AS: More collaborated than all of the occupied territories, but everybody is blaming us. We were the ones that were supposed to put up resistance. Believe me, we did our share, just by wanting to survive; just by wanting to live; we did our share. You know, Heydrich wrote in 1942 to Hitler, "I put the Jews in concentration camps." No he wrote, "I put the Jews in the ghettos." I want to state it correct. "Without food, without water, without sanitary facilities, and they just refuse to die." Now this is resistance.

BZ: And Goebbels wrote at the time of the Warsaw uprising, "It is surprising what the Jews can do with guns."

AS: Yes. Not only Goebbels wrote about it--he, himself, the one that headed the liquidation of the ghetto, Stroop wrote it himself. "That they are fighters,"--so we did do something.

BZ: With homemade Molotov cocktails.

AS: With what? You should see what they used. They used those glass tubes--you know that they take blood. And the boys were sitting up all night taking off from matches the phosphorus because there wasn't enough powder, but they fought--they fought.

BZ: And the head of this resistance was a Zionist? They had an underground newspaper in the ghettos too, the Zionists didn't they?

AS: Yes, they had a few papers.

BZ: So you would say that they were really the head of the resistance?

AS: Yeah, and by a young boy leaving the ghetto to steal a few potatoes and bring it back so that somebody could have something to eat--this wasn't resistance? Take a teacher, a Hebrew teacher, teaching the kids Hebrew or Yiddish or religion in a basement, a sub-basement--this wasn't resistance? This was the greatest act of resistance. Because if this man would have been caught, he would have been killed. Take a teacher teaching a few youngsters a trade in a basement because maybe the next day would be better; maybe they will need him for a shop; maybe they would need him for work; maybe we will be liberated--this wasn't resistance? Resistance can be defined in so many ways. Sure. There was a ghetto uprising that will go down in history because since the Bar Kochba, which is close to 2,000 years, we didn't have anything like it. This was something that the world will talk about as long as the world will go on. But those little things that were done in the ghetto, little sabotage things--it was resistance. But it isn't as much all this that I want to bring out. When I started telling about those writers writing the books--now, I have close to 2,000 books on the Holocaust, about six, seven languages, so it is a lot to look through, believe me, almost every one was read. And, every one of them will bring up a little bit--it may be under a façade, you know, it may be covered up, will a little bit bring up that the Jews--there may have been a Jew that collaborated. There may have been a Jew here or there that helped the Germans. I am not trying to white-wash it. We are not any different than any other people. We people want to live--maybe I shouldn't say we're not any different--I am very nationalistic, and yes, I think we are better than any other people. Because in camp we could have seen it. And it's not that I want to take it because I am a Jew, I want to say it, you know--I take it as a pride because of what we saw in the camps. We saw in the camps that only the Jews were the ones that helped each other. And as big as the books are from the Polish resistance, when they got packages he hid himself in a corner--you know, and gulped down whatever he could...

BZ: He didn't share--the Poles didn't share?

AS: No. But if a Jewish boy like me that could steal a couple of potatoes would bring them in the camp--and this is God's honest truth, you know it, I have witnesses for it. And I wouldn't go to bed when I brought these potatoes, eating the potatoes. I would wait up until after the last one came. And I wish God would give me so many years for how many time I went to bed without a potato to bed because somebody came over and said he was hungry. Nobody writes this--that little *mentshlekhhkeyt* that still existed among the Jewish people--nobody has put into books.

BZ: You would say among most of the Jews there was resistance?

AS: Yes.

BZ: Among most of the Jews...

AS: Yes. Yes, it's true if you would talk to a Hungarian Jew--and I have to mention nationalities, I can't help it. So he will say, "Sure. Look all the Polish Jews survived."

BZ: All the Polish Jews?

AS: Because wherever he goes he sees Polish Jews. Yes, most of them that survived were Polish Jews because they helped each other. The German Jew wasn't like the Polish Jew; the Czech Jew wasn't like the Polish Jew; the Hungarian Jew wasn't like the Polish Jew--none of them. Yes, we had some bad boys, too.

BZ: And this code was more prevalent among the Polish Jews?

AS: Yes.

BZ: Well, what do you attribute that to. What in your Polish teaching...

AS: What I call *mentshlekheyt*.⁸

BZ: That was only something among Polish Jews?

AS: It was more prevalent among Polish Jews. See, I don't want to say that it was only the Polish Jews. But I can say it in all good conscience that I don't know of any other nationality that helped each other the way the Polish Jew helped each other. I don't know of anybody else.

BZ: Now, the way you were situated, were all the Polish Jews in one block?

AS: No. No...

BZ: Mixed up with Hungarian Jews...

AS: They were mixed up, yes.

BZ: But would a Pole help a Hungarian Jew?

AS: Yes.

BZ: Yes, they would help...

AS: The Hungarian Jew wouldn't help a Polish Jew.

BZ: Is it because...

AS: The same thing--wait a minute--here too, I know that if an Orthodox would listen to this, he won't like it. When we, the Zionists--I know it's a bad name now in the United Nations. I wish I could go on the floor of the United Nations and holler, "I was born a Zionist and I'll die a Zionist." But when we the Zionists had food and could help, believe it or not, a religious man would be the first one that we would help because we knew he couldn't do what I could do. I could go out and steal and he wouldn't.

BZ: And you respected his...

AS: That's right.

BZ: And you respected his orthodoxy.

AS: Right. Right, there are people alive from Auschwitz that would remember this. That on Yom Kippur the Jewish people, the religious people wanted to stay and not to go to work, I was the one, the non-religious one, to pay off an SS man to let 10 Jews stay in the camp so they could pray. Because I felt that to *Shulam Plavis* and a few of those other religious people it meant more to stay in the camp than it meant for me to stay in the camp for Yom Kippur. The religious people wouldn't do this for us. No. if they

⁸ Yiddish: Decency, honesty, honorableness.

could help, if they were in the position to help, they would help an orthodox. But we didn't care, we helped a Jew. Yes, we had our code of ethics in Auschwitz, too. It may not be the right one but to us it was the right one. We would help first the youngsters because we knew we would all go. But we knew that the old men would go before the young kids so if we had an extra piece of bread, an extra potato, we would give it first to the young one because we believed that this young one has more strength, more will to live and he may survive. I don't say it was right but that's what we believed.

BZ: It was necessary.

AS: It was necessary to keep somebody alive so that he could tell the story. And somehow deep inside we knew that they can't kill everybody. And if somebody would stay alive let him help, let him tell the story, let us help him rather, let him stay alive to tell the story. Right or wrong we had to protect the youngsters first.

BZ: I know of one boy, that was actually smuggled out, a little boy, by the underground in Auschwitz. Smuggled out by the underground and given to a Polish peasant who later turned him into the streets. Now, this code of *mentshlekhhkeyt* that was among the Zionist people, it was based on Jewish teaching yet the orthodox were not interpreting the Jewish teaching in the correct way.

AS: In my opinion, no. Because as I said, as I stated before, and I stated it so many times to them, "We were not Jews, we were heathens, we were Godless." And for me, instead of staying in Auschwitz and praying where I had access to the kitchen, I felt there is a bigger God in the kitchen where I could steal a few potatoes and bring them out to my friends. I am sorry, maybe I am wrong but this is what I felt, and I was not the only one. But I would want it as a code of ethics, or as that little *mentshlekhhkeyt* that still prevailed among the Jewish people.

BZ: The Jewish teachings were there but they were not interpreted correctly by the orthodox.

AS: No. No, I think that we, the so-called godless people, interpreted it right.

BZ: I had a teacher who said, "The Zionism was the most exciting movement since the prophets." That was the really correct interpretation of what Judaism is supposed to mean.

AS: I was brought up as a Zionist. I came from a religious home. My father didn't have nothing against it--as a matter of fact, I think that my father was more Zionist than religious.

BZ: Well, certainly because it's a religious way of life, of doing and not praying, not being passive.

AS: Listen, we saw in 1948 in Israel, too, when Jerusalem was encircled. So the orthodox would stay at the *Kotel Maaravi*, at the Wailing Wall, and pray to God. God didn't come down and fight the Arabs, those godless Zionists they were the ones. The Stern Group, the *Haganah*, they were the ones that won it for us. So I don't think that God is up there. In my opinion God is here, God is in your heart. If you feel that you

don't help anybody--you don't steal. Quite the opposite, if you can help somebody and you do it, then you have God. Then you have the best God in the world. I can't interpret God any other way, I'm sorry.

BZ: There is really nobody better equipped to interpret God than somebody who came out of that fight. Because really...

AS: At the same time I wouldn't want to stand as judge on those Jews that came out from the concentration camps that deny God altogether. Because I don't know if they are right denying Him or if I am right believing Him.

BZ: How many do you think of the Zionists that fought and did the best they could to resist, would you say that they are believers or not at this point? I don't consider by the orthodoxy that are God-less but I mean what do you think, having done the best they could, would you say they are believers?

AS: See we have--it's a funny thing, I know people that were Communists at home and are now orthodox. They send their kids to orthodox school, they're *Shomer Shabbas* [Sabbath observers], they keep kosher, but I would say that at least 80 percent that believed in God got away from it. I'm reiterating it, I cannot blame them because I don't know if I am right or they are right. Because don't forget it, when you see that black smoke of Auschwitz day in and day out and you know that the best people, learned people, people that Torah and God was everything to themselves, and yet you see the smoke coming through those chimneys. How can you still believe in anything? How can you believe even in humanity? It can turn you to a murderer, it can turn you to anything.

BZ: What do you believe? Do you believe in humanity?

AS: Yes, I believe in humanity. I feel that there is a lot of goodness in people, if we could only bring it out. If we wouldn't be selfish, and if we would just try to understand the next guy. I was always--I always felt that if I want you to be a good friend to me, if I want you to understand me, I have to be the one to show you that I am good to you. And my wife did it the best way, because I never was serious about getting married. I never was serious about being with one woman, but she was so good that I just had to be good to her. And she taught me a big lesson. Even so that most of the time, if I would give her credit for it, she would say no. You are good that is why you do that, because nobody could change you. But I feel if you put yourself as an example, people can't just be bad to you. Sure, you will find people that are just basically bad, so you can't help people like this, even if you try.

BZ: Arnold, you know what the propaganda had taught the German about the Jew--after all, the SS men were there because many had joined the SS men and they were eager to carry out things that they had been taught. Would you say that you knew any SS men that were actually impressed by what they saw? I know the code of *mentshlekheyt* involved a lot of secrecy, you know, to help one another, but would you say that the humanity that one Jew showed to another--do you think that any SS men ever observed this and was impressed by it?

AS: You know, I may not be able to tell you if he was impressed by seeing the *mentshlekhhkeyt* from one person to the other. But I can tell you one thing, that I knew SS men that hated the Jew that hit or punished another Jews more than he loved him for it. Even so, he used him as a tool.

BZ: He expected more of him; he expected more of a Jew?

AS: Yes.

BZ: He expected the Jew to be a *mensh*, and when he wasn't--he was disappointed?

AS: Yes.

BZ: Yes, that is amazing.

AS: And I know sometimes, when even the head of the kitchen he was not an SS man, he was an inmate, a Polak. A murderer in his own right, but even so he saw me taking out a few potatoes. I know that plenty of times he turned the other way.

BZ: Because actually you evoked his admiration.

AS: Yes.

BZ: Things they were incapable of doing themselves--kindnesses they were incapable of even giving to their own people, they could still admire that somebody else was doing it.

AS: I know he saw me because I used to come back and he used to tell me, "You little bastard, did you eat at least?" I would tell him no, I didn't have enough for the other guys. He would give me something and he was a murderer.

BZ: So they sensed your moral differentness.

AS: Yes. They treated you different if you had morals and no matter how bad the SS men was, or what kind of a murderer he was, I think he did respect you more. Somehow I had the feeling that he did respect you more when you showed a little compassion to the next guy. I know I had one incident that may be of interest. It was in Lager 11, a branch of Dachau, and when the commander came in--you know I didn't remember this for a long time--when the outside commander came in we had tracks for the lorries for those half cars to bring in the dirt.

BZ: Tracks?

AS: Tracks, like railroad tracks for the lorries to go into the camps to bring in stuff to the camps. They were building the camp...

BZ: Were they things that were pulled by hand? These lorries were pulled by hand?

AS: Yes, pulled by hand. And one of my friends Yussik Baumgart--I heard he is now somewhere in California--came in and he was just wobbling, he couldn't walk anymore. He was sick, he was ready to keel over. And I stood at the door because I was at the gate. I was the one counting them and giving the report to the SS men. The SS men wouldn't bother to count them and this was a big job already in camp because I didn't have to go out to work. And next to him, pardon me, on the other side, on the other side

of the line was another guy, and this guy happens to live now in Philadelphia, and I just saw him a few weeks. He was a watchmaker. I think this will give him away enough--a Hungarian. I had one side of the line and he had the other side of the line to check. And when I counted them it had to be the same count that he got. And when that Yussik came in and he couldn't walk anymore, he was stumbling, he hit him in the face, that Hungarian boy. With nothing. An inmate, just like I, just had a little better job, just like I. Instead of being grateful that he has a better job and could help somebody, he looked down at him, and he hit him, and Yussik fell on the track with his face and couldn't get up. I lifted him up and he was bleeding, and I asked two other guys, one of these guys too now lives in New York. His name is Kohn. There are three brothers and I said to him. "Hold Yussik," and another boy, they held him under the arm to take him into camp. And I stopped counting because I was so mad. And I went over to the other guy and hit him hard, good, and he was a guy that weighed twice as much as I, and twice as tall as I, but I think my nerves did it.

[Tape four, side one ended.]

Tape four, side two:

AS: The SS man naturally, didn't like it. He took me away right away--sent me from the camp. They started counting again the *kommando*, and when we had assembly before we got our so-called dinner...

BZ: Assembly that was when they lined you up to count you?

AS: They lined us up in the camp to count again everybody. We used to count the *kommandos* that were coming in and then the whole camp.

BZ: Sometimes they made you stand for hours, didn't they?

AS: Oh, yeah.

BZ: Most of the time, didn't they?

AS: Most of the time, and I had to stay with my block where I was sleeping, which usually I didn't--they usually counted me at the door, at the front gate. And the SS man called me out and he said to me, "You know what you did was wrong?" I said, "Yes." "Why did you do it?" I said, "I don't have an answer for it. I just in that moment--I got wild because I saw that he hit somebody that's almost dead." He said, "I can't let you go without punishing you, you are going to get 25 on your behind." I didn't answer, but the group which was about 100 guys got a little noisy, so the SS man said--it's an incident that I can never forget--the SS man said to the guys, "Why don't you like it that he's getting 25 on his so and so?" And naturally nobody answered. He said, "Good, if you guys are such big shots, anybody that wants to come up here and take his 25, can take it instead of Arnold." It was the first time that something like this happened in the camp. But it was that SS man happened to like me. I always did my job good. I used to cut wood in the forest and bring in wood to his oven, keep his room clean, keep it warm. He always liked me. He knew that I always did a good job, always, but I did here something that he just couldn't let go, because after all, he was the SS man. He said, "If you guys don't like it, let me see if somebody wants to come out and take the 25 on his behind instead of him." And without exaggeration, between 20 and 30 boys walked out, that they will take it. He said, "Well, if he has that many friends, you can all go back." He didn't hit anyone. So, this shows you that even an murderer like this had respect if you showed solidarity or compassion for one another. Nobody got hit. It's a fact, we have a lot of people--as a matter of fact, there is one woman that works now with my daughter in New York that was there in this camp, too. And the camp always talked about this. When he saw so many boys coming out taking 25 on the behind, it wasn't the easiest thing, because for weeks you couldn't walk or sit.

BZ: There was no flesh to cover anybody anyway.

AS: Of course not, I had it once, I had 40.

BZ: Was this after your operation that you had 40--that you had 40 whip lashes?

AS: I think it was after the operation, yes. And I just want to bring out, that between us there was still a little *mentshlekkhkeyt*. And at the same time, the SS, as rotten and murderous as he was, he had a distaste for collaborators. He had a distaste for murderers, he was a murderer himself...

BZ: And yet he had a little bit of the good instinct, enough to respect in somebody else.

AS: Yet he had enough instinct to respect, if somebody was compassionate for his fellow man.

BZ: That is a spectacular incident. With all their SS training, Hitler couldn't get that out of him. This is how God makes you, with the evil with the good. And even the most evil has enough in them to know what good is when he sees it.

AS: You know, I read in one book the writer's account about his life in Auschwitz. And he writes: "He went passed by an SS man, and he took his cap off, which was the law. You had to take your cap off or salute. You know, not salute but walk straight, goosestep or whatever it was you know, to show respect for that SS man. And this guy mentioned in this book that an SS man stopped him once in Auschwitz and he said to him, "Hey *Jude*, Jew, why do you walk so straight and why do you take off the cap when I am passing by?" And the Jew said, "Because I have respect for you, you're super human," and he gave him a lot of malarkey and according to him, the writer, he let him go for it. I say it's a big lie.

BZ: Yes. It would actually back fire.

AS: It's a big lie because I remember once in Auschwitz, I was in the quarantine, I was very hungry and I didn't feel too good at all. I was a skeleton, almost then.

BZ: What was the purpose of the quarantine? Were you ill or separated because of illness?

AS: No, till they send us to another camp.

BZ: Oh, I see.

AS: When we came, we came under quarantine, and then they sent us to D *lager* or to other camps and so forth. And I passed by an SS man, being in the state of mind like this I didn't even see him. And this is the truth, I didn't see him. When I passed by, I didn't take off my cap, I didn't walk straight. And he stopped me; he grabbed me by the shoulder so hard I felt it, and I woke up. "Don't you know when you pass by an SS man, you supposed to walk straight, face him." *Rechts um or links um*. You had to turn around and face him, let him pass by first, to give him respect. I said, "I know that this is the law through the camp, but I was deep in thought." I was honest with him. And I said, "I have to be honest with you, I didn't even see you." He said, "What do you mean, you didn't even see me? What do you mean you passed by in the camp and you didn't see an SS man. What did you have to think about?" I said, "Well, I had a lot to think about, but most of all I am really hungry. I worked hard today and I didn't get my rationing." There

were days when we didn't get the rationing, you know, because there wasn't enough. The *Kapos* were stealing; the *Blockältester* was stealing; if you didn't have, you didn't have, so that day I didn't get my rationing. You know, he didn't even answer me, he just walked away. I thought he was going to kill me. Now in my opinion he accepted more the truth, than if I would flatter him. So, it isn't this because I remember another time that I passed an SS man, you know, and he stopped me, and I took off the cap and I was stiff, rigid, like you are suppose to be in the camp. And he asked me why I'm doing this. I said, "Because this is the law of the camp." He said, "*Weiter machen.*"

BZ: Translate. Just go on your way.

AS: Yes, go ahead.

BZ: That they could understand.

AS: This they could understand.

BZ: But to grovel before them...

AS: No, no, no, I don't believe it because they knew it was a lot of malarkey. If you made yourself a mouse, he didn't appreciate it. Even when you were killed, he wanted you to be a hero. I think that an SS man would appreciate more if you would hit him, telling him that you dislike him, you hate him, than if you give him all that malarkey. He may have shot you, you know, which didn't mean nothing to him. But I think he would have greater respect for you. You had to understand a lot. You know a lot of people ask me, "How come you survived," and you know sometimes it bothers me because if a non-survivor asks you this, then they think maybe you are a murderer, maybe you had a good job, maybe you hurt somebody else. It's not true, you didn't have to be a murderer, you didn't have to hurt your fellow man. If there was a Jew that helped another Jew, he just wanted to do it; he didn't have to do it. I can understand times when you had to do it. Like for instance, I was standing once at the gate and they used to check everybody--was called *feilsen* [phonetic], and they found on a guy a letter--just a little note that he was bringing into camp. This was punishing by death.

BZ: He was coming from a camp?

AS: From an outside *kommando*, yes.

BZ: He was coming back to the camp?

AS: Coming back to the camp. Yes. And the SS man checks him and the note was written in Polish. When I read that note my stomach turned. It was from a girl from another camp to her boyfriend. Okay, she was asking if he could help her with a piece of bread or something--but you putting your life! And he couldn't read it, the SS man, naturally and he gives it to me to read. When he gave it to me to read, I tore it up and threw it away and I went over to that guy and hit him in the face as hard as I could. I said, "Aren't you ashamed of yourself. You found a little note that is somebody else's love letter and you take it into camp. You can be killed for something like this. Why did you do it?" So he said, "I didn't read the news, I didn't read anything for such a long time, I just wanted to read it, I wanted to know what it is." So the SS man said, "What was it?" I

said, "Nothing, it was some kind of a love letter from somebody to somebody else. It's not even his."

BZ: You saved his life.

AS: So the SS man went over and said, "Why did you take it in?" and he said the same thing, "I just wanted to read it. I wanted to see what it is."

BZ: Because you weren't supposed to have communication [unclear]. So you really saved his life.

AS: So he said, "You know, if it wasn't for him I would have shot you now?" We came later on in the camp, the guy came over and kissed me and he said, "How did you think so fast?"

BZ: That's right.

AS: I said, "You asked me how I was thinking so fast, I thought I would get a heart attack instead of thinking." You know, it's funny, my brother had an incident like this too, with somebody with a letter. The letter was a little bit worse than this one. This wasn't so bad, but still the SS man would have killed him. Not only this, he would have wanted to know how did he get that letter from the girl. Who is that guy in the camp that has a girlfriend outside. You know, it makes already a big mish-mash and too many people are getting involved.

BZ: Sure.

AS: For this I could hit him.

BZ: How do you think, Arnold, the SS men regarded themselves? If they admired, in spite of themselves, this humanity they saw between the Jews? Do you think deep inside themselves they despised themselves?

AS: I think so, yes, yes, but in the same thing he wanted all the luxury. Then you have to understand one thing, and I am far from trying to find excuses for the SS men. That SS man in the camp figured if I keep on killing Jews, I won't go to Siberia. I won't go to the Russian front.

BZ: He was doing his job good in camp and that was his job to kill Jews.

AS: I am not trying to find excuses for it...

BZ: But it was better than fighting at the front.

AS: ...but this [unclear] it was better than fighting at the front.

BZ: Sure, the Jews were defenseless. They weren't going to shoot back.

AS: But the worse part of the Nazi Regime was that he made his own people into robots. See, in the beginning--I shouldn't say Hitler, he made it, they made it themselves. Because he gave them so much luxury in the beginning: all the Jewish properties, all what the Jews possessed. He made them so wealthy, and they living so good, living in luxury.

BZ: And they were important. They had uniforms and boots--and these were very non-descript people.

AS: That's right. And it was hard to get out of it. Even if somebody wanted to get out of it, it was hard already.

BZ: They had status.

AS: See, if you kill one person, then, you may think, well, maybe I did wrong. But if you go on killing, it don't mean anything to you anymore. You just do it.

BZ: You justify it.

AS: You find always justification. And that's what the Germans did to themselves; they started following Hitler so blindly, he was their God. Later on they just did it because the *Führer* wanted them to, and even if somebody had second thoughts about it, still he had to do it.

BZ: And if they really sat down and thought about it, their Christian teachings could always support it. Because the Christian teaching taught that the Jews killed Christ, and so they had had to suffer. So, if they really sat down and thought about it, it would be okay too, you know.

AS: You know I think I told you this story once, when I spoke in Catholic schools and a girl asked me, "Why was Hitler so antisemitic?" Now Hitler didn't invent antisemitism; antisemitism you know, was invented when they tried to justify Jesus. Let me tell you another thing, if they were really Christians, if they really believed in Jesus, they wouldn't do it.

BZ: Did you find Christians in camp that you know, that you felt really believed in Jesus and couldn't do it? Did you find anyone?

AS: I wish I could say yes; I wish I could say yes.

BZ: Did you find anybody in camp or out of the camp--you said not in the camp--anywhere, did you find anybody that you think truthfully from their Christian religious teaching that could be--that were good, in spite of the danger to the Jews?

AS: Oh, yeah, there were--we know a lot of people that were...

BZ: Did you know anyone personally?

AS: No, I didn't. I had that one encounter with that girl that I told you, you know after my mother went to the gas chambers that helped me as much as possible.

BZ: Yes. Was this from her conviction as a Christian or because she knew you? Because she knew you personally.

AS: No. She knew me and I think most of it came from the conviction that she felt that if the war was over I would marry her.

BZ: Yes, so this was different. It was personal.

AS: It was a selfish motive.

BZ: You don't know of anybody that would sit down and examine their religion and say, my goodness--this is against this.

AS: I know from people, know from reading now that people did it. People did save Jews, but there too few, especially in Poland. Poland had very few Poles that helped Jews.

BZ: From your contact with the SS, did they ever give you an indication that they were religious or believed in God, or considered themselves religious?

AS: No, no.

BZ: They were pagans, they felt they were pagans.

AS: Not that they were pagans, they had a god, they had Hitler.

BZ: That's what I mean that Hitler was their god.

AS: This was it.

BZ: They never said that they went to church or their families went to church?

AS: No.

BZ: No, because I understand that some did go to church on Sundays when they were out of camp.

AS: We know that Goebbels and I think even Streiker had Christian rites when they died.

BZ: Christian rights?

AS: Rites.

BZ: Oh, rites, when they died. Oh, yeah. And Goering and Hitler.

AS: So what the hell is the church worth?

BZ: Oh, no, I agree. I agree. But I just wondered whether in personal contact with the SS whether they ever indicated that they--well, they weren't--I guess they wouldn't let you know anyway, if they were afraid of a hereafter...

AS: No. You know, I have the last letter sent out by Rudolf Hess, the commandant of Auschwitz, to his wife before Poland killed him. And he states over there how he can't forgive himself. Now he is not angry at the Polish government for taking his life. He just can't forgive himself for following so blindly the *Führer*, for forgetting God, for forgetting his religion, for killing people just on orders. You know, it's like they say before you die, you holler, "God help me!" but they didn't think about it while they were alive. It didn't bother them...

BZ: They really thought the regime was going to last 1000 years that Hitler promised.

AS: Oh, yeah, sure.

BZ: They really believed him.

AS: The one promise that he kept, he told them in 10 years they won't recognize Germany; they didn't, it was in ruins.

BZ: No more culture, all the Jewish people gone, Germany the poorer for it.

AS: Yeah. Germany the poorer for it, that's right. Look at all the brains that Germany gave up, all the Jewish intellectuals, scientists, doctors, everything and it's all gone. And you know, I say one thing, Judaism thrived in Eastern Europe. And with the disappearance of the Eastern European Jewry, not even Israel will be able to produce the Jew that disappeared. This is gone forever.

BZ: That's why I think that the tapes are so important to capture what's left--the essence of these people because they are different.

AS: Like my brother can sit down with a few of his friends and telling they were in a camp where there were French people. And they stole a few bottles of wine that the French got from home. And it's interesting the way they tell the story. They didn't sit down one guy by himself, they sit down five guys, It was wine; you hungry, you're still hungry even if you have wine. So they would drink a little bit, and the next guy would take a sip of it and still in all they would smuggle the rest into the camp to give to the other boys. You know, it's nothing, but you don't know what it meant...

BZ: It gave a spark of life.

AS: A spark of life that somebody from an [unclear] *kommando* brought in. He stole a bottle of wine to bring it in the camp so that everybody could have a sip; it's beyond human comprehension. Where in God's name are all those writers? I'm just a simple guy--a simple guy just finished high school. Maybe, I can't put it in that many words like those prolific writers. Where are these guys to show that little *mentshlehkeyt* that existed because after all this was the *Shores* in Hebrew, the roots of Judaism--that little *mentshlehkeyt*. None of the writers bring it up, I have yet come across a book where they show that the real *mentshlehkeyt*, that real help that one would give to others. Now, like that guy told you--you know, I didn't remember this, it's God's honest truth, that I came out, that I used to have my pants bulging with potatoes; I was stealing potatoes in the camp.

BZ: Yes, yes, it was absolutely true, he told it to me, yes.

AS: Now, this guy remembered it, I didn't remember it. You know why I didn't remember it, because to me it was natural.

BZ: It was an every day occurrence.

AS: It was an every day occurrence. I was stealing every day from the SS to bring it to the inmates, to bring it to the camp to keep a few people alive--but things like this you don't see in books.

BZ: Did you read "The Survivor"?

AS: No, all that those writers tried to show, would you say, the morbidity of it?

BZ: Yes.

AS: Nobody shows that little *mentshlehkeyt*. You know, I remember we caught in Dachau the SS men's dog, a huge dog as big as a horse, we killed him; we had a feast, we had a feast, but you wouldn't say that one would take a bigger piece of meat. We would count how many guys are there who wanted to eat dog meat. And whoever wanted to eat it, we counted--if there were 20 guys we'll cut 20 pieces. If there were 100 guys, we'll cut it 100 pieces. Now, a guy could say, "Well, I gave my life--if I am caught for stealing the SS man's, the *Lagerführer's* dog, I'll be shot, why shouldn't I have a bigger piece?"

BZ: But no.

AS: No. He stole a potato--a lousy potato. How many guys are? Three? We'll cut it in three. Two guys? We'll cut it in two. This isn't in any books.

BZ: This was the height of civilization--it was the height of civilized living...

AS: That's right. Can anybody express this? Can anybody realize what this really meant in camp--a little help like this?

BZ: It gave you reason to live.

AS: You know, I had a guy--he's now dead, as a matter of fact, his wife is my sister-in-law's sister, and when I found out that they lived in Kansas City I wrote to him. "Itcha [phonetic], do you remember who I was or who I am? I am Alexander's son, we lived in the same street." I tried to explain it to him because you found somebody from hometown--and I will never forget it, my wife was so proud of this letter. He wrote me back, "Arnold, not only do I remember who you were but I remember when I came to Auschwitz and you gave me the first piece of bread." He couldn't pay me any bigger compliment because this is what I lived for. See, the funniest thing about it is that guys like me--I didn't think really of doing somebody a favor. As odd as it may sound, I have to be--I want to be honest with myself. I just felt I have to do it. I did it, now that I think of it I think I did it more for myself, because it made me feel good that I am in a position that I can help somebody and I am doing it. It gave me more reason to live. It's like I told you once, I think I survived not because I wanted to survive but because I had so many people that depended on me, that I felt, "My God if something happens to me look how many people will have to die." And it doesn't come just from thinking that you have, you know, that I wanted to be a good guy, or I don't know what to call it. Big-hearted it just came from the self-feeling and I think it came from the upbringing. I think it has a lot to do with the upbringing because I just felt that I had to do it. These guys are waiting for me. I have guys waiting in the camps, like he told you. When I came to the camp they were staying in line and the poor souls, I felt worst than them because they were saying that everybody was afraid to ask for something. It's like you have a little dog and he's waiting for you to throw him a bone. So everybody was waiting probably had in his mind, "Am I going to be that lucky, that Arnold is going to give me a potato, today?" And to be honest with you, I didn't need to eat anymore. I was too broken up with the--just seeing them waiting for it. It does something to you, and no matter how strong you are, it just tears you apart, and I had this feeling not once, and I didn't even think of it--well, well maybe I am that lucky to be in such a position that I can help. I should do it. No, I didn't feel that I should do it--I just did it.

BZ: It was just instinctive.

AS: Instinct.

BZ: Your father was a Zionist, you say?

AS: Oh, yeah, even so he was religious--my mother was too.

BZ: Yeah, well they should be compatible really...

AS: Not the orthodoxy...

BZ: Right, because they don't understand--they really don't understand what Judaism is.

AS: Not the orthodox--I love every Jew, and to me I'll take the best Jew, I mean pardon me, the worst Jew rather than the best non-Jew. I am sorry to say it--I am very nationalistic because even if a Jew is not religious he's still a Jew to me.

BZ: You think he lives by a different code.

AS: The only Jew that I don't like is a communist because I myself cannot comprehend how any Jew can be a communist especially now. I could never care for it, but especially now. I just don't like a Jew--as a matter of fact, I think that I...

[Tape four, side two ended.]

Tape five, side one:

AS: After listening to the previous tapes, I have to add some information that would be more explanatory. The first one will be: Life in the kitchen--what it meant to live in the kitchen, and what are the work in the kitchen. Well, first of all, we had to get up much earlier than the rest of the people, which in a way gave us the privilege of washing ourselves in the washroom; having more room and having water to wash. Then we came in and we prepared the so-called breakfast, which usually consisted of tea. That's all--no food. Anybody had a piece of bread, it was left over from the night before. Because bread was given out only at night. In the kitchen we had privileges--we could steal some food, raw or cooked, hot or cold, while we were preparing it, or after it was prepared--but we had enough to eat. This gave us a chance if we stole some food to bring it out later on to the camp, which most of us did. We always had some friends waiting for us, coming after the roll call, to bring some food. The second question is: Why we were shipped from Auschwitz, which I noticed that I didn't give enough explanation in the former tapes. When the Russian front, naturally, was getting closer to Auschwitz, we were shipped. When I say shipped I don't mean on ships or trains - we walked! Yes, we walked. And that's how I got through Ravensbrück, Sachsenhausen, and later to Dachau, by walking. Getting to the point now, life in the quarantine: Quarantine didn't mean actually that we were in quarantine because of sickness or anything. Quarantine was actually more preparatory or rather waiting till they will have more room on the other camps until they could sift us out to be sent on the other camps for work. I would also like to add, that we in the quarantine, which means the transport that I was with, except the number, the yellow triangle, and the triangle of red that formed a Star of David, we also wore two letters: *IL* which meant *In Lager*, inside the camp. To explain it a little clearly, we were not allowed to leave the camp. The reason because we all came from Upper Silesia. Auschwitz was in Upper Silesia. We knew our way about around the camp, and this was the prime reason so that we wouldn't get out of the camp, so we couldn't run away. We were shipped later on to *D Lager*, D Camp. Most of us still wore the *IL*, but I know that quite a few of us went out on different *kommandos*. I did not--I worked that time in the tailor shop--but the ones that went out the camp, the *IL* was still on their uniforms even though they left the camp but they were under special supervision. I know the *Dach Deckers*, the people that fixed the, or rather the roofers left the camp, and a few other *kommandos*. Now I would like to explain life in the *Krankenhaus* [hospital], or life in the *Revier*, life in the hospital. After my surgery--I think, I can be quite frank, after the experiments that were performed on me--I came back to the camp the following day. But sometime later, I was shipped as a *Pfleger*, as a male nurse to the *Krankenhaus* to work there. It's hard to really go deep into it because this alone could take up pages upon pages. The operations that I have seen, the operations that were performed by the SS, the operations that the inmates--I wanted to say *Häftlinger* [*Häftling*], which is German, is inmate--that the inmates performed on other inmates, like delivering babies in order to save a mother. Not that we had any women--I want to make this clear. We did not have any women in our camp. The women that did come to our camp were smuggled in. We had one woman that we amputated her leg. A German was shooting at her during the night when she left her barrack and we had to amputate that leg during the night or she would die. A woman like this was brought in. I understand it now, by the underground. I

did not, and I repeat it--I did not know it then that the underground had anything to do with it. But the underground brought in this kind of woman. The underground brought in women. Where we delivered babies in order to save the life of the mother. Operations were performed by the SS. If I mention them now it's just an unbelievable thing--I saw myself saw an operation on an inmate. I don't know his name, but I remember very well his number, his number was number 11, a very small number. He was one of the earliest Poles that came into Auschwitz. The operation was--to explain a little bit, I am not a doctor, I will try my best to explain it. They chopped out a piece of his skull at the right hand side--the SS man, the doctor at that time was Teelo--he put his hand in, and turned his brain. He wanted to see how long he would live. I think it got him scared that time, they turned the brain back--he did live. It's interesting, he did live, how long I don't know. I know that later on he died. I saw these operations because, as I said, I worked in there and I had to wash the instruments. I saw an operation where they took out a spine from a man; took out from his right leg, from the bottom they took out the shin bone; put in the shin bone. They wanted to see how long that he can live with a one piece spine. When I remembered, months, months later, I have seen this man still in the same bed, still unable to move. After reading the book, Fighting Auschwitz, which was written by a Pole, I don't even know if he was in Auschwitz. There's a lot of documentation, true. I'm just hurt about it that so little is mentioned about the Jewish leaders of the *kommandos*. And again, I want to reiterate, that I was not aware at that time that my help was for the underground. But I was aware, I knew very well what was going on and who the real people that helped, were. Like in Fighting Auschwitz, he states over there toward the end, that they didn't care for nationality--which by the way, I want to mention here--in Fighting Auschwitz, he states primarily Poles, he gives a few Germans that were Communists that came to Auschwitz later on. But primarily he talks about the Polish underground. I did not in Auschwitz know of the Polish underground. But at the same time, he states in his book, "how they helped every nationality without regard for religion." Well I would like to bring it out now, that the Poles, if they were in the underground, and no matter how much they were fighting the Germans according to their book--I call him a liar, that writer, because he did not--I'm sorry, they did not help the Jews in the camp. I don't know of one single instance where the Poles helped the Jews, except getting them killed. And even in this book, it's very interesting to note where he states that the *kommandos*, the leaders of the *kommandos* from the outside, the AK⁹ and the others that supposedly gave orders to the underground inside Auschwitz, did not let them have an uprising at Auschwitz. I am bringing this out because a lot is being talked why the Jews didn't make an uprising in Auschwitz. It's worthwhile to mention here that he is mentioning in his book when the crematorium was blown up in Auschwitz, that Poles were waiting outside, the Polish underground was waiting outside to give them help but that they couldn't give them help because the uprising was during the day. I would like to add something to it, that the Poles would have never given the Jews any help, that when it happened that a Jew run away from Auschwitz and he was caught outside by the Poles--underground or no underground--he would be handed over to the

⁹Armia Krajowa – Home Army, an underground military organization in occupied Poland, which included units that were openly murderous of Jews. The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry 1933-194 by Nora Levin, 1973: p 382.

Germans and brought back to Auschwitz, dead or alive. I should say dead because even when he was brought back alive, he was dead. The hangings in that book, he is bringing out so much about the hangings of the Poles. Why in God's name isn't he bringing out about the hanging of the Jews? Even in the quarantine camp. I don't remember them all, but I remembered three guys, among the three guys, when they were hanged was one by the name of Kushma, from Cracow, a Jewish man who was caught running away from Auschwitz, he was brought back, he was hanged. The hangman at that time was Korbonick, an SS man that was from Upper Silesia. And even according to the name it states his Polish origin, he spoke Polish, and I remember when he read the sentence he read it in Polish and in German. And when these three guys were hanged, the Jew was the one that went with the last words when they told him he could say something. He said, "My brothers, please pay them back for my blood." And the last words before they closed the noose was, "Long live a free independent Poland." Oh, I don't think he did it because he was such a good Pole. He did it because it was very bad that time. The Poles were killing Jews left and right in the camp. And in that book, Fighting Auschwitz, where he mentions the beautiful things they did in the hospital, I would want him to mention at least one Jew that came out alive from that hospital in the quarantine on the D camp when they said, they helped everybody. Polish antisemitism in Auschwitz was no less than Polish antisemitism before the war. It's true the *Kapos*, and the *Blockältesters* were primarily Germans. But I can give you so many of them that were Poles, and yes, those Polish *Kapos*, those Polish *Blockältesters* were much worse than the German *Blockältesters*, and the German *Kapos*, I mean much worse toward the Jews. Even so that the German *Kapos* and the German *Blockältesters* that was there, were all criminals before the war. We could have on Sunday when we worked a half a day, we would have to enjoy the Nazis, the SS in the camp. And we would have boxing matches, soccer games, and I remembered the boxing matches very well. I remember one in particular--a Pole, I think his name was Puntek [phonetic], where he fought against the Greek Jews, and if the Jews won the Poles would beat him up anyway. The soccer game, we were *Muselmann*¹⁰ -- skeletons--we played soccer against the Poles. If we won the Poles would beat us up because they were strong. They had more food than us, they received packages from home. They didn't have to walk around dressed in a zebra suit that they received in the camp because they were sent into the camp from home, sweaters, heavy socks, heavy underwear. And a lot of shooting from the Germans was during these games too, which is too much to go into now, I could use quite a few pages just for this. The black market was flourishing, primarily in the latrines, in the toilet and I was there. I remembered looking on. I remembered going in myself, being sent in from the kitchen with a package of margarine, for a few cigarettes for the *Kapo* from the kitchen, for some potatoes, for a bottle of whiskey, and there was always bartering going on in the toilet. It bothers me a little bit because no matter how active the underground was in Poland, I think that book is quite a bit over-dramatized. Their heroism is quite a bit dramatized. And this too, I am sorry, I cannot go into details with all the dramatization in those books written by the Poles, and primarily because I am a Jew and there are a lot of things that

¹⁰*Muselmann* - "German term widely used among concentration camp inmates to refer to prisoners who were near death due to exhaustion, starvation, or hopelessness." <http://www.yadvashem.org>, article "Muselmann."

wouldn't be believable. I will however, try to get a non-Jew to answer quite a few questions, to add when I am writing my book. To all the over-dramatization by the Polish underground, of the Polish heroism in the camp, believe me there was no heroism of the Poles. They were the same sheep that we were. Their heroism was that they received packages from home, and they were healthier because they were not marked for death. We were *Häftlinge*, inmates, and they were *Sträflinge*. Which means they were in there for committing a crime. Yes, even the clothing that we wore in the camp, the zebra suits. We wore summer and winter the same thin suit, not even being allowed to wear an undershirt underneath, while the Poles received special suits for the winter, heavier ones, fully lined so they would feel warmer. Another point is the delousing when they tried to kill the lice because we had them in the billions. It was a whole day process. They would do it on our day off on Sunday, which we had only actually a half-day off. It would go into late in the night, no matter how cold it was, and it was primarily done when it was really cold. We would be naked--completely naked on much below zero temperature, waiting till the stuff was deloused and then put it on wet and let it dry on our bodies. Escapes, well, it was quite a difference when a Pole escaped and he was found on the outside by the Poles. They would give him all the help they could because he was a Pole--it was not so with the Jews, as I explained before. He writes here that in the beginning was the Collective Guilt and he goes in up to 1942, not even 1942, the end of 1941, maybe the beginning of 1942. Well, I remember 1943, when there was the Collective Guilt. I remember August, September, October, November, December, when the Jews ran away from the camp or even when a Pole run away from a camp, from Auschwitz, we would stand sometimes as much as two days and two nights till the guy was caught, or till they shot somebody else and pretended that he was caught. They left him in the front. So the Collective Guilt actually existed in the camp as long as I can remember. Yes, I didn't mention nothing about the liquidation of the Gypsies. I was at that time on the *Krankenhaus* [hospital] working as a nurse, when the Gypsies were taken out. I remember looking out the windows because in the *Krankenhaus* we had windows. I remember looking out the windows. I couldn't see too much because the lights were out--but the screams! Oh, my God, I will never forget them. Not as long as I live, not as long as I live can I ever, ever forget those screams. And with all the uprisings that would supposedly be done by the Poles that never came to fruit, that they never accomplished, and the only uprising that came from the *Sonderkommandos* commander was by the Jewish boys. Yes, Jewish boys from my hometown. How can I forget the two brothers Hershenfeld, we lived in the same house, born and raised in Bendzin? How can I forget Goldstein, who supposedly according to the stories that we heard was the first one at the uprising? Then a little bit I wanted to mention about working in the tailor shop. It was hard work but it gave me a chance to take out suits, again I didn't know that this was because the underground wanted it. All I knew is that somebody asked me to bring out a civilian suit and I would steal a suit. Therefore, for this he would give me a few pieces of bread to hand out in the camp because I didn't need the bread. I had enough food. And I would bring the suit in the camp to certain people, and I found out later that these suits were used for people to run away from the camp. And now, the point is the function of a *Pieper* [phonetic], a *Pieper* was a guy that use to cook, polish the shoes for a *Blockältester*, and at the same time he was used for quite other things. Primarily for the sexual outlets of those *Kapos* and the leaders of the camp. I am not talking about the SS. I

am talking about the inmates. Well, the estimated amount of the inmates was about 140,000 steady on the camp. Talking about escapes, I have here one point--the escape of the boxer. We called him the boxer, he was once the *Blockältester* of Block 3, and then if I am not mistaken he was *Blockältester* of Block 12 in the quarantine. I remember when he escaped. A Jew--a French Jew, actually from Poland, but had moved later on to France. I was constantly moved from job to job, and I thought it's my luck that gives me the best jobs. And as I stated, I found out later that it wasn't just my luck, it was because somebody saw to it that I get good jobs and I was later pumped for information. I think I would have to end on this note because there is so much more that I could add, but I have to stop now. I hope that this will give some insight into the life of one, because I was only one, there were 6,000,000 that went through the same, maybe a little less, and most of them even worse. Please turn over for some more information that just came to my mind. I am very sorry, but there is so much to say about it that I can't remember everything at one time. The man from the *Sonderkommando* that I mentioned, Goldstein, was among the first ones, the uprising, was Shaya Goldstein. We called him at home Shaya Lapa. He too, was from Bendzin and if anyone from Bendzin listens to this they know perfectly well who this gentlemen was. Yes, he was a gentlemen, he sacrificed his life. This uprising was exactly the same as Warsaw. It was exactly the same uprising as the Warsaw Ghetto uprising because they knew that they can't live. They knew very well that if they are caught, not if they are caught but they knew very well that they are going to be caught and they are going to be shot, tortured, or God knows what, maybe even worse. On the other side of this tape, I want to give a few more close-ups of certain aspects of life in the ghetto, pardon me, of life in the concentration camp, Auschwitz, especially where I was concerned. I hope it will be of some help.

[Tape five, side one ended.]

Tape five, side two:

AS: Two things I want to bring out about the uprising of the *Sonderkommandos* in the camp, 1944. Those two things not in order that should be in the book, but they are in a certain way connected. The first one is: I was close by the crematorium, just by accident, when all this happened and we all run back to the camp not knowing what was going on, but we knew that something is going on with the *Sonderkommando*. We knew that the uprising is from the *Sonderkommando*. And, naturally, we run back to the camp, the camp, it was just a few feet, not too far. Naturally, in the camp we got already the news that there was an uprising. And we were all ready in case there is a collective uprising. Well, we didn't have any help from the Poles. If we would have any help from the Poles at that time because the Poles were situated--Polish underground was at that time situated in the Beskidy Mountains, it was not far from Auschwitz. One group, even according to the Poles, was very close to the camp. All they had to do is give us some help, to let some of us make the way. A few did make the way. They were caught later on too. Which proves that if they would have had help from the Poles, from the outside, the ones that were supposedly the underground--and we were all fighting the same cause, Nazism. But it proved that if they were given some help from the outside world--I don't say all, but some of them would have survived. Could you all realize what it would have meant if any of these would have survived, the stories they would have had to tell us? And another thing connected with this, too, there were only about two barracks away from the *Schneiderei*. I was at that time in the *Schneiderei*, [unclear] and I do remember, even so the Polish books state that nobody could get near them--the *Sonderkommando*. I do remember, and I can find witnesses, I use to go into the *Sonderkommando* after they came from work in the evening, since they worked in three shifts; after they came home, I used to go in to their block. I know not everybody could do it, but I used to go in and I used to get from them bacon, bread, some cakes, canned food. And it's hard for anybody who never went through Auschwitz to realize what it meant to bring out a can of sardines, a piece of bacon, some other stuff that we haven't seen for years in the camps. I want to connect with the same thing that when we left Auschwitz in January 1945, going at that time to Oranienburg, when we left Auschwitz we were just a few, as far as I know and I am sure it could be authenticated, we were the last ones to leave Auschwitz except the sick that were left in Auschwitz because Auschwitz was supposed to be blown up with the inmates, with all of them. And at the evacuation, I remember when they give us different clothing and I remember a friend of mine who worked at that time in the *Canada*. The *Canada* was the commander that took the transport that came off the train to keep some order in them. And I remember one of my dearest friends, Abe Sachs. Yes, I am mentioning his name because I am proud of having him as a friend. We went through quite a lot together in Auschwitz. And I remember Abe Sachs throwing bread through the wire when I was marching out already

for another camp leaving Auschwitz. They were the last ones to leave. He was shipped the same day or a little later. And I remember on the way when we got hungry we opened up the bread, the bread was loaded up inside with gold, diamonds. He was smart enough to give me last gift, not knowing if I will ever live to open up the bread. He gave me a last gift that probably did save the rest of my life for the rest of the time in the camps. I want to mention Block 3, requiring time, which was the block, which the people, before they went to the gas chambers were put in these whenever there was a selection or segregation, their numbers would be taken off, they would be put into Camp 3 for the last few hours. And who can forget the horrible cries coming out from this block, coming out from this barrack, from those people that knew so very well that they are going to the gas chambers. They were naked already, their clothing was taken away but their cries were not to save their lives. The cries were to give them a piece of bread so they wouldn't go to the gas chambers hungry. Can anyone imagine this? Uh-uh [negative]. You had to be there. Yes, I had the chance to go in, in Block 3, it was my great privilege to take out some of the boys from Block 3. I can't remember all the names from the few boys because there was very few that I could take out during one night, maybe one, maybe two a night. I don't want to go into details. I just want to state it that I could take out, the only reason that I could take out is because I bribed Korbonick, and Korbonick would open up and Korbonick would stay watch or go in with me to the camp. There's a lot of history connected with my work in Block 3--taking out people. I was very good in tattooing the numbers and we would change the numbers. And this in itself would require a lot of time what it meant changing numbers because when the SS had made the selection, had written down their numbers and somebody died during the night, we could easily move them into the camps. The bribes must have been very high, I personally did not do the bribes, all I did is changing the numbers. And we would take out, one, two, three a night, after a selection, and change the numbers. I won't explain it all but to go in a little bit into it--a five could be changed to a three or a three to a five to an eight, five to an eight, a two to an eight, and so on. But every life that was saved was one more life that may have survived. I remember Avrom Schuster, a very dear friend of mine, who was in there, and I came in, I took him out, he went with the second selection, and I couldn't do anything for him any more. And there were quite a few other people come up too. It's one thing that I didn't explain in the beginning, I think this belongs to the first tape that a pre-caution that I had after my mother was sold out by a Jewish policeman for 10,000 marks. Yes, I know it very well because I know who that woman even was. I know it because I was arrested in the ghetto for taking a rationing card for my mother under a different name months after she was dead in the crematorium in Auschwitz. And that's when I found out who the woman was that went out on my mother's identification card. A very wealthy woman from my hometown, from Bendzin. I can give the name because whatever I put in here I am responsible for it. Mrs. Plavis, Shulan Plavis' wife. I know it because the *Schutzpolizei*, the German police, came into my house and it proved it to me

that I am taking a rationing card from Mrs. Plavis on my mother's card. They proved to me that I am taking a rationing card for my mother while my mother was already dead, and I argued and I was brought to the Jewish police. And the Jewish police at that time, knowing fully well who did it. I know who did it too, I am too embarrassed to bring it out in the open who did it--because this man has a brother living, and I have nothing against this man's brother--this policeman's brother. He was a Jewish policeman. The brother is a nice guy. The brother is alive, and I have nothing against this brother. That's why I am keeping the name back. But when we came to the Jewish *Gemeinda* to the *Judenrat*, and I cried at that time, "What the heck do they want from me, my mother is not here. I am not taking rationing cards for my mother. The only one that I am taking for from the family Shieovitz is I. Nobody is left from my family. Why am I being accused that I am taking cards?" And they proved to me, they showed me that somebody is taking cards for Sala Shieovitz. And when I insisted that I want to know who it is, the *Judenrat* was not ready to tell me the name, but they gave me the name and that's when I found out who was the one that went out on my mother's name. Not that I didn't know that my mother's life was sold out because she was arrested. And I was sure she would be set free. She had a good *zonda* [phonetic] what was called. She had good identity papers as having a job in the kitchen for the orphanage. And this was a good job in the ghetto. And I was practically sure that she would be out, and she would have been out if some Jewish policeman wasn't too greedy for the \$10,000. And I saw this Jewish policeman go to the gas chambers in Auschwitz. I don't think I was happy to see him go but somehow a debt was repaid.

BZ: Did your family survive?

AS: Only the children, we are five children, which is very, very--it's probably the only family, it's the only family that I know of where all the children survived but my parents naturally died. My father got killed, in his own bed because he didn't want to go for deportation, they wanted to take him to Auschwitz, and my mother went to Auschwitz and to the gas chambers in Auschwitz.

BZ: Were your brothers in camps?

AS: Yes. They were all in different camps. And I can say it with great pride, I was the one that found them all, it took me quite some time but I found them all.

BZ: Were your sisters in a camp? You were...

AS: All of us kids were in camp except the older sister, who was in hiding in Warsaw.

BZ: She was in hiding?

AS: Yes, but she still worked as a laborer you know, for *Polaks*, for the Poles.

BZ: And what were the other children, you were next to the baby.

AS: I was next to the baby then I have a brother that's older than I and two sisters...

BZ: And a younger brother...

AS: And a younger brother.

BZ: How did you react to the liberation?

AS: Well, we were liberated--it's a very funny thing--we were liberated two days after May 8, which was VD day. When we were liberated, we saw already the Americans coming back from the mountains with the German prisoners, now I think that this deserves a little explanation, we were not supposed to live. We were the remnants of Auschwitz and [unclear] which was the head of the crematorium in Auschwitz came for us to liquidate, to liquidate us. We were supposed to be brought up in the mountains and over there they were supposed to open up, you know where the water runs through, what do you call it?

BZ: A dam?

AS: The dam and just let us disappear because we were the last survivors of Auschwitz and they didn't want any survivors. But we were hidden in a movies, in a theatre under the stage and when we came out the Americans were coming back already with the prisoners. Which was two days later, it was May 10, 1945. We organized right away a camp. The Americans helped us organize a camp. I was among the healthier ones. I was at that time 59 pounds, 22 years old, and I became right active, we started working right away with the camp. And we began to organize different things. As a matter of fact, about a week later, I was already helping the CIC, Counter Intelligence, the Americans in finding the SS men. And I was traveling with them in jeeps and even going into homes of the Germans and trying to find out if there were any SS or just stopping SS people that I recognized in the street that were already dressed in civilian clothes.

BZ: Did some put on concentration camp uniforms?

AS: Oh, yeah, or even on the way, just before the liberation on the march. When the American airplanes started coming down real low, they took our uniforms. They gave us their uniforms and they took our uniforms. We could run away, it isn't that a lot of us did run away. I ran away a few times, but it was safer to be with them--people don't realize it. It was safer to be with the SS than to run away because if you run away, you were caught by civilian Germans, and the civilian Germans would kill us. So it was safer to be with a group because when the Americans came down low with the airplanes they saw that we are inmates. It is true a lot of trains were bombed by the Americans, but Americans didn't know that there were inmates, all they saw is the SS outside, so they bombed; I have friends some lost arms; some lost legs but this was because they didn't know that inmates were in the trains. The trains were standing at the station waiting to be shipped. But we were actually destined for liquidation. They didn't want us alive.

BZ: They absolutely didn't?

AS: No, no, because we were the last ones from Auschwitz and we knew too much.

BZ: So Auschwitz was emptied?

AS: Oh, yeah, this was long after Auschwitz, we left Auschwitz in January and this was already in May. We had gone through in the meantime arrival at Sachsenhausen and Dachau.

BZ: And then you were on the march again?

AS: Yes.

BZ: You were running from the Americans?

AS: Yes.

BZ: Were you in a displaced persons camp?

AS: Yeah. There was organized right away displaced persons camps and all over the occupied territories, I was in a displaced person camp first in the American sector. Then when I found my brother in the English sector I moved over to the English sector, as a matter of fact my son was born in a DP camp in the English sector.

BZ: How long were you in a displaced persons camp?

AS: I was really a short time in the DP camp because I wanted to live private, so I took a room from a German family and I was their tenant.

BZ: Conditions weren't very good in the camps were they?

AS: No, they weren't very good and I didn't want to live with everybody together. We lived in a hotel but I still came to eat in the hotel, we still ate, we still had a communal kitchen, we still ate together. And then a little later on, I even went on ration cards, on my own ration cards because I started working as a tailor. Besides having a job, I had a job that I worked, I did all the tailoring for free for the people from the DP camp. I have papers for all this, and I just wanted to stick to my trade, except I started collecting the memorabilia; I have that most of it now.

BZ: That was unusual, not too many people were collecting at that point.

AS: No, I was the only one, they all thought that I am a nut. There were no people collecting, I was really the only one that I know of that did collect any memorabilia of the Holocaust.

BZ: Prior to World War II, did you ever...

AS: Oh, yes. I was a stamp collector.

BZ: You were a collector?

AS: Oh, yeah I was a stamp collector.

BZ: When did you come to the United States?

AS: I came to the United States October 1949, I came to Dallas, Texas. I lived in Texas until January 1950. In January 1950, I came to Philadelphia.

BZ: Were you aided by anyone to establish your life here?

AS: We were supposed to be aided by the--I don't know here it is Federation...

BZ: HIAS?

AS: Yeah, we came through the HIAS but we were supposed to be aided by the Federation--no, it was at that time something else. I don't know what it was called, but anyway, I didn't like when I came up. You know, I had to stay there like a beggar to

wait for the few dollars a week, I said it's not for me. And there I didn't need it. I came here on Sunday and I think Tuesday I had a job already. I didn't want any charity.

BZ: So you wouldn't say that the Jewish Agencies were terribly helpful to you?

AS: No, not terribly helpful to me, not at all, not at all. No, I had great disappointments. When I came up there and she told me that I spend too much money that I could have bought bread from yesterday which would have been half-priced, and when I had to live in an apartment of a room and a small kitchen where the rats were running around freer than I. Then, I don't think that I would give them too much credit all those organizations that helped us coming. I am grateful that they helped us come over to this country. I'm grateful for being in this country, but they were not as helpful--I know, I came to Dallas, Texas, and we had over there the Jewish Federation and they just didn't know what to do for us. While here it was quite the opposite.

BZ: I see, in Philadelphia. And who about the Joint Distribution Committee in Europe, did they help you after the war?

AS: They helped, yes. The Joint helped. Oh, sure they helped out constantly. I still have some books that they were sending over, and even with this--I was the only nut. When the books would come to the Jewish committee. They would call me in. "Arnold, do you want to take home the junk? We don't have anybody that would read the books now." I had the most magnificent library in Germany because nobody was interested in books. I was interested in books.

BZ: Do you have any knowledge of any children who arrived here after the war, orphaned children?

AS: Yes, yes. They came under a different quota. They came right after the war in '45 and '46. The minors.

BZ: What were their ages?

AS: I think they would have to be up to 16 years.

BZ: Were there many young ones, would you say?

AS: Oh, yeah, there were quite a few young ones. Not from concentration camps, they came primarily from labor camps.

BZ: They had put these children in labor camps?

AS: Yes.

BZ: How young would you say the youngest would be?

AS: I know of kids that were at that time 13, 12 years old when they came.

BZ: So then during the war, they took them to labor camps when they were about nine or 10?

AS: Sure, some of them younger yet.

BZ: [unclear] How were these children treated upon arrival in the United States, do you know?

AS: They were taken in. A lot of them were taken in by families for a short while. Naturally, the agency, I don't remember what the agency was called at that time, aided them. It was some kind of a Jewish aid society. They aided them, they helped them out, but most of them started going to school and I know even quite a few of them that started work.

BZ: As children?

AS: Yes, as youngsters, as minors. I have friends, some of them are professors, some of them are inventors, from the refugees. I know a lot of very, very educated people, I know scientists. I happen to know one that does cancer research. I happen to know of one of the top brain surgeons somewhere in California. They were all from these kids. They went to school here and they became big; even though they had very little schooling at home. I have to say it with pride, it's a special breed. And we are probably the only people that came over to this country that we never gave trouble to the police or to any other law enforcement office; we never committed any crimes. You don't see any of our people...

BZ: It's better when the culture is very law abiding.

AS: Yes, I think we were. There was once in the paper that we were the best breed of people that came over here, even so, we went through the worst.

BZ: Of the children you know that were given to families, was assimilation stressed by these families or was maintaining their Jewish identity stressed.

AS: Yes. Oh yes, Jewish families would take home these kids. A lot of them had interior motives. They had personal motives to marry them off to their daughters or whatever. And I know quite a few cases. As a matter of fact, I was supposed to be brought over here in 1946 by a family that said, I had everything ready for me, a wife is ready for me and a business for me. I just stopped writing to them because I felt that...

[Tape five, side two ended.]

Tape six, side one:

BZ: What kinds of assimilation were stressed?

AS: I really don't know if I would consider it assimilation. You have to understand one thing, a lot of these people that came out from the camp couldn't believe in God anymore. Now you know--it was funny, I believed in God. I always believed in God because I didn't think that God hurt the people. I felt that people killed people. But at the same time I couldn't tell anybody else my beliefs because I didn't know if I was right or they were right because after what we went through it was very hard to believe that there was a God. You can't blame any of these people it's a question for the individual. There were a lot of people that just couldn't believe in God because they saw their parents killed, people that were pious, religious, the cream of the crop. Because, let's not kid ourselves, even Israel is unable to produce the kind of Judaism that flourished in the Eastern Europe, this is gone, this is gone forever. And I don't care if they are saying that in a thousand years, not even in a million years, this Judaism is gone forever.

BZ: And the world's been diminished by it.

AS: Yes.

BZ: Not just the Jews, the world.

AS: Yes. And it's odd, I just read in the paper that, you know, there's a lot of mixed marriages among the children of the survivors. And I know it, I know it personally, and I don't know what we can do about it because the American Jew didn't do too much to give us any hope of Judaism. I don't think that the American Jew is the kind of Jew that we survivors can be proud of because they are not our type of a Jew, they are Jews, they can be any type of Jews they want, I love them, they're still Jews, but it's not the type of Jews we know, positively not. We have now the Jewish leaders, I don't know that any of the Jewish leaders would know how to make a *broche* [a blessing]. And who are they representing? Us? We know more than them. Who puts them up, who elected them? Who elected Federation? Who elected the JCRC? If they have enough money one puts in the other, to me, it's a *Judenrat*. I'm sorry to say it, but they're no better than a *Judenrat*. I'm picking up constantly, I'm getting an invitation to a party here and to a party there and this colored guy is being honored, or this colored guy is being honored, or this Catholic, or that Catholic. How many Catholics or how many colored people have honored Jews? Now, let's not kid ourselves, I may sound prejudiced, I don't know. You can call it whatever you want, but none of these people have honored us. We are honoring now one in the State Department that, the black one that didn't do a damn thing, not only for Jews, not even for the country. We are honoring him just because he is black. How [unclear] are we going to be brownny skins and kiss everybody's behind? For how long? Nobody is picking up for us. It's about time that we picked up for ourselves. I know that all those big shots don't like to hear it because they don't like to

rock the boat. I don't give a damn. I have been on a rocking boat all my life and plenty of times almost tipped over, so I don't give a damn what these people think about me. I can say this in the presence of blacks, and I can say it in the presence of non-Jews. I hate it when they are being honored for not contributed anything to a Jewish cause. If they have contributed anything to a Jewish cause, good. I have been a couple of months ago to a beautiful banquet where a non-Jewish banker was honored for contributing to the State of Israel, yes, this, I recognized. But just because somebody is black and he is in the State Department and didn't contribute a God damn thing to anything, not Judaism, not the State Department, not the United States, we have to honor him just because he is black? Because we have to kiss somebody's behind? But these people don't understand it. They too God damn stupid, all those big shots because they made money? Sure, he and his country--you ask if he is a big man, you ask right away how much money does he have, so he's a big man. In Europe you recognize a big man if he was an intellectual, here an intellectual don't mean a God damn thing if he don't make money. So it's altogether--well we have different ways of life. Again, I don't think that I am right but that's the way I feel. And I will always consider the Federation, the JCRC, with all this I will consider them the *Judenrat* because they are not acting any better than the *Judenrat* acted during the war. And I know a lot of people that are going to listen to these tapes and will not like it, but that's the truth.

BZ: Well, in your opinion were there some good *Judenrats*?

AS: Yes.

BZ: There were some good *Judenrats*.

AS: Oh, sure. We know of Gens in Vilna. We know of a lot of people, you know--you see, we had a bad *Judenrat*. We had a bad *Judenrat*. We had Monik Merin, which was a bad *Judenrat*. Yet, most people survived from our part because of Monik Merin.

BZ: In spite of him.

AS: I don't know, I can't say it in spite of him. He was the one that told the Germans, "Why take them," you know, "out of the cities to take them to the concentration camps? Let's make shops here. Why have the people running around in the camps not doing nothing, let's organize shops." Most of these people survived. They were sent away to labor camps. We had our own shops in the ghettos. These people survived. Who knows if he had something in back of his mind, I don't know?

BZ: He may not have appeared to but he really may have had the Jews in mind.

AS: Sure. You can take just the difference between Rumkowski in Lodz that he didn't care to sacrifice 500,000 Jews and save 50 Jews--like he said that if he leaves the ghetto, if he survives with 100 Jews, he will be another Moses. And I had the great privilege of seeing Rumkowski come to Auschwitz with his wife and child. And I can never forget it. He went over to the SS man that was at that time a big shot. It was Dr.

Tigel, at the ramp. And when they came off and he said, "*Ich will zu meiner Yuden sprechen.*" "I would like to speak to my Jews." And he said with a smile, "Later." And they just hopped over the three steps to the truck and they gave him the last part, *Sonderkommando*, to the gas chambers. They still thought that they are big men. I saw the policeman coming in their uniforms from Lodz with their whips, and their boots, and came off the camp and thought right away that they could start, you know, being big shots. Well, we didn't let them live too long either. We couldn't fight the Germans but we could fight our own. We could fight the Poles. We could fight the Russians if there were anti-Semites in the camps that tried to finish us off. We fought everybody in the camp, if they were against us. And we did plenty, believe me. I am not too proud of a lot of things, but it had to be done to save lives.

BZ: To save lives--to save the Jewish community.

AS: Yes, to save life in the concentration camps, we had to get rid of a lot of Poles, a lot of Russians, and a lot of others, even our own. And if we couldn't finish them off we saw to it that the Germans finished them off.

BZ: Well, for the Jewish community to remain intact, you had to kill the enemy within.

AS: One of these enemies could have an hundred killed. It's better one than a hundred.

BZ: Right.

AS: As a matter of fact, in '44 when we had the reins of Auschwitz the killing had stopped. Okay, the crematoriums didn't stop, the gas chambers didn't stop, but killing by other inmates stopped. Like when I came to Auschwitz and a Pole would see a nice pair of shoes on you, so he would put a broomstick on your neck, on your throat, stand with his two feet, you know, just so he could have a pair of shoes he would kill you. So we stopped all this. When we came--too, we had lice in the billions. We kept ourselves clean after our transport came. We saw that the camp was clean everything was clean. It was so clean that even the SS handed out extra rations of bread and butter or margarine if you brought them a louse.

BZ: They wanted you to live [unclear]. The SS did.

AS: Yes. It isn't that they wanted us to live this way, they had to come in the camp and if we had lice, naturally they took out lice too. We went out on a *kommando*--we could spread it. Typhus and all other sicknesses.

BZ: So it was only for their own self-preservation that they wanted you to be clean.

AS: That's right, yeah. And they were very happy with us that we kept it clean, which was impossible before. So we contributed something to the life in the concentration camp, too, as horrible as it was. As I said, we helped bring food for other people. We helped our own as much as possible. And that's why I am so aggravated when I pick up those books written by different Americans and others and nobody, really

nobody shows that little humanity that existed in the camp. Because we did help each other by stealing, by conniving, even by killing a Russian. I will never forget it. Maybe somebody listens to this tape remembers Pietka that we had in the *Lager* in Auschwitz. A Russian inmate that was just killing Jews. Well we had to get rid of him; we got rid of him. We had a lot of Poles that we had to get rid of. We got rid of them because they were killing Jews *en masse*. And the only way was to get rid of one of them instead of killing 100 Jews. I don't know if it was organized by the underground, it could have been organized by the underground. We would get an order you know, this guy had to be finished off. We saw to it that the guy was finished off and this was it.

BZ: So in spite of conditions that kept the morale as good as could be.

AS: Oh yes, it kept the morale as good as could be. As a matter of fact, I'll show you a book where they gave me--This Is Your Life. They gave me a party, they honored me in our synagogue with This Is Your Life, and we had witnesses. And just to read it, the statements from inmates, former inmates of the concentration camps, how I would keep up their morale just at night telling a few jokes or sitting around and talking and reminiscing about home and this and that, which any small thing it contributed to the morale. It contributed to the wanting to live a little longer because otherwise we had no reason to live.

BZ: To look back then was good.

AS: Yeah.

BZ: Bruno Bettelheim thought that it was wrong to look back.

AS: No, it wasn't wrong it was good. It was good. And I will show it to you in writing, on tape that people testified, people said it when they came to my party, when I was honored that it kept them alive--the different jokes that I was telling. And I was always the one--I was really among the youngest ones, but I was always the one to get together a crowd and start telling stories and reminisce a little bit about home--well it did keep them alive. A lot of them fell asleep while we were talking, a lot of them went later to sleep, maybe with a tear in their eye but he wanted to live another day.

BZ: What are your attitudes toward Israel?

AS: I love Israel. It's the greatest thing that ever happened. I only hate when people are bringing it up, we sacrificed 6,000,000 Jews, thanks to this we have now a State of Israel. I cannot listen to it because if we had to sacrifice 6,000,000 Jews, I personally paid too high a price, not that we didn't need a State of Israel--we needed it. I wish we would have had it before the war many more Jews would have survived. But I personally paid too high a price. I am very happy that we have the State of Israel, and I would let it go at that.

BZ: What have you done since liberation? Where did you work?

AS: I worked as a tailor in Germany and when I came over to the United States, I worked as a tailor, too. And, you know, my hobby, collecting of the artifacts of the Holocaust. I lecture. I promised myself in the concentration camp that I won't forget

it, neither will I let anyone else forget it. And I think I am doing a pretty good job, I won't let anybody forget it.

BZ: Was it difficult to adjust to life in America?

AS: For some it was, it was even a little bit difficult for myself, too. You come into a different country--okay, I was blessed with it, you know, I learned English in Germany before we came over here. As a matter of fact, I was the interpreter on the boat that we came over here. I worked with the Americans. I worked with the CIC in Germany and I had to learn English because I was exposed to it, working with the Americans. My wife learned English, naturally, television--and the children--but you know, very well that she spoke very good English. But I had to make a new start, I did not want to bring up the kids with fear that something like this might happen here. Well, I knew that may happen here, can happen here, and I hope it doesn't. But I wanted to bring up normal kids like anybody else, thank God, I think I did a pretty good job. Plenty of times it hurt me that I had to hide a lot of things from my children. But I didn't hide everything, my kids knew exactly what happened in Germany, I had to tell them this. They knew that their grandparents were killed by the Germans because when they came home telling me this friend had two sets of grandparents, I don't have any. Well, I could not tell the kids God took them because I didn't want to instill hate towards God in them. I told them plain and simple--there was a Germany, I explained what kind of a Germany that tried to liquidate the Jews, and that's where our parents were--at the same time I had to bring up normal kids. I wanted to bring up kids not to be any different than any other kids. And I'm very proud of it. I did bring up two wonderful children.

BZ: What is your son?

AS: My son is a doctor.

BZ: And your daughter?

AS: My daughter is a fashion designer, and I don't want to sound you know like a Jewish parent--my son is a doctor. But, I am proud, I had a lot to do with it, I had to push and nag, and sometimes brain-wash him without him knowing it. But thank God, they are out for themselves. My son is married, as I said, he is a physician. His wife is a psychologist. My daughter is a fashion designer, so I must have done something good. I don't want to take credit for it because actually credit belongs to a mother. A mother brings up children. But I spent, I think more time than any other parent spends with their children because this was all I had. When I came home from work this was my greatest pleasure to spend the time with them.

BZ: So, the cultural values that you learned in Poland are not gone but are instilled in the survivors. The survivor has these values.

AS: The survivor has these values and we instilled a lot in our children too. My children are good Jews. I instilled a lot in my children. When I say I, I mean my wife equally if not more. We instilled a lot in the values in our children. They know the values that we had in Europe they can never have because this is gone forever. But I am very

proud of them as good Jews. They observe, I wouldn't say that they are Orthodox Jews. They are traditional Jews. They observe all the holidays. My kids will not work on the high holidays or any other holidays that they don't have to work. They will observe it even if it would mean their job. And this I am talking about, kids that are not Orthodox Jews. Just Conservative Jews.

BZ: Did you find the Americans accepting?

AS: Accepting us?

BZ: Yes.

AS: I had no problems really. I really had no problems. As a matter of fact, I started out the first work in a shop. You know where there were all Italian people and I was practically the only Jew till a few days later some more Jews came in. I had no problems. I can't really say that anybody was against me. I take pride in it that I am a good tailor. And I did my utmost to satisfy everybody wherever I worked, whoever I worked for. I came up in my trade as high as you can. I was the head fitter in one of the largest men's clothing stores in the city of Philadelphia, till I worked for myself. I worked 16 years for myself. So I don't think it would be just to say that I had any obstacles, small ones, jealousy maybe a little bit in the shop that I would do more than them, make an extra dollar than them, or do a better job, but it didn't really amount to too much.

BZ: Did you find any concern for what you had gone through from these people, in the camps, did any of them ever express the concern or interest?

AS: Not really, not really.

BZ: But they knew.

AS: They knew what I went through, yes, but not really, not really, if you mean that we were treated any better...

BZ: I don't mean treated, I mean do your fellow workers--were they sorry? Or did they ever express that they were sorry about what you went through or...

AS: No, as a matter of fact, I could get more--I remember I lectured to a Catholic school where a nun came over and crossed herself and said, "Mr. Shay, if we contributed in any way to the massacre of 6,000,000 Jews, I hope God forgives us." And believe me, this was to me payment enough. I heard a lot of clergy, where I lectured, bring out concern that they didn't do enough for it. And to be very honest with you, I heard from more clergy, from more clergy from more non-Jews, from more Christians, saying that they are sorry what happened because they didn't do enough for us, than I heard from Jews or other Jewish leaders, which is surprising maybe to you, to me it hurts.

BZ: When you spoke to the clergy of the church did they ever indicate to you that their, they had learned antisemitic teachings in their schools and in their church services.

AS: Publicly, no. Maybe one or two, but privately, yes. Quite a few of them said that it was the teaching, it should have been taught differently. It should be changed

and so on. But I must admit that in the Catholic schools, I do get a very great response to it. The teachings that I am bringing out, I mean when I lecture to a school, to a Catholic school, they want to know a lot. They have read quite a few books on the Holocaust. I am very much pleased with it, very much. And I have had a lot of Catholic schools. I have had Catholic schools where I had to go back again and again, and tell more.

BZ: Have you ever been invited to schools of other denominations, other Christian denominations?

AS: Yes. I have been invited to churches, Episcopalian and other denominations. Yes, I did speak, I spoke to black groups.

BZ: So you feel that there is a turning in their teaching that they...

AS: I feel that they want to know...

BZ: And that if they know they will understand where it came from?

AS: Yes, and this is the only way that they can understand. Oh, sure, I had different things--I had in one black group where a guy got up--a black fellow got up and he said, "Well, Mr. Shay, don't you think that they are doing the same thing to us now, putting us in ghettos, and keeping us down?" Well, I got very much insulted with it, and I told him, I said, "Hey buddy, you don't have to be in the ghetto. You are in the ghetto of your own choosing, because you can leave the ghetto whenever you want." I said, "I know plenty of black judges and black lawyers, and black doctors, and a lot of them that didn't want to live in the ghetto had to leave the ghetto. You make your own ghetto, we were put into a ghetto to die." I said, "So I don't want to hear this." I said, "Don't you ever compare your ghetto to our ghettos." And I had a standing ovation at that time from the blacks.

BZ: Is that right?

AS: Yes, because they felt that I was right. They shouldn't compare anything especially to a survivor. I am very much hurt at something like this. And it hurts me, too, you know--when the--even the police, or the do-gooders will come out, "Well, what you expect, he's a killer, he kills this one, he killed so many people or whatever the crime they're committing because they're coming from a ghetto and this and that." But that's no worst ghetto than where we are coming from. You show me one refugee from our people that committed a crime since he came here, since 1945, I would like to see one. Quite the opposite; we built up beautiful families. We wanted to live the same as the American people. We didn't wait for any handouts, as soon as we can get a job--I came on Sunday, Tuesday I had a job. We didn't wait for any handouts. I was embarrassed to go anywhere for a handout because I am not used to it.

BZ: Did you encounter antisemitism when you came here, the same type of antisemitism that you had?

AS: Not the same type.

BZ: But the same type of thinking?

AS: The same type of thinking.

BZ: Stemming from the same type of teaching?

AS: Yes, yes. I don't want to talk too much about it, but I did encounter a little bit too much for my expectations, because I thought I was coming to a free country.

BZ: I would assume from what you said, that you feel an integral part of society here, that you are comfortable here, very much at home.

AS: Oh, yeah, very much--listen, I was in Poland 17 years, I am here 28. I am here longer than I was at home, and I may add this because I am very proud of it. I think that the refugees--ours that came after World War II--are better Americans than the native Americans, than the born Americans. Because we can really appreciate this country, good or bad or indifferent, it's still the greatest country on earth. I only wish that the American people would feel the same way because they think that it's coming to them--it's not. I wish they could go for a year or so to Europe and see the difference what it means to live in a free country because this is still the greatest country on earth. And I do love Israel. I probably would like to move to Israel too, I don't know. But I still think that this is the greatest country on earth as much as I feel that we need the State of Israel. But it does not mean that we cannot have Jews living in other countries.

[Tape six, side one ended]

Tape six, side two:

AS: We can be good Jews, we can love our State of Israel, and I sure do love the State of Israel, but at the same time we can be good Americans. And as odd as it may sound, I pledge allegiance to this country. It is my home. As I mentioned it so many times, I have the greatest love for the State of Israel because we do need the State of Israel. But even let's say if I have to sing the hymns, I think that the American anthem will come first than the Israeli anthem because I do live in this country and I appreciate this country. It isn't that I came here for a visit. This country was good to me, they took me in, they gave me the same chance as if I was born here, I can't forget it. I do my share for the State of Israel as much as I can, but if I had to do the same thing for the United States I would do it. If I had to do more for the United States I would do it too. Because this is my country, this is my home. There are no two ways about it. I know I may get a lot of controversy on this here, but I am an American, and I am proud of it. I am not an Israeli, I am a Jew. Which makes me an American Jew, I think I would be wrong if I would say a Jewish American. I am an American Jew because I am proud of this country. I could never have--in my wildest dreams I could never dream of anything having what I have here just as a plain working man.

BZ: That's not possible?

AS: No, it isn't possible. It's impossible--not in Europe and not in the State of Israel as a working man to have what I have here--to live the way I live here. So I do owe a lot to this country, and primarily my life because I was liberated by the American Service, and this I can't forget either. It's a lot to talk even about this subject because a lot of people think different or maybe are bigger hypocrites than I am, but I cannot be a hypocrite. This country has been great to me, and I appreciate it.

BZ: When you were liberated was that your first contact with Americans?

AS: Yeah, it was my first contact with Americans when I was liberated, and somehow I picked up the English language. I don't know if it's because I spoke so many languages, but somehow I think that the English language was the easiest one.

BZ: You were very eager...

AS: Maybe too...

BZ: ...to communicate with your liberators.

AS: Yes, I was very eager. As a matter of fact, I--even after the war we were only a group of 10, and we put our lives on stake plenty of times to help the American people. When we went to find the SS which I have proof of this from the Americans, and from the English. I have proof of this--even from here, from the Jewish Exponent, from people that were arrested through me--the SS men.

BZ: Sure they were still armed.

AS: Yes, I have still the documentations, yes.

BZ: In your opinion should the Holocaust be taught?

AS: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, and not just to Jews because we have to understand one thing. This Holocaust was something so great that it had never been in history, not anything like it. You see, I don't like when these people are called war criminals. They aren't war criminals, they are "murderers." A war criminal is altogether different. I don't want to go into the legal explanation of the difference of the war criminal, you know, than a murderer, because it doesn't take much to know the difference. But these people were murderers. And then, in all good conscience, I cannot forget all the different nationalities. We had in Auschwitz alone, well up to -- now we knew of 27 nationalities. We know now of 30 different nationalities in Auschwitz. How can I forget those millions of non-Jews that died. And as much as I hate Russia, how can we forget the 20,000,000 of Russians that gave their lives because of the Nazi regime.

BZ: If they were political prisoners they died in the gas ovens too?

AS: Oh, yeah, a lot did. Most of the political prisoners, the Russian prisoners, went to the gas chambers right away.

BZ: Yes, so that was a fate reserved for them, too.

AS: A fate reserved for them, sure. And it was, it was reserved we know it now reserved for all the Slavic countries.

BZ: There was more gas stock-piled than there was Jews.

AS: Sure. You go into the history of any concentration camp and you will see that in most of the concentration camps there were more non-Jews than Jews. Because after all--it's true that most of them survived. But still we don't have clear figures. But still we can count at least the same 6,000,000 Jews that died, the same 6,000,000 of other nationalities that died, except the 20,000,000 Russians. So I as a survivor, cannot in all good conscious forget these people, because no matter what their religion I, was, or what their outlook was, they were in the same boat as I was. And if it wouldn't have ended in 1945 it would have lasted longer, a lot of other nationalities, not mentioning this that more Jews naturally, would have died, but a lot of other nationalities would have died too. That's why I think that it should be taught to everybody. You know, it's funny when you pick up the paper, now all of a sudden the Germans -- the Americans don't like the Holocaust talk because it gives them a black eye. I would give them two black eyes, each in one of them. Where were they when they had the German *Bund* here? Did they object to this, did they object to the German Rifle Club? Did they object to all those antisemitic clubs that they had during the war? Did they object to any of the propaganda that they themselves taught or their parents? Now they don't want the Holocaust taught because they know it's true, and because it gives them, you know, a bad reputation. Well they did it, it's history. We can't deny history. Sure, it happened before, we know it happen to the Armenians before. It happened to a lot of other nationalities, and I don't deny that this shouldn't be taught either. But the Holocaust is the prime thing, because nothing of that caliber ever happened before. And it should be taught. The whole world should know about it. And we know how the ugly head of antisemitism is lifting up again. And the

main blame that I can put on is the judges of the United States. Even the Supreme Court, they stink all of them, because freedom of speech is a beautiful thing, but not when it's being abused and here it's being abused. And that group of lawyers --you know, what are they called-- the Civil Liberties Union? They are a bunch of hypocrites. They are a bunch of nobodys. And we know that we always have some creeps, you know, that will pick up for one cause or another, no matter what the cause may be. But I think that the Civil Liberties Union should be abolished. I think that they are illegal, giving the rights to a group of Nazis to march with their swastikas in Skokie, Illinois which is primarily a Jewish section. This is awful, this is inciting to riot, because there are going to be riots. I can tell you myself, if I am there and if I see somebody with a swastika. That swastika is going to come off even if the arm has to come off with it. I am not a violent man and you know it. I am against violence, but if I would see somebody with a swastika and if the swastika can't come off by itself, I am repeating it: it will have to come off with the arm, no matter what the repercussions will be, because I don't want to see a swastika. I have swastikas in my collection for a purpose but I don't want to see people that believe in the swastika to march openly with the swastika. And this isn't a free country, you can't consider this marching not because you live in a free country, no it's not. This is sheer hypocrisy, but the Civil Liberties Union to tell us that we have to stay there and watch when they are marching with swastikas to a Jewish neighborhood. I think every Jew ought to be there.

BZ: Somebody wrote that it's an insult to every mother whose child fought the Nazis.

AS: And not only to the child...

BZ: That's right.

AS: It's an insult even to the Catholic Church that recognizes now the evils of Nazism. It's an insult to every American, every freedom loving American...

BZ: It's idolatry.

AS: Sure. How can we survivors when the Nazis killed so many millions of us, how can we look at something like this?

BZ: Do you feel that your children are more sensitive to you and to others as a result of your experiences and your losses?

AS: Yes, I think that my children appreciate life more. I think that my children appreciate this country more. I think, especially my daughter, that was born in this country, my son was born as I mentioned before in the D.P. camp in Germany, appreciate it more being born here. And it makes them--because of knowing all the past. It makes them better Americans and better Jews.

BZ: Please feel free to conclude this interview by elaborating on anything you've said, or making any statement that you wish.

AS: Well, I think I made enough statements. I got a little bit high on the Civil Liberties Union. I got high a little bit on the Jewish organizations, which I repeat were

never elected by us, by me for sure not. And they coming up into ranks according to how much money they have, which this in itself is a disgrace because it isn't democratic. We live in a democratic country, and I think that we ought to have elections because even in Poland we had elections to the Jewish community. We elected our leaders.

BZ: The Torah is the basis of democracy.

AS: That's right, and I think that it's a disgrace here in the Jewish community the way these people are elected. And it's funny to see those people running around as if they were really our leaders. As if they were really the ones that could talk for us. No, they can't. For me, for sure not, and when I say me I mean the rest of the guys that survived concentration camps. I don't recognize them first of all, because I love democracy. I love this country. I love what it stands for, well we're not perfect. I couldn't say that this country is perfect, it would be sheer hypocrisy but it is still better than any other country in the world. We can still voice our opinion. We can still say what we like and what we don't like. And I can be a registered Republican and if I don't like the one that is running from the Republican ticket for president, I can vote Democrat. And I do hope that the American people realize that privilege because to me it's a great privilege to go and vote. To go and pull that lever that I want without anybody telling me what to do because it is a privilege. It is the first time in my life that I could vote was in this country. And I wouldn't want to give up the privilege for anything in the world even if I had to fight for it. But I do hope that some of the politicians realize all this because we did lose--if its Watergate or anything else--well, I know a lot of people won't like this--the only thing actually that Nixon can be blamed for is for being caught, because I don't think that any President before him or after him is going to be any different. What he did wasn't nice, but a lot of Presidents before him did the same thing, maybe not as bad. And as we see here now it is catching up, a lot of the politicians are being prosecuted for evil doings, and it's about time because nobody is immune from crime. If they commit a crime let them pay for it. Oh, sure, I don't care if some big shot, you know, that deserves, like we have now in the papers, that deserves five lifetimes in jail and gets off with five years. I think this in itself is a crime only because he was good to his constituents, or whatever. It's a lot of malarkey, sheer hypocrisy from the judge, too. All this letting off somebody for killing somebody because he comes from a poor home, and he comes from a minority home, or he comes from this, oh, it's a lot of bull. He committed a crime let him pay for it. All those fights about the jails, they want television. What are they sitting in jails for, writing poetry? They are sitting in jail for murder, let them pay for murder. But should we open up bordellos in the camp, so they could go and have their fun? Should we make shows, I mean in the jails, so they could have fun? No, when they go to jail for killing somebody let them rot there. Because a lot of people are shedding tears over those people that were killed, let them shed some tears. I know that it's true that this country has a lot to be desired, even so, it's the greatest country on earth, and I will keep on repeating this as long as there is breath in me. But we ought to take a deep look that

the politicians are crooked, and the politicians will pick up for a minority group no matter what group it is because they want their votes, nothing else, it's sheer hypocrisy and something ought to be done about this, too. I don't know--you know, we cry a lot about those politicians. Some people may say well I know of a lot that is good but what they did bad overweighs the good deeds because most of the politicians knew exactly what they were doing. You have a lot of lawyers, you have a lot of intellectuals and they knew what they were doing. You know the oddest thing that strikes me is the only thing or the only profession, if I may call it that, you don't need no experience is to be a politician. It's a disgrace in a great country like ours where we have so many intellectuals, and the country with so much unemployment, but yet, the politicians have the right to give themselves a raise. So many people are out of jobs, yet the politicians are making so much money, and I am talking from the smallest to the biggest one. It's true a lot of the politicians give up jobs where they made a lot of more money than they make now, but well, they made their money. They want to be in the public eye, they want honors, let them pay for it. The poorest slob that's working to make a living don't have to pay for it, or the millionaires that have multi-million dollar concerns. Some of them get away without paying taxes, and we know it, it's in the papers, it's all over. This is wrong, too. If paying taxes everybody ought to pay the taxes according to his income. Or even those churches, they are the wealthiest why shouldn't they pay any income tax, they own homes, they own beautiful buildings and just putting in money upon money, and collecting more money from the people. Why don't they help the poor people? It's a lot of injustices here, too. But let's hope that maybe someday it will change. I am not a politician, maybe I am talking too much about politics. Well, I think I am talking only for what I read. And what probably hurts the most is because it hits the pocketbook. I know that I worked hard, for every single dollar, and there are a lot of them, politicians that are putting in people in jobs where they don't do no work and make money. This makes me laugh; some secretaries don't even have to know how to type as long as they have other qualifications. It's a joke but it's true. Things started and they are being caught but still and all those are the culprits, the culprits are making money on it. Look at how much money the guys from Watergate are making now on books. I think they should be banned from writing books.

BZ: Only in America?

AS: Only in America, yeah. Well, all I can say is God Bless America. I am happy to be in this country and I am very grateful for everything this country has given me.

BZ: Thank you.

[Tape six, side two ended]