

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

HENRY SKORR

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer:	Harriet Richman
Dates:	February 8 - July 19, 1983

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HS - Henry Skorr [interviewee]

HR - Harriet Richman [interviewer]

Date: February 8, 1983¹

Tape one, side one:

HR: ...and Harriet Richman the interviewer, taking place on February the 8th, 1983. Mr. Skorr, would you please begin by telling us a little bit about the town that you came from in Poland, and what it was like there before the war?

HS: I was born in 1921 in Kalisz. Kalisz is on the western part of Poland, a part from Poznan state. In the beginning we was belonging to Lodz state. And later in 1923 they put us to Poznan state. Kalisz is the last bigger town that had a bigger concentration of Jews in the western part. It's very important that I explain what means in Poland the western part, the eastern part. Poland was divided between Russia, Austria and Germany a few hundred years. In connection with this, in the old part of Poland this was under occupation of the other, the occupation, let's see, Russia, Germany, or Austria was developing entire different culture, or a Russian culture or a German culture or a Austrian culture. We was belonging to the German part. In our town, until 1914, not far from our town was the border in Sayborno between Germany and Poland. Classically, the western part from Poland was always antisemitic. During the history of Poland, the old pogroms, the old anti-Jewish actions was more active in the German, in the western part of Poland what was belonging to Germany. The state of Poland was founded in the western part of Poland like in Gniezno, Torun, Bilgoraj, Poznan, Kalisz. This is the historical part of Poland, that Poland start to develop in the first kingdom from the Piasts, the first kingdom from the Piasts was in Gniezno. We are not far from that part. I believe--I'm talking a little more now--I believe that our town, the community, the Jewish people, was the emigration from the western part, from Germany, when the Polish kings invited Jews and Germans to Poland to help to build up Poland to make it more modern, to create towns, cities, to create industry. So I believe that in our town was the biggest concentration of Jews when they come from the western part of invitation from the Polish kings, from Boleslaw Hrobrey [phonetic], from Boleslaw the Piast, from Boleslaw--Casimir the Great. This is all kings what was involved in building up of Poland. And a part of building up of Poland was from the Jews what they bring, they bring their knowledge from the western part, from Germany, from French, from Italy, and they helped building the cities. Our town was built western part. This means city hall, and from city hall the streets was going around in a radius. This means they make from a *Ratush* [phonetic], this is the center *platz*, and from this the streets was going around like German style. This is our city of Kalisz.

¹This interview was conducted on multiple dates in 1983: February 8 and 28, April 12, May 2, June 14 and 28, July 5 and 19.

And Kalisz is a very old city what was existing either before the history of Poland. It was located on the river of Prosna. And during the history we learned that Jade Tract, the Jade Pike what was going from Rome to the Baltic Sea was going through our city. We find still in our city bridges and highways made with the ancient stone from the Romans. Through our city was going Napoleon Bonaparte in 1812 when he went to conquer Russia. We find there too bridges what he was building for the army, and we find the Alayzyu Zafina [phonetic] what is a name from his wife, and all kinds of signs in French what is written when he was marching with a big army through Poznan, Kalisz, to the Russian border.

So I want to repeat, we are the last bigger town in western part of Poland what had a bigger Jewish community. I believe in 1939 before the German invasion was approximately 30 to 40,000 Jews in Kalisz. The Jews was occupied most in their home industry. There was carpenters, shoemakers, butchers, bakers, goldsmiths and so-and-so. A big part of making a living, this was, people was going to market in the western part from the small towns from great Poland. They call it in Poznan Oloshno [phonetic] and they was over there selling their merchandise. And they have a special how to say, a congregation. They was concentrated and represented by the Polish government to protect their interests. Because when they was going selling their merchandise, they always had all kinds conflicts, all kinds pogroms, all kinds of robberies in the small part, in the other towns when they went to sell. And I remember being a child, I always was listening how my mother and my father and friends was telling, "Oh, this week was a very bad week for the Jews on the markets. They was beating them up and they was taking away their property. And this was like in my memory waiting over when they're coming back from home and coming back from the markets and selling what was a good day or a bad day or if they was beaten up or not beaten up.

So, how I want to continue with my Kalisz, what have a historical part in development of Poland and have a, too, a very historical part in our Jewish history. In Kalisz was the first time written the *Kaliszian Krakdar* [phonetic] in, I believe in 1410, by the King Boleslaw Piast. In that ***Krakdar*** the first time the Jew start to be not a private property between a landlord or from another *reger* [phonetic], between a other big man what could do with him what he wants, take away his property, take away his life, take away his wife and throw away the bones from the cemetery. Until now nobody was punished for killing a Jew, or for harming a Jew. In that *Kaliszian Krakdar* [phonetic], that king Boleslaw Piast first put this on paper that a Jew is now the property from the king and is under the king's protection. I saw in the *Kaliszian* museum, in city hall, the original tract what is written in Polish and in Latin. And the witnesses was very famous people like the *Starosta* [phonetic] from Sieradz, the *Starosta* from Poznan, and the bishop from the Catholic Church. Because the Church was always very active against the Jews. And that king involved them to sign the signature that the church should too protect the Jews.

So, I want to say again that Kalisz had a big role in Jewish history. And our social life, and our organizational life was very nice developed. How I remember, we had our own *Gemeinde*, with our own small city hall. And we had our own Jewish hospital, Jewish orphanage, a Jewish old age home, a Jewish synagogue, a Jewish Talmud Torah, a Jewish *mikveh*, and a Jewish school what was kept up by taxes what Jewish people was paying to the *Gemeinde*. The *Gemeinde* is like a *Kahal*, what was elected by Jewish people. And the *Kahal* was hiring the rabbi, and hiring the other functionaries what was working in the Jewish community. Plus, I remember we was electing too our representative to city hall what was representing our Jewish rights and our Jewish interests, because we was in constant conflict with the Polish outside world. And they was the official protection given by us. We have a constitutional right to be a self-governing body, with our by-laws and with our way of life, we made our own taxes, and with paying government taxes. I remember we had a very big old *shul* what probably is old a thousand years And the *shul* was built like a fortress, where Jews in time of distress ran away or it was a pogrom or it was an attack by the Tartars, or it was attacked by the Swedes. When the Swedish invasion of Poland, Jewish people was active fighting against the Swedes. And we still have near the synagogue the old butcher stores, built like a fortress. And when we was learning the history, to explain this, I'll, this was in protection against the Swedish invasion when they was going in the western Poland, and when they was going to Czystochowa. And Czystochowa now is important with the black madonna. This was too a part involved with Jewish history. And the Jewish people was active fighting against the Swedish invaders, against the Tatar invaders, fighting for Polish way of life.

How I say I remember, not far from our synagogue, a wall. And they say the wall is the remnant from the Jewish ghetto, with very big bricks. This, everything was destroyed by the German invasion. How I, I want to repeat about the so-, we have a very developed social life, and a very developed political life. In our town we have plenty, all kind of social organizations and political organizations, most oriented Zionistic in direction from Palestine. We have a *Poalei Zion*², a left *Poalei Zion* and a right *Poalei Zion*. We had a *Betar*. This, *Betar* is the Zionistic party what Begin was the representative. We have too a Bund organization. A Bund organization, this was a Jewish working party what was saying when Jews belong to Poland they don't have to emigrate to no other country. They have to fight together with the Polish worker, the welfare from the Jewish worker. But they was a little minority, because Jewish people didn't believe in Polish justice. And the tragic history that the German come show us that the idea of the Bund, that we are a part from the Polish life and the Polish work, from the Polish proletariat is very false. In the first time of trouble, everybody abandoned us and we had

²*Poalei Zion*: Movement started in late 19th century whose ideology consisted of a combination of Zionism and socialism.

no way to exist. And the policy of the Jewish parties was much more realistic because they was orienting the Jewish people for emigration to Palestine and believing that only this can safeguard our existence. And how tragic we saw this in 1939 they was right.

We had a very developed religious life too. We had plenty Jewish organizations with the *Agudah*, with all kinds of *shteiblach*, religious *shteiblach*, with an *Agudah* school where religious people was going, with a Talmud Torah where poor Jewish children was going supported by the *Gemeinde*, with the Hebrew schools like *Tachtumoyna* [phonetic] in *Tarbut* where Jewish people, Jewish youth, was learning Hebrew, learning Polish, and learning to be future good Jewish people to emigrate to Israel. We have to develop sport life. The youth was organized in Jewish clubs, what was a part from the political life, like the Bund have *Yushenka* [phonetic] and the *Poalei Zion* have a *Morgenshtern* Club where we was playing soccer and gymnastic and box and we was too on the river, how is to say?

HR: Rowing?

HS: Rowing on the river. And we have a club *Makabi* what was very famous with this, a very famous soccer club. That youth was too prepared to protect themselves, because every Sunday was made like little pogroms in the city and the Jewish youth was learn, was getting their education in the sport clubs. In the time from trouble we was always ready, was fighting off the Polish hooligans what was always each Sunday attacking Jews. When we want to go to the park, we want to go to the river, we were wanting to go to a soccer game. So that we was a very sophisticated, developed Jewish community with our pleasures and our displeasures and our troubles and our life.

HR: Tell me something now about...

HS: Yes.

HR: Your own personal life, about your family, your mother, your father.

HS: My father was a butcher. He, we have a store, and my father too was selling live cows to Warsaw. I remember when I was a child my father was still working for somebody. And later he went to his own business and he was successful. I remember how we were, he was working very hard getting up 2:00 in the morning, taking his all the things what you need to the slaughterhouse. Because in Poland we have to take the cow to the slaughterhouse and make this everything, kill the cow, and the *shochet* have to see how this is kosher. And later this have to be brought up to the butcher shop. And my mother was at home. Later when we grew up a little she was helping out with the father in the business. We was very, I was very proud of my father. He was one from the strongest men in the city. And everybody was afraid of him. And if somebody was a time of trouble, they know to go to Yosef and that he will protect. I remember like I was a child, if somebody took away money even from somebody, they called to my father and he should go to the other person and straighten out that conflict. I remember it like now that if I, a girl was giving her dowry to a rich man, so he should keep it and give her dividends. In the end that rich man didn't want to give her back the money. And I

remember like now that girl come crying to my father that a man stole her dowry. And my father pick himself up--it was Saturday night--he went to that rich man, and the rich man was afraid of him. He give her back the money. This was important for me, that I remember this. And he was a very good man, very hard working. Now the family was a very close-knit family. And we was living in the Jewish part from the town in a big house where was living maybe fifty Jewish tenants. And even the *struzsh*, how they call *srtuzsh*...

HR: An apartment?

HS: The man what cleans the house.

HR: Janitors?

HS: Even the janitor was talking Jewish. And the houses in our town was built different than here. Every house was built like a fortress, in the front a big gate, a very heavy gate. And when you closed the gate nobody can go in. Is not open. At night, 10:00 at night, the gate is closed and made from a very heavy oak, and the whole building was built inside in the...

HR: The courtyard?

HS: The builder, the, yeah, there was a backyard. The whole life from the house was in the backyard, surrounded on all sides with buildings, and with a pump where we take water. And the outside was closed up. In that house was maybe 200 people living and there is so many children. And we was always living in the backyard, playing around, fighting around, and living our own life, and going to our own holidays. Because every holiday was a big thing in such a house. It comes a, when it comes a Passover, the women was bringing down all the straws and all the old clothing and was washing and cleaning. And the rabbi come *kashering* everything. And the, either the *goyim* in the city was knowing that is coming the holiday, and everything was done in the backyard. The, all women and the all, was a whole a *mishmash*, day and night was everything, was that backyard busy. We...

HR: How was *Shabbat*?

HS: *Shabbat* was very nice and beautiful. *Shabbat* start Friday in the afternoon. When the *mikveh* get a sign, a sign-up whistle that the Jewish people have to close the stores, and everybody is closing the stores. And the *Shamas* goes with a wooden hammer knocking on the doors, and we was closing. And you see it everything is slowing down, and people start to go to the *mikveh* with the clothing to wash themselves. Fathers and children and going out back from the *mikveh*, they change their clothes. Everybody was going in their, in these, such special *Yibitis* [phonetic] they was calling. How was that called, made from velvet.

HR: Special clothes.

HS: Special clothes from velvet. And everybody nice, washed clean, was going home. And later we start with the candles. You see the candles in every house and every window. And you start to see this, feel the smell from the gefilte fish between the whole

thing, and we know that *Shabbos* is coming. In the afternoon the women was preparing the *cholent* and the cakes. This was all baked, made at home, and taken to the bakery. This was baked in the baker's home. And *Shabbos* it was picked up the *cholent* back hot, because you couldn't make fire on *Shabbos*. Only a *Shabbos goy* or a *goy* from the school was coming making the fire. If no, is no fire in the houses. And I would say this is the, this was by every Jew, not talking about he is religious or not religious. This was our traditional way of handling *Shabbos*. We get up *Shabbos* in the morning. The father with the boys, with the children, went to the synagogue. The children was holding the *tallis* in the--I was holding the *tallis*. And after coming back from the synagogue, we eat a meal and the father was always listening what the children learned in *cheder*, the *sedra*³ from in the week. And later they was learning a little Torah in the house. And it was coming guests. And this was the *Shabbos*. In the afternoon *Shabbos* we was making *Shalashides*⁴. And when we was already looking around, otherwise the first stars in the sky we could make fire. We could light in this.

HR: [unclear].

HS: Yes. This was in the beginning. Now later when we start, I start to be older, I remember I was going with my father, with my mother, to the park, because Kalisz have a very famous park made from a very old forest. These are remnants from a old forest. And in that park was a River Prosna. Now Kalisz is surrounded by a river, and they call this Polish Venicia, because then you cross from one street to other you have to cross a bridge. So the river was going around in serpentines in the city. And this park was around that River Prosna. So I remember Saturday it was a nice day. We was always going with the father, with the mother, nice clothed. We have to go to the park. Later when I was a little older I didn't like so much to go with the father. I want to run around by myself. My father was a very big disciplinarian. We have to do exactly what he like and how he liked. And I can assure you that we are doing everything what he liked. We had a very big family what was always Saturdays they was coming to guests to us, or we was coming to them. And I don't know how we was communicating because was no telephone in that time. Now we know already that this week one would come to our house and next week the other would go to the other house. And this was our life.

HR: Do you remember your grandparents?

HS: I remember only mine mother, mine grandmother from the father's side, and grandmother from the mother's side. One my grandfather from the father's side what was killed by the Polaks. He had ground like a farmer, and something happened. It's not unusual in Poland life. They getting drunk and they kill him. Yeah, I remember my mother's mother what was lately living with us, because her son went away to Brazil and she was living with us. She was a typical Jewish grandmother, very skinny, very lively,

³Portion of the Torah read each week.

⁴3rd meal of the Sabbath day.

working day and night just to do, to pleasure for us. She was a beautiful cook, and we was fortunate when she was cooking for every child a different meal what the child liked. I remember she was going special to a different pump, about half a city, to bring water what is good for drinking. She was going to a special store across the city, they're selling better flour and cheaper flour. This was my grandmother, and she was still alive when the Germans come. And when we have to run away she was very sick. We couldn't take her with us. And then they, later I arranged, I come back to save her, she was already taken away by the Germans and destroyed in the first destroying camp what was made in Poland, near Poznan. This is Chelmno. Now, to say, I remember when I was started to go to *Cheder*. My grandmother on my father's side took me to the *Cheder*. I was a small child. I was very afraid, and I was crying. And she had all kind of candies in knots and she was putting on mine head. And everybody around was clapping the hands and singing that a new Jew is growing. And I was started to be a little more happy and I remember I stopped to crying. The rabbi was Rabbi Hanoach, Rabbi Hayner. He was a very good rabbi. In mine eyes he was good because he always was giving me candies.

HR: How old were you, do you think?

HS: I was three years when I start to go to *Cheder*.

HR: And you remember this?

HS: I remember this very clearly, because I remember how was my grandmother was carrying me over there, and they put me near the *Sefer Torah*, and they put the candies and the nuts on my head. When I finished *Cheder*, when I was six years old, my father engage me to go to a Jewish school. [tape off then on]

HR: Now, you were talking about the *Cheder*.

HS: Yeah. When I finish that *Cheder*...

HR: How long did you go to this?

HS: I was going when I was, until six years old. I remember I already know *Chumash* and *Toysafos*. And I start to learn Russian. Now *Gemora* I didn't, learned already, because my father was very active in the Jewish *Poalei Zion*. And there was a Jewish *Borochovschule*, named from Ber Borochov.⁵ This is a Jewish *tereticka* [theoretician] from Russia, what was, his theory was Jewish Hebrew Socialism. This means to create a working class in Palestine and to go to build Palestine with the Jewish hand. And the *Poalei Zion* organization was very active in our town. And I remember my father was very, very active. I remember always guests was coming from Warsaw, either one was a guest from Palestine at that time was calling Zerubavel⁶, a very famous person with a big beard. I was a small child. And I was very proud that I could see him. In mine eyes he was looking like Theodor Herzl. Why he was so remembering for me? That so

⁵Borochov, Ber: (1881-1917) Socialist Zionist leader and theoretician.

⁶Zerubavel, Jacob: (1886-1967) Leader of *Poalei Zion* organization.

many all kinds of famous people was coming to our apartment, because Zerubavel was by us. I'm telling this to give a-

Tape one, side two:

HS: It's working now? And my father, how I say, was very active in that Jewish, in that *Poalei Zion*, in the *Arbayter Heim*. In that time they was organizing that school what I mentioned before, Ber Borochov School. And my father decided to send me and my sister to the school, to the Borochov School, that we should get Jewish education. Not only a religious education what we have in the *cheder*, but that we should get Jewish education and we should learn Hebrew. This was a very original school, a small school, only supported by the people what send the children.

HR: All Jews?

HS: All Jews.

HR: Jews.

HS: I'm talking only about Jews. This school wasn't either supported not by the city and not by the *Kehillah*, not by the *Gemeinde*, only by the people what send their children to the school and by the political organization from the *Poalei Zion*. I remember clearly that sometime there was shortages in the school. They didn't have coal to heat the ovens because they didn't have money. And they're collecting money by the members that we should continue, that we should be able to go to school. I was going, I start to go over there in kindergarten, because I was six years old. And I remember our teacher was a lady from Vilna. We had neighbors Lichtenstein. And she, in the beginning she show us all kinds of pictures from Palestine and from *kibbutzim*. And they show us how grows oranges. And this was so exotic in mine eyes, so different that we was exposed in our town and in Poland that I was feeling then that I am a different world, not understanding Hebrew. She was singing the songs, teaching us the all kind of Hebrew songs. And it was such a different sound for my ears that I remember this until now and I am already in the sixties. This, the teachers, how I understand, they was schooled in a Jewish *Seminarium* in Vilna. The Vilna *Seminarium* was preparing special teachers for all schools in all Poland. This was the only *Seminarium* for Jewish teachers what have the official legality with the Polish government. Later I start to go in the first grade, in the second grade, in the third grade. And they was, our teacher was different teachers; every year the teachers was changing. They was going, they finish one year going from us to Lodz and from Lodz to Warsaw, and we was getting different teachers. The second teachers was a teacher and her name was Shmielevska. She was from Warsaw. She was a little a hunchback, a very sweet and a very dear woman. And she was such a, and she teach us so much love about Israel, about Palestine, that knowing that country I started to love that country. I remember there was a picture in the movies, they show a, they took our children to that movie, and it was *Viosna, Viosna*, [phonetic] *Palestine* is [unclear], *Spring in Israel, Spring in Palestine*. And we saw how the oranges are growing and how the cactuses and everything. And this was developing to me a big love for Palestine and for Jewish people. I went to the school only to the third grade, because the school couldn't

financially exist. And under pressure from the Polish government, I remember they was sending always inspectors and always complaining that the school is not good in this way and the other way, until they finally, they succeed and they closed the school. So I finished mine Jewish, Hebrew education only three classes. After this I was, I went to Polish public school. And in that time opened for me entire different new world. Until the third grade I was in strict Jewish environment, and my life was 100 percent Jewish. I was not exposed to no Polaks, and to nothing Polish. I know only the Polish beating up Jews and the Polish doing this and the Polish doing that. No, we was inside in our Jewish world. We know that we have to run away from *Shigutzim*, [non-Jews] run away from the policemen, run away from Gentiles. We know only that we should be in our own environment. When they closed up that school and I was forced to go to a Polish public school, it's clear I didn't have the Polish preparation. We was learning Polish in that Ber Borochoy School, now very nominal, very little. And I remember I was very backward in Polish. And when they make me a test I remember how they was laughing from me, laughing that the Jews don't speak Polish. And they are laughing from my accent. And they was laughing from mine orthography. And they was saying, I remember how they was saying that I am a stupid Jew. [tape off then on] This was my first experience with, how to say, with the outside Gentile Polish world.

HR: And with antisemitism? Your first experience with it.

HS: And I remember when I come back to home how my--I saw the look from my father and mother how they was heart broken that I didn't make good in that test. And it was, I promised myself that I will in the future try to do very good, because I was very concerned, I was, I loved very much mine father and mother, and the look in their eyes was very much disturbing for me. And I remember how my mother, she was very progressive in her age. I will give you example. She know to write and to read Polish, Russian, German. And we have always plenty books in our house. And this was, at that time, was very remarkable that a woman was so, basically in that time a Jewish woman was only involved with her home. They wasn't involved with the outside. My mother, should rest in peace, was a very modern woman, and her point of view was very progressive and very modern. And her way of doing was an example for me. And I was very heart broken that I didn't satisfy, that I couldn't do that she should be proud of me. And I promised myself that I will do better.

I went to a school, the name was Mikolaj Rej. This is a man, Mikolaj Rej was the first Polish writer what created Polish language, the literal language. Until that time was, in Poland was talking in Polish and written in Latin and other languages. He was, Mikolaj Rej was the first man what create the Polish orthography, the Polish. And this was a school what was concentrated all minorities in our town. In our town was Russian minorities, German minorities, and Jewish minorities. So they make a special school where the children from the minorities was going. I remember not far from our house where we was living, on the *Yitsalah Uiltsah*, [phonetic] was a Russian, a Pravoslavlic

church. And was a German *Kirche*. And the all children from the people what was living around was going in that school. And the all children from the people around was very antisemitic and we was in constant fight. There was not a day when they didn't attack us, there not a day when they didn't beat us up.

HR: The Russians and the German children?

HS: The Russian, and the Germans, and the Polaks. So, in that Mikolaj Rej school was on the other side of the town. I have to walk every day maybe a five miles from mine home to the school. And the school was built in a factory, in a abandoned factory. Poland in my time was a very backward country. And they haven't enough schools. They haven't enough nothing. So they make schools, they haven't the schools special built for schools. They just took buildings and accommodated for schools. Our school was made in a building what was before a textile factory. And that it was the shortage of schools was so high that we was learning in three shifts. One week I was going in the morning. One week I was going at 12:00. One week I was going 5:00 at night. And not take in account snow, rain, snow, rain, winter, summer, ice. Every day we was going to school.

HR: When you went at 5:00 you came home when?

HS: Then we was going home very late. And sometime my mother or my father was come with me. I have to cross the park how I say in the beginning. It was a very big park. I have to cross that park. And at night was very, very wild. And we have to...

HR: Did you experience any antisemitic things from, of other kids beating you up, that sort of thing?

HS: Yes, yeah. We, going in the school, I'll come to this. Antisemitic, our relations, how I say to the Gentile world, was very hostile. The *shaygetz*, you know, it's the Jewish, the *shaygetz* means the young Gentile boy, or the *shiksa*, the young Gentile girl, was our natural enemy. And very, very seldom this was the exclusion of the rule. Beating, getting beated up was a normal thing like eating bread. Being spitted on, being hit, and being cursed was such a normal thing like in daylight is light and night is night. This was accepted and they was beating up. If we beated back, it was sometime, we was beated up so, I remember I went to school--I went to school through the park, and four boys was waiting for me and with a stone they split my head. [unclear]. They took a big stone without just, without talking to me they hit me and I fall to the ground full blooded. And they took me to the Jewish hospital and they bandage me. I wasn't going two weeks to school. And after two weeks I went to school. And the teacher asked me, "Why didn't you show up to school?" I say, "The boys, a boy throw a stone in my head." She asked me why. I told her, "Because I am Jewish." And she didn't answer nothing. And this was accepted like a normal thing. She didn't volunteer she is sorry or not sorry or nothing. This was accepted because I'm Jewish. I sit down on my bench and this was it. The same on the when we finish the lessons. How they call this in between?

HR: The end of the term?

HS: No, in between...

HR: In between semesters?

HS: In, when we go out in the back yard to play between the lessons.

HR: Oh, recess.

HS: In the recess. Constantly was only beatings up, or other things. And the official people, the *Wózny*, that means the man, the janitor of the school, they didn't pay attention. They look away when we was beaten up. In that school we was going only a few children--three, four or five children. And it was no way to do something. Now this was accepted. This was a part of living. And there was active teachers, active antisemites, *Pankornada*. [phonetic] There was a teacher of *robotorenschen*, homework and gymnastic. He was a official antisemite. He could, in the lessons, say that the Jew *parcha* Jew, you know, *parcha*, [mangy: Polish] this means when your head is not clean, Jew go to Palestine, and so forth. And this was a normal thing. And I have admit there was a teacher, he was a Socialist. He was belonging to the Polish Socialistic Party. He was a protector of Jews. And there was a constant antagonism. You can see that constant fight between them--not a physical fight. He tried to protect us, and the other tried to intimidate us. And they, when he that Tom Kowalski, what was that the Jew lover, how they call him in the school, he was singing for us Jewish songs either. When we were so very down, he was singing, we was in the school, in our class, we was four Jewish children--two boys and two girls. And there was a other group of teachers, patriotic Polaks, what they say everything what is Poland is great. They didn't comment, they wasn't not anti-Jews and they was not pro-Jewish. They was just pro-Polaks. And I remember, I was a very big, I start to read books. I start to love to read books. And I was reading books, plenty about the Russian occupation of Poland. And there was a Pani Shikolska, a old Polish woman, she was teaching us history and geography. She was sent away by the Russians in '95 [1895] to Siberia. And she asked me about, when I was reading a Polish book about Siberia, and she told about the Polish revolt against the Russians, and how it was a Jewish *polkovnik*, a Jewish man what was with the Polish soldiers fighting against the Russians. His name was Berek Yesolevich. [phonetic] And I, and it was making a special battalion of Jewish soldiers under the name of Berek Yesolevich. And I brought this up. Well he was writing every month one work in Polish. And she brought, after that came out, what I brought it up, and show this what a sign of the Polish patriotic that I am a Jew, now I am very patriotic for Poland. This was Pani Shikolska.

And we was going only five days to school because Saturday, like Jewish boys we was official excluded by a law we shouldn't go, we was excluded to go Saturday to Polish school. Special my father was a kosher butcher, and we demand a exclusion. Now I have to go to get a Jewish religion lessons to a Jewish school. There was a special public school only for Jewish children. The name of Eliza Orzeszkowa. Eliza

Orzeszkowa was a Polish writer what was in the history of Poland writing positive about Jews, about the Jewish positive contribution to building of Poland, of Jewish how they're good tailors and how they're good shoemakers and how they built in Lodz the big textile factory. And she was a very big Polish writer, Eliza Orzeszkowa, and very positive for Jews. In her name they built our, a school in Kalisz, a public school. And there was only going Jewish children. To that school I have to be, Jewish children have to go once a week to get lessons in Jewish history. They call it lesson of religion. This was a part of our education. And what I was learning on Saturday I have to go to a Polish boy and he have to give me what they learned that day. I have to write it over and have it ready for Monday.

How I promise myself that I will see that my parents don't have aggravation from me, I start to learn very good. And with the time I start to be the best student in our class. And later I was the best student in our school. And I saw when they was taking, every month was a, for parents, how they call it, a parents' day.

HR: Mmm hmm, that's it.

HS: A parents' day. And my mother--mostly my mother was going because my father was working too much, always was busy--and my mother was going. And I remember when she was coming home, and her face was shining, that I make so good. Because I was believing that I am in heaven. And later, being the best student, I was invited to the Polish *Starosta* [phonetic]. *Starosta* is like governor. And I was getting a diploma. This diploma, I went with my father. And he put on special clothing, I remember, to go to that *Starosta*, because this was a, something unusual that a Jewish boy is invited. He put on such a special black hat--they call it a *cylinder*--and a special clothing--they call it a *smoking*--with a patterned *lakierki*. And he went with me. And I was in the front line with other children, other these. And I saw that my father is very proud of me. And this was mine all, you know, this was mine biggest accomplishment to give him that pleasure from--through learning good for them. Because they was always worrying and always are involved that the children grow up good, that the children learn, that the children be happy, that the children were healthy. This was ninety-percent of their life. And the children, in the opposite, with the other way, tried to do everything what is possible to make the life in the parents more happy and more livable. Because the life in the parents in that time was very, very, very hard. To making a physical living was very hard. Earning the money was very hard. And to live in that society, to be under constant pressure, they have to have that part of pleasure from their children. And most children, analyzing now what's going on in the world, analyzing this, most children was responding this way. They felt a responsibility to give a little happiness to their parents. And you very seldom hear things that children was doing what was not good for their parents, was not good for the community. It's clear we didn't hear either about crimes, about these, about the smoking, a child, or doing something, or they think this was so unthinkable like the world should come apart.

And the end of, when I finish the school, the final from this was that my parents was invited from the priest from the school. The priest from the school was the *skarbnik*, [treasurer: Polish] how is a *skarbnik*? The money man from the school. He was giving out stipendiums. And I was chosen to get a government stipendium that I should continue to go to school. This was a unheardable thing in that school, that a Jewish boy should get from them, from that school of minorities, that I should be, and I should get a stipendium. I remember it was a whole celebration by us, in our, by our family. Thinking about this and talking about this, and talking to our friends and talking to our relatives, this was a whole extraordinary situation, that the priest is inviting by a letter the parents to come the future for the children.

I had the principal from the school, Ham Roshkovski [phonetic], he was a very big patriot of Poland. And he was insisting in us a very big part of pride in history, pride and love to Poland. And I have to admit, one time I was a very big lover of Poland, of Polish history. Even when we were suffering so much, he tried to explain me, he took me once to a exhibition from a miniatures I forgot that, a Jewish painter was painting miniatures Arthur Rosh [phonetic]. And in the museum from Kalisz. And he explain us in these miniatures the [unclear] from that Jewish emancipation. He explain us how the Jewish people were suffering in the beginning in Poland, and how with the process of emancipation from that Poland will be more educated. The hate against the Jews will go away. And I remember he was a big patriot. I loved that per-, I loved him very much. And he was very positive to Jews too, what was a very seldom expression. Later I meet that man, after the German occupation, when he come back to Kalisz because of course everybody was running away, he come back. I meet him on the street. He was walking without shoes, without clothing. He just come back from the running away. And I went to him. I say, "Panicz Roshkovski, *herem*? [phonetic] Mr. Roshkovski, where is Poland? What happened with Poland?" And he start to cry like a small child. [tape off then on] Poland is a very unhappy country. And the Jewish people are the unhappiest people in that country. Because Poland, when was, how I say before, it was divided 100 years ago between bigger countries like Russia, Germany, and Austria, after gaining the independence in 1918, right away they start on the way to mistreat the Jews. Even when the Jews was in the Polish Army they didn't believe that the Jews are loyal to Poland. They was believing that the Jews are more loyal to the Russians because the Russians in that time, after the revolution, was attacking Poland. And they was near Warsaw. And, they called it from the Polish Army, "the miracle by the Vistula." When the Polish Army fight back the Russian Army, the Russian revolutionary Army what was under the leadership from Trotsky, and they went back until to Kiev. In that time already, the Polish, the Jewish soldier what was in the Polish Army was mistreated like a spy and was put in a special concentration camp after--Neabolna. And the all divisions, especially from General Holland, what was in the western part from Poznan, was strictly antisemitic. And the Polish, and the Jewish people didn't gain nothing from the

independence of Poland. And before they was together with the, Poland was a part from the Russian imperium, the Jewish people had a more easier life with the Russian people because the antisemitism, and the *chornayah sotnia* [phonetic] what was organized from the reactionary part from the Russian leadership and the Russian government wasn't a strict expression of the Russian people. Was just organized from their heads. And when Poland took back, when Poland get back the independence, Poland was cut off from the natural market what was Russia. Basically whole Poland was working only for the Russian market what was an immense market including European Russia, and including Asiatic Russia. So like the cities of Lodz, even what was a highly industrial textile city, was working only for the Russian. And the other industrial part of Poland what was working for the Russian market, with one shot was cut off from that market. And at that time start to be economically very bad in Poland.

In the beginning Poland should be a democratic country. The Polish constitution what was in 1921, and with the first Polish president Paderewski, should be a democratic president, a democratic country. And if you go back through the history of Poland, you have--a, he was doing plenty for the democracy for Poland, and for the democracy in the world in there. Although, taking away the part, the Jewish problem, Poland was sending our best souls either to America, like Tadeusz Kościuszko, like Polasky. Even they was heroes in the revolutionary war in America. The same Poland was sending in the time from the Renaissance, in the time from the fight for freedom and democracy and [unclear] orders. So, Poland have a, was a part of a renewal of the Renaissance from Europe. And Polish people and Jewish people was believing that Poland will be a normal country. And after this-

Tape two, side one:

HS: I remember how the situation was getting worse and worse in Poland. And Poland was on the way of being a fascistic country. I remember I was being a child. I was, I saw from the, in the windows from our apartment the fights on the street in 1926 when was the, how they call it, the revolt. The May revolt. The *Tchevid Majowej*, when Marshall Pilsudski took over the power and throw away the constitution in 1921 and make more of a fascistic power. And how in that time our situation start to change. In 1929 when start the big crisis, economical crisis in America, that crisis went over to Europe and went over to Poland. And what, harder is for us to be, to live in Poland, that harder it was to be the life of the Jews in Poland. Because the Polish government, the Polish ruling class want to put away the old economical worries, the old economical troubles from the old population that being able to give them work and bread and other things, showing that this is the fault from the Jews, that the Jews take away the bread from them, the Polish worker. That the Jews is the enemy from Poland, the Jews is that and the Jews is this. And in that time, with the death of Marshall Pilsudski, was coming to the ruling part the Polish colonels with their leader, Richsmigali [phonetic] also in government. The situation of the Jews started being intolerable, especially in the western part of Poland. And it's amazing. The organized antisemitism was coming from the west. It was coming from Germany, from the progressive part from Europe. [tape off then on] And it's characteristic that the eastern part of Poland wasn't so exposed to a organized antisemitism. The Polish farmer or the Polish average person in the eastern part of Poland was less antisemitic than in our western part. And we was very aware of this. And our, all our Jewish organizations was very much involved in preparing themselves in fighting against the antisemitism. Why I am bringing this out? I want to come to the situation that it was not our way of living for the Jewish youth in Poland. After you finish school, even when you was still in school, you could get a stipend to go to *Gymnasium* or to high school. You have no prospective to finish the school. You have no, and after you finish, you have your *Matura*, how they call it, when you make the test that you are already a, finished *Gymnasium*, ready to go to a university, was no way what you will do with your future. And Jewish, and the people what was a little richer, they send their children to study in France, to Switzerland [unclear] send them off.

So, the situation for the Jewish youth was very explosive. And it's amazing, together with this the awareness of being Jewish was more expressed by the people. Not saying that we was going around like martyrs, like unhappy people. We was very aware that we are Jewish and we were proud of being Jews. We didn't want to be Poles. We feel that we are much more moral height. And we was never, I never remember a time that I would deny my Jewishness. I want to give you a small example. Being in the school, one from the best students in the school, I was elected to go with our school flag to a army holiday. The army in Poland have a special, is a special symbol. The army is

Poland, and the Polish person is very proud of the army. So when it comes such a holiday and a holiday from every regiment, every school announce that the, with the flags three people. I remember I was one from the three people with our flag, and they made a celebration in a big field where there are the Kazars [phonetic] and the, between the, from the soldiers. And over there they make a, they was praying and on this field they make a altar, a church altar. And it was maybe 10,000 people. And everybody kneel down. And I felt it's not right that I should go on my knees because I am a Jew. And I was standing alone, a person, a boy 13, 14 years old, on that amazing field with so many soldiers and horses, standing alone to make a, it was an *shapolah* [phonetic], how you say in Poland, the field prayed. And I was standing. I remember after this the boys what was with me with that stupid, that flag, they was very mad at me. And when we come to the school was a whole discussion. And I remember that mine, the principal in the school, Pavroshkovski, explained to them why I didn't kneel down, that it's not to be ashamed to be a Jew. And I still didn't want to kneel down.

To, coming back to that Jewish problem, so I want to say that was not a way for us to study further. How I say, I have to be all rich. You have to be able to go to a other countries to continue your education. I intend to be a, I remember how my father was very concerned what they will do with me. I didn't want to get more education. I had to get a profession. So they decide to give me to, not a shoemaker, to a profession what makes the upper part in shoes. I and this was involved too with a whole regiment because Poland had a whole status for the middle age that every profession have its own...

HR: Guilds.

HS: Guilds. And we have to go through a whole procedure, in two years learn, in three years you studied and going to the schools. And in this was too antisemitism. There was Jewish guilds, and there was Polish guilds. The Jewish guilds, the Jews was not accepted in the Polish guilds. So, by Polish law, by the law of [unclear], that a boy goes to school and signs a contract with that Master. The Master have to have a diploma, and I have to be sent to evening school three times a week. In that evening school already the antisemitism was so high at that time. This was already in the late '30s. They was forcing us to sit on the left side. They make already in the school a ghetto. The Jewish boys would sit on the left side, and the whole class should sit normal. We was the four boys in that class. I was the one what decided I will not sit on the left side. I was standing on my lessons. I was standing in the class and not sitting down. And I remember the professor was coming out to give us the lessons. He saw that I am standing and he didn't pay attention. And he knows very well why I am protesting. The end was when, in the end from the lessons, the Polish boys were always following up on us, beating us up. This was our experience every day and every night. And still we didn't want to sit and to be on the left, sitting on the left side of the ghetto.

The fascisation of the Polish government was growing so terrible that they permit already in our town in Kalisz to divide the market--Jewish part on the left part. And I

remember there was a special organization from, the [unclear] and the Polish, and the Polish antisemitic organization, was putting up signs, "Don't Buy By The Jews." And if I, a Polak went into a Polish [means Jewish] store, they put in a sign on his back, a printed sign on his back that that pig is buying from the Jews. It's clear that we was a resistance, yes. We was making [unclear], self-defense organization, what we was patrolling that market in the days of Tuesday to Friday, fighting back the pickets what was not permitting the Polaks to go into the Jewish part. And I have to admit, that was too a part from the Polish working class, the Polish Socialistic Party, was with the Jews fighting together every Friday and every Tuesday when was the market day, and fighting back at the [unclear].

HR: You're saying the Socialists fought with the Jews?

HS: Polish Socialists, yes. And it was a movement between the Polish youth, between the Socialist youth, to be sympathetic to the Jewish case. And the Polish Socialistic Party was coming out in their newspaper, *The Robovnik*, [phonetic] means *The Working Class*, fighting against the fascistization of the country and the organized antisemitisms of the country. Because what I am saying, what happened to us on the market wasn't only expression for the Jew of antisemitisms. The Polish government was coming out with a special line, "You shouldn't hit a Jew, but you should fight him economically." This means, in Polish they say, "[Polish phrase]." This means that you can make a boycott not to buy by the Jews. So I want to bring this out to show in what terrible situation we was before the war in Poland, not taking in account the German danger what was coming out. Because since [unclear], Hitler was coming to power, the German danger was start to be very actual in Poland, especially in the western part by us, in the Poznan *Prowincja* [Province]. Because we had whole towns, we had whole villages what was populated by the ethnic Germans. And every Sunday they was going with their flags, the *Hackenkreuz* [Swastika] flags, and the uniforms from the Storm Troopers. And it was a normal occurrence after such a pro-German demonstration was right away a anti-Jewish action. They was fighting back, hitting the Jews.

HR: Mr. Skorr, do you remember times when people were actually killed, the Jews?

HS: Yes. I remember in our town, it was a fact that Jewish people was just killed in the street for being a Jew. I even, I remember mine--a friend, I forget his name. He was too in the Polish, he was too in the youth of the *Poalei Zion*. He was a member in the youth *Poalei Zion*. He was living off Deginska [phonetic] Street. So, a boy come in with a knife and just kill him on the street. We made him a very big funeral what was a political demonstration. Now they not to care even they didn't arrest him [unclear], and it was--I remember the official, when there started to be official pogroms. It was a pogrom in Pszcyna, when a Jewish boy hit back a Polak and injured him. And you remember in 1936, '37 was a bloody official pogrom in Pszcyna what is not far from Oswiecim, what was later made to come to Auschwitz.

The same way I no want that you should have the impression that we was going around only like martyrs, suffering people. We was in that whole terrible time, we was happy people. We had all our own world. We accept that situation that we live in a very hostile country, a very hostile people. No, we have our own inner world. And we was very healthy, mentally by us. We was healthy and happy. We'd celebrate our holidays. We'd celebrate our national holidays, our religious holidays. We was going to Jewish theaters. We was going to concerts. I remember every Jewish organization had their dramatic clubs. That means they was playing all kind of Jewish shows. And all, everything on a high literal level, because the Jewish literature, we was very well educated and very literate in Jewish literature, in Sholom Aleichem, in Peretz, in Mendele. And the all modern writers was our daily bread. We was living with their life and gaining the strength from their writing.

HR: But Mr. Skorr, at that time no one was anticipating the catastrophe that was coming in the future. No one had that kind of prophetic feeling.

HS: We had the feeling although, we had the feeling that something terrible will come. But we didn't have the feeling that will come a such a terrible thing that annihilation of a nation. We had the feeling because we was very political active. We was very political watching the European theater. We saw what was going on in Abyssinia. We saw what's going on in Spain. It was the *Buergerkrieg*, how is the name of the *Buergerkrieg*? Like a, the war here between south and north?

HR: Civil.

HS: The Civil War. The Civil War in Spain, when we all was, the whole Jewish youth was just shivering, ready to go to fight by the Spanish people. Well we was automatically inclined with ourself to the left, from the left movement, believing that the way of Socialism was going to bring justice and bring our way that we had, we'd be able to exist. The rea-, this is what I want to bring up. The whole youth was very Socialist, leftly oriented including in this, the Polish government and the Polish was coming out with a slogan that the Jews are Communists. They called it the Jewish *Komunja*. To saying, oh, we are, we sympathizers, we was very aware, we was given out the brown book, about Hitler's behavior in Germany, about the first concentration camps in Germany, about what they're doing to the, not only to Jewish people. Because we have to remember that Hitler start his fight, you know, the Jewish was only the fringes movement. First he destroyed the Socialist and the Communistic movement. And the first people in the concentration camps was the opponents to his political National Social-- National Socialistic Democratic Party what he created. And on the [unclear] of this, reading his book, *Mein Kampf*, what was [unclear] in Poland, we saw black and white what he tried to prepare for us. It was clear for us in 1938 when he throw out, physically he throw out the Polish Jews from Germany. There was Jews in Germany. They're called the *Ostjuden*, [Jews from East] what they never was German citizen. He took them physically to the Polish border in Zbaszyn, and throw them out on the fields.

I remember my father was very active in the community. We was, the German border wasn't far from us. And he was taking, he was organizing a committee to save the Jews. He went to the border with bread and with everything, and bring the Jews to our town. And they was divided to, up into all Jews. They was living with us. I remember by us was living a family, Leipzkind, from Breslau. And they was living in our apartment. Was a mother, a daughter, and a grandmother. And I have the believing that she had a German Gentile husband and he was left in Breslau. And she was only come with her daughter and with her old mother. And the amazing was that they was coming to us and after being there a little time, they was criticizing us, that our level of life was so low, that we wasn't so cultural developed, that we are not, having water in our apartments, not the toilets in, that we are backward people. And I remember that we had constant discussion, especially the daughter had, she have a daughter Elza. She was always just praising Germany this way, and Germany is nice and Germany is clean and Germany is strong. And I'd say, "Are you not ashamed of [unclear]? Take a look what Germany did to you. They throw you out like a Jew." And they was only showing that we are such backward people. In our backwardness, what they were saying, I still saw the whole beauty of our life. We was so dedicated to each other. We was so much in love with our parents. And the parents was so much worrying and caring about their children that we was such a holy person. And our family was the mainstay from our life. And the children, I remember the basic worry from parents was only what will be with the children? How will it be with the children? Why I am saying this? I will give you a example from our life. I decided that I can't get education, that I have no future. Now my parents want to give education to our sister. Our sister was the crown in our family, like you know, we, everybody, the father, the mother and we, the boys, love her very much and she was the top from our family.

HR: She was the oldest?

HS: She was the oldest, and we all was caring and we all was very proud of her. I remember the mother, especially the mother, was very educated minded. She was very well written. I'd say my mother was much ahead of her time. She knew a few languages. And our home was always full with books and full with newspapers. I have to mention newspapers. Now in America a newspaper is you go out and buy a newspaper. In Poland by the Jewish people you no buy a newspaper. Four or five or ten tenants buy together one paper. When you finish the paper, the next tenant reads the paper, and the next tenant reads the paper. So buying a paper wasn't such a simple thing. Buying a paper was a celebration, and it was well readed in our house, and well discussed in our house. And I remember a Saturday or Friday night, what a beautiful table, it would be covered, everything, with a beautiful light. And the light that we saw was holy is in our house. And after this, the father start to read the paper, because it was a special Saturday edition with all interpretation what's happening in Poland and what's happening in Spain, what's happening in Abyssnia, what's happening in Palestine. And even my grandmother

what was 80 years old and she didn't hear well, she was a part of our discussion. And when we children was learning that she didn't hear good, my father was yelling on us not permitting to laugh on the grandmother. And he explained to her the whole everything what's in the paper. And she was so interested to know what's going on, which was amazing that a woman from 80 years old, sick and small. And she was full of life to the end, to a tragic end what I will come later.

What I want to bring out about my sister. They decided she should get education. To get high school education in Poland was more than to get your college education. It was at a very high academic level. She had to join a *Gymnasium*, a girls--this *Gymnasium* was like a Junior College. It was divided for boys and for girls. Well to go in over there was very hard especially for Jewish people. There was a unofficial list how many Jews can go in, without telling black and white. And I remember we was preparing she have to get special preparation in Latin and in other, in geometry that we have this in public school. I remember I was reading with her together *Homer* and her all, from the Greek tragedy, in preparation, and special clothing. And in the end she wasn't accepted. She wasn't accepted, and we had the impression she passed the test. She wasn't accepted because we was Jews, and because my father was a butcher. Maybe if he was a higher educated person maybe she would be accepted. The trauma from not being accepted was very much on my sister. And she joined the Communist Youth, what was the sign was that she, that to fight the Polish fascism. And I remember they was putting out leaflets, illegal. The Polish Communist Party was illegal. And she was in their work was putting out flags on the electric wires, make five minute demonstration in the street, you put out a red flag make such a demonstration, or putting on new flags on this. I remember doing such a job my sister was caught by a Polish and she was arrested. And can you imagine the tragedy in our family? We was a religious people, that having a daughter what was belonging to an illegal party and was arrested? And was sentenced to seven year *dopokrachya*, [phonetic] how do you call it? Where, it's not a prison. This is for children.

HR: Detention center?

HS: No, this is for a...

HR: Correction?

HS: Youth, corrections, yes.

HR: Right.

HS: And this was for us like she would be sentenced to death. I remember the uproar it was in the community with this. And the whole community was helping us to collect money to hire one from the famous lawyers in Poland. I forget his name. And that case went to the Appellation Court, and to the Supreme Court. And she was getting, she wasn't sentenced to that, to prison, only...

HR: Paroled?

HS: Paroled for five years, for ten years.

HR: Probation.

HS: Probation, right. I remember the tragedy. I remember how my parents, my mother, was like crying--I never saw my parents crying--how they was crying. And mine heart was going out, seeing that intolerable situation we are put in, not being able to do this, not being able to exist. I saw we're going in in such a pressure that what will be our future? Because the Polish, the end was we was only working, doing for the Jewish people. A shoemaker was making shoes for the Jews. The baker was baking for the Jewish. Basically we have no strict contact with the Polish people. And it was getting worse and worse, because the Polish situation was worse. The Polish worker had no work. Lodz was without work. The all big towns was without work. And I remember what was going on in the street, demonstrations between the people without work. And our situation was worse, because we had no connection with the outside world. It was let's say Jewish shoemakers what never make a new shoe. He only was fixing old shoes, or have tailors, they wasn't making new clothes. They was only fixing the old clothes. And not meaning that it wasn't, with that whole thing what I'm saying, in our Jewish world we wasn't a monolith world. Was rich people, was poor people. It was a struggle between the rich and I remember there was very rich Jewish landlords what every Friday night they throw out Jewish tenants on the street for not paying the rent, and collecting the money by other Jewish people to collect their rent for them that they should move back to the apartment. I remember Jewish people that was very rich. They was wholesalers, or suppliers for the army, and there was people what was dying from hunger.

HR: So, Mr. Skorr, you're not suggesting that Jews were any different than any other people.

HS: No, right. Wasn't different. No, we was for the outside world, for the Polish world we was Jews. Now we are inside in our Jewish world we have all our Jewish problems. We have rich people, we have poor people.

HR: But even in the atmosphere of impending danger, there was no pulling together of the Jewish community so that people would still throw people out even though they didn't have...

HS: Yes, no, correct. Was not pulling together. I believe there is not pulling together in the world. I believe with the atom bomb, molecularly, there is always constant fight between the atom too. Everything constant movement. No, there was a very big difference. I remember Itzik Adder, a person what they, on the Jewish street, this Zolta Gasse, this Jewish street he own maybe twenty or thirty buildings. And every day you could see on the street people with the *shaynigis* [phonetic]. You know what *shaynigis*? Like here we call them mattresses. They filled up with straw, and they all this, on the street with children, with the water pails. Because we had no water. You have to carry the pail.

Tape two, side two:

HS: The Jewish world wasn't a, you can't take it's like a Jewish people like one part. There was big trouble in the Jewish population. Or we was united against our outside danger.

HR: The community.

HS: The outside danger was so big, because the outside enemy doesn't think that poor Jew or the rich Jew. He wanted to kill all Jews. Now inside we have our troubles, we have our fights and we have our tears and we have our smiles. We have our tax collectors what was so hated by the Jewish population. Let's see...

HR: Jewish taxes?

HS: Tax collectors. They was a, he was employed by the government. I will come to this. No Jewish person was employed by the government. You couldn't be a janitor. You couldn't be a doggie catcher. You couldn't be nothing. A Jewish person couldn't be a part of the establishment. And a person, a Gentile person where he only wore a button with a Polish eagle, was already the representative of the power. And he was already afraid and he was already alert. So what, only to collect the money from the Jews, the Polaks hired Jewish tax collectors. And if a Jew didn't have the money, that Jewish tax collector come to his house and take out his furniture, what kind of furniture he have. They take out everything. And that was a special class of people what was hated by the Jewish population. And such a time was coming, because he was coming with a Polish *policja*, a Polish *policja* means a Polish policeman. And he was doing his dirty work. Because the not liking the Jew like a Polish citizen, the Polish government collect every tax, anything what they can from us. They didn't like us in their schools. Now we have to pay a special tax for building schools. We have to pay for everything, and not having, you know, the benefit. It's clear we was a, we have a Jewish autonomy with our *Kehillah*. We have our form of self-government, how I say in the beginning, with our court, with our rabbinate, with our *din Torahs*, with our school, with everything. But we have to pay money for this stuff. [tape off then on]

And so bringing this out everything, I'm trying to give a picture of our Jewish life, and seeing that our problems was mounting so terribly that we felt it will come to explosion. I privately, how sinister it sounds, I was thinking there will come a war. And I was waiting for a war without possibility of tragedy because I felt something have to come out. All this was a sense of adventure because I was in that age of looking for adventures. I was 16, 17 years old. Now I felt that we can't exist a long time this way in Poland. And still, in that time of cataclysm--we have to see it was a time of upheaval in Europe--the fascism was being very strong. It was already made the Iron Pact between the Soviet Union and Hitler. And Mussolini was already taking Abyssinia. And Franco was already conquering Spain. And was already a time from the *Volksfront* [phonetic] and the left took over in, with Premier Blum in France. And there was upheaval from the

east in Russia where Stalin was making his bloody cleaning. And we felt that we are living on a, it's time for an earthquake. And we felt this. We were very afraid. We were very thinking. And you know, every Jewish person is a philosopher. And it was always, when we will see three, four people. They were standing, and discussing politics.

It's interesting to mention this. We were living our special life in Poland. Saturday was our holiday. Sunday was their holiday. We couldn't work Saturday because our Jewish religion, our Jewish *minhag* doesn't permit us. Not saying that we are religious [unclear] a Jewish person didn't work Saturday. A Jewish person didn't work on the holidays. Not questioning if he is religious or not. Only, the Poles didn't permit us to work Sunday. It was a strict law, enforced with very strict Polish policemen. So what the Jewish people did in that day, Saturday they went to the synagogue. After the synagogue they eat, they went to sleep. In the afternoon they went to the theater or they went to the park. Sunday was a day of politics. The Jewish people was going out on the Jewish street. And the Jewish on the Zlotygasz [phonetic] and the [unclear] on the corner where it was a Jewish delicatessen. And a Jewish *zuckeraria* means a candy, a [unclear] candy store. And you can see a hundred or two hundred people standing, talking politics. And standing with their sticks, it was a law that everybody have a walking stick. The men, they were standing, people, and talking politics. They were standing everywhere. You see six, four, five, ten, fifteen people. And you can go in and hear how they're discussing the Palestine or they're discussing Spain, or they're discussing Ghandi, or they're discussing the [unclear], the question what learned people concentrate on this. And this was amazing, specific Jewish, specific Kalisz, that on a Sunday you would go out on the corner of that street and you talk politics. And if you have to find your father or you have to find your grandfather, you go over there, and you know that you will find him. This was the more, not-so-religious people, because the religious people were sitting in *shteiblach*, *davening* and praying and learning Torah. The little more *Haskalah* [Enlightenment] people, how we say, were standing and discussing.

I want to say something too. We have our own Jewish underworld. I don't know how I express myself. There was a Jewish band from the brave boys, strong arm boys, what they call a *Czarnowreczye*, the black hand, made on the model from the Italian mafia. And it is very unique. They weren't bad people. In our eyes they were the heroes, the *gibers*. And if you have, if Jewish people have a conflict between them, somebody no want to give money, somebody own this, somebody made not good shoes, somebody take away some money from a girl, they no go to the court. They no go to the rabbinate. They go to the *Czarnowreczye*. They go to Layzer or to the other and say, "Layzer, that man did this and this wrong to me." That *Czarnowreczye*, these strong boys, went to that guy and say, "Listen, you will give the money." And that guy know already he have to give the money or they broken the bones. And this was so in our eyes they were very nice people. In the reality they were hooligans, right? But they did the Jewish function. And if somebody just try to hit a Jew, this was a normal, hitting a Jew was a normal thing, like

you drink a glass of water you know somebody will hit a Jew, somebody will break a window. Or somebody will take a Jew by his beard. Then is more vicious. Or somebody will take off the *sheitel* from a woman throw with this. Let's get these boys, this was a band maybe ten, twelve, the *volyayingen*, how we were saying. Let them see there's something doing. You should see what kind, how, what kind of slaughterhouse they make with them. They take them apart and they kill them. And they was sitting on the bridge and crowing in their court. And Jewish people was coming to them and asking, and getting help from them. In, when a time, there start a time in 1938, in the beginning 1939, when the antisemitism was very organized, the [unclear] was already not only talking, they was fighting us. They was hired like guards. I remember there was a Jewish autobus line, a bus line, which was going through Kalisz through the small towns, to Lodz. Kalisz, Sieradzo, Zdunska Wola, up until at last Lodz. In that time on the highways, the bus was being stopped by the farmer boys, by the hooligans, and the Jews was taken off from the bus and beaten up and roughed. Would you believe what the Jewish autobus line did? They hired the boys from the *Czarnowreczye*, from the black hand, and they was guards on the line. And nobody was, and they was afraid because they had knives, they had guns, and they know how to beat the Polaks. And it's amazing, in our eyes, they was taking, in our eyes they was heroes, Jewish heroes.

HR: They didn't get caught by the police?

HS: The police was afraid of them. The police, if somebody, a Polak, was going and complaining that he was beaten up by Layzer Kaminski, or by a other, they have special names, the Eizner Life [phonetic], we have such [unclear] names, you know, the police would say, "Who told you to start with them? Don't go to them." They know they, they're not, eating potatoes. "They can beat you up." The police was afraid of them.

This was, we had like a, I told you, like a Jewish world. And around them was the Jewish *traygas*. How do you call it, the *traygas*? The Jewish porters. There was a Jewish profession, very nice people, hard working people, even by us. You could be a good Jew. What means a good Jew? Not that you are a Jew. That you are in Jewish way learned. You can be a Jewish porter. You can carry water, and you have the name, you are a good Jew. You can be Itzik Adder and have plenty money, or [unclear] was a millionaire, and he wasn't a good Jew, because he wasn't a Jewish man. I want to bring up, there was a Jewish profession, Jewish *traygas*. They was carrying loaves from street to street, and they were standing on the street and they have their own guild. You can go and take him. You have to take by the line. And they was, they was educating the children in Jewish way. And they was very nice people, but very hard working. If such a Jewish man, such a Jewish porter, get a little richer, he buy a small carriage. He didn't carry on his back. He carried the load on a small carriage, from store to store or furniture in this. This was specific and they had their ropes, their [unclear] the sign of their profession on their [unclear], and they was waiting day and night or snow or rain, standing on the corner of the Bladina [phonetic] Street near the Rotsayger [phonetic] Pharmacy, and waiting for

this. And they was very dear people. And they was, people have, feel respect for them. Not talking that they was porters. And for the *VoiaYingen* they weren't having so much respect. The community didn't have respect for the Jewish mafia. No, they considered their power they can protect them. But the Jewish porters, they was like a, the people respect them. We have two Jewish, is *droshkages*. They was taking load on horses, *droshkages*. This is like, a *droshke*, this is from the Russian, carriages. If he is a more wealthy, he had a carriage. A lot he had a nice carriage, with the rubber wheels, with a leather *Kapote* [long coat] if it's rain. And he was carrying people from the city to the railroad. And how I can see now this is a whole world [unclear]. Later we had the other horses, *risargi* [phonetic]. This was a, he had one horse; the person had one horse. And he was taking a load. The *droshke* was taking only people, and it was everything nice and clean and he have to have a number from the city. Our biggest holiday, our boys is, when they permit us to wash their horses. We was taking the horses in the summer time, and going to the river, and wash the horses and we was believing that we are the kings of the world. We have too a Jewish *expeditsia*, [phonetic] a *expeditsia*. He was carrying a load, heavy load, from factories from us to Lodz. I'm just mixing up things I just want that we shouldn't forget.

In that whole kaleidoscope of situation what I want to bring up, I want to tell you that the Jewish youth was growing up beautiful, clean in their mind, in their thinking, in their behavior. Their whole meaning was only to get a profession, to get education. Not thinking that we are living on a--we are living out our welcome. We wasn't thinking. We know that we live in bad times. You know, in our history there is so much experience. Our fathers and grandfathers was telling us about the *Haidamackers*⁷ to Ukrainians, the *Chmielnickis*, the Polish *chalirikas*, the all kind antisemites was killing us for 100 years. And we always know this is a part of our tradition, is a part of our life. And Jewish blood was always very cheap. It was always flying on the street.

Now we was living with this growing up, and we was growing up very nice, very healthy, with love and respect for people, love and respect for our parents, love and respect for literature. Being so [unclear] by the Polish reality, we turned in. Our literature was the most famous world classic literature. We didn't read cheap. It was, probably wasn't the cheap literature. We was brought up with [unclear]. We was brought up in a Jewish literature, because Poland was just flowering with Jewish poets and with Jewish writers.

And the same thing, our relations to our parents and to growing up, and me being a boy, the relations to girls was so beautiful, so pure, so inspired, that I am now, still now I am already a old man, I'm flowering in my mind the beauty of the moments. Because don't forget please, that in that, all the people was growing up, physical laws exist for

⁷Paramilitary bands that disrupted the social order in Polish Ukraine during the 18th century (*Encyclopedia Judaica*).

people. We are children, later we are already youth. We start to look on girls. Girls start to look on boys. And you know, the changes was so subtle, so nice, that I try to find this now in this world and I can't see even a sign. What was the meaning a boy look on a girl? A boy--a woman, and a girl in our philosophy, was put on such a high pedestal that you was preparing yourself to be ready to that appearance, that you can be ready to go around and to walk and to talk with a girl. And that, you have to be already different clothing. You put already a few pennies to buy a new shirt and to buy new pants and this, because you start to going around with a girl put you already in a different category. We was a bunch of boys going around, maybe ten boys, a group always. And when we start to get the profession, we start to get already to earn some money, so I start to see the signs that people start already, are already to look on girls. If one [unclear] they come Saturday, he's nice clothed. I ask him, "What happened?" Why he's nice and he went to a barber already, the haircut. Because we was going out without hair. We, our, we didn't have hair. We cut our hair with a *machinka*.

HR: All the way down?

HS: Yes.

HR: Oh.

HS: Until six, until, I believe, until 14, 15 years I was always have the haircut like with a machine. Soon you start already have longer hair, and wear longer pants. You start already to be like a grown up. This was already start to be after the *Bar Mitzvah*. In that time, you start to be already a little more serious. You're not horsing around so much. And we used to take a, I say, take a look, my friend, Motek Leder, my best friend, he walks with a girl. I was very shocked.

HR: With long hair already.

HS: Already nice. He was already earning money. He was learning, he was studying by, to be a tailor, by the best tailor. This is a history too. His father, I'm mixing up this.

HR: It's all right.

HS: His father was a old Russian revolutionary in the Jewish party, in the Bund. And he was in Siberia. He was sent by the Czar to Siberia. He come back from Siberia. He was over there ten years. He developed a *gruzlica*.

HR: Tuberculosis.

HS: Tuberculosis. And he died. I remember the funeral was a whole revolutionary funeral. People by the thousands of people they was walking with the red flags. I didn't understand so much the sense. Only now I understand the sense of this. And he wasn't, why I remember this? A Jewish law by a Jewish tradition, you are mourning, you don't cut the nails, you no wash yourself, you no cut the hairs. And he was coming into school. By us in the school they was every day checking if we are clean or we have no lice or the nails are cut or the ears are cut. And he comes without nails, without cut the nails, dirty. And the *hygieniska*, this means a teacher, a hygiene teacher.

They're called a *hygieniska*, ask him, "Motek," his name was Mordechai, "Motek, why are you dirty?" He started to cry. And I explained that his father passed away. And the whole class, I remember, was very quiet. And later our main teacher, what was our principal teacher in our class, Panya Sadova, she was responsible for the class, she had a whole speech how the children that by Jewish law, a time of mourning is that Jewish people no wash themselves. And this was. What I want to bring out, and he was a orphan. So, the *Kahal*, the *Gemeinde*, and his father was a famous political person, this, the *Kahal*, the *Gemeinde*, tried to put him to, give him to a, the best tailor in town, that he can learn over there without paying money. Because usually when you go learn a trade you have to pay to that master 300 *zlotys* then you pay a contract. The *Kehillah* was forcing him that, not forcing, was putting up that one orphan goes to the tailor Toldosky. He was the most famous in the city. And he was working over there, and he was learning over there, and he was making already money. The sign that he was making money, he was changing his clothes, and nice dress, and he start to go out with a girl. With this he was not going all the time, well he wasn't just a good looking, wild boy just running around.

And little by little the group start to be smaller because everybody find a girl. And we started to go out. What means go out? To go to theater, to go to the movies. In a very, in a nice, respectable way. And such a boy was already looked up by other people, because he was already very much respected. What I want to bring out with this? That in living under the [unclear] we was living our normal life with our normal pleasures with our normal things. We was, we love our Saturdays, to make some in the Saturdays we tried to go out of the town. We had to take some sticks and stones that the Gentile boys, we have to fight them off. Because we love to go to the nature. There was a forest, a vineyard, five miles from us. Always Saturday we tried to go over there, five, ten boys together. When we was five, ten boys together the Gentile boys was afraid to attack you. One person was more easy for attack. So we was taking our life and our realities how it is, and coping with this. Now we are coming out...

HR: It's 1939.

HS: And the time wasn't standing. The upheaval was coming near. Hitler was already, it was already after the *putsch*, after killing his own [unclear], the S.A., and start already after the *Kristallnacht*. You probably remember the Crystal Night, when a Polish boy Grynszpan, went in. I believe this was in Paris, and killed a the third secretary from the German Embassy, in protest for sending out his parents, throw them out to Zbaszyn. His parents, the Grynszpan's parents, was Polaks, Polish Jews. His parents was, we took them into our town. It was already the Crystal Night. And we saw already the upheaval is nearing. And what was their action, the Polish government? The Polish government was start to be more fascistic. The Polish government was making too their own concentration camp. Was a concentration camp in Kaitos Bereza [phonetic]. In Kaitos Bereza in the eastern part of, near the Russian border, was, make a Polish concentration camp for

people which are against the regime, in the same model what is the German concentration camp. And the Polish colonels, including their, the state, the Secretary of State like you call it here, the *Ouser* Minister, Beck, Józef Beck, was very close working with the Germans against the Russians. And from them he was getting the ideas, the Polish government was getting the ideas, to demand a part from Czechoslovakia, Zbaszyn, and a part from Litovskaja, near Memel. And the Polish government was so blinded by the German propaganda, seeing that the enemy is Russia, that the enemies are the Jews.

And that time not only the antisemitic line that the people was developing, there was developing a official line, antisemitic line, with antisemitic laws, anti-Jewish laws. What is the law? First of all was the law of *Ugolotualny* [phonetic], that we shouldn't cook even, the way of slaughtering the cows, the Jewish way, they was for a whole year was hold the [unclear] with everything which was [unclear] so important how to kill cows in Poland. They didn't see that the Germans are preparing to destroy Poland. The whole energy and the whole press, and everywhere, you only was hearing how the Jews are killing inhumane the cows. And it was a whole, and come out a law what was permitting only that three or four butchers can kill in the Jewish way the cows once a week in a town. Or they come out with a law how to paint the houses. The, Poland was bending already, and they was worrying how to paint the houses. The meaning was, in the small towns, who have the house? Only the Jewish people. So they was only the whole intention was misleading the Polish people, and showing them the wrong way, bringing out such extraordinary stupid things that the people will no oriented see the danger. They like, their priest Shetsha [phonetic], like the Madame Pristorova. This was a, there was a, in there, like the Congress, in the same. There was Congressmen. And every day they was coming out with all anti-Jewish denunciations and reference, and propaganda. And the official explanation why Jews should be pulled out from the Polish university, and the [unclear] in the Warsaw University and the L'vov University, Krakow University, and Lublin University. Every day they was only killing and harming Jews, cutting them with knives and throwing them out. In the time when they killed the Polish Mr. Pieratski, in Lemberg, they come out with a, this that the Jewish did this because he is an antisemitic against the Jews. And they started to make pogroms against the Jews.

The fascisation of Poland was going on day and night, not seeing the danger, and not willing to see the danger. I believe that the ruling class from Poland was working together with the Germans to prepare the war against Poland, and against Russia. The German fifth column was so developed in Poland, either by the leadership, that this is the reason that the Polish Army wasn't modernized. The Polish Army wasn't mechanized, and the Polish police was only make fascist designs. And the only, in our town, only *Volksdeutschen* could belong to the Polish police.

We will come now to the upheaval when it comes 193-, in the beginning from 1939 when they start, when the west started to give in to Hitler. When Hitler went in to Ruhrgebied [phonetic], when Hitler went in to Austria, when Hitler went into Sargabid

[phonetic], when Hitler went into Sudeten, if you try to remember this, we know that the cataclysm start. Polish people start to talk about the war, only talking in their chauvinistic way, that we will destroy Germany. We will make them the second Grunwald. This was a famous battle in Grunwald, in 1410, when the united armed forces from Poland and Lithuania, under the Polish king Jagiello, destroyed the German Army, the *Krestinostis* [phonetic] (Teutonic Order?), and the Grunwald. And they start to put up signs to the, on the streets, placards, with-

Tape three, side one:

HS: The atmosphere in Poland started to be very tense, and very unruly. The Polish population was talking about war and the Polish government was talking about taking Czechish territory. It was amazing how they tried to link away that problem, that German problem and they tried to camouflage the situation. They tried to put that Poland has to take a part of Czechoslovakia, in the time when Czechoslovakia was in trouble. It means Zaozhe [phonetic], a part of territory by Czechin. And putting out a anti-Czechish hysteria by the Polish people, and I remember it created demonstrations, "We want Zaozhe. We want Zaozhe," what people was yelling. It's clear that the Jewish people was taken away from the whole thing, because I remember already we was like instinctively the Jewish community, the Jewish, everything was like preparing themselves for the inner trouble, what we expect. The tremors were coming. We could feel in our souls what the Polak couldn't feel, because finally the Polak could lose only the government what he didn't like so-and-so, but he could lose his country, he could lose his life. And we know what in time of war what the Germans are, could prepare for us. So the tremor that scariness, was very deep, went in in our hearts. And I remember the constant discussions or in the synagogue, or in the *shtieblach*, or in the organization that I belonged, or in the street everywhere, was talking about the coming danger. And I had a feeling like we was preparing ourselves for that fight. Privately, how I told you before, I was welcoming that storm, because instinctively I felt we have no way to exist. How can this go further? How further? And I was feeling maybe in that exploding storm, something will come out positive, in the same time being afraid--what will happen? You know, I remember like now walking in the park Saturday morning, you know, thinking so and waiting how the storm should come. You know, I was like, I remember I had discussions with my friend. We was young boys. Most was anti-war. I, how stupid I was, I say, "There will come a storm, and maybe the Russians will come in and that means Poland will fall apart, something will come in. There is no way we are existing in a artificial environment what have no way to exist." I remember the strength, the discussions what we had with our, with my friends, and waiting, and thinking a lot of this.

How families was preparing themselves? How people, like what I am talking now, I'm talking now general. How people in their [unclear] homes they was preparing for that trouble. And every felt trouble was coming. And then we felt that the family will be affected. Because everything what we had in Poland what was secure--I would say secure, what was our moral and physical defense--was our family, our invisible world what is created around father and mother and children, in that apartment what we have. And we was, I remember we was afraid what will happen to us, what will happen to the family. And I remember the discussions what my father and my mother had. They remembered the Germans from 1914. In 1914, I will say Kalisz is a border town. The Germans were, this was the first town what the Germans occupied in 1914. And they

destroyed the whole town, not the whole, but the center from the town, just by bombing, shelling, and killing. And they killed maybe 1,000 people and lined them out near the [unclear] house, near the city hall. My mother was in that time in Kalisz, she said. This was only in the beginning, three, four days. Who was killed was killed. Who were hiding in the basements were hid. Later they come out and say the Germans wasn't so bad, she said. The Germans brought kitchens, and they started to give soup and they started to give bread. And they started to make disinfection cameras. You know disinfection? *Endlousens*. They was, they're always crazy about cleanliness. And there, she say they come to every house and take out people for disinfection. *Endlousen* cameras. What was she wanting to bring out? She want to quiet us down. She was a very smart, unusual woman. She wanted to quiet us down, that it's not so terrible. And probably she wanted to give us strength before that horrible things what will come. And so these constant discussions was in every house. And everyone in his own level. The very religious people was afraid how they will conduct their religious life, how they will [unclear] the synagogues. Because we know already from the experience with Germany it was written a brown book, I don't know if it's known about the brown book here in United States. But that brown book was given out, I believe by the League of Nations, condemning the atrocities and what the Germans was doing against their own population, against Jews. And that brown book was very well known by the Jewish people. And everybody was afraid what will be.

And to the end, when Chamberlain was meeting Hitler about safeguarding Europe 1,000 years, about giving him and the *Anschluss* what was with Austria, and by giving him the Sudeten, how they dismembered Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia was very modern with a very strong army. They was ready to fight, and they had a, Czechoslovakia have a defense pact with Russia. They say from France, Czechoslovakia, Russia have a defense pact. If the other aggression will come there, they will fight. How they circulated, and how they avoided, and how they didn't want to let in Russia in that fight, Chamberlain, he got Hitler in his various houses, the devil knows where. And he comes back with this sign, "Thousands Year Peace." And we was [unclear] Chamberlain with his umbrella. It was so much, you know, irony in our Jewish papers, that what he was promising thousands of years of this. And we know that only he's giving in to Hitler till he has the war, until Hitler comes in with this straight demand from Poland, to give back Danzig, and to give back the Pomeranian corridor. Germany by the 1918, when Germany lost the war, Poland was get Danzig, and *Oust* Prussia, with the city Konigsberg was divided from Germany. Poland took that part in between. So East Prussia was divided from Germany. So Hitler come out with the demand. And this they call it the corridor. How is it in German? The corridor?

HR: Mmm hmm.

HS: The corridor, yeah, the corridor. He wants back Danzig, and he wants back the corridor. And the Polish government very, help him out, very nationalistic, very

chauvinistic, very stupid. I will tell you why--because they was believing that they had a pact with France and with Great Britain that if they will go to war, they have to go to the war. And this is what happened. And the demands from Germany that he should give away this and this, the Polish Marshall, [unclear], "I think [unclear] but one buck." This is a historical expression. *Niyeded guzhik* [phonetic]. A *guzhik* means a buck. But I don't know [unclear]. And it was clear at that time that it will be war. And the ultimatum was given and Great Britain was saying to them that it will be war. This was the last day of August, yeah, July, August, that war start [unclear].

How was we behaving to this? The panic start to be very big. And, it was so unreasonable. With one shot come, with one thing come a, believing that courage will be again destroyed. And everybody what could start to take out his household, his things, sending away to other towns. We was, all the clothing and house wares. We was a part from that panic as usual. Every Jew was, the panic is this. I remember we hired a what, such a carriage with the horses. We put out the clothing, and I went with my uncle to a small town. They call it Lask, near Lodz. What was the reason? How was the reason? I don't understand, because not, they said Kalisz will be destroyed like 1914. You have to take away the all stuff.

HR: Do you mean to say that almost every Jew went? Or a percentage?

HS: Yeah, every Jew start to send out his clothing.

HR: Oh, just to send away.

HS: We lived in such a panic already. And you could see, we had a uncle what had a horse and he was dealing with the farmers and this. So, we hired him. We put in every, our clothing, and his clothing, and other family clothing. And I went with him with this horse about 200 miles near Lodz. Over there we had a far relative. We put everything in a basement, and we come back. In that time start already the mobilization. The city started to be entire change. I have to tell you, we didn't see in our town, until the war, we didn't have no cars. We didn't have mechanical transportation. Everything was done by horses or by legs. Until the Germans took me and the Gestapo took me in a truck, I never was on a car until 1939.

So, in that time, the first time I saw army trucks, Polish Army trucks, with soldiers starting to go around in the city and mobilizing the people in our own--the friends what was in the age of mobilization. They put on shoes and this, and they start to prepare the certainty to be in the army. I was walking in the park and I saw the young boys in the army going in beautiful new clothing, very strong, and very--and I was believing, "Maybe we will beat the Germans. Maybe it's true that we will beat the Germans." Because it was a very, in that time they toned down the antisemitism. You didn't feel that, you know, that concrete danger maybe make it quieter. You couldn't see such a expression of antisemitism. And we start, come out a mobilization. We have to go to dig trenches. So, you could see boys from the *yeshivahs* with their rabbis. You could see children from the schools. You could see political organizations with their flags--

Po'alei Zion and Bund. You could see our rabbis, Meyer Lewis with the *shtrahmel*,⁸ with one of those things, going with the shovels. Where they took so many shovels in one shot I did never know. You could see thousands of people streaming out on the fields, and under the leadership from the [unclear], this means from the soldiers, and they show you how to dig. And I'll tell you a secret: no Jewish person had once a shovel in their hand. We didn't know how to dig, because we was never exposed to this kind of activity, this kind of work. And we never, I never had a shovel in my hand. And so most of people. It's true yes that other people, other Jewish persons, like my father and other people, they was physical, always physical working, they know how to handle this. Now they, how the *yeshivah bokerim* and how the rabbis was doing this was, you know, was only--and the Polish soldiers started to laugh. I remember I was, I started to be very mad, because I was very sensitive on my Jewishness. I was very sensitive on my Jewish honor. And I start to work so hard I start to get...

HR: Blisters?

HS: Blisters. And I will tell you, the blisters I had until I was in Russia, deep in the forest, still the blisters was on my hands, so many months later. I had blisters on all my fingers, when we dig holes, and what the rabbis and the *yeshivah bokerim* was nothing done, because they didn't know what to do. They didn't know how to do it. You have to know how to do this kind of work. But I just want to give you the atmosphere. This was only a political demonstration that we are ready, together with the Polish population, to fight for Polish independence. And it started to come out all kind of signs; it still wasn't war. This was a few days before. It was general mobilization. And the Polish government come out with all kinds of plans and instructions, how to close the windows, and how to make the paper, and how to do that and how to do this and how to all kind of things. How to take apart the--near the houses, how do they call this? The [unclear].

HR: The...

HS: The fences.

HR: Fences.

HS: To eliminate danger of fire. With all kinds such, you know, such kind of stupidities. And how to use if they will throw gas and you haven't got a gas mask. You take a towel over your nose, you know, with all kind of things. And we start to be a little more serious, think about it like that. They arrested these kind of people that they was spies for the Germans. And they make a court trial and they was executed. I was living, lately we was not living in the Jewish neighborhood. We was living on a Ulitsa Peratskago [phonetic]. And this part was the German people with their [unclear], where the *Kirche* was concentrated. And they, and over there was a factory from the toys, Shryah's factory, where most German people was employed. And apart from the people

⁸Fur velvet hat worn by Orthodox Jews on special occasions.

was that, in that sign, in the placards, that they was German spies. And they was executed. And, this was until about two days before the war, in the first, I believe, was the rations [unclear]. I don't know [unclear] in English. When the war started, August, September. Did it start, the war, in September?

HR: In September.

HS: Yeah.

HR: That's right.

HS: That's correct. The 1st of September we start to get all kind of signs. And the radio start to give all kind messages. And at night they started to say that it's war with Germany. War with Germany, and the upheaval start. What start the upheaval? With one shot come a this everybody have to leave the town.

HR: This is a Polish order?

HS: Right. I don't know it was a order or it was a panic or it was a German...

HR: Instigation.

HS: Instigation, because with such a terrible disorganization, such a terrible upheaval, you take 80,000 people, no communication, no cars, no trucks, and you say, "Everybody has to go out."

HR: Did you hear this word of mouth? You did hear it? Just neighbors started saying, "We have to go. We have to go."

HS: Neighbors. Neighbors started. We started and it started to be so terrible. And there start to be such a panic. And people start to run. And we go out on the street and the street is without electricity. Everything is dark. And start to be such a horrible panic. And what else? We was a city built on bridges. I told you in the beginning.

HR: Yes.

HS: Our river was going around back and forth. We was living near a bridge. And they say, the Polish Army, told come to our town, to our house, and they say, "Open all windows, because the bridge is dynamited, and it will be exploded." In this was a terrible panic if the bridge is exploded how we will go out. And we started to, and at that time, my father lost himself. My father started to fall apart. When he saw that the family, everything falls apart, he started to cry like a small child. And seeing this, this was for me the worst thing in my life until that time. I never saw my father in such a distress. My mother was sick in that time. She had ulcers on her leg, bleeding, you know? And how--and she was a heavy woman--and how will, what we will do? And my father was in terrible, you know. He started to tear his hair from his head and he started to cry so like a small child. "What we will do? What will be with us? And what will..." You know? And be everybody falling apart, the mother, the children, everybody.

HR: And this little grandmother of yours was in the house too.

HS: And so where we will go? My mother can't make a step even. She had such bandages, you know, so elastic, you know?

HR: Yes, yes, her legs.

HS: She had such a swollen leg, you know? The whole leg was, from the knee until the bottom was one wound, you know? So I say to my father, "We have downstairs the carriage." We was, my father was a butcher. We had where to carry that meat such a carriage, inside with a metal that the meat have to be carried from the slaughterhouse to the shop and it should be hygienic. The law, from the Polish law, it have to be inside with metal, and this have to be every time washed. When you come with this carriage to the slaughterhouse, they no let you in if that policeman doesn't look in, "Oh, this is not washed." So I say to the father, let's take in some food and some clothing and let's put in the mother in that carriage and we--let's go!" And my father started to fall apart. He couldn't, he couldn't concentrate himself. And he started to cry like a small child. And so did the mother, so did the children, so did the grandmother. And the grandmother said she will not go. She said, "What will be will be. You go. I will be here, and I will keep everything what this is. What will happen will happen. I will not go." And she was over 80 years old. And she was a sick woman. I don't know what kind of sickness. She was always vomiting. She was eating. She can eat. Soon as she should eat an hour later she start to vomit. This was a, I'm sorry I'm mixing in. I just want to give you a picture.

HR: Sure.

HS: I, we know the ritual. She was eating everything soft. After an hour she'd start to say, "Oy, oy!" We have to put in a pail, and we have to hold her head, and she was vomiting. This was every day a ritual. She had something with the stomach. I remember how long I am existing I remember this.

HR: Oh my.

HS: So it couldn't be cancer. She was skinny like a finger. And she would run, you know, she was always on the move. And she said, she, [unclear]. "You go. I will be here. What will happen will happen. God will help us. You will come back, you will have a home." You know, and we watched the child, we left with her the smallest brother, Moishe. He was...

HR: How many children now? I mean...

HS: We were four children.

HR: Four children.

HS: We was three sons and one sister. And he was a little, a sick boy. Because in Poland plenty of people was sick. Youth was very sick. I remember he was getting that cod liver fat or something? You know, he was always...

HR: Cod liver oil.

HS: Oy, he was always so much. We have so much trouble with, always, with the eyes and with his head. We was carrying him always to that, there was such a, from the public [unclear] with the lamps, you know? He was very sick, and he [unclear]. And her last word what I remember when we went out, she say, "Just watch Moishe. Watch Moishe." This wasn't where to watch Moishe. Wasn't what, I couldn't organize, you know? And I said, "Papa, let's go! Let's go!" And he was crying. And I took the mother

out, downstairs, and we took some, we were making our own wine, you know? You know, in Poland you make your own wine. Cherries, blueberries, and I figure when we have to have a drink, something. And this was Sunday. We still had *challahs* and this. We, I took in, and we took in a ax too.

HR: An ax.

HS: We had an ax in the store. I said, "Let's have something to protect ourselves." A big ax, you know, like in Poland they was, the meat was cut with big axes, you know? I wrap in that ax, and put in that. I had to start to be the leader, you know? I put in the two bottles, milk bottles, [unclear], big ones.

HR: Big vats of it.

HS: Right. With cherries and blueberries and other kind of things and this. And we take this down. And I put in the mother, and I put in the brother in that carriage. And I even went in the front like a horse, you know? And the sister with the brother. And the father was pushing. Because we have to go up. How I told you, we have the rivers and a bridge. And the town was still from the King Jagiello was made such a, it shouldn't be the water overflow. How they call it? From the river.

HR: A flood.

HS: That it shouldn't be flood, was made such valley.

HR: Dikes.

HS: Dikes, yeah. The old dikes maybe 800 years old. They call it Valley Aygroška [phonetic], because the King Jagiello was making the, was building the. And we have to, I just try to remember everything. And we pushed that carriage up, and we come out that bridge was still soldiers over there what it was mined. And we come out to the highway, and my God, I never saw, hundreds of thousands of people, just going. Villages, with cows, with everything. A sea of people. You can't imagine. If you saw now that picture what he want to show you in *The Winds of War* about Poland, this was a small joke, what you see, I never saw so many people. We was from a small town, right? A river of people! Horse after horse, villages. The same what we was going, all, there was a, all that villages. I believe this was a, the Germans put up a disinformation to make a upheaval. Because villages was coming from there, and one village was going there. It was stopping and nobody could go. The army could go through, couldn't go through. They have to walk on the side, and they was cursing, you know? They was, with, they have the, and the big trucks what never I saw before. And nobody was moving. And I was going, you know, and carrying the mother, you know? It was nice and cool. It was night. It was still summer. It was still hot, but the nights was nice and cool. And I didn't know where we'll go. Where will we go? We just go because people are going. We didn't know where to go. And we started to go. And we go and the Jews and Polaks, villages, horses, soldiers. And we say, "What the hell is it?" You know? And I was sure that we, they say we should go out from Kalisz because we will fight in Kalisz. Kalisz is-

HENRY SKORR [3-1-38]

Tape three, side two:

HS: They said we should go out. I tried to remember that Kalisz will be a battlefield. And they intend to open the...

HR: The dikes.

HS: The dikes to flood [unclear]. And I was working, and I was in that time working by a carpenter. So, with the master, we with the master, we take the furniture and make the furniture--and this was in a basement, you know how--put this up higher that when the river will come, we have this whole thing. I metted that master later, Gelbach. So we are on the highway. We're walking, hundreds of thousands of people, with horses and with this and with that. You know, on the side women with children what can't walk. I meet a woman, when I start to learn the trade to make the upper shoes from this, he was mobilized. I saw that woman standing with two children on the side, one child about three years. The other was a child about one-and-a-half years. She say, "Henry, what should I do?" You know, and I feel with my heart it's, I forgot, I either couldn't, not that I am an honor to my own thing; I was pushed behind when, with other people. We was like in a conveyer, you know?

HR: Sure.

HS: A mass conveyor of tens of miles of people. I couldn't even talk to her. I would take the children on that carriage, you know? I carried the mother and Moishe. I would carry these little children and she would walk. I couldn't even stop, you know? Her name is Yetka, Yetta, called Yetta. She said, "Henry, what should I do?" You know, and I feel that my heart--I couldn't stop. And I--what happened with them I never saw them any more. Two children. You see, don't forget that we are, again, we are extreme people abnormal. We never was at night outside on the street.

HR: Yes.

HS: You see, the Polaks, they was living a normal life. We was, I never saw a night that I should be, let's see, 2:00 outside, and on the fields, on this, you know? We had not that experience, because we was like insulated, artificial everything. You see, we were not exposed to nothing. And here, the first night I am outside on fields, on the highways, you know, with so many horses, and so many things, you know? And it comes in my mind, you know, I was reading in that time Peretz, how he was talking about 1914, how the Jewish people was exposed from the Czarish army, you know? When they was fighting the Germans, they send away the Jewish people to the city. Jewish people are not reliable. Later they was saying that the Jewish people are with the Germans. And how he was coping, you know, with the immense refugees what was from the battlefield. In that time I was thinking how if he was feeling, seeing such a situation. So we was going, going the whole night, until we come to a small town, Kozminka. I come in that Kozminka, you know, and we was dead, I was dead tired. I never did, I was like a horse carrying this. Dead tired, you know? And I look on my mother, you know? So I was no

more tired. And I look on mine other, they was still young. They complained, "This hurts me. This hurts me." And I say to my brothers, "Don't you see the mother? Why are you complaining? Don't complain. They suffered enough, you know?" And my father wasn't saying nothing. [unclear].

We come to that Kozminka, a small town, a small marketplace. In Poland that small town is a marketplace. Around houses, small houses, I never saw this because I am from a bigger town. Kalisz was already a small, typical Jewish from Sholom Aleichem time, and there's always a marketplace. And around the people, and around the Polish soldier are already disorganized, already with the, without belts, you know? In the Polish Army without a belt you're already not in the first thing if you are deserting, if you want to harm you, to take you off the belt. A Polish soldier without belts, and this was this. And they say the Germans are so strong and they're this. And I said, "Oh my God, what will be now?" And we can't get no bread and we no can get nothing. We no can get water. There was, Poland was the pumps, not the pumps, how do you call it?

HR: Wells.

HS: The wells. Well the well was already emptied, so many people was drink. So I took out a little from that wine and I start to give a little to my mother. And my mother was so brave. She doesn't saying nothing. And you know she didn't have for nothing, you know, didn't mention nothing, you know? And she was so brave. She was so controlled, you know? I just all, I was very concerned with her. Most I was concerned with her, because she was unable to walk. And we was over there a day. Not a day, a few hours. Let's see we come in maybe 6:00 here around at night. We come in 6:00. And you know who I meet over there? I'm walking under this, with a silver stick. That lender, what was throwing out every week people. Itzik Adder, the millionaire, what owns a whole street, was walking with his wife. He have a, with that *cylinder*, you know. He wear with a nice *berdle*.⁹ He was a *yezen* [opera hat] with a stick, with a silver this, walking...

HR: The same as everybody else.

HS: With his wife. He can't walk, because he was never walking. You know, and walking so, that...

HR: Your feet get so...

HS: Yeah. And I look so on him. And I think, "Itzak Adder, where is your houses? Where is everything?" And I saw already in what kind horror we are. Now, we come in this and I say, "What to do? We can't sit here on this." Because we couldn't--I can't give you this, I have to be a big artist to explain you this, to see that horror in the people's eyes, you know? And their behavior, you know? And their...

HR: Fear.

⁹Trimmed beard, fashionable at the time.

HS: Fear. And their hunger. Not, already nobody had bread. Nobody took with them. They just ran, you know? I, we had a still a little bread, we, a little of that wine. And already you see nothing was organized. Was no life more. In a few hours. So I say to the mother, "Let's go out a little to that street. Let's go on the side. We are in the middle on the river," I say. "Let's go somewhere on the side." So, I carried that, I took that carriage and we moved a little to the side. A little to the side was already in the fields. You know what a town is in, a small Jewish town is? A few houses.

HR: And that's it.

HS: And that's the fields. Around was already farmers. And over there, we come in to a house, in the outside house, was already a farmer. I say, "Can I put in the carriage?" He say, "Okay." Well, they was, you know, the farmers...

HR: A Polish?

HS: Polish farmer. Basically they, you see, they were so antagonized when they're organized. Basically they're simple people. Do you understand? In time of trouble yeah, they're not so vicious. I no, I don't want to bring out that everybody was a animal. I believe everybody is good; now they can make from the person a animal. So, a young guy, he say, "Okay, stay over in this." And I went to the, I took in the father with the money. He started to, so father give him the money, and the money was in a bag. We carry money in bags in that time, leather bags, you know? And I went out to look around for bread, for something. I come to the market. And this market is a half a street. And lots of soldier on a horse, "All men goes to Lodz! All men goes to Lodz!" You know? And I run that way back to father and say, "Father, we have to go to Lodz, that the army is saying that we have to go." And, you know, in that time we have to go. So, I come to the mother, I say, "Mother we have to go." And she say, "Go. Go with your father, and leave us here with the children, and I will be by that farmer and..." she started to cry. And I went with my father, and then we went, before we went over, the Polaks exploded a bridge. Was a small river. So, I took a piece of wood from that bridge and we swim over and we started to walk with the father to Lodz.

HR: And three children [?]_____...

HS: Three children and the mother...

HR: With the farmer.

HS: We went to, I don't know where to go. I saw where everybody is going. Again, you know, we went with this. And we, to the direction to Lodz. Lodz was maybe 200 miles.¹⁰ The order of it, we was afraid that if we will not go, the Polish can do something. And second, we want to fight the Germans. We wanted to fight the Germans. We went to, with that this was already a half a day, right? We was a half a day in that

¹⁰According to the Atlas, the distance from Kalisz to Lodz is approximately 100 km. Walking under the extreme conditions must have made it feel much longer.

small town, in Kozminka. And after, and this happened around 12:00, 1:00. We went, it was a nice day. I'm too on this?

HR: No, I want to make sure it's working.

HS: And we walked to villages, you know, to all kind of things. The same horror what was in this all packing and going, packing and going, you know? And going and crying.

HR: Wait a minute. [tape off then on]

HS: And the women, you know, in the villages, women with the *Yesus Maria* crying, you know? And sitting near the, on the highways in Poland we have big crosses, you know? How they call it? Yeah?

HR: Mmm hmm, right.

HS: And praying, you know, and this?

HR: Statues.

HS: Statues, and praying, you know? And it's such a horror. For them the horror is more than for us, because we was living always, and they was, you know, for a farmer to take out with the horses, with the pigs, and with everything and going. And we're going so at night and in the evening it comes in the evening and we see a big fire everywhere. The whole horizon around is damaged. And we, as I say to my father, "Let's go in, in the forest. I am afraid what happened over there." What's happening over there? They was plenty ethnic villages, German villages. And soon they was coordinating this, they put on their German clothing, on the motorcycles, and they made fires in the forest with the machine guns. And they start to, you know, to shoot. We was walking in that forest and we saw plenty crazy people, not far in water from where my father is, is a big crazy house. How they call a crazy house?

HR: An asylum.

HS: Asylum. When the war start they let out the, crazy people. And they was walking with the, they have such protective clothing, you know?

HR: Tied up.

HS: And they was, right. And walking around, you know? And we was between them. And they was coming on us. They was hungry, and they was eating the, this. And my father start to fight them. They was crawling on us, you know? Until we ran away from there from that burning forest, and we come out again on the highway. And we come to a small town, Dobra. A small town, Dobra, and my father goes around crying, "Where is my wife? Where is my children?" And crying like a child, you know, going around. I say, "Father, now stop it. Now what do you see, so many people where, everybody is now." He was going [unclear]. I say, "First of all, let's go buy a bread." There still was a baker. I see over there from the smell from the bread. I went in, I had the money in my pocket. I took two loaves of bread, you know, that round...

HR: You could still buy it? With all...

HS: Yes.

HR: These people there was a big line there must have been?

HS: No.

HR: No?

HS: No, I don't know what. We wasn't coming from the straight line. We was coming from that forest.

HR: Right.

HS: And we see, and we were, and I feel the smell from the bread. I say to the father, "Let's buy the bread." This wasn't, this was part of the town. And I bought two loaves. This was not a normal loaves, because [unclear], a farmer brought it. So, I took two loaves and we went to the city. We went to the city. We went to Dobra. Again, when you went to the marketplace, the city is the marketplace. This was a little a bigger town, with a church, with a [unclear] and small houses. And we went and saw, and I saw my master, I told you, from the carpenter, Gelbach. And he say, "You know, your aunt is here, *Ciotka* [Aunt] Rivka, is here with a few children." Mine family, my mother's brother's here too, with the wife, she is with two children. And he, and she don't know where the other are, a lot like we. *Ciotka* Rivka? He say--we ask, "Where is she?" And he show us. "She is in the house." So we went over there, and we was over there.

But with *Ciotka* Rivka is a whole story. She is a very ultra religious woman. She didn't want to come to our house that we are not enough kosher. Her husband, *Feter* [Uncle] Herschel, is like my mother, religious progressive. His hobby? Books. He could sit a whole day in books. And she was always fighting him that he read books. She know only religion. They have a store--I'm sorry I'm going back--they have a store, a *milchikeh* store, selling cheese and eggs, butter, rolls, bread. And I would like to show you the economy from that time--it pays for my *Feter* Herschel to come to us three miles to deliver us four rolls and one bread every day. Can you imagine? And she was very religious, very Orthodox, for nothing. She never want to visit us, because we're not enough religious. She never let the girls--she had four beautiful daughters--she never let them come to us. They was coming to us but she shouldn't know--that we shouldn't spoil them. When the boys start to be a little, and they were in Jewish clothing, you know, in traditional, a Yiddish [unclear] with a *capota*. Later when they start to work, the elder one, Yosef, he is here, I will tell you a whole story with him. He made modern clothing, whatever, with a hat, with everything. He keep this in our house not to show them to the mother. Because he was, she, he didn't want to aggravate her. You know, the respect for the mother and father is very big. And the children, the girls, have to be--they have to do what she wants to do. And this is the reason that she didn't want to give them us, we will come back. The boys I saved.

So, we come back to them and *Ciotka* Rivka. We was over there, and again, we was sitting over there. And my father start a little calm down, you know. He said this. And again, with friends, with that, my master Gelbach, they are from the same town. You know, these, all people from the same town. Now later we was living in Kalisz. But,

they're born in the small towns, you know? And they was talking about the wars, what was, and how it was in 1914 and 1916 and 19- this. And the Germans are not so terrible and not so this. Okay? And the night we went through a night. And in the morning we go down, we come to around a Polish *ulana* [phonetic]. *Ulane* is a kind of soldier of horses. Ran to us, turned out, and ran back, on horses. And we hear a big *kanonada*. You know *kanonada*. Automatic fire, you know? Tremendous fire. And we, everybody hide himself. And we went back to the room. In the afternoon we hear trucks, you know, rrrrrrrroooooommm, coming in. And we look out through the windows and we see the Germans are here. We didn't reco-, we didn't know how the Germans look. We saw they're not Polish soldiers, the clothing. Now one, and when they was turning around, I saw on the cask a *Hakenkreuz*, and I know, that the end come.

The Germans come in, and we was looking through the windows. They make a turn around on that market, make a few, and then pull the machine gun there, you know? Fire and then run back. And it was all day quiet. In the afternoon they come in with a whole, then we hear tanks coming in, you know? And we heard yelling, "*Gevalt, gevalt. Shema Yisroel.*" And then a half an hour later with one German soldier coming to our room with this, like, knock out the door--we was hiding behind this--with a grenade and with a pistol. "*Juden raus!*" You know? We pick up our, like this, and we went out from the door. And also is standing already German soldiers with bayonets, you know? And we run outside on the street to, and they was pulling all us to the church. The church was like a fortress, you know? In Poland everything was made, you know, so. And we come out on the street, and that smell, that different gasoline, you know, such as they was using a synthetic gasoline, that smell of war, you know, overwhelmed you. And you see the soldiers, they're so big, axes, you know, and knocking in the doors. And other, you know, I saw a soldier with a bayonet, and a Jew, in his behind, you know, putting in, putting this in his behind, you know, in that, in folds. And everybody, the men, only men, not women. And they put us over there to that church. This was already in the afternoon the second day. And we are standing by the church. Comes two trucks with machine guns and a officer, a high officer on a motorcycle, you know? And he stays over there. So I was sure that's it. He will open fire. And come with a other truck, and he say, with a *dolmetscher* [interpreter], you know? One German who speak Polish, or a German, and he say, "There is fighting a battle on the Warta River, not far, near you." If they, and we will be hostages. If they can overcome the Polaks, they will explode us, you know? We have to go into the church. And they put in a explosive in the church, you know? And everybody have to give the watches and it was a, put in everything there, the money, the watches, you know.

HR: This is not just Jews. Were there some Poles?

HS: Everybody.

HR: Everybody.

HS: Not Jews, not Polaks. Everybody.

HR: Everybody.

HS: Right. And we went over there. I didn't give him the money. I see he is not watching. I am not so fast to give him the money, right? I already want to start to resist them, you know? And we went to the church, the first time I was in a church, you know? We spit out three times, you know? When a Jew goes near a church in Poland, they have to spit. Or, he makes a thing and puts in his pocket and he walks [unclear], you know? Such a [unclear]. I never saw a church, you know? And we sit over there on the side. And right away they divided Poles, *Juden*, and Poles. The Germans. In that turmoil, you know? And in the night you know you hear the, *Kanonada*. They were, the battle was, so twelve miles from this was the battle going on and you see that fire in the windows. And at night, you know, they come in to the church, three soldiers, with the pistols here, and took out the priest. The priest was by the altar. They took him out and kill him. And in the church there was plenty of crazy people, you know? What was, I told you, in the...

HR: From the asylum.

HS: Yeah, from the asylum they was over there. And they was going around, you know, and playing. And there is not [unclear] with this. And they was, and they didn't let us out to go to the toilet.

HR: The bathroom.

HS: To the bathroom. And people was so scared. And they was doing everything over there by the altar. It was terrible, you know? A horror. And they still didn't say nothing about Jews. In the morning they come in and they say, "Somebody told us that there are weapons here. If you will not give the weapons, everybody will be killed." And, I was afraid that the Polaks can do something to us. They're throwing in a gun and that's it. So, I say to my father, "Let's watch. Let's watch that they are not coming in, or the Polaks are even coming in." And we start to talking to the people that we should be alert that somebody shouldn't doing something to us. And they come in in the morning. They make a line, and they say, "Every tenth will be shot." And they start to make one, two. So what people start to do is start to run. Nobody want to be the tenth. You know, it's a parody in that tragedy. But the crazy people, they didn't understand what's going on. Was a whole, I mean, running around. And the Germans started to laugh, and they make, and they couldn't control it. This was still, they were still soldiers. This was the army.

Oh, you see, I forgot to tell then when we were standing so by the church and he say, "And how," and starts so with the hand, everybody, you know, the Jews are thinking always. [unclear] to shoot, they start to kill them. They start a panic, you know? And they start to tear their, the clothing. And they start, "*Shema Yisroel*," and this and that, you know? And they started to, and they touch me. You know, I was not so big. And my father finds it, you know? And I run to that German, to a German soldier. I say, "What, sir? What?" And I see the German was scared, you know? You know, it was a terrible

picture, you know? People panicked. They started to tear the clothes, you know? People start running around, you know. And the sun was, was about 5:00 in the afternoon. And I see what the hell, how far we was running to finish here. [unclear the *Dolmetscher* come, and he say that we will be *zakladnikes*, we will be,

HR: Hostages?

HS: Hostages, yeah. So, the next day, that they want to take the, every tenth, was such a tumult. Nobody want to be the tenth. They was running around, and the crazy in the middle. The Germans started to laugh and they went out. And we was still in the church. So, next...

HR: And they didn't give you food.

HS: They didn't give food.

HR: Water?

HS: They didn't let us out, nothing.

HR: Nothing.

HS: Not food and not water. And the Jewish ingenuity start to work right away. Come in a soldier and say, "Is here a one Yakobovich?" "Yes." "Your wife is very sick. Go out to your wife." You see, that was the second day, and they destroyed the Polaks over there. So the women outside start to, what's happening with the men? And go to a soldier and then, "I'm sick." And the soldier, "Take out the husband. Take out this," you know? So our, you know, our Ciotka--Aunt Rivka too, "She is sick." Okay, sick, and so we went out.

Oh, I forgot. They let in, the second day they let in women with food and with water. And in the second day in the church I find one my, a boyfriend. And his girlfriend, I told you what they start to go with a girlfriend, was in that town, and she was with the women coming in bringing in water and this. He was, his name was Rishek. He was a floor maker. So, as everybody find a wife and, that she is sick, and they let us out. They let us out, the war, it's finished, the battle is finished. They let us out from this. They let us out, and they say, "Nobody goes out from the town until we give you permission. Who will be finded will be shot on place." We're sitting over there with already back in the house, and we took in that our, my friend too, Rishek, you know? He was alone. How he ran, everybody was running. You don't know...

HR: [unclear].

HS: Right. And my father again, what with the mother and what will we do? He will go, he goes back to [unclear]. He say he knows the places. He was buying cows in the neighborhood. We was, in Poland you go to villages and buy, yes? He know there are swamps around. No Germans will be over there. Okay? I didn't want to stay over there. I didn't know what the Germans, I want to go back to what happened to the mother with the children. And we decided to go back to the mother.

HR: You too?

HS: Me too, yes. [unclear]

HR: Okay. [tape off then on]

HS: When we come back to that small town, to Kozminka, well we didn't find our mother, and not the children. We just find our carriage was standing in the back yard by the Polish farmer, and we find the farmer, that he was killed, how later I find out from my mother, because he resisted the Germans and they shot him in this, in his house. His house like was a farm house, on the end of the small town. And we find in that carriage the whole thing what we left. We find that wine what we took with ourselves, and we refreshed ourselves a little. And we rest a little and we washed ourselves up. And we start discussing with the father what we should do now. We decided to go back to Kalisz. And it was dangerous to go, because the whole German Army was going in that time to Lodz. And we had to go to the military, to the third commander in the city and we get from him a permission to go back, to let us go on the highway where the army is going. We went to that commander and we told him that we are from Kalisz and we felt that our family went back to Kalisz. And we asked permission to go back. He look over my father and my father was wearing this semi-military clothing. He was a butcher with the boots. And he asked, "What kind of clothing is this?" And I explain to him in German that he is a *fleisher*, a meat man. And this was what he was always wearing. And he give us a *schein*, *Ausweisschein* that we can walk on the highway.

HR: He gave you a permit.

HS: A permit.

HR: Right.

HS: An *Ausweisschein*, right, a permit to go. And we start, it was already so, in the afternoon. And it was a beautiful day.

Tape four, side one:

HS: And the day was beautiful. It was this start already from the Polish golden fall, its golden days like summer. The sun was shining, it was very sunny, and it was very hot. Going on the highway we wasn't permitted to go on the main road, because the main road was clogged with a army. [tape off then on] And besides, the size and the quality from that army was so overwhelming that every, that we were feeling like small, very helpless people. We never saw such a mound of tanks, of canons, and such a beautiful quality, and such a mass that the person saw that Poland couldn't fight such a tremendous army. And what was amazing, that no German soldier was walking. Even the foot soldiers was on bicycles with their own, with the guns and everything. And how I say tanks and canons and everything, mechanized. And we saw the *Messerschmidts* in the air. And that size, and the quality in that army make us believe that Hitler will take over the whole world. This was so scary, so terrifying to just thinking what kind of situation was the Polish Army. It was only based on horses and on the feet from the soldiers and walking. And no wonder that they couldn't stand against the Germans. Either they will be so, when they have horses, they was entire different horses, a kind of Belgian horses, very big and very strong and very clean. And we saw the, with [unclear] they was walking and the [unclear] make on us such a terrible impression we have felt like the world fall apart.

How I say we couldn't walk on the highway, we walked on the sideway. And we have to cross, I remember, a few bridges what was destroyed by the Polish Army. And the bridges was being repaired by German *sappers*. In the same way with--they was such big soldiers, such big men that we never saw such men, in such a beautiful clothing. And they was so strong, and doing it with carrying such big things to repair the bridges that we fall apart. I have to admit they didn't make no anti-Jewish remarks or nothing. They didn't ask us who we are and what we are. I remember when we fall in with our carriage in the sand, we couldn't move because the whole wheels went into the sand, two soldiers, they took that whole carriage like a child, like a play thing, and just to push it out. And they make from us pictures. Probably they was military correspondents. They made from us pictures how we was going, because we was very dirty. And our hair was very dirty from that sweating, because we was walking like horses, carrying with that carriage. And the way around was so full with sand that we was very, very, in a very bad shape. I remember we come to a well in a village. And I drink a whole pail of water like a horse. I was so thirsty. And this was, I remember this until now.

How I say the German soldiers wasn't showing, we didn't hear anti-Jewish remarks. Only coming a little closer to the city, we was maybe about ten or fifteen miles from the city, and the army was still continued marching in the direction from Lodz. We hear one remark. That was Germans what was from Silesia. And Silesia was a mixture of Polaks and Germans. And the Germans know a little Polish. And that the German, when

we pass through, he recognize that we are Jews because he was in contact with Jews. And he say, "*Jude*," this means, "Jews," and he show with his finger like with a knife and cut your throat. This was a remark what was very until now in my mind. They say, "*Jude*," and he showed like to cut our throat.

Coming with, closer to the city, all bridges was destroyed. Only partially they was repaired by the German Army. And we have to cross through boards, until we come to our city. We didn't see no signs from fighting. Nothing was destroyed, only the bridges. And the highway was a little destroyed from the tanks, because they was so heavy, and the Polish highways wasn't built in such a good quality. I remember the main bridge what we, not far from our house already, we have to cross on make-believe bridge, on boards. No heavy transportation could go through.

And we come to our home, to our building. When we come to our building we saw that our building is partially destroyed from the explosion, from the bridge which was near us. All windows was broken, all doors was open. And we went in in there, in the house, from the back, believing that nobody is in the house. We went up to our apartment. We walked in to our apartment, and we find our mother and sister and the two boys, sleeping on the floor. And our all furniture thrown down on the floor, and everything broken apart. The windows are broken. And everything, because near was the bridge.

We waked up the mother and can you imagine the tears of joys and of sorrowness that we all are together? We didn't care that the house is broken up, that nothing is in working condition. We was happy to see them all. And our mother start to tell us what happened to them when we went away with my father on the command from the Polish Army, and how the German Army come in and they start a fight with the Polish Army in the small city, in the small town of Kozminka. And they make a position near the building from that farmer. And she, they'd constantly say the command, "*Fritz Feuer, Fritz Feuer!*" And she heard that the farmer start to shoot on them and they kill him. But the fire fight was, and she say maybe a half an hour. Later everything stopped, until the German soldiers come in into the apartment and throw all people out. No *denska* [phonetic], she say they was looking for men. There was no men. And they started to ask or they are from Kalisz. She said, "Yes." And they say, "All people from Kalisz have to go back."

And so we was all back in that house. We took a little rest in our apartment, and we walked over the whole house, see what happened with neighbors. Nobody is back. The first thing what I did with my father, we secured the doors from our neighbors. And we closed in that nobody should steal from them the furniture or other things. Because people, later they start after a week or two, little by little they started to come back. Because people was running in all kind, in all directions. And very seldom whole families come back. So we start, this was the first, the second, the third day of the German occupation. Was no administration, only military administration. We had no

food. We had no electricity, until a few days later, they start to make a city administration with a *politzeiamt* [police station]. And it was the first announcements, the placards on the street, how we have to behave under the occupation. We have to give back weapons if we have, all signs from the Polish and Russian, all signs like the eagle, and all valuable things. Like all radios we have to give back. And every such announcement was ended, "If you will not fulfill that, you will be shot." Since that time, we just always see announcements what was always finishing, "If you are not doing this, you will be shot. If you are not doing this you will be shot."

In the beginning was not molesting. They didn't care who was Jewish, who is not Jewish. They start only a different trouble. The Polish, the Gentile population from the city start molesting Jews, coming in their apartments and taking out furniture, and beating up Jews. And they learned a lesson from the Germans very well. And they know it from before. And the first harassment in Kalisz we didn't have from the Germans; we have from our Polish neighbors. I told before that a few days before the war was announcement in the Polish government that they find German spies in the toy factory from Shryah and they all, they arrest them and they was executed. To our surprise, soon after a little order was made in the town, we see the all people back. Nobody was shot from the *Volksdeutsche*, from the Germans. This was just maked up believe, and it was not true. They didn't called nobody, and they didn't shot nobody.

We, in the beginning we didn't know what to do, how to do our professional life or how to exist. And we decided that our mother and our sister will go to the commander, to the *politzeiamt* and to get a permission that we open our butcher shop. My father was afraid to go to ask for this. I don't know the reason. Now men was very hesitating to be in touch with the Germans, with the German administration. And to women they was a little more courteous. It was a very, very terrible time. You could find cows walking around in the street, running around without owners. And you just could take a cow and take it to the slaughterhouse and kill and sell it. It was such a turmoil. And the *politzei Kommandant* give us a permission to open our butcher shop. And this is what we did. It'd be very simple. Cows on the street, we took them to the slaughterhouse and we killed and we sell them. And the German soldiers was very good buyers. And my father was very mild surprised. He say, "Take a look what kind of different is the army. What price you're telling them, they're buying!" We didn't know that the Germans didn't have enough food in their country. And they was very surprised that they can buy still meat without rations, and other things by the farmers. And they, but then was the question only to get it, with that merchandise. And we was getting from them *Deutschemarks*. And we didn't know how this will work out, because we have Polish *zlotys*, and they have only *Deutschemarks*. Now, in the beginning, how I say, was the situation wasn't terrible. Was no harassment. And little by little the bakers was opening. We could buy bread, and we could buy other stuff. And on the market we could buy by the farmers chickens. And this was a few weeks until comes in the civil administration with the Gestapo.

When they started with the Gestapo, our troubles start for serious. What was our trouble? First of all they start to make a *Judenrat*, from the Jewish *Gemeinde*, what should register all Jews. And the first order from them was that we have to bring back all radios, fur coats and gold. And our radio was broken because from the explosion what was from the house. And still we have to bring them back the broken radio because I was afraid that there is a registration and the administration that we have a radio. And we have to bring it. The fur coats, we decided, my mother's beautiful fur coat I say we will not give it back to the Germans. We cut it in pieces and throw it away in garbage. I didn't want that the Germans should enjoy our coat. And the same with the gold and with the diamonds. We took the diamonds and gold and we hide it in the walls what was broken up, the walls, from the explosion. And we hide it in the loose bricks, and telling that we have no nothing else.

My father start, it was in the beginning, he was optimistic. "You see that it will be okay." He say, "The Germans are not so terrible." Now, after a few weeks we saw what they mean. We have to put up in our store a sign that we are *Jude*, a *Jude* sign. And later we have to put on the signs of the hand, a yellow band. And it was announcement that Jews can't walk on the sidewalk. They have to walk on the middle on the street. And when they see a German soldier they have to take off their hat. And there is no permission to open *shuls*. Is not permission to open Jewish schools. And everything have to, we listen what the *Judenrat* is ordering. The *Judenrat* was made from people not from our old leaders what was in the city. I don't know what happened with them. Or they ran away or they stayed. It was such a turmoil. Plenty people what was in Warsaw. Plenty people was, either they're running farther away. So the Germans made, ordered the *Judenrat* what they want. And I remember the head from the *Judenrat* was the *hazzan* from the German *shul*. We have a regular *shul* and we have a German *shul*. And that *hazzan* from the *shul* was the head. And he was filling out the orders what the Germans was doing.

With come in the Gestapo start to be a terrible time in the city against the Jews. They was catching Jews on the street and making *laftankis* [phonetic] this is called. They come in with the trucks on both sides of a street, arresting all Jews and taking them to hard work or taking them to make exercise or taking them to clean the toilets and, or taking just to beat them up, just to harass them. And they make us a new sport. And when they catch a Jew on the street with a beard they cut off his beard with pieces of meat and they wounded him and they hurt him. And we start to see different people in the street. All the religious people changed their clothing and not be, not willing to shave their beards, they put on like *farshteles* [disguise]. They put on such clothing like they would be sick, covering the beards. And it was very tragic and very comic to see the people what we know they're Jews, religious Jews, going around in different civil clothing without the Jewish hats, and covering the beards. This was only the beginning. Later the German recognized who was wearing a, covered the face, they special stopped him and

they cut him off the beard with a knife. And so all the religious Jews have to shave off their beards.

Our life start to be much more complicated with coming in the Gestapo. And they was coming in to, they have a list from all the nice people with all Jewish intelligentsia, Jewish doctors. And they was coming into their houses and in the eyes from the children beating them up and humiliating them, taking them down to the street, making a whole night exercise. And in the morning when you come on the market street and you hear the fire department, you find the dead people laying around after a half a night, a whole night of exercise. How I say, the old Jewish intelligence was so humiliated. And in the, and we start to pick up a horror, and we was seeing my father changes already his optimistic outlook. And he was already agreeing to me that we got, the situation will not be so smooth. Because mine idea was that they no mean to give us a hard time. I felt in mine thinking, and I felt in my bones, that they mean our destruction. And nobody will do to help us to overcome this. People didn't want to believe. They just, and our Jewish philosophy what they all was thinking, "Oh it was hard 100 years ago, 200 years ago. And the Haidamackers,¹¹ the Cossacks, the Polaks, the this, and we will overcome."

I want to explain how our life in the beginning was when the Germans come in. And we have cows by farmers, we was fattening them up a whole summer, and later sending them to Warsaw. And I decided to go to them and to demand from them back the cows, or to sell them. And I have a very mixed reception by the [unclear] there. A few say, "You *parshevi zud*, you dirty Jew, go out from here or I will kill you. I don't owe you nothing. I will not give you back nothing from your property. And if you say--if you come once more I call in a German." A other farmer was our friend, Pavlov. He say, "I will not give you back the cow. Only I will give you back potatoes. I will give you back flour. And this will be, because what will you do," he say, "with the cow?" I agree with this, and I took that carriage, and I started to make reserves for the winter in our house. I start to bring potatoes. I start to bring wheat. And that wheat I was going to the mill, how they call that mill?

HR: Mill.

HS: To the mill, and exchanging this for flour, exchanging the flour for sugar. And then we will make in our apartment a whole storage area that we can put and keep a whole winter. Now I know, and I felt in my bones that this will be now in the end from that, that they no mean to let us be alive. And that they're catching the Jews on the streets started to be very persistent. And every hour you hear that on this street they caught 200 Jews, 300 Jews, and take them out in hard work. I developed a special strategy. When they was, when they're making the *laftankis* on the street closing up the street with the trucks. And I was with my carriage carrying potatoes or something else, they didn't recognize that I am Jewish. So I lay down with my carriage, make believe that the

¹¹ 17th and 18th century Polish rebel serfs who preyed on Jews.

carriage is broken, and started to change the wheels. And until they went through with the trucks. And this was a very nice trick. And I, with the time was so excellent. Soon I see the German trucks was coming, I right away start to work on repairing the carriage. And one thing you have to say, the Germans when they see that you are doing something, or you're working, or you're doing something, they no bother you. They have a respect for work.

And that in, now coming with this and being a young boy, being very unruly, I, constantly I was running in the streets. Constantly I have to stay in the line for bread because my father was afraid to go and I didn't want to expose that my mother or the brother or the sister goes. So I start to be the main supplier and staying in the lines in the bakery for bread. And the first menace was not the Germans. It was the Polaks. If a German come in to see who stays in the line, he takes with him a Polish boy and that Polish boy was showing, *Jude, Jude, Jude, Jude*, and the German take out the all our, the Jews from the line. And without that Polish boy he wouldn't take out. He wouldn't know who is a Jew, who is not a Jew.

They caught me once on the street with maybe about twenty other boys, and they took us to the Jewish *Gymnasium*. And they give us big axes to break the benches. The benches and everything and the portraits of Herzl and everything, was piled up on the in the back yard. Because in that building they make a *koszary* [barracks], that means where the army was standing. And we have to break this everything up. Being a strong boy, I took that big ax and I started to knock down the benches one, two, three. And I saw that was a few boys, one was a Jewish *yeshivah* boy with the *payos* there, not enough alert, he still was looking like a *yeshivah* boy. And he couldn't even pick up that ax. I went quiet to him and I say, "Give me the ax and I will work, and you go on mine side where is already the breaking up parts." And a German saw this. And he give us both a good beating. He say, "You don't work for him. You did your job." And he was very mad on me. He give me a loaf of bread and he say, "*Mach mahause*." ["Go home."] So, and I start to develop a philosophy that if you're being caught by the Germans, you have to start to work. You no have to show them that you are lazy or you are afraid. In this situation you're endangering yourself. Just show that you are brave, you are working and doing. They respect and they let you out, and they no beat you up.

They called us up once in the Gestapo. The Gestapo took a whole building on Jasna Street. This means on the light street. And we have to wash over there the trucks, and wash the motorcycles, and wash their bicycles. This was all apart from the army, from the Gestapo equipment. And the same thing. We was doing the work, now together with this we was getting a terrible beating. We were so beat up. They broke my one teeth and they start to make with us exercises. We have to go on a ladder with a pail of water on the head and not losing this. And it's clear that everybody couldn't, nobody could do this. And we was beat, then beated up. And we was beaten up until at night. Being over there in the Gestapo I saw my, is a friend what I was going with in the school, a

Volksdeutsche, a German, Pfeffer. He was a whole big shot in the Gestapo going around having that *Hakenkreuz* on the left side, going around with a gun. And he didn't even look in my direction. Until the war start he was coming to my house and I help him to make homework. And now he start to be a big shot.

It was starting, the situation was very terrible on the streets with the plain population. I want to give you a example how, what they do to us. In our town, like in every town, we have our town crazy and town stupid people. And how, we have the stupid Moishe and the stupid Chomendar [phonetic] and the stupid Ruchel, and the crazy Pinchas, and the crazy Sheindel, what was official crazy people we recognize in the city. And they was running around in the city. The Gestapo, seeing them in the town, they come to him on the street and kill each crazy guy with a shot. He goes with a motorcycle, comes to him, and the crazy people didn't recognize the danger or to run away or this. And they was continue to do their all things what they was doing always. One *meshugenah* Pinchas was running like a horse. This was his craziness. Moishe now was telling how many people what was dying. He was a stupid guy, working with the *Hevrah Kaddishah* [burial society], and he was always telling, "Today was two people died; three people died." And he continued this way of life by the Germans. So, they killed him on the street. It start up, it was a very big unemployment in the cities. Nothing what to do. Our old sources of life was destroyed. And the *Judenrat* make a deal with the Gestapo that the Gestapo will not catch people on the street making [unclear] all kind of works, and they say to the Gestapo that they will supply the amount of workers what the Gestapo need, or what the German administration need. And it's clear that who they sent to work- they sent the poor people. The rich people was paying them so they didn't have to go to work. And poor people was getting notification in the houses, tomorrow to come to work. The work what means in most of the time the Germans didn't mean work. They mean only to beat up, to humiliate the people, to just, just to do their sadistic things.

And I remember once my cousin was, he was a religious boy. Oh, I forgot to say that he, they come in, when we was already in our house two weeks, when we come back from Kozminka, two weeks later they come to our house, and it was the *Politzei Shturm* there, at night. They was afraid to go into their house. And they were sleeping by us. And we have to go the next-

Tape four, side two:

HS: And we have to go the next day to bring for them clothing that they can change the clothes for a civil clothing, that they can go to their houses. And when the *Judenrat* start to send out people to work, they receive too a notification, "You have to go to work." And they was afraid to go to work. So I decided to go in their place, to do their job. I reported to the *Judenrat*, and we was sending out on the highway near the railroad. And we was carrying stones a whole day. Why I am mentioning this? I'm mentioning this was, in that time it was a very seldom thing happen. Was a German soldier, probably he was a not a really German, Austrian he was. He told us, "If you see nobody is coming in just sit and don't work. If you see that somebody is coming from far away, make believe that you are carrying the stones."

HR: Who told you this? A German?

HS: A German what was our *Obermann*, a German soldier what was the supervisor what we had to do. Because the work was just to humiliate us. We was taking stones from one side of the highway and carrying them to a pail on the other side. And he told us, "If nobody comes in here from there, make this, just sit down. Don't work."

HR: Now, this soldier wasn't a Gestapo then?

HS: No.

HR: So he had feeling and he...

HS: Probably. This was a very seldom thing.

HR: But you saw it somewhat, sometimes.

HS: Yes. And I had a other fact once. I was standing in the line for bread at the bakery of Katz. And one, a man from that, from the owner, that Katz, he didn't hear good. How do you call it in English?

HR: Deaf?

HS: A deaf man. And when they took us out from the line, to arrest us, because we was *Jude* we shouldn't stay in the line, one soldier called him too that he should go. It's clear that he didn't hear. So that soldier take that rubber...

HR: Truncheon.

HS: Trunch, and run to him. And I saw a other soldier, a elderly man, was going like in between them, not letting him to beat up that boy. And he took that boy and put him in the other line. This was very, a very seldom, and very, it's very deep in my mind.

I have one more fact about this. In our house was living a man what was before the First War, he was in the German Army. He was, how I say in the beginning, our town was a border town. And a part of people was from the German side. And he was in 1914 he was a German soldier. Now he was a Polish Jew. When they throw out the Jews in Zbaszyn in 1938, they throw him out too. We was so in the occupation already maybe a week or two, come a German soldier looking for him. He was very afraid, but knowing

what this means. And when there is, when that soldier saw that old man, he was a older person already, he started to kiss him. What was? They was together soldiers in the German Army in 1914. And how long he was in the [unclear] in Kalisz, this he was bringing him things. He was bring bread and he was bringing wine. I want to show there was, still was German soldiers what was not...

HR: Human beings.

HS: Was human beings. And they no was so from the Hitler side. It's characteristic, when they arrest me, when, at that factory that they, with that boy, that deaf boy that didn't hear, they was leading us to the magistrate. This means to the city hall. And it was already snowing and raining. And I keep my hands in my pockets. And one soldier, and this was against the law--you know I wasn't always a law abiding, with the Germans I keep my hands in my pockets--the German comes to me and hits me with his boot, with his jack boot in my back. And he gave me such a bang that I feel that I am fainting. And this make me so mad that I decided I will not take out the hands from my pocket. And he was constantly going, beating me up, to the city hall, and I didn't take out the hands from my pockets he made me so mad. When we come to the city hall, was already 150 or 200 people. They put us on trucks and they took us out of the town, not knowing what will happen. This was the first time that I was in a car, in a truck. Until that time I never was riding in a truck. And was riding in that truck, this was a Gestapo truck with a *brezent*¹² on top, with the Swastikas on both sides, and so many Jewish people inside. And everybody already, Jewish peoples right away start to think, they say, "Maybe they will take us in the forest to kill. Maybe this and maybe that." And they start to throw out money on the sides. And I want to try to jump from that truck. You know, when I open a little, that *brezent*, I see that behind us comes a car what is watching me. Behind us is a German car with a machine gun, was watching us. And we was sure they are carrying us to death.

Now well what happened? They took us to that forest, to a river. And over there they was making, fixing a bridge what was destroyed. And they didn't intend to kill us. We just was working, carrying big pieces of wood while they're fixing the bridge. And in that time we have a very friendly reception from the soldier what was working on the bridge. Later I find out, this is not a German. This was a third organization, where was, and they employed Germans, Czechish Germans. And they was entire different, like they wasn't like real Germans. They was friendly to us. They was feeding us. They call us *commarade*. And when we was with that, going, bringing the, all kind of things in a truck, we saw Polish soldiers going home already with the clothing, you know, running away. They took everybody on the truck and called them *commarade*. And they say *Machtes Lausen* [phonetic]. He was very friendly. At night they give us bread and they let us go.

¹²Tilted opening at roof of truck.

Now the going was a very terrible thing, because it was about maybe 20 miles from our city. And was the *Politzeistunde* [curfew] there. And we have to walk the whole highway with the hand up, because patrols, German patrols with motorcycles was constantly going back and forth. And they was always ready to open fire. And they stopped us and we was taking, we was telling them that we come back from work. So, we was coming back to our city.

I want to bring out the characteristic from that time. We started to believe in a new Messiah, the Messiah should be Russia. We started to go around all kind of talking in the city that Russia will come to take over our part, that Poland is divided between Russia and Poland, and our town will be the last town like it was until 1914, and the Russians will come. And everybody was just looking out for that day and listening. And every day you had different rumors and different things that the Russians are coming, the Russians are going. And we was believing in, especially the youth, was just praying and just thinking how the Russians will come and how we will be again free and everything will be okay. The elder people was very skeptical, saying that the Russians are not better than the Germans. They don't believe in God, and they no like rich people and they will do other things. And it was a whole turmoil in that big tragedy with the Germans. Was a turmoil on the Jewish street how it'll be, what will be. And it was too a few Jewish boys, Communists, what was released from our prison, in our town. You know, they was belonging from the part what is now occupied from the Russians. From Kovel, from Bialystok, from Sarne. I remember the names. And they was the whole heroes from the town, because they could legally go in to the *Polizei Kommandant* and get a *Ausweis* [identity paper/passport] to go to the other side. And we was always, I remember, standing in the line for breads in the Jewish quarter, in the Jewish streets, where we was not so much afraid of the Germans, always constantly discussing how this will be and how lucky they are they belong, that they are from the Russia and from the other part. How we will come over? And what should be done? Because it was getting worse and worse with us.

What was getting worse? They closed off the market and made from this a prisoners camp for soldiers. And later when the soldiers was released or put in the other camps, they start to take whole streets of Jews, putting in, evacuating whole streets of Jews. And you can only take your little clothing. And they put you, they call it in the *Halle* how is this *Halle*? *Halle*, this means...

HR: Prison?

HS: No. *Halle* means on the market, a building, like here the market is in stores. Store.

HR: Oh, a marketplace.

HS: A marketplace. No, it was a building. And they started to take the Jewish people out from the streets and putting over there, and saying that all Jews from Kalisz

will be evacuated to Lublin. This means in that time already they started to prepare the camp in Majdanek. And they started to evacuate street by street.

HR: What year is this?

HS: This was, and this was still in 1939.

HR: '39.

HS: Yeah.

HR: How close was Majdanek? Was it [unclear]?

HS: Oh Majdanek was almost in the center of Poland.

HR: All right.

HS: Lublin. We was on the west of Poland. We was very far from us to go to, so that was...

HR: But did you know about that concentration camp?

HS: No, no. We didn't know nothing about it. It was nothing saying about the concentration camp at that time. It was only saying that in that time our part will belong to the *Deutsche Reich*, to Pruszkow. It means that our part, what is from the Warta River to Lodz, from Pruszkow, from Balon, to the German, to the *Dritte Reich*. And Warsaw and Lublin will be the *Generale Government*. It will be like a Polish semi-government. So, in that time already they started to evacuate whole streets and taking all the, taking the people away. And we have to leave the whole apartment in good condition, because they were starting to bring *Volksdeutsches*. I don't know from where. Now I am suspicious they was bringing *Volksdeutsche* from Lithuania, from Latvia when they maked a deal with the Russians. They started to evacuate the people and they took the best and most beautiful apartments, the Jewish apartments, from the richest people in town, and they bring a German family. And you can't take out not one box from the apartment. Everything what is there, you have to leave it over there. Even not your clothing. Only the poor people could take out a baggage. If they come in, a German officer come to a Jewish doctor, three, four rooms apartments with the beautiful furniture, the person have to take, give him this apartment, go out, and they take over. This was a daily occurrence in our city.

And taking this, everything into account, and seeing what they're doing, I come to the conclusion that we will not survive, that our way is only or to escape or to go away from the apartment. Nobody from the people what I was discussing with them, they wasn't ready to such a thing to do. It was very terrible to think that people with one, it's very hard for a normal person to understand that something terrible is coming, that they will destroy you. It's easy to read in a book or it's easy to hear. But practically, to tell the people that they will take a whole town of people and kill, or they will tear a whole amount of people from a country and then destroy, this is impossible that people should understand. Either when you read it in paper, "They kill 100 people," it doesn't hit you because you no understand what this means, killing 100 people. And so, and I believe that people was shutting off that idea, that horrible idea what can happen with them. And

they just want to live the daily life and overcome the difficulties. And if they're getting beaten up, they're getting beaten up. If they're taking away the father to a camp, or they shoot him on the street, it happened. And they still believed, "We will survive." They didn't know and they didn't feel and didn't accept the idea how much I was talking with people that there is not a way that we should survive this, that their meaning is not to give us a hard time. The meaning is to destroy us. Nobody want to accept that idea.

I remember I was sitting, and this was Hanukkah, with our neighbors. We was sitting in our neighbor's apartment and making potato *latkes*, and thinking what, how we will survive, and what will happen to the next Hanukkah. And I, we were discussing, was a group of young people, a group of elder people. And then the elder people start to cry. And I was very, I say, "Our crying will no helping. And our praying will no helping. Something terrible come us over, and we have to decide something to do." I by myself didn't know what to do. No, I feel our, to be passive is our destruction. And the time was going, even I say, "The time is worse. Winter is coming. Our way, our mobility will be less." No, I couldn't achieve nothing, and nobody wanted to listen to me.

I was occupying myself with the, how I say, with the bringing all kind of pieces of wood and pieces of this and meat. And I cut off, the bridge what was destroyed from the Polaks, I brought a saw and I cut, I loaded up a whole, one room was full with wood. Just occupying myself, believing that we will do something.

Until a horrible thing happened to me. Being on the street how I say, was very unruly. I was always running around, always want to listen and want to know and to hear and what is. And I was waiting that the Russians should come and they should come and they should come. We was arrested on the street, me and my brother, with other people. We was taken in to the Gestapo. We was in the Gestapo, and they was bringing in maybe about fifty more people. And they put us on trucks and we, they took us to a ride in the countryside, and we went around, we went maybe about 200 miles, to a German *Grundbesitz*. The name was Moravine [phonetic]. A German *Grundbesitz* means a German landlord, a big estate. And how I say, we have in our parts of country whole villages, whole estate what was by Germans. And we was brought up to that Moravine, to that estate, not knowing nothing, where they are bringing us. Now, I was used already to be on trucks, and so I know already what is waiting for us. We come to that estate. They lined us up, the two Gestapo, two Gestapo--I see them like now. And come the German *Grundbesitzer*, a woman, with a daughter, a beautiful young girl, a 18-year-old girl, blonde. And the German, the Gestapo tell us, "You are now the property from that woman. You will work here, and you will die here. You have to work here. And if something you will do wrong, we'll make a *Kurz Gericht*." This word she say, a *Kurz Gericht* means they took out the pistol and they say, "We will shoot you." And that woman invite us, ask us, "What you're doing? What is your profession?" She spoke to us in Polish. She was born in Poland. I told her that I am a carpenter. And one told her he's a blacksmith. Other people was like a shoemaker and this. And she started to find work

for them. The most people went on the fields to pick up sugar beets. Me she took to such a house. It was like a carpenter shop. No, it was not a carpenter shop. They have to make wheels for, how, what they, carts. What is a cart in English? What's a cart?

HR: A cart, mmm hmm, the wheels? It's a cart.

HS: The horses, yeah. I told her I don't know how to make carts. I don't know even the tools. I am I say a furniture carpenter. And I don't know how to do this. And she started to yell on me, "You *faule* [rotten] *Jude*! You this and you that!" You know, and they start to beat me up. And she said, "*Marsch!*" Into the field. And she took me to that field where the people was working. It was maybe two miles. And she was constantly yelling at me, and she was start to get hoarse from yelling on me. And they put us to work on the sugar beets. They make from us brigades. We have to take the big forks to take out there from the ground sugar beets and with knives to cut off the greens. And to collect the beets and make baskets and take them to a storage place. We covered these beets with ground. It's clear we never saw a field. We never was in field. We'd never known such kind of work. We was very detached from nature. The Jewish people was very detached from nature in Poland. It's clear we didn't know how to do that work. And they start, and give us under guard from *Volksdeutsche*, from Germans born in Poland what was running around. They have their rifles, and they make for us so, they give us so much trouble. They wasn't interested in our work. They was only interested in beating up. They were standing in such a situation that when you ran with the basket, where you ran, they beat you up. If you fill up the basket, the basket maybe have 200 pounds, you can't carry. If you not enough, they throw you out on the field and you have to do to replace it again. And constantly they beat you up.

One man was a elderly Jew, maybe in the 60s. He couldn't work at all. So they, two of the young *bohais* [phonetic], the young Germans, take off their rifles, and they beat him to death on the field, with their rifles. They didn't no shoot him. They just beat him to death. And we have to carry him from that field and to that *Grundbesitzer*. They put us in such barns. We were sleeping in the barns where they keep hay. And they put in such big German shepherd dogs. And the dogs was constantly biting us and we have to climb constantly on the, not on the roof, on the, behind the roof, on the...

HR: Rafters?

HS: On the, yeah, on the boards, sitting a whole night, you know, because the...

HR: The dogs.

HS: The dogs want to tear us apart. And it start our, you know, it start our going. We got over there and we was working so on the sugar beets. And we was working on the potatoes. And we was working on the *kukurudza*, cutting the *kukurudza* this corn. Little by little we start to know the work. And little by little we see what we have to do. And it's clear that I could run away maybe ten times a day. I was working near a forest. Now they had told us if one from us run away, ten people will be killed. So

how can you run away? How can you escape, knowing that they will destroy our friends and my brother, you know? And they make a other ritual. Every 9:00 in the morning come the *gendarme* from Tsekhur on a, such a coach. And that woman come in. And they lined us up. And we was getting a beating, a half an hour beating, for breakfast, every day with the rubber truncheons. And I was getting a double beating because she still remembered that I was that *faule*, that I didn't know how to make the wheels. So every time, every, the whole line was beaten up, I went over to the, I had to go out and get. I had such a leather jacket, and that leather jacket was so cut with that beating till like I had this, like *lukshon*. How do you call *lukshon*?

HR: Noodles.

HS: Like noodles. And I didn't want to show that I am crying. I took my hat on my eyes, you know. And they was beating us every day. And it's amazing we're getting used to that beating too. We was getting used to that beating. And for a sport sometimes they say that we should beat each other. We beat there let's see me, to me a turn, and to my brother a turn, that we should beat each other. It's clear we didn't beat each other, and so they show us a lesson how they was beating someone. Side by side with us was working Polish farmers too, what was too captive they're captured just like us. You know, it's amazing, the Polish farmers, they was captured like us, and they was laughing from us.

HR: Well why did they capture the Polish?

HS: To do the work.

HR: Oh, oh, just to...

HS: You see that *Grundbesitz*, that land was, when the war start, the Polaks overrun that estate, kill her husband, and she have such a rage.

HR: They were Germans.

HS: They was ethnic Germans.

HR: They were, yes.

HS: Right. Ethnic Germans. You see, this is, the Germans on the western part from Poland, is a historical struggle in Poland. They was always a *Drang-nach Osten* [Eastward expansion], a historical *Drang-nach Osten* since the beginning of the Polish kingdom. In that time the *Drang-nach Osten* was modernized by a Bismark and by Hitler. Now in the beginning was the Christ leaders. Did you hear about Christ leaders? This was such a, like a priest leaders, with their, that they will bring Christianity with war and fire. And they was colonizing the east. And the Polaks was hiding in back. Was, and the whole Polish literature from Bolaslav Prusk [phonetic] which was written *Placowka*. *Placowka* means the outpost. There was a law in that time, when this was under German occupation, when the German occupied a part of Poland, that a Polak can't build a house.

HR: He can not.

HS: So they was building carriages, living in carriages, just to keep the Polish ground. And this was glorified in the Polish literature, *Placowka*, that, you know, he was-

-the farmer Schliemach [phonetic]--I give a name from that book, from *Placowka*--that he was living in that coach, working on the ground and no want to sell the ground to the German farmers what was killing, coming with the big, like he was going here in the western...

HR: Oh, yeah, caravans.

HS: With the caravans. He want to pay him with gold. And they destroyed, they killed his son and his wife is dying. And he's saying in the dying moment she say to him, "Marchin [phonetic], you no sell the ground." And there is a taken, and Maria Konatniska and take Aliza Zhoshkova, there is songs what they say, "Never will a German spit in our face. We'll never permit that a German make Germans from our youth." So it was a old...

HR: History.

HS: Yeah.

HR: But, so those Germans, I mean the Poles hated those ethnic Germans. But the Germans were treating the Poles almost as bad as they were treating the Jews? Or not? Did they beat those Poles?

HS: No.

HR: They didn't.

HS: The Germans? You mean the ethnic Germans?

HR: Yes, when they were beating you, what did they, did they also beat those Poles?

HS: Well, I will comment. They want to beat the Poles, but the Polak put in a knife. A Polak is not a Jew, you know? Well I will come to this. So you see there is a eternal struggle on the western part of Poland since the beginning of the Polish kingdom in about wrestling out the ground. And these Germans, you know, that in Moravine, they was ethnic. They were sitting hundreds of years over there, and being with Germans, you know? Outer-most Prussian, either they're building, the estate is built in German style. This was a, it's a historical struggle. So, it was the Polaks farmers too was working like we. But they let them out, they don't sleep with us. And the Polish farmers, they was lau-

Tape five, side one:

HS: ...made about our living in that German estate in Moravine, that we was put in prison. And to explain how in the beginning still this wasn't a concentration camp. Now, how to show the tendency of the Germans, how I saw what will develop from this and how was our behavior in that time. And it was the first step of the German plan to work us out to death, and probably to kill us later. I believe this was the first stages when they intend to do the Final Solution to us. And how I say it was probably the first intentions where they was working with their animal instincts. This wasn't still yet a organized plan probably coming from Germany. [unclear]

HR: Okay, sure.

HS: It's true when we start to be in that estate, Moravine, we saw their behavior, that we are--they are treating us not like human beings, just like treating us like merchandise what is expendable. I want to explain how my feeling was. Let's see when the two German Gestapo officers, we have two German Gestapo officers what probably was responsible for us, for that action. Because they was coming, they brought us in that big truck, and they was taking always potatoes. And they was coming back during the weeks when we was over there, visiting us on the fields and giving us punishment, beating us up. And we have to load potatoes and *kukurudza*, corn, on the trucks. And we was in constant contact with them. One was a very elegant, tall, good-looking, extremely good-looking officer. The other was a narrow, no the other was a long, a very strong, wide-shouldered man. And that, I had the impression that tall, elegant officer, he was a higher rank than the other one. He was a little more delicate. And when he was beating up, he didn't beat us up with just with a sadism. He just, he got his job, the German job, and later he come to me and told me that it was like people. I remember he come once on the field and he was cutting corn. And my hand was bleeding because the corn is so sharp. And we had no experience in doing that job, and I was cutting my fingers. And my whole finger was bleeding. And when he come to us to visit, "How you are working? You must have got your..." And so I show him my hands, that my finger is bleeding. I can't work so fast. And I saw in his eyes a little concern about this. Now he didn't answer me nothing but he didn't beat me up.

What what I to bring out? When they show to us that brutality and that beating us, or when they come sometime with that lady, that German woman from the Moravine who had a daughter, a beautiful blonde girl, and when she was coming on a horse through the fields, and just for pleasure she was running on that horse and beating us up like cattle with that...

HR: Whip.

HS: With that whip. And when sometimes she wants to show she is a big sport she come with the two German officers on the fields. And when almost when we finish the work, she demand that we run after her, she on the horse, and we have to run between her

and between the two Gestapo officers. And they was intending this like a sport. And we always have to run maybe ten or fifteen miles. It's clear we have elderly people, that they couldn't run so fast. We the younger boys, we could run. It wasn't too hard for us. It was hard but not impossible. You know, for the older people it was impossible. They're falling down on that field and they was beating them up until they have to get up and come, and run after the horses.

HR: Did some of the people die?

HS: One person died from beating up, the second, the first day. I believe I said on the, on before the tapes. We have to carry the sugar beets maybe 100 or 200 pounds. And we have to run with the sugar beets to make from them mountains. Later we cover them with leaves and with ground. Probably this was keeping this against freezing in the winter. Because the sugar factories, we was a big sugar region in Poland. The sugar factories wasn't working in connection with the war, so probably she was keeping the sugar beets protected for the winter. And but we wasn't used to that hard work. Especially was one older Jewish man, a religious. We call him a *Husid* or he's a *Hasid*. And he couldn't run so much with the beets. We tried to protect him that he should stay working in the beginning of the field, not in the center of the field. And we switched the young people, including me, that we work from the center, that we can run more. Now the Germans didn't like this. There was a bunch of *Volksdeutsche* Polish Germans what was living over there. And they have the Swastikas, the *Hackenkreuz*, on their arm bands. And they was watching us with their rifles and with sticks. And they was constantly beating up. When that man fall down, he couldn't carry the beets more, they took down the rifles. They didn't shoot him. Just with the...

HR: Rifle, the butt.

HS: With the butt from the rifle they beat him to death on the field. And we have to carry them to the estate. And later the Germans come with the truck and they took him away. I don't know where they took him away. What I want to bring out? When I was watching, with a whole, let's see with that whole horror, with that whole suffering, mine keen observation wasn't diminished. I was constantly observing, constantly watching, constantly analyzing. Either they couldn't beat me down with their hard work or with their beating up. They couldn't beat down my thinking. They just make me more mad, more willing to resist them, and more dealing to run away. How I say in the beginning I couldn't run away. I decide not to run away, because when we come to that estate, they lined us out they make such a field *Appell*, and the Germans said, "If somebody runs away, ten people will be shot." And we make I say, I remember there was a very *putus* [phonetic] *Gericht*, a short trial. So it's clear that I could escape ten times a day. Working near, we was working near a forest, and take chances. No, how could I run away to leave my people, leave my friends, leave my brother and the other, and try to save myself? Clearly that I would put up a death sentence on them.

This more make me mad, you know, and that madness keep my energy. And I didn't break down. I didn't surrender to them mentally. No, I was seeing what they intend. How I was observing them. They can beat us up, the two Germans. They can laugh on us, and then they, the old lady, that *Grundbesitzer*, come to that field, they start to be gallant officers, [unclear], saluting to her, and kissing her hand. They say, "A kiss on your, the hand, Madame," and talking very nice and very polite and very cultured. It doesn't mean after ten minutes they start to beat us up again. So, I come to the conclusion that we in their eyes are not people, not human beings, even not horses. We're just instrument of work. And if you're not properly doing that work, they entitle us to destroy.

Being over there, going through that whole thing, you know, and the whole nights I was only thinking--if I could think that nights, if the dogs, because they was putting in so big German shepherd dogs to bite us in the barn. So we have to divide ourself. A half of people was sleeping upstairs. How do they call it, on the...

HR: In the loft.

HS: In the roof. And other people was downstairs watching the dogs. And when it's my time to rest I was thinking: What will happen to us? I saw clearly that our destruction comes, that we will be destroyed like a nation, that they no mean our hardship, that they no mean to utilize for our work. They mean to destroy us. And I saw in that tragedy what befall us, in that hurricane what in the beginning I was, when before the war start I was thinking maybe that hurricane, that terrible storm what is coming maybe will change the atmosphere, that the Jewish problem will be easier in Poland. Now I saw it coming that the German invasion, I saw that hurricane will destroy us. Because what happened to us is much more terrible what happened to the Polaks. A Polak if he want to resist or to hide, he have behind him a whole Polish nation. Every home, every field, every forest was his friend. We was acting in a environment which was always hostile to us. We couldn't run away. We couldn't protect ourself. Every home, every stone, every field, every forest was our enemy. Every Polak was our enemy. Every super [superintendent], in every house was a German collaborator. When the Germans come to the house first they go to the super and he show them who is the rich Jew, where they, what is his business before, where he hide his merchandise because most people what have stores and other things was hiding their merchandise when the Germans come. The supers and the Polaks was showing them that. So, we are in a special terrible situation.

Second the Germans to succeed to destroy us from inside. They destroyed our families. Right away when the war start, everybody start to run away. And we have fact that a family from ten people, ten people ran in different ways. And later they didn't, you, sometime one person disappeared. The second, we didn't know either where each other disappeared. But see, take my family, mine Aunt Rivkeh what I am mentioning constantly. They ran in four different directions. The girls ran away with their husbands. The mother ran away with the two small children. The boys ran away a different direction. Then later, not every family was coming later together. Because every part could be destroyed in a

different way. If you find, and if you come to the battlefield, if your luck brought you to the battlefield where it was the battles about a town, half people was destroyed. But see my friends, my brother's friend from the school, he was hiding in a town. What's the town's name? I forgot. Was a big battle, and they was hiding in the synagogue. A bomb come in in the synagogue and destroy the two boys. Their name was Shur. And oh, the town was Leczyca. In Leczyca was a big battle and they was destroyed.

So what I want to bring out, that either our nucleus, our family which was our only protection against the entire environment and against the Polaks, this was too destroyed. Our leadership, the all parties what existed, political or religious parties, social parties, everything, everybody runs away. So, we have no leadership. We have nobody who should say what should we do now, how we should behave, how we should organize. So, with one shot our all moral and material structure disappeared. So, we're analyzing this. I saw that we are in a multi-danger because we lost everything what was binding us, like a nation, like a race, and like a family. We have no more family. We have no more leaders. We have no more government. The Polaks had everything. Because, and you see, his government ran away? No, he had his friends. He had his neighbors. He could probably, if he no want to fight the Germans he will sit in his house and nobody would bother him. This wasn't happening with the Jewish people.

So thinking in that, lying in that night, when I could rest in that barn, I was thinking: What should we do? I wasn't afraid to die. People have to die. I was only afraid of that humiliation, of that degradation, and of that terrible shame what they're putting out the Germans when they come into the houses, beating up that parents in the eyes of the children, or beating up the children in the eyes of the parents. And destroying, taking everything away. And taking away the will of living by people, that later they have a much easier job in destroying us. Because we had people, most people have no more willpower to do something, to resist, or to fight. So thinking about this I come out with the conclusion that we have to escape. It's not a way, we have no way to fight the Germans. We have no, it was no way how to battle the Germans, because big armies, Polish Army or French Army or Belgian Army, they all disappeared in weeks. What could we, such a few million poor, hungry people do against such a terrible enemy [who] wrote a law, wrote a whole philosophy why and how they have right to destroy us, why they have a right to kill us, why they have a right to steal everything from us and take away our material goods, to take our moral values and to make a law they have a right to kill us. And if we are trying to protect ourselves we are the lawbreakers. So they changed the whole moral values from the world upside-down. They was the rulers. The law is on their side. If they want to take my gold, is their law. If I want to fight for my gold, I am the lawbreaker. If I want [to] protect my life, I am a lawbreaker. If they want to kill me, it's good for them.

Laying over there in that, again in the nights, you know, constantly thinking and constantly, because I was so, probably was enough young and enough strong and enough not mentally not abused, I saw that terrible injustice and I saw that nobody can help us.

Only we. Either if you want to die, you have to die with dignity. People have to die sometimes, but people shouldn't die like worms what they want to do with us. So, being in that camp, we tried to organize our inner life because we saw, I saw, how I say I constantly observing I saw that our people in that camp are breaking down. They're just willing like animals of burden doing their work. And they only are happy if they're not beaten up. They're not thinking today they'll beat you up tomorrow they will kill.

We had in our midst one old blacksmith. His name was Shivek. I want to talk about him because he is a classical figure who doesn't exist, well, didn't exist our, in our time. Was only one person in the 70's, a old man. He was the only Jewish blacksmith in town and he was looking like a typical blacksmith, a strong, dark, old man with callused hands. He was the only person on that farm what wasn't afraid of the Germans. Why, I don't know. Probably his working more, probably they need him, he was the only person what was working what they need him very much in the camp. He was fixing the old carts, old wheels, and everything. And he didn't talk to the Germans. They come in and tell him, give him the order and he didn't answer them. So, Mr. Shivek he was my neighbor. And I start to discuss with him that problem, what should we do in that camp? We didn't know how long we'll be here. We didn't know or if somebody knows that we are here. And I say, "We will fall apart." So we come to a conclusion with him that when he was working, this blacksmith, how you call it blacksmith, that every day he will demand from the Germans a help to [unclear].

HR: Anvil.

HS: In that anvil, and blowing that air. And we developed with him a system that every day who were the persons more weak will work with him. And he succeed to explain to the Germans that he need a helper. And how I say, the Germans with their all animality, they respected work. And they respected the results from work. And they saw there is a worker and they need him, so they didn't bother him. So every day we, a other boy was working with him and resting that day. I remember I was working once too when my fingers was so bleeding from that corn. Come in the German and he say, "Good morning." He didn't answer either. He just looked around. He was nothing in that, and with that hammer. He didn't answer to the German. And the German looked around, "*Seien Sie gut. Seien Sie gut.*" And I saw my heart is growing just for that little rebellion what that blacksmith, you know, that he no surrender inside to the Germans.

And I remember that my brother was much more abused. He was younger and he was weaker, and I was giving him my time that he should work in that, for the blacksmith. So, I come to the conclusion, what I want to bring out? I want to bring out that I didn't see a way out in that our tragedy. I saw total destruction. And I figured we only have to escape, the whole Jewish people have to escape how they can, to leave everything what you have in the houses. I was discussing with that man. How to come to people to explain that we shouldn't consider no more material goods. We no more exist for ourselves. We have just to exist to keep up the Jewish people. This means run away from that [unclear] camp. Not

thinking if you leave a house or we leave material goods or we leave a store or we leave gold. Is just take a bag and run. This was our theoretical thinking. What I want to bring out, that thinking keeps me alive constantly. And I have until now that sickness in my head. My brain is never resting. I am constantly, even till now, so many fifty years over, my brain never rests. I am never at peace with myself. I'm always thinking what to do this and what to do that and how and how--what will happen. And I believe this is a result from that, from my brain was getting such a training in that time. So, and I never am at peace with myself.

However saying, we was thinking about the Messiah, about the Russian Messiah, thinking that the Russian will come. It was a big tendency that the Russian will take over Poland. And our naiveté was believing that Russia will, Communism, Socialism would come to save people, in this time Jewish people, that the Russians would come to the border from 1914 means to our part, and save us. And I remember a Sunday morning, we got out from that barn and we washed ourself in that small pump and I saw there is no *HakenKreuz*, the flag, the German flag, is not on the castle, on the German castle. With big jubilation I ran back to the boys and saying, "Probably the Russians are coming! There is no more flag on the castle!" To our big disappointment, in a half an hour they put out a bigger flag. So the tendency of the Messiah.

I see it clear in that messianic thinking how our people was thinking about the Messiahs thousands and hundred years ago, how they was believing in the false Messiah Shabbatei Zevi and Frank. Probably they was in the same trouble that we, and they was looking for a extraordinary escape somewhere. And it was in every person what came like Shabbatei Zevi and other false Messiah, with the ideas of salvation they was running for salvation. And I was seeing clearly like apart from this thinking about our Russian Messiah. I remember too when we was coming home from work, running home what means from working in the fields, we saw sometimes that woman, that German witch woman, and in a carriage, that carriage, that means in such a fancy coach with horses, surrounded with *Volksdeutschen* on bicycles with rifles. And they was going on the hunt, hunting Polish gentry, hunting Polish farmers. We was cleaning in that time. It was a big, a tremendous big yard with trees. We was cleaning the leaves because was late fall. And when they was going out on that hunt, they was like wild animals. We have to hide on the ground because they take down the rifles and they was shooting in our directions. So she was killing not only Jews. She was killing Polaks too.

Now the Polaks, they should get their lesson. Because what I want to bring out, we had, we was working together with Polish farmers which was semi-slaves like we. In that time they was working with us, they was laughing from us, not seeing that we are in the same situation. They just was laughing, was, and saying, "No more chickens. No more turkeys you will eat. Work on the fields." Not looking that they are working under German bayonets. No, they was fighting back then. I remember that a Polish, a German *Volksdeutsche* had a conflict with a young farmer. I don't know for what. We wasn't so

close to him. And he took down the rifle and beat him up. And he was with the knives cutting the sugar beets. He took that knife and plunge in his, in the German's stomach. I don't know what happened to him.

I, how I say, we didn't get the food from the *Grundbesitzer*. We have to eat on the fields the sugar beet and the raw corn. And from this we was vomiting. Now with the time we developed a contact with the Polish farmers and we give them watches or a gold ring. And they was bringing us food and leaving on the fields. And we know already to pick up the food.

I believe I gave you enough explanation about Moravine, what was a small prelude what was waiting us. Because this was not organized and not with the S.S. and not organized with the Gestapo. This was, we was only working for private Germans. I just want to show to what they are capable, and to what the Germans are capable when they have a organization structure, whether they mean to work you to death, and later to kill you. How I say in my former--in they tape from before, we was working and not knowing that somebody knows about us. And we was in a very, very bad situation. This was the first time that I want to commit suicide. I couldn't, I was working Sunday in a big rain.

HR: They made you work, it didn't matter what kind of weather, right?

HS: Yeah. Well and the opposite. They have the biggest pleasure.

HR: And you didn't have proper clothing.

HS: We had no clothes. We had no shoes. We had our summer clothes.

HR: What you ever were wearing.

HS: You know, but everything falls apart on the fields. And I was so beaten up by the, we have every day from 9:00 or to 9:30 comes a *gendarme* from a small town Zagut [phonetic], and beat us up with a rubber stick. And I was wearing a leather jacket. And he beat me up so that my leather jacket was looking like...

HR: Shreds.

HS: Shreds. And I was getting double beating because that woman believed that I am lazy, that I don't know to work because I represent myself a carpenter. And she want that I work making wheels. And I didn't know. But she always saying that I am the *louse*, the *Faule Jude*. And I was getting the double beating.

And, one day come the Gestapo with a Jewish boy. I think I already told you. There was a few Jewish people was working with the Germans to our eternal, you know, shame. And they was showing where are Jewish, where the Jewish people are hiding some stuff and this. And they was going down with them, working with the Gestapo. Once come with the Gestapo come a man, a boy, I know him from the street, helping when we loaded up the potatoes and other things what we were ordered by the *Grundbesitzer*. And I told to the boy that if he should go to the Jewish *Gemeinde*, to the *Judenrat*, and say that we are here and they should save us, because we will die over there. We was not washed. We was full of vermins, because so many weeks we didn't change our clothes. We have no soap. We have no, we was in such a terrible situation that we will die over there. And I have to tell

this that he probably went to the Jewish, to the *Judenrat*, and the *Judenrat* took us out of there. Now before the *Judenrat* took us out I don't know how, a son from that Shivek, from that blacksmith, come on a bike to us. I don't know how. It was plenty of miles and he come to us.

Tape five, side two:

HS: And that son from that Shivek, he was a musician. And probably he went to the Jewish Committee, to the *Judenrat*, and tell it about our trouble. That Shivek family is a, he is a, I want to say he was a blacksmith. You know, he had a remarkable family. They was very musical inclined. Every person was playing on a different instrument and they was, years ago they were, already it was a very, very seldom thing by us. And when was a big Jewish concert--we haven't got time to tell you this--was a big singer, Austrian singer, Yosef Schmidt. I don't know if you know about this. It was the pride of the Jewish people in Europe. And he was a, like a movie actor, and he was a Jewish *chazan*. And when he was singing on the radio, that family Shivek invite the whole Jewish neighbors to his house. And we was listening to the radio. How I say a radio could be, only one person had a radio in the house. And that this was a very remarkable, very educated people. And he, being a blacksmith, you know the whole family was very progressive, a very remarkable people. And probably he sacrificed his life, that young man, finding out that the father exist in that Moravine. He come on a bike. And I am not ashamed, we was start to cry when we saw him. And he probably was the instrument that they took us away. We didn't know where they took us away. We was just happy that the two same Gestapo people come with that big truck. We load it up with potatoes, and we went back to Kalisz.

HR: Well, Mr. Skorr...

HS: [unclear].

HR: How did, no, no. But how did that blacksmith's son have such power to do, to get you, to [unclear]?

HS: I don't know.

HR: Do you think, something...

HS: He...

HR: ...had to be done and the Germans weren't gonna just let you go back to Kalisz and...

HS: No.

HR: Was it money? Or...

HS: What I believe, no, no, I believe what we tell them, and sure, that you can't go so. Only you could go to the Jewish, to the *Judenrat* and the *Judenrat* can buy us out.

HR: So that's what I'm saying. Some money, something had to be...

HS: Oh it's question-, sure it's money.

HR: Yeah.

HS: We know it's money.

HR: Yeah.

HS: Because I remember we had a prisoners of war camp in our town on the market where the [unclear] was. Was over there a group of maybe of 200 Jewish soldiers.

HR: From the Polish Army.

HS: From the Polish Army. And they was terrible mistreated, because they was very, they was mistreated by the Germans and they was mistreated by the Polaks. Because the Polaks, right away they jump on that horse of antisemitism. And so what I want to bring out, that the *Judenrat* have to buy for two kilo gold, he have to collect money and rings by Jewish people to buy out the few hundred Jewish prisoners of war. And I remember this. So, probably he went to the Jewish, to the *Judenrat*. I know that he went to the *Judenrat*. This was the only instance, the seldom legal instance where we can get something done or something undone. Probably they give a sum of money and they buy us out. Only we didn't know what they'll do with us. They took us to the, they come in the evening and we loaded up the truck with the potatoes and other goods. And they took us to the building of the Gestapo, on Yasna Street.

HR: Back to...

HS: Back to Kalisz.

HR: Back to Kalisz.

HS: Right. And we was a whole night in that basement.

HR: Was your brother with you at this point or had...

HS: The whole, yeah, the whole bunch was with us, including Shivek. And including the, it probably was maybe 80 or 90 people over there. We was in the basement from the Gestapo. They didn't harm us that night. And we was so tired they could kill us and we wouldn't move because we couldn't do nothing. And we were sleeping on the in the basement, on the floor. Well this was already [unclear] because we already had a pavement. We know already how to sleep on floors, on fields. Before the war no Jewish boy was, never, was always sleeping in a bed. He never know what a night is outside from your apartment. And we already have our lessons how to sleep on floors, on boards, on ground. And how not to eat and everything.

In the morning they took us to the Jewish [tape off then on]. In the morning they took us to the *Judenrat*, no more on a truck. We just was walking to the *Judenrat*. We come to the *Judenrat* and they took us to a room not far from the Jewish hospital where was the *Hevra Kadisha*. *Hevra Kadisha* means the burial society. And over there they put us in such a, was a few rooms where before the war the dead people was lying before the burial. This was near the *mikveh*, near the Jewish *Gemeinde*, this means the *Judenrat*. This was everything like a cluster of Jewish institutions. And they start, they give us shovels, *lopatka*. Shovels they're called?

HR: Shovels.

HS: And they start to give us shovels. And that, how I say, mine head never stopped working. My brain never stopped working and making schemes. I didn't like their behavior, and I didn't like the look on their faces either. And the two Gestapo they wasn't wearing even the same clothing, not the gray clothing. They start to wear black clothing. And I didn't like that whole atmosphere. And when we was going out from one room to the other with those shovels, I pushed my brother Nathan in the other room. I say, "Run."

I told him, "Just run." And this was near the river. And I don't know. And I say to other boys, I just, who I could, "Move it out from the *lopatka*!" It was a chance. I didn't know what I am doing. You know? I just tried to take out the people from the hand from the Gestapo. It's clear I intend to do by myself too, though I was too busy trying to push out the people. And I believe that Mr. Shivek, I push out that Mr. Shivek too. Because I no remember that I saw him later. I can't remember or I saw him later.

HR: Well tell me, what was the situation like that they were able to escape?

HS: I don't know.

HR: Was it because there were so many people around, to get lost in...

HS: There was...

HR: ...the shuffle?

HS: Sure. It was not, you see, it wasn't, it's not a clear field when we go, let's see, eighty people. And near the *Judenrat* was always milling, hundreds of people was always in turmoil. People was always in trouble. They was afraid to walking on the street. There was always around the *Judenrat*. Or to get a job, or to save himself from a job, or to find out where his mother disappeared, where his father disappeared. Was always full of people around, and you could mingle with them.

HR: So that's how your brother just sort of mingled out with...

HS: Yeah. And I could mingle by myself too. You know, I had already that fixed idea, you know, to try to push out how much I can and later I will go out. And they didn't make us not a *Appell*, not a, like when we come to that camp to counted us. It was not, I didn't see that organization, that they lined up that they know they had the amount there.

HR: I see, yeah.

HS: So much people. I saw it it's a turmoil. And I just want to utilize that turmoil and just escape the from their hands. You know, this was already a part of mine idea how just to try to escape from their hand. Just if, mine idea was, if they say, "Yes," you have to say, "No." If they say, "Give me," you should no give them. If they say, "Work," you shouldn't work. If they say, "You lay down," you should walk. Only you have to try to resist. Why? Because, you know, they want you dead. And what they say to you is against you.

So, being very rebellious, I tell you the truth, I wasn't afraid to die. Until now I am not afraid to die. I wasn't afraid to die in the hand from the Germans. Only I would wish it I can hit somebody or I can die with dignity. And in that turmoil from taking over this and giving over this and it was very narrow, you know, over. It was that, standing that *agole* they call it, such a carriage where they carried the dead in Poland. In Poland the burial is two horses covered in black and a wagon in black.

HR: With a hearse.

HS: With, yes, and...

HR: With the casket.

HS: Right. No, it goes inside. The casket goes inside. This is like a black...

HR: Oh.

HS: This is only for Jewish people.

HR: Okay.

HS: Not fancy. Very plain. So in that narrow thing and so many people around, I say; How many we can escape? We can escape. I, probably I was too busy in organizing and pushing. And that man comes back, that Gestapo. He wasn't standing with us. He was outside. A man from the Jewish *Gemeinde* was giving us the *lopatkas* [shovels]. But now I remember. That German wasn't in the room. He was outside. It was beyond his dignity to go in with the Jewish people. So, how many people come out with *lopatkas*? Everyone have a *lopatka* and it was okay. Later with this it was already to 9:00. We went back to the Jewish *Gemeinde* with the Pisgozhevi [phonetic] Street. And from there we was walking to the Jewish cemetery. We had to...

HR: With the shovels?

HS: With the shovels on like this, make a lines like soldiers. We was walking. The Jewish, in the Jewish cemetery, in the old Jewish, [unclear], in the new Jewish cemetery. We had a old Jewish cemetery, was older than thousand years. And we had a new Jewish cemetery. The old Jewish cemetery was no more in use. Only it was a rich guy, or you had reserved this, only famous people. And that Jewish cemetery is older than the Jewish--than Polish country in our town, more than 1000 years was in that town. So they was taking us on the street going with the Kaminitzka in the main street, Pielsiudsego, until we come on the Widok Street. And we come a little further down so like, not [unclear]. In the beginning you should see how the Polaks was running after us with a big celebration. And first saying, "They're leading the Jewish to death." And in Polish is such a rhyme from this, you know?

HR: Yes, right.

HS: "*Provado, provado Zhiduv nashmiertz. Provado Zhiduv nashmiertz.*"¹² And we, that, this hit me in that time because I wasn't thinking about this. When they was saying this I say, I was thinking they, why we are, they're leading us with the shovels to the cemetery? And this was hitting me, you know? We wasn't doing, we couldn't do nothing. We come, so it was already 10:00, I believe. We come to the old, to the new Jewish cemetery. It was already a group of German officers over there. And they show us a plot, they show us a place near the grave from Rabbi Shapiro. Not a grave. He had, was just a small mausoleum. He was a famous rabbi in Kalisz. He died a long time ago. And they build for him such a small mausoleum, you know? When people was coming in *Tisha B'Av*, praying, you know? And not far, maybe 100 meter, 100 yards, 200 yards, he show us a stretch of ground we should start to dig a grave. And we start to dig a grave. I remember my hand was still hurting me. I have calluses, bleeding calluses, from the first digging there

¹²"Accompany the Jews to death." - Polish

when we was digging before the war against the Germans. We was digging in the, making trenches against the German tanks. And my finger was bleeding my whole finger was...

HR: Swollen?

HS: Right, from the work in Moravine. Or maybe the shovel was already, I was already used to a shovel. You see, I have such a sickness. When I start to work with something, after a time that instrument start to talk to me. The instrument get used to me and I get used to the instrument, and I know already how I have to work. And I start to be already good to work with a shovel. And we start to dig that ground. And we dig the ground it was a sandy ground and it start to collapse. So the Germans gave us a little a beating, not too much beating. I didn't like their face. They was very serious people in that time. And they told us that we should dig not straight walls, nor a little, how do they call it [unclear], like a prisma, that the top should be wider, and the bottom should be narrower that the sand shouldn't collapse. And we was digging a very long grave, maybe, I don't know how to tell, a long grave, maybe in my eyes it was everything long. We was digging so till 3:00, till 4:00. 4:00, yeah, it was already in the afternoon, 4:00 come two big truckloads with people, with a small command car, with German soldiers--I believe not soldiers, I believe this is this S.S. I believe the first time I saw S.S. They was in black, yes, they was S.S., black. They was in black *mundurs* [uniforms] and they have a black caps with the skull and the two bones, correct. This was the *Einsatzgruppen*, the S.S. And they come with two trucks of people and behind them was more than, it was more than two trucks. Three trucks of people. And when they come down with that command car they start to shoot and make open a fire, just in the air, no hitting nobody. We have a big scare. We fall down on the ground, we lay down everybody. It was a few religious people and they start to say *Shema Yisroel*, *Shema Yisroel*, you know? And after about fifteen minutes the shooting stopped.

HR: Without killing?

HS: Without, I believe they didn't kill now because we didn't hear no yelling. And they took us out, they lined us out near the wall from that Rabbi Shapiro. And they lined out the people what will go from the trucks, lined out near the wall. And they start a young officer, not officer, maybe a soldier, with a pistol in his hand, start to go in to everybody. He shoot him in his face.

HR: He'd have to be close for a pistol.

HS: Close like close where we are standing. Just going out. He have a cigarette in his mouth. How I say my illness, I was in that time still constantly watching and constantly registering, and constantly thinking. And I was thinking at that time, I remember like now: How did people stay so quiet when a person comes in to you with a gun? And you no hit him or you no do something to him. I, until now I have not a answer how people...

HR: Because maybe they were in shock...

HS: Yeah.

HR: From everything.

HS: And we all were standing in the line. And I always was thinking, and I say, "If they'll come to me, I will get him, and I will die." And I was, not only this, I only think how I will escape from this. I have a, in my heart I have a belief I can't die. I have this until now. [chuckling] I believe I am immortal. I believe I can't die, and nothing terrible can happen. Final, sure, I will die. Nor I am not afraid. And I always did believe that this can't happen to me. So, and I was always, and I was constantly, you know, in that tragedy, in that terrible horror I never saw, you never saw killing people. You can read, you can see in a movie, you can see, at that time we didn't see movies. You never saw killing people, you know, go with a gun.

HR: Like we do now.

HS: With a cigarette and with nonchalance and nothing. And they, everything was surrounded with the other soldiers. And when he calls for ten people or fifteen people, everyone, they was lying on the ground. And I say, "What will be now?" I was thinking: What will be in that moment? And I see they are making a commotion and I was nudging myself a little and say, "Oh, they will start to come, *'Einz, zwei, drei, here.'*" They took sixteen people. They start to count. And I nudge myself out too. They started to count, "Out from the line." And he start to give us instruction. When he give a whistle, four people take a person and give it, four people goes on the by the grave. Four people goes in the grave. And I nudge myself into this, to the job. And he took us to the job. And they start to go in. We start to carry the people. I was, I took the girl. We was carrying in the first four people. And we come to that grave what we digged, so that the man what was over there say that I should go down, with three more people, in the grave. And...

HR: And arrange? What do you have to do down there in the grave? Why did he want you in the grave?

HS: To lay down...

HR: To lay them down.

HS: To lay them out.

HR: Right. Because otherwise if they threw them in then they didn't...

HS: No, they didn't threw them in yet. They was laying on this and they have to organize. This was in the organize, yeah. So the other people was bringing them and I was near, again, I nudge myself to the grave. I didn't want to be over in the fire, in the line of fire. I feel, I tell you, I always constantly I was thinking. These split minute decision you have to make, split second decisions. In that case I have to figure out that I want to be in the grave, just away from them, just away from them. So, in there, in, you know, and they start to shoot the people. And now we was looking over there. We was looking, and they're bringing in more. And they bring a few women. They brought a woman in like a *pokojlowka*. A *pokojlowka* means that a housemaid with a...

HR: Apron?

HS: With a apron. And I remem-, I don't know why, what happened over there. And they, and the action of shooting start to be more intensive, or then it was organized.

And we start to, I lay out the people down. And the people were still alive. They wasn't dead already. They were still breathing. And that blood from that bullet, where the bullet on the, how they call this?

HR: A temple.

HS: On the temple. And with every breathe the blood like a fountain spray on me, you know, on my face, and my shirt, and mine everything, you know. And it is so terrible. Not only the [unclear] as you see a dead person, you know, that blood have such a terrible smell, you know? And everything gets so horrible. And the shooting start to be more intensive. And they throw down on us mountains of people.

HR: You could have been buried under them!

HS: And I couldn't, I was full with, I was laying between the people. Not laying, I couldn't walk, because they throw on on our head. And I couldn't, we start the two people, we start to take them from one, this was how they go. We didn't know, what did we know already? We never saw a dead person. We were sixteen, seventeen years boys. Everything was so terrible in our eyes, you know? This was, horror is not a expression. We never saw such things, you know? And we didn't know what to do and was afraid they will shoot us too. And when we start to lay them out, and the grave was long to go from one corner to the other, and we will come back, is a full mountain of people. And one person caught mine hand. How do you call this?

HR: Wrist.

HS: Wrist. And he was so strong that I couldn't pull it out. You know, this I have to put mine leg on his breast and pull myself out of him. And they're throwing down more people and throwing down more people. Later was no, it was no organization. They just throw them down and we just put them down because we couldn't lay out the people. And finally, so they stopped shooting. Was already dark, not dark, well, darkish. Come down a civilian German, in civil clothing. He come down and he start to walk on the people. And he says, "He's still alive." He told me, "Pick up the shirt from that guy." And he start to shoot him then, you know? And it was on the other boy. And that other boy, Herzko, I remember his name, Herzko, he start to cry like a dog. He make such sounds, you know? I don't know he was start to be crazy or what it.

HR: He was one that had been shot?

HS: No!

HR: Oh.

HS: He was with me downstairs.

HR: Oh. One of the workers.

HS: Yeah.

HR: In the grave.

HS: Only he went something berserk, is such a expression, berserk?

HR: Berserk, yeah.

HS: He started to cry like a dog, you know? Such sounds. “Yuuuuuuueeee!” You know? And I look on, and I believe he was, he went mad. So the German took the gun, and he shoot him into this. And he fall down, Herzko, a Jewish *yeshivah bokher*. And this was already in the evening. It was already at night. Yeah, that German, he was a doctor from the S.S. And that gun, when he shoots my friend--not my friend, I know him, I know him from the street; this was a small town--and he taked a gun, he say, “*Poylisha scheissa*,” that the quality of the gun is no good, and throw it in between the person, in the people. And he went out. And he told to me, “Stay down.” And he went up, and he come with two soldiers. And I have, it was, we was, how much, four people. And we have to dig out [unclear], or whoever the hell tell us to, put off the shirts from the people. And they start to shoot from upstairs down. And we was downstairs. And I saw but one person, he had a watch. You reme-, in Poland it was wearing watches on this. And in my place they have come in, the German shouldn’t believe that I want to steal that watch. I take the watch and put on the breast from that person. [chuckles] Why I don’t know now. In that time I was thinking that the German shouldn’t believe that I take the watch from that person. And they, when they started to shoot from the upstairs, the ground started to collapse, because it was sandy ground, you know? And the people start to be buried. And they were still alive. And with the legs I was buried too. With my legs I couldn’t go out. Only I, with force I pulled myself out against, away from the shooting, you know? And there come down a higher officer. And the people, hit, they just was shooting down. And he say, “*Feierabend*.”

HR: What?

HS: *Feierabend* means, “Finish for today. *Feierabend*, the day is finished.” They took us. We was one or, three boys we was downstairs. One was shot. And it was over there maybe, we come up, was left a few more boys. There was over there straw.

HR: Mr. Skorr, how many people do you think were killed at that time?

HS: Maybe 800. And for what and what, I don’t know. And I remember when we come upstairs, they burned that straw. I don’t know why they, what the straw was doing or the straw was bloodied or something, with blood. They burned it, the Gestapo. And the German, the officer looked on the watch and said, “*Feierabend*.” And he said to the other, “[unclear], in that mausoleum. Who was left...”

HR: Shoot.

HS: “Put him in the...”

HR: Mausoleum.

HS: “In that, in that mausoleum.” We was left maybe about 16 boys. In that time, I remember, now Shivek I no remember, I believe he escaped before. He didn’t go to the cemetery, that old...

HR: Shivek.

HS: That old blacksmith.

HR: With his son, the one that came and got you?

HS: Oh, the son what he came and got me, he went right away back. He wasn't arrested. He come on a bike. To have a bike in that time was a, he have to be a rich guy. Who have bikes? It was my only dream to have a bike. My dream and my mother's dream. She wanted to give me a bike. You know, we never could do it.

It was evening already, and they put us in that mausoleum. The mausoleum is a small room without the windows, just holes, and the grave from the rabbi. And over there you have candles what people putting up and prayers books and the *gonseh mayse* [whole story]. And there was a soldier at the gate. You could hear him walking on the gate because they have such, the German soldiers have such nails on the shoes. We could hear walking. We could hear back and forth, back and forth. We lay down on the ground. You know, we was all dead. I am talking now like a normal person. In that time I was not normal. I was, it was undescrivable horror. We never saw it, I never saw this. And I hope I don't no see it. I saw it later in the Russian front there. You know, I was already a experienced death person. [In a whisper] How far are we?

HR: It's just about done.

HS: And we calmed down a little. And the people start to break down. The people start to get crazy.

HR: You're talking about these sixteen boys in the mausoleum.

HS: They start to get cr-, they start to-

Tape six, side one:

HS: ...this, and they fall apart. But with everybody it's [unclear] it's such a shock, you know? And they couldn't cope with that. I was in a very terrible situation. You know, I could cope with myself, because that madness was always in me burning. So I remembered being in the grave. I didn't forget to think it: How will the world know what happened now? Being, standing in the blood, you know, standing in that blood I remember I had that that fall down from mine arm.

HR: This was your band, the arm band, Mr. Skorr?

HS: Yes. And I put this back because I still was afraid within this, and we was full of blood, and I was thinking in that time: How the world will know what happened to these people? When I was carrying that girl, you know? I don't know, a girl, and she was so heavy, the heavy of deathness, you know? A young girl, well, maybe not a girl. Was maybe in the 20's. And you know what I was thinking? That [unclear] this is only seconds from the thinking, right? What she did? Why this killing, you know? And that heaviness, and she was so heavy, you know? A woman is more heavy than a [unclear]. I don't know what comes to me such things. And then I was over there with the boys, you know, and I was observing them. I say they're no more alive. They're no more mentally alive. I say, "Let's run away." And they look on me like and I say, "Let's run away." "Where we will run? What we, they will kill us!" "If they will kill us, then what is this?" And they start, you know, they was start a hysterical, making noises, yelling, you know?

HR: These were all your age boys left...

HS: Yes, a few older.

HR: Or there were older men?

HS: A few older too.

HR: But no women.

HS: No. No, women wasn't arrested with us. Was women was weakness, shot people. I don't know what happened. I know that the whole affair, what happened, why, what was it, that the whole, you know. Well, we digged them out after the war, when I come back to Kalisz.

HR: [unclear].

HS: Yes, and I see they're not to respond to me. Not only, they start to make noise, crying, you know, hysterically. I say, "Take--if you can't stop, take sand in your mouth. Close your mouth or he will come in and he will kill us, you know?" The German will come there. And we sort of relaxed a little, you know? We was, we laid down. I say, "We should run away." They say, "Where will you run to?" "I don't know." Nobody wants to go. "I will go." "Where you will go?" This was a small, in two sides was small holes, no windows, no glass. The German was by the gate. The gate was like from here to the entrance from the temple. You could hear him on that *zwir* [gravel]. *Zwir* is such a sand with stones, you know? How he walks under this. And I was getting out from that hole,

protuding myself through. It was a narrow and I could go through. And I fall on the ground. And that fresh air hit me so, you know, it was night. It was cool. And it was night, you know. And I lay down on that sand, you know? And that clothing, everything was so terrible smelling, you know. I took sand and I...

HR: Put it on you.

HS: Put it on me, and until I come a little to myself, you know? When I was by myself I didn't see the misery with the boys, you know? They fell apart. We couldn't nothing organize more.

HR: They were completed hysterical.

HS: Completely hysterical. You know, it's amazing. It's a psychological process, how a person can, there was no more resistance, no more nothing, no more nothing.

HR: They were overcome with fear, that's it.

HS: [unclear], yes. You see, we was people from a small town. We never was exposed to such a horror, you know? And this is such a terrible horror. Not a catastrophe that a building falls down or something happens what you can do nothing. But when organized people come with guns, you know, and make it so calm, with cigarettes, you know? And later talking to each other like if nothing would happen. Or when they come down, looking, you know, and shooting down, like they're doing a job. They're not upset at all. They were no, no, you know? And this was probably what make us so crazy. So, when I lay down on that ground, you know, I don't know what I am doing. I wouldn't say that I was 100 percent sane. I can't claim this, you know. Now with that instinct and that terrible hate I was always red with hate. I hate them so much and I could with my hands I could kill them. You know what we--when we hear that they come into houses and killing parents and killing children in front from the children, you know, in front from the parents, we took, I say to my father, "Let's take," we took two axes home from our butcher shop. And we say, "The first German what come in we cut him off in his head and let him kill us and that's it." We took two axes, you know, the powerful, the big butcher axes? You know, like...

HR: Right.

HS: Very big. You don't see this now.

HR: I'm going to shut this door before [unclear]. [pause]

HS: You see, that hate was in me a terror, such a [unclear], you know, and such, overcome mine sanity. You know, I wasn't afraid to die. They caught me once, you know, on the street, and it was already cold. And I was keeping my hands to my pockets. And this was against the law. Again, this is their law. I shouldn't, he can do to me and I shouldn't do nothing. I kept in my pocket. Was raining, you know? And he come with a boot, with his shoe, and hit. It still hurt me until now. I always have pain here. With his boot he knocked me so terribly, you know. And I was so mad. I said, "The hell with you." I hold

my hands in my pocket. And he was beating me up until we come to the [unclear] house. And I didn't took out the hand. He didn't kill me. He just beat me up.

HR: Because your hand was in it?

HS: Because I didn't do what they want. And I would take out the hand if he wouldn't hit me so terribly, you know, that that pain is making me so much hate I say, "I am not taking out the hand from the pocket."

HR: Where was this, Mr. Skorr?

HS: In Kalisz.

HR: Yeah, when did this happen? [unclear]

HS: Before.

HR: After?

HS: No.

HR: Oh, it happened before.

HS: Before.

HR: Before.

HS: I was caught twenty, thirty times because I was always on the run, always on the street...

HR: Before you ever went to the estate.

HS: Yeah so the estate was already mine, my fighting. And I just want to reconstruct, you know, my hate to them. And I was always so boiling with them. You know, I was so, there was a law I shouldn't take wood. And they, by us they destroyed a bridge, the Polaks still. And to me comes a fixed idea, I will take pieces from that bridge, I will cut wood and I will have in winter time. I took a saw when I was, I told you I wasn't a carpenter. And I took that wood and I was cutting pieces. And near this was a sign, "For taking this is death sentence." I said, "The hell with you." Now I did my job. They want to kill me, I will do what I, they will kill me, they will kill me. So, once they caught me on the st-, not they caught me. They say, "Stop *Jude!*" They was catching. And once I start to run I never stopped. You make systems, you know? And either you, there is a system in violence either. You develop a system what to do. When you will run from a German, don't stop. If you start to run, and you stop, you're in his hand. If he kill you when you run, well the hell with it. Then you have a chance to escape. No if he catch you when you run away and he stops you, he will so humiliate you, and he will kill you. I remember I was going home from work. Once a German, "Stop *Jude!*" I said, "The hell with this." It was on Chasna Street on the narrow street, is Chasna Street. And I know all the houses where to run. I know the escapes, you know? And I start to run. I, later I was sorry because never run in a house where Jews are living. You can endanger them. You see, you have to develop such rules. I have a big discussion with God. The discussion with God was, "Okay, God, there is something you're doing to us, something I don't know. And I, and the long thing, maybe we deserve or is something happening and you're--I am not challenging your justice. I just beg you." You know, when I was sleeping at night over at Moravine. "Permit

me, if I should be alive not go through this with harming other Jews. Don't make me do things that somebody should be harmed." Because you can, in that time of trouble, you can harm people. You can steal from somebody. You take away a piece of bread. This is the same way like you could kill him. If he have only one piece of bread, if you take away from him this piece of bread because you're stronger, you killed that person. Not only if you take away. If you take away you know this piece of bread is everything. His whole anchor. I develop a system in Russia. When I get a piece of bread--I was in bigger troubles than by the Germans in the forest--I always divide that piece of bread to three pieces. I eat one piece. Knowing that I have two more pieces keeps me like, you know, like that. And I develop such a discipline I'm not, people was eating everything. You get a piece of bread, eating up in that minute. After that minute is hungry again, because that piece of bread is only a symbolically for them. You need 100 pieces of bread. Only if you take that piece of bread and you divide this, you develop your system and you eat one piece. And you know in a half a day or at night you will eat the other piece. This keeps you so calm because you make a discipline in your head, a line, a guiding line. So I just begged from God, "Just give me a line that I can go through clean. Or, let me die." Not on my, that you shouldn't harm nobody. You shouldn't take away from somebody. You shouldn't talk against nobody, because it's enough that you show, "He have a store or he had this." People was doing this, to their eternal, you know, shame, people was working with Germans.

So you know, what I want to bring out, then I ran on that Chasna Street, I ran in #10 Chasna. I remember that like now. And I say, "I make a terrible mistake. I shouldn't run in in the house." And he runs after me. "*Verfluchte Jude!* [damned, cursed] *Verfluchte Jude!*" You know what is "*Verfluchte Jude!*" And I walk a step higher and he after me and after me. I say: what should I do now? I don't want to go into apartment. I just figured maybe I will go out on the roof. And through my luck he went to the third floor and he stopped, and he cursed, and went back.

You know, this was such, no you're doing that, okay, because finally when this start, I come to the conclusion we no belong more to ourselves. We are no more people alive. We only belong to the future generation. Our responsibility is to survive, to try to survive, just to keep up the Jewish race, just to keep up ourselves. Because if we will be destroyed, what will happen? No personally if you fall, just fall in a battle, fall in the running, if you run and you fall, you tried. No don't fall in surrendering. You're never surrendering. Not physically and not mentally. No mentally don't surrender. Even when you stay by the wall, think: How I will hit him back? You will no hit him, no just think how you will hit him. It's easier. And you see that hate was like a mortar in me, you know? Constantly, how and what and what.

So I was laying on the [unclear] and seeing, I was thinking: Why the boys no want to come? Now I can't make with them a battle. I can't yell. There was, to nobody to yell. Even my father, may he rest in peace, was falling so apart. I started to argue with him to, you know, to, "Let's do this. Let's..." He was so paralyzed afraid. You know what's

happening to people? They're getting so paralyzed afraid they're not doing nothing more. I say, "What do we have to lose?" This will be maybe, it is not maybe, it's not, it is a system. It's not a bad thing. It's not a *Chmielnicki*¹³ they will kill 1000 Jews and 100,000 will survive, because you know the system, he's a hooligan, a drunk, and he have a saber. And he will kill how many he can and that's all. Now this is a system, I say. You see, this is a system, annihilation of a people. And this is what they will do to us. It's what we have to be concerned. We have to run. We will survive this way. You know, survivors, we tried. We did our job. We tried. This what was in mine whole idea during the whole war, trying to escape from them. We can fight them. Bigger people, bigger nations fall apart, right? And what we are? Just try to escape. And nobody was listening to me. They you know, they was saying that I am crazy, developing all kind of ideas and all kind theories. I say nothing will help, they mean our death. And if they mean our death, and they are our enemies, we should think of our life. And our life can be eternal if we can save only one person. If we will save. And nobody will want to listen. So, you know, back to that, you see, I'm getting wild, you know. But this makes me mad until now.

Lying on that ground, you know, in that cemetery, I hear a whistle from a train. This is again a sign from God. The train was not far, not far. It was, the direction from the train. That train, that whistle, give me a sign what I should do. I say, "Why you shouldn't run to the train?" And I start to go to the end of the cemetery is a wall, you know? And I cut my hand because on the wall is glass. They put on glass that the gentile boys shouldn't go in. They always was throwing in stones. And I got was a little cutting. It doesn't absolutely matter. And I climb over there. This was the opposite, if the German soldier was this side, I was in the opposite. The instinct was, you know, is how long you're just feeding an idea in your head and this works. And I ran and I went on the field. Was fields over there, you see? And I was going and crawling, crawling, until I come not far from the train, in this *Koliovastate* [phonetic]. *Koliovastate* means the railroad train. And the train have a, and I already catch up with myself. That process of doing something, of running, of fleeing...

HR: [unclear].

HS: Already, I was already in command of my thinking, you know? And I say, "I will run away now. I will not go back to the city." In the city was *Politzeistunde* there, you know? You know what's *Politzeistunde* there? Police. Curfew. Who is seen on the street is shot. No question asked. No question. And we was on the outskirts from this. I could come to the city, to that railroad station, without violating, without catching [unclear]. I come to that railroad was such a plaza on the front, you know? And was thousands of people, and thousands of Polish soldiers from the camps. And the Germans let them out. You know, with, just with their uniforms, without nothing, just [unclear].

¹³Chmielnicki, Bogdan (1595-1657) Leader of Cossack and peasant uprising against Polish rule in Ukraine in 1648 which resulted in the destruction of hundreds of Jewish communities and the massacres of thousands of Jews. [Encyclopedia Judaica]

Thousands of people waiting for trains, for this, for that. No system. [unclear], you know? And I say, "I will run away. And where I will run away? I will run away to the Russians." Comes to me a idea. I had to run whole Poland. And not knowing, I just, I will run away. And I, basically I know the routes. I have to go to Lodz. I have to go to the east. The west is Poznan, the German border. I have to go to the east. I have to go to Lodz. I have to go to Warsaw. I have to go to the Russians. You see, studying geography was my hobby. My nicest hobby was a Saturday when I wasn't working, going on the streets was a big store what's selling books. And we had a big map of Poland. Was biggest hobby was to staying and say, "If I could go here, and here, there and there," you know, "how I will go."

And I was, you know, there was by us, well should I go back a bit?

HR: Yeah.

HS: There was by us a family from Baranovici. Baranovici is on the eastern part of Poland, after Bialystok, not far from the old Russian border. The family--well how is it made, from Baranovici? They come Gilfiks, family Gilfiks. They come to Kalisz. A son come to make *Hachsharah*. You know what's *Hachsharah* means? There was a Zionist Youth Organization, *Hachsharah*. That means they're making such camps, agriculture camps, and learning the trade. And they have to get the qualification to go to Israel, to Palestine. At that time it was Palestine. You get a certificate from the British government if you are qualified agriculture worker. So they was submitting two pluses. First of all in getting used to agricultural work to work in a *kibbutz*, and second they make a open way to get a certificate from the British government, through the Zionist organizations. That Gilfiks, that boy come to work in our town. After him come the mother with the two daughters. They have not a father. And they was so intriguing to me, that family, you know, a beautiful family. Their way of talking would somehow lift the Jewish, you know? That was sing songs, you know? And they was beautiful people, very handsome, dark people. I was a little attracted to a young girl, a small girl in the school just called Milchah. Milchah Gilfiks. I always help her make homework. They was very poor in Polish. They couldn't, they was more Russian oriented. That time was Russian. And I was very, you know, I was, I liked that girl, you know with what my innocent, you know, liking, want to protect her, to help her in school. I was very good in writing Polish, you know? I was always getting, how is the best, how to word?

HR: Grades?

HS: Not only grades, more than grades.

HR: Awards?

HS: Awards. I was getting awards. I was known in the city from getting awards and making homework. Every month you write in the school a work, a literature work the size from twenty, thirty pages. This was in the schools, so you know? And sometime you write about geography, sometimes about history, you know? And I was very good in this, you know? And I like it. So I always for that, I helped that girl, you know, to write. And I was so attracted by them. You know, that exotic is from them, was very for me, was

different than we. Nice, handsome people, dark. And they are singing me such in a Russian, you know, such a Orient thing was in mind. And when the war rumor start, they went back to Baranovici, about two weeks before the war. And my intention was to go back to see Baranovici. I was so I was used to that map. This was my hobby. I go, I see I'll go to this station. I'll go to this station. I'll go to Bialystok. From Bialystok I'll go to Volkovysk. From Volkovysk I'll go to Stoltza [phonetic]. I had the map route in my head, you know? And I had the address either. When the war start and I had my group of boys, and we were making plans, I say, "If we can meet each other, if we are dispersed by the war,"--we was terrible dispersed by the war--"let meet us in Baranovici, Minska Street 57." I visit that street after the war. It was a Jewish ghetto, everything destroyed. I visited the grave. There was a mass grave in Baranovici in a field, in [unclear] a small forest. The whole Jewish population lies over there including the family Gilfiks.

So what I want to bring out again? I come to the train, and that knowledge what they automatically feed me in, I will go do do this and this and this. In comes the next train what's going this direction, I just jump in, no tickets, no nothing, no. And I was already how I say before so used to turmoil, to not convenient life, you know? That all my normal life until now was like wiped out. I was already very rugged, accepted that hardship, not sleeping, not eating, not drinking, not washing. I went in it one, two, three. And this was no more a hardship. This was already exciting for me, you know? I could convert myself to my mind idea, what was inconvenient didn't bother me. This couldn't, didn't harm me. Hunger was nothing.

HR: Because by now you still hadn't eaten. You don't mention that you ate yet.

HS: I'll tell you a story. I didn't eat maybe a whole week until I come to Bialystok. And I wasn't hungry. Can you imagine? So, I go around and...

HR: Yeah. Let's stay with this story now.

HS: It zig-zags, you know?

HR: You're on the train.

HS: Yeah.

HR: Anything...

HS: A train with Polish soldiers, and with Polaks and with Jews. Mine, I took this off. I had it in my pocket.

HR: With sand and blood all over you.

HS: And everybody is dirty, with sand and blood all over. My shirt was so I had, I was draining out. People was with there bringing in me, draining out was, my underpants, everything what I was soaked, literally soaked in blood. Mine shoes, I was walking in blood. Can you understand that horror? So I was going with that train, listening again to all kinds of war stories. Soldiers talking. I was listening. I was observing everything, and that observing this took away me from my trouble, you know, took away from that horror, took away from me. I wasn't thinking of my family. Nothing, you know, it was, there is a mercy in nature, probably, to give me such a anesthetic that...

HR: Sure, you go into shock.

HS: Yeah, you, and you no observe more this. So, we was going towards Zdunska Wola. In Zdunska Wola they took us off.

HR: What about a ticket or a pass or...

HS: Nothing.

HR: Nobody asked for anything?

HS: No it was nothing. It was not a public train. It was not a where you sit.

HR: It was like for cattle?

HS: Sure. Was no trains to sit. It was only the [unclear] trains. How do they call the train?

HR: The cattle cars.

HS: Cattle, yeah. It was, how much goes in they sit, they stand, they hang, you know? In Zdunska Wola, you know, we go, sit in small towns. Zdunska Wola is a absolute German town in Poland, German town, you know, full of these Germans, you know? And they took us off. We have to work a few hours loading. You see the Germans, one two three they find a way. Need to do something, they take people, do it. And later they release you. Not asking Jews, not Jews, everybody. And we went into Zdunska Wola, went to Lask. And Lask is that town where my sister, when I went with that, to hide our merchand-, our stuff.

HR: Oh yeah.

HS: Yeah. She took it back. She went back. She get a *Schein* [document, receipt] from the police and she go get back everything. And we went to Lodz. Lodz, this was already for me a revelation, a big town. Lodz is a big town, you know? And so I never saw in my life so many people. And we come to that station, the Volitz Kaliski [phonetic]. This means a college station. And being on that night on the college station we have a tremendous explosion. The German explode the Kościuszko *Ponik*. Here they call it Kosciszczko. Did you hear that? Poland, a Polak patriot what was fighting for here, for the independence of America, Tadeusz Kościuszko? There is a building on Pine Street.

HR: Oh downtown on Pine Street. Oh, right on the corner.

HS: This is that. Tadeusz Kościuszko. He was a national hero. And that night they explode in that *Ponik* Kościuszko on the Kościuszko Street. And it was, the whole station was just zooming to destroy the street of the Polish patriot. That was *Politzei Schtunde* [phonetic]. And we couldn't move. In that street, in that station I find out I have to go to other station, to Volitz, to Lodz *Fabrycznie*. It means to Lodz Industrial. This is stations, like in Philadelphia North, Philadelphia Main Line. And I take a tramway. You know what's a tramway? A tram. Tram? Like a...

HR: A tram, like a trolley car.

HS: Correct. I went, this is the first time...

HR: You ever saw that.

HS: This is the first time I saw this and the first time I was on a train.

HR: And the other time was the first time you were on a truck.

HS: Was on a truck.

HR: Yeah.

HS: You see everything first things what I never saw, I never saw it. I was a very provincial boy. And in Volitz Kaliski I was sitting. And they was, want to take me for work. They was taking for work. So I was laying down. And was over there a Jewish woman. She sit down with me. She was sitting on me, to cover me, you know? Just sitting, literally sitting on me. I was, and they was looking for men. Not Jews or not Jews, just looking for work. In the morning I, from the Volitz Kaliski, from the college station, I took a train to, I hear what I have to do. And in the tramway was full of ethnic Germans. Lodz is Jewish and German. Lodz was built by Germans, and by Jews. The whole industry, the textile, Lodz is the biggest textile town in Poland. Before the war they was exporting the whole merchandise on the Russian market. It's a city what is factory after factory after factory. It is a city what is competing with Manchester what they build, yes. This scope, this scope of a city. And no Jewish could work in a factory by Jewish owners. Only Polaks, before the war. And the textile, Jewish was working making in their home textile. You know, how do you call this?

HR: Weaving?

HS: Yes, weavers. Jews and Germans was weavers. So being in that tramway I hear how the Germans say, "*Ach die verfluchte Juden, Schmeiss sie ans.*" If I find now a *Jude*, a Jew, I'd throw him right away." I was standing near him and I say [unclear]. You know? I didn't look like, I, in that time I look like a vagabond. Is no question about it. Additional to this, and I wasn't looking Jewish. And I hear, you know, that-

Tape six, side two:

HS: ...train. And went to the tramway too, to Lodz *Fabryeznie*, to the fabric station. And from there I took a train--I don't know where nor the direction--but in the direction of Warsaw. It was not a normal communication. I remember that they stopped us in Pruszkow. Pruszkow was the new border near, was incorporated in with the *Reich*. Pruszkow was the border from the Third *Reich*. And later start the General Government, the Polish, like still the Polish. In Pruszkow we have to go out, and I saw Polish policemen for the first time because we didn't see it after the war. Already there we start to see Polish policemen. By us, the first day of war, right away everything was German. And I have to tell you to the eternal shame, the most Polish policemen went right away to the Germans to work in the same police station, in Kalisz. Most was *Volksdeutsches*. Most was the fifth column, working for the Germans. The Polaks, yes.

So when we come to, let's see, after a day I come to Warsaw. I come to that central station of Warsaw, which was completely destroyed. Warsaw was three weeks in blockade, in that terrible situation. And it was very much destroyed. The main station was destroyed. And you see the canons on the street. You see it all barricades, everything, it was like still the war, you know? And you had the smell from that smoke from everything was still in the air, you know? And the Jewish people there, it was a terrible turmoil. You know, it was such a amount of people, millions of people, what I was completely overwhelmed. Coming to that station, to that central, *Dworzec Groben*, this means the main station, I, how I want to tell you, I was constantly listening. My whole running was just listening what people are saying, how people are saying, what saying. I hear a group of Polish *Gymnasium* students. You know what's *Gymnasium*?

HR: High school?

HS: Yeah, but with the [unclear], it's more like high school here. It's like junior college--with the special clothing, with the special hats. And I hear they are talking about Bialystok. I hear they are talking about the border. I hear they are talking about Malkinia. I hear they are talking about the *Dworzec Vilinski*, you know the Vilna Station. And this hit me on this, I have to follow the boys. Because I didn't know what I am doing. I didn't know where I am going, and I didn't have nothing. I just was. I didn't eat, and I didn't have to eat. It was no, a few days I didn't eat completely. And I didn't eat and I didn't drink. And there was no need for. And I hear the Polish boys, you know. They was talking about the border. This was people what was born on the other side. And when the Russians [rather] the Germans divided Poland, there was a agreement that people can go back to their homeland, you know? And they was going back. And I hear from their talking, they was speaking in Polish, you know? And I was fluently, you know, and I was, and I hear, "Now we have to go to *Dworzec Vilinski*," they say. "And we have to go to Bialystok. And the border is in Malkinia." You know such words I never hear this, you know? They was originally from Vilna. You hear of the city, the town of Vilna. So I say to myself, "Let's

me keep with them.” And I start to talk to them. Not that I am Jewish. I want to go over there and this. They say, “Okay. Let’s go. You can go with us.” Was three boys, very nice boys. I, we didn’t touch the Jewish problem. Was no need. Maybe it would be counterproductive. And he say, “You go with us.”

And I was going with them. And there was not good transportation. The city was destroyed. The city was, the bridges was destroyed. Everything was temporary. I remember we went through the bridge Kierbedzia and the bridge Poniatowskie, we was walking. So I can see the whole destruction of the city, you know? It was terrible, that Warsaw, how horrible it was, you know? When we come to that *Dworzec Vilinski*, we come to that *Dworzec Vilinski*, now it was thousands of people, mostly Jews. Jewish people what was escaping. What I was doing, what I was start to do by us was something new and nobody in Warsaw this was a normal thing. First of all it was closer. And the information was closer. People, Polish, this was not far to go back and forth, a day’s travel or something, [unclear] more. And people started to escape. People started to run away. Not like by us. We was too far. We was on the German border, and the horror was too much. You see we had no information. Who escaped in the war didn’t come back here to say what or we can move or we not can move, where you can go. People was escaping in the radius from 50 miles, 100 miles, 200 miles. No they wasn’t escaping 1,000 miles. Not so far. We wasn’t so far adventurous. Because the Russians, the German Army overcome. And over there it was closer.

So we come to that *Dworzec Vilinski*, thousands of people in every, and they come in a train. You are so far from the train, like two blocks, you can’t, so many people. The Germans was shooting in the air, you know? Only I with the boys, we was going a different way. We didn’t go with that main thing. I just was going to the corner of that *natlok* [crowd], so many people, and was near to a train. And come the first train, and boom, Henry is there. You know, with that power, I told you, I was already very knowledgeable in these things. But first of all I was in that age, jumping, running. It was not a hardship. Sure for a older person to run.

HR: Yes, right.

HS: This [unclear] will jump. For me to jump was a normal thing, you know? Maybe I had a pleasure to jump even. So we run in that train.

HR: How old were you at this time? You must have been...

HS: Seventeen years.

HR: Seventeen, yeah.

HS: And I was very, very strong. And full with ideas, full with this. And I train myself before the war not to eat a day or two to feel how to be hungry, how to this, you know? So, the romantical things, you know? Or I train myself how to go fight, to Spain when was the [unclear]. So you see, this was for me, when I come to that, this wasn’t so horrible. And we sit in the train, you know? It was so many people. I see so many Jews already. And everybody is so dead scared. You could see a Jew right away how scared he

is, right away, you know? And this was so horrible. And I learned from this. Don't show that you are a Jew. You don't have to write down Jew. You show with your eyes. Don't be so scared. Don't be so, don't look around so much. [unclear]. You see and I was going and sitting in that train, with the boys, not so very close. I, in that there we couldn't yes. And we was traveling so, you know, and the city was such a whole different atmosphere over there, with different people. It's already more like Russian people. They, the *Karboyzha*, not the *Karboyzha*, the landscape is always changing, more, no more so western. More eastern. You see already horses and wagons, not western style, you know, with the, how they have the wooden, like *Jatroygas* [phonetic]?

HR: Yokes? Yokes?

HS: Like yokes. You no see this by us. By us you see only [unclear] and two horses. And you saw already a Russian style, you know? Eastern style, with the yokes, and the farmers already much cooler, you know? I saw the first *lapches* [phonetic]. You know what *lapches* means?

HR: Wrapped stocking.

HS: Correct. You see, you no see by us. And we saw already different things. And I was thinking: 'My this is so much space, and everybody is so much and a Jew have no where to hide himself, where to be home.' You know? And the Jewish people, and while we was traveling so, we was traveling a day. And nearer to the, the border was on the Bug River. The River Bug was the dividing line from Germany and Poland. This was once the *Cieszyn* line in 1918, when they divided, if [unclear] history. And we're sitting in the train and I hear that the Polaks are talking. "Now the Jewish bones will start to, getting beatings." [Polish translation]. "Now the Jews will get a beating." I hear when they are talking, you know? And I was wondering what they're talking about. We come to the border. Is a small town, Malkinia. Is not far from Treblinka, in that, in time was Treblinka, where they gassed. Was a, the railroad stopped over there. This is the last railroad where the German occupation was. On the other side is already Russia. The rails are cut off. You can't go further. And when you go down from that train, you know, go down to the, near to the station, in the side, the station's from the back, stands a line of Gestapo and say, "*Jude? Jude? Jude? Jude? Jude?*" And the *Jude* say right away, and he, they take him away.

HR: They're asking, "Are you Jewish?" And they're saying, "Yes."

HS: They know if, sure. It's...

HR: Is that what you mean?

HS: Yeah. They just, they're not saying nothing.

HR: They know that it's...

HS: They're just going saying, "*Jude? Jude? Jude? Jude? Jude?*" And they, to me too. And I didn't look even on him. I just go, straight like the Polaks. I make me a symbol saying, "This is a Polak." I make me a sign, "Polaks." I will do what they are doing. Do you understand?

HR: I understand. But these people, the Jews got out and they sort of stood around and the Germans...

HS: Not they st-, they didn't stood. You can't stand around. You start to walk and the Germans just...

HR: Kept saying, "*Jude*."

HS: Take you away like a strainer, like a strainer catching fish.

HR: Right.

HS: Stands a line of Germans, with whips, even dogs. Such dogs, you know? And they say, "*Jude? Jude? Jude?*" And the *Jude* just go. You no have to say nothing.

HR: But they said this to you too.

HS: Sure!

HR: And what did you do? You didn't say anything?

HS: I just, I didn't look either on them. I just was going with the Polaks. I go again exactly with the Polaks. The Polaks...

HR: Those boys.

HS: Those boys and other Polaks.

HR: Mmm hmm.

HS: The Polaks was going straight with that railroad sta-, with the railroad, the irons. How do you call this?

HR: Tracks.

HS: With the tracks. They was continuing going the tracks. And the Jews, they was continuing going by the right, to that railroad station. And they say, "*Jude, Jude*," and I didn't look even in their direction. I didn't look. He was going so, and they were standing this way. Was a line and I was going straight like this and not, don't bother me.

HR: Because you weren't Jewish so you didn't stop.

HS: Yeah, I wasn't Jewish and I had, I had been in dread, you know? I didn't...

HR: Right, right, yes.

HS: Yeah. And I was going with the Polaks I'm going. I saw the boys. You know, I wasn't not involved. I saw them. And I was going with them. And I saw already a different thing, like [unclear], you know, like border smugglers, with packs. You know it was developed already a war smuggle. Smuggle of people, smuggle of goods, and smuggle of this. And plenty of Jewish people could save themselves if just they would go. No, it, the German didn't touch him even and he went to the right. You understand the psychology of that?

HR: But, Mr. Skorr, by either the way they looked or the way they dressed, did the Jews have a, did they look different? You would be able to pick the...

HS: Sure.

HR: ...difference between a Jew...

HS: Sure, sure.

HR: Not...

HS: First of all, yes. The religious Jews you could see. You could see...

HR: Well...

HS: You can see a Jew in the figure. You can see in everything.

HR: Even if it wasn't a religious...

HS: It didn't, well, it either it, nobody was wearing a, how you call it?

HR: A star.

HS: No.

HR: No.

HS: Because they was in the running. They was on the run.

HR: Yeah.

HS: It was illegal for a Jew to travel. You couldn't travel. You know, you see, the Jew was, now don't believe that only I Jew, one escaped. Plenty like me escaped. I no say that every, they didn't took out everybody. They took everybody, the weak people, what was surrendering to their psychology pressure, they went. More, it was 90% didn't go, they just go straight. And I saw there's already a profession over there, from going back and forth. I learned that something going back and forth. You understand this already? Now this was for me a entire different like I would come to the moon, you understand? Something entire different experiences. And this everything absorbed me 100%. And that whole horror was in the side of me. You understand? Yes I was involved with that process of doing.

And I go with the boys. I go with the old Polaks. And when we went maybe a block, we come to a big field. Was again Germans. The border Germans. Now they didn't have, just they let you through. German *gendarmes*, you know, such as. And over there was a pass. They call the *Neutrale Pass*. Neutral Pass.

HR: Neutral Pass.

HS: Neutral Pass don't belong to the Germans and don't belong to the Russians. And they come over there and when we got I say over there maybe 200,000 people, laying on the fields. And a little further is *stacheldrahte* [phonetic]. You know what's *stacheldrahte*? The wire?

HR: Oh, barbed wire.

HS: Barbed wire. *Stacheldrahte*, right? With a big arched gate, a Russian gate, with a sign, how they have the sickle and the hammer, you know? And with the red flags. And I believe that I am in paradise. I was sure that I see God. I come to that over there, to that border. And I was wondering: Why are we keeping sitting here? Why are they not going further? You could see families with children lying in the field, put out paper, put out *kotsis* [phonetic], how is *kotsis*? What you cover yourself, at night?

HR: Blankets?

HS: With blankets, with like, making like *Succahs* in there and this. And I come to that border. I see boys, you know. I say, "What is this? Why are you not going there?" They say, "The Russians don't let through." I say, "What's with the Russians not let

through? The Russians? They will no let through?" And I couldn't understand that the Russians will no let me through. I ran to them and they should be people what...

HR: Open arms.

HS: That I should escape. And I couldn't understand. What do you mean that? I ran to the border and then that soldier he say, "*Davay nazad*," with a rifle, with a bayonet. And I say something a *Kafkavoltet* [phonetic], or something of my belief. Here I ran away from the Germans. I ran to the Russians.

HR: And then...

HS: They no let me out, and they no let me in. And hundreds of thousands of people, you know? And I couldn't understand this. And I take a look on that soldier, that poor Russian soldier. And I take a look on the German soldier. I said, "Oh my God, what is this?" Oh, [unclear], you know, a great coat of dirty, you know? Dirt. And such shoes without leather, you know? A Mongolian face. And I say, "If these should be our protectors we are in big trouble." You know, I was so shocked. And I take a look to the German soldiers, big like the wall. Men six foot ten or something, with the beautiful clothing, with the automatic weapons, with the rubber, with the everything protecting against rain. You know, with their it was raining a little. No, I didn't care already. Rain doesn't bother me no more. It still doesn't bother me now. Even I can go in the rain for days. And I say, I look on that soldier [unclear], you know, so big, and say, "And this should be my protector? And this should protect the world against the Germans? Is something wrong." And I say, you know, still I have to go through. And he say to me, "[unclear] *Davay nazad*? *Davay nazad*." Do you understand? *Davay nazad* means in Polish, Polish-Russian, "Go back." Oysh, okay.

It was in the evening at night. And I was, they make a fire, the boys, with this and singing, you know, everything happy. I say, "What is this town?" And they start to ask from what town, from all this. And nobody's from our neighborhood. All from over there and from [unclear], all kind of this. I say, "What is this, they no let you through?" I say, "What's it mean? What they will do?" And they don't know. But they don't let through. I say, "Let's go." I took a group of boys and girls, and it was at night, and I took off the wires, and we went through! We go a little. A soldier wasn't, it wasn't close soldiers, you know. It was, by the gate was a soldier. And we go in a forest and we, the tracks are still the tracks.

HR: Continuing from the, where the others had got off.

HS: Correct. And I go not far from the tracks. And then boom comes a soldier, "*Davay nazad*." I say, "No." I turn and he talks to me in Russian. I talk to him in Polish. I say, "*Nyemsi kamsu, Nyemsi* [phonetic]." "They're killing us!" And he say, "*Davay nazad*." And I say, "No!" He take down the rifle. He take the rifle. But I wasn't afraid of that. You understand? First of all I lost the respect is one. But I took a look at that *shabro* [phonetic], at that soldier, and I wasn't afraid. You see in my heart I know they can't do nothing to me. This is the Russians. And you see mine idea was so full that they are my

brothers. And we was arguing with him so maybe a half an hour. He say, “*Nazad*,” and I say, “No.” And later he say, “No, *Ich gerot*.” It means, “Go.” *Ich gerot*. Okay? So the boys, “You see? Well, *Gerot*.” And we start to work, with the tracks, with the, this. And we come with the tracks so a few miles. And we hear like the Germans singing. I say, “Oh my God. Probably he give us a direction we should, to the Germans.” I say, “Boys, lay down. Let me go.” And I was crawling, you know, on the ground, crawling to the station. It was the first station. The name was Zarunbikos Chelna [phonetic]. Yes, Zarunbikos Chelna, if I remember it, yeah. And this was a, it was the Russians. And they were singing in Jewish! Jewish boys and girls was sitting making a fire by the station waiting for a train!

HR: And you thought it was German?

HS: And I was...

HR: The boys thought it was German? When you heard...

HS: Sure! You hear such a sound, you will never believe that it will be a Jewish songs.

HR: It's Yiddish.

HS: It was in Yiddish, a Jewish song. And it was, when we come to the station. And we was already in. This was the first station, Zarunbikos Chelna, right? Zarunbikos Chelna. And we come, come a train, from where, from Bialystok. The train was only going to this. And again, many people, they was waiting in a road when they went through there. Went everybody on the you don't know what this is, how to storm a train. You don't know this, how to storm a train, you know? We stormed the train. And they still was Polish crews what was there when the war start, you know? And now he was saying, “The *Parshiviy Zhidy*,” and they was cursing, “Those *Zhides*, the *Parshiviy Zhide* and the *Moskali*.” The *Moskali* are the Russians you know? No but they can't do nothing to us, right? And we, this was at night. I was on the border only a few hours. I couldn't tolerate it more. You see I come in the evening, I walked into the night and took the boys, and we come to Bialystok. We come in station Bialystok. The first thing what I saw in Bialystok, we come out from the train, a Jewish sign, from street to street, how do you call it when you make such a banner?

HR: A banner I'd say.

HS: It was elections how they, for the, the Russians maked already elections. And was plenty of Jews. Was written in Jewish. And I was so shocked. It's like a entire different world, you know? A Jewish banner, you know? And I saw the first Jewish sold-, not Jewish, the first Russian soldiers, and Russian Cossacks and with the sabers. And I saw a Russian officer sleeping on the floor. I say, “My God, what is this? Russian officers sleeping on the floor?” Waiting for a train.

HR: Okay.

HS: You couldn't see this by a German. Or, and you couldn't...

HR: By a German.

HS: See this by a Polish. Polish officers was more beautiful than Germans, like dolls, perfect ones, you know? Russian soldiers and Russian officers. Only this I like having there, you know? I didn't li-, it was shocking me what kind of power is this against the Germans? The Germans are so organized. They're, only with their look they make from you, you're half dead. Only looking on them and their power and their organization, and the quality of the weapons, of the, the size of the horses, of the cleanness from the soldiers, you know? They're taking a town, the first thing they go in, taking off the clothes on their back, naked, and washing themselves. Not ashamed. Women, not women, you know? No, you know, they're overwhelming you with their organization, with their, you feel so small, you know? And over there, it's like a *steppe*. You know what's a *steppe* is? Oh, how is a *steppe*?

HR: Oh, it's a...

HS: Like a big field...

HR: A field, a field.

HS: With all the organization, you know, just in And you, well, okay, this is, and again, "*Gloria*," already you'll see it on Jewish, "*Gloria to Stalin*," and, "*Gloria to* [unclear]." Those signs what, okay, everything is [unclear]. It's good. And people was waiting, hundreds of people was waiting for the train for the newcomers, to find out what's new.

HR: For news.

HS: And I meet a friend from the school, Brotslavski.

HR: A friend that you went to school with...

HS: Yes.

HR: In Kalisz?

HS: Correct.

HR: Mmm.

HS: On the railroad, I don't know how it happened. A young, a boy, you know, Brotslavski, his father was a electrician. And I say, and I start to cry this time. He say, "What happened?" And that whole horror come back to me. You know, that was such a climax. Before I was so tense because I was in danger, everything. Here I stopped everything. Yeah. So, he took me. He was living, I don't know, I come to I wasn't so [unclear], I was, you know?

HR: You hadn't eaten, and just that alone!

HS: This I didn't, this didn't bother me so maybe. I didn't, yeah. You know, I wasn't 100% in my senses, you know? [pause] And, yeah, he took me to a family where he was living. I didn't understand what he is doing with me. And he give me a, I remember he took off that clothing, and I [unclear].

HR: Did you take a bath?

HS: No, I didn't take a bath. I didn't, they feed me something a meal, what people eat. It's called *kashe*, you know? It's *kashe*.

HR: *Kashe*. You never had *kashe*.

HS: *Kashe*, with onions, with something else.

HR: It must have tasted like heaven to you.

HS: You know, to tell you the truth I didn't right away want it.

HR: Right away.

HS: Right away. Probably I wasn't eating in such a long time.

HR: Yeah.

HS: And it was so I [unclear]. And I collapsed. Well, and I rested a day. Was...

HR: This was a Jewish family?

HS: I suppose. I tell you, no, I don't know now.

HR: You don't know.

HS: This was like a weight. It was a too much contrast, you know? Such a horror I didn't think I'd be seeing, to my shame I didn't think nothing of my family even in that time. Only when I start talking with this boy, that whole horror come back. I say, "There I left them! What I--there I left everybody!"

HR: But you were picked up on the street. You couldn't help...

HS: Yeah, but you see, now where I left my family this--everything start to come back to me. And I went, you see, I tell him. He say, "Look, what you will do now?" I say, "I don't know what I'll do now." He told me that, "We have a friend in Kovel. He should be a big Commissar. Isaac Sturmman, Yanek Sturmman." He was in concentration camp, the Polish concentration Katus Berezah [phonetic]. Poland had one concentration camp of the German style, and all Communists was over there. And when the Russian come, they free them. And by us was going around, and he told me in Bialystok, that Brotslavski, that he is a commissar in Kovel. A commissar that worked around over there from. He say, and he don't know, he say, "What you will do?" I say, "I don't know what I will do. I don't know what I am. Now I will go to Kovel." He give me some Polish money, I remember, and give me shoes. My shoes was all torn up from that Moravine, you know, from that working in the fields. And I went, before I went to the Jewish synagogue in Bialystok. In Bialystok there was a Center of Refugees. They call it *byezhinitzes*. If you have no where to sleep, where do you go? To the synagogue. And you come over there, is such a horror, you know? Such a death. Children, children are dying, you know? And it was not organization. They couldn't catch up with so much being refugees, so much you know? I mean the city was overrun three, four times, you know, with people. And no food and no this and no that, you know? [unclear], you know. And maybe a epidemic could be, was already.

I intentionally had intend to go to Baranovich, where my friend was. And when I was talking before of my friends. Now he told me about that Yanek Sturmman, I said, "I want to see him. I want to think things over, you know?" And he give me some money. Over there, from Bialystok to Kovel you have to buy already a ticket. Was already more organized. Only from Bialystok to the border, you know, with that, this was still probably

they know people have no money that come. And I saw the first Jewish newspaper. I always have to read, you know? I believe in Bialystok the *Stüirm* they call it. Now they're written already in a Jewish, a Russian Jewish. Not normal. It was nouns with no this, you know? Such a Soviet style, you know? And this was with not a Jewish paper. This was a Russian paper written in Jewish. Nothing touching the tragedy what happened. Like nothing would exist. Like nothing happened. Only *gloria* to Stalin, and we have to make a la-

Tape seven, side one:

HS: Finding out about that, not friend but I know him, that he is a commissar in Kovel, I decided to go and to see what I have to do with myself. Because the shock from running was over, and I have in my heart a very deep guilt that I left my parents, that I left my friends. And I was very uneasy with me. And my friend give me some Polish money and I, he told me he'd give me a shirt and this. I changed out of that bloody clothing and throw away. And I bought a ticket and I went from Bialystok to Brest, Zeshna Gubin [phonetic]. Coming through Brest, is a big town, a big tremendous town. It's like a state town. And it's very much in [tape off then on] and Brest was very much in mine mind, in my thinking, because this was the biggest town that was a different, a Russian, Ukrainian or White Russian minority fighting the Polish government. And I was reading at one time a book, *The March on Brest*, the day the Russian farmers what was under Polish occupation, was going to occupy that town. And that political unrest was much in the last 30 years in Poland. So I know plenty about that town and I have much memories about this. Now, to see practically was an entire different story. Was a very gray, rainy, snowy day. I was standing near the River Bug, or I was standing on a big bridge near a tremendous railroad station. Is a historical railroad station where in 1918 Russia, Soviet Russia was signing the peace agreement with Germany. And they stopped the war then after they throw down the Czar. And left Trotsky was in the head of the delegation. So, it have a tremendous historical value for me.

Only when I was standing so I remember the snow and the rain was going down. And I was thinking about that--Where we fit? We poor Jews, where do we fit in that tremendous amount of humanity? Why we can't find our space? And I feel so humiliated and so hurt that nobody care of us, and we ourself can't take care of ourselves. The first thing in Zeshna I start to see the common Russian occurrence--lines. Lines for bread and lines for clothing. Everywhere in every store there was lines. We didn't know this before the war. We just know when the Germans come in we was standing in line for bread. Now, a new Soviet thing I just find out--lines. Where you want to buy something, you have a line like they call in Russian, a *ochered*. First in Zeshna, that big tremendous railroad station, there was a official kitchen like a soup kitchen for the refugees from the Germans. And I eat the first time a soup ladled out from somebody to me like I am a refugee. And it was very hard for me to accept that first soup of mercy. And I hear already people talking about registration to go to in Russia, to go to work to Russia to in of Russia. And this time I start to think about my future. What should I do with myself? What should I do? How I left my parents and I left everybody. Where I will fit in? And little by little start to come to me a idea I should go back to my town and to try to save mine family and to try to save my friends. And that idea start to go deeper. And I say, "I can't stay in Brest."

And I went to Kovel. You see in Kovel was a big railroad station, very impressive. The whole railroad business was very impressive for me because I never saw railroads

before that I was on a train. And in that Kovel it was a big station still from the Czar time and much from before. And Kovel was already a typical like a Russian town. The first time I saw wooden sidewalks or streets without stones. You know, unpaved streets. And the whole streets with wooden houses. And a cross entire different people already, much more eastern people, the people that they look already like Slavs. And their clothing is entirely different. And their talking is entirely different. And I saw so many Mongolian people already, Chinese and different what was in the Russian Army or in the Russian occupation force. We in Poland wasn't used to this. In Poland you see all 99% one kind of faces--Polak faces. And small minorities like Jews, Germans, Gypsies. And the Jews and Germans either fit in that Polish sea of Slavish faces. And that Kovel first hit me so many different people and so many different outlooks.

And the first time I heard a Russian Army singing. And it was like from the wild [unclear] Steppes. The songs was so, the motif was so Oriental, so gnawing, you know, so heart throbbing. And time when I hear the German songs was so full of knives, full of sabers and of guns and of bullets, and of smoke, in the song even. And in that Russian songs you can feel the melancholy from the Russian character. You can smell the snow even. And we see the different, in every song they will finish with, like with a whistle, like with a [unclear] from their, it was so attractive and scary a little. And the first one man is singing, they call it a *zapevala* and later the whole regiment was singing. And sometime I remember I was walking in the afternoon about a half an hour just listening to the rhythm of this song. And it was so amazing. So in my time of trouble even, I tried to absorb this entirely different world. Even the smell of the Russian Army was different. They was smelling from bread and from cabbage. Like the German soldier was smelling from soap and from water cologne and from gasoline. And from the instinctives, you feel a different smell. And the Russian soldiers, they was going to the *banya*--this means to the public bath--with their clothing. And I clearly could see how the Russian soldier was walking two, three or four hundred years ago the same way. This is a little...

So I come to that Kovel and I start to look around for my friend, find out that big commissar, until I find a Russian restaurant where the Russian officers is eating. The name was Risursa [phonetic]. And I went through on the, this was after Lagionof [phonetic] Street, still the Polish name. And I hear Jewish speaking. And this was a Jewish waiter is working over there. And I ask around maybe she know a person from Kalisz that is so-and-so. She said, "You know, I know that person. He works, he is a head from a kitchen for refugees. And he is not far on Dalutska [phonetic] Street."

And I went over there and I saw my friend. He was not a big commissar. He wasn't small commissar. He was working in a kitchen what was giving food for refugees. And that Kovel is a little further from the border and they had less refugees. It was a little more organized. And they was feeding the people. People wasn't going around hungry. I meet him and he took me to his room. Not his room, to his bed where he was living. Because in that room was living maybe ten people. And I try to tell him my story. And I saw something

terrible happening, that he don't believe me. And he start to ask me such questions like I would be a crazy person. And he start to talk such things to me because I say, "Why is he so quiet? Why nobody's protesting what they're doing to us over there?" How far are we? I say, "You are not so far removed. You are just a few kilometers," I say, "from our tragedy." And I see that he, nobody want to listen, like nothing happened. You know, they no write nothing. They no talk nothing. Only the tragedy was in the smaller *huddleleah* [phonetic], in the small people, the refugees what we was roaming around. They was in their tragedy. Nobody want to accept this. And nobody official want to help us. To my deep sorrow and shame the Jewish population over there, well they was very negative to us. Or there was a reaction; they was afraid to accept the truth, or no, they didn't tolerate this well. I remember he took me to a room from a woman, from an old woman, that I should sleep over there. She say I can sleep over there if I pay her, only one night. I say, "Why only one night?" She say, "Maybe tomorrow you will bring your parents and other friends and they will take away mine house." So, I start to understand they are afraid of us, that we will overtake them. Or, if they didn't, to a negative point of, I have to say that we didn't have too much help from the Jewish population from the other side. I remind myself how we was trying to help the German refugees when they're coming in in Zbanszyn in 1938. How much, what kind of committee got organized and how the average person on the street was fighting to take in people in their houses. Well, I tried to understand that, or too many people was coming in from us. Or they are afraid with that political changes what come in, that Russian regime. They was afraid. No, mine opinion, mine first thing was negative, that they didn't care about us, and they didn't try to help us. Only the opposite. When I was going on with the soup was going to a woman laughing, "What kind of soup are they feeding today the *byezhintzes*?" A *byezhintzes* means a refugee.

And it's the same with my friend, you know? I saw that something divide us already. Oh he want to go with the line from the, he was a Communist. And he had a job from them. And in that time the policy of the Soviet Union was a friendship with Germany. They together divided Poland. They together I believe they was happy that the friends in Great Britain get a beating. I hear, the first thing I hear them calling when I come in, how many, how the German submarines, how many they sink, they this. They sink the ships, and how the French Army ran away and how the British Army get a licking. And nothing is saying about our tragedy, like we no exist at all. That a few million of people are bleeding to death. And so I believe this was the political, official life in Russia. And my friend already was going the line of Russia. He didn't understand the terrible degradation, the terrible things. How they was praying to Stalin like to God. I was so overwhelmed there. You go in Kovel, everywhere you see portraits of Stalin, thousands of portraits everywhere. And I was feeling that I am in a madhouse. Everywhere red flags and, "*Gloria to Stalin*," and *gloria* to this and *gloria* to that. And that time when we was laying on the street. We was hungry. And nobody mention a word about our Jewish tragedy, even the Jewish people

over there want to, I don't know what's the reason. Now this was my impression that I am taking this everything in account.

And he say, he advise me to go to Russia, to register to go to deep Russia and to be a Russian. And I say, "What will be with my family? What will happen to them?" He say, "They're by the Germans. You know what happened to them." And I was terribly shocked. And I decided in that time to leave back, to try to save them or try to be with them. And what will happen will happen.

He give me a few again Polish money. It was still Polish money going around in Kovel. I don't know in the account; well we could buy tickets. You can buy bread. It's amazing at that time already going to buy bread you can't get change. There was no metal change. You're going into a store, you buy something. First of all they don't want to sell you, period. This is the Russian style already. Until they decide to sell you something, he give you a piece of paper that he's owing you twenty cents. Was no change. I believe people started to hide the change. This is just a [unclear]. I decided to go, seeing this [unclear] and seeing Kovel, seeing Brest, seeing Bialystok. I decided to go back. I decided not to save myself, not to go into Baranovici, just to go back or try to save my people. I see there is a way to take them out. With our things, with everything how it's bad over there-- we have no where to go, we have to lie in the synagogue, we have to lie in the, sleep on the street, on the railroad station--nobody is killing you. You have Jewish signs. We have a Jewish newspaper. And I, we see Jewish boys with guns. It was the city police as you say, only Jewish boys and Ukrainian boys with guns, and with red bands. This was for me a very big miracle. And I right away want to take a gun.

So, taking this in account, I decided to go back. I don't know how to do this, but I decided I couldn't sleep, I couldn't rest, I could do nothing. I have to tell you one thing, I didn't shave myself for the whole time and I was going around with a beard and I was very, looking very neglected. I was looking very, very bad, because I didn't care about myself. And people what saw me was very depressed looking, and I was very depressed myself. Not depressed. I didn't care about me. My thinking was not about me.

So deciding to go back I have to wonder how to go back. So I decided to go back the same way how I had come, the same way I will go back. I went back from Kovel to Brest, and from Brest to Bialystok, and from Bialystok I went back to Zarembi Koshchelne. Coming on that railroad station, I start to listen what people are talking. And seeing that it's a whole movement, a whole organized movement smuggling people and goods between the German occupied and from the Russian. People was smuggling out people, smuggling out *valutas* [contraband money], smuggling out everything. So it's a possible thing to do. In my naiveté I went to the Jewish boys, you know. There are the Polish, the Jewish underground. Not underground. In Polish, it's Jewish, like the Jewish thieves from Malevki [phonetic], from Warsaw, you know, the tough guys what start to make a living from that tragedy by smuggling the money and smuggling people and with all this. And I ask them, "This is my situation. I want to go out to save my people." To their eternal credit I have to

tell they was very good to me. They saw that I am a naive *boychik*. And they tell me, "Go with us. We will take you with us. And when we come to Zarembi Koshchelne, we come near the border, if they arrest you and they will ask you where you want to go, say you want to go to Bialystok." I say, "What's the reason?" I see the Russian have such a system. If you want to say you go to Bialystok, they send you back to the Germans. If you say you want to go to the Germans, they send you back to Bialystok. Because they want already to stop that movement of refugees. Because with the whole thing there was nothing altruistic from the Russian side. They never accept us legally. We just ran them over. That they should do something like other countries was accepting refugees, giving them help, or letting legally through, this is not true. Just people was running. And we never should accept such ideas that the Russians saved us. They didn't save us. They had no choice to do with us, because if 100,000 people run them over, they can't send everybody back, or they can't arrest everybody, so they let them in. No, there was no official line. They didn't try to help us, to their eternal shame.

So, we come to Zarembi Koshchelne. Nobody ask us nothing, and I went with the boys, with the professional smugglers, underground people. They have knives in their shoes, and their everything, you know? Tough guys. They can kill Germans. They can kill each other too. They can kill me too. Now they have one common thing, the Jewish soul. Bad things was their profession. Now they could be good Jews, and they was good Jews. And they took me with them. And we went to the train. And we walked over the same way how we walked with the railroad. The same way we come to Malkinia. And they give me a *chemodan* [suitcase]. I carried their bags. Probably they're smuggling, the ones that I don't know. Now I make a, I look like a busy person. And I went with them to Warsaw. And in Warsaw they went their way and I went my way. And I went back the same way to Warsaw. And I went back to Lodz, and now back already I have to beg tickets. And it was already that we have, it was already signs that the Jews have to wear in Lodz the...

HR: Stars?

HS: Yes. I didn't bother with this. I didn't care about this. I had money what I give. Yeah, they gave me some money too, and they give me some bread. They give me some salami, the Jewish boys. And I took a ticket. I went the same way back. I bought a ticket for Polish money, and I went into a train. Not to a last train, not to--a train. I bought a ticket like a normal person, and I sit in a German car with Germans with German soldiers, and hear that whole stories, their whole singing, the whole thing. And the whole thing was only talking how glorious they have in the west. How they're fighting the British. The whole thing, you know. And I was so downbeated. Only we was believing that the Germans and the French would fight them. How they went over the [unclear]. They was in a very good mood and they was singing their songs. Nobody bothered me. There was no more Jews in that. I was the only person a Jew. I couldn't recognize who is a Jew.

And I come to my Kalisz station back. Imagine my this? I was away two weeks. And I was back in Kalisz. I was back in Kalisz. I was back in Germany. I come back at

night. There was a *Politzeistunde* [curfew] there. I was sitting in the station, waiting in the morning. And I went back to my home through a way, through a different way, you know, with the outskirts. Because I didn't know how this, I didn't have mine...

HR: Paper and your band.

HS: My paper and my band. And I didn't want to wear it either. So I went to the side through the park. And with the Polish streets, [unclear] and with the other thing. And I was like a Polish man. And I was pretty dirty. One thing was, we know in my heart I didn't know if my parents are still there, or if the street was in *aus idel* [phonetic]. Because when I left, and I ran away, there was already a half a city taken away. Street by street they was taken away to the *Halle*, to the market, and to that concentration camp and sent away to Lublin. And imagine, and imagine, in the morning, 7:00, I come to my home. I come to the back yard. I go to the second floor and knock at the door. They opened, and imagine what this was [crying], when I come back. They know that, they know from the *Judenrat* that everybody was dead.

HR: Who did you find? Mother? Father?

HS: I find everybody...

HR: Everybody.

HS: Sitting on packages, sitting, waiting on packages, with the arm bands. That street, our street wasn't taken yet. My mother collapsed. My grandmother, you know, my grandmother start to yell, "I told you that he is not dead!" [pause] Well...

HR: Your brother? The one that...

HS: I have two brothers.

HR: The one that was with you in the *Judenrat*?

HS: He wasn't dead. He was sick.

HR: He got back to the house.

HS: Sure. My brother Nathan.

HR: And the little brother?

HS: My lit-, my Nathan, he want to, yeah, he was still sick from that time, from Moravine. It's only two weeks, you know. He was in bed. And my smaller brother, everybody was there. Now I tried to calm them down. And I say, "Li-," and I tried to, well you know, they couldn't believe me what I told them. They didn't believe that I, they was sure that I, something happened to me that I am crazy, that I wasn't in Russia. I say, they asked me, "Where do you come?" I say, "I am come from Russia." They couldn't believe it. They didn't believe me. I say, "Or they are crazy or I am crazy." It took me time to convince them that time. I start to believe that I am start to be crazy because nobody want to believe me. Over there, they no want to believe me, and nobody wants to believe what I am talking. I told them that I come back. I was in Russia. And I come back to save them. And there is a way to save them. And they shouldn't be afraid. And not only they should be saved, we should now, who we can reach, what kind of people, strange people or friends,

we have to say how, what they should do. We can. I calm down. I took a bath. A bath in Poland is not so, not a bath in America. I just, a sink with water. Not a sink.

HR: A basin.

HS: A basin. You made a little warm water and wash yourself. You washed the head with kerosene for the louses. This is a bath in Poland. And I felt clean. I couldn't eat. And I was not a eater. I couldn't eat. And I start to, after I calmed them down, I calmed down my father. And I say, "We can save people. We all can save." I have to insist the courage in them. I didn't tell them what is dangerous and what is not danger. I say, "It is possible to do." And they tell me, "He is taken away. He is taken away already [unclear]. And this family is taken away and this family taken away." Taken away by streets. And I say, "Okay, who is taken away is taken away. Now the *Politzeistunde* is ended. Let's go to all our friends and tell them what they should do. They shouldn't go with us. Nobody should go, nobody goes with nobody. Everybody goes by himself. Nobody goes in no groups. Either I say, you see, we can go together we're like strange people. We can't go together, because your afraidness is affecting me. My afraidness is affecting you. And that's it. No have to be a German. A Polak will give you out." A Polak will call a German. And we went so first of all to all our neighbors what was still around. The whole street and the whole relatives what we still had. And imagine our psychological situation. We went to our Aunt Rivkeh what I mention constantly. She say she can't give us the daughters with us. Her Jewishness was still so deep, the knife was already on our throat and she still say she can't let the daughters go in the world by themselves. She say, "You want to take the boys, take the boys. I know you want to take the father, take the father. No, the three girls," -three beautiful girls, and they're twins, you know, and a small girl, ten years--"they will go with us." The father decided he will no leave her. The three boys decided they will go with us. What's mean with us? They will do what we tell them. Not with us.

And I developed a plan. I made a short that I shouldn't talk to everybody. "This is how you go to the railroad, take off your band, buy a ticket, sit down, go to Lodz, Warsaw. Go the whole this and go. And when you come to Malkinia, don't listen to Germans. Don't go to the right. If he ask you just go straight where every Polak is going." And this I tried to spread around the idea. And how many people I reach, friends, and not friends, strange Jewish people, I told them this. It wasn't so smooth how I am talking. In that day our street was almost, our street have to start to be evacuated. And the Polaks, you know, the hyenas start to come to steal our furniture, our things. And that whole thing and the whole preparation of going away, they're coming up, said, "I want to buy that closet." They didn't mean to buy the closet. Just they mean to just look around. And I say, and I told them, "I don't want to start a fight."

Tape seven, side two:

HS: ...neighbors, and all our relatives. I can say that we saved a few thousand of people. There are still people around in the United States and in Israel and Poland what I was saved. I no want to be saved by me. They was saved by God. And we had a chance, they need only that thing, you know, that, to know, "Go this way. Nobody," I explained that, "nobody is guaranteed that you will succeed. No, you will try. And it's possible." I say, "There are hundreds of thousands of people," I say, especially make them bigger, "running. After Lodz," I say, "you see trains of Jews going to Russia. And you'll come," I say, "to Bialystok you have Jewish signs." You see I want to give them that courage, that movement that they should go. And I the Shiveks, the Shivek was, the family was still, yeah, I was, I visit them. Their father was too home. That go-, that...

HR: That blacksmith.

HS: Yes. And I told him, "I don't know if they went. I hear something about that. I hear that they are alive." No, if they utilized this I don't know. If they utilized our way, I don't know. So I explained to everybody, to who I could. I either went to that *rynek*, to that market, when people was already arrested. This wasn't a formal arrest. You can move in, out [unclear], only they know already. If you arrest a family, children, this was our eternal tragedy. Young people could save themselves but didn't want to run away from the parents. They stick with the parents and the parents with the children. So if the Germans took a family they know the children will no run away. And I went even over there. I took out one, our family, a very poor, what we, Stockman, what we helped them so much during, before. They was so poor that you can't understand this. He was a *glazier*. You know what's a *glazier*?

HR: A private shop.

HS: Not a shop. He had a...

HR: A private [unclear]. No?

HS: No, the shop was on his back.

HR: Oh.

HS: He was going with a piece of glass to the villages, making windows. And every Monday he was coming to us, borrowing two *zlotys*, taking two *zlotys* from my father, buying that piece of glass, and Friday giving back the two *zlotys*. And the difference, from the difference they make a living. His children was coming, we tried to help them, was coming to eat meals by us. You know? I know they was very ashamed. I couldn't understand they was so ashamed always, you know, that they have to do this. So I find them on the *rynek*. And I took, I say, "Come out from that *rynek*." They was this you, I say, "You have nothing there. You have no clothing. Forget about this." I took them to our house. Their house was already German, right? And to other friends, and to other relatives, and other and other. Who we could, we just told them what they have to do. And they did. If you see people from Kalisz saved, in some way is our connection. Some way. Or just the

idea. Or just through a other person, some way. This was like, we give the initial push that the ball start rolling. Because we were so far away, so deep in Germany that it was psychologically hard to imagine that you can run.

Okay? Now, again we come to the grandmother. What we do with the grandmother? I say the grandmother can come with us. I say, why, I figure she will die. Okay, she will die. People are dying. She couldn't make it."

HR: It's better to go than stay...

HS: Because she was always vomiting. I don't know what kind was her sickness. What she eat, later she start to vomit, a hour or two. Now she was much smarter than we, much more decisive. She say, "I'm not going in no place. This is my home. You go, and I will wait for you. You will come back. You will have everything." Eighty years old. And one thing, "Watch Moishe." This was her apples from the eye, Moishe, Moishe, Moishe. You know, the small boy, the sick boy. And when we went out, we left her. We left her. The last word was saying, "Go, and watch Moishe." And this was her last word what I remember from her. And we went, through the *Politzeistunde* we went. We went, not all together. We went, went already. I...

HR: How about your mother with the legs?

HS: She went.

HR: She went.

HS: She went. She was so indescribable brave, that there is no, I have no, you know, this is a, she is a pure, simple from womanhood, you know? She could eat for weeks giving away bread to that small boy. She went down, she was so heavy, she went down in Russia to 70 kilo. You know what is 70 kilo? Maybe 90 pounds. She was in Poland maybe 600 pounds [probably means kilo], from that suffering. But, we will come to that suffering, you know. No, she was a symbol of our Jewish women, you know, so brave and so smart and so calm and so cool. And you have to tell her only a half a word and she knows already the whole lot and going of the sentence, you know.

And we was, we went to the train. And we took tickets, and we spread ourself out too, not in one this. How somebody got saved we no belong no more to each other. I say only, "You come to that station, you wait. You come to that station, we wait. We no see you, we wait." We went to the, we went the same way, with tickets. And we come to Lodz. And in Lodz they arrest my father and they arrest my brother, Nathan. And I say, "Mother, we have to go." We went to Warsaw. Same way. In Warsaw my mother say, "I am not going further. I will wait here for the father. I am not going." I say, "Okay, mother. This is your decision is my decision. We'll wait." We were sitting in the main, in that destroyed...

HR: Railroad station.

HS: Railroad station, [unclear]. And we wait and they, you know, waiting in night. Three days we was waiting, and they come. Because they know we will wait for them. And I told her, I, we, I will told her a whole schedule what they will do. "He will wait for you. You wait for us. And we wait here, not there nor here." You see, my father

was my problem. He need more guidance. He need more help from the mother. How physically strong he was. And he needed guidance. Not only he needed guidance. He needed guidance that it should come out that he is doing it. And my mother did it so, and I did so. And if he would listen, my last word when he went to, he would be alive maybe. He didn't listen when we, they took him to the Russian Army. I tell him exactly what he have to do. He didn't. And the other brother too. I told them, "Don't speak Russian. You don't understand the language. You are a Polak. You don't talk. You no understand." Do you understand my idea?

HR: Of course.

HS: "Don't talk. You're a strange person. If they took you, oh your bearing is in Poland. You are this. No, you don't know nothing. What kind soldier are you? They will do something with you there, put you in a kitchen. They'll put you to work in a forest." But they were so afraid. And I am not bla-, no, I am too sinful to talk so. Well, okay.

HR: So you were in the Warsaw...

HS: In Warsaw, and we wait for...

HR: And they came.

HS: And they came.

HR: And they came.

HS: And again I listen to wisdom from my mother. And I analyze how right she was, that I listen. Because if we went, I don't know what would happen, if we make her. She couldn't manage. We went to *Dworzec Vilinski*. And with the same *tsuris*. We went to the, to that, oh, I forgot to tell you, we meet some friends, on the railroad. And he say he will take the baggage from us helping us to carry. Now I didn't have time everything to explain. And when we come to Malikinya they start to be, "Jew, Jew, Jew, Jew." They went. And they went with the whole baggage, with everything. And half my friends went. How much you tell them, almost my brother went. I just told them, "Put your hat down." A hat, you know what's a hat is? He have such ski hat.

HR: A hat.

HS: "Put down on your eyes." You understand? Because he was almost ready to go. Then he would go, the mother would go. And he was trembling, you know? He was so afraid still from that Moravine. The small one he didn't understand so much. He only want to hear singing. He has, with his blinds he is very musical. He could stay hear the German soldiers singing on the street and I'm tearing him, "Come home!" "Oh, let me hear how they sing, how nice they're singing," you know? So we come to there, we make the whole, we come to that place, to that neutral pass. You know, it's already a entirely different story. It's already a *Stacheldraht*, already a fence, solid fence. No more going through. With a regular army. And people, people, you know? A sea of people. And my all wisdom, my own knowledge, went to zero. And we was on the pass maybe two weeks. Snow, rain. We was laying on the field. We went to a farmer. The father had a gold watch. We took our jewelry. We had golden coins, and put buttons, and the buttons [unclear]. And we had the

other jewelry and the diamonds we buried them in my house, where we had the cow standing. And our silver and a sugar vat. You know a sugar vat? The old silver sugar boxes what we had for generations. I, after the war I took it out from there, for show.

Well here are the Ger-, on the pass, in the neutral pass, we come. No food. My mother was a very big woman when we come in over there. We had what we carried with us, she give away to old friends. We was expecting, to mine instructions that we will soon go over, right? So, she can't see a hungry person. That woman, we was saving hundreds of people in Russia, cooking for them. *Oy*. She's a saint. She was a saint to me, my mother [unclear]. And we have no bread. We have no nothing. And we went to a farmer. I took off my, Papa took out the watch. You know it was a golden watch 50 years ago--you can buy a house. He say, "Why I should give you bread for the watch? You *tuputochnish* [phonetic] you will die." Not die. Worse than die. "You will drop dead and I will take the watch so and so." Mine younger brother start to get swollen, the youngest. I don't know why. The legs started to get swollen that we have to cut of the...

HR: Pants.

HS: The pants. I don't know why, the knees start to get so swollen. And there is no way. People are dying. Children are dying. And the Russians don't let you through. One night start to be a big horror, the Russians running away. And you feel you're safe there--everything moves back. You know, people start to run after the Russians. We was afraid to be by the Germans.

HR: You mean the Russians...

HS: At the border.

HR: That were guarding the border started to run?

HS: They start to go back.

HR: Back.

HS: What happened? It happened they moved the border. Their, by the agreement they straighten out the border. The Russian retreated a six, eight miles. We didn't know this. How do we know? What do we know? We was animals. We didn't know these things. Because was maybe a half a million people. You know what means a half a million people on muddy fields? So we start to run after them, after the Russians. And you hear when running, and thousands peoples are yelling, "Moishe! Lymie! Shlomie!" Because everything got mixed up. You don't know where you had the people, your relatives, your family, your father, mother, your aunt. I was always close to the mother. And my sister was close to the father. My sister is very brave, very. So, we lost the father. We lost one brother. We find them again. And we come to the new border, six miles. They just moved back the border. And we continued to go. They stopped us and we continued to go. They come with horses, with *Slotikozaks* [phonetic]. And we no want to stop. They say, "*Davay nazad! Davay nazad!*" How can you stop hundreds of thousands of people? Only with machine guns, right? And we lay down on the ground, and we start to yell so much that the horses start to be afraid. They went down on the two legs and they turned

around, you know? And we see come maybe, here comes a Commissar. And he started to have a speech, in Russian. And nobody understand later there was somebody Polish. That, "A delegation went to Moscow and Stalin is deciding that you should wait," and, "we will go with trains." And we didn't move. We lie on the floor and went to a Russian officer, a Jew, and he say, "*Louf nicht*, don't go back." A Jew. "Don't go back," he said, to us.

HR: Don't go back to Germany.

HS: Right.

HR: Stay there.

HS: "Don't listen what the man is saying. Don't go back," he said. A Jewish man. And we was laying in the Russian territory, was plenty people. At night that man come with soldiers, and he take people with us. "Come," he said.

HR: The Jewish man?

HS: Correct! And he took a group of people, including us. And, we go. He let us in in the forest and go. And we come to Zarembi Koshchelne. What happened with the other people I don't know. Probably they let them go. They didn't send them back. Do you understand that paradox?

HR: Mmm hmm.

HS: Just at night, when it was at night, we run after them. He say, "Don't go back." You see a Jewish soul is a Jewish soul. He say, "Don't listen to them and don't go back." And later here comes a few soldiers.

HR: He took you.

HS: They didn't take us.

HR: But, let you go through.

HS: "Go," he said. And we went. And I understand already what he is talking, because I had a similar experience with that young Russian soldier the first time. He couldn't make it, they say, "Go." These are not Germans, you see. They have a soul. They're not always listening whatever their superiors are talking, and especially a Jewish man. Yeah. And we went to Bialystok. And we went to that, went through the whole [unclear]. We went to the synagogue. And we, I want to dry out our, we was wet here. You know, we had something to cover from that field. I burn this, didn't try to, and we say we can't save it. I say, "We will die over there, because it will be a epidemic." This is, you can't, I can't describe. No toilets. No nothing. You can't it's impossible, you know? So we have to go out, who knows where to go? I say, "Let's go to Kovel." I say, "Kovel have less people."

HR: Are you saying Kovno?

HS: Kovel.

HR: Oh Kovel.

HS: Not Kovno. Kovno is Kaunas, is Latvia.

HR: Kovno is in...

HS: Is Latvia.

HR: Oh, Latvia.
HS: Kovel.
HR: Kovel.
HS: Kovel. And near Lutsk, and near Rovno, not far from Sarne.
HR: How about Berdichev?
HS: No, that isn't.
HR: It's near...
HS: Yeah, this is in...
HR: Also Lublin?
HS: This is in Ukrainia.
HR: The Ukraine.
HS: This is already deeper. I'm still talking about towns what was belonging to Poland.
HR: Poland. So it's perfect for you, right?
HS: Yeah. And Sarne was the Polish-Russian border before. And I say, "Let's go to Kovel. It's less people over there. That Sturmman is there and maybe he can arrange something." And we decided, my mother was very sick. She was spitting with blood, very sick. She had a high temperature. And I had no, a person was like a fly. You say a person will die, a person will die. It was no concern to nobody, absolutely no concern. It was, the dimension from our horror was so deep that a person, I told you, we no belonged to ourselves. A person doesn't mean nothing. So, we went through Brest, and to Kovel, the same thing. I forgot already about Baranovich. This is already fantasy. And we went to Kovel, and I went to him. I say, "Listen, I have my family. What can you help me?" I say, "She is very sick." He say, "I can help you nothing. Just go to," and he say, "go." He gave me a address. "And say you have a very sick mother. Oh, they will take you to the hospital and give you something." And I went over there. I don't know what it is, was a committee something. And they give us, in the city prison, a cell, to live. Do you believe the paradox?
HR: Was the prisoner there, still in the cell?
HS: Komorova, on Komorova Street Dreitsen. The prisoner, right, that cell wasn't ours. Was you know what is *naris* [cot] how you sleep?
HR: On those beds.
HS: Yeah. We was, and they was over there. And we can't go out. We can't...
HR: Were the prisoners there?
HS: No. This was a city jail.
HR: Yeah.
HS: Off the Komorova Street. Well, so, I have already where mine, to put away my mother, you know? So, we start to move around and see. Then I start to look for a job, to work by the Russians.
HR: And this is in Kovel?
HS: Kovel.

HR: Kovel now, okay.

HS: Kovel. Comes a idea to my sister, and my sister said she will go back to save the grandmother. Who should we be to say no? Who will take? I say, "You can go, because everything is *Judenrein* already." They can right away say if, even if a *Jude* can right away say or, they can see how you are a Jew or not a Jew. But a girl they can see nothing, right? She is a very smart, this one. And to tell you the truth, to my shame, I didn't feel so to go back. And I was so already knocked out. And I shouldn't let her go either. Now, who will, who should say no? Who can play God?

HR: So...

HS: So...

HR: Was this your mother's mother?

HS: Yes.

HR: Yes. And...

HS: Now she was so, yeah, my mother's mother. My father's mother, thanks God died a normal death, you know. You see, we was in the time already the Germans was in Kalisz we was so envy to a person what died normally. And we take them to the cemetery.

HR: To the cemetery and bury them.

HS: That's right, you know? Well you envy, real envy. You see, and my sister decided to go back. And she took a few girls.

HR: She must have been an extraordinary girl.

HS: So she went back. And we didn't hear from her maybe two months. Can you imagine my mother? And nobody want to say, "No." You know she's 99%, you know, that nothing can come out. Now who should be the person should say, "No," during this time? We couldn't. Who can? It can't be this. So, in that Kovel, you know, I was working for Russians, with the Russian Army, a day's work, carrying for the horses this and that, you know? And I saw that is such a bluff, such a farce, such a distortion of the truth.

HR: The Communism?

HS: Right, that whole Russian system. That's such a terrible life. And global *mashtab* what you see everything is not true. They say they are rich and they was lousy. A officer can come in to you on the street, "That's a nice coat. How much you want for that coat? They are good shoes. How much you want?" A officer! Do you understand? Buying and selling, this was so amazing for us what kind army, what kind of this, who have to buy, why you have to buy from the street. And you no could buy nothing for money. Or you want to buy something well you have to give a shirt to get this. In the stores you couldn't buy nothing. And you get the soup and it was a kitchen, soup kitchen for *byezhinitzes*.

Okay, we accept this everything. I accept that system what we should do. And I saw the farce, saw the lie. They're talking about freedom. Well it's not freedom. They're talking about hate, everything what is not everything. They're talking that the Germans are people when they're not people. I saw a German commission come in, something, in Kovel,

you know? And we made a demonstration after them, just running after them, yelling. We see the police come. They want to arrest us. Do you understand? Later come a man who saw us and there was still plenty of people what want to go back to Kalisz, want to go back. They didn't want to stay with the Russians. I tried to explain it, you know what this is? Here, okay, I accept this is no good and this and this.

HR: But you're alive.

HS: "Well nobody is good," I say. "Nobody had better. This what is but we're alive." And they're no running, they're no telling that a Jew, that he does to that. He want to...

HR: And they still were insisting...

HS: And people went back. My friend went back.

HR: Well why? What did they think?

HS: Came back to the family. He went back. He didn't want to work. You see...

HR: But by this time they knew that they were being...

HS: No, this is what I am talking. There are people, passive people they can't overcome theirselves. I developed a theory I should be able to work the best from everybody. Nobody can overwork me. Nobody can overtire me. Nobody can overhunger me. Until now I have that system. I can work 40 hours. Who can work more than me? I can work more than everybody. I can suffer more than everybody. And I have it this in my head. Still now. I work now 18 hours, doesn't bother me. I develop a system I can overwork a German. I can overwork a Russian. I can over, I work over everybody. I develop a discipline in me. They was laughing that we can't work. Either I saw by the Russians that I was working carrying for the horses. I never was carrying such bags with the oat. Oat?

HR: Oats.

HS: Oats. They was laughing. I say, "The hell you will laugh at me." And I was doing better than they more, because I will do it. And what, if you make up a decision you will do it. It's not so hard. It's only that afraidness to go in in that process. The hunger is not so terrible if you're not afraid of it. In the beginning, the first day, is terrible. Later you're getting used. Well, I'm talking about that I was enough healthy. I had enough maybe fat I can be a week without food. No is much more you're mentally resistant that you're physically weakness. I was working on a ship in Russia. And we will come. They was laughing from us. I say, "The hell, I will do better than you!" And I was the best. I was cutting trees better than the Russians. Yes, still now I can do better. Yes! I say, I had operation, all of that cancer business. After four hours I say to the doctor, "I want to go down." He said, "Wait, wait, wait."

HR: Well where did you have, what kind of cancer?

HS: In colon.

HR: And you...

HS: Four hours after...

HR: [unclear]...

HS: ...the operation I say, "I have to go down to stay on my legs." He say, "It's impossible." I say, "You let me."

HR: Oh.

HS: And I would, "I just have to stay," I said. And I stayed. I get my whole chemotherapy two-and-a-half years I didn't miss a day work, in my store. My daughter was coming and giving me the needle and I went back to work.

HR: Oh, and you didn't have any symptoms?

HS: I have. When I was vomiting, I stay home. I was getting pills. I was getting needles. I was very nauseous. I lost the nails. I have no teeth.

HR: From the chemotherapy?

HS: Sure. My all nails was fall out, they come back.

HR: And your hair?

HS: The hair start then no. I didn't have trouble. So what I want to tell you? I was getting my whole chemotherapy in the store. I see, you know...

HR: And you, well you were...

HS: I was working.

HR: Vomiting, when you were vomiting it only lasted...

HS: No.

HR: A day or...

HS: A day. And I was getting pills once a month. Now this was pure--it's easy to die. I was vomiting...

HR: That was the chemotherapy once a month?

HS: Yes.

HR: That's all?

HS: No. A week needles.

HR: Right.

HS: One pills. One week in a month, needles. Later they have to wait the red cells should come back. Now the blood is [unclear]. No, once a month that pills. Now after that pills you have to vomit 24 hours, every two minutes, either you have nothing inside. So, I was vomiting in my home. No sooner I finish the vomiting I went to bed. I was very weak. I couldn't stay and I say, "I will stay." And I overcome it. You can. The death is afraid of you if you look at it back. Oh yeah, definitely. So, let's continue [unclear]. Oh, I'm afraid it's too late, no? Are you still, how much you have?

HR: What time is it? Not much.

HS: Yeah. Okay. So, we was in Kovel. And started to be troubles in time in Kovel in this time.

HR: Meantime your sister left.

HS: Yeah. And this was always gnawing us, in our back, you know? We wasn't talking about this.

HR: That she left.

HS: That she is not back.

HR: Two months it was.

HS: Two months. And my mother, you know, my mother is so brave. I'm telling you she was. And I see how this is eating her up. And I say, "Well, you know, it's [unclear]. We have to stay maybe this and maybe this and maybe that." And I know it's trouble, no matter what can you do? And there started to be trouble in Kovel. They forced you to registration, and they force you to go to deep Russia. I wasn't against the idea of deep Russia if the sister would be there.

HR: Yeah.

HS: And they come with a other idea that they're forming a *cartel*, a cooperative, a butcher cooperative, that my father can be a member. And it was such a co-op. And we will be citizens, you know, and the whole story. I wasn't too hot on that idea, you know? I didn't like that idea, because I was afraid of the Russians. That co-op business, they, later they can say that you are a rich man and this, you know? I saw already what is smell with them. And it's a matter of a person come to say like the, by the Germans say, "*Jude*." They will take you, and they will say-

Tape eight, side one:

HS: ...a member not from the, from the proletariat, and they can arrest you and send you away to Russia like they was sending away many people. This was one reason why we didn't intend to go through with that idea. You see, with [tape off then on] we was, how they say the refugees, the *byezhinitzes*. We was like an insulated group of people in that town of Kovel. We wasn't accepted in the general population. We was cooking our own sausage. We had, we hear all kind of rumors that is a possibility to go to Vilna. And Vilna was in that time still independent, not overtaken officially to Russia, just occupied by Russia. And through Vilna, through Riga, you could maybe go to United States or to Israel. Or, we could go to escape to Romania and from there to the southern part, through the Balkans to Israel. This wasn't fitting to our situation, because my mother was very sick. And second, our sister wasn't with us around. So, we just was tossing that idea about how to continue our life, and only waiting that our sister would come back. How I say that we registered to go to Russia, in place not to be forcibly deported. And we only postponed that going to Russia until our sister come back. And, how I say the Jewish population didn't accept us with open arms like we in our time with...

HR: Can I interrupt one minute, Mr. Skorr?

HS: Yes.

HR: At this point you're in...

HS: Kovel.

HR: In Kovel.

HS: Kovel.

HR: Kovel, which is in?

HS: Kovel is Poland, now belongs to the western Ukraine.

HR: Ah, so this is why you're talking about going into Russia. Really at that point we're not...

HS: This wasn't yet Russia.

HR: It wasn't yet Russia.

HS: This was, the Russians was calling it western Ukraine, but Poland took it in 1918 where they make the pact. They took it away from the Russians. And they claim this belonged to them, and they took it over. And they divided Poland between the German square and the Russian square. So when we ran away we was in that part.

HR: In the Ukraine.

HS: Right. Or living, being over there in Kovel, the Russians demanded that the *byezhinitzes*, the refugees, or they're registered to go to deep Russia because they accept us like a not secure element. They are always saying, you know, always crazy about security. They say that we are potential German spies and not a secure element. We can go back and forth. And they want to secure this border, so they forced people to go to deep Russia, or voluntary, the signing. Or they arrest you, they come at night with the NKVD

you surrender where you are. And they put you on *echelons* and they send you to deep Russia, to Siberia or to Komi A.S.S.R. and to other. And when you go voluntarily when you register, you have choices. You have a choice, you can go to Donbass to dig coal. You can go to the forest to cut trees. Or you can go to Ural Mountains to work in the industry. And they put up a whole propaganda theme, showing how good it is over there, how the life is beautiful, how you will make a *kalieri* [phonetic]. You will be a tractorist. And for us primitive people what wasn't exposed to such idea, just to hear you will be a tractorist or you will work in a forest was very exotic and very desirable. And I have to admit they was very big liars. They used, they was unscrupulous lies. They could say to us, when we went to register, we choose to go to the forest. Why? We figured, they say that you no have to live in the forest. You will live in a near small town or in a village, and with a train you will go every day to the forest, at night go back. And everything in glowing pictures, with clubs, and the air is fresh, and the food is good. And we choose Belobozhnitsa Oblast. And we see over there in, plenty of butter. And we know our mother is sick, you know. She was spitting already blood. And being in Kovel, you know, I don't know the reason what and how. So we choose this. And it was a extreme lie. To Belobozhnitsa Oblast is a extreme to north. And this is only that they're sending away people. And the life is so primitive, like two, three hundred years ago in Poland. I just want to show how the way of advertising. And they say that they will send us in nice, comfortable Pullman trains. They give us a Pullman train only to the Russian border, to Gusinaya. And later when we changed to the wide Russian railroad--the Russian railroad is wider than the European railroad--they put us in cattle trains and very, very primitive conditions. I will come back to this later.

So, how I say we wasn't too much accepted in the, by the local population. Not so warm. I believe that they, this is a reason that they was already disoriented with the Russian occupation. Their all social organizations or their political or Zionist organizations went in underground and wasn't who should organize to give us a hand or to give us a sympathetic ear. They probably was afraid to under Russians because if somebody was a little more rich you right away was explicated from his property, from his factory. So they was very, very cool to us. I remember when we was living, how I say, in the beginning, in the city jail, on Komarova 13, come a carpenter, Mr. Shmulik, with his son. And they're looking for workers. So I told him that I know a little about carpentry. And he hired me to work in a Russian Garnizone making barns where you put on that oats for the horses. I didn't know that very well that kind of work because it was a very rugged simple what I was, I know to make furniture. Now I adjust myself. What I want bring out? I get in touch over there with the Russian people, and the other young carpenters what was freed from Kartuskaya Bereza. They was former Communists. They was freed from Kartuskaya Bereza. And they come to us to visit us in that cell where we was living, on the Komarova Street, with boys and girls. And the boys and girls brought in the Russian soldiers. In the evening it was very nice discussions and we hear how they sing Russian songs. We didn't know Russian, maybe only a few words Russian. Because the alphabet is entire different like the Latin

alphabet. Now the words are a little similar. Let's see in Polish they say, "*Shilet*." In Russian they say, "*Shiliet*." In Polish they say, "*Molokov*." In Russian they say, "*Molokov*." In Polish you say, "*Maslo*." In Russian you say, "*Maslo*." So these words was a little...

HR: Familiar.

HS: Familiar for our ear. And I was very always involved with reading. I satisfy my hunger for reading with the Jewish, was a Jewish newspaper and there was too Polish news. And I started to tackle a little the Russian language. You know, it was too much for me. And what I want to say, the Russian soldiers was constantly bragging how good in Russia is, how rich they are, how the factories they are, what they have. So, we was asking this, "Why are they buying so much stuff by the people on the street?" And this was such a friendly dialogue. "If they're so good in Russia, why are they buying our shoes and our everything? Why is no bread and sugar in the line?" And I, once a Russian soldier stole from us the light bulb in that cell where we was living and we have to sleep at night without light. And my mother have to, you know, being sick you're and sleeping always on the *naris*, I have to get a light bulb. And you couldn't get. To get a light bulb is like to get a diamond in United States. It was impossible to get. So I went in to a big mill, how do they call it where they make flour?

HR: Mill.

HS: In a mill, and I saw a light bulb. And I ask him that person if I can buy by him. He say, "You can't buy that light bulb. There is no light bulb. No, you can steal the light bulb. I will turn away. This is, I am just only working." I explain him our situation, that we live in this. "We have no a light bulb and my mother at night have to go out and it's terrible." He say, "I will turn around. You steal the light bulb and go out." And this what I did! This I just want to give a example from the, how the life was.

The police--I was always going to the railroad, and then hoped to find maybe my sister is coming back. I was every day going and expecting when comes the train from Brest, from Bialystok, waiting for my sister. Because there was no communication and was no where to ask and no where to find out is she alive and she's not alive. This was always in our minds. And I saw that my mother was crying at night, thinking what's happened to our sister. And I was blaming myself very bad that I permit to let her go and that I permit only to develop that idea from going. Only I couldn't stop her to say she goes to save people or not. Going to that railroad, it was a entire different world over there. You see the Russian officers sitting in the restaurant, the *Kalmyki*¹⁴ in the rest-, were plenty of the Mongolian soldiers. And the first time I seen they're drinking tea with butter. They put in the tea with butter. And it was such a extreme different world for me that in not to take in account my deep troubles, I was very deep involved in observing that new, exciting, exotic world what was developing for us. I saw that they make a New Year's tree. And I was sure that the

¹⁴Ethnic group in Russia

Russian, they are against the religion, they will no make the New Year's tree. Only they call the tree different. They call the Saint Nikolai...

HR: Oh you mean a Christmas tree.

HS: A Christmas tree. They call the, not Saint Nikolai. They call him Ded Moroz, the Uncle Frost. And I saw over there the Ukrainian militia walking around the farmer boys, walking around with the red bands and with the murder in their eyes. And I compare them very well to the German *Volksdeutschen* which was too from the whole thing, from the local population, going around with their guns and have a [unclear]. They burn, they have a Swastika. Now one thing they have both in common. They both have murder in their eyes. I saw very well that they both are capable to kill Jews. They had that, when I watched the Ukrainian boys, they had that terrible glint in their eyes, where you can see the hate. Only by the official Russian propaganda they couldn't do nothing against the Jews. Jews, we're supposed to be equal people.

So going around in our troubles, we start to be cold. We was living only what I was working sometimes. My father, I took some by my father to work in the Russian *Garnizone*, carrying loads and unloading sugar or oats, everything what have to be. And we was constantly, our daily schedule was going to the railroad waiting for our sister. And comes that horrible day that we have to go. They didn't want to postpone more our departure. And that *Verkhovodnik* means that man what is taking in the people and saying, "Are you going today? Tonight with the *echelon*?" Or, there is a potential we would be arrested. And imagine our heart. [pause]

HR: You still feel it very strongly.

HS: Yeah.

HR: You still feel it.

HS: And especially my mother, you know. I was constantly watching her how she is, you know, how she is like a light going dimmer and dimmer. And with our heart we have to register. And I went with my father to a railroad station to take our documents and take the money. Because every person was given 150 *rubles* for traveling expenses. And we was getting the temporary Russian identifications, like passport. In Russia you can do nothing without a document. In Russia you can't go on a train without a document. You can't live in a house without a document. You can't sleep over to the, or you go to a neighbor to stay 24 hours, you have to be registered in the police. So they give us such temporary cards that we can live in one place where we was sent.

We was sent to Belobozhnitsa Oblast. That name was very vague. Nothing, it doesn't mean nothing for us. This just was a name and we intend to go. And imagine our second big miracle, being on the railroad station, we met our sister! Our sister was in the train. Now she couldn't walk. She had frozen the legs. So two people carry her down. And that accommodation, that noise for carrying down put our--it was not a usual thing, carrying down a person from the train--maked us to go closer. And imagine, this was our sister.

HR: Oh, you didn't know who it was but it was such a...

HS: Correct.

HR: ...strange thing that you went to see.

HS: Because it was...

HR: She was in a train coming in to the city.

HS: To Kovel.

HR: Into Kovel.

HS: Right.

HR: And you were going to leave.

HS: In not to leave yet. We was taking the documents in that time.

HR: Oh.

HS: Not to leave yet.

HR: But you went down to the railroad station...

HS: The railroad station was the office from that office where we get the documents...

HR: I see.

HS: ...to go to Russia.

HR: So it just happened that you were there when she came.

HS: And I was going constantly. Every day, let's see, I know 8:00 is a train coming from Brest and from Bialystok. And this was my daily occurrence. And I was meeting other friends. And other friends was telling me horrible things. One saw what came in Lodz. One saw a shot in Bialystok. All kind of things was talking. And I kepted this everything by myself. I didn't tell this to...

HR: Who was at the railroad station with you?

HS: The father.

HR: Oh.

HS: We have to go to take the documents.

HR: Just you and your father.

HS: Right. The mother was sick.

HR: And you see this person coming off the train.

HS: And she didn't come off from the train.

HR: They carried her.

HS: They carried her down from the train. She had frozen the knees when she was crawling on the river, the Bug River under the wires, smuggling in the border. You know, the border was hermetically closed. You couldn't go. Closed. They were shooting on sight. And she was arrested. She explain this when the Russian took her in, and they arrest her. Only she explained that she ran away from the Germans and that she had family in Kovel. And she give the Komorovo Street and everything. So, they let her be with them to make her a bandage on the legs. And they let her go to Kovel. In that turmoil by going by the train and being by the train, everything, thieves cut off the pocket from my father and stole the whole money. [unclear] They just went, this was their profession. And where

they saw a big amount of people they were doing their job. And when we [unclear] I said, "Papa what do you have for a cut? They cut off with a knife and they took out, you know? So, that problem was that we didn't have the 150 *rubles* per person. They stole this.

In that time we right away registered my sister on the railroad station. That man know already our case, and he was very sympathetic. And he give her right away a document. And he give her \$150. And she, and with that \$150 we went to Russia. Imagine we carry her to our mother, to Komorovo Street. And you can imagine what was happening. This was that big miracle, a tremendous miracle. And it was, in our eyes was too a sign of God. And she explain us the horrible news that when she come to Kalisz--she went the whole procedure--she come to Kalisz, she come to our house, was no more Jews. And the super tell her that they come, the Gestapo, took away the grandmother to the Jewish old age home on Stabashinska Street. Because we had a Jewish old age home. And he told her, "Don't come back to the house because I will arrest you." He was afraid that, he took our furniture. He stole everything. She told him, "Give me a few sacks or something, you know?" He say, "Oh, you're not going away? I call right away the Gestapo." And he is supposed to be, he was our friend. We was feeding him always, you know? Constantly. He was working by us. He was attending our cows. We had a stable over there with cows what we was feeding. Now this is a normal occurrence. We had nothing what to be surprised. And my sister went to that old age home. And the old age home was already emptied. The all old people was taken to the camp Chelmno, near Poznan. This was the first camp where they was exterminating, gassing people.

So my sister find two more families in Kalisz what was living illegal. And she smuggled them out to Lodz. And they didn't intend to go to Russia. They was very good people. Their name was Poldonsky. They had a small factory from kosher salamis. And she give her for smuggling her out, she told her she smuggle out her jewelry and everything. For this she will pay us some money. And with that money she was able to travel on the train and to continue to, coming back to Kovel. She didn't come alone. She come with other people, with other three, four girls I believe. She organized and helped them go through to the border. But they was left in Bialystok. So, still we celebrate and we cried. And we prepared ourselves to go to Russia. Our mood was very bad because we have no absolutely money. We, I believe we sold something. My sister, I believe she brought some stockings, some how do you call the good stockings in that time?

HR: Silk stockings.

HS: Silk stockings, right. And we sold these on the market. And I being a little a carpenter I make a special...

HR: [unclear].

HS: Like a...

HR: Display?

HS: A *sunduk*, no, where we can put in everything what we have.

HR: Oh, like a trunk or...

HS: Correct, correct, like a trunk. And with such a *sunduk*. And this was, that *sunduk* was a bed, for sleeping for us a long time in Russia. And we come with, we carry this on a sleigh to the railroad station. And my mother was sitting on that, and my sister because she couldn't walk well. And I remind myself for carrying them on the sleigh that I was carrying my mother in that carriage when I ran away the first. And I have always analogies, you know, to make how history is repeating ourselves. No, I figure, thanks to God, I always praise God that we are not in a physical danger. Probably we're coming in for physical hardship, because we didn't, we know and we felt in our bones that Russia is not a paradise, that Russia is a very hard piece of bread. And we closed, I really closed my eyes to see the bad things about Russia, and try by myself to explain myself: Well, if this is what it is, then it's okay, still okay. I saw that big lie of the propaganda. And right away, and they had their baby lie. They're saying they're so good and they're so strong, they're so rich. And I right away saw how poor they are, how nothing, how they're robbing a city right away everything clear, nothing what to sell. And in the same thing the propaganda goes around they have so much everything and they are so strong and so invincible. I look on their horses. And from ten Russian horses to make maybe one German horse. I look on their tanks. I look on the clothing. I look at the soldiers. I say, "Is so such a big difference." And I closed my eyes on this. I just tried to say, "It's good." And like to everybody say, "It's good. Don't look on the negative side. Look on the positive." Because many people registered and go to go back. And many people went back, knowing they're going to death. They couldn't overcome themselves. And they was afraid of the difficulty. I had terrible discussions with people, friendly discussions, wild discussions, fighting. "Where are you going?" If you tell them that you go to save somebody, "Go." Now if you go just to make easier your life, you're doing a crime to yourself and you're doing a crime to the Jewish people. And the Russian was with the whole propaganda with their songs. They have such beautiful war songs, *Yesli Zavtra Voyna*. This means they have a song what was very modern they sing. "*Yesli zavtra voyna Yesli zavtra vapolchod Yesli tyomnaya ila Nagrianet*." This means, "If tomorrow is war, if somebody comes in against the Russians, we will crush them to pieces." And we saw how they crushed them later, how they was in one day everything falls apart. And I remember these songs, "*Katyushah*," and "*Tri tankista*," and it was blaring, the radio, the propaganda was blaring day and night on the streets while it's already, the Russians style--we didn't know this. The radio on the street was blaring day and night. What in that with this we went to the railroad, to our *echelon* what the men promised, nice *Pulanot*, *Pulmanovski Vagoni*.

HR: Now this included you and your sister...

HS: It included...

HR: And your brother?

HS: Two brothers.

HR: Your two brothers.

HS: Two brothers.

HR: Because your other brother...

HS: No, I have two brothers. Everybody come with me.

HR: Everybody came with you.

HS: Right. The brother what was with me in Malkinya and in that camp...

HR: And you sent him out from the station...

HS: I push him out.

HR: He went back to your mother.

HS: Right.

HR: So as the entire family is in tact now.

HS: Yeah, the entire family is in tact.

HR: Excepting for the grandmother.

HS: Right. The grandmother wouldn't survive. No, she would die peaceful. In our opinion she wouldn't survive. Eighty years old, and chronical sick. I don't know what kind of illness she had. No, she have a very great spirit, very great. A heroic Jewish woman, a [unclear]. She remembers still the French and she told me, not the French, still the old Russians. She told me stories about big fires that whole towns were in. She give me, she remembered the last Polish revolt against the Russians. And I learned this later in the history. No I--in her simple Jewish words I heard it playing you know, how that revolt against the Russians. And plenty Jewish people was a part from the Polish revolt against the Russians. And she was just simple old Jewish woman. And she have so many, and she was singing such old Jewish songs, you know? Homemade songs, but it's still, the sound is still is in my ears. Well, I don't know either where her ashes are.

I know this is our life. We come to that train, to that *Pulmanovski echelon*. This was a *echelon*, it means a, maybe forty cars. And it was dark. It was a old Polish train. No [unclear], again, no light and no heat. It was already cold. And we bundle in ourself in one thing. And there start to come other people, other *byezhinitzes* what was a part from this and we start to meet other kind families from Warsaw, and from Lodz. And it was very amazing, we was meeting people what we was never exposed to them, with a different mentality, with a different language, a different dialect. You could hear the Russia dialect with a "*Yach*." You can hear the Lodzia dialect with a "*Ich*."

HR: But you were all Jews.

HS: We are all Jews. Now and we're all from Poland. No, it was very much different. Either the way of talking and the way of thinking, you know? You can see in that Warsaw Jew, a family he was such a *bon vivant*, you know? Such a...

HR: City.

HS: Yeah, such a *huchstatleh* [phonetic].

HR: Did anybody...

HS: And it...

HR: Organize praying or this sort of thing?

HS: No. Was, I have to say no Jewish, Jewish life was right away--you see something stop [on the tape perhaps]? Jewish life was right away suppressed. The synagogues was not official more synagogues. The synagogues was only like a refugee, a center of refugees. If you couldn't locate it where to sleep, you go to sleep to the synagogue. And was Jewish life, religious life, it was very suppressed. Because it was acti-

Tape eight, side two:

HS: ...our kind. We were exposed to people from Warsaw, exposed to people from Lodz. And most people was exposed from what our, from the eastern part of Poland. Because not many people escaped from the west. Why more people from the east? Because there was a part, when the Russian Army was marching through Poland, they was getting further, they was almost going to Lublin and staying over there. And until it was the pact when they make the official pact with Germany and dividing, they started to go back. To their credit we have to say they give a option to all the Jewish people what want to go with them. They give them transportation. And whole families put up their household and went with them.

HR: With the Russians.

HS: With the Russians. So you can see in Bialystok, in Brest, in Kovel, whole Jewish families from Lublin, from Chelm, from Bilgoraj, from Krasnik, with their whole goods. And not harmed. And they was like a oasis of peace and you can see. And I, we meet them on the train. And we saw entirely new people. And what else? What kind of people ran away from the Germans? The simple kind of people, the rugged people, the younger people, the poorer people.

HR: Not the richer.

HS: The no educated people. The more complicated people what have their mental comforts, they couldn't make up their minds very fast. It's okay. You will listen? [tape off then on] Okay? All them, they couldn't make up their mind. They was afraid to lose their physical property. They was believing they will accommodate with the Germans. They have the hate for the Russians. Or they wasn't physically able to make that quality change of their life to tear everything apart and to go. The simple person...

HR: Didn't have that much to lose.

HS: Didn't have too much to lose. The decision wasn't so hard for him. And he can't understa-, he can go with that rigors of the life. And this was 90% of people what escaped. And we met the all people on the train with the all kind cross-over and with all kind of complications. What else problem come up? People was divided. Let's see a husband in any situation, only he ran away. He left his wife with the children. Or, a soldier was released from prison from the camp, prisoner camp on the east side, he didn't go back to the Germans. Or, a woman anyway was let's see on vacation or something, she was alone and the husband and children was back. It was divided and people was in trouble. And what else? People start to join each other. You could see couples, they wasn't married either. They say, "And this is my husband," and, "This is my wife." They wasn't married. They just meet on the train, decide this is a husband and wife. You see young couples, I was sure they're married. This is what they're saying. Later we will find out they're just married, just meet each other on the train and decided of this. Or, the people what left their wives with children over there, and figured out that's it...

HR: We'll never see them.

HS: They never will see them. And they right away make up their mind and look for the continuation of their life. The family Perla from Warsaw, what I start to say, I saw, this was a husband, a wife, a girl and a boy. Later I find out this was not his wife, just he met a girl on the train and he was, and she was very eloquent. She would be a tractorist on the train, on the, in the forest and this and that. And we, personally we was shocked with this, because we never was exposed to such roughness. We was a very close family, very clean, ethical, and very simple, very Puritan in our way of life. And we was continuing so. Now this was the cross-over in, from what is happening in that turmoil. Because life was going on. And how I say in the beginning, how some people what went through that whole horror, or just was touched by the wing of war, this was a tremendous adventure. Exposed to such a new things what we never would be exposed in Poland to such things.

HR: Did those people at this point know about the concentration camps and...

HS: No.

HR: What's happening to people?

HS: Eh...

HR: This is 1940 now.

HS: 1939.

HR: 1939?

HS: It's the winter 1939.

HR: Oh, so it wasn't happening now.

HS: It wasn't in that time yet organized...

HR: No.

HS: ...horror. It was spontaneous horror from a sadist, from this. You could hear a march, taking let's say a few hundred Jews, and making them a forcing march forty, fifty or sixty miles and shooting them.

HR: Like the incident that happened with you.

HS: Or the incident what happened with me at the cemetery. Or the incident that they take a rabbi and they kill him on the street. Or they take a priest by us, they kill him on the street and later they take rabbis. The rabbis have to carry him in a carriage to the Jewish cemetery. We hear of violence, not systematic, organized. What we heard organized already? Like by us when the Gestapo come, they make the city *Judenrein*. So it was not mass killing. This was mass discomfort. They take you out from your apartment, take away everything, beat you up, and throw you out. This you was hearing. So when we come in, being in that train, in that Polish train, we went with a train to Sarne. This is a small border historical town on the old Polish-Russian border. In Sarne we board a new train a-was cattle train. They call it a *echelon*. And we change for the other, we change over for the White Russian train because Polish is smaller. This was entire new experience. A typical Russian organization. They're putting in, let see about four to five thousand people on a train--forty, fifty people to a wagon, without...

HR: Washing?

HS: Facilities.

HR: Toilets.

HS: Toilets.

HR: Nothing.

HS: Nothing. They just put a oven in the middle. They call it a *burzhuyka*, and they give you coal. And this have a chimney in the middle. And they have wooden beds, *naris*, on the sides. And you have to either how to go up to that wagon, it was not a...

HR: Steps.

HS: No steps. We have to carry the mother up and down. Only later we organized some wood. The Russians started to organize, how you say, steal some wood. And we make a ladder. I made a ladder. I have some nails. I have a hammer. I took some tools with me from Kovel. And we make a ladder. And the train, I have to say the behavior of our people wasn't so perfect. It was the law of the fist and the law of the strong arms. Who was stronger and younger started to occupy the better beds, and the weaker and the children were pushed in the back. I was made the *Kommandant* from that wagon. You know what's a *Kommandant*?

HR: Mmm hmm, like a supervisor.

HS: Supervisor. And I start right away a revolt in the wagon. I say this will not be that a woman should be put in the corner on top. How she will walk up. Women and children should be in one side, and on the lower beds, that they can reach better. And single and stronger people should be on the top side. It was a little a heated discussion. You know, I had a few younger men. And my father was a very strong man. And if there was a need, he would physically enforce it. And it was enforced, that they do the weaker people should be a little more comfortable. And we organized too who will go for water. This was a big problem. We have no pails. We have to make a, we have to everything organize. And we have to go to that railroad station where we stopped to bring pails with water. And sometimes you don't know how long the train is standing. And when you start to go with that, first of all we couldn't speak Russian. So the communication was very bad.

HR: They could leave and you'll be going for a walk.

HS: They was leaving. Not once, not twice. And they explained us what to do and we didn't really understood what they tell, are saying to us. They tell us, "In the next station will [be] waiting bread for you, and will [be] waiting wood for you to the ovens." And we didn't know how to use this. And it was very, very, a hairy situation. What was the end? The end was, I was the official water carrier, because I was afraid that people will be get harmed and people will, the younger people, very simple, they didn't want. They say, "I will no carry. I will no nothing, and that's all." And the elderly people was not able. So, I was the official carrier. This was for me a big fun. I was running with the train. Now it was a big danger. They say the train will stay ten minutes. We go down and I started to run for the water and the water sometimes is a half a mile. And the train started to move.

So we had to choose. I don't want to lose the water [chuckling]. And I don't want to lose the train. So I developed a whole strategy. I was, if I couldn't get my train--our, mine wagon was #14--I was catching the next wagon what I could, and standing over there, waiting until the train stopped.

HR: And then go.

HS: Yeah. And only I have to make quiet my mother that I no, that she should be used to the future that I am not getting lost, that I always will catch myself. It was plenty of fun and plenty trouble. And it was a very, very hard winter. Our clothing, the people what was sleeping near the wall from the wagon, these was not protected, was frozen. Their hair sometimes at night freeze to the...

HR: Wood?

HS: Yes. And imagine now a different story. So many people have to go out to the toilet.

HR: In the night time sometimes.

HS: In the night time.

HR: In the day time, any time.

HS: In the day time. And it was a whole horror.

HR: What did you do?

HS: Because practically, imagine, comes a train and people have to have their privacy. And people are old and people are sick. And we have to, how unpleasant it was, we have to organize a whole guard, first of all that the ladies, the women can go, sit down near the train. We have no other choice.

HR: Well what how often did the train stop? You couldn't...

HS: No regulation. The train stop when he want to stop.

HR: You don't know when it's going to stop.

HS: We didn't know absolutely.

HR: So you just have to wait. If you have to...

HS: We have to wait. We have to bust. It's a, was a terr-, such simple thing it was a terrible horror. And was no plan. Sometime you can stay a day. They put you away in a side, in a *pristalo* [phonetic]. They call it a *pristalo*, such a *raz'ezd*. In a side, how do you call it?

HR: A side...

HS: The siding. And we could stay a whole day or a whole night. And you have not to who to talk. You don't know where to go. Because you have to pass through, either to bring water. You have to go under other trains. You don't know where. And sometimes the train starts to move when you are under. And you don't know what to do. And, or sometimes you make a sign; you believe your train is over there. Other trains moved away, and you no find...

HR: Your train.

HS: You have to develop a whole strategy how to find out that your train is your train, because is similar trains like this. And it was very, very hard. And the same with the bread.

HR: You didn't get anything but bread. That's it.

HS: We didn't get anything but the bread.

HR: And water to drink.

HS: Only sometimes they would say, we come to a bigger station, "You will get a meal over there." So this means that we stay overnight. Every wagon goes to a restaurant, not a restaurant, and is being feeded over there. You can imagine the food. In that time the first I find out you have to have bread with a soup. You get 100 gram of bread, and he say, "That bread belong to you." And I didn't know what the meaning, the bread belong to me. It means, "You can eat it." And you're limited, you finish or you should take it with you. This is a typical Russian. If they give you a soup, they say *soup khlebat*. This means the soup eat with *khleb*, with bread. And if sometimes, when I was exposed later to Russia I was eating soup; we're not used to eat soup with bread. They was sympathetic and feeling so poorly, sorry for you, they come in and they put you a piece of bread near you. "Eat it, the bread." Because they feel if you eat a soup without bread, it's not food. You see the Russians are very kind and very unkind. There's too a border people. In one moment he could give you his shirt and he can give you the heart. In the second moment he can kill you. The violence and goodness, we have such a thin line. You know basically they're much better than the Polish people. They're much open hearted. They're much more softened, you know. They suffered so much in their history. They feel...

HR: Your pain.

HS: They feel with you with suffering. And their words are so much softer. The Russian language is so much nicer and softer. And they make it everything so, let's see, *khleb*, they say *khlebushka*. *Moloko*, they say *Molochko*. *Maslo-maslichko*.

HR: You hear that in Yiddish.

HS: *Maslichko*, you know? They say, they are so adoring food. Food is such a big problem. They're getting so romantical, you know, and nicing names...

HR: For their food.

HS: Yeah. And this, it sounds so nice for the ear. Sometime too our hygenical situation was very poor, very dirty. So sometimes when we come they organized for us a *banya*.

HR: A bath.

HS: A bath. Comes in trains, in a train, a *banya* train. And we was standing a whole night and we get washed up.

HR: What kind of bath? A big...

HS: There, and they have they're heating water and you get wooden such...

HR: Tubs.

HS: Yeah.

HR: And you would just get in the tub?
HS: No, no tub.
HR: No?
HS: You just stay...
HR: You stand.
HS: And you have water in that pail, that wooden pail. And you wash yourself. And somebody is rubbing your back and spilling the water on you.
HR: On you.
HS: And this, in that time you get your clothing to disinfection, a *dezakamera*, [unclear] *dezakamera*, *dizinfeksion kamera*. And...
HR: Did they wash the clothes?
HS: No.
HR: No?
HS: They just put this through such a steam to killing the all vermin and you're getting back everything, oy, you got even. And my mother was crying that they destroyed all our everything. No, it was no choice. Was a really horror.
HR: People had lice?
HS: People had lice, and it was a danger of a epidemic.
HR: You know, did people get sick?
HS: Correct. Was plenty time of sicknesses, and people was taken away from the *echelon* to hospitals. Only in that time when we was, it was winter, it was a dirty, bitter cold winter--forty, fifty below zero. Sometime we was standing a night on a station. This train was freezing to the station. They have to, they have two locomotives. How do you call a locomotive?
HR: Locomotive.
HS: Locomotive. Pushing the train, jogging back and forth. And by the jogging back and forth they spill our all water out. And they had to watch the ovens they could make a fire because it was a poor horror. Okay?
HR: Did you have blankets?
HS: If you have blankets you had blankets. If you have no blankets we have no blankets. It was straw mattresses, on the *naris*. You know what's a *naris* mean?
HR: On the bed, on that bunk.
HS: The wood, bunk.
HR: Like the wooden bunk.
HS: Yeah, it was mattresses.
HR: With straw.
HS: With straw mattresses. No, who have no clothing have no clothing.
HR: But you'd freeze to death!
HS: And we were freezing to death! It's no, it is a Russian proverb. A Russian proverb say, *Yesli ne privyknesh' to podokhnesh*. If you no get used to this, you will drop

dead. Not simple drop dead. Drop dead. It's a different, *podokhnesh*'. To a horse you say *podokhnesh*'. How would you say in English the expression? A horse or a dog is not dying. He just...

HR: Drops dead.

HS: That's right. They say *Yesli ne privyknesh*', to *podokhnesh*'. Simple, literal is the meaning and this is what happened to people. And with that whole thing, with that whole horror, people felt, is like free, you know?

HR: Yeah.

HS: That in this we are all together. I tried to make fun from the all we, you know? It was, for me it was still a part from the big adventure.

HR: How about your father?

HS: My father was coping good.

HR: Good?

HS: Physically, you see, he was carrying wood. We come to a station. He learned...

HR: He, physically he was able to do it.

HS: Yes. He, mentally he was able too, you know he, mental stress was very hard for him. The mental stress. And we tried to protect him from that mental stress. And when we come to a station, any wood what was around he was stealing. And we come, we can never, because we have to prepare a stack, wood for the ovens. Was children, you know, children...

HR: Babies?

HS: Babies, without consideration. We come so on to our first Ukrainian town, Korosten. Is the first station where was a big concentration of Jewish people. And they greet us very nicely. We was standing a whole night over there and a whole day. And we come to that city. All good jobs the Jews have. What means a good job? Job, he is a head from a, in a big supermarket, in a big other store. So right away when we come we saw Jewish people. Ninety-nine percent in that *echelon* was Jewish people. Was a few Polaks too. I don't know the reason why Polaks was too. We were suspicious that there are German spies. You know, but this was not our business.

We come to that nice town Korosten. And we met a friend, I have to mention, we met a friend. There was a man from, he was having such a supermarket. And he was saying the life is so beautiful and Stalin is so great. Right away, any work, Stalin is so great. And the children was so great. He took us to a Jewish kindergarten where there was pictures and signs in Jewish, only different Jewish. Not our Jewish. Not with a *nun sophit* and not with, only there were different, is like a jargon. And he say the Jewish people, one thing he didn't want to accept--we start to talk about the Germans he didn't believe us. There was the official line, the official Russian line that the Germans are our friends. And over there you put up a line, everybody accepts the line. And he say, "From where are you?" "From Poland." He didn't understand in our language you see.

HR: Did they speak Yiddish?

HS: Yiddish.

HR: And you spoke Yiddish.

HS: Yeah.

HR: So...

HS: Though they speak a different Yiddish. They speak a Russian...

HR: But you understood each other.

HS: Yes. They say *was* and we say *wuz*.

HR: Well.

HS: Yes, no, we understand. And we start, and he say, "What are you doing here?" We say, "We ran away from the Germans." "Why are you running away from the Germans?" Like on an entire different planet! He told us that. I say, "You know what the Germans are doing?" And he start to look on us all so suspicious that we are telling lies. Well we didn't intend to go in a dialogue. He did us a good thing for this. He cleaned out the whole supermarket, all people out, and let us in, and we can buy everything.

HR: Oh.

HS: Yeah, the first thing what was impressing me was fruit conserving. Fruit.

HR: Like jellies?

HS: Jellies, cherries, you know in Ukraina. Written Ukrainian we never, we didn't see this a long time. We was very poor in money. Now people what had more money bought plenty. We bought too a few apples. And he was very impressed with this. Now we come, we continue. You see we was basically on the train over three weeks. Travel and standing, standing and travel. We went to a big city of Gomel. The Russians say Khomel and Briansk. And what's amazing, you know, we saw the first time what is amazing to observe the Russian people in deep Russia. First we saw very poor people, uniformed all poor, uniformed all bad, dark clothing. Uniform all were wearing *valenki* such boots made from wool against the snow. And very, very poor and very always lines. Where you look out to see a magazine, a line. Only what is [unclear] what we saw. If you see 100 Russians stay, right away they dance. Right away they have a harmonica or a *bayan* or accordion. And right away dance. You can see 100 people and already, and they're improvising songs. Is not a ready made songs. They're singing, they can start to sing a song about snow, about bread, about the train. And they call it *chastushki*. And this was very amazing by us. You never see Poles, Polish people are very reserved people, very hard, very stiff. And they are very, you know, exposed. A hundred people, boom, and they're dancing and singing like this [chuckles] like they would be the happiest people. And this was very amazing.

We go on the trains, and people started to ask us, "Where are you going?" And we, in that time already we're working on the Russian language. We know already a forest is a *les, lesa*. And they'd say Belobozhnitsa Oblast. These are the first things what we learned, what I know. And I saw people start to cross themselves. And I start to be very, you know, very wary what's happening, why the people are crossing themselves? [unclear] They are

sure that we are sent away, forced sent away and they're sending in the forest to the north, Belobozhnitsa Oblast, they know. But now we didn't know that the [unclear], by us they say Belobozhnitsa was a paradise--plenty of milk, plenty of butter. We never saw milk. We never saw butter until later. Now they know now to Belobozhnitsa Oblast nobody goes of his own will. He is sent away. So they are crossing themselves. And I make such an analogy. From their crossing, and with that first German soldier what they say, "*Zhide*," and he showed that they're cutting the throat, you know? I saw their sorryness, and I saw the very, you know, so, because they saw the people, the women, children, you know? And they are used to such horrors, because they had in the '30s the collective *chistki* [purges], you know their, what Stalin was doing. They are used to that mass deportation and mass trouble, you know? No, the sign of cross is a sign they was so sorry for us. And we saw signs that they resent the Russian...

HR: Regime?

HS: Regime, because was one Polak with us his name Donayevski. He spoke Russian. What he did by us I don't know. He start to talk to them. What else is remarkable? Women mostly are doing the hard work, on the whole railroad, the hard work, cleaning. And they're moving away the snow, and working on the trains, being in the cold. Only women are doing this. The men is not doing the hard work. And he started to say to work, for the woman, "What are you doing? How are you working?" She put up her shirt, not the shirt...

HR: Dress?

HS: The dress, showing she had no clothing behind. You know showing how poor she is. She wore there such a hat and she put out the skirt this *fulitza* [phonetic], how do you call a dress? Not a dress, the...

HR: Skirt?

HS: The skirt, showing that under it she is so cold.

HR: And she has nothing.

HS: She wears only the woolen boots because [unclear]. Now under she have, the legs are exposed. And you know, and this was so like electric shocks for us. And we, everybody kept the moving things in our...

HR: Hearts.

HS: In our hearts. And we know that we are in trouble. Now, that's it. We have to make yeah. And what else, you see, the official propaganda was always going, it's good. It's good. You see the signs, "It's good," and this and the loud, you know. Or the, if they put you in that restaurant in the railroad station, they give you a soup with that piece of black bread. And they demand that you say, "*Khorosho? Khorosho?*" Is it good? And we wonder what it is good. Why is he so excited what they give us a soup, you know? But this what it was until we was constantly going from town to town, standing, going, you know? And watching the behavior of our people, I wasn't too much excited, impressed. There was very big frictions with people. People wasn't cooperating.

HR: They wouldn't help.

HS: They would not help. They was very abusing to women, to children. Either relatives was. You know, I was once caught in a train, no, when I was with that water business. And I couldn't catch my wagon. You see I had develop a strategy I never tried to catch my wagon. I catch what I can pass. Because what faster the train is moving, what more dangerous the operation is, because it's more slippery. You have to, what you get, hold it. Secure it with one hand we hold it, with one hand secure the pail. Never lose the pail. Better lose a leg than the pail. The pail is more valuable. I come in one wagon and I was standing over there about two or three hours until the next stop. And I hear such a courseness, such a fighting, in-fighting between people. In our wagon, incidentally, we didn't have this. And maybe I put on a little discipline, you know? A little more soul. Well it was, you know, and they was abusing a woman with two children that she should go for water and she should this and bugging her, you know? And it's young boys, you know, much stronger than me. If I would start to fight they would overcome me, you know? And I was very-

Tape nine, side one:

HS: ...traveling with our *echelon*, the destination to Belobozhnitsa Oblast. I remember once we stopped in Moscow, in the outskirts of Moscow. And they gave us permission to go to Moscow to see the Red Square and to see the mausoleum. And it was for us a very big experience. The first time we saw the Moscow underground, the metro, very, very beautiful, everything from marble, all kind of extreme beautiful, with mechanical stairs going up and down. And we was going over there. And from there we went to the Red Square, seeing Lenin's mausoleum. I have to say we did everything without knowing the Russian language. Now the average Russian person was very sympathetic to us. And people was asking us, "Where are we going and how are we going?" They recognize in our dressing that we are not Russians, because we was very dressed in western style and not [tape off then on; music]. And our clothing was not for the very cold winter climate. I remember I froze my ear, because I had no good hat. Being on the train, being in the subway, and meeting I remember a Russian couple, probably one was Jewish, teachers. And they gave us their address we should write them when we come to the destination. It's clear that we didn't understood what they mean and how they mean and we lost contact. Accidentally, some, in that time they told me that Kaganovich was the main builder from the subway in Moscow, that Jewish man what was Stalin's second hand, was building that subway. And they have maybe a few hundred thousand people died over there, prisoners that was building that subway.

So we continue our traveling north and north. And the picture was changing. It's getting very nordic. We was believing that we are in Siberia. Not knowing...

HR: Lots of snow?

HS: What?

HR: Lots of snow?

HS: Lots of snow. Tremendous amounts of snow we never saw. And the tracks have to be constantly cleaned with the special trains, keeping the track clean. And the sides from the tracks was built such special branches to keep away the snow. And hundreds of thousands of peasants was constantly working on the sides from the train and keeping it in working order.

So we continued traveling until we come to a station, Cherepovetz. This was the end station where it was our destination. It was a shattering experience. We was sure that we are on the end of the world. We looked down from the train. We saw only a waste of snow, small houses. Snow we was believing until the top of the roof. And from every chimney was going out a smoke. And it was so shattering for us to see. And we was thinking how people can live over there. We didn't know that this is just the beginning. We will go much, much deeper in the snows in the forest. So we went down from the trains. And we was, I don't remember we was, yeah, we was walking on this. We was walking on the streets. Not on the sidewalks, only the middle of the street. And the whole walking in

that city, in that town was not, the sidewalks was filled with snow and everything was just going in the middle of the street. And no cars, no trucks, nothing, only sleighs and horses. And it was very, very amazing.

They took us to such a hostel for farmers. They call it *dom krestianina*. This means where the farmer come to the town he can stay a day or two over there. We was sleeping over there a night. And they was feeding us over there. And they was giving us soap. And they was giving us candies. We was very surprised that people from the streets come to us and we want to sell them the soap and the candies. We didn't know that there's such a scarcity that they couldn't get it. And they make us a dinner. This should be a very famous dinner with the chicken. And every chicken looked like a average bird, a small, small thing. You know, they went out of themselves just to show us how friendly they are to us. And that time the first time I saw a big Russian river. We went to that river, and it was very, very wide and snow and ice and very big wooden barges was covered in that ice. And it was so amazing for us for people what we never see such things. You couldn't see that the end of the expanse, the end from the second side from the river. And on the barges people was living, because we saw smoke going out from the chimneys. And this was very unusual, very strange for us. And that--being in that *dom krestianina*, and that means in that farmer's hostel, they start to give us out clothing, special Russian clothing, winter clothing for the work in the forest. Is a clothing what is made inside with cotton, like a Chinese style. Cotton pants and cotton jackets. They call it *fufaika*. And they give us the *valenkis*. The *valenkis* means boots made out from...

HR: Wool.

HS: Felt. And right away there we saw the terrible disorganization from the Russians. A half of people was getting that stuff, and a half a people was saying they will get it on the place of destination. I didn't like that idea and I say to my father, "Father, I believe is something wrong. If we're not getting here in a big town where it should be the headquarter from that *Trust Cherepovetz Les*-" this means a *trust* what is responsible for the all work in the forest- "If we are not getting here that merchandise, where you will getting in the forest?" And to my not so pleasant surprise it wasn't so. We didn't get it either. We didn't get it in the back. When we come to the forest we didn't get that clothing. Being over there two nights in that town of Cherepovetz, they put us on a sleighs and we was traveling a whole week, day and night on sleighs on that river what I say before, that wide Shecksna' River. And we was sleeping at night in villages. And the first time I saw a Russian village, the houses are made from trees, from whole trees, cut up trees. And between the tree, and nothing maked fancy inside, only the same wood what is outside is inside. And between the trees is put in *mech*. How would I call this, what grows on the forest, to keep warm?

HR: Moss?

HS: Yes. And they covered with moss the--it was looking very wild and very unusual. And a half of that room was a big oven. They call it a *Ruskya Petchka*. And people are sleeping on that oven. They're cooking in that oven.

HR: Like a *pripichick*?

HS: *Pripichik*.

HR: Same thing?

HS: Yeah, no, I believe a *pripichik* was smaller. And this was a really, this was using a half a room was such a oven. In that oven they was cooking, was baking. And they said on Sunday they're taking baths inside, inside in the oven. And on top they are sleeping. We have like a bed. And we was sleeping.

HR: And you could stand up inside the oven?

HS: You not can stand up. You can sit up.

HR: Sit up.

HS: Sit up. And there was...

HR: They took the basins in...

HS: Right, in the oven was washing. It was such a style. I had a, from this a, I had a once a surprise. When I was already much more Russian I was going around in the villages looking for food. I come to one village and I opened the door and I see two legs stretching out from the...

HR: From the oven.

HS: From that hole. I was very scared. I didn't know what it is. In that time the *Holyaikah*, he took a bath in that oven. Because, they have no, on the doors they have no...

HR: Locks?

HS: They have no locks. They have only just such wooden pieces of wood that you put in a piece of wood from the outside and you open this. There is not locks on these homes. So we was in that, we slept in such rooms. The people was very unfriendly, because we was imposed on them. The Russian people are like, the Russian, the average person is like in prison and that government is always imposing on him his will. Is like a occupational force. And the farmer, the peasants already used to this. No, I wouldn't say that he is happy. Because there comes the Commissar or the *Politbureau* what was the leader from our slave trade come in and say, "Four people here and four people there," and they're just sending. The peasants are grumbling and they have to accept us. And they're putting up a *samovar* and making hot tea. It means hot water. There is no tea over there. I never saw tea over there.

HR: But they call it tea.

HS: They call it tea. And they're making something from tea, growing some from that forest, some dried berries, herbs you know. And they're cooking, they call it tea. We call it *Kipiatok*. *Kipiatok* means boiled water. So they have to by order of them to make that *kpiatok* and they get a little more friendly when we put up the candies what we get in that Cherepovetz. And we invite them to share with us so they start to be more friendly.

And it's amazing too that in that, you come in to such a room. You see from one side the all the Russian *ikonas*, icons how you call them here?

HR: Mmm hmm, icons.

HS: Icons.

HR: Icons.

HS: With lights. Very old idol. In the other side you see posters, propaganda posters, from the Soviet regime.

HR: So that these Russians were still carrying on their religion?

HS: Every Russian farmer...

HR: Had an idol.

HS: Carrying on the religion. How he can, how he is involved with that Soviet regime, he's carrying on with the religion, carrying on with the holidays, celebrating the holidays. And not only this, the seasons of his work, he is still calling the old names. Let's see even cutting he's doing *spaskoye* and sowing he's doing in this holi-, every holiday, every work in the farm is involved with some *pravoslavnyi* [Orthodox] holiday. You know this?

HR: Like with the Jewish calendar.

HS: Yeah, you see the calendar, they are not accepting the modern Soviet calendar.

HR: [unclear].

HS: And not only the calendar. This is like a church calendar. And every big thing in the village is involved with a special religious festival. You see in that festival we're doing this. In that festival we're doing this. And how the official propaganda, they have in the villages still the people are doing the, what they're doing before. And they have special official propaganda rooms. They call it *Krasnyi Ugolok*. It means the Red Corner. And the special people what are making the propaganda, only I no believe they have too much impression on the Russian peasants. And so you can find in the houses from the Russian peasants one wall with official Soviet propaganda banners, that, "Work Better," and do this better, and how strong we are. And you see ships and you see guns. And the other side you see the holy idols. And the woman before they're going to sleep, I saw they're making the sign of a cross. And they're not sleeping on beds. They have beds, nice covers and nice pillows. Pillows to the ceiling. No, they're sleeping on the floor. They're sleeping on the floor on *puluks* [phonetic] the fur, the sheeps...

HR: Sheepskin.

HS: Sheepskin, very big one. They are putting on and they're sleeping on the floor, in their old clothing. They don't take off the clothing. Just they're taking off the shoes. They're keeping the shoes near the door. When you're coming in to a farmer in winter time, they have such a basin, how do they call it?

HR: [unclear].

HS: No, to clean the snow.

HR: Oh, a shovel?

HS: Not a shovel.

HR: Or a brush?

HS: A brush.

HR: Brooms?

HS: Such a special broom made from the weeds. You clean your *valenki*. You take out the shoes and you go in without shoes to the farmer's house. The floors are made from wood, very beautiful, clean. And they're washing with sand. It's a whole celebration. Every Friday they're washing with sand. They force us to do this too. And our women wasn't too happy to do that work. So this was the, I just give example how was my first impression from the Russian farmer in a Russian village.

We continue how I say a few days and nights traveling. And we was going constantly in wilder and wilder country. And this was over there a canal system what was coming from the White Sea to the Volga. Is a part from the system is summertime in the canal, like Panama Canal, you know? Panama Canal?

HR: Panama.

HS: Yes. And they come in. And they have such a system of canals where the ships goes in, changing the level of the water and can go on to the Volga River and the Caspian Sea. This was a made canals what comes from the White Sea to the Sheksna to the Volga to the Caspian Sea. And this is a very old canal system made too by Katarina the Great. And it was made later by Polish prisoners of war was continuing making this. And they was dying over there. When we was traveling later I was a sailor later. I will explain this later. I saw graves of Polish soldiers with a Catholic cross. Because the Pravoslav they have a different cross. The old buildings they have a different cross, with Polish names. And I ask questions. They explain to me that Polish prisoners of war was doing that part of that canal work. So we was going with that canal system. I have to say that whole winter traveling goes everything on the river. The river is the highway. The river is the life system. For winter time there is no ways that something can go. And the tractors and cars and trucks, and everything was going with the rivers. In summertime the whole supply to the far country in the forest, everything comes with the river. When the river gets frozen you have to have all the reserves already for the whole winter. And if there's something missing, you have such a Russian proverb, "*Kogda parokhody poydut, vsya budet.*" This means, "When the winter will be over, the ships will come; everything will be. Now you have to suffer."

So, we continued to go through that canal system until we come to a small town. They call Bielozhersk, on the lake, on the White Lake. Bielozhersk means white lake. This is a very old historical time still from Ivan Groznyi. Ivan the...

HR: Great.

HS: The, Ivan the...

HR: The Terrible.

HS: From Ivan the Terrible. And there is over there a *kremł* still from this time. And there is nothing change from this time. When we come in over there, they put us in again in such a hostel, a farmer's hostel. And we went out outside to look in that a *kremł*, surrounded with old stores, everything made from stones. We have the impression we are five, six hundred years before. The lifestyle is not changed. The people wearing the same clothes like they was wearing. They're carrying the water from the well the same way. And they're using the sleighs, the small *chanashkas*, the same way. They're talking the same dialect. Later they explain us. The same way how it was from that time. We saw in that *kremł* stores with doors like a *crepost'*. A *crepost'* means like a fortress. They have keys, metal keys, to open this. The sides...

HR: You're talking now about, what is the *kremł*? The...

HS: The, every such a fortification is the name a *kremł*. They say Moscow have a *kremł*. Yaroslavl have a *kremł*. Volograd a *kremł*. The same where you put some churches and houses, fortified with a wall around. They call it a *kremł*.

HR: And outside of this though is the other houses outside.

HS: Outside is the town what was existing under protection from the *kremł*.

HR: Oh yes, I understand.

HS: Because if was coming in the enemy, the Tartars or somebody is coming, the people was running in...

HR: In behind that wall.

HS: In that, yeah, and fighting back. And they was under protection from that *kremł*. And outside from that *kremł* are stores where the *kupiec*, the dealers was, to them was supplied the merchandise from Siberia or from Asia with the river. And they was selling over there the furs, you know, from the forest, from everything. And it's everything was so kept up over there, because it's not progress. And it was very shattering if you want to study this. Most people was involved in their misery. They was in a terrible misery. Imagine traveling day and night on sleighs. And we was cold maybe forty below zero. Every few miles we have to go out from the sleigh and run after this because we can...

HR: Freeze.

HS: We can freeze. The Russians know already, a Russian doesn't sit on the sleigh. He runs after the sleigh.

HR: But your mother couldn't.

HS: She couldn't? She did.

HR: She did?

HS: Sure.

HR: Oh!

HS: My mother and other mothers and children. Children was dying. We buried maybe ten small children in Cherepovetz.

HR: Oh.

HS: They didn't make it right. Our friends Ackerman, right away their twins [unclear]. Plenty of people was dying. They couldn't make it. No, the Russian, if you, Russia, in Russia dying is a daily occurrence. You don't make a big deal of this. And we was so traveling to that town. And again in that town they make second distribution. Where we will go to the *lesopunkt*. *Lesopunkt* means point in the forest where people should go. And they make a little selection. Weaker people they send in bigger *posiolkis*. A *posiolkis* means a small settlement what exists only for that forest business. Everything in that small town is involved with the forest. Let's see--they're cutting the trees, and supplying, and a hospital and accounting. This is just made small settlements they call *posiolki* where they do this. And the weaker people and the single people, they kepted closer in the *posiolkis* because they was afraid they will not be able to do the work. I have to say we wasn't a too big bargain for the Russians. The Russians didn't expect such a element what I never saw a real forest. Not only talking the living in such conditions in temperature forty below zero. It was official policy, we have to work in the forest until it's fifty below zero. If it's more than fifty below zero we can stay home. So the youth, how much was the youth, the youth...

HR: Mr. Skorr...

HS: Yeah?

HR: How many people were involved? How many Jews?

HS: In our *echelon* was about maybe 4,000 people.

HR: 4,000.

HS: Yeah. This is *echelons*, maybe 40 trains or some 40 wagons. Later they make distributions. And they're putting away here, here, and here. And it's a big, a tremendous territory. The territory tremendous distances. So, like for the Czar, if they send away something to Siberia, they don't have to watch him either. Because in winter time you can't...

HR: Run.

HS: Run away. You just will freeze if you run away. If they give you a sentence, six hundred miles from a river, from a train, from a road, then that's it. You no have to be arrested. And I had the impression that we are in the same conditions because was no way, nothing to do. And we are, we was sent, and I have to say that there are people from us was making a very good judgment. They saw the trouble what they are in and they start to claim they are sick. And they, right away they left them in the bigger towns where they had a chance to take, to do bigger jobs. We wasn't, I don't know, we wasn't involved in this or we wasn't so cunning, or we was enough strong. We didn't use nothing excuses to go where they sent us. Only we could because our sister was still unwell with her legs. And my mother was a sick woman. No, for some reason we didn't do it. And we, they choose us to send to Pokrovski mekh Lesopunkt. I know the names there because Pokrovski Mekh Lesopunkt, Potchtovayah Otdelenie Konevo. Potchtovayah Nyielena means the, the post department is Konevo. And Pokrovski Mekh Lesopunkt means this is a *mechanaziet*, mechanized forest point. No, the all mechanization is only on paper. We didn't see nothing

in that whole lie what I was saying that we live in towns and travel to the forest and go back. Was a terrible life.

From that Biellozhersk we still was traveling on sleigh six days and six nights, with a canal, Kozhevski Canal, to that Pokrovski Mekh Lesopunkt. Pokrovski Mekh Lesopunkt was only two barracks in that, a forest, a virgin forest, of hundreds of hundreds of miles...

HR: Covered with nothing but snow!

HS: Covered with nothing but pines, beautiful, terrible beautiful pines. It's a breathtaking beauty, breathtaking cold. And only two barracks in the forest, and a road for tractors. They did only one thing to us. The mother, and other women, and small children, they keep them in villages. And the working people like the men and the youth, they send to the two barracks. My mother was in a village they call this Siemenchevo. It was 25 miles from that...

HR: Barrack?

HS: From that barrack. We originally come to that village, Siemenchevo. The village is like a *kolkhoz*, a fish catcher *kolkhoz*. The main occupation from that *kolkhoz*, a *kolkhoz* is a collective...

HR: Farm.

HS: Farm. And the people are forced to go in that farm. They don't believe that somebody want to belong to this. *Kolkhozes* are slavery. It was like before, it's a really slavery like was 100 years ago, for the Czar, or like the slavery in United States before. Only they're using now a much more modern language in Russia and they say they're not slaves, they're a collective. How, why they are slaves either? A farmer had no either a passport what every citizen had. Every Russian citizen had a internal passport what enable him to move from city to city with special permission. A farmer have no passport either that he can move out from his village. He can go only to do some errands to a city and he have to come back in two, three nights. Because he's a, if no he would be arrested.

HR: Well, who, what is his background? They were prisoners there? Or they were...

HS: No, they was originally...

HR: Criminals that...

HS: No.

HR: Originally peasants?

HS: Originally peasants, farmers, until Stalin decide to collectivize.

HR: Originally from that part.

HS: From that part.

HR: Oh.

HS: Right? And who didn't want to go was sent away. He was [unclear] sent away further and he was destroyed. I was later in such a village where it was living the woman from the sent away people, from the exiled people what was a richer farmer. A richer farmer was if you have two cows and two horses and if you employ a few, two

people, you're already a rich farmer. You're already a enemy from the class and you have to be destroyed. So in the '30s, Stalin collectivized everything and everything, everybody have to go to that *kolkhoz*, willing or not willing. And we come to that, how long you have time?

HR: Another five minutes.

HS: Let's finish it in five minutes, yeah. I will remember if we are in Siemenchevo.

Tape nine, side two:

HS: After we come to our destination to a village, Siemenchevo, and that, I believe there was a *politruk* and Yastrivov was his name, put us in to one, to the peasant that we should sleep over there, we should live over there. They accept us with a certain hostility. And it's logically, like strange people coming in to a house not invited, only by force of the power that somebody comes in and say, "People will live with you." It's clearly that that *Hoziaikah*, this means the, that woman from the household, was hostile to us. [tape off then on; music] When we come in to, that woman was hostile to us. First of all we didn't speak her language and we didn't understood what she is talking. And she expect from us that we know the rituals in the house, their behavior. But we wasn't used to this kind of behavior. Let's see, they have nice beds with the all kind of pillows. And they demand from us that we sleep on the floor. And they were sleeping too on the floor. This is their way. The beds are very nice covered; everything is very nice but nobody is sleeping on that. They're just putting their fur coats, the *shubas* made from sheepskin, on the floor, and they're sleeping so without taking off the clothes.

HR: Well what do they do with the beds?

HS: The bed just is like a representation. They look nice like here a sofa in the living room. And they expect from us that we should do the same way. And we have to do it. Now, we was very uncomfortable. Second thing, they wasn't talking to each other, that couple. This was a old couple. How I understand, they had a son in the army, in the army when they occupied the western Ukraine. They was in Lvov. And when she find out that we are from that part, she say that her son is very lonesome in that big city in Lvov because he is not used to so many people. He's more used to the forest and the fields. And she start a little, be a little more friendly to us. And we wasn't used to the language. They didn't talk to each other nice and gentle. They just was yelling, such a very rough language between the husband and wife, not like in a normal talking like people talk nice. They just was [unclear], like dog would barking. And this was their way of communication. And how we understand later, he was a brigadier from a brigade what was catching fish in the White Lake what I explained before, a tremendous White Lake. And his business in the *kolkhoz* was taking out his people and go to the lake and catching fish. Even in the winter time, they make big holes in the ice and they're catching so the fish. And he was a sick person. He was always complaining about his stomach. Probably he had a ulcer.

How, I was talking already about how it looks a Russian peasant house. Now this was shocking us more, because we was a little in that house, in the same, well, in the same house, one side was living the cows and the chickens and a pig. And only a corridor divided from the living quarters. And they didn't have toilets, nothing, just we have to go over there where the cows were. And for us it was such a traumatic experience, was so shocking, and so scary there at night to go somewhere. And you feel the smell from the cows and everything. And on top there was pieces of meat, pigs, half pigs was being frozen over

there. And they was keeping this during the winter. And outside the whole all sides of the walls was covered with, prepared with cutted wood, because they was using that wood to heat up the *ruskya pietchka*. *Ruskya pietchka*, this means a very big oven which takes over a half of a kitchen. And you do all cooking, the all baking, and on top of there when it is very cold you sleep over there.

HR: Yeah, I asked you before...

HS: Yeah.

HR: It's like a *pripichik*.

HS: A *pripichik*.

HR: But it's bigger.

HS: Much bigger.

HR: Much, but the same idea.

HS: Correct. How she explain to us later, she was working *doyarka*. This means she was taking milk from the cows. And she say she prepared the whole meal in the morning, put in the *ruskya pietchka*, in that oven. And when she come back at night, the meal is ready. This was the function from that...

HR: Like a crock pot. [chuckles]

HS: Yeah. This was the function from that *ruskya pietchka*. And she told us, it's a other function. They are taking baths inside. Well they're going in inside with a pail of water and they're washing themselves, on place from going to a *banya*, means to a Finish sauna.

HR: And then they put the food in there.

HS: Yeah, they're living very primitive and very dirty. And their whole entertainment is when women coming together they're singing and they're, how do you call it?

HR: [unclear].

HS: No, they're making clothes.

HR: Oh, knitting?

HS: Knitting clothes. Not...

HR: Weaving?

HS: Yes.

HR: Weaving.

HS: And they're taking knives and looking for louses in their head. This is their entertainment. It's clear that we couldn't adjust ourself to this. This wasn't the end of our problem with that *Hoziaikah*. Later find out that we have to go to the forest, to the deep in the forest to work. And the mother and the children should be left with the *Hoziaikah*. The *Hoziaikah* was resenting this, because I understand now that it's a very imposing thing that you put four people, strange people what they no understand the language, they don't know the behavior how to do, they should be always constantly over there. And my mother tried to help her, you know? I no believe that she was able to help her, because it's a whole

enterprise. Their floors are clear like a mirror. They are taking a special sand and they're taking a special bricks and knocking this to pieces. And every Friday they're just rubbing that floor a whole day. And the floor is so clean and so white, you know, it's made from beautiful wood. And when you come in to that house you had to take off your shoes outside. You're just walking in in the socks. Now they are not wearing socks. They're just wearing such a *shmatas* they're covering the legs. So just they're taking this everything off and walking around in the house without shoes. It's clear we wasn't used to this. Now, we have to do it how they say.

When she was getting used to us a little, she saw our clothing and she saw our pillows made from feathers. She say, she put her head on that pillow like it is so nice and soft and she say, "Maybe 100 years ago by the Czar we have such things. No, no more now." And she told us, "Don't go in the forest with this clothing. That clothing will be destroyed in a few weeks. And never, never in your life will you get back such clothings here." Later in the practice we saw how she was very right.

So, it comes a Monday, and that Yastrebov, means that *politruk*, that political leader from that *Trest cha politles*. Took all men and all single people. The women and the children what they was in that village in different houses, and they took us to the forest. The name was Zilonyi Bor. Zilonyi Bor was green forest. And we was walking to that forest maybe 30 miles. This is the procedure of doing things. We was walking. We come to that forest.

HR: Thirty miles?

HS: Thirty miles in snow.

HR: How long did it take you?

HS: We was walking a whole day. They say they are doing this in a few hours. Basically they are doing this on skis. And we wasn't used to skis. The whole transportation in that northern part of Russia, if you have no sleighs with horses, you're using skis. Even children, small children going to school--there is not a school in every village, there is a school for a few villages--they're taking skis. They're taking a ax, and they're taking a flint. It means such a stone, to make fire if the wolves are attacking them in the forest. And the small children are prepared so. They're going with skis with a small ax to cut down a tree to make a fire. And they have that stone like they do 100 years ago. They're making a fire in protection from the wolves. It's clear that we wasn't used to this. We have to walk, we was walking to that forest. Means all men and all single youth, boys and girls. We come to that, our point in Zilonyi Bor. This was only one barrack. One barrack and in that barrack, the barrack was divided for men and for women. And that barrack had a space like a small stove, and a kitchen where it is like a canteen, and a small restaurant.

HR: So wait, Mr. Skorr, did everybody make that trip all right?

HS: Oh yeah.

HR: Your mother was able to walk?

HS: We have to. In Russia is not a question. If you're not able, you have to die.

HR: Did anybody fall down?

HS: Oh yeah.

HR: But you picked them up and you...

HS: Fall down. We picked them up. They're falling down later. I will explain what's happening later when we was working in that forest. There the law of life is very severe and very cruel. Not talking either about the Soviet system. Just talking about the Russian system living so up north. Or you're able to live, or you're able to survive; if no, you have to die. And when we start to complain in the beginning to them, they say, "*Privyknesh*", you'll get used to this. "*Esline privyknesh*", to *sdokhnesh*." This means, "If you no get used, you will drop dead." And they mean it in the full sense of word, without sentiment. Just a few statements.

So, in that part from that barrack, where it was the men, was divi-, it was maybe 50 beds. And everybody from us get a bed. And we was living over there. And in the beginning was a few girls with us. And they was living in the other side where the women's apartment, where the women are living. Because Russian women are too working in the forest, in winter time exactly like men. How I say about that modern slavery what the Russian system put up on the old peasants, on their own people, they're forcing them in the winter time when there is not enough work in the *kolkhozen*, they're forcing them to go to the forest and to cut tree for that *Trest cha politles*. And everybody have to make his [unclear]. And the farmers are, the peasants are used to this. They're accepting, and they're living a whole week over there in that barrack, cutting trees and doing the other things what I will explain later. And the weekend they're going home to the villages. When they're coming back from the village for Monday they're bringing all their own food. And they're living very well. And they are used to this.

HR: So their attitude is good. They're not depressed. They're not depressed.

HS: They are not depressed. This is their way of life. They're accepting. And they are rebellious. They are bitter. No, this is what it is. Who didn't accept this in the beginning was physically destroyed. In every village was a terrible fight between the poor and the richer farmers. Who didn't want to accept this was physically destroyed. Later was put up a system, let's see how I say that Yastrebov, what I say that *politruk*, he was the overlord on the, in the village. He dictate whatever have to be done and the peasants have to do. They was rebellious. They was cursing him. No, only they was doing what have to be done. If no, they would be arrested and sent away to other locations.

So we come in over there and they have for us a whole speech. And they say that we will do the work in the forest. Not understanding that we have never saw either a forest in our life. Never, most people didn't have either a ax in their hands. You know, they don't understand this. Because Russian people, the original from the Russian people is the village. Every Russian person can take a ax, take a saw. It can be too their professor. Tomorrow take him to the forest and he is working. They didn't understood that we don't know this. And they start to have very bad relation with us. They say that we are *lodyris*.

That means we are people what no want to work. They didn't understand that we are not used to this. So, and they was a little bitter to us. Analyzing that whole situation, when they're taking, analyzing this everything, I see that we have to work. It's not enough to go around and to complain and to cry, because nothing will come out from this. And if we will not get used to this we really will disappear over there. So, they make from us brigades. There was over there a master Oshikov. His name was Oshikov. He took us to a storage place where the people are cutting, let's say people are cutting the trees in the forest. With horses they're taking out the trees, the cut trees. They call it *triulovka*. They, and they are taking the trees to a big storage place where these have to be put up like *shtadles*. Later come big tractors with big sleds like trains. And that wood have to be loaded. And that wood is going on a big truck far away to a river. And over there in winter time when the river is frozen the wood is banded. They make such a *plotz*, how do you call it?

HR: Bundles.

HS: Bundles. Big tremendous bundles. And when the summer comes, the wood is already banded. Come ships and they're taking that wood to, with the river, with the canals, with the Sheksna, to the Volga, to the Caspian Sea, everywhere and to export to Great Britain for the railroad. So, they give us a job to load the wood on the big sleds from the tractors. It's clear that we didn't know how to work. And what else? To their eternal shame, they give us the worstest work. What the Russian didn't want to do, they give to us. What means the worstest work? If that, the sleigh is far away from that wood, they put us to work over there. If there is very small pieces of wood that we, a whole day we're just waiting and we can't fill up a sleigh, they give it to us. And there was over there a small boy, a young boy, Mitia. He was measuring this everything. He was the guard. Dead and alive, he decided what you will have and what you're not going to have. And what he was doing, what already we was doing with our inability to work, he give, wrote our work to the Russians. So, he later at night, they was always drinking vodka with them and laughing from us, and showing that we are not good workers. He, our work he wrote over to them.

And how I say in the beginning, they didn't give us that clothing what they promise us, in Cherepovetz. They promise us they will give us clothing in the forest. We come to the forest, they didn't give us the clothing. And we started to work in our clothing. Our European clothing is not used how they work in a forest, because it's too long and too clumsy. The how do you call it, the sleeves are too long, and when the sleeve get frozen, when you work in snow, start to tear everything apart. So when my sleeve get frozen on my shirt I just tear it off. In two weeks I have no more shirts left. We have no shoes because they didn't give us. So they took away from the women what wasn't working, from our women, what accidentally was getting the *valenkis*. They took away from them the *valenkis* and they brought it to us in the forest. And let's see, they give me a pair of *valenkis*. I explain already what this means. Is made from felt. So, they give me *valenkis* that are a little too small. In the morning you can put them on. Now when they're getting wet, they were getting tight, you can't take them off. So I was working a whole day in the forest and

then at night I come home, I have to lay down on my bed. And maybe ten people start to tear my legs--the boots from my legs, and you couldn't take off. And sometimes whole night I was sleeping in the *valenkis* because I couldn't take them off.

I just want to give a little how it was, that work, how, in what atmosphere we was acting. I saw that this is not a resort. This is not a way going around always bitter and not doing nothing. And I talked to the people, "Let's see what the works mean. And let's not only to go around complaining. Let's start to do something. Because they're laughing from us." They're giving us five *ruble* a day. And the five *ruble* a day we can only buy in the morning one cereal and 200 gram of bread, and coming back to get again a soup full of water, made from oats that horses was in Poland eating. And I say, "If we will not start to work and we will not start to earn a little more money, we will die here from lack of nourishment. So I organized a brigade. And seeing that the system of work, I organized that whole system of work. We wasn't, I devised a plan we shouldn't carry the wood in our hand because it's too heavy. I made sleds, boards. And we was shifting that wood on the boards. And two people was standing constantly on the..."

HR: Platform?

HS: On the platform, on that sleigh, and loading this up. In this way we was working much faster than the Russians. And they start to recognize that we are better workers. And they call us the brigade of Skorrupa. This was our name. And I was with my father and two more people. And we started to earn a little more money. And they're putting up a, over there is always propaganda. There come that Yastrebov, that *politruk*. He put up a newspaper and they put us up on the wall newspaper that we are good workers. Now still from that whole thing we couldn't make a living, because we was getting ten *rubles* a day. And we have to send the money to our mother because she have to buy the stuff in the village. And we was demanding clothing. They didn't want to give it. They say they have no clothing, and the clothing have to come in from Konevo, from the headquarter. You know, "Now is winter time, and the clothing will come only when the river will..."

HR: Melt?

HS: Melt and everything will come. And we decided to make a strike. Not having the clothing, and not earning the money, we told them that we will not work until we will now get the clothing. They was very petrified with this because there wasn't such a thing like a strike in Russia. And I told them very clear that we will not go out to work until we will get the clothing what we have to have that everybody have to have.

HR: Weren't you afraid that they would just shoot you?

HS: Yes. We was afraid. No, we was very desperate. And I saw that the work what we are doing, we start to work harder, we start to do more. No we didn't get more. We just, they put us on there just on paper that we are good workers. But we didn't get nothing for this. And I tear all my shirts and I tear my jacket. And it's like that woman in the village told us, "In a few weeks you will need out clothing." So, and we decided to make a strike. We decided to make that strike. Right away come from the *NKVD*, from the

police it means, from the *NKVD*, on sleighs with horses. And they had a whole speech to us. We didn't understand a half from that speeches because we didn't speak so very well Russian. Only we explain to that man--there was one man who speak a little better Russian--we explain to that *nachalnik* from the *NKVD* that we have no clothing. And we had no where to buy clothing. And they're mistreating us. And we're entitled to clothing. Because I know a half a people was getting in Cherepovetz clothing. And we didn't get nothing is a sign that something is wrong. So we don't want to strike and we no want to be killed. We don't want to die from the hunger. We not want to die from cold. Because it was so cold we have to work until forty degrees below zero. This was the norm. If it's more than forty below, we no have to go out to the forest. And don't forget to go out to that storage place where we was to the loading zone. We have to walk maybe five miles in one direction and snow in the half and walking back. And until you come over there, you come with that piece of bread, that piece of bread was so frozen that you can cut this with a knife. So we had to make a fire and throw in that bread on a spear on, from the wood, and warm up that bread. And we was eating so that burned bread. So we, and the Russians aren't exposed to such things. They have their own food from the villages. Only we didn't have nothing. We have only two or three hundred gram of bread, one cereal in the morning, and one soup when we come home. So, or we will die this way or we will do a action. So we explained this to that *nachalnik* from the *NKVD* that we are not rebels. We just no want to die. We need all the merchandise. I believe that he saw the justice in our talking, and I believe he saw that something goes around of things. They was stealing from us everything, that *Mitia*, that master, what he was getting for us stuff, they were selling, not giving to us. They're selling to the Russians or taking to their home. There is no mercy over there, because they are used dying, you die and that's all. This is what they say, "*Ne privykнешь, to sdokhnesh.*"¹⁵ And probably that man from the *NKVD* saw what's going on and he probably wrote to Moscow because in a week come a commission from Moscow, from that *Trest Chapotitles*, from that ministerium of forests, to investigate what happened. And when they come they make a *sobranie*. This means a meeting in that *stolofkas*. This is where we was eating. And he started to say why are we striking in Russia? There is no striking there. And later we have to say, I say, "We are not striking." And so we just tell him the whole story. And finally I say, "We are not slaves here. We're coming here with our goodwill. We come here to live and to work in Russia. We shouldn't be so mistreated."

I had the impression that one man from them was a Jewish guy. I saw in his eyes that he is a Jewish guy. And after that meeting I took a chance and I have with him a talk. And I explain to him, in mine way how I can, what is going on here. And I show him our documents. And they say that we are here prisoners. The local management from that forest say that we are here prisoners. We can't do nothing. And I told him, "I no understand why we should be prisoners. We come voluntarily," I say, "to Russia. We come voluntarily to

¹⁵"If you don't get used to it, you will die.

the Belobozhnitsa Oblast. They promise us that we will live in a village,” and the whole thing. And I explain to him, “Our mother is thirty miles away and we are not in contact nothing. Why we should suffer so much?” He look over my papers and he said, “You know, they’re lying to you. You are not slaves here. You can live in the whole Belobozhnitsa Oblast. You can, it means live in the whole Belobozhnitsa province. You are, they are just misleading you. You just have to do your job. If you no like it you’re entitled to go away.” This I already took it in mine ears, you know? And what else? They right away brought with them clothing for us, real Russian clothing with the *fufaikah* and the cotton pants. And the *valenkis* and everything. And I explain to him how we organized that work. And I say, “If we would have hooks to carry the trees not with our hands, just with hooks, it would be much more efficient.” And they make for us hooks. And it was everything okay.

Only, this was not our future. We, a few people was working. Now, who had a profession start not to work in the forest. If somebody was a shoemaker, somebody was a tailor, somebody was a barber he already didn’t go out to the forest. He just was start to go around in the villages working for the farmers and earning bread. So it right away divided the people what was working and people what was not working. And it’s amazing you know in that forest we get up in the morning was one a religious Jew and we make a *minyán*. And you know and it was so wild to hear, you know, the Jewish praying in our primitive virgin *tyga*¹⁶, you know, what they didn’t see people over there at all.

Now, how I say that season, cutting the trees is only in winter time, when the tree is frozen. When it start to get warm, we stop cutting trees because the tree is alive, and the juices all run.

¹⁶ Forest of high and dense trees.

Tape ten, side one:

HR: ...is with Mr. Henry Skorr. It's being taped on the 14th of June, Harriet Richman interviewer. This is side two [side one].

HS: So when it started to get, this was the winter till 1940 when, the winter 1940 it started to go to the spring, they took us to a other part. We didn't want to be already divided with the mother. And they took us to, all together to a different part. And they call it Novoe Selo. It means new village. They took us, it was still snow there, and with a big sleigh, with a tractor. And we come to a, what, how I explained before to a place like a homestead where it was once a property from a rich peasant. This was a *khutor*, a small island surrounded by the river Kovzha . And he was living over there. And later they sent him away. Only his wife with the children was living over there. And they took the all, they call us *byezhinitzes*, and we was working over there on the, preparing the wood for transportation on the river. There was no more cutting the trees, only to preparing that wood what we sent with the Kovzha River to the canal. It was a beautiful *khutor*, this means a homestead. The houses was made still in old Russian style with all the kind of beautiful things cut from wood. And that woman was going around always unhappy. And she was afraid to talk to us. And this was a very big house. And every family was getting one room separate. And we was eating all, we was eating together in a, again in a *stolofka*, in *stolofkas*, means like a canteen where we was cooking for us. It's clear the living conditions wasn't better. It was the same. Only it was already going to spring. We was already more happy.

I have to mention too in the 1939-1940 was the Finnish Campaign. The Russian was fighting the Finnish, and the atmosphere in the village was very, very tight because many young people was dying. And the supposed so strong Red Army that should be so invincible, so strong, was a very, was showing very poor in the fight with the small Finnish Army.

When it comes to the Spring, we young people decided to run away. Why we decide to run away? Because we was afraid that come a summer already and we will be stuck later a winter and we will be again over there stuck. We decided all young people will run away. We will leave the families. And see, because it was no way to run with the mother, with the children, with older people what was around with us. Was older families, was a few families what they was saved by the Red Army when the Red Army retreated from the Polish territory. There was whole families. So, we decided if we run away we will be successful we later without our parents.

HR: Well how did you figure you would be able to get them out?

HS: We didn't figure.

HR: You just thought you're running...

HS: We just thought we have to do because we saw that we can't stay over there. There is no life. What kind of future? What kind, what will be with the children? What will

be with us? We was just in a wild part from a country what was always a exile part--by the Czar and by the Soviet regime. People always, people was sent away over there.

HR: Did you have a plan about where you were gonna live?

HS: No, we had no plans. We have only one plan. How I say before, the whole communication goes with the river. In winter time is no way to go. Now soon the summer time comes or the spring time, the whole highways is the river. And soon the river is start to, this ice goes away, start to come the ships. They call it the *Parok hod*. And the whole life start, the whole province start to come alive when the ships are coming, bringing merchandise, bringing people and taking away people. It's a whole different life. And we decided to go back to that headquarter from that *Trest cha politles konyovov* where are the ships. And there to try to board a ship. Either that the local people, the local management say that we shouldn't go away. We have already on that paper, that temporary, we have temporary internal passports what say that we can stay in Belobozhnitsa Oblast, not like they say, only like the person what explained me from Moscow what was coming.

And I have to say being that winter time, I start to learn Russian. I have nothing what to do. The Russians was just playing with the harmonicas and dancing. And our other people were just gossiping around, you know, telling the stories what and how. And I was sitting by the oven. We have no light, just by the light from that oven. And I was studying Russian papers to adjust the Russian alphabet to the Polish alphabet, to get adjusted. And when once the *politruk* come, I demand from him books, that I want to learn. And he brought me books from the elementary school. And I was start to study the alphabet, the Russian alphabet. So I know already a little what and how. I know a little how to read.

So we decided to go with that, the river Kovzha, to Konevo. This was 40 miles to walk. Now by the river there is no, this is a virgin forest. Now the end from the river the Russians made like a sidewalk. On the river they put boards, for 30 or miles.

HR: Where you could walk?

HS: People was walking this. They're so ingenious, because you can't walk in the forest. You can walk in the river. So they made floating sidewalks. And I have to say too when they start a little this thing before we ran away, I was going out with the Russian people catching fish in that Kovzha river. They have a special way of catching fish. You're going out at night on small boats and you make a fire on a special piece of wood. And you see tremendous size of the fish, sturgeons, sleeping in the water. At night they're sleeping. So you have such big irons. They call it like a *jida* [phonetic]. I don't know how they...

HR: Like a spear?

HS: Like a spear. And we was spearing the fish. And I learned one stays there, one is showing with that fire the water, the...

HR: Fish.

HS: The fish is sleeping like a piece of big wood. Big sturgeons and *osetrs*, beautiful fish. And you spear them. You have to know how to spear them, because they're not dying so easy. And they're very strong. If you don't catch them right they can bite off

your hand. So they taught us this and I was very willing to learn. It was a nice adventure to go over there. And we was catching fish and we was no more hungry. My mother was cooking soup already at home with the fish and we was changing for clothing potatoes in the village so we make such a fish soups. And it was very pleasant.

So, deciding to go out, to run away on that floating boards, we make a meeting in a small church at night. There was over there a abandoned, semi-destroyed church, a beautiful wooden church like a picture, surrounded with birch trees. It was looking so beautiful, you know, so that it's hard to describe. You know, around wild tiger and a beautiful sky. And that small, half-destroyed wooden church with the, made from wood, and beautiful painted. You can see that man was a big artist what was doing this. And the Soviets when they were come to it, they make the collectivization, when they forced the people go to the *kolkhozen*, they destroyed the churches and fight against the religion. So we make at night all boys and all single, what would want to run with us. We say we will meet at night because the management, nobody is around, they will not see us. This was Saturday night. Next day is Sunday; we are not working. So we have a day ahead of them.

They can run after us. In the morning everything was ready. As soon as there was a little shine everybody have such a, they call it a *ruksak*, from a sack made a...

HR: Like a knapsack.

HS: Knapsack, and we was starting to go. It's clear my mother and my father, everybody was crying. And I said, "Don't worry. God help us until now, we come out in a such a fire. I feel now with my instinct we have to do this. And I will go out, see how the world looks, and I will come back and take you out." So we decided and we went. We walked the 30 miles.

HR: How many?

HS: Maybe forty...

HR: Forty?

HS: Forty people. Young boys and single men, what had nothing what to lose. If they take us to prison we'll be in prison. We will cut the same trees. In prison we'll cut the trees and in freedom we cut the trees. And we come to that Konevo. We come to that Konevo to the *pristan*; this means the seaport. In the *pristan* was already a ship they called "*Chaikah*." A "*Chaikah*" means seagull. I remember the sea, I was still now on that wide, nice ship. It was very, you know, my eyes [unclear]. And I saw over there people from the management, from the NKVD. Now they didn't touch us. They didn't touch us. We went to there, we bought tickets.

HR: You had money?

HS: We had money. We was earning five *rubles* and, or we was selling, everybody had maybe a hundred or two hundred *rubles* put away, you know? And we went on that ship. This was my first experience to go on a boat. You know, it's very romantical and it's very, very strange. And with the all Russian peoples, you know? And we was sleeping on the board, on the deck, you know? And this is a ship what had wheels. And it

was heated and the steam was made with wood. And we sailed and nobody stopped us. Probably that man from Moscow was right, they didn't have a right to stop us. We have a right to be in the whole Belobozhnitsa province. And the Belobozhnitsa province is maybe two times bigger than Poland--tremendous. Now mostly virgin forest. And we go out with that boat until we come to Belozersk, what I say by the first beginning. And in Belozersk we change for a bigger ship. Over there we was going with a canal what had smaller ships. In Belozersk we change for the Sheksna River. It's a big river and we change for a big ship. Still I remember the name. The name was *Pushkin*.

HR: *Pushkin*.

HS: *Pushkin*. And we come with that boat, again sleeping on this, eating our bread. We didn't want to spend. It was a buffet, you could eat, but we didn't have enough money. So, and we come to the city, to the town of Cherepovetz. The first town what we come in. We come in in that Cherepovetz and we go out from that boat to the city. We saw a beautiful nice building. It was a school for nurses. And we come to the main street, *Sovietski Prospekt*, on Lenina Street. And we come to that dom Krestianina, that peasants' house where you come in if you, if a peasant come to the city can stay a, it's such a small hostel. We come over there. We're entitled to be two, three nights over there, by law. So we registered, and we was sleeping over there--two, three people in one bed. And we was looking over there around and I was starting to look around, and everybody from the boys, what we should do further. We was walking around and everybody start to call us, "The *Polaki* are here." They call us *Polaki*. And I was looking around what should I do? The boys saw a different world and they didn't want to stay in Cherepovetz. Everybody want to run further to Ukraina. I didn't want to go back. I, because I had my parents. I intend to--there was over there two boys from Lodz. And one was a shoemaker, not a shoemaker, he makes some, the upper parts from the shoes. And he got a job in a *artel* [Russian association of collective laborers.]. And he took a apartment on the outskirts from the town. And I left over there the, my clothing. And I was looking around what to do in the city, how, what is the possibility from bringing my parents. And they start to be very tired. They, the *khozyayki* where the people was living, they say, "I no want that a strange person come in to us." They was very suspicious. The Russians are very chauvinistic and very suspicious to strange people. Any strange person is not welcome to them, and they're very, to other, not only strange. They no like Ukrainas, they no like Uzbeki, they no like Belorussians. They're very chauvinistic, great Russians. And they hear about us, the *Polaki*, the *byezhinitzes*, not knowing that we are Jews. They was very hostile and reserved to us. And I really didn't know what to do. Everybody runs away. The boys ran away to, back to Ukraina. I didn't want to run away because I want to take out the parents. Somebody told me that if I go to work on the river, on a ship, I can get apartment in that management from the port authority. The port authority was a whole city with their own hospitals, with their own remote--where they're fixing the ships, and with their own schools and hospitals and everything. And I was figuring that I can, if so is, if I can get a apartment for my parents

over there, I will go over there. I went over there and I ask about a job. And that man from that *kad*, from the personnel, you know, they're like horse thieves. They need--when it was spring time--they need staff for the ships, the crew for the ships. He promised me gold, everything. "Take a job. We will give for your parents a apartment." I was sure that I am in a paradise. He promised me everything. "You will be a sailor." I said, "Oh my God, okay." I sign it. And I went to work, a sailor on a ship, on a boat for the *kolkhozen* there. And my troubles start now.

When I come on that ship, I never saw a ship, right? I just was on a ship only when I come and now I am already a sailor. Can you imagine? And I did it always with the condition that I will get apartment. I wrote to mine parents a letter in Polish. "Everybody runs away from the city. It's hard to adjust in the city to get a apartment. They no want to rent apartments. I am, I will work a sailor on a ship and he promised me that he will give us a apartment. Wait for a answer from me." And I went to the ship. The ship was somewhere, this is a navigation. You know, the navigation means that year from the spring to the fall is a navigation year. My ship was very near Rybinsk, you know, a thousand miles near the Volga. So they give me a ticket to go with a ship to find the other ship. I didn't even speak Russian. I don't know nothing, you know? Only okay, they give me food. They give me everything. And he was so happy. And I didn't know I should be a little suspicious with this happiness. You know I was so happy they promised me. I, they promised me everything, so I can take out my parents. I figure I will go to that ship and I will come back. I will take vacation and I will bring them in. I didn't know the Russian reality. I didn't know that come out a law in that time when I was talking with him that you can't leave a job. This was the law, Molotov's law from 1940 that you are, if you had a job, you can't get away. If you go away you go in prison. And this, he was so, you know, and you have to have a workbook. In the workbook is written down where you work, or you are released. Nobody will accept you without that little *knishkah*, *knishkah*, *tylavayik knishkah* [internal passport]. And I come to that ship, you know, imagine. I didn't know this. And come to that, I come to a *shluz*. You know what a *shluz* is? A canal, how that Panama canal have what divide this, the water goes up and down?

HR: Yeah. I can't think of the name.

HS: You see the river is divided with such *shluzes*. The a ship come in that canal, they let in water, and they change the level. So, and when I was going from, with that ship, and I show it to that captain he say, "That ship will be in that *shluz*, *Shluz Derenyevkah*." I don't know what [unclear]. "And at night when we come to that *shluz* you get off and wait for the ship." And the ship was over there, that *kolkhozen* ship was over there and I come in and I show them the papers I am working. And they accept me to work and I don't know even what I have to do, what is to do and how is to do and where is to do. And they put me in [unclear] at night. They call me up. I have to go to work to carry the wood. I didn't know what I have to do. You see, the Russian ships working on wood, cut wood. You loaded that wood in special stations, and with that wood, you put in that wood in the...

HR: Furnace.

HS: In the furnace, and this makes the steam. So, I was a part from the top. I have to carry that wood, get it down, and do that whole work what have to be done on the ship. And loading that wood from the shore. And when we come with the *shluzes* what I say, to change this, and we was carrying that wood from the forest, you know? The wood? How do you call it what they say, the blocks? What we was cutting in the...

HR: The bundles?

HS: The bundles. But you know what a bundle is? Like a half a street. Three, four bundles. And on that bundle, on the bundles lives a person. And he have such a thing.

HR: Like a hut.

HS: Yeah, and he had fire over there. And at night we have to put on the lights that other ships not going in in this. And we had to take this apart, because only one goes in in a *shluz*. And if that bundle, what this is five, six, and you work at day and night. So, I was started to do that job. And it was very impossible. And they was very hostile to me, because again, I was a stranger. And I didn't know the language. And I didn't understood nothing. And I didn't have clothing. And I was dirty. I have nothing and there they was just, was so abusing me. There was no word. They just want to see that I collapse. They make so the work rules that when I have to rest, have to be done additional work where everybody have to work. They change so the rules that see when we have to carry wood, it's mine eight hours off, I have to work. And what else? That I should earn money for this for carrying the additional. My money they sign off to other.

HR: Somebody else?

HS: Somebody else. And they was so hostile to me. And I was so frustrated, you know, that I had no way out. And I have no to who complain.

HR: So you feel like a slave for sure.

HS: And I have no to who to talk. Everybody is laughing from me. And we was going on that boat to Rybinsk. The whole both sides from that river was prison camps. People was working over there on that wood, because they was creating a sea of Rybinsk, a artificial sea what will connect five real seas. That artificial sea to the Volga will connect the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Baltic Sea, and the White Sea. And they was making a tremendous 2,000 mile artificial sea, with big dams where the water will be concentrated. And for this only prisoners was working. In the whole land from the river was only prison camps. And the all villages was around from there was evacuated. All houses taken apart and make bundles and put on the river, with the cows, with the women, you can see on the river thousands of villages swimming to different directions. It's so, you know, it's so amazing. So, it's a different world. The river is a world by itself over there. And so you see when I saw on that, the prison camps near Rybinsk, and I hear that people are yelling over there, Jewish. The prisoners, in Yiddish. And was, we have over there one, the secretary from the *Partin Organizatsia*. Every ship have a Communistic cell. And they have a secretary over there. His name was Knyazov. And we were standing or so. You know, and

my heart was bleeding because I know my people are over there. I hear the Jewish voices, you know? Like I was working in the forest, they arrest him and he was working on the river. And our, and the boys was laughing from them, you know? The *Polaki*. And that Knyazov, you know, that, he say, "This is not Polish people. This is Jews from Poland."

So, and my life was so miserable. I had no connection now with the home, because I was sure this will swim. In one swim from that Cherepovetz to Rybinsk was a month. I didn't know this. I just took a job, you know, just to took it out of desperation. And I really didn't know what to do. I was so terribly abused by them. I was dirty. I have no soap. I was washing my clothes, I took from the furnace the ashes, because I learned that is a no it didn't help. And they was laughing because I don't know, because I don't have, because I am dirty, you know? And I was so desperate. And I was so, and I didn't know what I even, where my parents is. And I was in such a jam and I can't do nothing. I was whole nights, when I was upstairs on the *palma*, you know, on the deck I was sitting and I was crying. What I did? I say, *Guttinu*, ["Dear God," "Oh my God"] what I, why I, why...

HR: Did you leave them?

HS: Yeah. Why I deserve such a punishment? When is the [unclear], you know, I want to kill myself. I couldn't, I say, I did such a terrible thing. I am divided from them. They are now in the forest over there. I am here, not out. I can't go out, because I can be arrested. I can't leave the boat. It's the law, you know. But later it was a whole meeting on the ship where they was reading the decree from Molotov. And we are [clapping], everybody, "Hello! How happy we are. That's how good it is to be disciplined by work," you know? Everybody was laughing at this. You know everybody is saying it's good. And I was sitting so, you know I want to kill myself. I couldn't stand it. I couldn't stand that abuse, that they are so abusing me, you know, without reason. And I was working so hard. I was working more than them. Work doesn't bother me, because I make up my mind work is, I was doing things what they wouldn't do. I was carrying, the most dangerous jobs, I took. I want to be, I want to justify myself in their eyes, you know? And they know this. I was carrying the trees, you know, from the loading to the ship from the on a small boat. You go with a, how do you call this, a wheelbarrow.

HR: Wheelbarrow.

HS: And you fill up a wheelbarrow with wood. And you have to go on a such a small boat from this. And this is just [unclear]. They was, I would say, "The hell with you. I will do it." I was doing this. I will be a specialist. I was doing better than them. Still I wasn't accepted. You know, and I was sitting so one night and was crying, you know? I say, "*Gottinu*, it's time to finish. I can't stand it more." But that I should be so abused and I see no way out. And I was crying so, you know? Come out a man from the *Kochegar*, the man what put in wood in the, how you call such a...

HR: A furnace?

HS: Yeah, how call them, such a special profession. They call it a *Kochegar* in Russian. His name [was] Afanosiev. I saw him so. Now there was, you see on such a ship

is a very big hostility between the bottom, between the top, and in between the leadership, the Russian brotherhood. If we have to do something, if we come loading wood, they will make they have to fix downstairs. If they have to fix they no have to go out to loading the wood. So we have to do the whole work. If they have to do something, we will make we are busy. It's a terrible hostility between the bo-

Tape ten, side two:

HS: ...seems so I'm crying, you know? And sometime I have time to sit and to cry when the ship is loaded with wood, with this, as the first hour is, the first hour is free. Because usually, (it's working, right?) usually you see when you come to a port, we loaded up wood. And it's your *vachtah* [watch]. They call it a *vachtah*. So everything is full with wood. An hour you don't have to carry that wood. That wood is a, you have to carry that wood and put in the special holes and this goes down to the bottom. And he take this and load it in this.

HR: For the furnace.

HS: So the first hour after the wood, when God gives that you have that time, that *vachtah*, you sit. You rest. You take, you drink a little. We have a steamer to make hot water. No tea, no sugar. Just hot water. And this is the paradise, when you sit with a little hot water, with a piece of bread, and you can rest. You no have to do nothing. And just is the paradise. I can't afford that paradise because my heart was, everything was over there, you know. And I don't know what to do. In my personal misery, you see? I can stand everything. No, I can't stand abuse. My nature can't stand abuse. I can't be mentally mistreated. And you see that abusing me was so overwhelming me that my thinking was not clear any more, you know? I was boiling with hate, and I say, "I'm doing the best." I was the best worker. Again, written down I'm good. And they was hating me so because I was a stra-, not knowing yet that I am a Jew. I didn't go around...

HR: Telling them.

HS: ...manifesting that I am a Jew. Yeah I, later I told them. So, I was sitting so and crying, you know, what to do. I would like to die and I will jump to that, and that's all, you know, and finish it. Come that Afanosiev up, typical Russian *kochegar*, you know? Like what Gorky was writing you know, with that [unclear] face, you know, with the, like from the Volga, a boatman from the Volga, typical, and with a--every part in Russia have a different dialect. One said with a "O," one said with a "E," and he said, well, he was from the Volga, with such a wide language, you know? And he say, "I hear you crying." They're not used to that men should cry there.

HR: Yeah.

HS: Who is crying in Russia? There is a proverb in Russia, "Moscow doesn't believe in tears." And I cry more, because I was already in the bottom. And he said, "What happened? What is it?" And I tell him what is happening. He say, "I see you're not a Russian." And there's plenty of things in Russia, everything is mixed up. I told him the whole story because he was like sent from God, you know? That I...

HR: The fact that he showed some interest in you and that he should ask you what's wrong...

HS: Right.

HR: A little kindness breaks the heart.

HS: Yes. And I told him. I told him the whole story. He said, "Listen, I understand you very well. We have no more tears to cry," he say. "Every Russian had a similar tragedy to you. There is no one Russian that wasn't in prison. There is no one Russian what wasn't suffering. And there is no one Russian what will not suffer in the future. I understand you very well. And please don't cry."

HR: Did you tell him you were a Jew?

HS: Yes.

HR: Yes?

HS: And he told me his wife was a Jew. And he was in prison. And he don't know where his wife is. And such a person. And he say, and I say, "Take a look what I wear." And he say, "Listen. It was clothing by us. It was everything by us. We have everything." And this what happened.

HR: He gave you clothing?

HS: No.

HR: No?

HS: No this, he gave me something different. "Don't cry, because you can't afford this. Be like us. Hard and bitter. That you're crying is still you have tears inside. We have no more tears," he say. He was so, you know, he was so like Gorky was saying, you know? Like being from the Russian literature he comes out with such words, you know? "We have everything. Most important we have freedom," he say. "The Czar wasn't God was no good, now we can say it, we can protest, we can fight. We have nothing," he say now, "and we will have nothing, only death. You shouldn't cry more. You should adjust yourself to the situation. And we will see, and I will see what I can help you." You see, to get one friendly soul was already for me a break. I told him now about my father, with my family.

What happened? From time to time comes inspections on the ship, from the management. A big *nachalnik* comes in in a *carter*, how a small ship. How do you call it here, on such a small boat? Carter? *Carpeh*?

HR: A row boat? No...

HS: No, no, no.

HR: On a sailboat?

HS: No, in a very fancy...

HR: A chartered boat?

HS: It's a built especially for the big boss, you know? The name was *Diktatoria Proletariata*, *Dictatorship of the Proletariat* was the name from the ship. He comes to inspect the ship. We have to make a plan, you know? Which everything is lie. If you no make a plan nobody make, just everything write down that is made there. You know, everything is lie. The whole country is just lie. The whole system is lies. The whole doctrine, the whole Communistic theory is lying. They will say, "You have," you know you haven't. They will say, "You're rich," you'll say you're poor. They tell you you are

happy you say you are unhappy. They say we have breads; we have nothing. And they have nothing. Everything is a lie until now. And everybody knows over there, and everybody lies over there, and everybody is divided. And they have private, they have a different world, officially have a different world, starting with the smallest man, ending to Stalin. Everybody knows it's not true and everybody goes through the motions. So that *Nachalnik* come to the ship, checking off everything is okay, how we'll make the plan, how this. And, you know, it's a inspection.

HR: Inspection.

HS: Inspection, right. I believe that man took him away, aside, and told him my story. He say, "We have here a man and he's the best worker. He is abused from them." He was more, he was a educated person. He was too educated a person, that *Kochegar*. He was hiding himself. In this work, he was probably a engineer or something, and he was in prison for this. And later when it come out, he just hide himself. He just drown in a dirty job and that's it that nobody knows his work. This is the Russian strategy--to survive. You can be a genius. You can be a big theoretical. Soon they have the stamp, later on you can run away, take a small job, something in a watchtower or something. I believe that Afanosiev was such a person. He spoke with that man, with that *nachalnik*, with that head from that Sheksninskoe Rechnoye Parokhodstvo, it mean it was from that system. And that man, and he called me, talked to me. And I explain in my broken Russian. "This and this, what is this. They are laughing from me. I have no clothes. I'm dirty. I am dirty," I say. "because I have no soap. If they have a piece of soap they will no give me. And I am working hard, and my family is in the forest. I have no clothing. And I have no, I need a book. I need a newspaper. I have to read something. I need this more than bread," I say. "This I don't have. They no give me this. And there is not none. And everybody is " He called in that Knyazov, that, from the *Partynaya Organizatsia*. He say, "What your responsibility is to help such a person! Why you no helping him? Why you see that he is and you say by yourself he is the best worker in this all." And when we come to the next *shluz*, was already for me prepared clothing. They call this *spetsodezhda*, special clothing, you know? Clothing and soap and a shirt and shoes and socks and everything. So, and they already start to respect me more. You know? I was already a different person. Now I have to do something. One more thing I had to do with them. Every navigation the whole crew have to make such signs.

HR: Tattoos.

HS: Tattoos. It's clear that I wouldn't want to make a tattoo.

HR: Why do they make tattoos?

HS: This is their ritual.

HR: Oh. It's a custom. It's not to ri-...

HS: A custom...

HR: It's not to be able to identify, nothing like this.

HS: It's a custom what is more than a custom. If you are no with them, tomorrow you're working downstairs a piece of iron can fall on your head.

HR: So this makes you like a brotherhood with them?

HS: Correct. Tomorrow if you will fall in the river...

HR: They won't care.

HS: Nobody will see it. No. And I was avoiding this, avoiding this stamp, this. And so in July and August is that ritual from tattooing. And I was avoid, they're making oh, elaborate all kinds of things. Maybe it's a whole macho how can you stand this. Because...

HR: It hurts.

HS: It's very painful, right? And I was avoiding that I no understand. And they was nudging me and nudging me in this, you know? And I have a discussion with that Afanosiev. I say, "This is against my religion. This is against my morals. Why should I do that?" He say, "Gennady," my name is Henry, in Russian, Gennady. "Gennady, go with the river. If you no like it in the future we'll make a operation and take it off. They can kill you. Nobody will know. Nobody will see. It's only for this." And I still resented, resented. And I have to make it. I decide and I make it for, and I was with them.

HR: Why did you choose...

HS: This is the smallest thing what I can do. This was from our ship, from our *kolkhozen*. I could do more elaborate.

HR: This is the symbol?

HS: This is the symbol...

HR: This is the symbol?

HS: From our ship.

HR: On your thumb, between your thumb and your...

HS: Correct, from our ship.

HR: Forefinger.

HS: If I go somewhere and I show this to them they will know this means the *kolkhozen*.

HR: What is this a symbol of? Is this an anchor?

HS: An anchor from our ship.

HR: An anchor.

HS: You know, I have to make it and I made it. And I started to be already there better. And they give me already books. And give me newspapers. And I started to read. And I was already in peace with myself. And I, the next, I come back to my port. And to my big surprise when I come to the port, my family was waiting for me, in Cherepovetz.

HR: Oh my goodness! [unclear].

HS: They come out, my mother told me she figured something is wrong, that they have no mail more from me here. I didn't know that a [unclear] will be a month, you know, and I didn't know that I will be go in such terrible trouble. And the people and

everybody started to go away from over there. And they decide and they will be alone. And they decide, they're not stupid, my mother was very, very bright, very, very. And they hired a boat, not a boat, yeah? They went the same way. No, they have clothings. My mother and the children can't go on...

HR: They can't walk.

HS: Can't walk. They hired a boat, a row boat.

HR: A row boat.

HS: And they was going, and they come to the river. And they know that I am in the, I wrote them that I am working on a ship. And so they went to that personnel to find out where. And I was already a big shot over there, because their from that, the manager from that, give hell to that personnel manager. "Why are you neglecting a person? Why are you just..." You see, over there is always hate. A bigger boss knocks the smaller. He want to look for a chance to say that you're not working well.

HR: Yeah.

HS: He said, "I was on a ship and they complained to me about a *byezhinitzes* from Poland so mistreated and without clothing and without nothing, without this. And you promise him this and promise him this. Why you didn't do this?" You understand?

HR: Sure.

HS: So, and when my family come to looking for me, he was very already, you know, again, "I will give you apartment. I will this," the same *shpiel*, you know? And they was very happy that everything, they were sure that I am a big shot.

HR: But you didn't believe him so much this time about the apartment.

HS: I didn't see them.

HR: Oh.

HS: They was telling before.

HR: They were telling them.

HS: And when I come from the ship and I saw them, you know...

HR: You almost died.

HS: Yes. And I decided not to say nothing. I say, "It's okay." You understand? And she, my mother was so happy. Everybody is happy. They said, "Yes, it's okay." I was already...

HR: Dressed.

HS: In that clothing, you know, and everything was okay and so I went to that Komolov, oh yeah, Komolov is his name, right, from the personnel. It's spelled like your computer.

HR: Yes? Yeah.

HS: Komolov. And I say, "I need a few days vacation to arrange my family." He said, "Well, okay." We went down. About the apartment we didn't talk already more. I went, I took them to that, again to the dom Christianina, to that...

HR: At the hostel?

HS: The hostel, right. Yes, and we started to evaluate what to do. They was again, and my father only will go work with me, you know? I told them, “[unclear],” because I just want to calm them down. I wasn’t [unclear] yet. I say, “No, father. It’s not [unclear]. If you go they will kill you from work. And they will arrest you.” I just tried. “I am here. I am happy,” and all this, “you know, I no like it either. I want to go to school. This was only temporary. Let’s look something more provincial, more normal for people.” I find a few people what still with the boys, you know, what they was working in the *artel*, and a few who didn’t run away. And we, I say, “Let’s look for them an apartment.” And we went back over there where I was once keeping the clothing by the two boys in Lodz. And across the street it was Niekrasova, Ukritsa Niekrasova Diesat.

HR: [unclear], you...

HS: No, it...

HR: Oh, where did you go?

HS: [unclear]?

HR: No.

HS: And over there we come, and we see. And they say that a, one woman have to rent a house--not a house, a apartment. We come over there. I was already like a big shot, you understand? And my mother and father and the children, they look already different. They are afraid, you see, for single people, not stable, they stop. Now they see a family they have already...

HR: A different outlook.

HS: Different outlook. And they say, “Okay, I will rent you.” It’s not a apartment. It’s more. You see, the Russian have, winter time they live in this part, and summer time they live in a different part from the same house. One is more insulated, and one is less. “So I will give you this part,” she say. “And you will pay me so much.” I had already money. “For a month you will pay me at the end of the month.” I said, “No, I will pay you now for three months, in the...”

HR: In advance.

HS: In advance. And she was, this was not a custom over there. You know, I want, you see, I want for them, and especially I want for my mother, that she will be in peace that everything is, that we are on solid ground.

HR: Secure again.

HS: Right, that we start something, stabilize. I say, “I have to be, I can only be two days more.” And my father only he want to be, he only want to go with me. I say, “Okay, father, come with me. I will talk with that guy.” We went to that guy from the personnel, to that Komolov and I say, “My father wants to work with me. Now I want my father try only one week.”

HR: Was he healthy?

HS: Very healthy.

HR: Yeah.

HS: Very healthy.

HR: He was strong then.

HS: Stronger than me.

HR: Really?

HS: Oh, only I was stronger here.

HR: Yeah, he was mentally, he was...

HS: No, no, he was very good, very pleasant.

HR: But he couldn't take the...

HS: Very pleasant, very clean. Yes, and you know, the aggravation and...

HR: He couldn't take the aggravation.

HS: Yes. He was too plain, too noble, you know, to take. My mother, yes. My mother could evaluate them, you know, and have a whole dialectic in her head, yes. And I say to that Komolov, "I want my father to try only for a week. No papers. No signing nothing. Let him go with me for one race." Sometimes we had short races we call it. They use over there English words, race, *navigatsia*.

HR: *Shluz* is an English word.

HS: *Shluz*, and foreign words, you know, and they are using English words. I took him on that to help to work with that Afanosiev.

HR: The nice one.

HS: The nice one. And I say, "Afanosiev, see that he shouldn't work. See that he shouldn't like that job." I didn't want that my father [unclear]. And my father start to work with him and he start to give him a little the business. It was hot in there like hell. You know in the *kochegarka*.

HR: Sure, sure.

HS: And primitive. It's not like now. Everything's iron.

HR: Even so, in the furnace room it's hot.

HS: And not only, everybody's from iron, you touch something, you burned yourself.

HR: Hot, sure.

HS: And in that time was already, was such big flies on the river, they hit you, they make you a hole. And billions of mosquitoes. Not millions, billions. They come like waves. And we was in our *kayuta*. They call it *kayuta*, a cabin, no, *kayuta*, the room where I was living. And we was putting in *shmatas*, make a fire, and it was so, the smoke was...

HR: Keeping the mosquitoes...

HS: Pushing them out. Well we couldn't sleep over there. So my father was a week, you know, and he couldn't, and he was drinking so much. And he was [unclear]. I says, "Father, this isn't for you." The Afanosiev say, and we was friendly with him, with the Afanosiev, you know? They are very, you see, it's such a amazing about the Russians. They are so good souled people on one side, and they're so terrible killers with the other

side. Soon you see the glint in their eyes, the knife, the ax in their eyes, you know they are ready to kill.

HR: The same person?

HS: The same person. They're so, they're, you know, when they're good they give you away the soul. You feel it. They're so *paren rubakha*, that means he give you the shirt from his back. No soon like you're changing a switch, when you see that glint, you know, a glint from a knife? I can see by a *goy* I see that glint I know he is ready. The eyes start to glint like a knife or like a ax. And I saw it later in the war time, where, when he was talking about Jews. Here with the beautiful people, talking nice. Soon we start to talk Jews, boom, he's changed. The eyes get wild. I know already how I have to treat him and how I have to be treated. You know you have to be constantly evaluating. Your brain have to work like a computer, seconds. Never rest. Always up and down, up and down. So we were sitting over there with that *Afanosiev* on the *palma*. *Palma* means the deck. And he was evaluating everything. He said, "You are a butcher," to my father. "Why are you not going to the..."

HR: Slaughterhouse.

HS: "Slaughter factory," he said. Over there you no call it house. It's a factory. "They're sending in thousands of cattle, and these have to be made, killed, prepared." They send it away again you know, with plans, with the whole, you know, the Russian terrible system. "Why are you not going to the slaughter factory?" I heard this, I said, "Father, why are you not going to the slaughter factory?" The race, it was a short race. We have different races, and can only take a barge. We go fast. And when you take the wood, how to call, the bundles, the big bundles, you still, you go two miles an hour. Takes you a month or two, one race. And when you take a barge you go very fast. This was a short race. We come back, and we come home, explain this to the mother and to the children. We say, "Let's go to the *boynia*, to the *Yasisavov* [phonetic]." We went to that *Yasisavov*. It was not far, incidentally. On Ulritsa Polsova. And we was on Ulritsa Niekrasova. And we went over there. And they right away took him in, with open hand. "Oh, a *yasnik* [phonetic] from Warsaw, from Poland!" You know? And he knows the business. My father know the business. They don't know. They, over there nobody knows nothing, you know? You just do it. My father, in my presence, they took him in and I say, they took him in to show him. He took the ax and the knife how to [unclear] some. They opened their eyes, you know? I say, "Father!" And you're working, I say, "Father, you're working by food, don't forget." I was already enough Russian. I say, "You're working by food, not by stones and by fire, by water, with bums." And they took him in. And I was already happy, happy. Already my swimming was entire different. You know, I was already not in distress. My sister went to school to learn accounting, *schetoroistro*, not accounting. My younger brother went to school. Mine other brother went to school too and he was looking for a job for, with electricians. And...

HR: And you still lived, where did you, did you, and you lived in that apartment still?

HS: Niekrosova, right. And I was on the ship. I was on the ship, and every time when the race comes my, the, where my the brother was working in the factory, "*Krasnaia Zvezda*," ["Red star" - name of factory] he was always waiting for me. I saw already he is, you know? And I already, when we was working we would come to Rybinsk it was sometime times that we have, we're getting white bread. You can get five white breads. They're counting you for so many days and you wait, you're entitled to five white breads. You no see it in no place. When I getting the white breads I didn't five, six days I didn't eat a piece of bread at all. Period. I just, when I come I give him that bag of bread, you know, which was the biggest holiday. And I was, sometime I have a chance to buy a little barley, a little this. Then we come over there in Rybinsk. Rybinsk was a tremendous big city. Rybinsk is not far from Yaroslavl, on the Volga river. We was on the Sheksna river. And over there you know it was more like a European, you know. It wasn't so much provincial, so much close. So, and I was working on the--it was already much better. They was working, yes. Now I have to find a way how to go out from the ship. No way they didn't let me go to the ship.

HR: Get off.

HS: Get off.

HR: Excuse me, Mr. Skorr, did you have news of the war and what's going on now?

HS: Sure.

HR: You knew.

HS: Yeah.

HR: And the Jews? You didn't...

HS: Now, very, very informal news, very disoriented news.

HR: Did you...

HS: The Russian news was...

HR: Censored.

HS: Not only censored. Not telling the truth. The Germans and Hitler was a hero, and the other side was violence.

HR: Did you know anything about the Jews?

HS: No, now, yes, now we will come back. When I start already, you see, I was in a terrible turmoil for a few months. Turmoil that again, with saving my family, you know? I was not so much exposed, my, you know, I, my day and night was only to save that unit, you know, to make it again a working unit, to make it what it was. And I settled this, that problem, you know, that this is okay. I come back, and for two, sometimes you see, when we come back, I, sometimes get a week off, when they're fixing the ship, you know, and something have to be changed, this. And my mother start, you know, "What will be and what we hear from them, from them, from the family." We didn't hear nothing

what we, what I brought them up to the pass what I brought them to Bialystok. The people what I pull out from Kalisz, we didn't know nothing there. You see, when we run on the border, everything was dispersed. I didn't know where my cousins are. I didn't know where mine friends are. I didn't know where my relatives. I took one more family, family Bricktlau, is my mother's cousin. We call him uncle, only he went with us too. Only we know that his wife, is named Soya, he married her in the First World War in Latvia, near Riga, that small town I forgot. Not [unclear], a small town. And we don't know nothing about them. And as I say to the mother, "How about we write a letter to that small town to Latvia? To the family Aaron? Maybe they know something from them." And I know, and we know that he was a *zygermah*. You know what's a *zygermah*? A watchmaker.

HR: A watchmaker.

HS: So we saw, when we stayed...

HR: Aaron the watchmaker.

HS: Aaron the watchmaker, right? And we, and amazing we get, make a letter. They, with the other family that what was from Kalisz, the Bricktlau, they was arrested, and they were sended to Komi A.S.S.R., deported. Like we was deported to Volenton [phonetic], now we wasn't deported really. We volunteered. They didn't volunteer, and they deported them, to Komi A.S.S.R., even higher than we, more to the north. And they was in a prison. Not in a prison, no, in a camp, right. And we wrote them a letter, imagine they get a letter from us. And he broke a leg, Uncle Solomon. And my mother right away what we have, make a package. This is my mother, you know? Right away we send them a package of food to Komi A.S.S.R. I forgot to tell you, when I was in the forest, you know, I had friends in Baranovichi, the family Gilfiks, what I intend to go to Baranovichi, on the Minska 57. And we, my friend, I make a po-

Tape eleven, side one:

HR: Mr. Henry Skorr, side four [side one], June 14th.

HS: So being still in the forest I wrote a letter to my friends in Baranovich and, to that family Gilfiks what I intend to visit them in the beginning when I ran to the Russians. And I didn't have a chance in connection what, when I was saving my family. I received a letter from her, written half Russian half Polish already, because she was going to a Russian school. That my friends, a few show up over there. And now they decided to go back to Poland to save their families too, and she didn't hear nothing from them. I just find out about one, Motek Leder. He was in the Warsaw Ghetto and he was fighting in the 1943 in Poland he was there. So we know already of our family what was in Komi A.S.S.R. and they know, and they received a letter from my cousins what they ran away, again through the same way. They was writing to Riga to her family. And they are in a, they was in a city Kirov, too in the north. And they intend to go to run to Tashkent. And from them we received a letter that their mother isn't, they have a letter from their mother in Warta Ghetto, in Poland. This is the family what the mother didn't let the daughters go with us. She let only the boys go with us. So, the boys wrote us that the mother, the father, and the four sisters are in the Warta Ghetto. And we right away decided to send them packages. It was very hard to get already all kinds of things on the market.

HR: Which ghetto was this?

HS: The Warta Ghetto.

HR: Where is this?

HS: Warta. This is western Poland, on the river Warta, they're a small town. This is where [unclear] basically originates. And they decided to go back over there. Because when they make Kalisz *Judenrein*, all the, or they send you to Lublin, to that future concentration camp with Majdanek, or you run away when you want to run away. And they ran away to Warta. And in Warta the head from the ghetto was our far relative. And later, well after the war when I come back to claim some real estate what we had over there, their *Burgermeister*, how do you call a *Burgermeister* here?

HR: The mayor?

HS: The mayor from the small town tell us that the Germans forced the Jewish people to hang that head of the Jewish ghetto, our relative.

HR: It was your relative.

HS: Yeah. And he show us the place. We had home a picture where, still a picture from, they sent us a picture from the Warta Ghetto with the yellow bands. And when I was in Warta later, I saw the place where they make the pictures and where they hang that guy. You know, this is what happened. So, we decide, we sent them what we could, a package of barley and soap. I say it was very hard to buy on the market. And we sent them two packages. They received, and they sent us a letter they received with that picture. And this was until 1941. Then 1941 it start the war with the Germans, between

Russia and Germany and this flared out. That we lost a connection with them and they disappeared. Nobody survived. There was only that one daughter was alive to the last of the days and she couldn't make it and she was destroyed.

So, now being on the ship--let's go back to Cherepovetz--being on the ship is already, it was much more normal for me because I know already where my family is and I know already what's going on. No I, clear I didn't intend to stay on the ship, and I, and clear I couldn't go out from the ship, only to go to prison. And I, with Molotov's law. And I was already, they know me already on the ship and they treat me already different because I did already my job. No to tell the truth I didn't like the job. When they find out that I am Jewish, because it was a discussion, and their behavior to me change, especially their behavior from the Knyezov, from that secretary from the *Partin Organizatsia*. He was a big antisemite. And he was trying to needle me about Jewish origin, about the Jews no like to work, and about this and that. And always when we went through the camps near Rybinsk he show me, "You see how your Jews are working." No still I didn't pay attention to him. I did my work. I read my books. And I take my time. So it was until it comes the winter. The end of the navigation, and they still didn't want to let me out from the ship. They didn't no let me out from the work. When, at the end of the navigation is over there a whole ritual again. You run with the ship so long until the river is freezing, because we have to make the plan. And you try to come with the ship through the port and where they're doing the repairing of the ship. And this is what we did. And again they're loosening up their connection. They released everybody from the villages, the old boys what was working here. And they went home. And they decided that I and a few more boys should live on that ship in the winter time, and being a part of the remodeling and fixing. And doing this--our job was that the ship shouldn't be squeezed with the ice--we have to cut the ice constantly every day around the ship. And it's a very hard job, and very primitive by Russian conditions. We get such a iron...

HR: [unclear].

HS: No, you get such a big...

HR: No. Oh, I see.

HS: Iron pick.

HR: To [unclear].

HS: Yeah. And you bind this to your wrist that you shouldn't fall down. And you cut, so everything, you go out and you're just putting it out. Doing this once, you know, it was very slippery. I fall in in the ice water, with that ice pick, with everything, and I almost drowned. But that boy what was near me, working the other side, catch me by my legs and pull me out. It's clear I was frostbitten and they took me to the hospital. Being in the hospital I met all kind of people. And I met one Bulgarian doctor. And we was, we start to have discussions and mine Russian wasn't so good. Now he knows German and so we spoke a little German. And I was sure that he is positive to me. Now soon he found out that I am Jewish, he changed the entire tone. "You Jews are lazy. Jews so..." because I told him

I no intend to work on the ship. I just went by accident to the ship and I want to go to be with my family. And he started to talk so with a abusive tone that the Jews only try to look for a easy job for this, for that. And we have a very bitter, hard discussion. Still I decided not to be on the ship. Being in the hospital I was already two weeks, because my whole hand was frozen. The skin went off from my hands. I decided, not being able, I was discussing with that Komolov from the personnel department, and he say, "Is no way that we will let you go. You are a good worker. We can advance you. We can make you a bigger thing from you. No, you will be with our system." I say, "I intend to be with mine family and I intend to go to school." And our discussion didn't help nothing. I decide to write a letter to Stalin. It was a very controversial thing. And I decided to write a letter to Stalin.

HR: Why? What did you have in your mind?

HS: Laying in bed I develop a whole plan, and my broth-...

HR: Stalin is gonna care about you?

HS: And he brought me a whole notebook from the school, my brother, to the hospital. And I wrote a big, big letter to Stalin in Polish. And I explaining there and I going through the whole our history and the whole our being in Poland and how they was behaving to Jews, and how the Jewish youth have no prospective of existence, how we was believing that Russia can help us, and how I am happy that I am in Russia. You know, and I would like to be, I would like to study. I'm just accidentally on the ship, just a job what I, that I took because, and this is very far from me and from my mentality. And I believe that I would be much more productive for the society if I can be educated and do a job what I like. To my big surprise, I have a answer.

HR: You actually mailed it to him!

HS: Not from Stalin. I wrote this to Stalin. And mine, I remember, my sister mail it with the registered mail on the to the [unclear]. I should have somewhere the copy. I receive a answer, not from Stalin, only from the Vologda State Department. Not the State Department, from Vologda Province Department. It's like from the governor of the...

HR: State.

HS: Like the governor from Vologda, a whole letter that they have instructions from Stalin's consulary to take care of me. What is my wish? And if I have some, yes, in my letter, and the instructions are sent to the *Profsoyuz* to the how is it in English *Profsoyuz*? To the labor...

HR: [unclear], unions.

HS: To the union department from the organization where I worked. This means to the *Sheksninskor Rechnoye Parokhodtsro*. And I should discuss with them the problem. And if I have no satisfaction from them, that I should be in touch with, not with Stalin, or be in touch with the State of Vologda. And sure a day after come a man from the unions, from the *Rechnoye Parokhodtsro*. And he start, and he say, and he asked me, he was very surprised. And he was very afraid of me and asked what's the problem. I explain him in a very civilized way my problem with him, and why and what. And I say, "I am not satisfied

that they, I am a young boy. I can't command the Russian language. I have to get basic education in Russian. And they're forcing me to work on a ship. I believe that if I will be educated I can be better for this society, do better things. Why should I be forced to work on a ship? First of all this is strange for me. I never saw a ship in my life. And it's strange to my mentality. And I would like to get a regular education." I told him again the whole *shpiel*. "In Poland I couldn't get education. I just, they beat me up in the school constantly. I believe I am now in Russia, in the free Russia, that I have a chance to better my life and be a very productive part from the society." He was very impressed with my speech, and he say, "How about we send you to school here, to make you a captain of a ship, or to make you something from the..." I say, "I would prefer, I know, I have not too much sympathy to ship business," because, I told him in a nice way, I told him that I was very abused on the ship, very mistreated, I believe underpaid. Because I was already later I find out the ropes. I was doing work that I didn't get paid for this. Other people was getting paid for my loading the wood and my free time. And other things what I wasn't impressed. And I will be, and I told him, "I would be, I believe it would be much better if I would be released. I would appreciate very much." The next few days before I have to go out from the hospital, this was already three, four weeks I was already in the hospital. I developed a rheumatism too from that, the arthritis with the whole thing I developed from that--yes. And I have a statement from the doctor that I have a rheumatism arthritis. And it is not advisable that I should be on the water. So, a week later I received a letter from that head of the whole *Parokhodstro* what once was inspect our ship. And, with a letter that I am released of my job, that I can go where I will. And he wished me luck, and he's sure that I will have success in my future life. This was mine way that I finished with the...

HR: The ship.

HS: Yeah, and it was a very original, revolutionary way, because I believe they was just afraid of the word "Stalin." And they wasn't looking for trouble. The Russian psychology...

HR: Why do you think that Stalin, why do you think that the big shots responded like that to a letter?

HS: I didn't think nothing. No, I start to learn the Russian psychology. The very people, they're very afraid to do something extraordinary. They always want to be covered with something, because they have a bigger experience. If they do something, and something went wrong, they go to prison. So, when they received a letter from the top, sympathetic to my condition [unclear]...

HR: Yes, I understand their reaction. But why do you think the top reacted to your letter the way they did?

HS: Because I...

HR: Why didn't you just get lost in that bureaucracy?

HS: Because, no, if you write a letter to Stalin it's like you want to write a letter to God. They would be afraid to, oh, what you talking? Stalin is more than God. God is in a...

HR: Yeah, but God doesn't always answer!

HS: Correct.

HR: Stalin answered your letter!

HS: No, they always, they're very afraid. If you write something to Stalin...

HR: He's gonna answer.

HS: If you do something, they will send it, they will expedite it to the top. And I'm almost positive that some person in the consulary over there studied, read that letter in Polish. Somebody have to read it in Polish. And I represented as a little, in a such a way, to give him our history, that I still I was believing that they are sympathetic to us, to our horror what we went through. And I told him, "I'm already, I'm here in Russia." I told him, "I am free in Russia. So, why shouldn't I be educated?"

HR: Remarkable.

HS: So, and that letter, it was a very big talk by the whole *byezhinitzes* community in Cherepovetz, because...

HR: Nobody ever did that before.

HS: And nobody ever did that. And they was amazed. Everybody, basically everybody was stuck with jobs what they don't like. Because this was the rule, and the Russian director from a factory or from work, he is so strict by putting up his power, showing what he can do, if you let's see come ten minutes late to work you'll get six months of prison.

HR: Oh my!

HS: No excuse. No telling that you have no train, that you have no car. Only if you're sick you have to have forty-one degrees temperature. This means 105 degrees temperature, registered by a doctor from the *Polyklinikal*, by the government doctor, that he give you a sign. No excuse that you're sick, no excuse that you were far, or if it's snowing or raining or something. No talking about traveling. Over there you no travel, you walk. So, the law was very strict observed, because if they no observe, if the director from the factory doesn't observe, there are spies in the factory what will tell about the director and he will be in trouble. So, I believe my way to try to go out from that is, it was enough successful, analyzing their psychology. I couldn't lose nothing. I only could advance me better. And from the ship I definitely can go out. I could accept a job in their system. They have plenty of work around in that *Sheksninskor Parokhodstro*. This means, it was a whole city for themselves, a whole government, you know? A big, with the apartments, with streets, with the hospitals, with schools, with *kinos* [cinema theater], with restaurants, with everything. Only I want to be with my family. I want to feel my family, and see what--and I was very thrilled with this that I succeed...

HR: Sure.

HS: Through such a revolutionary way to get out. So, I come home a big hero. And everybody was happy. And we were start to be at peace with ourselves. I wrote out to a Jewish newspaper from Kiev, because my father was like very much Jewish. That was the Kiev *Emes*. Now, to our big sorrow this was only, this was a, really a Russian paper written in Jewish language. Nothing, absolutely nothing on Jewish. Only everything which was in the Russian press...

HR: Was written in Yiddish.

HS: Was written in the Jewish, with that special Russian dialect, not a normal Jewish with the, not *soph*, *nun* or the *lamed*, nothing. No, what...

HR: What do you mean now?

HS: They are writing an entire modernized Jewish that nobody can understand.

HR: So you could read it?

HS: Very bad. Yeah, you have to read it but very bad. And we was already, we was reading that paper. And my father start to enjoy that, the job, because he was doing things what he knows. And they really respect him. He was, because basically only just accidentally people work from butchers and this. And he was a real professional in that line. And they was happy with him, and we was happy with him. He started to bring home food from the *boynia*, how do they call it? From the...

HR: Slaughter factory.

HS: Slaughterhouse. Pieces of meat, a whole stomachs with that whole fat inside. Fats, they are not u-, I don't know why they are not using the tongues. They permit him take out tongues. And my father...

HR: And your mother pickled this.

HS: And my mother start to do this. And my mother, may she rest in peace, was a very unusual woman. She started to cook meals for all Jewish people in our town. And we started to give them food, to the people. We had it that all meat and that everything. And she just let know to everybody. And they're every night, everybody would come with a pot, and my mother was filling them up the pots with soup and with this. And everybody was taking away. And that our *khozayki* shouldn't be mad, we give her food too. So she was sympathetic because this was too a anti-Russian thing. You're not making a kitchen and you're not just going around helping people. They say the government have to help people. Now there were people was so hungry. And I remember how they was blessing me on the streets when they just saw me, saying, "Imagine what kind of a mother you have!" I say, "I know what kind of mother I have." And we was in that, with that *khozayki* we was in very good, very good condition with her. She liked us, because we took over the whole work in the house. We was cutting for her the wood. We was bringing the water. Over there water is not like here [where] you open the...

HR: Spigot.

HS: ...in the kitchen. You walk over there four, five blocks to a pump and you bring the water. And you no walk on a street. You just walk on boards. In the winter time

you walk on the snow and ice. So she was--and who you believe is doing that job? Only women and children, no men. Men are not doing this kind of work. So she was very glad and she was very happy that I told her that we will do this. And we was bringing the water and we make a central water station in the kitchen that everybody can use that water. And finally they find out that we are Jewish. And there was a subtle hint of antisemitism. How they find out? The mailman, the mailwoman--there is not mailman in Russia--the mailwoman was delivering us the newspaper, a Jewish newspaper. And the neighbors saw that it's a Jewish newspaper from Kiev, and that there was over there a woman Anna, a beautiful young peasant woman, a blonde, you know. And I saw how she was changed to us. I saw that terrible glint in her eyes. Before she was believing we are Polaks, and now she finds out that we are Jews. No, to give us a compliment she say, "You are not like our Jews. Our Jews are not working. Our Jews are the bosses. Only you are the people what are working." This should be a compliment for us.

So, this was so. And we was happy and it was winter time. I started to go to night school, and because I intend to take a job. Being afraid that again, that I shouldn't be stuck with a job what I don't like, so I decide to take a job in the electro station where they're making electricity, cutting wood. Over there you can take a job, a season job, cutting. Let's say you make with them like a contract that you will cut during the winter time or during the summer time. And if you want we can prolong it. So you are no obligated and they can do this. And this was very extraordinary because they was used to have the farmers, peasants, cutting the wood for them in winter time when they have no too much work around in *kolkhoz*. So, they extend this to other people that you can get a job by them on contract. Or you can get a job, a steady job. I didn't want to take the steady job, and I went with two of my friends and we take that contract job, cutting wood. This means we were standing eight hours a day cutting wood for the furnace. The whole electro station was built, it was made where the fuel was wood. The wood was delivered with trucks, with cars, with sleighs, through the river with ships. And the wood was pulling out on the back yard from the station. And over there was standing maybe twenty or thirty people, teams, and cutting the wood. This was a very strange experience, to stay eight hours cutting trees. And again we started to feel the question, Jews and not Jews. This kind of work only was doing Russians. There was there a few Jewish supervisors. I forget his name. Rubenstein, one was Rubenstein. And one was Bielis. And how I come to that point? Always when they was calling Rubenstein or Bielis, they was calling with such a irony. Over there the *desiatnik* was a man, Spiridonov. He was like from the noble people what once was from the nobility. And I believe he was living in Cherepovetz that he was sent away in the '30s when it was the, something wrong with the rich people. That's, I have a constantly discussions with that Spiridonov, and he was so gently nudging too about the Jewish people and this, and how I am a Jewish man, a Jewish boy cutting the trees, the wood, and the other are not cutting. And saying that we are not productive. And we have constant dialogues with him. Now I would say that he liked me. He was a elderly guy. And he start

to bring me literature--old Czarian journals, like *Mera* means fields, and books from Tolstoy's, and all kinds. He give me tickets to the theater and was reference from the *Voznesenski* about the international situation. He called me in every hour when was the news. Over there you hear the news only once a hour. And you have not already, you have only a reproductor. And he calls me in to his room that I hear the news, and I tell this to the boys. And he was laughing. He was saying that, "You will not cut trees in Russia. You'll be a big commissar." With that whole irony, and that whole unproductivity, I started to hit him back. I say, "If you say so, they are, nobody is good, you're so good, how come that only that so many people are cutting the wood by the hand? Why no you shouldn't put in here a mechanical saw, a central fugal saw, and we can and one team can cut a matter of fifty people can cut." He look on me with the eyes, he said, "What you're talking?" I say, "Very simple. Why shouldn't we make a special saw and cut wood? We can in one day cutting wood for a week." He think about this. He called me to the director, and they make from this a whole *shvitz*. And the head mechanic come to me and ask me what kind of idea is this and what? I believe it's just to take a saw-

Tape eleven, side two:

HR: ...Skorr, June 28th, 1983, Harriet Richman recording.

HS: And since that episode with that electric saw, with mechanizing that cutting the wood, I started to be like a personality in that electric station. They wrote about me and our team in the rural newspaper. And for a special appreciation they let me eat in the *stolofka*. This means in the canteen where only the engineering part from the [unclear] are entitled to eat. The paradox in the Soviet society is it should be a classless society, that everybody is equal. Now eating in every factory, you have different canteens where only a worker can eat, and later where the technical staff, the engineers and the *politruk* and the director can eat. And this should be their new modern, equal, socialistic society. Their worker was, the working people in the beginning was grumbling against that custom. Only later they get used and they didn't intend to fight that system. Only they want to just climb the ladder to be too a part, to be entitled to eat in the canteen where they were, the engineers, eating. So I had the permission to eat in the canteen, only not my friends what I was working with them. Now I was entitled to buy for them food and take them out and give them too a part from this, from that food. And a other things, I was permitted already when I had the night shift, when I, we have the coffee break, I was permitted to go in in that boiler room from the electro station. And it was the enormous ovens they was throwing in the wood. And I was sitting over in the warm watching the big fires. And my troubled mind was coming in the memories what's happening with the Jews in Poland in that time? And in my fantasy I saw how they was throwing in in the ovens, not knowing either that this is not a fantasy, that this is really true. In that time already people was being destroyed in the concentration camps, buried alive.

Something specific about the winter from Russia. When I come out from that hot environment, from that boiler room, that special Russian frost have a special smell and catching your breath. And you can't breathe either. And your lungs get congested. It was like 40, 45 below zero. And after the 15 minutes of rest we have to go out again to that, in that cold, cutting that wood. Let's see how it's [tape off then on]. So, I was working in that electro station and doing all kind of works, everything with the wood supply. I remember we was going sometime to that wild river, to that Sheksna, and to the forest, organizing the, preparing the wood for the, to prepare it the wood for the summer time it should be prepared with the river. I had already experience from forest work, so I was no more, it was no more strange, that work, for me. And I was already a good worker. And they recognized already. I remember once we was going out in a small, not a village, a small place they called Torovo [phonetic]. It was about ten miles from Cherepovetz. And we was working together in a prisoner's camp and the train from the electro station, working together with the prisoners, preparing that wood. And I have sometime talks with them. And they was very envying us that after a day's work we can go home in the free, in...

HR: Russian prisoners? Russian?

HS: Russian prisoners, right. No...

HR: And what kind of crime?

HS: Not...

HR: Politically.

HS: Politically a criminal, mostly political. And mostly not crimes. If their system decided they need labor hands, they need to do some big unattractive work, is just arresting 100,000 people for nothing, just for the fantasy. Just, because how I say in the beginning, every Russian citizen have a case in the police. And they already know exactly what he's doing wrong, what he's not doing wrong, because in every factories there are informers. So, if something comes on a project to build, let's see when they were started to build the *Rybinska More*, the Sea of Rybinsk, or to build a big defense factory, they need 100,000 people. They're just arresting people without reason, without trial. There is not a trial. There are not judges. They just get sentences from the *NKVD*, five years, ten years. And the Russian person is already used. He takes his bag with a little salt, with a shirt and a underwear, and goes to prison.

HR: Well did you meet any Jews?

HS: In prison?

HR: From [unclear]...

HS: No, no. I didn't meet Jews. I meet only Russians and all kinds of Serbs. So, and this was the kind of work I was doing. And at night I was going to school. I was in the same [unclear] my sister and my two brothers. And a little if it's possible to say, we was at peace with ourselves, not forgetting the trouble with news what's going on in the world, what's going on in Poland. And but the Russian system it was a twilight zone. If they decided not to mention that a German is a criminal, that the German is doing atrocities, nobody knows about this. Because in the newspaper they're not writing about this. And the radio, they're not announcing about this. It's you only hear what they want to tell you. And...

HR: So at this time you really didn't know the horrors that were going on.

HS: We didn't know the horrors what's going because either when we received one letter from the ghetto, from Warta what we sent a package, it was always written that--probably they was afraid of a German censor or the Russian censor--"We was living in the ghetto. Thank you for your packages, and we hope we will see you sometime." And this was the contact with them. And only it start to be political rumbles, a little uneasiness between Russia and Germany. And you have to read this between the lines. I always was going to the bazaar. This means to the free market. Why I was going to the market? Because over there was hanged out a newspaper to read. You can't buy in Russia a newspaper. It's not...

HR: It's on the wall. Like in China. They put it on...

HS: Yeah, it's only there is in a few places in the city hanged out the *Pravda*. From one side and from the other side. When you want to know something you have to go

over there and to read by yourself. Or if you are a big shot in a factory or a director, probably they're getting the newspapers and other journals. We didn't get. We only get a Jewish paper. We write out to Kiev. This was the *Kiever Emes*. Now it was a Russian paper written in Jewish language, without nothing news what you get. So, going to that bazaar and reading that *Pravda*, I was already much more fluent in Russian because I was constantly, in my free time I was constantly reading, and making better in the Russian language. I started to read some small announcement in the Russian press about concentration of German Army near the border, about big maneuvers, big field exercise from the Red Army in western Ukraine. And I started to feel a certain uneasiness. I was say that when I was working at the station, that Spiridonov, that old foreman was letting me in every hour to hear the radio, I always, in the radio I was hearing something like an uneasiness. And even he told me. And I remember he give me once a ticket to go to the *Goroskoy Theater*. This means to the city theater was a political *referent* from Voznesenski, a man from the Politburo, from the Censor Politburo, he was later killed by Stalin. And he start to mention too about inappropriate demands from Hitler. His whole *referent* was saying how the west was losing from the Germans, how the German Army is overcoming the west, how they are knocking down the--there was in that time the battles in Fretta [phonetic], and the [unclear] in Greece, and in Albany, how the German Army is succeeding. And no, and in between they was putting in saying that the German Army are putting up more forces on the eastern border. And when people started to ask questions he didn't give a good answer.

And so our life was going on until 1941. How was our daily, how was our week going out? The week was, we us working. Everybody who have to work was working. The children was going to school. After the war we was cutting wood. And we was bringing water for ourselves and for the *khozayki*. Sunday was a special day. Sunday was a *banya* day. This means we was going to the bath. Going to the bath is a whole celebration for the Russians, because they have no, in their houses they have no...

HR: Showers.

HS: The showers, or the *banyas*, how do you call it?

HR: Bath tubs.

HS: Bath tubs. So the whole Sunday day is going to the public bath. This is a *banya*, and this is a old, a Russian still from the Czar, a whole enterprise like a whole holiday. They're going, the men and the women, and they're taking on the small sleighs small children, and they go to the, all to the rooms. You take off your clothes and you go in in a big room full of steam, with hot water. And they give you a, such twigs from a beech tree, and everybody start to knock each other on the, and washing each other. And yelling and screaming and singing those all kind of songs. And later after that *banya*, this is a public thing. You take a wooden pail, you're getting a wooden pail. You're mixing the hot water and you're just throwing in that water on yourself. And when you want steam, there is over there a corner full with hot stones. You take that water and throw on the hot stones,

and comes out very hot steam. Now the Russians are very used to this. And it took a little time that we get used to this. You know, it's a, I believe it's a very healthy exercise. After that steam you go out in that waiting room. You're changing your clothes, and you go to the barber. The barber doesn't accept you before that you're not washed. So after you take the--you go to the barber, he give you a hair cut. And later you go to buy such a beer, a homemade beer. Is not a beer. They call it a *kvas khlebnyi*, *kvas*. This is like made from bread, such a fermented liquid. And it's a little sweet, and everybody is drinking. And we have to stay in the line and wait. In Russia everywhere you stay in line. And after this you change your clothes. You take your dirty clothes with yourself home. And you go home, this was like a holiday. We was going with our father and he saw how we, he was very happy that we all go together on that streets full of snow. And the sleighs in the middle. People are not walking on the sidewalks. Everybody is walking in the middle of the street. And plenty drunks, and plenty singing, and plenty dancing. How I say, if you meet ten Russians, and they have a harmonica, and right away they start to dance without reason on the streets. This was our regular winter day. And when we come home, the mother have already a hot soup. And she's taking out from the oven. And she feed us. And our landlord come in to take this soup. And the small children come in. We feed them all because we have that food from the place where my father was working. And we can say we was comfortable. My mother's eyes started to shine back like she was always, you know, in good mood. She was nice and at peace with herself and at peace with us. And I say how her face start to be nice and not clouded. And we was very happy to look in on ourself.

And this was the winter time from 1940 to 1941. And when you come 1941 we continued our work. My sister was already getting a job in her accounting business, and we was at peace with ourselves. Until come the first of May in our town. I have to explain what this means such a holiday in the Russian reality. This should be a big proletarian holiday. More in the fact the Russians are utilizing, because in that time the Russian government is giving them. It's strange to say that word. In Russia you're not buying merchandise. They're giving you. That you spend [unclear] money is not important. You're not buying from a store. You just ask, "*Shto dayut?*" What are they giving in that store?" So in that holiday they're giving you vodka, they're giving you cookies, and you no have to work.

HR: But you have to pay for the vodka, didn't you?

HS: Yeah, that they're giving you doesn't mean that you get without the money. Only they are so already...

HR: It's not available otherwise.

HS: Yeah. It's nothing normal is available. And it's so inclined that the government is so good, he is giving you. That you have to pay money for this is not important either. Because you can't go in to a store and buy, because nothing is in. It's very abnormal. You can find out tomorrow they will give shoes in that store. So in the morning right away, 2:00 in the morning, you have a line of thousands of people staying in line.

You need shoes or you no need shoes, you buy them. You buy them and put them away and later, or you exchange for something else, or you have in time when you can buy. So it's nothing abnormal. It's nothing normal. So that holiday, the first of May, is a very big celebration because officially the government doesn't permit to celebrate the religious holiday. The *Pravoslavna* [Eastern Orthodox] religious holiday, people are celebrating private how it is suppressed by the government. When it's comes such a holiday like first of May, everybody gets crazy, because everybody gets vodka. That means alcohol, and the cookies and other goods. And they're forcing you to go to a demonstration. This means forcing you. In every factory they say, "Tomorrow 10:00 you have to be in the factory place. And you get a red flag and you march around two hours." Not if somebody wants to go. Only you have to go. And when that May day, it comes in the afternoon, you believe you're in a mad house. In the beginning I was sure is something a illness come in the country. You can see all people drunk on the street, laying on the sidewalk, laying everywhere. Women, men, and children, even six, seven-year-old children.

HR: They get drunk? The kids?

HS: Everybody is drunk. I was sure that is something, a cholera or a *chuma* [plague] or something, a sickness come in everybody's--and the whole city is laying on the street drunk. This is the May holiday. And probably other holidays so. And their...

HR: When Christmas would come did you see some celebrations?

HS: Yes.

HR: You did.

HS: It's not Christmas.

HR: Like in the house, not out.

HS: Yes, private. In the few churches, there was a few churches what they have open, you can see the elderly people going with the candles. And they're going celebrating. And especially the *Pascha*, the, not the, how do you call the *Pascha*? The eastern.

HR: Easter.

HS: Easter you saw it more on the streets. Christmas is when it's winter, you no see so much. No, the *Pascha*, this means the Easter, you can see on the street a such a shine in the eyes of the people. And strange people coming to each other and kissing when they meet on the street. And they say, "*Christos voskrés*." This means, "Jesus Christ raised up, and he's truly raised up." And people are kissing each other on the street. And they're going to the old, neglected cemeteries. They have the cemeteries that are very neglected, the *Pravoslavna* with the crosses. And they're not...

HR: Enclosed?

HS: Taken care of. They're not enclosed. You can see cows walking around eating the grass. Because usually is over there near every church is a graveyard. And this is now neglected, because now the modern cemetery is back in the, out of the city. So you can see that people going over there, sitting down and crossing themselves, you know, and putting candles.

HR: Did you see any antisemitism particularly at Easter time?

HS: No.

HR: No?

HS: We didn't see antisemitism because we didn't see Jews.

HR: You were the only...

HS: We are, now we wasn't, we was like on the stranger of Russian life. We wasn't integrated in the Russian life. We was living our personal life.

HR: Did you know other Jews? No, you didn't know other Jews.

HS: We know only our Jews. And the Russian Jews, I know a few Russian Jews. No they didn't [unclear] with us. They didn't, we couldn't go so closer to them. The reason is most of the Jews what was in that city, they was political they send away. How do you tell it? They was...

HR: Prisoners? No.

HS: Not modern prison. If you was in prison and later they send you away, and they say...

HR: Exiled.

HS: Yeah. They was political exiles in that time, because mostly there was coming from wealthy Jewish families, they was, the heads was all destroyed or something. And they was exiled to that town and they can live their life. They can be doctors. They can be lawyers. Not lawyers I didn't see. They can be doctors, pharmacists, a watchmaker, a photomaker maker on the street. And we know each other. You know there was a little, there was like a wall between us. They was afraid of us. We wasn't afraid of them because we had nothing what to lose. We was like--and we wasn't accepted. I wouldn't say that we was accepted in Russian life. We was only like tolerated. They didn't let us in in this. We was, they was, how saying, we are not a *nashi* [native]. *Nashi* not, is not ours. We are the strangers. And when they find out how I say before that we are Jews, because when we was getting the Jewish paper from Kiev, I saw a little hostility, especially by one young woman. Anna was her name. And she was mentioned to us. And I saw the hostility in her eyes. And the other people was just tolerating us. So, this was going on until June, 1921 [he means 1941]. And this was...

HR: '41.

HS: 194-...

HR: Forty.

HS: Yeah, 1941, in June. We was being in bed still, I remember. We had a radio, a loud speaker, not a radio. And we hear in the morning, it's probably so 4:00, a special announcement. And that sign, a special announcement hit us like a knife in our heart because in Russia if they say a special announcement it's something unusual have to come. And we hear this speech of Molotov that a terrible thing has happened, that the German Army, without provocation, without this, attacked us. And they crossed over the border and they're attacking us. Only we don't know we will be strong. We should be ready. And

we will fight them back. After this start a whole upheaval. We, everybody runs to his working place. And that whole city, that whole town, you saw a whole revolution. I would say that the Soviet reality like was going a little in backward, and like the old Russian life was coming, start to come out. People start to be very serious. They wasn't talking in that modern slogans. The women start to cry. The men start to get drunk. They start to be very unruly. And it was start to be a very disorganization. I was surprised only by such a announcement such a disorganization can right away be in a city. And we come to the work, to the electro station. Already we didn't get the supply of wood. Already the ships didn't arrive. Already I saw that it's a whole, like we wasn't moving in the same orbit. And right away they start with the mobilization papers. Everybody start to get his mobilization card. And the people start to be very hostile about the work. They came already drunk. And they was very vile. And they started to sing the vile songs and going around with their axes.

HR: My God!

HS: And you can already see in their eyes the killer instinct. And they don't talk already more in Soviet slogans in the modern. You can see like the Russian *muzhik* [peasant] started to come out. Like, you know, like that Russian reality start to push away the Soviet reality and they start to sing the old Czarian songs about the swords, about rifles, about killing, about this, you know. And they was very easy on the fight. They was very edgy and right away you know every discussion you can see they're right away ready on the battlefield. And we was working in this condition. Already they start to take away the people. And the military *garnizon*, and the city start to make, how to say it, so controls in the city. They're going around, the soldiers, and checking documents and by the railroad and by the water, *vugzal*¹⁷, you know? You could see thousands of soldiers, you know, checking, being afraid of sabotage, and being afraid of that, and being afraid of this. And it was a very sense of uneasiness. One day I saw the whole city was cut off with the army like a chain of army. Later we saw that Molotov or other big men was going through the city, going through the river to checking or there is, probably it was only rumors, that they will transport sea boats through that water system, to the *Rybinskoye More*.

And how I say it was very, the supplies already was bad. And we wasn't get already the bread normal. Usually we was getting deliveries, the bread, that pound of bread what we was entitled. Was a woman bringing in in a carriage every day. And every person put out a bag in his name and later he collect that bread in the carriages. That system stopped. Was no more bread. We have to go stay in the line, go in the city to get bread. And was no more bread. We was coming home, and one day they say, "There will, on this day there will no be bread. They will give you only grains." And it's amazing how the Russian was ready for this. They already take out the grain mills. They have home grain mills. And they're already making that grain flour. And they're already making bread in their homes. That right away they was already no more dependent on the Soviet regime. They're already

¹⁷Large railroad terminal.

back to that old Russian origin not to be dependent on something, and already making their own, old historical way of existence. It's clear we was right away hurt by this, because we wasn't prepared for this. We didn't have no supplies. We didn't have no--we didn't know either how to make from that grain flour. So, the *Khozayki*, the landlady what was working, what was living by us, she teach us how to do this. And she lend us this. We had to give her a little flour for this. And we was doing it. And...

HR: Your mother could bake bread, but...

HS: Yeah, we was...

HR: [unclear]...

HS: Yeah, we was doing, we start in our clumsy way to do things how they are doing.

Tape twelve, side one:

HR: This is side two [?] of an interview with Mr. Henry Skorr on the 28th of June, 1983, Harriet Richman interviewer.

HS: And the news from the front, the official news, it was horrible. The German Army advanced so fast, taking one big city after the other city, going hundreds of miles. And we started to think, where is that whole Russian power? Where is that everything what they was talking that we are so strong? We have such a tremendous army. We have so many planes and so many everything that we will overcome the whole world. How it's possible that in everything is collapsing so fast? And in connection with this, the change from the, by the people, and the, you could see what the Russian people in the city, by the news that the Russians are losing so much, how they start to be anti-Soviet, how they start to be pro-German. And you could see on our street how the people started to be very edgy, and not listening so much to the Russian news. And they're going around like with such a inner happiness that their regime have so much trouble. And it was very amazing and very scary for us. And that woman, Anna, what I say, what was so outspoken before, she start to be very outspoken now and say, "It will be very bad for the Jews. We will kill all Jews. And we will kill all Soviets. And we will, it will be still old Russia. We will destroy our houses," she's saying. "We will go to the forests." Now, to me she say, "You are good Jews. You we will take with us to the forest." And we was very scarey because it was so reminding the attitude from the Polaks.

HR: But they weren't pro-German were they?

HS: They wasn't pro-German, no, they was anti-Soviets.

HR: Oh.

HS: And soon they say, and they was always under the propaganda, the Soviets are so strong, the Soviets are so, they're unbeatable. Soon they say that the Soviets are very much beatable, and that the Germans are going so much strong, and that the Germans are so technically advanced, they right away, the old hopes what they have inside in their heart right away come out with the whole ugliness, that they will get rid of the Soviet regime, that they will work with the Germans, that they will get back their ground. There will be no *kolkhozes* and they will get rid of the commissars. They will get rid of the Jews.

HR: And they think the Germans are gonna let them have all this then.

HS: Yeah. This what it was the German propaganda.

HR: Oh.

HS: And they was probably listening German radio and German propaganda. And it was entire anti-Soviet mood in that where I was living, because I was living not in the center from the town. I was living where the former villages what moved to the city. And they was basically very anti-Soviet. And you could see going in the bazaar and standing in the line a very ugly, anti-Soviet mood in the eyes from the people. You saw already that glint of hate in their eyes, and a glint of hate against the Jews, against the

commissars, against the regimes, against the *Kaganoviches*. And you could feel it. You can cut already the atmosphere with a knife feeling this. The same on the working place. You could see that hate in their eyes from the, especially from the women when they're taking away the men to the front. They was already praying that the German take over and that the husband shouldn't get killed on the front. And it's amazing they wasn't afraid to express themselves. And the official part with the *politruks* and the engineers and the directors. they was very subdued. And amazing this was, we are so far in the deep in Russia. No they, you see the news--is the invisible pulse goes so fast. And the mood was very much changed to the negative.

One day they come in the electro station with a announcement that we, there is no, we have a shortage in labor, that we will, they're mobilizing us to go in the forests to load that, prepare wood on ships and bring it to the city. And they say we're mobilized, that we have no choice, just to accept this. So, all men from the electro station including mine Jewish friends what I was working with they loaded us on a very big boat. And they give us food for a week. And they let us swim down to the river, and the river to the forest, then we have to work where we have to work on the in the forest loading that wood.

The river was already no more so strange for me, because I was already, I had already the experience. Now for my friends and other people it was a very strange experience. And we was rowing that boat. We was maybe about forty, fifty people, a big boat. We was rowing that boat maybe fifty miles a day. And we have to cover ourselves with *brezent* [tarpaulin] because this was so many mosquitoes--billions--like whole things of mosquitoes, until we come to that forest. In that forest we was working two weeks, and loading that wood on barges. And my shoulders was rubbed off to the blood. And still we make such pillows from the sacks and we was continuing to work. And then we loaded up that wood. We have a order to walk back to the city. This was maybe about fifty or sixty miles to walk back to the city through the forest, because the barges was loaded and the barges was waiting for a ship to carry them against how do you call it, the stream?

HR: The stream.

HS: Against the stream. And this takes a long time. And we took it the old Russian way. We started to walk. And we walked four days. And we walked through the forest, we come to the city. We come to the city, was, and we didn't know the news in the forest. Was no radios, no nothing. We just was working and not hearing nothing. And we had our bread with us. You know, we have to going to bring some mushrooms in the forest. They are, the Russians are very specialists to get food from the forest. And I started to learn by them. And this helped me later in my future troubles, to know what kind of mushroom I have to take, what is poisonous, what is not poisonous, where I can find berries, and where you can walk in the forest not to drown in the, how do they call this, swamps there. You have swamps that you don't see there is a swamp. You have grass on top and everything.

HR: A swamp.

HS: Swamps. And you can go in and in two minutes you can disappear.

HR: Is it quicksand you mean?

HS: Right. And they taught us, and we can see in the special grass what is growing over there that you should avoid this. This, everything I was accepting and my mind was very open for learning the old tricks of life, and to be in the rhythm of them. I already start to feel the rhythm of the Russian life, and the mentality of the Russian people. And I was adjusting myself with them. And they started to accept me. Because I wasn't fighting. I tried to do, how I say mine policy, since my trouble in Poland, no hard work can scare me. It's not was important the hard work, what suffering, what pain. This couldn't overcome me. And I was going how hard this was for me. I did not throw down a, the wooden middle. How painful it was when the blood was in mine...

HR: Shirt.

HS: From mine shoulder, I was going. And they appreciate this. They are too such hard people, without mercy to themselves. They are so sturdy to pain and to working and work twenty-four hours. And I was little by little overtaking them, because I say this is the way only to survive and to be in peace with them. You have to develop such a rhythm. And I learned by them and I was accepted by them. Even they change my name. My name is Genadi. They start to call me Genasha. So, by the Russians is always, they make everything so soft if they like something. As a, Genasha, Genya, or water, *voditchka*, of *molo*, *mashlichko*, of *khlievbushka*, you know?

HR: What is your name?

HS: In Russian was my name Genadi, Henry.

HR: Genad?

HS: Henry. Genadi.

HR: Genadi.

HS: Yeah. This is a official name.

HR: Genadi.

HS: And now they was calling me Genya.

HR: Genya.

HS: Genasha. You know?

HR: Oh. They make a little...

HS: Yeah, a little softer and you should see men like killers, you know? And they can be so tender and soft when he...

HR: What did they call you in Poland, your friends?

HS: Henrik, Henryk.

HR: Henryk?

HS: Yeah.

HR: It's a Jewish name?

HS: No, Haynoch, Hanoch.

HR: Hanoch.

HS: Haynoch. Now in the school they was calling me Henry. And the teacher, when she likes me then she called me Henryk.

HR: Henryk.

HS: Yeah. So, and we was walking in that forest back like them. And we took off the shoes because we have to save the shoes. You no have to save the legs. You put the shoes up on your...

HR: What about saving the feet?

HS: No, the feet you no save. The feet you no save. Self you no save. You save your clothing. You save the shoes. You save your bullets. You never save yourself, because you are...

HR: Replaceable.

HS: Correct. So, we was walking a few days. And behind me mine friends, my Jewish friends what wasn't so on the level, they didn't accept this. They didn't accept that Russian life, you see they was stubborn. They didn't go in in that written, it's hard to, I don't know, I can't explain it. They still was themselves, not willing, you know, to...

HR: Mold in.

HS: To mold in, and not willing to say the work is not too hard. You no have to complain. You see what less you complain, you better you feel inside. What more sorry you feel, what more depressed you get. And what more you throw away, I no feel sorry. I can do this. I can do this. And you're doing. And you're like, you get a inertia. And I tried to pull them behind me. They was doing what I say, because it was easy, no with a very much resentful. It's like driving a car with the brakes on.

HR: Yeah.

HS: So, we come to the city. This was in the afternoon. We come to that, we reported to the electro station. And over there was sitting a military man. And soon he come in, they surrounded us and they say, "You're all mobilized to the army." Now in this moment he say, "You're no more free people. You're all mobilized how you are." We was walking around then, okay. And we went up and we have to swear, it was a very strange, you know, ex-, very strange, unrealistic. A Russian commissar stand like this, and he say, "We have to swear allegiance to the Russian. And we fight," and this and that. And later we sing the international. And he says, "You are now Russian soldiers." Okay, so we are soldiers. "So now everybody can go home for a hour, bring a shirt, underwear, a cup, a spoon, a knife, and if you have bread, and come report back in this place." We went out and mentioned our names. They had written down our names and we went home. We wasn't home a few weeks after this...

HR: [unclear] give you an hour.

HS: And we come home and the mother, you know, and my mother I saw in her sweet eyes I saw already new trouble brewing. I saw already the atmosphere is entire different. You know the development was so fast, the deterioration on the front was so fast, the deterioration of our life was so fast that days wasn't, was counting. And I see my mother

already is in trouble. And my f-, and everybody is so tense, you know? We hear already the Russian going on Leningrad. And this was a few months after the war, you know, maybe three, four months since already. And we was in such a turmoil. How thousands of miles? What happened? We couldn't even, we didn't know either what's going on. Because I was, the news from the radio is only what they want to say. The street's so hostile. You know you see there a hate in everybody. And we are again the stranger. And I come home with the bad news, "I am here and I have to go away." They didn't know nothing, when I will come home. I told my mother, I say, "I have to go back to the army." And I remember we didn't have bread in that day, because how I say, they didn't give us bread, only they make. They give us that wheat. And my mother make *lipioshki*. You know what's *lipioshki* means? Like pancakes, from that...

HR: Flour.

HS: From that flour. She make me three, four such pancakes, wrap it in a towel. And she give me, I remember still such a red coffee cup, from metal. And she give me a shirt. And long, I have long underwear, homemade from the Russians what they're making by themselves. How do you call it? Linen.

HR: Weaved it themselves.

HS: Weave it by themselves such a [unclear]. And I will tell you in the future, I was walking in that underwear a half a year on place of pants because my pants fall apart. And this, and good that I have such strong underwear. This was my clothing. So, I took the mother and I say--I kissed them, everybody, you know. They didn't dare to cry either. They didn't understand. This was so overwhelming, coming home after two, three weeks.

HR: And to leave right away.

HS: And leaving right away. They say an hour. And I didn't want to start with the Russians. You see we was very careful. We was very, like, you know, we was the strange people. Oh, I forgot to tell. When we was over there already, in that city, a half a year they call us to the police. And they give us passports, internal passports with a *Statia* 58. This means that we are not reliable elements. *Statia* 58 means that we can live only, let's see, a thousand miles from the border, a thousand miles from Moscow, a thousand miles from this, that we are not secure people. This is the written, it was written, we was getting a five-year internal passport with *Statia izat wozen*. This means *Statia* 58. So I was evaluating in my mind about this, why we were undesirable people. I didn't say nothing to my father and mother. No, I felt that we are something undesirable.

So, we come back. I reported back to the electro station where I worked. And we come over there and everybody was already there. And they marched us down to the River Bugzal [phonetic] and they load us on a big river ship. And they shipped us, thousands of people, not only us. This was a general mobilization from the all, from every factory they took only 30 or 40 percent of able bodied people.

HR: How far were you from Leningrad?

HS: We was from Leningrad, from the northern part, maybe 500 miles. And what I later find out, the Germans was going so fast that they decided to make a fortification line, like a *Maginot* line around. And they was mobilizing hundreds of thousands of people, from all around. And we was a part from that whole thing. So they shipped us with a big river boat to the Volga, to Rybinsk, where I, and I know that route because I was swimming over there. And we was over there. And they put us in in a prisoner camp. I, you remember I say before that whole bridges, how do you call it? The whole...

HR: Bridges?

HS: No, the whole sides of the river was prisoner camps.

HR: Banks?

HS: The whole banks...

HR: Banks?

HS: ...of the river was prison camps. And prisoners was cutting wood and putting this on the river, preparing the Rybinsk sea, artificial sea. They put us up in such a camp overnight. And they was forming from us division, the units what we have to do.

HR: They didn't take your father?

HS: No.

HR: Too old.

HS: I didn't...

HR: Too old?

HS: I, no, no, I didn't know nothing. The father was home. Everybody was home. When I left, everybody was home. I didn't have time to talk to him either. I didn't have time, I didn't either say good-bye to them really, you know? Because the half an hour what I, a hour-and-a-half, in Russia this was a five miles we have to walk. There is no transportation. So, until I tell him I'm, to say, "Hello I'm here, and give me this," I didn't even have time to tell him what and how, because I didn't know, and what's happening with them, you know? I just look on my mother and I had enough. I saw already the whole trouble what's going on. So we come in to that, they loaded us up in that prisoner camp and from where my friends was getting vodka, I don't know. And later they didn't get vodka, they get *eau de cologne*. You know what's *eau de cologne*? Perfume. Perfume and cucumbers. And this they started to drink.

HR: They drank the *eau de cologne*?

HS: And I have to drink too. I decided that I am a part of them. And I drink *eau de cologne* with cucumbers. I was right away vomiting. And they was laughing. No, I was a part of them. You know, I was integrated with them. I felt they, that vile body of them, you know? And I feel the anger what is accumulating in them, you know? And I wanted to be on the other side from the anger. I no wanted to be, you know, I felt this is not, though you see, my instinct, I got very developed instinct what I had to do in this moment, the thing to do right or wrong, you know? I was trained. In that moment do this. In that moment

do this. And I felt I have to do with this, you know? I was already accepted. And I was thinking, I no want to be a softie in their eyes. I no want to be...

HR: But when you vomited did they make fun of you?

HS: Oh, they was vomiting too.

HR: Oh!

HS: Oh, vomiting is a normal thing.

HR: From the *eau de cologne*; nobody can drink it.

HS: Oh, sure. I forgot to tell you when I was in that forest, in that Turovo, in the beginning. And they sent us to work cutting trees...

HR: Cutting trees.

HS: Yeah. I was, from that food I was very sick. I was getting *farunkalas*.¹⁸ You know what's *farunkalas*?

HR: Great big holes in your skin?

HS: I have, I will show you, I have here full, I am full of *farunkalas*, everywhere, you know? And I was very, and my legs was swollen. This was from the bad nourishment, from the lack of vitamins, you know? And we was in that Turovo sleeping over there and they was bringing vodka. And they was drinking. And they fall on me, you know? And with this they break me the *farunkalas*. That pus was going out, you know. You squeeze...

HR: Yeah.

HS: You see, you squeeze.

HR: Oh my.

HS: You see the holes? And pus goes out like glasses of pus.

HR: And they got big.

HS: Big like a fist.

HR: And left you with those marks.

HS: And left me with marks, right.

HR: All over your legs, [unclear].

HS: Here. Not only legs. Here and here and everywhere, you know? It was like a sickness, one start and the other come. One start and the other come. So, and I remember, and I was, and they fall on me, drunk, you know? I was sleeping with the *farunkalas*. And he make me so much pain by falling on me, he bangs that *farunkala*, that I kicked that guy. And I give him such a kick that he ran out through the door, you know? And so I was used to already to their drinking and to their vomiting and to their cursing. They are using such a curse. Language you never saw. There is no one sentence that shouldn't be two curses. And everybody--children, women, professors, doctors.

HR: Are you talking about words, curse, swearing words? Or a whole sentence of curses, like, you know, that you [unclear]?

¹⁸ Abscess or boils.

HS: A swearing curse, and whole sentences in curse. And this is amazing this, how this release you, how you, your anger goes away.

HR: You know, in Yiddish they have curses, I don't know...

HS: No.

HR: But not like this.

HS: I no believe in no language is this.

HR: No language.

HS: You, I can tell you a sentence, a whole sentence, just one curse after other. And so elaborate, you know, so whole this. And it's amazing how this release your tension. If, now if I get mad I curse too, in Russian.

HR: One word or a whole sentence?

HS: A whole sentence.

HR: You can't translate it it's so bad?

HS: I, it's very bad. It's not yeah.

Tape twelve, side two:

HS: And being a day in that camp, near Rybinsk, they loaded up on trains thousands of thousands of people. And we went with that old Russian historical way, from Rybinsk to Bezeck to Bologoje to Staraja Russa. This is the old, this is the heart of Russia, great Russia, on the way to Leningrad. That time was already a horrible time. The Soviet power was crumbling. The Soviet power was crumbling and you can see everywhere, when we was looking around, millions people on the run. This was reminding me the time when we had it in Poland, when people was running. Now here was a scale much bigger, much more people, and much more territory. All railroads was bombed. All bridges almost destroyed. All either the signal stands almost destroyed. And we was going and standing, standing and going. And sometime days waiting for our train to go through, and not being able to move. And being almost constantly under German bombs. The Germans develop a, all kind time of technical bombs. They was bombing our train in the front. Later they was bombing the train behind. And we was caught in, not a way in and a way out. And we develop a whole technique just from jumping from the cars. And sometimes we have to jump in the swamps and sometimes we have to jump in the water. And you have to jump and to run maybe 100, or 200 meter, because the pilots, the German planes was going so low down above the wagons that you can see their faces. And they was looking down. You can see their faces with their...

HR: Goggles.

HS: With the goggles what they have them. And you can see how they start to spray with fire the, you see the fire comes out from the *pulemyoty*, from the machine guns. And you just lay down looking on their faces and waiting that you will get the bullet, because you are not able to move. Most time we was in the tangle from the telegraph wires what was. And after such a thing, they bombed out, we have to get up and we have to walk to the next station and to board our next train and everything to by the order what they was doing this. And we really didn't know or they know what we are doing. Until, so going and waiting and bombing, we come to a lake, Kalinin [now called Tver', northwest of Moscow], no, no, not far from Kalinin, Lake Ilamayn. And not far in Kalinin it was the that time was the big battles in Kalinin. And at night we saw the first time how the first Russian *katyushas* was firing. This was a terrible weapon never seen before. You could see a sea of fire coming out with a tremendous noise. It's not a regular cannon artillery. And you know, like a ball of fire with a very terrible noise coming out. And they tell us in that time, "This is the new secret Russian weapon."

We continue until we come to a town, Valdaj. This is like a, was Valdajska, *Vosvishenoist*. This means like small mountains. Valdajska *Vosvishenoist*, this is from the northwestern part from Leningrad. And they told us this will be our destination where we start to work on our fortification line.

HR: How far from Leningrad now?

HS: Probably this was about 200 miles from the other side from Leningrad. You see, and we was, from Leningrad, Cherepovetz was from south, down to Leningrad. We was now from the west of Leningrad. And how I understood, the Russians tried to make a fortification line around in the, how they call it Dalidostupitulenga [phonetic] to Leningrad, from the wide range from Leningrad, and stop the German Army. Why was it strategically so tremendous important? Because the Americans and the British start to give supply to the Russians. It was already after the Atlantic Charter, when they say they will help Russia to fight the Germans. And the help started to come from Murmansk and from Archangelskoie, from the northern railroad. And the northern railroad was in danger to be cut off by the Germans. And we should keep that line open. So, we come down from that Valdaj and we was walking to the forest again maybe a 20 miles. This is a very small walk in Russian style. We come to the forest and they make from us brigades. And they give us shovels. And they make a, and we started to dig anti-tank trenches. Anti-tank trenches we was digging maybe a 100, 200 miles. Was hundreds of thousands of people mobilized to do the job, without no technique at all. We have only a shovel, a saw, and a ax. And we went in to the virgin forests over there and we started to make the very deep trenches. And we was cutting the trees down. And from the trees we was making *dzot*. This means we make holes, we put in the, like houses in ground. And on top we put the mountains of grounds, with one small window where it was put in a *pulemyot*, a machine gun. This was called *dzot*, *Dolgovremennaya zenitnaya ognevaya tochka*. And we was making mines...

HR: Fields?

HS: Mine fields. We was mining the fields where we couldn't dig the trenches, because it was highways where the army have to move. This was everything mined. And the side was protected by anti-tank artillery. We was joining, this was a country of lakes, thousands of lakes. This was still from the glaciers period when the glaciers was moving, with the big boulders and big--so we was with the anti-tank ditches we was joining lake to lake, just keeping a small piece open so, and this was mined, so if there will be a need, this will be explode and the water will surrender the whole anti-tank trenches. This was the plan. I don't know how in the reality was, because the German knows everything what we was doing. We was working constantly under German fire. They was bombing us, and they were strafing us. And they was throwing down leaflets.

HR: Leaflets, yeah.

HS: And we was under court marshal order. We was ordered not to pick up the leaflets. I was in that brigade with, mine brigadier was one Fiodotov. He was with me working in the electro station, a man strong like a bear. Very powerful a really forest man. Born in the forest. He knows everything, strong, and mad like hell, a very mad man, and very anti-Soviet. And always you see in his eyes a boiling rage. And it's amazing, he was very close to me. I was very friendly with him and he was helping me. He was teaching me either how to make the handle for the shovel that it should better dig and we should get less blisters. And how I should move really the arms, by throwing the earth with the power

from your body, not only the hand. And you shouldn't work so hard. I was very close with that man, and I was saying, "You see in what kind of terrible situations we are." He said, "Genya, this is a very good situation that we are in. We will get in a terrible situation when we'll be in the regular army. Now you see still we can run, we can hide. When they're shooting us you can..."

HR: [unclear].

HS: Yeah. "When you will be in the front line, you will not do and you will not have the freedom." And how really his words and I saw this in the future. We dug in and we was living in the forest. And the ground was very--there are so many lakes it was very watery. You dig in, and we constantly was sleeping whole nights in the water. Sleeping outside there we couldn't because the Germans was harassing us. And we cover us with branches. No sooner you dig a little deeper, you was already in the water.

HR: In water.

HS: So, we have the choice and we was sleeping in the water. And the Germans was terrorizing us. And mine--we had a few Jewish people there, Jewish boys what was working with us in different this. And I wasn't too happy with them. Again I have to mention they didn't arose to the situation.

HR: Wait, I want to ask you a question, Mr. Skorr.

HS: Yes, right.

HR: Before you go on. In all of your experiences in Russia, after you left Poland you went to Russia. And up until this time now, did you, was there any observance that you remember of Shabbat or of any of the holidays?

HS: No.

HR: It's completely gone.

HS: Absolutely nothing.

HR: For your father, your mother? Nothing.

HS: We didn't know either.

HR: You knew Saturday.

HS: Saturday we know.

HR: But, it was a...

HS: No, Saturday was a regular day of work. The system of life doesn't...

HR: Right.

HS: Yeah.

HR: And you didn't have a Jewish calendar and you never knew what...

HS: [chuckling] We didn't have a Jewish word. Only once when my mother come home from the bazaar and she told me she met the guy from the photograph [unclear] what is, he was a Jew. And he told us, "You know, soon will be Rosh Hashanah." And the mother was amazed that how they know this, and how we are so disoriented that we don't know this. No, I was no, and we didn't have nothing about the...

HR: Okay.

HS: Yes. Again, what I was working with the Jewish, with our, the *byezhinitzes*, with our refugee people. They didn't arose to the situation. They didn't want to commit to their work how it have to be done. They always was trying to go to the doctor, that he, this hurt them and the other hurt them. Probably it's hurt them. It's hurt everybody. Now you see they didn't make them, they overcome. They didn't start to be a part of that whole struggle. They just looked themselves still like they are in the...

HR: Separate.

HS: Separate, and they are individual. And I have to say they evoke resentment by people. Let, I'll give you example. My friend Yasha, a very big boy, stronger than me like a bear, bigger than me, he was so afraid of the Germans that he wasn't the one to sleep in that *dodo* [phonetic]. He went to sleep at night by the lake. I say, "Why are you going to sleep by the lake?" He said, "The Germans are intelligent people. They will no throw in bombs in the lake." Well, once we have a--they attacked us. He jumped in in a toilet. And he was sitting in the toilet the whole night, coming out stinking from the toilet, and not realizing that it's only up to God if the bomb will hit you here or the bomb will hit you that, you know?

HR: Here or there.

HS: It was like finding a needle in a...

HR: Haystack.

HS: Yeah. And the end of the days, when it was a commission of disabled people, come a commission. And they, most of the people show they are disabled with rheumatism, this with this. And they were sent away. I was left with a few boys. I didn't want to claim that I am sick.

HR: You mean a lot of the Jewish people.

HS: A lot of the Jewish people went through, probably they was sick. No, they didn't make a effort to do the job. Mine impression was if you are over there, you're the same safe like you would be in a other place. You have to do your part in fighting the Germans. You had to do your part. It's very hard to [unclear]. You no have to try to just to run in with your head in fire. No, what you have to do in your part of the struggle, you have to do. We was treated over there very bad, the whole population, the whole.

HR: Not just the Jews.

HS: Not Jews. I'm not talking about the Jews. We was like a...

HR: No, it was everybody.

HS: Let's see...

HR: They didn't differentiate you probably this time.

HS: They was talking about Jews, we let's see it was over there 100,000 people. Maybe we was over there a 60 or 80 Jews. So we was almost in, and we was known in our brigade. No not in the other things. The whole, I want to just give a situation. We was very mistreated from the management, from the commander, from the [unclear]. I had the impression that that whole defense job was dished out to the NKVD. That whole defense

fortification work was dished out to the management from the prison camps. And they put up the same regime on us like they would put up on prisoners. This means if for any reason you're not able to work that day to dig and not only a hole, you have to dig let's see 20 cubic meter of ground. If you dig less, you'll get less bread. If you are sick and you no get from the doctor a this, you will not getting feeded. My shoes tears apart from that digging that ground. And I had very big shoes. So the permission from my, from that Fiodotov, from my brigadier, I left in camp to fix it with wires, just because the shoe was, I have no soles. I have only the tops. I was walking with that. So I want to put them together, and I find some wires from a plane what fall down, from a shot down plane. I find electric wires and I try to...

HR: Put them together.

HS: Improvise. So when too the, accidentally that commandant from that, the head [unclear] and he still have the insignias from the NKVD. He say, "What, why are you not working?" I show him the shoes that I want to fix them. He say, "Today you're no getting bread." And I didn't get bread. I just want to say a example how they was. And they had bread and they have shoes and they have vodka and they have meat and they have women and they have orgies. You can hear at night the whole orgies what they are doing. And they are, yes, with the whole management, with the whole *politruk*. They are living like kings.

HR: Who? The officers?

HS: The officers, the whole management. They didn't give a damn about us. They have a whole, let's see they have clothing, they have shoes, and they didn't give us. Only what happened with the shoes? One days the Germans come so close. We get a order, "Run away! *Sposaisa kto mozhet.*" The whole, everything was ran away, and we left the whole shoes, the whole everything. And they, loads with, carloads with bread, they was throwing on the highway. And if somebody is able to take, we was taking. And near the Valdaj, that city of Valdaj, the city of Valdaj was abandoned. Probably that was already the front line. We, sometimes we was marching through to other positions and you can only hear the radio that produced this in the street was on. And just talking, "Soldiers fight to the last drop of blood," and this, the all kind agitation.

HR: Because you hadn't met any German soldiers, right?

HS: Not yet, no. And only I picked up, once I picked up a leaflet, a German leaflet. And it was written in Russian and in German. And when I have a chance I went to the field, I read it in German and in Russian. And it was their standard agitation saying, "Don't dig holes. Our tanks will overcome you. Throw away your weapon. Put your bayonet in the ground. Kill the officers and kill the Jewish commissars. And come over to us and we will guarantee you security." This was their...

HR: Did some do it?

HS: This I don't know. I didn't see it.

HR: You didn't see it.

HS: I didn't see it. We went near, far from the Valdaj is a Valdajskaj *azero*, a lake of Valdaj, with a beautiful monastery. We was going over there, you know, and it was such a beautiful, and it was looking like in Switzerland. And I was always so admiring this. And that Fiodotov told me, "Don't look over there. You know what in that monastery is? In that monastery is the biggest prison from here, from the *NKVD*." Hundreds of thousands of people was destroyed in that *Solovietski* monastery. We, okay, we finished this fortification line and they sent us over to a other line. And by lining up, when we maked that *Appell*, this was in a field. We was attacked by German planes and plenty of people was killed. Because we was massed over there. And later they say that this was a sabotage, that we have a, somebody in the fifth column what was monitoring everything what we are doing and reporting this to Germans. And the Germans know everything what we are doing. And they're sending out descends, air descends, were taken over the all fortification what we digged behind ourselves.

HR: Sending out what?

HS: Descends. *Parachuten*?

HR: Oh, parachuters.

HS: Descend? How do you call them?

HR: Descend.

HS: Yeah.

HR: The parachutes were descending.

HS: Yeah.

HR: All right.

HS: Parachuting. And they, sending out parachuting, our soldiers, and the Finish soldiers. And they're taking over everything what we was digging was useless.

HR: Because the parachuters were coming down on the ground and...

HS: Yeah, behind the lines.

HR: Behind the lines.

HS: And the whole line was a...

HR: Oh, useless.

HS: Yeah. That was...

HR: Oh my.

HS: ...useless.

HR: How far behind the lines?

HS: I don't know. This I didn't...

HR: I mean you didn't see them?

HS: We didn't see them. Only we was forced to run away.

HR: Oh.

HS: And we come so...

HR: I want to ask you, Mr. Skorr, when you say so many of those people were killed, did they bury those people? Did they take...

HS: We ran away.

HR: Nobody...

HS: Who knows?

HR: Nobody did, they left everything.

HS: Either...

HR: If people were wounded what happened?

HS: In my time? If there is near help, there come a *sanitar* [paramedic]. And most time if you are wounded, you're dead.

HR: They left them.

HS: They left them.

HR: No help.

HS: No help. Because they was in such a disorganization.

HR: You didn't have aids or medics and all this? Nothing.

HS: It was such a disarray, and such a disorganization. And the Germans were so controlling everything. I will give you a example. We was working near a lake, deep in the forest, making a fortification point with wood and earth and they put in machine guns over there, and *minamioty*, and mortars. Come to us to check a Jewish commissar, I told you about a commissar. This was already cold. It starts already freezing. He comes in with a car, and he had to us a speech. And we told him, "Take a look how we are walking around." I was already in my underwear. I have no pants and no shoes. And he say, "*Nuzhno v zemliu zaryvat'sia*." This means, "You have to go in underground it shouldn't be so cold." Well, and we was looking on each other and we continued our work. He with that car didn't went away maybe a half a mile that we see diving a German plane, diving. They have the divers planes, and straight tearing apart the whole machine with that commissar, killing him. You know, they was such in a control. Later we went, we finished over there they throw us away to a other more dangerous point. We come to near Ostaskov, near Demjansk. They was going on very bloody battles. And not far from Ostaskov they made from us battalions. And they give us rifles. And they give us machine guns. And they send us near Demjansk to occupy positions already, prepared for us from different people. We come near Demjansk and we saw that battle maybe a mile, that constant firing, you know, with the artillery and with the cannons. And we just took positions. We fired positions with machine guns, with the rifles, with everything. And it was till 12:00 at night. So 2:00 at night we hear a call, a big *sumatokh* [panic] and yelling, "*Sposaisa kto mozhet*." This means, "Save yourself how you can. We are overrun." And we saw from the right flank tanks going over, German tanks going over, the tanks and everything. And that whole, we didn't put up no battle whatsoever and we was already surrounded from all sides.

HR: You mean close? Real close? Did they, they got you?

HS: Yeah! We was the second position from the front line.

HR: Were you close to Leningrad now? Or...

HS: Not yet.

HR: Still far out then.

HS: This was, yeah. Well you see, Leningrad is a geographic position. You can, we was going--Leningrad you go around from three sides.

HR: Right. And you were...

HS: One side, this is...

HR: Still on the western side?

HS: Yeah, yes. No going closer to the northern railroad, Demjansk, we was going on tremendous battles. In that time, General Vlasov, did you hear of Vlasov? The Vlasovs what they went over to the Germans? General Vlasov surrendered a whole army more than a million soldiers to the Germans. He went over to the Germans helping fighting the Russians. This was that period of time. So when we was in the second positions from the front line, that come in that order that we are surrounded, we started to run. Everybody how he can. I tried to keep myself with my people, and with that Fiodotov, with the other guys. And we started to run to the forest. Because the forest was our home, our safety. Because the Russian in the forest was much more safe. And the Germans with their technique, with their tanks, they couldn't go in so deep. And in the forest was much easier to fight the Germans than outside, because they wasn't supported so much by the technique. The Germans was only fighting the Russians because they was much more superior in technical, they have much more tanks and much more *motozit* [phonetic], canons. They have much more mortars. Their soldier wasn't so tired because he was always...

HR: Well-dressed and well-fed.

HS: Well-dress and well-fed, and well-prepared to the front. Not tired. We have to march 70, 80 or 100 miles until you come to a position you're that, your legs, you know, your legs getting so tired. And you're getting, you're sweating so much. And your legs, you're developing rashes. They're called *gvuls*, *gvoks* [phonetic]. And you start to be, you have no time to wash, you know?

HR: And you can't walk.

HS: You can't, yeah, you can't walk and he say, "Walk!" No, it's very tiring. But only I want to say what kind of soldier are you in such a inconvenience, when you come to the position you're already half dead. And the German soldier come ready with trucks, with the motorcycles. And every, and he is already, this he was much better. And they were much, very technical, and much more better officers [unclear].

HR: But in the forests you could use guerrillas [unclear].

HS: Correct. In the forest the Russians were better, because you can go with bigger units. And the Germans didn't go in the units. They didn't was interested. They was only interested to go to take more territory, to leave big surrendered, they have, they call it a *cotyol*. You know what's a *cotyol*? A *cotyol* means a pot, a big pot. It means to make a big pot. In a pot you can have 100,000 soldiers. So, in that time we started to be already very cold.

HR: And the snow?

HS: Not yet snow. Now already in the morning...

HR: Frost. Frost.

HS: The *zamorozki*, the frost, you know? And we was in very bad condition. And...

HR: And you still had no pants.

HS: I still had no pants. And I had no clothes either. My first--our first occupation was when we was a demoralized group. So that Fiodotov told us, "Now we are by ourselves. We have no connection with the army. We have no connection with nobody. We have to be a unit like a guerrilla unit. Everybody have to listen to me, and I have to listen to everybody. We will do better what we can." First of all, he say, "Your clothing is no good. We have to find clothing from dead Russian soldiers or from dead German soldiers." This was the first thing, and we, at night we was crawling to the, near to the battle fields. And we find clothing from the soldiers. We find boots from German soldiers. You couldn't take them off of those soldiers. We, with axes hack off their legs, you know? Yes, because they was frozen in.

HR: And how did you get it off them?

HS: Yeah, we put this near a fire and...

HR: Oh!

HS: When the leg go out, and we pull it out. We washed the boots later. And I had very beautiful *sapior* boots. You know what's boots means?

HR: To the thigh.

HS: Yeah, how they call that? *Shtivel* in Yiddish, you know? Boots.

HR: Up to your knee.

HS: Up to the knee, and I was like a king, you know? Very good, strong. Well, it was a little revolting to, from a dead person. No I was becoming...

HR: But to put them into the fire, the odor from those legs...

HS: Well this...

HR: [unclear] nothing.

HS: This didn't matter. No, this meant nothing. So, and we started to live our lives.

HR: So you got clothes? Did you get clothes?

HS: And the, we got clo-

Tape thirteen, side one:

HR: This is an interview with Mr. Henry Skorr, side four [side one], June 28th, 1983.

HS: So, we started to be like a irregular guerrilla unit. I say irregular because we had no connections with nobody, and we have no directions what and how and what to do, just only that Fiodotov. We feel we are a group of people so we have to be good clothed, have weapons.

HR: What about food?

HS: I'll come to food. And clothed, and have our weapons. And to fight the Germans if it's a possibility if we get in touch with them. And second, to get in touch with the Russian management, with the Russian management?

HR: Army.

HS: Yeah, army, because we didn't want to be deserters, that we run away. We just, we want to see what was the situation, what the situation will bring. The food, how I say we had to find food. Where did we have it? In a forest, a Russian doesn't die from hunger.

HR: Do they eat berries?

HS: They eat berries. They eat small animals. They eat...

HR: What kind of animals?

HS: What a...

HR: Squirrels?

HS: Not squirrels. Over there we have the *sharakis* [phonetic]. How do you call it here?

HR: Moles?

HS: With the jumping, no, not the with the ears?

HR: Rabbits?

HS: Rabbits. We have foxes. And once we find, we shot a cow. It was abandoned, you know, like when the people was running away with the horse and was evacuated, their, everything was in a turmoil. And the cow was already like a wild one, you know?

HR: He was roaming around in the forest?

HS: Roaming around and he was like a wild--we couldn't go reach him. We just have to...

HR: Shoot him.

HS: We have to shoot him. And we shoot him. We shoot the cow. And...

HR: Someone knew how to butcher it?

HS: Yeah, a Russian knows everything.

HR: Yeah?

HS: A Russian is a very amazing animal. Give him a, he knows to do everything and he doesn't do nothing. He can be a shoemaker and he can be a carpenter. He can be a tailor. Give him a ax and give him a saw and give him a hammer. Put him in the forest, come in a half a year he'll have a house already. He's able to do everything.

HR: Because they learn when they're children?

HS: They learned, that's correct.

HR: The little children, they learn?

HS: And mostly every, the origin from every Russian is from a farm, is from the forest. So he knows everything what to do, and how to do it. And what else? He is very, he is preparing himself. How do you call it? Means, using that the situation, adjusting himself very easy. So, this is no, he can make shoes and he can make either when we have time he can make from that leather from that cow what we killed, he could make everything. Now we didn't have it.

HR: So what did you do to the cow? He butchered up the cow.

HS: Yeah, we tried, we cut the cow to pieces and this was near a lake. In the forest you have plenty of lakes. And near every lake they have a sauna, a Russian *banya*. The people have over there like Finnish sauna? The baths, a Russian baths. Small houses with stones where they're going in to take a bath. This is always near a lake. Take the water, put on the hot stones and make steam. Later when it's very hot inside he jumps out in the lake, even in winter time, and makes a hole. We was doing too later this. In a hole he just...

HR: Jump up and down.

HS: Jump down, and going back to the hot to the steam, or you're going in the snow and rolling yourself.

HR: I see. So you took the cow to that?

HS: We took the cow, and it was over there such a big pot. We cut the cow in pieces, put in water, and we cooked the cow. And we eat the meat.

HR: And you didn't burn it and make a fire and barbecue it? You boiled up a cow.

HS: We boiled up a cow. And I will tell you what happened with that cow. And we, I eat the cow, and later I went to the lake and I drink a little water. And a half a day I have dysentery.

HR: Everybody else or just you?

HS: No, only me. And I started to go out with blood. And I was very sick and I have very temperature. No, to their plus they didn't abandon me. They carry me. They make a *nosilki*. You know *nosilki*?

HR: Stretcher?

HS: Stretchers, from wood, you know. And they carry me. Now I didn't get better. It was getting worse. And they carry me maybe 10 miles. And they left me again in such a sauna.

HR: Alone?

HS: Alone, and they say, "If you will survive," because I was hindering them. I hindered their movement. And that Fiodotov told me, "Genya, if you survive," just simple like that, you know, there's no sentimentality. "If you'll survive, you will go this way. We will make signs on trees. You will go to the nearest village. We will be there. If no, they will tell you where we are. If you don't survive, God with you." And they left me grenades and they left me a...

HR: They left you what?

HS: Grenade, grenades? For throwing?

HR: Oh, grenades.

HS: Grenades. Yeah, they left me grenades. And they left me I have a German automatic *Meiser* with a, and I have a rifle. And I have a bayonet. And I have *patrons*, bullets, you know? And they prepare me a position, you know? They...

HR: And no food?

HS: There was no food, yeah, I had the cow. I had meat, you know? And they left me. So, and the next day nobody show up. No Germans, and no Russians.

HR: And you're alone.

HS: And I was alone.

HR: Totally alone.

HS: And cold. It was already cold. It was already the light snow started already, you know?

HR: And what were you wearing? You had something to wear.

HS: I had already. Things were getting better. I had from a Russian artillerist I have a jacket with cotton inside. How do you call it? Like, this was very warm. Oh, this was saved me. When I cover myself...

HR: You were warm.

HS: Under my head and I forget the whole world, you know? So, I see no German, nobody with--I wouldn't survive. I just would fight to the end and I would kill myself. And it was not such a big deal, you know? Killing, dying, it was a...

HR: Easier than living.

HS: Yeah, it was not such a...

HR: In those days.

HS: It wasn't such a, yeah. I come out to that, outside. I look around. I feel no, I was afraid to make a fire, because I didn't want to make orientation from the smoke, somebody should smell. And I was coming out I see like a field under the snow, that something was growing. I took out my knife there--I have such a bayonet, a Finnish bayonet--and I digged out. This was carrots, half frozen carrots. And this was and I like always carrots and I was very hungry.

HR: Like manna.

HS: So I clean up the carrots, and I put this, I wash it, and I start to eat the carrots. I eat maybe ten pounds of carrots. And it's amazing. I start to feel better. And I stopped bleeding.

HR: [unclear].

HS: So I say, "Maybe it's a good thing." So, I have such a this where I have the mask, the gas mask. I throw away the gas mask. I don't need more a gas mask. And I fill this up with carrots, and I started to walk. I have nothing what to sit over there, right?

HR: And no more temperature? No more dysentery?

HS: Yeah, I was weak. Who knows what my temperature...

HR: Weak, but you felt better.

HS: Who know temperature? I didn't look about temperature.

HR: But you felt better then.

HS: I felt better.

HR: Yeah.

HS: I felt definitely better because I didn't go out with blood more. I didn't go out that more at all. The carrots was something doing for me.

HR: They made you stop the dysentery.

HS: Yeah. Something did, you know? I feel better. I look around. I look around. And I start to, how they...

HR: They told you to move.

HS: How and where to go. And I feel signs. He made...

HR: They really left you signs?

HS: The signs with a ax, two knots.

HR: On a tree.

HS: On a tree. And I was going to the north side, where the *mokh*, you know what's the *mokh*? What's this, they call where it's growing on a tree?

HR: The moss.

HS: Moss, right. We call it *mokh*.

HR: On the north side?

HS: They told me, "On the moss side you will find low, two knots." And I was going, and I was going, and I was going, little by little, sitting down, cleaning the carrots. Going further, until I come to a village. The village was, the name was, it's a strange name, "Small Nails," *Malyegrozy*. I remember because the name is so strange. I come over there, and there was people over there in the village. What happened in that village? And I was wondering the people are usually, they was over there abandoned, they ran away. This was a religious village Starovery, the old believers, like here the Quakers. They didn't believe in the Russian, in the Soviet power. And they didn't want to go away from the village. They say, "What will be will be." They're like Quakers, with the beards, old believers. Only they, very guest friendly. Everything is okay. No, you can't smoke by them. You can't eat from their dishes. They will give you to eat in a other dish. They give you the

drink in a other, another, not from their. And we can't smoke, we can't wear the hat. You have to go in, you know, take off the shoes, take off the hat. And so. And I went in over there.

HR: So they're Christians then.

HS: Christians, old believers.

HR: Yeah.

HS: You know this is the same what, now there went a family what was in Moscow.

HR: Yeah, from that religious...

HS: This is the old believers.

HR: [unclear].

HS: Yeah, the old believers. And they were anti-Soviet. They're more pro-German I believe. Only they're very guest friendly. They take you in. They will not abandon you. Only they're very reserved, you know, and they're, they have the old icons, beautiful icons, you know? Because I was sleeping one night by them, separate. They didn't let me in their room. Only what I will say, when I come in that room I saw a small mirror. I look in myself, and I didn't recognize myself. I look and who is standing behind me? I had a beard, wild hair like a wild, with straw, with everything, you know? And I was so shocked.

HR: And your hair grew long I guess...

HS: I didn't look so bad. It was a small...

HR: Yeah.

HS: ...farm with a mirror, you know? And I was looking so terrible. You know, my, the eyes and all this, and a beard and this. And I believe I saw some gray hairs already. Or maybe it was dirt. I don't know. So they let me sleep a night over there in that village.

HR: And did they know your friends went through before you?

HS: I asked them.

HR: Yeah?

HS: Yes.

HR: What'd they say?

HS: They say, "They went this direction." Because if no he wouldn't have a sign. No, I was so surprised that, "What are you doing here?" And he say, "This is our land. This is our home. We are not going no away from the Russians, no away from the Germans." And I asked him, "Did you hear some from the Germans?" They say, "No, we didn't hear now from Germans. We hear only a *cannonade*." You know what's a *cannonade*? Artillery.

HR: Loud noise from that...

HS: Boom, noise from this. You see at night, when you go at night you could see the whole around, the whole forest and around, fire is like, you know, like a...

HR: A bonfire or so?

HS: No, no.

HR: No?

HS: On the sky, you see like a real--you know like burning around? And when we see the fire from the cannon just, yes...

HR: Like fireflies.

HS: Not fireflies. Just you see that, it's a very strange feeling. You catch your heart right away, you know? So they tell me, "Go to the other direction." And we went to the other direction. And I went to them, and I meet them. They was very surprised.

HR: Were they far away from the village by then?

HS: About twenty miles. So they...

HR: So you caught up with them.

HS: Oh sure. If I getting alive I can walk. I was already such a walker. I can walk and sleeping if I am tired. We was walking later, when we was more in the guerrilla movement already and we have to march, we have already orders, we was holding ourselves by the horses, how the horses? The wagons. We was going and sleeping, and taking a rest. And it's restful. You just close your eyes and you go. And you hold your rifle, you get so used to your rifle, to that knocking here on your hip, that if it's not knocking your hip is something wrong. You know you get used to such things. So I come over there and they was very happy with me. And they was very, and I was happy with them. And I brought back the whole ammunition what I had. You know, I was, bumbled around with grenades, with everything. And they told me they hear a radio that Germany and America and England is in war with the Germany. So I say, "Fiodotov, we won the war. The war is won. It's only the question if we will survive. The question only how much we will suffer. You know the war is won." You know, and I fall asleep so restful, like this. And you know, and I imagined the, in that time I imagined the Americans with very big silver planes, silver. They have to shine. And so many motors. There were maybe ten, twelve motors. And every American is very tall and very skinny and very blonde, full of muscles, you know? And so powerful. And I felt so comfortable, like you know?

HR: God is already here.

HS: Like something, you know, yes. I forget to tell you that when the boys that went away...

HR: When you were sick?

HS: I was sick, I wrote a letter to my home, because I didn't wrote a letter, you know? And that letter was a very, very, I was very not in a good mood, yeah? And I was already, I was jealous that they're going away and I was jealous I'm not going out, you know? And that I didn't, and I wrote them a very depressed letter, because we have to march. In that time we have to march and I don't know. And I escaped a few words, I saw the letter later.

HR: You did?

HS: Yeah, my mother kept the letter.

HR: Where did you mail it from, the village?

HS: I didn't mail it. I give it to them, to the boys, when they went away.

HR: Oh, and they took it.

HS: Yes.

HR: Oh.

HS: And they mail it from somewhere.

HR: And she got it.

HS: And they got it and I say, "I am embarrassed that I didn't tell good-bye to you, because I was so in the hurry."

HR: Do you still have the letter?

HS: And so naive. Maybe in Israel I have that letter. I have all my correspondence in Israel.

HR: With your sister.

HS: In Russian, and probably. And, "I was naive and so now, and let the father take care of himself, and the brother and this," you know. "And I hope we will see." Okay.

HR: Why did you leave everything in Israel?

HS: Why? You know, we didn't, I didn't come here with such a very easy heart, you know? And you know, it was very hard to leave Israel and it was very hard to stay in Israel. And I make it the decision and I did it already, you know, and it was very, very hard. It was a very painful move. So, and we started to be already in communication with, in touch with the Soviet military power. And they give us already orders what to do. And we was doing, we was mining bridges. We was mining railroads. And once we attacked, with a other group we attacked a small *garnizone*, from Germany. They were standing near a forest. They was watching the, you see the northern railroad, they was already cut off the northern railroad. This means the supply from Archangel and Murmansk to Moscow, to the interland, was cut off. So we was already doing work with the army. And they throw down once a descend to us, parachutes? And they was preparing a big operation. What was the operation? To cut, Leningrad was already in that time blockaded. Only the Lake Ladoga. You could still escape to the Lake Ladoga. Did you hear about the Lake Ladoga? It's the only one way to escape. The all, this was already...

HR: Surrounded.

HS: Surrounded. The rail was cut off. And they was preparing to take the station Tikhvin. If you will read the history, in the winter in 1941, the offensive on that Tikhvin to open the gate through Leningrad, to open the railroad, and to let in the army to Leningrad. And we was a part of that battle for Tikhvin, for the railroad station Muga in Tikhvin. This was maybe a 100-mile straight, about with the railroad, from Leningrad, between Leningrad and Moscow. It was a very, very bloody battle. And the station was going over four times around, back to back. We was taking a part from the forest part, and we was already a part from the 62nd *Strelkovaya Divizia*, the 62nd Infantry Division from Marshall Maretskov. In that time he wasn't a Marshall yet. It was a general army Maretskov. And was a terrible frost and a snow. And this was helping us.

HR: It did?

HS: The whole German technique was immobilized. From the other side, from the big side, in the *Bol'shaya Zemlia*, the side from the great earth [land] we called this, not from the guerrilla, was coming Siberian soldiers, with the small horses, you know? The small horses was slipping in snow and everything. This was the Siberian soldiers taken away from the Siberian front when Stalin make a pact with Japan that there will be no war over there. So this was the first offensive, the first successful offensive, that we capture the Tikhvin railroad station. Was a terrible battle. They was, we was, between the other side, we didn't have to make, it was the ground was so hard we couldn't dig in. We have to make trenches [unclear] from dead soldiers.

HR: Trenches from dead soldiers?

HS: We made from German soldiers...

HR: You piled up soldiers?

HS: We piled them up, and we put on water from the lake, and they froze over, and this was our [chuckling] position. [pause] And there was a battle over there a whole week. From us maybe half the people survived. That Fiodotov was killed. [pause] And the umbrella of God was above me. I was in that time carrying *minomioty*, *pulemioty i shariady* mortar shells, you know? And it was a, they bombed us, you know, and they destroyed maybe a half people was destroyed.

HR: You had a lot of casualties on the German side too.

HS: Sure.

HR: You did.

HS: There was terrible casualties. And by us what was the most terrible was by us to be wounded or to be wet. To be wounded in the forest is half dead. To be wet, you freeze to death. So when we was crawling you know, in the snow, I have the German boots. They was too narrow. The snow was going in...

HR: [unclear]?

HS: In, and melting in this, in the legs. And we no have socks. We have *anutseh* [phonetic]. You know what this is? *Portyanki*?

HR: Flannel wrapping like.

HS: Yes. And this is a whole knowledge how you're wrapping it in order you can walk. Because you right away get, how do you call it, the *mazolis*? The...

HR: Blisters.

HS: Blisters. This is a whole, they teach you how to wrap it right. So, when this gets wet you have to take it off and wrap it around your body and warm it up with your body, dry it out and put this back. Because if you freeze you're dead. I was frozen, you see here the holes? See here?

HR: Yeah.

HS: You see here?

HR: Yeah.

HS: It's, everything was frozen. My hands was frozen. Everything was frozen. So after that battle...

HR: It's a wonder you didn't lose your fingers.

HS: I was in a hospital later. After that battle, we was already a part from the regular army. And we went in with the army to Leningrad.

HR: Oh!

HS: With Maretskov's army, and this was already in the time that that Vlasov surrendered. And it was already the time when they destroyed the whole food in Leningrad. When I was coming in still the whole, everything was burning. They keep the food in old, out-moded storage rooms. And the Germans knows everything. They bombed this everything, the burned this everything. The whole preparation, everything was burning, the food, the bread, the sugar, everything. And there in that time you see they took us in and I don't know, and they put me on to a fire fighting unit. I was stationed, why a fire fighting unit I don't know. It's again, this is all up to God, right? I was stationed on Vasilevski Ostrov. This is Vasilev Island. I remember *Sredniy Prospekt*. I remember the fire station. This was belonging to the army. The Germans was bombing, fire bombing, the city every day and every night. You come up at night and you see whole Leningrad is like a sea of flames. They was throwing down hundreds of thousand incinerating bombs. How do they call it?

HR: Yeah, that's it.

HS: Hundreds of thousands, you see? Only...

HR: And where were you? You're in a street in Leningrad?

HS: On the roofs.

HR: Right in the city?

HS: In the city. On the Vasilevski Ostrov.

HR: And all around you is burning and...

HS: Everything was burning, and we was fighting this.

HR: You had water that was running?

HS: Well, we had water in the beginning, and later we have no water because everything was destroyed.

HR: Destroyed, yeah.

HS: And so we made a relay from the Neva. Neva is a river. And we make machines, pumps put up one pump near the other, getting the water from one pump to the other. Now, it was not enough power. You couldn't reach to the top, you know? It was very useless. Only everything was in snow. The roofs was in snow, so we had to develop a different tactic. We were sending people on the roofs, sitting on the roofs. And when the Germans throw the bombs, just shovel them down. Throw them down, it's possible when they start to burn, they melted this, they go down to the floors below, and the whole house burns like a candle, you know? And I was developing such a technique. We was throwing down, you know, the bombs, with everything what we can. And it's good when the roof is

flat. And when the roof is not flat we have to put yourself with wires to the chimneys. Well, life was...

HR: But you threw the bombs down?

HS: On the ground.

HR: And then they went off? On the ground?

HS: On the street.

HR: On the street.

HS: Well...

HR: So you could do--but at least the house wasn't...

HS: Yeah, yeah, no it was a...

HR: I mean the idea was to save the house.

HS: The idea was to cut down on the fires.

HR: Yeah.

HS: Because what they was doing, they make a fire, and later they send in to bomb. Soon they make a fire they know where it is and later they send in. And our intention was to cover, yeah...

HR: So if you got them on the ground you could do [unclear].

HS: Yeah, other people was doing. Basically [unclear] it was only to do, just to do, you know? Just to do. How it was effective, very poor effective. And I remember we was going on, you know, and it wasn't already food. People was already started to die from hunger. I remember I went once, we ran up to a roof and I see these old houses, you know? Old beautiful houses from the Czar still. No, not modern, right? And I see a toilet in the, over there they have the toilets on the steps, yeah? And I see a Russian sitting so on a toilet, [unclear] such a Russian, a fire and bombing and shooting, and he sits so quiet on the toilet. I say, "What the hell is it?" You know, I went upstairs and I did, later I go down and he sits still here, so I go down and I say, "*Grazhdanin!*"¹⁹

HR: He's dead.

HS: He was dead. So, we was doing what we was doing, and comes to be one, and one thing they caught me, and I was wounded in mine back, on the roof, from a fire bomb. I was wounded in my back. I was, they took me to the hospital in Leningrad and I was laying over there a month.

HR: But that hospital room, it was so jammed...

HS: Very, very bad.

HR: [unclear]?

HS: And I start to get, a hospital, this wasn't a regular hospital. It was made from a school.

HR: Yeah.

¹⁹"Citizen", a term of address.

HS: And you know, they just put in beds. And I started to get gangrene because they didn't have help or something. And they start to evacuate people--soldiers, wounded soldiers, children, old people. And they, one day they come and say they will evacuate us to the great land. And they evacuated through the ice to the Lake Ladoga the evacuate. You know the word evacuate, right?

HR: Sure.

HS: And to a village. I believe that village was calling too Ladoga. Ladoga was the name of the village.

HR: How far away?

HS: This was to the other side of the lake from this. And over there they feed us already right away.

Tape thirteen, side two:

HR: ...June the 28th, 1983, Harriet Richman interviewer.

HS: Okay. I would like, I didn't add it before the first connection with Judaism in Russia. I had a chance when I was in Leningrad, in the blockade. Accidentally we was, I was with the army over there. And accidentally I was near the opera house when I saw the old Leningrad *shul*. And they show me, the soldiers what was with me, they say, "This is the *Yevreiskaya Sinagoga*." This means the Jewish *shul*. And I say, "I am a Jew, and I would like to go in over there." There was not hostility from their side. And probably in that time, a time of trouble, you know, was--and I went in over there and...

HR: Was it bombed, the synagogue?

HS: Yeah. It was not bombed. It was just damaged. They, it's a very beautiful old synagogue. It's a central synagogue, and around they have like the Shneider *Shul* and the Shuster *Shul*, you know? They have the small...

HR: Little *shuls*.

HS: Little *shuls* around.

HR: Near that one.

HS: Yes. And the Leningrader *Shul* is a beautiful old *shul*. And the Jewish Hebrew words hit me so strong, you know, that I started to cry. This, everything, you know, come back to me. Because I have to tell the truth, in that whole whirl of situations, I lost myself. I was only struggling...

HR: To be alive.

HS: To be alive and just observing and living in that situation. And that witnessing, you know, you see that *Melamed* and you see the benches and see the *luchas* on the...

HR: Did they have a *Sefer Torah*?

HS: And this I don't know. I couldn't, I wasn't in a long time.

HR: Oh.

HS: Because I was with my unit outside. I just went in and...

HR: Nobody was there?

HS: No, no, it was like partially destroyed. The roof was like burned, you know? And it was very hard on my heart, you know? And this was my first, I guess this was my first, I saw a small Jewish cemetery in that city of Cherepovetz too. On the fields. I didn't mention this, right?

HR: No.

HS: I--in the fields between the town, in the new town where the new streets are, was in Cherepovetz, where the former...

HR: Which town was this? The one where you...

HS: The original.

HR: Did the...

HS: Yes.

HR: With the...

HS: In the electro...

HR: With the...

HS: In the [unclear], right.

HR: In that...

HS: So, over there it was like, probably in the old time it was the end of the town. Because after this start like new streets with the wooden houses from the farmers, from the peasants what was coming to the city. Was over there a very small cemetery maybe six, seven stones, partially destroyed, partially standing, with a beautiful iron gate, iron, how do you call it around?

HR: A fence.

HS: A fence. A very artistical iron fence. And it was over there six, seven stones. Now they was in better condition than the other general *kladbistcha* how they call it in Russia a *kladbistcha*. This was called the *Yevreiskaya Kladbistcha* the Jewish *kladbistcha*.

HR: Cemetery.

HS: Cemetery. And the Russian people know about it. They know about this. Because I asked them about this. And I saw old Jewish stones.

HR: But only six or seven?

HS: Six or seven, very small.

HR: But did it have Hebrew writing on it?

HS: Yes.

HR: Like we do?

HS: Like a regular *metzayvas* [tombstones], you know the *metzayvas*. And it was around a field two trees was growing over there. And a very small maybe seven, six or seven stones.

HR: Could you read what it...

HS: Yes. We read names. And I read the year, much before the Czar, 1907, 1910, you know in Hebrew and in Russian, yes. So I will go, I'm going back now.

HR: Yeah, to the synagogue.

HS: Yeah. After the synagogue.

HR: In Leningrad, yeah.

HS: Already, yeah, this is what I mentioned when I was exposed to...

HR: Judaism.

HS: To Judaism what hit my heart, you know? And when I was evacuated to the Lake Ladoga, on the other side they was already waiting for us, ambulances, army ambulances. And they feed us and they give us some preparation, medical preparation. And they took us to the nearest railroad station where it was waiting for us a train, a hospital train.

HR: Was this, you had your injury in your back?

HS: Yes, I had a injury in the back and I had gangrene on...

HR: You had gangrene.

HS: Because probably they didn't have medical supplies so good. And probably I was only a soldier I was very unimpressed with the care. No, they was, it, probably it was such a terrible time, you know? Such a horrible time probably. The balance of existence between the Soviet regime was in balance. They didn't have time to take care of the people and they didn't take care. The food we was getting, we was very hungry always. And this we already was getting more than other soldiers and other civil populations. So when I, we come to that train was already much better with the girls and...

HR: Nurses?

HS: The *sanitar* yeah, nurses, and doctors. And we have such beds. And the very badly wounded--I wasn't so bad wounded. I could walk--and the very bad wounded have such special beds they can, like hanging beds. And they took us to a town there called Vologda. Vologda is the center town from the Vologda Province. It's a big old town with a big railroad station, a part from the northern railroad station what goes from Moscow to Leningrad. What they was in the north fighting for that railroad. And that railroad was exposed already to bombing from the Germans too, in Vologda, because this was already not so far to reach for them. I was in Vologda from winter, I was a half a year.

HR: Sick?

HS: A half a year sick, right. Only, not, I was a part, a part I was in that was the *vyzdoravlivalustchaya kommanda*. This is, you are sick, and later you are able to walk around. When you're able to do in the hospital, no you are not able to go back to the army...

HR: But you could work.

HS: Yeah. So you are a part from this *vyzdoravlivalustchaya kommanda*. This means from the improving, from the [unclear] convalescent, yes. And we have over there some Jewish doctors and they probably, they kept me a little longer than [unclear]. They, I remember they make me sometime more temperature.

HR: That's something.

HS: Yes. I have to say this. Without open expression about the Yiddish, not Yiddish, you know? That question when Jewish start to be more suppressed in that time, I believe the German antisemitic agitation start to work more on the people. The antisemitic expression start to be more expressful. And the Jewish people either if you was a big man in the Russian Army, you start to suppress your nationality not to want to expose. Because you was hearing already from the soldiers when they got drunk about the Jews and the Jews are not fighters. The Jews are not doing this. The Jews hiding, the Jews big bosses, the Jews in the hospitals, the Jews about food. And we are, this already was start already the official start already like antisemitic movement.

HR: Propaganda?

HS: Yeah. Before for such a talking by Russian law you have to go in prison. You couldn't say either, it wasn't, you couldn't say *zhid*. This was a insulting word. And

if you want to say it you have to say *Yevrei*. Let's see in our passport, in our internal passport, I put on *Yevrei*. And if you say that word *zhid* you mean you're insulting this and you can be punished. No, it's, already you could see a turn for the worse about Jewish people. And they in the army they start to do jokes about Jews and that Jew so and Jew so, not even knowing maybe they didn't meet a Jew at all. And it's amazing how this works, you know? It's very amazing. We had once our lessons, they have, how they call the lessons?

HR: Maneuvers?

HS: In the army, yes? Like, they call this like maneuvers. We had a smoking break, *perekun pereryv*, it's a *pereryv*. We sit down and we're talking, you know? What do you believe they start to talk? How about Jews? And I am sure nobody knows, person, nobody knows a Jew. And there is an instructor what was instructing us. We have in that time I remember a lessons about hand grenades, about defensive and offensive on the ground. You can make a grenade be offensive when you are hiding, or you can be defensive, that you shouldn't be attacked, you know what I mean? So we have such a lesson. I remember it well. And he is start to talk about the Jews in the forest. He was with the guerrilla too. And he was saying how the Germans started to kill Jews and the Jews, "Ay! Vai! Vai!" And I couldn't stand it this more. I get up. And I say, "Tovaristeh Commandyer, I am a Jew and I can't stand that what you are talking lies and not true, that you should talk this in the Russian Army. You're not in the German Army. You're in the Soviet Army. And I want to complain about you." By the rules in the Codex from the Russian Army, you can't complain to a officer, to a higher. No, you have to tell him. You have to tell him that, "I am going to complain about you." And I went. I couldn't stand, I say, "The hell with this. What I have to hide? What I have to hide again in Russia?" And I say, "You talk against the Jews what is not true, and you shouldn't talk so. I will complain about you." I went to the Commissar and I told him the whole story. I told him that I am a Jew. I am from Poland, and I am in the army. And not for this I am fighting that a Soviet officer should this. They took him right away away. What they did with him I don't know. No, they took him away. This was already in the army. You see it was not a shame, they was not afraid, in the army what talking about. So, now when I finish with this, the *vyzdoravlivalustchaya kommanda* already "*priznan goden*", oh I start already in Russian, *priznan goden*, this means I am ready to go to this. By Russian law you go back to that station where they took you. Do you understand?

HR: Yes.

HS: Let's see they take you from that *voyinkomat*. A *voyinkomat* means that mobilization point. You go back from there...

HR: And you have to go all the way back?

HS: They send you back to the mobilization point, and they send you away from the--in the...

HR: They're gonna send you back where your mother was?

HS: Correct. Not only my mother. My father and my family.

HR: Your whole family was there?

HS: And they...

HR: What was the name of that town, Cerep-...?

HS: Cherepovetz.

HR: Cherepovetz.

HS: Cherepovetz. And this is their, this is the procedure. I will tell later with the Polish Army what I had. I was in the Polish Army too, in Russia. And they send me to Cherepovetz. They send me to that *voyinkomat*. How is *voyinkomat*? This means, *voyinkomat* let's say mobilization part, right? I come over there. In that time they was mobilizing to make a desant division, a parachute division, to fight behind the lines. This in 1942 is a death sentence, because they was so disorganized, so with no experience, so ill-prepared. Only it comes a order from, you see it's a very inflexible army, a army not built to do this, only if Stalin will say so, we will do it. We don't care it's wrong or right. Nobody will say no. If Stalin say, "Tomorrow we have to make four air divisions and send them here, here and here," that's enough. They will do it. If in the four divisions will be alive one percent, is done nobody can--and nobody cares and nobody is responsible either. Because everybody tries to push away...

HR: The responsibility.

HS: The responsibility, just to [unclear]. And it was such a turmoil. You see whole armies was deserting in that time. It was a riot in Moscow. People was, you know, you probably hear what was going on. They, the movement from the population was so anti-Soviet. The farmers, the *kolkhozes*, these were so anti-Soviet. They was looking only for Hitler like a angel, a God-sent angel he will kill the Soviets and kill the Jews and making a paradise on the earth. So in that time--I later find out--they was forming a *vozdushnyi desant*...

HR: A parachute.

HS: A *vozdushnyi desant*, a parachute, right? Now, they have a procedure what, how to do. First of all, not like in a normal army, they have a very developed political department. Now the deciding factor what is responsible for the political, for right or wrong, in that division, I find out this later, this division was a *NKVD* division, from the internal police division.

HR: Right.

HS: This should be the top of the line. And when I come in, I come with my papers and they called me in, "Genagi Josefovich Skorrupa," that called me in, you're, in Russia they use two names--your name and your father's name.

HR: Genagia?

HS: Genagi, and Josefovich. My father is Josef.

HR: Jos-, Josef-...

HS: Josefovich.

HR: Josefovich.

HS: Genagi, yeah, Josefovich, Genagi Josefovich Skorrupa.

HR: Genagi Josefovich Skorrupa.

HS: Yeah. And you know they called me in and they called my name. They mispronounce my name. They say Skolupa; they make it Russian from Polish. I come in and report; I say, "I just want to straighten out my name is Skorrupa, not Skolupa."

HR: Mr. Skorr, I can't hear the difference.

HS: Yeah.

HR: Say it.

HS: Skorrupa or Skolupa, a "l" in the middle.

HR: Oh, again.

HS: Skorrupa, without a "l" now Skolupa.

HR: Oh.

HS: Yes. So I want to straighten out because, and we later are right and I want everything what's happened to me to go to my family, you understand?

HR: Sure.

HS: Well I shouldn't tell you how it was when I come home, you know. The story later, I went to the *voyinkomat* and they was waiting outside, you know? You know how this is?

HR: Outside of the house? They were, they knew you were coming.

HS: Of the house, yes whole, you see, it's over there is a whole Russian, old Russian system. Whole villages are waiting with their sons, you know, outside, you know? It's like before by the Czar. And so, and you see my mother and my father, everything, they was waiting outside that I should tell them what's happening with us, you know? Because as soon you go in, you don't go out more. You go in in that house, you no more go out a civil person.

HR: You don't go out...

HS: More, no more, you already a army man. You no more civil. Soon you go to the *voyinkomat* with your *poviestka*, with your mobilization card. You're in. So or they make you free, you can go out, or you can go out more you go to that army unit already.

HR: So you went home before you went to the mobilization.

HS: Sure. I was in [unclear], sure. I went home...

HR: And then you went to the mobilization.

HS: And they give me a date when I have to go.

HR: Oh.

HS: They no send straight. Let's see they, when we was in the *Tovaristeh commandir* can say, "You will be home six months. You will go home a year. You will go home a month."

HR: So how long were you supposed to be home?

HS: I probably was two months home. And they say, "You will register," they give you, it's, they no talk to you too much. They put you on military book to register to the *voyinkomat* on this and this day. You come a day before they will no accept you. You come a day later they will arrest you.

HR: They will arrest you. What happened to your brothers?

HS: Everybody was home.

HR: They didn't go in the army?

HS: No.

HR: They were too young.

HS: In that time. They went to the army later. They were killed later.

HR: Both of? Not both.

HS: One.

HR: One.

HS: The father was killed. So, and my mother was waiting outside, you know?

HR: And how long had it been since you saw them? How...

HS: Almost a year. It took the whole...

HR: Yes.

HS: Because I was not in touch with them.

HR: Right.

HS: It was in the blockade.

HR: They got that one letter.

HS: Only that letter. I was not in touch with them, you know. Later I was in touch with them, yeah. My sister come to Vologda to the hospital once, when I wrote them letters, you know? I wrote them a letter and the letter didn't get through. Probably I wrote something not right. The military censor, you know? So, they took me in. See, it's amazing how the umbrella of God, you know, is, how this is working. In that day they was doing this they called me in, and I mention my name. And they look over the papers. They say, "Why he's Skolupa? What is Skorrupa?" You know, they sit a, sit a few people, few officers, specialists. One is the specialist from this. One is the political specialist. You know, one is the doctor what looked over your quality, your speciality. They, over there you go by speciality, you know? Probably here too in the army. So, and I say, "I am, my name is Skorrupa. It's a Polish name. I am from Poland." "From Poland?" Everybody opened their--I see everybody looked up. This was unusually case.

HR: Sure.

HS: This was unusually case that a Polish man is in the Russian Army. You understand?

HR: Sure.

HS: And the political commissar, he say, "Come in here. Sit down. What is the problem?" I tell him the story. He took me away to a other room. "Tell me now the whole story." I say, "What?" You know already with their suspicions. "Tell me the whole story."

I say, "What you mean the whole story. I am from Poland." I saw a map over there, a map of Europe. I went to the map, [unclear]. "Here is Poland. Here is Poznan. Here is Kalisz." Was the names over there. "And here is Warta, the River Warta," I say. "Here I was living. Here was the Germans come to us. Here I was by the Germans in the village." I told him this. "Here I was running." I show him everything on the map. "I was running from Kalisz to Lodz, from Lodz to Warsaw, from Warsaw to Bialystok, from Bialystok to Kovel. Now from Kovel back to Poland, you know?" And he didn't like this--to back.

HR: But you told him you went back to get your folks.

HS: This, no, they no believe, this I understand now. He didn't like, he like this everything coming is okay. No, that going back...

HR: To get them, he didn't want you to go back.

HS: It's not a, this I believe.

HR: He thought you were maybe a spy.

HS: That's correct. He is already, he was already suspicious. He already, and this is already, I see God's hand on me. He saved me. And I say this is the point, I say [unclear]. "I went. I'm Jewish. I went back because I have to save my parents. And I saved them. And I saved," I say, "other people." You know I said. And he say, "Okay." Okay? "Go out." And he was, have a whole discussion over there. They call me in back. And they say, they put me on a stamp. "Go home. Come tomorrow back." So I was going two weeks...

HR: Back?

HS: Every day back and forth. And on my paper was written, "*Do vastrebanya*." This means, "When we will need you." Such a red stamp. Being the second, being there a few days, I see one more Jewish boy. And I see a Polish boy, waiting over there. You see, you get the documents and later they call you in. And I start to talk with them. I say, "What's " They say they come to mobilize. I say, "I am already a few days," and I tell them the--I was with this brother Pelta, he is from Lodz, with his two brothers on the *okopis*, on the fortification wall.

HR: In Leningrad?

HS: Before Leningrad. Later they escaped, or I don't know what happened with them. Again, I have not with a good experience. They was bakers over there. They was baking the bread. And I come toward them. I say, "I need some bread for our people." They say they don't have bread. And I know they was selling bread. That was just in between. So, that brother Shimek, I ask him, "Do you want to go to the army?" And he say, "No." In that time already I developed a different thinking. I saw already that this reality, that [unclear] that our death will be so useless, you know? So without weight, without the remark in history and without weight, you know such a terrible loss for Jewish people. We lost so much, you know? I was already thinking different. My fight against the Germans will be so useless, you know? Even if I kill a hundred Germans, and later I will be killed, is no value, you know? Because I am one from the, so I already start to think a different

thing. Not only of fighting, how just to survive, how just to overcome it. And I say, "Shimek, you want to go to the army?" And he say, "No." I tell you what I say. "Tell them that you are from Poland." I say, "It was working by me." Maybe...

HR: Where was he? Was he from Poland?

HS: From Lodz.

HR: From Lodz. He was. Okay.

HS: Sure.

HR: But he was afraid to say?

HS: No, he didn't go in yet.

HR: Oh, I see.

HS: I just saw him, and that other boy was a Polish boy from Vilna, Dolgovitch.

HR: They were both Polish.

HS: He was a Gentile and he was a Jew.

HR: Oh I see, okay.

HS: I will tell you later about that Dolgovitch. He was antisemite too. And I say, "Shimek and Dolgovitch, just if they ask you, just mention them that you are from Poland. Because I mentioned that I am from Poland and they send me back day one." So, the next time, I went in again, with, again *Do vastrebanya*. And they too *Do vastrebanya*. This was, you know, awry something. Okay, and we was going so a week. And going, again, going is not so like here.

HR: 20 miles.

HS: Not 20 miles. No, going is [unclear], end to the end. And you know with it's a misery. And such a hunger and such a terrible thing, you know, just to be in that environment from that mobilization. People so wild, you know? And later I started to be a little more courageous. I say, "How long I will walk back and forth? What's the reason? What should I do?" He say, "You are a fireman, right? I see you already was in the army as a fireman. You know what you should do? Go to the fire station." I say, "Okay. Give me a paper."

HR: Why did you need a paper?

HS: Well, everything you need a paper over there. So he wrote down, he wrote me the address. I say, "Where is this? What is this?" You see, I just start to play naive. And he wrote me down a paper to the fire station. And I went out and I was waiting for the boys outside.

HR: To tell them you're a fireman.

HS: Yes, I tell them I am a fireman. And [unclear], I went with them to that same guy. I say, "I have two Polish boys. Send, give them with the fire, let's all go together over there." They had the same stamp, that was *trebovanya*. He say, "Okay, go." And I took them to that fire, we come in to the fire station. And I say this and this. And again, they need only a piece of paper. They was believing that we are sent, but we wasn't sent. Fire station, okay. They didn't know nothing. I had a little experience with Leningrad. Not only

experience. I had the [unclear], you see, I'm a battlefield soldier and all the bombs and the all things, you know? I was already a specialist. And they, for this they start to give me a hard time. They were so, you know, so prejudice, so narrow minded, so, you know, chauvinistic.

HR: At the fire station?

HS: Yes. The people over there, I come over there with their old tradition, with their old things, with all the hooliganism, you know, a bunch of [unclear] you know? A boy over there what was the head, because I say, you know, because I say, "I know this and I know this." Sure I know. I know it. And he start to give me a hard time, "Do the hardest work." Do, and for me it was just a joke. What was for me hard work, you know? And the dirtiest work, you know? I didn't care. In the basement was a old-fashioned heating system what was, and collapsing-

Tape fourteen, side one:

HR: This is an interview with Mr. Henry Skorr, side six [side one], June 28th, 1983, Harriet Richman, interviewer.

HS: And how I say, they start to give me the worstest work over there. We had a old heating system, how I say.

HR: Are you tired?

HS: What?

HR: Are you tired?

HS: No. A old heating system, and something, the water the basement where the heating system was was flooded every night. And every night we have to send down people to put out the water. And I don't know if it was punishment, they send me always I have to work over there a whole night, pumping out the water, only on the caprice from the people what was above me. Doing that work, I come out with a conclusion that it can be developed a device which would mechanical pump out the water, with a vacuum system that we shouldn't pull it out of it. I told this to that man, "Why should I stay a whole night over there? I can develop you a system that it will automatically, the atmospheric pressure, putting out the water." And he started to laugh at me. "We was doing always so, and why should we do different?" I say, "Because you have to save labor. Is not a way to keep people in the basement a whole night and time they have to rest, and then they will go out for fires." They give me a permission to do this, and I started to work on a system what was working on a very pure system of atmospheric pressure. When the water goes on a higher level, is activating a *shestom*, how they call it?

HR: Plunger?

HS: Such a plunger, and the water start automatically going down without needing help. And when the water falls down, so this stops automatically. They was very happy with this, and they started to look on me already entire different. It's very clear that I didn't get, I have no comradeship with them. I was doing my work. In my free time when not was work I was sitting reading book and studying technical books about fire fighting and about technique and other things. And they in their free time they was only all constantly all dancing and singing their, the traditional *Chastushki*, the songs with their harmonicas and always boy, girls problems, like a usually thing in that time. After a short time they advanced me to be the head from one fire truck. And being already the head from a fire truck, I already start develop my own ideas. I say the fire truck is not built, not the question built right, no, the instruments are not placed right. And I reorganized the whole work how the instrument should be and who is responsible with, for that part, who is responsible for the other part, and how this work when we're going out in action. Who is responsible for the quality, who is responsible for the cleaning. They liked that idea, and they sent that idea to the *Vologda*, to the headquarter. And come down a [chuckles] commission and look it over this and discuss with me. And they ask me, "Are you want to

go to a school?" I say, "Yes. To be in, I am already in this. Why shouldn't I go to a school?" And they took me to the school in Vologda.

HR: Far from there?

HS: Fire, yes. And I start...

HR: No, far away from Kali-, no, Cherepo-...

HS: About 400 miles.

HR: Oh Lord.

HS: Yeah. This is over there a very short, yeah. And I started to advance very nicely in that fire department, because I was always reading. And I was, I always was acquiring literature not only from Volograd. I was acquiring literature from Moscow, from the central headquarter. And in a short time I had more theoretical knowledge than that head from the whole department in the city.

HR: You were able to get material from Moscow?

HS: Yes, through them, because everything is based over there on instructions, on literature, and on laws. Only they are so used to they are not doing nothing. They're just...

HR: Staying with the same way.

HS: They're just staying with the way, with the primitive Russian way, with the drunkenness, and just pushing a day through, and not trying to advance absolutely nothing. What less they have to do, what better is for them. I saw, I'm already in this, I saw that enormity of the loss what's going on. So and I was interested in reading and studying, on a place, studying, just reading a militaristic book, I start to study what a soldier have to know, what an officer have to know, how is the physical of this and how the chemistry of this, and how have to be organized, fire protection. And in a short way I start to be a specialist. And I advanced again. I was already a head from a shift. And being in that time they took to the army other people. And the fire department had--later I, when I was already the head from the whole department, I find out every year we have to send 10 percent from our people to the army.

HR: Let me just make sure.

HS: Okay, mine, it's clear that my family was very happy with that development, that I am home, and that I am succeeding. Now another trouble start to come in to our family like to millions of other families. It comes the time that they took my father to the army.

HR: How old was he?

HS: My father was born in 19-, in 1895. And they took my brother to the army.

HR: So he was already 50. He was already...

HS: It was...

HR: Old. They were taking that age group?

HS: Yes. This was such a horrible time, 1942, the worst time. They were taking everybody, everybody what was just able to walk. It was, the Russian power was on the verge of destruction. And Hitler was going, he was already near Leningrad. He was near

Moscow. He was in the south near Stalingrad. He was going to Caucasus, he was going everywhere. And the hunger was very bad from the city. People was dying for hunger. You can go out in the street in the morning and find dead people on the street. And nobody, and it was a normal thing. And the horror was come in to us that they want to take my father. And I try already in a quiet way to prepare him. My theory was in that time was entire different already. I tried to save them, and I tried to explain my father that he shouldn't talk over there entire Russian, that he should say that he doesn't understand Russian. So, my theory was being that if he no understand the Russian, they can't take him to the front army. They will mobilize him and take him somewhere to put him somewhere in a corner, working, doing, everything is, thousands of people are around. It's, my theory was if you're going in in the [unclear] of armies you're going one way. When you come up, front, killing or wounding, hospital, and back. If you can go out from that round, you have a chance of existence. God helped that I was a little out, temporary. You know I accept this. And I saw by what more higher I will go by my work, what more safer I will be, because I will be valuable. Mine effort will be valuable for the country.

HR: Sure.

HS: I tried to explain this to my father. Now my father was so afraid of them, and so not accepting that challenge. You have to be in such a thing stubborn. You make up your mind that you no speak Russian, and you stick to it. And he went to the, I went with him. I didn't let my mother go because she was very much crying, you know, and everybody. I go with my father and I beg him, "Do what I am telling you. Is not dangerous. Is not nothing. You no understand Russian. How you understand Russian? You just come from Poland." I just tried to make him sure. Just...

HR: Did he understand it very well?

HS: He, not very well.

HR: But he could...

HS: Now he understand, right?

HR: And he could speak or no?

HS: Not so well. Not so well. He was speaking like a Uzbek, like a other thing. No, he could, you know. He was only in a you see the paradox in Russia was so, a few months later, they no accept him to the army. They accept him only to working army. A few months later come out a decree, "No national minorities from out from Russia, not accepted to the army." It was only a few months survival. And you see, in that horror, they took him, and he went. The same time when they took my brother. With my brother I couldn't already. He was young and he was this. I say this. I told him one thing. I told him the reason why he is going to the army, what he have to do, what is our intention. If he have to fight, he have to fight. Try to be reasonable. Don't try to be a hero. "You're more," I told him, I tried to explain, "You're more a hero when you will survive. This is our heroic part. To being killed is not heroism, because nobody will recognize it either." They say that we are, we no want to fight so and so. I told him, and they took him.

HR: And the other brother, where was he?

HS: Mine other brother was, they didn't took him. He was blind. They didn't took him.

HR: Oh, he stayed home.

HS: They took my father. We had from him only one letter. The letter, somebody was writing for him. And three-quarters was confiscated from that censor. And since then we didn't hear nothing. My brother, they took my brother to a camp not far from us, from between Cherepovetz and Vologda. Walking, again, not by train, walking the 100 miles from us to that camp. Already being a little--having a little more in mine, being advanced in my work, you know, and being already a soldier in the army, I went to visit him. In all kind illegals, in a illegals way I went on the train. I had from my command--from my, this, took a command [unclear], and I went to his camp. And it's a horror. He was so like coming out from a concentration camp, so skin and bones. They didn't feed them at all. I brought some food from home. He devour it in one moment sitting with this. Being over there I say, "Nahum, Nahum, how about," he look, he was looking like me. "How about we change clothes? Let me stay here and you go back. You run away." I just wanted to see how this will impress him. And I see he will not make it. He wasn't psychologically ready, you see, because this was a very dangerous hair-brained scheme. I would be over there a day and I will run away. If he can run away. You see, in the trains was a very dangerous story. They was checking everything 1000 times. And you have to be brave to hide yourself in things. There is ways to hide in the train, up above. Now you have to be ready for this. I saw he wasn't ready. So I give it up. Because can be a double trouble, I figure out I'll get a bullet and he will get a bullet, you see? So I went out from that camp. This was Pushchuba [phonetic], a training camp. And they was training with wooden rifles. They have no rifles even. This was, that '42nd year was the horror. They have no food. They have no rifles. They have no ammunition. They have nothing. They have only human meat. And they was sending human meat, you know the, and the German in the millions was cutting them down.

So when I come back my mother saw already on my face what it is, you know? I say, "Well, it's a hard time he will go through." They took him to the front, and he was, he survive until 1943. He was a year on the front. He was three times wounded and he was in the artillery. He was buried in the village Chusovkiye in Voronezhskaya Oblast, in Voronezh Province. And it was that big battle in Kursk battle. Did you hear that Kursk battle in 1943? My father just was bombed out in a train. I received one announcement *poldot* [phonetic] from the army. I received the announcement over there in that mobilization point. And I was already a big shot in there. And this we will come back because I will explain. They call me in and they give me this. And I didn't want to tell my mother. I just told my sister. And she break down. And my mother know it already. So, my brother and my father disappeared. He wrote us a letter once that he was sick on malaria. He, on the front he had the malaria and they keep him behind the front, you know, and he will be right away able,

he have already medals. I say, "We don't need medals. We need you." I wrote him a letter, "We need you." I wrote him in Jewish a letter, that that censor shouldn't be so fast, you know. And later I received a letter from a friend which was with him, that he saw him. Later I spoke to him. When he saw him he was already dead, but he didn't want to write. He is buried in a brother's, in a brother, in a brother grave. How do you call it?

HR: A mass grave.

HS: A mass grave, a mass grave in the village of Chusovkiye. So, this was, it was 1942. My mother was in very terrible condition. Everybody was hungry. I devised a different, with this, I start to grow potatoes. I ask permission from the city hall to get a piece of land, and I started to grow potatoes and cabbage. And there was, over there I find out on the railroad they was loading horses for the army. Well I was collecting that manure, you know, carrying home ten miles. And I was soaked through with that, this. And I will tell you a story, that I started with that potatoes growing, the whole city started to grow potatoes. And my mother, you know, and we had permission from the place where the father was working. We was getting still, we could take out bones and heads and this. And my mother still was continuing cooking for the other people. Because the other people was, the people, our people was dying for hunger. In [unclear], dying for hunger. It was over there a, there was over there a barber from Warsaw. He was from hunger started to be paralyzed. He had no, he couldn't walk on his legs. And my mother was every day delivering him food to his house. One friend what I was with him in the army, when they sent him home, you remember what I say, he, they took him later in a different, they took him and mobilized him again to the army, they have a child. She with him was dying from hunger. We took the child to us. We was bringing up, you know? And he have a brother what was working with my father. He was arrested for stealing a piece of meat and was left only a mother with a small child. She was dying from hunger and from the hunger, she went crazy. And she was telling to that child that she will cook her up for a soup. The child ran away. We took that child to us. We was bringing up by us that child. And she come at night to our window knocking on the door and, "Give me back my child!" And the next day, she died. And we have to bury her. This was winter time, and you're cursing people that to die in winter, because you can't bury them. The government doesn't do nothing. And I was carrying that woman on a sleigh. Only three people we went to the cemetery. And you can't, you have to make a fire to make warm the ground. So I saw that somebody is digging a ground already deep. So, I told them, "I will give you a liter of vodka. Let me make near." So I give him the vodka and he make two graves in one grave and put her in. You see, either to die in winter time is a curse, a curse in Russian.

So, and this was, it's so, you know. And my mother was start to be so very bad sick from that everything. Oh, and I wanted to tell you. I started to be in the fire department bigger and bigger. And I get a apartment from that fire department in the...

HR: In the same building?

HS: In the same building. And little by little I took over the management from that whole department. I have officially above me a person. Now he was only involved with drinking, and everything went over my, in mine hands. And I organized the whole department. I was afraid I am going, you know, this is just accidentally I come to this. And I was afraid, I have to develop a whole strategy what, how I will do this. And so I was thinking I will go strictly by the letter of the law, that you see, from greatness in Russia to prison is just only a small step. I started to be in the city a personality. Because over there the fire department is not only fire department. The fire department is a power. You can go to every factory. I developed a [unclear] department. This was on paper everything. No, it was never applied because they was, you know, backward people they wasn't doing. And I have, I read the whole literature, the whole instruction what was coming, and I was doing, I put this everything to life. And they was coming commissions from Vologda from Moscow. And they was, you know, shocked what I did, and how I did and why I did. And they let me do it everything, you know? I just exactly did what the law permit me, you know? I developed, you see, we was a near front city, not far. I developed a fire protection for the whole city that this was, on paper was everything. Now nobody put this in practice. And so I make from mine fireman teachers, they was going to houses and make people, ten people, teach them what you will do in such a situation, what you will do in such a situation, what to do in such situation. And people from other cities start to come to learn what we was doing. Now, I put together, let's see that all factories have fire departments. On paper, they're under mine control. Only on paper they was. I maked from this one unit, one strategic unit. Let's see the railroad have a train. I put it in in mine strategic part. The shipyard have a ship in the *Zagotzerno* where they have the loading the grains have trucks. I made from this one fire plan. And if I can accomplish something with my technique, I just mobilized them, and they're going to do the job. So, you know, I made from this a whole fortress. And it was very impressive for the city and they start, you know, I was already the head and they was calling in to city hall for, give reference how to protect schools, how to protect hospitals, how to protect this. And with the same thing I was a strange person. I was never accepted in the Russian society. Either by the people what was coming, checking me, from the headquarters, from Moscow and from Volograd. Comes a *politruk*, the head from *poly-*, Vliahanov. They was coming telling me, my people, you know, he say, "You be on alert. This is a strange person in our midst." And I know that people from me was going every week to the *NKVD*, reporting on me. And I have to let them go, only I know where they're going. She say that a woman Zorina, she goes this and this. I say, "She goes to the military department. And I know what she have to do over there." And I know that Galebov, his name, that lieutenant Galebov, he is the head of the all informers. So I took that girl and I told her every week what she had to say over there. Do you understand? Because what I can do? And later, you see, I start to improve the whole living situation in the fire department. If I have so many people, and I have so many trucks, I went, let's see, to the factory what makes clothing. I say, "I can give you five people to

work in transportation.” This was very, it was not available. “If you give me for the people so much and so much clothing.” Every director have let’s see, five percent a fund what he can utilize for the welfare from the factory. So I say, “I will give you trucks and I will give you people. And you give me clothing for the people.” And he say, “You have a deal.” I went to the shoe factory. “I will give you people, you give me shoes.” To the Vod--spirit factory, “I’ll give you this, you give me that.” And they was giving me. And we was living in very good comfort. And I went to the city hall and I say, “Give me a field. I with my people put on potatoes and everything and cabbage and a half will be for us, and a half will be private for every person.” And you should see how we, and you should see what was private they make a good job. What was for us they didn’t do a good job, you know? And so I developed, you know, all kind of things and they like it.

Let’s see that, I told you about that system, that old fashioned system, the heating system was out of order? I throw this everything out and I make ovens in every room. And I went to the...

HR: Central heating.

HS: I throw it away because I didn’t have a reserve part. Later I went to the city, I say, “I need now wood. Because I have so many ovens.” I sent people to the forest and they was cutting trees. And I went, I took a ship with a barge. And we went over there and we start to load the ship. We come over there, the river was too narrow, too small. The barge wasn’t going in. And mine enemies was already happy. Now I am in trouble. How we will load the wood? I took mine key people together. I say, “What we will do now?” I say, “How we make a bridge? The ship stays a little further. Let’s make a bridge.” And the Russians, they need only idea. They start to work with their axes; in two days they have a bridge and we loaded up the wood. I get later a medal for this, you know?

So everything was okay, and everything was fine, and I started to develop a, how to say it, Jews. I was in touch with in all hospitals you have Jewish doctors, you have Jewish the suppliers, you know? You know, everybody is separate. And I find people they was dying for hunger. I was walking on the street and I see a person lying on there, dying on the street. I go to him and I say, “Oy, oy, you know?”

HR: You know he’s a Jew?

HS: A Jewish thing, and I say to him, “*Amkhu*?²⁰” And he pick up his head. He say, “Yah.” *Amkhu* is Jewish in Hebrew. I took him on my shoulders. I took him home, already to where I was living. And we brought him to life. We feed him and you know, and then later I have to give him a job. I do something. I went to the hospital to ones from my friends and I say, “Listen, I need a job for a person.” And they give him a job for him. And later he start to steal. It’s a usual Jewish story. They say, “Let’s send him away.” So we sent him away with the sick soldiers, you know what goes away?

HR: Why do you say it’s a usual Jewish story?

²⁰Meaning: “Are you Jewish?”

HS: Well, in Russia...

HR: In that time period?

HS: In that time, yes. In Russia there is no other way to exist. There is no other way. You will, let's see you was making 200 *ruble* a week, a month. For 200 *ruble* we was getting one bread.

HR: So not only Jews had to do it. Everybody did it.

HS: Other people had other supplies. They have the sources in the villages. They was hungry, they went to the village and they...

HR: They had relatives.

HS: Relatives.

Tape fourteen, side two:

HR: This is an interview with Mr. Henry Skorr, side seven [side two], June 28th, 1983.

HS: And this way we develop such a organization that if somebody Jew need help, I have a way to give him a job and I have a way how to send him away if he is in danger. The same thing, we had a, our department, the *NKVD* was very antisemitic. There was over there a special, a one, a young lieutenant what he was official antisemitic. And to being willing and to be able to stay in the back not to go to the front, he devised all kind schemes that he is fighting spies. And he developed a scheme that our Jewish community there are spies. And he arrested maybe 20 people, including the barber where my mother was bringing him food. And he took us, took me and my mother at night to the *NKVD* that we should give testimony that the other guy was talking against Russia and saying that Germany is good, and that we was bringing in food. And we have to decline. We have to say it's not true. We never yeah, they put in my mouth that I was saying to that guy, "Don't say nothing against Russia. Russia is very good." Just making me the good one and he is the bad one. And the end was that they arrested that guy. He, and that guy had a sister, and he was forcing that sister to say that his brother is talking against the Russians. And that sister admitted that he was talking. They arrested him. They arrested his wife. They arrested the other people, that they find the anti-Russian conspiracy, and they send them in maybe about 15 years of prison. The end was after a year he died in prison, his wife died in prison. They have a small child and they took it to a government house. And when my mother went to go to visit that child, they call up to the *NKVD* to say that she have no right to visit the child. After a year the child died. I just want to give the atmosphere what was going on in that time. And they're saying my mother, meeting the Jewish soldiers on the bazaar, invite them to our house, where they could pray. And I was very much afraid to let them pray in our house. And my mother say, "Who are we that we shouldn't let Jews pray?" Hearing already that argument I didn't argue with my mother. I let them pray by us. This was a part, they was from the wild division. They was really *arrestons* [phonetic], the arrested people. And they was belonging to the wild division. This is a division what they send on the first fire. And what happened with the people, I don't know later.

So the time was going until 1943, until we had the news from my brother, from my father. And a little trouble come to my house. And come out a order in that time from Stalin to take all Polish people to form a new Polish Army. How probably, you know, there was in the beginning a Polish Army, Anders' Army²¹. Only they was made from the all refugees, from Jews and from Gentiles. And they was mobilized in middle Asia. And from there they went to Persia and to the Middle East and they was fighting with the British. They didn't want to fight with the Russians. They was very antisemitic. And they was very

²¹Army unit comprised of Polish men whom the Russians had put in prison camps and formed after Germany invaded Russia.

anti-Russian and very antisemitic. In that time later they formed a organization from the Polish patriots, under the leadership from the Communist writer, Wanda Vasilerska. And they make a Polish Army, the division of Kostiuszko. In that time they mobilized all available people from Poland. Or they was in the Red Army or they was in prison. They collect everybody and they send to that army. This was in Divobo v Riazani, not far from Moscow. I was mobilized too and mine boys, the two other boys, was mobilized. And my sister was mobilized. And there was no way to avoid it. Mine the headquarter in Vologda was fighting to, that I shouldn't go to the Polish Army. No, they couldn't do nothing because they told them straight, "This is a order, a personal order from Stalin. Everybody, everyone was going." My sister was released because she had a heart condition. Yeah, she still have heart condition now in Israel. And this was a little relief for me that my mother wouldn't be alone. I forgot to tell that I mobilized mine brother and put him in the fire department.

HR: The blind brother?

HS: Yes, the blind brother. He was...

HR: He wasn't totally blind.

HS: Not totally blind. One eye was total blind and one was around 70, 80 percent. I just put him in just to be over there and he should be safe from the army. And in that time a other horror struck that I find out that family what they ran away with us from Kalisz to Russia, they disappeared in Ukraina when the war start, when the Germans overran the Russians. It was left only a small brother and a sister. They went to, evacuated to Kirgizia. In that time it was so bad over there that that boy died of hunger. And I find it out from my relatives what was in the Komi A.S.S.R. and we took that girl, Esther, to us, and she was living too with us until we went to Israel.

Now when this was the mobilization, when they mobilized me, I just look on my mother's face, and I saw that I have to do something. I can't abandon her alone. She was all broken with her heart what's happening to us. Now I had no, I didn't know plans what to do. No I start already to think something. When we come to Vologda, from Cherepovetz to Vologda, to the head of mobilization point, over there was already a few Jewish boys from other parts from the Vologda province. And there was a few Gentile boys already from the prisons what they was released. And already they start the antisemitic remarks about Jews and this and that. Being already a Russian officer and experienced in their ways and way of talking, I went in to the commissar and I explained the situation how it is. He say he can do nothing because this depended from Stalin. Well, I see I can't do nothing. We was waiting a few more days. And come in a train with other future Polish soldiers from other camps, from that Belobozhnitsa province. When we come in to the wagon, they- it was a full wagon with Polaks and Polish girls. And they right away started to laugh on us and with the old Polish antisemitic slogans, you know? And I already saw in this a opening for my plan what I have to do. I told to my boys, I told them before, "I am working on a plan how to get rid, get out from the Polish Army to the Russian Army. I can't tell

you how because I don't know yet. Now you have to listen to me and do what I say." When the Polaks start to insult us with the this and we start and one give us a little push, I just give a order to my boys, "Start to beat them up." And we start a battle in that wagon, in that space. And then we started to beat each other up. I know the, good school of fighting. We beat them up very nicely, until that, what was the, that man what was leading us, the, a Captain Popov, a Cossack, a wounded Cossack, and he say, "What's happening?" And I took him over on the side. I say, "I am a Russian officer too. I'm going to the Polish Army. You see what this is. I no want to go to the Polish Army because I know if they, not the Germans will kill us, they will kill us. You see what's going on with this." He say, "What can I help you?" I say, "You can't help me nothing now. Just I want from you one thing. Take the papers from us and don't give them over there to the Polish command. Just tell them that you have here 20 Jewish boys what are Jews, not Polaks, and they no want to go to the Polish Army. Just do me that favor." And he separate us in the wagon that we was separate. And we say, "Don't give our documents in the Polish hands. Just tell to who you have to tell over there on the Russian side that you have 20 Jewish boys who no want to go. And if you do this I will give you how much vodka you want and how much money you want, because I collected all the money and all the vodka from all my people." And I say, "You do just what I say. And you listen to me. If you agree," I had with him a, such a confidence, "if you agree not to go to the Polish Army, if something will go wrong, say it's my fault. I am accepting if something will go wrong, that it was mine idea, that you're not involved. Now, if it be successful, I will take you out from the Polish Army. And only you have to listen to me if you agree with me." And we make such a [unclear], you know, and they listen to mine plan and they will do it. And I told him, "If something went wrong, say you don't know nothing. I did it." You see, I didn't want that more people should suffer. If something happened, it's enough one will suffer.

He come to the *stantsia* zhivovo [phonetic]. This is where it start the Polish camp, not far from Yalzania [phonetic] on the river Oka. This *stantsia* was, this station was bombed, you know? And the whole *shtab* was in a railroad car. Over there was sitting in one side a table like this--Russian officers, and one side was sitting Polish officers. And that Popov went in and he say, "I give over two hundred people. And here is 20 Jewish boys from Poland what no want to go to the Polish Army. What should I do with them?" And it was start a big concentration, you know? And when we come with the train, I saw over there a corporal, you know what's a corporal is from the army?

HR: A corporal.

HS: A corporal. And I figure he is Jewish. I went to him and I say, "*Amkhu*?" And he say, "Yes." I say, "What's the situation?" He said, "*Tsi!*" *Tsi* [phonetic] means run! This means that my plan was right, that for the Jewish people is not so good. I saw already a Polish *gendarme* leading a soldier under the bayonet. I saw already the Polish system. So, when I come in to that and he say, he come out, that Popov, and say to me, "I told him this. The papers I give, I have the papers. I didn't give them to the Polak." And a few more

minutes, they called me in over there, to that train. And I have to make the decision of my life what I have to do. I saw over there the Polish over there. I see the Polish hammers, you know, already mad. And I decided to go the full line, because there is no way back. Or I will get the bullet, if I have to go to the Polaks, I will not survive one day. If I will be forced to go, they will kill me. So, I told him, "This is the story. I am not a Polak. I am a Jew. And this is the same Polaks what we was always before, they was killing us before. They was helping the Germans killing us, and they will kill us now too. And if I have to die I want to die in the Red Army," I say. "I want to fight [in] the Red Army, and to save mine people." That's the whole story. This, it was a whole this, and I saw the Russian officers are very sympathetic to me. You can analyze in their eyes. It was a very big, you know, I say, "What is this?" I told him, "We was just in the train," I say, "from Vologda to here, they beat us up." I didn't say that we beat them up. "They already beat us up. So what kind of brothers are they to us? What kind of soldiers are these? I'll tell you what they are. They are killers, not better than the Germans. They helped the Germans kill us and they will kill us now." And they say, "Okay, go out." I went out, and they sent away the Polish people. In that time that Polak, you know, that Dolgovitch, in the railroad, in the train when he was going, he was with the Polaks. He wasn't already with the Jews. And over there, he falls on me, "Henry, maybe you can save me!" I say, "You go to hell. Now you are again a brother? You was just with the Polaks." So we was waiting on that station. He was leading the Polaks to the army, and we have to wait a day until he bring them back. We have to hide ourselves. We was over there a [unclear] in the grass, because the Polak was looking for us. They would kill us at night. Now I make a whole, you know, people was watching, you know, until that Popov come back. That Popov come back, they call me in back to that railroad and I say, "Now what will be?" I say, "I am ready to go to the Russian Army."

They give me a letter and I went with that letter to a, this was only a field position, right? In a train. I have to give that okay from a higher. This was a 60 miles I had go by train and with that envelope. And I come in and report, you know. I was still in Russian clothing. And I have the impression that that guy was a Jew who was reading. He read that letter and he was so smiling at me. And he say, "*Molodets*." You know what's *molodets*? Good man. And he put on a stamp and I don't know what was in. And he close it and go back. I went back to the same train. Train, this was a not a train like, and that train, it didn't want to stop on this station.

HR: Oh God.

HS: And I have to jump. And I jump and I break my teeth. And I tear, because the train was going so fast, and I tear mine everything to blood. No it's nothing. And we went, and I saved the boys. And I saying the same story. We went back to Moscow, to Vologda, and in Vologda, from Moscow I asked that Popova permission to call Vologda. And I call up mine, the headquarter from the fire department in Vologda and I told them this and this the story. And they already was working over there through them. When we come over there, he was already, that head was already over there, with his car. And he

say, "Henry, you go back to Cherepovetz." He already arranged everything. He was Colonel Nikitin. He liked me very much. I had trouble with him once. He want to make me a big inspector far away, in the virgin territories. To be a inspector, a head like big from Poland. Only, with my mother, you know, I say, "Where I will take my mother to the *goyim*? Here she have a few " And I told to that Nikitin, "How I will take..." And he say, "You are dictating to your mother or your mother is dictating to you?" I was wearing a coat still from Poland. I had from my father a coat. You know what I did? I took off my coat and I give it to him. And he accept it, a gabardine coat. They, I want to show you what they are--a big colonel, you know? Nikitin.

HR: Mmm hmm, he took the coat.

HS: Because once he, when I was over there, he said, "What kind of beautiful coat is this?" You know...

HR: Yes.

HS: Of material gabardine, you know, a British--"I would need this for my son." Well I didn't know when he, later, we have the graduation, and this was a course of upgrading the *kommand sostav*, you know? So they did me a big favor. They advanced me, and I didn't want. So I went to him, I say, "I can't do this." And so I didn't say nothing, I just took off my coat and put [unclear]. He said, "[unclear]." This I want to give you such a background. So, and he was waiting already with the car, in that *kerosin punkt*, from that mobilization point. And that other boy was with me, the Polak [unclear] was Polaks, and the other boys went. They went, one from Griazovets and one from the other kind of point. And I tell them, call, I make a phone call. You see, a phone call here it means a phone call. Over there is a whole...

HR: [unclear].

HS: Oh my God a phone call, you know. From one town to the other, fifty years ago in the war time. And I called with that phone, I called my mother. And she tell, and I say, "Mother," and she tell me, "I know you'll come back."

HR: She's still in Chere-...

HS: She's still in that fire department.

HR: Chere-...

HS: In Cherepovetz.

HR: Cherepovetz.

HS: Yeah. So, and this was, let's see, and this was 1943. And with that all things what's was going on, we start to be a little more active in the Polish things. It start already after the big battles in Stalingrad and the big battles after the [unclear], and Kiev was already taken, you know? We start already smell with the, going to the Polish border, you know? And the atmosphere start to be a little more easy. And my sister start to be active with the Polish, and we was figuring we would like...

HR: She was in the Polish Army, your sister?

HS: Yeah, now they released her with the heart condition.

HR: Right, yeah.

HS: Released her, yeah. They released her with the heart condition. You see, and I was so, I was much involved with the, I started to be more accepted in the Russian society, you know? I was started to be more invited to big people in this, and they was very friendly with me. I am surprising. They was so open with me. They was all anti-Soviet. And how they was not afraid to talk to me, you know?

HR: But somehow...

HS: Big people. I mean, you know, I have to give a fact of Nina Blagoveshchenskaya, Nina Michaylovna. She was later, she was made later the Minister of Health in the Tatarian Republic. Her husband was killed on the front, a doctor. How is his name? Oh, I forgot his name, a big man in Cherepovetz. His, she was in the, she told me the whole Jewish-Russian story, how her parents were, how his parents was against that he married a *goyim*, and how she was so antisemitic, brought up in that Russian Siberian, *sibiriachka*, in Siberian way, so against Jews, you know? Brought up this way. And she says she sucked that antisemitism with her mother's milk. And when she saw--I'm just thinking about his name--and when she saw the Jewish living, the Jewish life, such more inspired, such more spiritual, then she start to like the Jews. And she married that guy. And she started to be so pro-Jewish. She say, "Only Jews survived in Russia that are so flexible. Good Russian people all destroyed because they're not enough flexible. A Jewish person is bending a little, not surrendering, just bending." She, I'm just telling this, the words, how, yes. And she say, "You should run from here. You shouldn't stay from here." And I say, "How are you not afraid to talk to me so?" She say, "I am not afraid. You will not denounce me. Now, you just don't dare to stay here."

Oh I have doctors in the--a doctor in the hospital no. 78 and he wasn't even Jew, and he say, "If you can put me in your suitcase!" You know, they say, you know, I was a witness how a Russian Soviet drunk, they was running around in the street, you see that he was not afraid. And they brought him back, the police. And the Jewish head he comes and he say, "You *Parshivi* Jew! You Jewish scum!" You know, I was a witness. "You Jewish this and you Jewish that! We will kill you, you know!" And you know, and hundreds of soldiers around, you know? And you just bend down your head and you drink it, you know?

So, you see him, and this was so, it started to grow in you. You are, I'm already a big person and they know me with this and that. And the *NKVD* and everywhere. And I know they have such a book on me. Where they will, when there will be a need, you know, they will take it out.

I have to tell you a other story. When I come back from the Polish Army, they call me up to the *NKVD*, a higher from the *NKVD*. And he say, "You know, you have to read for us Polish and Jewish letters." In Russia there is not a thing to say, "No, I will no read." You know what this means? That I should censor...

HR: Polish.

HS: Polish, Jewish, Ukrainian, Czechish, everything what I understand what they no understand. And I have to develop a whole strategy how I have to warn the people. Because they was writing such bitter things, you know, in Russia.

HR: Sure.

HS: And I had to, you see, mine a girl that, a captain in the *NKVD* was giving me the letters, [unclear]. And I have to be to her very friendly, that she should tell me when they are investigating my letters. You see they, she say, "Henry, tomorrow I send away to Moscow to check my letters." And you see, people was sending such, writing such things. I was trying to...

HR: [unclear].

HS: Mark it for a extinction, how do you call it, that they shouldn't be able, or to destroy it. You know, I was walking such a very narrow line. And I have to say, to talk to people, and to warn them. Let's say I go upstairs, that same Novo, you know, what was arresting and making such a big this, start to be my friend and he start to ask me, "What about that other guy? What..." You know, that same lieutenant what made a big trial for the people, when he sees me over there, he started to ask me about the other people. And I say, "I am not in touch with the other people. I live in a government house. They're not coming to me, you know." I just right away cut him off. And still I have to say to my mother, "Mother, talk to him that he shouldn't do this, shouldn't do that, you know." And it was a very narrow line we have to run. And people shouldn't know it. And not only people shouldn't, people should be warned about the danger, you know?

Okay, now what? Now we, time to go to Poland, right? And it comes the time after that whole horror, after we, you know, and we make it very fast, we hear that they come to the Polish border. They took over. They come to Lublin. They come to Warsaw, and start to come the literature from our trouble, about the Warsaw Ghetto, about the mass destructions, about that whole thing, you know? Come back soldiers, Jewish soldiers what was in the army, our soldiers, yeah.

HR: In the Red Army.

HS: They was in the Red Army, yes.

HR: And they knew.

HS: And they knew and they saw, you know, and they see that whole horror. And come the time when they was start to talk about going back to Poland, that we are official going back is not such a simple thing. You have to be official Polish-Russian agreement to go back.

HR: Why did you want to go back?

HS: What will we do in Russia?

HR: Weren't you afraid to go to Poland?

HS: Yes, I was afraid. Only you see that Popov what I told you, what I mention a few times, he was in the Russian Army. He come back, and I have with him a little discussion. I say, "I was afraid to go back to Poland." And he said, "You stupid guy. In

here you will be? In Poland you no have to be, you'll be able to go to Israel." For this first time I hear, "You will go to America! It's a open world!"

HR: Yeah, but from Russia you couldn't get out.

HS: From Russia you not only you can't go out. From Russia you can't talk either. You can't mention that word. "So you are afraid to go back to Poland?" So when it comes that I, when Polish government made a agreement with the Russian about repatriation, so we signed up we want to go back to Poland. They call me to the *NKVD*.

HR: But listen, how is it that they didn't find out that you didn't want to go in the Polish Army? You know, this is not part of, this was not...

HS: [unclear].

HR: Nobody knew this.

HS: We come on, how they find out, let's see a, in one day I was an unreliable to accept to the parachute descent.

HR: Right.

HS: And later I was going so big, do you know what I was doing? You know what kind what I was checking or what kind airports, what kind factories and the prison. And prisoners of war, I was coming in to checking the prisoners of war, sixteen generals, German generals. I kept them standing an hour. There is a law in Russia. When I come in to checking, they had to stay *achtung*. You know what's *achtung*?

HR: Yeah, yeah.

HS: I kept them an hour standing and I had a whole lecture with them. And I say, "You know who before you're standing? You're staying before a Jewish boy from Poland what survive you, what destroy you, and what will kill you all!" And you say, "This is..." now, and I was doing some work. I didn't mention this because we want to go faster through. I had a once trouble. They bombed the electro station. Not this far from the town. And I went in with--to do the job. And I saved, I went in in the fire, knowing the location, everything. I cover myself with water and I went in to open the steam, that it shouldn't be a explosion. Now by going back, we have to go with the river. I couldn't go, I pushed the [unclear] down. And the river was very weak. And I had no way to go a different way. And I decided to go with the river. And mine people was very antisemitic. My shof-

Tape fifteen, side one:

HR: This is a tape with Mr. Henry Skorr, July the 5th, 1983, side one.

HS: And going, I am continuing, I am going back with the river, with the Sheksna River, with the cars, with mine trucks, how I explained before. The ice was very weak. And I could only succeed to go on the ice if I was going very fast, that the ice can't crumble behind the heaviness from the truck. Now how I say, I have a driver, Keplnichev. He just come back a year from the army where he went in. And he was very antisemitic, and very antagonistic from me. First of all, he was antisemitic. Second, I didn't let him do unlawful things. And when I was going to work with our truck what I had a permission from the NKVD, to the base of a *tzerno*, this means from the grain company where the *kolkhozen* bring in the grains, I saw he want to steal grain, putting in a bag. It's clear that I would be responsible if the guard by the gate stopped us and control us. I would be responsible for his behavior. The guard, they really couldn't check me because the guard was, on the gate was under my control. This was a part from the fire department. Only I didn't want to permit a person to steal when we are doing official work. And when I told him to take away, put back that grain, he start to curse me in Russian. And, "You Jew!" And, "You bastard!" And you this and that, and, "I will kill you!" And he take out that iron for the wheels what we use this, and he want to hit me. I take out my gun and I force him to put down that iron. And I arrest him in mine place, and I make against him a case for the prosecution. And it's amazing that the [unclear] of prosecution was a woman, a Jewish woman. And she told me, "Listen, I don't believe that we should make this a case. He is antisemitic and he's this. Forget about it." She didn't want to. I say, "I am a officer. I am a leader from that unit and he makes me against, threats against me. And he insult me like being a Jew. And you tell me that I shouldn't press charges?" I say, "Still I believe that I will press charges." And I left the papers by her. She was a girl, a young girl, from Romania from Kishinev. I had with her a few discussions. Now she wasn't one to bring up a case. And that driver, when he was still, he was working by us. And that driver, if I told him, "Drive fast," he was afraid and he start to drive slower. When he start to drive slow, we went in with our wheels in that ice what was broken, because it was already April and not a long time ago the Germans was bombing that ice and the ice was weak. In that cars, and the truck start to collapse to the back wheels. I just give out a order, "Run from the car!" And I give a order to my people, not far they was fixing a ship. I took two big timber, and I put this under the car just to keep it up the load. And when I want to pull it out, like you pull out a anchor from a ship, you know, I start to make a movement and the whole truck went under the ice. It was a very tragic moment for me and I am standing so near this and I was thinking, "Should I jump in? Should I kill myself?" No. And this is, I get a sign. When I start to be sorry for, when a person start to be sorry for himself, he right away think about self-destruction. Why I am saying this? That for such a thing, and having my environment, and having the, a witness, that driver that he didn't want to go, I force him

by order, I could get 15 to 25 years in prison. They can make me a sabotage. Only how I say before, when I have, took over that responsible job I was studying the whole law what was involved around this. How I have to conduct myself, say, and not to be in violation of law. And if something happened wrong, because in Russia everything can happen wrong, if somebody want to do something against you, I should have the protection of the law. The law say if I go into an operation, I have to be in connection with the *NKVD*. My straight head was the Major Grigoriev from the *NKVD*.

HR: What is *NKVD*?

HS: *NKVD*, this is the mili-, this is the police department.

HR: The police.

HS: And the fire department is a part from the police department. So when we make such major moves, always by law, by our internal status, not status. Law, how they call like in the army, they have codex.

HR: Codes. Codes.

HS: Codes, that I should report to him, "I'm doing this and this. I go this and this. Happened this and this." I was caring very much to doing this. And my number six person in mine car was my connection. And we didn't have in that time very developed communication. So, the procedure was, I give a order to the number six, "Go to the closest telephone and report to that Major Grigoriev this this and this." When I, after that fire, what I successfully put it out and saved that local [unclear] what was providing steam for the temporary electro station, I told to that man, to my number six, I believe [unclear] was his name, "Go report to the Major that the fire is extinguished. We can't going back with the road because the truck is under ice. And I send out people to find out the ice is still carrying the load. And should I get permission to go with the ice?" He come back to me and he say that that Major Grigoriev permit me to go with the ice. So, with one thing I was covered. If something would happen, I was covered by law. I give a order to my people and we start marching a few miles through the--the truck was in the water. Only by the when I tried to save it I put a cable to the front wheels so the cable was on top on the ice and the truck was in, deep in the water. Only I was happy what I saved the people. We marched to the direction to the city, and we come to the river *vokzal*, to the river station. And I give over there again a order, a mobilization order to the fire department from the river administration, that they should be on alert of something happening because we are out of circulation. And the same night, when I come to this, to my station with my people, very depressed, and I was very afraid what will happen in the future; 2:00 at night the Major Grigoriev called me in. This is their normal procedure. The *NKVD* doesn't call you in during the day. They call you in during the night. I come to that, to him, and I report. And the first thing I say, "Comrade Major, how many years I will get for this?" You know, I want to, and he looks so on me. He say, "*Tovarisch* Skorrupa. Don't be a *durak*, don't be a stupid. You did what you can. You did a good job. You saved the electro station. You saved the automobile. We will carry out. We will pull out the truck from the water." So,

and I would say he was always sympathetic to me. He was a very rough, a really Bolshevik, from the beginning, from the 20 years, very rough and strong man, very un-cut, you know, I would say. No, I was with him always straight, and always doing what have to be done because he was my only protection if something would happen in the future. And he say, "You just write me a report. Everything what it was. Because it will come in a special commission from the province from Vologda, to check that whole story, the whole implication." And probably I told him about that driver, Kipleinchev. He knows before that I make a case against him. And they probably will check everything. "It wouldn't be advisable," he say, "that you should be here." I will send you out for two weeks to a *rayon* [storage depot], and you go over there and instruct a fire protection on the grain collection." He wanted to get me that I shouldn't be around when they come, the higher officers, you know? And they will again find out that I am a Polak and I'm this and that.

And he did. I went for two weeks on a *komandirovka*. I believe it was [unclear], such a *rayon* center. And everything was the commission accept the whole story and after this I wasn't punished. That was it. It was sent out a letter to the whole administration of the fire department with a citation for me that I did such a outstanding job and everything was okay. And he sent me, it was this in winter time, in the end of winter near April, to a admiral, to the, he was standing Donyetska Flotilia, the *katera* the missile boats, the Donyetska Flotilia was standing in winter time in our town. So he sent me to that admiral to get from him a *equipage* from him, people going in the water. How do you call, they build a [unclear]? What go in...

HR: You mean to go underground?

HS: Right. In the water.

HR: Submarine?

HS: In the water. And he give me a *equipage* from six people with all instruments. They went under the water. They straighten out the machine, and they brought a tractor in and they pull it out. And it cost me a few cases of vodka. I have to go to the factory what makes vodka and they give me vodka. Because I have to give them vodka every day and every night. Now this is what it was.

HR: Sea divers.

HS: Sea divers, correct.

HR: Sea divers.

HS: They were very big, very powerful boys, you know. Later I couldn't get rid of them. They was always coming back to me. Why I'm giving that episode? The episode is very important because it was already coming the time in 1944 and 1945 when we start already talking about Poland. The Red Army was already going back, was already on the border from Russia and Poland. And they're crossing already on the border. And we was already listening in the did I talk about this before? We already intend to start to think about going back to Poland.

HR: You did, yeah.

HS: And my sister start to be active in that *Soyuz Polskikh Patriotov*. This is a congregation of Polish patriots. And our population, the Jewish population, start already to talk about going back to Poland. And they organized in Moscow the Polish patriots association from former Polish citizens. And they call it Polish patriots under the leadership of Wanda Wasilevska, a Polish writer, a Communistic writer. And mine, I didn't want to be active in this, because I didn't like the Polaks.

HR: This is what I want to understand...

HS: Yes.

HR: Is that you as a Polish Jew felt that naturally the Germans were your enemies.

HS: Yeah, right.

HR: But you felt that the Poles...

HS: Yes, correct.

HR: Were just as much your enemies but you still wanted to go back just to find what is left in...

HS: I wanted to go back for two reasons: to find what is left, and to, I was very afraid of Russia.

HR: That you would be stuck in Russia.

HS: Not only I would be stuck. Sooner or later I would be in prison. Everything what I was doing was tolerated. It was in war time. Now not in the light of the Russian law. The old thing, if somebody wanted to bury me for any movement what I was doing over there, putting away trucks for private use, sure the collective was benefiting because my people was benefiting. They had more food. They have more shoes. They have more clothing. No this was officially illegal. This was only done because it's the war time. And I was doing. And if somebody want just to say, and I'm sure everything how I told you in the beginning, everything was reported on me to the *NKVD*.

HR: Well supposing you gave a message to number six, and he didn't like you, and he's going to the telephone, he could say what he wants to say.

HS: And he comes back with the report that he, no, it wasn't so tragic that he didn't like me.

HR: Or if he...

HS: His...

HR: Wants to get even with you or whatever.

HS: Yeah, if he wanted...

HR: Also...

HS: ...to get even with me, who wants to get even with me can get even a half a minute and I can get a bullet. It's enough that somebody say that I say, "Stalin is no good."

HR: And that's it.

HS: And that's it. No have to be a trial, don't have to be nothing.

HR: And they don't have to prove anything.

HS: No have to prove nothing. I will give you a example. My [unclear] soldier, his name was Topachov. He went on the bazaar, on the free market, to buy a herring. Was exactly a herring over there to buy. He took the herring, and there is no paper what to wrap it. So there was a store open not far with pictures from political literature with Stalin. He had no paper. He have no books. He have nothing. Now, portraits from the leaders we have how much we want. He bought such a paper and he wrapped that herring. And he was, with the insignia from the fire department. That woman what saw what he is doing, they report him to the *NKVD*. They called me in and they say, "What kind of soldiers do you have? Do you know what kind of crime he did?" I have to make believe a crazy man. I say, "Topachov, he's a stupid guy. He's a *durak*. He's a fool." Because I am responsible if he bought and he wrapped that herring in Stalin's portrait. So, if somebody want to do something they can be arrested in a moment.

HR: Well what happened to him? Did you...

HS: No, I...

HR: You covered him up?

HS: I covered him up. You see, I have good relations with the all, from the *NKVD*. They was needing my services. I developed such a organization they come to me, they get from me vodka. Because I covered them, they cover me.

HR: Yeah.

HS: I know everything was in order of crime. If somebody wanted to do something, you could find. So, I didn't, I felt I have to go away from Russia, because sooner or later I would be in prison. And there is not one family in Russia what somebody wasn't in prison or will be in prison. There is a proverb in Russia. "*Kto ne byl, tot budet, a leto budet tot ne zabudet.*" Who wasn't in prison, they will be. And if you will be you will never forget it. And from poverty and from prison, never say no. Because you don't know that this will not hit you.

HR: Now...

HS: [unclear]...

HR: From poverty...

HS: From poverty...

HR: Yes.

HS: You never know you will not be poor.

HR: Oh, I see.

HS: And from prison...

HR: You don't...

HS: You never know you're not going to be. Russians have proverbs--with their bitter life they're developing proverbs of everything. They have proverbs and they have curses. This is their daily life. What else I give you also a sign of the [unclear]. We're getting supply cards for bread and for butter and for meat and for everything. You get only

paper. You no get butter. You no get meat. You no get cheese. You get only 400 gram of bread. Only the *NKVD*, and the all big leaders, they have special stores, *Spectorg* store. And over there they're getting everything. And when it comes to end of the month, my mother start to bother me, "Henry, go. Henry, go. Henry." I could get for this for the cards, I could get it, milk, everything. Over there was a woman. I just go to her and she would give it to me. And it was so revolting for me, you know? This was so denigrating me, to go over there. And I was looking on the sad eyes from my mother every week, every month. And I know already that I have to do when my good mother, "Henry when will you go. Henry." And I was, like a punishment, until I forced myself, you know, to go to that Klavdia Ivanovna. She was the leader from that Spec store. And go, you know, and to be nice to her, you know. And I would like to give her such a, breaking the teeth, you know? That, and I have to go every, I was getting, I was bringing home for my mother, you know? And she was giving away right away. Oh, the man was sick. A woman was sick. She was giving away this everything. No, this was, everything bordered on the crime line. Sooner or later I will get it. Because I know a woman that was every week going and reporting on me. So, and they have a case. And they will be on me. They will make a whole political case and I will go. So, I felt that I am, if it's possible to go away from Russia I should go [from] Russia, go. We are hesitating to go back to Poland. We know already the press, the Russian press, and we have literature from that Polish patriot for the and they was giving these small brochures. We didn't know already the whole atrocity. We know they was giving the reports.

HR: So you knew everything about the concen-...

HS: Not everything. You know, not everything. We know the basic things. We know that Jews are destroyed. We know about the Warsaw Ghetto. We know what they was doing in Russia to the Jewish people. So we know this. Only, so hesitating...

HR: But you didn't know to the degree.

HS: To the degree we didn't know.

HR: No, how many millions of Jews...

HS: Yeah. We didn't know. We probably didn't want to know. We push away that horror from ourselves, you know? Believing maybe, maybe, maybe. And so, discussing this, we was between fire and water. I didn't want to stay in Russia, because first of all I will have to get lost like a Jew. My whole struggle in that whole cataclysm what was, from that whole Holocaust, is to remain a Jew, and to save Jews. To be in Russia and to continue this way, accidentally, you know, I was put in in a part from the Russian elite, without mine...

HR: [unclear].

HS: Without my making.

HR: But they can always, no matter how much you would merge yourself in Russian society and in this, the identity of a Jew is always something they could hold over you and...

HS: They're always holding over me. And I will hold by myself. See by me it was a big asset to be a Jew.

HR: Yes.

HS: In my heart I was much more superior than them, you know? My thinking, my mentality, mine code of morality...

HR: That's it.

HS: ...was much, much higher, you know? I was coming later even in the high class from the Russians, professors and doctors and what, sitting in this, always with that animal drinking, you know? And soon they start to drink, that taking off the shoes and that dancing, you know, that they'll be a peasant dancing. And soon with the jokes. Automatically jokes about Jews. I don't know how they this, how they come out from this. And I was looking around, "Where am I? What I am doing here?" I was so strange, you know? And they saw that I feel no good. And later when I start to already think about going back with the people, I start to disassociate from them and they was telling me, "What happened? Why are you not coming to us? Why you no this?" I was keeping up with them how long I was with them. And I never admire them. I was always a strange person. And you see, I didn't feel that I should hide my Judaism. And they didn't, and they was so, you know, either they was so progressive and they were talking. You see, it's a horror to talk about the Russian, the Soviet reality. They created a monsterism in human relation. What is the monsterism? One side is the official line from the Soviet life. The other side is the human life. You, the every day is a lie. If they say, "You are working," you know you are not working. If they say that you are producing, you know you are not producing nothing. If they say of morality, "Who is teaching molodykh?" He by himself, the biggest thief. If he say, "You shouldn't steal," he takes whole carloads. If he say about the freedom, everything, you know it's prison. It's a daily reality. You go to a city in Russia you see they are leading the Russian people prisoners, surrounded with dogs and surrounded with this. It's a daily occurrence, you know?

HR: How can the Russians be normal [unclear]...

HS: I am telling you they're not normal. They're paranoid. Even that *politruk*. He gives you a speech about *glorya* from the Soviet regime, about how free they are, about how bad is the west, how good is their leadership, how God is no good. No Stalin is a god; this is already good. And if you save pictures from the leaders what was destroyed three, four years ago, in three or four years ago, he was a god. And later he was destroyed. And from the books you have to tear out the--we get a order. We had in mine [unclear] have the big Soviet encyclopedia. They send us letters, "Take out this and this page. Take out this and this that." Or their, the *politruk* comes a whole speeches about freedom. You know, what kind of freedom is it?

HR: But Mr. Skorr we don't have a chance with people like this.

HS: We had no chances. Sure. Do you have a chance with cancer? We had no chances.

HR: It's so [unclear].

HS: Let's see if they say, "Tomorrow will be a *subotnik*." You know what's means a *subotnik*? A Saturday day you will go out to work on beautifying the city. They're mobilizing everybody. The leaders by themselves are not coming. No they say everybody is going and everybody is doing. They are not coming. Or they is mobilizing money to buy a tank, a tank! We are buying, we are giving our money. No, the leadership, the *politruk* and the this doesn't give, they don't give money. They say, "I have two wives."

HR: But you see within the higher echelon...

HS: Is worse.

HR: Is also the paranoia.

HS: Sure there's paranoia.

HR: So they don't have any security.

HS: They are, they have no security, and they are the biggest thieves. They sue you for stealing 200 gram bread. With what right Stalin have ten *dachas*? Who give him the *dachas*? He have to steal that living place from workers. Ten families live in two rooms, right? Ten average families, they live in two rooms. He can have ten *dachas*. He can have 100 cars. He steals the cars from the other people what they don't, no have cars. And they are preaching that we are equal. If you are equal, how are you entitled to have such a luxury that either the American president doesn't have such a luxury? In the time when people are dying on the street for hunger. And going around talking about freedom. The person what talks about equality, he knows that he is lying. He by himself fears for his life. He gets paid. He [unclear] doesn't work. He who doesn't work, the *politruk*, can get a bread and butter and meat and shoes and clothing. Their worker doesn't get nothing. He get only 400 gram of bread. He get 400 *ruble* a month. From 400 *ruble* a month you buy on black market only one pound of bread.

HR: But [unclear] of the Russians they don't have...

HS: Correct.

HR: [unclear].

HS: Right. Because they are living...

HR: [unclear].

HS: ...the old Russian way. You see a divided life. This is a Soviet life, and this is a Russian life. The Russian life say, "The hell with the Soviets." They are living, they continue life like they was living before. They have a piece of ground. And he have his potatoes. He goes to the village to the relatives. He brings. He accept that Soviet life like a occupation, like a abuse.

HR: But he gets food some way. He...

HS: He gets food. No, everybody is stealing. This what I am telling you. Starting from Stalin until the bottom. I was, I forgot to tell you. They took me in. I was as *zasedatel'* in the *voyenny*; tribunal. That means like here in a jury in a military court. From mine position, they come to me and say, "You will be this and this." Or they come to me and

say, "Tomorrow you give us your *krasnyĭ ugiolok*," that, where we had the meetings. "Tomorrow we will make a trial for people in your place." And I have to say yes. There is no saying yes [no?]. So they come to me a *prokuror* and he was a Jew, Lefkowitz or something, a thief, a liar, you know? A typical Soviet development. And I was a member from the--they took in a woman. She was in *Karelia Finnia*. She was by the white Finns, and was the war in 1940. And later when it was a exchange of people she come back. And she started to say to the people around, "The *Karelia Finnnians* are people. They are not animals." They're living-

Tape fifteen, side two:

HS: And that woman was saying that the Finns, they are not so terrible. People are living much better and much freer. She was talking this now, on a *kolkhoz*, north near Vyborg, near the *Karelia Finnian* border. This I am talking about after the war in 1940. It's clear that they denounce her in that *kolkhoz* and they arrest her. And they put her on trial what I am telling you. The second was a old *kolkhoznik*, maybe 80 years old. And he's a old peasant. He was drunk.

HR: A *kolkhoznik*...

HS: A *kolkhoznik*.

HR: Is a peasant? Is a peasant?

HS: No, a *kolkhoznik* is a member from the collective village. They call it a *kolkhoznik*. And a old peasant, he was drunk on a holiday and he put up the vodka and he say, "We still will drink for the third Czar." This means for old Nikolai the II, the second, Nikolai the II Romanov, so he was killed by the Bolsheviks. "That we will still drink for the third Czar." The third case was a boy what ran away from a FZO²². This means Stalin was making a mobilization by 14-year-old boys and girls, take them to schools, and teach them professions. Because there is a, with that old mismanagement in that Soviet life, with that life, we have no, a continuation of workers which should come in the future industry. The soldiers was being killed on the fronts like sand destroyed. Half was in the prisoners. So they didn't have a force coming from industry. So they get out a law, they call it FZO, to teach young people new professions. And *slessars*, *tokars*, you know, and carpenters. So they mobilized. They mobilize them like a soldier. They put in here a factory. They make for you such a home, and you're over there, live over there, in terrible, terrible conditions, you know? So the children, they're still small children, they're running away. They're running back to home. They're running and as soon you run away you're doing a crime. So the three people was, I was a witness in that *Voyennyi* tribunal, in that military court. That woman was getting 15 years. That old *kolkhoznik* was getting eight years in confiscation of *imustchestvar* [property], confiscation from this what he had a house or something. That boy was getting twelve years. And we should be, I was like as a *zasedatel'*, like a member of the jury. They didn't ask me what I say. They just come back with a paper, this and this. I myself, I made myself that I am sick. I didn't want to sign such a paper. This was against my inner morality. And they, I say, "I feel very bad." I went home. This was in our, this, I went to my quarter and I didn't go no more in back. I send a other soldier to sit in my place, because I wouldn't want, I couldn't make peace with myself that I should do such things.

²²Acronym for low level trade schools.

Or, they call me in in the NKVD. They arrested a Jew on the market, on the bazaar. And they ask him questions. Now he was a smart Jew. He didn't talk to them Russian. So they called me in that I should talk my language with him.

HR: In Polish?

HS: Yes. And I start to talk with him Jewish, and I say...

HR: Did you talk Yiddish or Polish?

HS: Yiddish!

HR: Yiddish.

HS: I no want to talk Polish.

HR: Now do you think they understood?

HS: No.

HR: No?

HS: They don't understand anything. Polish they could understood something maybe.

HR: Yes. But Yiddish...

HS: And I talked to that man. "You're doing very well. Play more crazy," I tell him. "Play that you're not normal."

HR: Tell me in Yiddish how you would say it.

HS: First of all I ask him, "*Am hu?*" When I ask him, "*Am hu?*" the eyes shined up right away. And I tell him, "*Reb Yid, eir tutt zayer gut. Macht zich meshugah; entfirt gurnisht. Red voss ir vilt in Noentfer zay gurnisht, gayt un eir zont nit normal.*" I gave him mine address. I give him too mine address where I live and I say, "*Kim nisht heint und Kim nisht morgen, Kim in a pur tug und cloppen der teir arein [unclear] kloppen der tier und a frau, a Yiddishe frau, my mitter und zayin voss mir cantein.*" [phonetic] This I talk to him in Jewish. And I say, I told to that officer, that man, "He's a crazy man. He is Jewish," I say. Now I say, "He had documents that he was just released from a prison. Probably he stole something, or something he did what's wrong. No, I can't talk to him from here because he is mixed up." They released him. They released him and that man come to us. And I arranged him a job in a hospital, through...

HR: You see, in Germany they would kill him if he was crazy.

HS: No.

HR: But in Russia they didn't quite...

HS: Well, in Russia, you see, in Russia is such a story. Nobody is a dedicated Communist. Nobody is a believer. Everybody knows it's a show. In their nature the Russians are okay. Now that buildup, that Soviet buildup what is forced on them, is something abnormal.

HR: But you think inside they [unclear].

HS: Correct. You can check on this, no, it's not hard. They, everything will see, if you are a policeman, or if you are a *politruk*, or if you are a redactor in the paper, you're

just doing and making a living from this. It's your way of existence. Even when you are denouncing somebody, you're just protecting yourself.

HR: Well, do you really feel that there is a difference between the basic German nature and the basic Russian nature? To say, to be able to say the majority. Not to say there isn't a good German, or not to say there isn't a bad German. But there is a basic difference between these people.

HS: Yes, and very basically. They're, basically the Russian person is a very good, gentle person. Period. Very good, gentle. Plus he have build-ups, very violent build-ups, you know? He can go violent from one month to the other--not only against Jews, against each other. You know, they can be very gentle and they're very nice. They call themselves *parayurobacha* [*rubalchaparen* is the correct phrase; means 'nice guy']. You know what it means *parayurobacha*? He can take off his shirt and give away. This is an expression to give away the shirt, because in Russia you have only one shirt. So when they say give away a shirt...

HR: They mean it.

HS: This means he give away everything from himself. Which doesn't mean that in a minute when he drinks, he'll get that glint, that murder glint in the eyes he can take an ax and kill you.

HR: [unclear].

HS: And it's so easy, pogroms not only against Jews. Let's see Russians make pogroms against Ukrainians. They make against Tadzhiks, against Uzbeks, you know? They're very violent and they're violent people by nature. For them to kill was nothing.

HR: And you see, it's such a paradox to be gentle...

HS: It's a paradox, right.

HR: And to be...

HS: Right. You take a wedding. A wedding is a holi-, is a merry, holy thing. There is no Russian wedding that two, three people are not killed. It is a normal occurrence. Or there is not a nor-, it's a normal occurrence that you live in this village, you're in constant fight with the other village. You just take a stick or take a knife. You just go beat up the other people because they're from the other village. Or the river is frozen. You go on the river, and we have *kulachnyi boy* [fist fighting], just fighting. Boys just fighting. And this is such an extraordinary, such a horrible thing. Let's see when I was in the guerrillas, I was with one boy. We took a German prisoner of war, you know, a prisoner, not prisoner of war, a prisoner. He didn't want to talk to me. I talked to him in German Jewish. I talked to him and he was laughing from me. That [unclear], you know, took out that [unclear] and just knock him in, you know?

HR: Killed him?

HS: No. He started to talk.

HR: Oh.

HS: He just put him in and put him on his behind, you know, give him with the bayonet in his behind, you know? Without talking, you know? I looked and he was starting...

HR: The German started to talk?

HS: And the German already start to talk. These are the Russians. And to live with them you have to go in their rhythm, you know? You have to start to drink. You have to start to be violent. You have to beat up your wife. A Russian woman expect that you beat her up. If you beat her up it's a sign you love her. Now how, do you understand? She--they can go in the village and, "Oh, my husband give me yesterday such a beating!" Like this is a achievement, you know? He loves her.

HR: And sex must be something that is absolutely unbelievable...

HS: Correct.

HR: Because here if you talk about such sexual perversions as...

HS: Yeah, no, it...

HR: People wanting to be hurt and things like that. In Russia it must be a common thing.

HS: Yeah. No, without profanity. Not profane, you know? They're much more natural and clear in their relations. And their expression love, you know, if they love each other, they love each other to death and go in to death for each other, you know? And they're developing so many complication to--they're suffering so much for each other, you know?

HR: So there is a real bond between them?

HS: A bond until the existing of the days, you know?

HR: But they'll, but they beat them. They beat them.

HS: This doesn't mean nothing. He get drunk, he beat her up, and everything is okay. You know, you see, I don't believe in United States there doesn't exist love. Because love means you have to suffer for, a little, for the other person. Not just to go out to a restaurant or to, you know, over there if you love a woman, you take off your shoes and give it to her and you go without shoes. Or you take away your piece of bread and you give. Or you do the all hard work for her, you know? And you try to protect her. You try to save her, you know? And let's see if she goes away to a other town just to see each other, is involved with so much suffering because this is not you're going in a train like here or you take a telephone. You know, the bond is much more than physical. You're getting a mental bond, you know? You--it's so much full of sacrifice, you know? You know what I mean? I didn't saw in United States love in United States.

HR: You have not seen such a thing?

HS: No.

HR: No?

HS: I no believe that it exists. People in the Sov-...

HR: Because they don't want to sacrifice for one another.

HS: Yeah, people are robbed of that higher feeling of love. Love in mine point of view, love that you want to sacrifice yourself with all for the other person. You always try to satisfying him, morally and physically, right? And here is the opposite. You want always be the number one. So, they're very much involved with love and they're very, very romantical. And they kill each other for love. You--they suffer for love, you know? They, she can, if she loves a boy, that girl, you know, she can give away the whole world. Nothing is important, and she will suffer to the end of the days and so him. And there is such a...

HR: At least if they're put into prison they will be true to each other.

HS: Correct. To the day of the end of the days. You know they have such a capacity of suffering built up through ages. And they, sometimes they, that goes, the glory goes to the top. If you take Russian literature, take Tolstoy, take Gorky, take Pushkin, take the old, the only you see about love suffering and sacrificing and dying. Take *War and Peace*, right? Or take *Anna Karenina*, right? So you, how can you measure this? I don't see this in the American reality. I don't see that here. We had this in Poland before the war. A bond between a man and a woman was much more than physical. Probably the physical was only two percent of the relationship.

HR: Even amongst the Polish you're talking, not just the Jews.

HS: Right, amongst the Polish. I believe poorer people, deprived people, have a bigger capacity of feeling because they're exposed to much more suffering. Good living makes you so coarse to, you always want to satisfy your physical well-being, your stomach, your mouth, you know? Your comfort--you're cold or you're warm.

HR: Your reality.

HS: Yeah. And let's see, for me to give away my shoes for my wife and I should walk in the snow is a normal thing. I would be happy to do this. Tell this to an American man he should give away his shoes and he would walk in snow and give his to his wife. I give you a example. It was of the terrible hard days in 1942, right, to going out to take bread to get about 200 gram bread, was involved with being killed. Because there was riots in the stores from that giving that bread, you know? Not talking already about that bread. I'm talking about the forty degrees, fifty below zero. To get that bread 9:00, you have to go out 2:00 at night in that terrible weather, in that snow, in that *purga*, in that frost. And I was going up. I make I will go out for bread because I develop a special strategy how to get this. I have to tell you. It's a whole strategy. And you know and it was so much suffering, going out in that weather, you know, it was so terrible cold. And I was so happy that I am going out and that they will sleep in bed, you know? That my mother and my father and my sister and my two brothers, that they no have to suffer, that I was. At night, I remember it was 2:00 at night, so cold and so dark when we start. Was like I was going and I was singing to God that You permit me to do this for them. You know, I was in a ecstasy, that I can suffer, do this. And I wasn't suffering more. I was so happy, you know? Like I was talking to God that I can do this, go for them and bring that bread. And you see,

when I'm coming over there to that store, not knowing if there will be over there bread. You know in that store you can get bread. Not if they will deliver that bread.

HR: You just get in line.

HS: You just...

HR: [unclear].

HS: Not in line. If you get in line, you stay in line, coming thousands of thousands of people, they're pushing you away. You can't stay by the door. If you stay by the door, by 9:00 you are pushed away physically. You have to develop later that people should push you in. Later coming in boys, and they're pulling on you, hundreds of boys. And you are so crumbled that they can kill you. You can't move a hand. They're walking on you. And if you fall down, they top--you die under there and not being able to do nothing. This just it can be a episode from going to get bread. And do you understand? You're coming in. You fall down. Let's see you, God forbid my mother would go or my sister or my brother. They push him, and he fall down. He can't go up. So you walk on him, and he dies. And either when he dies, you can't do nothing to him. Like people was in the trains, in the death trains. So you're just going out to getting four hundred gram of bread. And when it get already 9:00, if you are lucky--I had the strategy that I was coming, pushed in to the door, and you have to pushed in to the door not what is opening that you are pushed away, no that you can be pushed in. This is a whole strategy. You, only you have to develop this when you can think about these things.

HR: So you knew where to stand.

HS: First of you no have to be sorry for yourself. First of all you, your personal discomfort should disappear. You suffer, you're not a part from suffering. You should be above all this. Your person shouldn't exist. How long you [unclear] you're still a refugee, you're still a sufferer. Your discomfort and your pain, and your suffering, you should go away. You should give it your, to your family and then you no suffer more. I didn't suffer later more. And when I come--you see from that forty below zero, when you come out from the store you have to take off the shirt. We was draining out the sweat. And my sweat it was a bad quality. The whole color was I was blue, you know? The whole thing. And so I give you a this just a few. Or from '42 I was going to villages to change vodka for bread. They have a piece of soap for potatoes, or for a clothes, have a, I find a few buttons. We go to a peasant. You change them. You give him a half a liter of vodka. You know what vodka means? He give you five pounds of grain. No bread. Grain. Or he give you a few frozen potatoes. So you have to go about twenty miles, forty, fifty below zero, in snow so deep with a small sleigh. And the snow started to fall down and you don't know if you will survive. And you don't know when you come in in a farmer's, peasant's house or he will not kill you. No still I was going, doing this, you know? And singing glory to God, you know? That He permit me to do this for them. And I wasn't suffering. I was so happy when I brought them the little potatoes home, a little flour, you know, and what else. And some berries, you know, if they had them there. Once I come to a village. In a village, you should

see a village, full with snow. I come in in a house. I see three mens like murderers, you know, sitting over there. I guessed right away that I can't tell them that I have vodka, or they right away will kill me. I just tell them, "I am looking for a guy here and here and here." I just want to go out. I didn't want to do business with them. Because they would kill me. They had that murder in their eyes. I had developed a whole, I, in a eye from a person I can see how he will kill me or no. Yes! I'm just telling you a example that you should see the time from that. Well, this is [unclear].

HR: So you decided to go back to Poland.

HS: Right. Through seeing this everything, and to thinking that this should be my future life, I say, "Better I should take my chances in going back." And we was debating. We was debating with my family, you know. Yes going, not going, this. And I have already work and they are safe. And I say, "How long they will be safe?" And I remember I go in and check from my worker duty to check the railroad station and I saw the tracks from the rail--how do you call it? The railroad tracks?

HR: [unclear].

HS: No, no, the railroad tracks. There is the irons. How do you call this?

HR: Oh the tracks.

HS: The tracks, these [unclear] tracks. And I say, "These tracks will lead me back to freedom," you know? I was trembling, you know, with that inner injustice what was going on and that I can't go out with this. And I can't go on with this, you know? I have to deny constantly, you know, going to that woman to get that bread and to get that butter, and going to a other woman and the [unclear] to get paper, you know? And going to the other man to get shoes for my mother. And going over there always, you know? And mine, I was, it was so revolting to me in my heart, you know, as a young man, that I have such a, making so long. Now I know they need this. I tell you too I didn't eat, personally I didn't eat nothing from this. I just give it away like this. Because I was so bitter that I have--it was against my grain. Let's put it this way. Now we start to be active how I told you in the Polish patriots--my sister. I didn't want to be involved with it. I tell you the truth, the Jewish people who didn't [unclear] didn't put [unclear]. Either being saved, either being over there and they still didn't go to the situation. They still was in their soul *byezhinitzes*, refugees. You understand? They didn't saw what's going on. They look only their private, small gains, you know? A man, let's see he knows he have a wife and six children left in Warsaw. He goes to bed with a girl married here, you know? And a woman, a sister, denunciation the other sister what I told you before because they got an officer from the *NKVD* took her out once to the movies, just to find out. And she talks things and she, and they get to prison and they die. I wasn't so, you know, happy with them. Or they come to me ask, the *NKVD* was asking me about people. They know what they was doing, and I have to find a way, through my mother, to warn them. Now to warn them in such a way that they shouldn't understand what we're doing. So my sister was active in this. We was a little. We start to be like the elite from the refugees [unclear].

In that time I met my future wife. She was, this was a meeting was from young people in our apartment, just young people. And we was discussing...

HR: Jews? All Jews?

HS: All Jewish. We was discussing, we make a covenant, a, we make a covenant, to make a *referat*, to give a speech to our people, you know. This situation, the political situation what we have to prepare, you know. So we elected, the all younger people were the educated. And we--I talked with her. In that time, the first time I met her--I saw her once, I told you, in the beginning...

HR: Before, on the train.

HS: Years ago, in the...

HR: So many different, a few years, right?

HS: Two years. And I know that she exists. But she was not in touch with nobody. She was going to a school, to a medical school, a nurse, to be a nurse. And she was through the whole treatment what I am telling you. She had to--her father was killed near her eyes. She alone escaped Lublin, you know. And...

HR: She is originally from...

HS: Lublin.

HR: Lublin.

HS: Lublin.

HR: Is it close to...

HS: This is near to the Russians, not far from the Russians.

HR: Is it far--what's the name of your hometown?

HS: Kalisz.

HR: Kalisz is far?

HS: It's a little bit. It's like you would say California and New York.

HR: Oh.

HS: We are on the German border. There was half Jews. There was no Jews in our part. And she was going to that school and with that whole terrible, with the war business, you know? She was once mobilized to the Polish Army too. And she took a apartment, like a room, by a Russian family. And they like adopted her. She was with them like a daughter. And the woman was a Latvian originally and he was a Russian originally. He was a big drunk. And she was with them and they was living like peasants. They had a cow and they, and so she was really materially well off. Now with the all complications from a Russian family life and he was a drunk. And she was protected by them and they intended to keep her like a daughter. They send her to making her a doctor. Now she was very strong to go back to Poland. And when I met her the first time...

HR: So wait, tell me, did the Germans come in to her...

HS: No.

HR: Oh they didn't.

HS: Yes, yes, yes, not the Russians. The Germans.

HR: And how did she escape from the Germans?

HS: She had gone through a whole, she went from her town. She said she been, she was going in *Gymnasium* in that time, and was a very, very much involved in studying, and learning. And she say, "I will no stay with the Germans because I have to go to school." So, she say, "I will go away. I no want to stay with the Germans in the beginning." She went away to a town Blodovka [phonetic], near the Bug River, where they had relatives. And from there she tried to escape to the other side to the river, where the Russians are. The parents was sending back all the time people, "Come back, it is not so terrible," and you see, in that time there was not still the, they didn't go through the atrocity yet. Because this wasn't, we was already in Germany. And this was Polish like a protectorate. And near was the Russian border. So she went, you know, and she denied, she didn't want to go back. And she crossed the river and the Russians arrested. And they wanted to send her back. And they send her back. The Russian didn't accept, didn't believe it is a false, a historically false. They didn't accept us. We just ran. Ran in. Not like the United States accepts refugees, normal, right, with the whole procedure. The Russians send her back. And later she went over there. Later she went back again, until she the second time they didn't send her back. Even though this, you know, the Russians are very unpredictable, right? And she had some relatives, her mother's sister married a man from Grodno, or from Vilna over there. And she went to visit over there. And then start already the upheaval from the eastern side of Poland, and she left over there. She left for the Russian side. And she registered to go away to Russia. In that time I met her on the *echelon*, on the train. So now I saw her back. And when I saw her...

HR: And where is this now?

HS: Cherepovetz. Cherepovetz.

HR: Where your mother...

HS: Correct.

HR: ...was.

HS: And in Cherepovetz, she talked to us.

HR: You were with the fire department.

HS: Correct. She come to our house. And I start to and I talk to her, and my whole world light up. I didn't have such a talk since the upheaval, you know? About books, about literature, about people, and she was talking in mine genre, you know? She was not a refugee in her soul. She too was, you know? And I was looking so, and talking so. And what impressed me, she asked me, "Do you know French?" She wanted to-

Tape sixteen, side one:

HR: This is an interview with Mr. Henry Skorr, July 5th, 1983, side three [side one].

HS: I can talk? And we was talking about literature, about life, about the future. And she was very strong, she had very strong convictions, very strong developed lines without, and she say she will no be in Russia. Without discussing the plus and minus, this and that, she never intend to stay in Russia. She didn't, with the whole pluses, with the whole shape of things what they, she say, "The good things," she said one of the good things, they was very good to her, the teachers. And the people around, they was very supportive to her. They give her a chance to earn money. She used to work in the laboratory, you know? And she was starting to be the best student, without knowing the language. They praised her. They give her a stipend. They send her to the rest houses, you know? And the teachers was so good to her. And in private I was telling her, "You have to go back. Here is not a place to live for you." They was very open to her. And she was a very strong, she say, "We shouldn't, and we are discussing Poland, Russia, and Germans." So, and she was [unclear]. I'm okay?

HR: Yeah.

HS: And she was saying that she will go back. So, talking to her, from the first time I decided that if I will be married, she will be my wife. From the first time we...

HR: The first time you saw her.

HS: The first time. After I saw her I say--and I analyze mine self with two things: first of all, [unclear]. Second, she have to be picked up. I saw she is so depressed. She is like a beautiful flower, you know? Just pressed down with that whole reality, with her family tragedy, and with the Russians. She knows that the family doesn't exist. She knew they were destroyed. And I say, "Is my responsibility to take such a girl, to pick her up." And additional she is such a beautiful and such a girl that you don't see, you know, you no see around. There was other Jewish girls in our environment. You know, I didn't like their behavior. I didn't, I couldn't even talk to them. They took over only the low-class from the Russian society. [unclear]. You know that's such a coarse thing. Nothing you know, nothing spiritual. There was nice things in Russian life too. Spiritual things, you know? They never read nothing, you know? There was such a beautiful literature, to read and to say. They was so down to earth, so coarse, that I couldn't get a common language with them. And with her, right away mine, the quality of the special went to the high level. And I say to myself, right away I met her, this will be. And I start to meet her, and go with her to the library. And later she was, they took her away to Sokol--this is a town near Vologda--to be a nurse. Because this was already, the war was finished, or finishing. And they started to bring in all wounded people, to put in fortifications. More treatments, less treatments. And she was in such a hospital where the chronical disabled people should be treated. And she was in Sokol. And she started to write to us. And she want to be in touch with us,

because we start to be already very close and going home to getting the papers. It was already discussion that the form from the passport how it will be. And, it come the time that there come the Polish-Russian passport for us. We have, I, we have to go to show, you have to show that you are a former Polish citizen. We have all kind pictures. We have all kind of documents. And we get it. And we get the documents.

Now starts our story with the *NKVD*. He, the *NKVD* was getting the documents because it's the police. And the documents went to the Major, to the Major Grigoriev. I come to that Grigoriev and he opened his eyes. "*You want to go back to Poland? You want to go back to Poland? You know, do you want that I cut off your head?*" In such a coarse way, you know? "*Do you know who the Polaks are?*" I start to tell him, "*Comrade Major,*" he was, I see he was shocked with me. He was sure that I am...

HR: A Soviet citizen.

HS: I am a, no, I was with the flower from--I was very, very eminent already in Cherepovetz. But see, we meet each other in the first, in the theater, you know, for the eminent people? And the first line was, I was sitting near him. And when the director from that theater, a woman, comes, she took me away with her. And he was looking so, you know? I was a part already from the establishment, let's put it this way. And when I started to tell him, "*Listen, everybody goes away, my mother, my sister [unclear]. We sacrifice plenty for Russia. I [unclear] a father. I was believing for Russia. And my responsibility is to my family [unclear].*" I say, "*You know how much blood I was giving?*" I forgot to tell you. I was, in the army, on the front line, it was zero, [unclear] below. And I was giving straight blood for wounded soldiers, from me to them. Because [unclear] I was universal blood. I say, "*And I have to be with my mother, but not taking in account I like it or I no like the idea. It's this way.*" He say, "*What kind of man are you that your mother can discuss and can dictate you?*" I say, "*She is not dictating me. She doesn't speak Russian. If her friends will go away, what she will do here? She is a sick woman.*" He say, "*You go home. Think it over. I will not give you the papers.*" And he didn't give me the papers. I went home. I didn't say nothing to my mother. I didn't want to scare her. And in a week I go back. And I know by law he have to give it to me. Only, they can cook up something. They can arrest me. And he wasn't, he start to be very rough with me. I say, "[unclear] [Russian phrase]." "*You have, take a look at the shoes you are wearing. Take a look what you are eating.*" And he start to tell me, you know, where I'm getting all this. I was meeting him in places where he was getting and I was getting. And I say, "[unclear], I can't [unclear] morally wrong. I am not against Soviet. I am going to Poland. Poland is a socialistic country. I am not against Russia. Now why should my mother be so unhappy? Isn't she entitled to get a little happiness? And my sister and brother, what will be with them? I am," I say, "*a Soviet now. What will be with them?*" And he looks at me, "*Go home. Come in tomorrow.*" I come in tomorrow. "*Here you have the papers. Now I will now give you a truck to take the to the railroad.*" I say, "*Okay, [unclear]. I have the papers from the whole family here.*" And later I start to organize with all people was coming to me. Not only from

my town, no from the whole province. And I organized two wagons, two truckloads. And I was with mine truck. And he wasn't such a [unclear], you know? And they come from the province to me, you know? From mine commendation they make a whole celebration, and a whole *appell*, you know what's a *appell*? They put all these soldiers [unclear]. And they was crying and this and that. And they make a party for me. And we went to the, I loaded up all people. Was something, or somebody else, one was in the Polish Army. His wife and his son was by us. And he was mobilized to the Russian Army like I told you, like he was in the Ru-, maybe from the Russian Army to the Polish Army, a different episode, not with us. He came back from Poland to bring her, to take her. And something was illegal with him. They arrest him. I don't know for what. No he, over there you no ask questions. I have my pistol, you know? I had my gun with me. And we have two roads through, two cars. And maybe it was a different direction, was not the way how we came, you know? We were already settled. And imagine our heart. My mother, how she was crying, you know when we left the father and the brother over there. And where we going, you know? And we started to travel back.

We traveled back, this was already maybe in February, end of February. It was still winter, deep winter, and it's amazing, when we were starting to come back and you see the climatic change. It started to be warmer and warmer. We come to, into the Ukraine and we see the terrible destroyed Ukraine, you know? Terrible destroyed. You can't, is no imagine. Like everything destroyed.

HR: This is February of 1945?
 HS: '46.
 HR: '46.
 HS: 1946.
 HR: In the meantime you left your wife. Did you?
 HS: She was with me.
 HR: Oh, you took her with you.
 HS: Sure.
 HR: Oh.
 HS: She wasn't my wife. She was...
 HR: I know, but I mean...
 HS: Yeah.
 HR: You took her.

HS: We was, yeah, we was discussing about, later discussed with my wife getting married. And she say, "Marriage is only in Poland and only by a rabbi." So I respected her saying. And this is what will be. We was with other girls, you know, in the cars, other people. You know we was with, maybe with others who have so much experience [unclear] in our struggle. It made it all much more civilized that the older people and children whoever there was. And I organized there the food situation. I was already a very experienced man with that.

HR: Yes you were.

HS: And everything was working. And in Vologda, imagine, that mine head, the Colonel Nikitin, come to visit me, you know? I was already like a, I was no more a Russian citizen. He come to visit me, he bring me vodka, you know? And this and, "Be in touch with us." He give me some books. He knows I read, that I am sick about books. He give me some books to read, you know? It's amazing. They can be so, you know, very, yes. And we was going so back, you know? And from the other side was coming the Russian Army was demounting Germany. Whole factories was coming back. And so many Russian prisoners of war, arrested by the Russians. The whole Vlasov army was a army what went away, what give up to the Germans.

HR: They killed them?

HS: They took them, they shot them. And they was, you know, like the Germans was treating us...

HR: The Germans gave them back to Russia?

HS: Right.

HR: And...

HS: Not the Germans. From the Americans give them back.

HR: The Americans gave them back and the Ru-, and they didn't want them to go, they didn't want to go back but they had to go back.

HS: Oh yeah...

HR: And they went back to death.

HS: And you know how...

HR: But you saw them going?

HS: We saw them going back and how they was kept, under guns, they was cursing us. They saw that we are...

HR: Going back.

HS: Yeah. And from this, "*Zhid! Zhid!*" You know? "Jews! Jews!" You know? And when we come to the Ukraine comes a order that everything should be closed, because the Ukrainian underground, guns--anti-Jewish, anti-Soviet guns--was attacking the trains. In Russia still. They was a very much [unclear] what was working with the Germans, they was hiding in the forest and attacking trains, and especially with the refugees what was going back to Poland. And it's amazing when it started to get warmer and warmer. And when we come Ukraine we see a whole battlefields, with dead soldiers from under the snow. Thousands! Thousands, you know? You see their heads, you see how they're lying in their positions. Because this was everything covered with snow. And the cannons and this everything, you know?

HR: And so when the snow began to go away, there is all these bodies. The odors [unclear]...

HS: Thousands of bodies, you know?

HR: How did they dispose of those?

HS: Yeah, I don't know. And everything was mined. And you can't...

HR: And what about the disease from these bodies?

HS: Oh!

HR: People were getting sick?

HS: You know, in that whole railroad what we was going, we was going to the Brest, to Brzesc-Litewski, to Brest. This was the changing line from the Russians and the Poland. And the whole railroad was reinforced. Because the Germans, this was still from the Germans times against the guerrillas, made the bunkers, you know, the bunkers. So I had in mind mine times when we was attacking the trains, and they was making such fortifications. Let's see the whole forest, let's see a few hundred yards and a few hundred yards was cut off. Was, that you can't go in to the railroad that they shouldn't know you. And every hundred yards they have bunkers, you know, and they was, and this was going so until we come to Brzesc, Brest on the Bug River. Is the same historical way how I was coming to Russia, so I was going back. And we come into Brest, and have a Russian was checking everything. The Russian was, you know. I was, with the Russian clothing, with the medals, with everything. They was [unclear] to me. And each, I had a gun hidden, you know? This was a [unclear]. Is, I had already the other things. I had gold coins there, you know? And I prepare myself. And we change, in Brest we changed the wagons for Polish wagons. The Polish railroad is smaller, is narrower than the Russian.

And we come to the Polish side, which was entire different world--like day and night different. First of all, you can see much better clothed people. You don't see that starvation. You no see that drabness, that grayness. You see already different, laughing people.

HR: Even though they were even after the German occupation? And after the war?

HS: They didn't suffer nothing.

HR: Compared to you.

HS: Compared to the Russians, they didn't suffer. They have a beautiful clothing, nice towns. You see we are so used to the Russian drab, gray towns, monotone, the wood, dirt. And so standard, you know? You will, if you see one store, one magazine, let's see in Moscow you can see the same store in Vladivostok. The same way, you know, in such a crudeness. And in the Polish towns we saw the house is painted. The sidewalks and everything nice, you know? And bread, so much bread and so much food, so much salami, so much everything. I brought with ourself dry bread, you know? We made the biscuits. And we prepared from home, they tell us, "Potatoes." They say in Poland is nothing. You know, like more than before the war. What one whole thing was with the Jews. They were so, we passed the train, we come on the other side. Right away they will start calling, "Jews! The Jews are coming! The Jews are " You can hear, "The Jews are coming." [unclear] means they what wasn't killed, they're coming back, you know? And they wasn't afraid from where to talk. They wasn't ashamed to talk. And right away this

start. Comes in these boys, twelve-year-old boys. You have to sell gold. You have to sell gold teeth. And right away with such a wallet to check on this gold, you know? Twelve-year-old Polish boys, a whole commercial people, you know? They start to like they was dealing with the Germans. Gold teeth what they was used to take out from the Jewish people. And we were so this was so amazing, you know? Because where in the world before a twelve-year-old Polish boy would come and deal with me, ask me if I have to sell gold or we have to sell diamonds to him. And we passed the--we come in in the other side. What was the town then? What was the town there? The first thing was a representative from *Poale*, from *kibbutzim*, from the Zionistic organization have in Poland *kibbutzim*. And they was awaiting us and saying, "Come to the *kibbutzim*. You will stay in a *kibbutz* and later you will emigrate to Israel." And the first thing they give us a Jewish newspaper. This was the first thing that I saw a Jewish newspaper in several years. And I was a big reader. And this was the *Mapai Poale Tzion*, the *arbit* [unclear]. And imagine to our surprise, I open up that newspaper and I read that a woman from Paris is looking for the family Velcher. Ziska Shpeter is looking for family Velcher. My wife's family is Velcher. And this was her aunt from Paris, looking. And you know how my wife, how she started to cry. She recognized Ziska Shpeter! And we, you know, and we come to Warsaw, on the train. And Warsaw is all destroyed. The buildings from the Warsaw Ghetto, not only destroyed, it is all brick is destroyed, you know? Like a desert, like a moon.

HR: How soon after? The Warsaw Ghetto was...

HS: The Warsaw Ghetto was 1943.

HR: And you were there in '46.

HS: Yeah, three. Three years.

HR: So three years later and nothing has been done in that time?

HS: Nothing, no anything. [unclear] later it was a war. In Warsaw was a war, a revolt against the Germans from the Polaks. Warsaw was more destroyed later, in 1945, when the *Armia Krajowa*,²³ when the Russian Army was being on the right side of the Vistula and they make a uprising against the Germans because they want to take Warsaw--the *Armia Krajowa*--and not say that the Russian liberated. Because they didn't like the Russians. They was a fascistic organization, the *Armia Krajowa*, what was in British oriented. So the Russians was standing on the right side, waiting until the Polaks kill each other, they kill the Germans, and they destroyed how the whole Warsaw. We come to Warsaw, you know, and there was meeting us a delegate from that Central Jewish Committee. [unclear] afraid to talk we wasn't that used, you know, to that, to be so scared from the Polaks. I was used right away to fight, you know? In Russia somebody do something, right away I hit him and later we discuss it.

HR: But was this attitude similar to the attitude before...

HS: Worse.

²³Polish resistance movement loyal to Polish government in exile.

HR: Before the Second World War, when you were a kid? It was not that bad?

HS: Not that bad. This was something horrible. They was afraid, the Jewish population, okay, I will give you a, he was, he told us, "Yes, don't be so knowledgeable."

HR: And what was this, a Polish man or...

HS: A Jewish man.

HR: From Poland [unclear]?

HS: A representative from the Central Jewish Committee.

HR: Okay, and...

HS: They was on the Praga. This means on the server from Warsaw. This wasn't so destroyed.

HR: They were survivors of this...

HS: Correct. Most was survivors. And they were so subdued. They was so afraid of the Polaks they didn't admit they are Jews. Most was hidden on *Arish* [meaning Aryan] papers. And the Polish antisemitism was so much more militant, not like before the war. They want to finish the Jews what was left.

HR: What the Germans didn't do.

HS: They, correct. The old Polish underground, what it was, after the war, left, their action was killing Jews, killing Russians, and killing Polish Communists. This was their official decree. They was doing this day and night, and supported by 90% of the Polish population. Because the Polish population started to think, you see, first of all, they hate us twice. They hate us for Jews. They hate us that we didn't be killed yet. They hate us that they say we brought the Russians back. And they hate us that we will take, we want to back our property. Is a combination of hate. So, and we went from that rail station, we went to the Praga. Praga means a suburb of Omitsa Paragova [phonetic], on the market street, Paragova, was the headquarters from the Jewish Committee. We went over there to look over the list. This was start to be a national occupation for the Jews after the war. Everywhere that I come I put my name. And the Jewish Committee was hanging lists. And you come down, you write, "I am Henrich Skorrupa Skalisza." And *Sheva Velchez Rubina*. [unclear], we're looking for them and them, you know? And you just come to a Jewish Committee, you're not going no where, you just look it over, and if you find something you just write over if you know it. If you find something, if you see somebody that you know, you write over there, "I saw him here and here." You know, it's a whole life, you know? And it was our [unclear], you know, when we will come in a Jewish Committee, lists of lists with names and, first of all you have to go to register. You official go to the Committee, register that you've come in here, and they put you on the list. And for other information. So, and we was, the atmosphere was terrible, you know, and they was attacking us with knives. They was hating us. We come up upstairs, you know, and talking between us and all. "[unclear]. Don't talk so. Don't be so loud." In that [unclear]. I say, "What happened?" "Polaks." I say, "What happened with the Polaks?" "Those Polaks, this, this." I say, "Do you see what I have for the Polaks? This I have for the Polaks." Then I

just want to influence them, you know? I say, "What's to be so afraid? A Polak's a Polak. If they want to fight you, we have to fight them." This was our attitude. You see, mostly we, our men was in the army, or survivors over there, you know, where we have to fight or we have to die.

HR: Did you see survivors of concentration camps?

HS: This was the first day. I still didn't know. It was...

HR: These were sur-, well who were these survivors with you?

HS: This was probably, this was already the organized Jewish Committee organized through the Polish government. You see, in Poland...

HR: But where were those Jews from? From where did they escape? They must have been in concentration camps.

HS: Yeah. They was in concentration camp, no, most was hidden in the *Arish* side like Adal Verman...

HR: Okay.

HS: Sure. They--and they was fighters from the...

HR: Polish underground.

HS: Jewish ghettos, correct. And they was, and there was people sent back already from Russia to Poland. You see, while we are talking about our Jewish tragedy, Poland was going through her own tragedy. It was going through a terrible fight between Polaks what want, didn't want to be under Russian domination...

HR: [unclear].

HS: And Russia, with the old brutality, with the old bayonets with the million man army what destroyed the Germans, with the old arrogance, you know, from the Soviet power, was overtaking this. And they was very unhappy with the Jews and they was very unhappy with the west, that the west is not enough militant to hold back the Russians. You see that Churchill and Roosevelt, was it still Roosevelt?

HR: Truman, yeah.

HS: Or Truman? No.

HR: Truman.

HS: Yeah. They couldn't understand the Russian menace, like today they don't understand.

HR: They don't.

HS: They couldn't understand at that time. It was in that time very easy to force the Russian back. I remember being still in Russia after when the war finished, I was in a commission taking over the hospitals, giving them back to the schools, what was before. There was special rooms of therapy or other treatments. This was sealed and not given back to the school. I ask why. They say, "We didn't finish yet." They say, "We don't know what will be with the west. We don't know or if we will no have to fight the British and the Americans." Do you understand? They didn't finish there. Stalin have a big appetite, you know, to take it over everything, and not and getting the whole help from America. Lately

the Russian Army was only fighting with the American weapons and with American food. The same with the hospitals. And the same with the clothing. I was, every Russian officer have a beautiful American outfit clothing, you know. So, you see, Poland had two, our Jewish tragedy and they was going through their own...

HR: Upheaval?

HS: Upheaval like a revolution, a counterrevolution. Because the Polaks imported from Russia, and the Polish Army what was coming from Russia, what I should go to that army, the Poshushka division, you know, they was brutally, you know, destroying the Polaks, the all opposition. Bloody, you know. During the night, the whole night was fights. They're destroying physically the Russians, the Polaks. So, when we start to go back, you see, and we didn't know where they will send us. We was a part already from the Polish *repatriaten*. *Repatriaten* means refugees what's going back. Repatriation?

HR: Repatriates.

HS: Repatriates. This is it was a Polish organization [unclear.

Tape sixteen, side two:

HR: Okay, now, Mr. Skorr, you're just going to tell us about what happened after you arrived in Warsaw.

HS: Right. We arrived in Warsaw how I say before, and we visit the Jewish Committee *Entraga*. And how I say the atmosphere was so terrible, so subdued. People was so afraid. They didn't either permit us to talk loud in Jewish. [tape off then on]

HR: Now talk in...

HS: Do you want just to test it again?

HR: In a little while we will. Just go ahead and pick up with the story. They wouldn't let you talk...

HS: Okay. Yeah, so and it was all kind of rumors that we will be settled in the new provinces what Poland recall it from the Germany. This means in Silesia where is Breslau, Reichenbach, and top to Stettin. And Wokzyn. And we was continue. We was on the trains. We didn't know, we didn't believe that everybody can travel how he wants--he can get off the train and travel like a free person--because we wasn't used to, since the Russian experience we was very, we was already psychologically geared that they have to send us and we have to do everything what the government or the people are saying. So, finally we find out that all the trains what are coming from Russia, they're being sent to the western Poland, what they call it now, in the returned provinces. *Zhemia Prowincia*. I don't know how just to explain this in English. And we was traveling through whole Poland, from east to west, in the direction to our destination, not knowing exactly where we will be sent. Traveling in that time, it was April already. It was the most beautiful time in Poland. And you can see the farmers working on the fields. Is everything so individual, in contrast from Russia where everything was so gray and so subdued. You can see a entire different country what we wasn't used to this.

In the same way you could see that the Polish population didn't like us. When we was traveling on the trains and stopping on stops in the cities, we could see their remarks against the Jews and against the government. And we was wondering that they're not afraid to talk so, because we are, again I am repeating I was used to the Russian experience. You're no expressing your political opinions. Now we could see that everybody, most from the people what we was meeting on the trains, was against us, and against the government. And it's very remarkable, I remember I had a little a conversation with a railroad man. And he told me a proverb from Poland, that, "Bad is that bird what is talking against his own nest." This he want to explain me that he is talking against Poland because he no like the political system what is now in Poland. [Polish phrase]. This is means, "It's a very bad bird what's make dirty their own nest." And now you can see in the atmosphere what's going around, that everybody, most from the Polaks, was against that new political regime what was enforced on them from the Russians. You can see everywhere Russian soldiers in big

quantity, and their behavior was not like they would be in a friendly country. No they was like they would be in a occupying country. And the Polaks was straight avoiding them.

About only behavior I have to tell what happened to us at night when we was traveling already in the direction from, to Legnica. Legnica is in Germany, was Liegnitz. This was already on the western part already of Poland. We was standing, waiting for a locomotive. Come in three Russian soldiers with guns and demand money from us and demand vodka from us. It's clear that we could resist. I had my gun ready and analyzing the situation, being afraid that any resistance that they just will squeeze the trigger--they have automatic guns--and they will be too many...

HR: You were able to take your gun out of Russia?

HS: Correct. I took my gun illegally out of Russia.

HR: Oh.

HS: And I have it constantly with me, being in Warsaw. And I remember when there was a woman, a secretary, we was in that headquarter from the Jewish Committee, tell us; "Be so quiet. Don't talk so Jewish," I just show her the gun, that I am, I will no permit that somebody should attack me without--they still had the psychology, they most was Jewish what was hiding on Aryan papers. Now we wasn't used to this and...

HR: They found Aryan papers?

HS: Aryan papers. Means they...

HR: Even though they were Jewish?

HS: Right. And everybody from the all leading people, from the Polish community, they have false Polish names. Nobody used a Jewish name, because they, and it was a official policy from the government that if you're employed by the government, if you are a Jew, they wasn't employing Jew. Now you have to change your name, not to antagonize the Polish population--what was so terrible anti-Jewish. They overtook that German propaganda and the German behavior, and they was, or they was active against Jews or they was actually killing Jews. You heard, every day you was hearing that here and there a Jew was killed. So, going back to that situation, to the incident in the Legnica railroad, the three soldiers with automats, and one was standing down with a grenade and demand from us money. We could resist. We have, we was soldiers, and we had a few demobilized soldiers, two Polish-Jewish boys. We could fall on them and start a battle with them. Only we was afraid that will be too much, if they just squeeze a trigger...

HR: Sure.

HS: In the car was 80, 90 people in it. So, I developed with the Russian strategy, I start to talk to them in Russian. I say, "What you doing, boys? You want to have maybe a drink?" And we took out, we have alcohol and we give them to drink. And what was, they drink and they fall asleep in the car. We called the Polish railroad police and they said, "We're not interfering in Russian affairs. This is your soldiers." They saw which was a sarcasm to us, "and you take care on them." We tried to call the Russian military police about them. Now nobody answer us. I just want to give you this for a example how was

their behavior from the Russian soldiers. They was behaving like they would be in a occupying country--robbing, stealing, raping. And this should be a country where and they should be in a country what they should be their friends.

When we come to Poznan, they tell us that in Poznan is a small Jewish committee. This was, either before the war Poznan was a anti-Jewish town. And we find out where is the Jewish committee. We went over there. In the same way they greet us very nicely, you know, very cold, and they tell us, "Don't be loud with your Jewish behavior." And this was very strange for us. So after a few days of traveling we come to our destination. This was in Silesia and the town of Reichbach. They call it in, by German Reichenbach am Eul Engebirge. This means Reichenbach on the Eule Mountains. And over there was already standing plenty echelons with the *repatriaten* from Russia. And was a new ferment, near the station was waiting hundreds of people what was coming before and looking just for people. Maybe they will meet somebody what they know from before the war. How I say it was a ferment that people start to look for each other and where they come they put up a sign, a piece of paper that, "My name is so-and-so. I am from Kalisz." Or, "I am from this and this town, and I am looking for friends and for relatives." And imagine our--we, some people from Kalisz was standing on the station and they recognize us. And one was a family Blankrot. One was a friend from my brother. And he...

HR: The brother that was killed.

HS: Correct. And he, that family survived because mine brother, when I come back the first time, he went to them. They was living on the Shotana Street and he told them that there is a way to escape to Russia. And they, there was a father and a mother and one son what was from the Polish Army. When he find out that, that his friend, my brother, was killed, he started to cry on the station. And the first thing, they was living already a few weeks, three, four weeks before when we was coming. And they was in a small town near Reichbach there. The name is Bielawa, Langenbielau. And they give me their address that soon we, they will settle us somewhere that I should come over to them. And in fact, that I went to them. And imagine they either didn't recognize my mother. My mother was, lost so much weight and she was so old, they didn't recognize her. She was weighing maybe 80 pounds. And before we left to Russia she was weighting over 300 pounds she went there.

HR: My!

HS: So they didn't even recognize. And my mother being in the train so long, she was very sick. And she was spitting with blood and mine future wife, she was a nurse and she was constantly being with her, taking care and she nurse her very well. And they loaded us out from the railroad and they send us to a small town near Reichenbach, near Dzierzoniow. The Polish name of Reichenbach they give a name Dzierzoniow. It was a ferment in Poland to change all names from Germany in Polish. So they send us to a small town near Reichbach. They call it Pietrolesha [phonetic], Peter's Valda [phonetic]. And we come over there and we was living in such communal houses, just like ten families in

one room just waiting until they come from the poor organization, from the repatriation organization to send us, to give us apartments. It was a big ferment about the new returned provinces. Whole towns was without people. The history returned. Now, the Germans was the underprivileged. The Germans people was suppressed, and the Germans people what was under duress. You would come in in a house, take over a whole house, take over a whole business, with everything what they have over there, and just going on to live. You can go in, throw out a German, and go in in a house with everything, with clothing, with all the...

HR: You could just...

HS: Yes.

HR: Really?

HS: Everybody could do this, go in, just take a house, take a business...

HR: Well where did the Germans go?

HS: With everything, and they throw out the Germans or they give them a small room to live until it will be a repatriation. And the Germans was belonging, was coming from the U.N., from the UNRRA, a repatriation commission, and they was resettling them to West Germany. And they didn't permit them, you just can take a little clothing, the same way what we had before when the Germans come to us. No, in a much more humane way. And to our eternal plus, the Jewish people didn't usurp that way. They didn't mistreat the Germans. They didn't, Jewish people didn't want to go in. They was only a few people what was doing this. Most people what was just coming out from the concentration camps. Because was in Langenbielau and Bielawa and Pietrolesha, in Peter's Valdau, and Reichbach, was before concentration camps where the Jewish people was working over there and they was being killed over there. These wasn't extermination camps. Was only working camps. No, they was mistreated over there and was over there cemeteries where they was buried. So, when it come, when the Russian Army overran this, and the prisoners from the concentration camp come out, they beat up the Germans and they took over businesses and houses. And later when the Polish administration come over the apartments and the houses where the Germans ran away, they was closed from the government. And later they give to everybody, resettle them. The same way to us when we come to Pietrolesha, they ask me, "Oh, you want this apartment? This apartment?" Full with everything, with furniture and with clothing, and with food and with jewelry, with everything what it was. Now being over there, still living in such a dormitory with everybody comes my friend from Kalisz. And he was a big shot already in the administration. And he say he have for me a job. And not only he have for me a job, he was talking so in Russian he start that I should take over that job. I was used to already that, to the Russian psychology that they send you, I should go.

HR: This is in Warsaw?

HS: No, we...

HR: No, in this German town...

HS: Right.

HR: [unclear].

HS: In Peter's Valdau, in Pietrolesha, right. I should say the houses and everything was so beautiful we never saw in our life, because that Niederschlesien [lower Silesia] was, is so beautiful much nicer than Poland. Not talking about, don't talking about Russia. The old towns are medieval towns, beautiful built with how do you call that, with surrounded the wall, with medieval walls, with the gates how it was 100 years ago.

HR: And it wasn't destroyed?

HS: It was very little destroyed. This was the whole, only the destruction you was seeing when you're going near to Breslau, to Wroclaw, where the German Army, when Hitler declared this is a *Festung*.²⁴ And the German Army didn't run away. They stayed to fight to the end. Breslau, Wroclaw what is now, and you hear about the, with the Walesa business, Wroclaw is a big town from the Solidarity Union now. And when you come near Breslau, you could see 80, 90 per cent of the city destroyed like Warsaw. Everything was destroyed. Only the other towns around them they was just surrounded by the Russian Army and the Germans surrendered them without fight. So everything was in working condition. Either the coal mines, the big factories, everything was in working condition. And the Polish government took this everything over. The ethnic, the really Polaks, they didn't want to go over, take it over, because they say this doesn't belong to Poland. They was against that whole situation what was imposed from Russia. So, the Polish government decided to populate this big, rich provinces with the new repatriates from Poland. And the repatriates, plenty of Polaks was coming from the west--from France, from Belgium. And Polish soldiers was coming from the west. With this population, with these people they populated the all *Zhemia Prowincja*, the new returned provinces.

So, when my friend come and told me that I should take over that job, I say, "What kind of job?" And I was already, if they say I have to take over I am ready to take over. This was I should be a head from the Jewish home for children what come from the concentration camps. This was called such a *bursa*. This means children without parents, children coming from Russia. They was organized in such a, in a house. We was providing them food, providing them school, and teaching them professions.

HR: What ages? How young to...

HS: Ages? They was, let's see, from you could be from eight, ten years to twenty or to twenty-five. We had either soldiers, single men from the Russian Army that had no where to live. They didn't want to take over a apartments. They was living in the *bursa* and getting jobs. Now the main thing was to organize the children and the youth from the concentration camps. And we get such a house what was before a German professional school where you learned professions. That was a little out of town, and was a old house was a few hundred years old and we was, and we had over there, we maked over there

²⁴fortress - German

living quarters and a dining room and a kitchen and like a school. And this was it. And I took over the job. And in that job was that I get a apartment over there.

With all complications what was, the children was really sick, there was plenty of children mentally sick, you know...

HR: Right.

HS: ...from that all everything. And was going on plenty of horror things. You could see them walking around whole nights, you know, and talking to themself. Mentally sick. And you could see boys so depraved, you know, and they're no believing in nothing. So cynical. Destroying everything, cutting everything, stealing. That, this was supported from the Jewish Committee. And the Jewish Committee was being supported from the American Federation, from the whole money was coming from the Jewish people from the United States. Either I didn't have civil clothing. I was in my army clothing. They give us, in the Jewish Committee when you come over we was getting clothing and getting food. And if you no have a job, and most people have no jobs, most people was so disoriented. Their whole life was only for looking for people. And they were standing near the Jewish Committee. There was always hundreds of people milling around and listening for news and listening about horror stories. Was always, in whole Poland you only hear every day and every night they was killing Jewish people. And there was pogroms. You probably hear of the pogrom in Kielce, the pogrom in Krakow and other towns. The Polaks didn't accept Jewish people back. And so in that whole Jewish population was in such a uproar and such a--not knowing what they will do with themselves.

And most, I have to say that the Zionist organizations was doing a very good job by organizing people in *kibbutzim*. They organized *kibbutzim* in every town and just waiting for the people on the trains and say, "Come to the *kibbutz* and we will take you to..."

HR: Israel.

HS: To Palestine.

HR: Palestine, yes.

HS: At that time it was not Israel. And plenty of people was going over there. Now this was actively fought by the Jewish Committee. The Jewish Committee was oriented and was supervised by the Jewish Communistic Party. And they was dead against that Jews should emigrate from Poland to Palestine. They want to build a Jewish life in Poland. No by the political situation in Poland, the Polish government was not so strong in their Communistic way. It was a really a coalition government where was the Communists, the Socialists, and either the western part *Mikolaich* [phonetic] from London, and other people. The *Stronictwo Tvolodovid* [phonetic], that means the peasants' party, the same was in the Jewish life. The Jewish Committee was organized from the Jewish Communists, from the Bundists, and from the Zionist organization. Only the Zionist organization, they was suppressed in their activity. The most part, the most activity and the most strength was in the hand from the Jewish Communists. And they was very eager to keep the Jewish

people together to make from that Niederschlesien a Jewish country. And that the Jewish leaders in Reichbach and in Breslau, in Wroclaw, have more to say in managing the provinces than the Polish government. It was amazing. And they started to stabilize. We started to stabilize the Jewish life. There started to be Jewish theaters, started to be Jewish schools.

HR: Was there a rabbi after you came?

HS: There start to be rabbis.

HR: [unclear].

HS: It's amazing, it's...

HR: Survivors.

HS: It's amazing that the Germans didn't destroy the Jewish cemeteries in their territory. In Reichbach, in Reichenbach, was a old Jewish cemetery not destroyed. Was a small *shul*, and was a small house from the Jewish *Gemeinde*, from the Jewish *Kehillah*. Like...

HR: The society...

HS: Correct, what it was before. And the Jewish Committee took over this and they have over there the headquarter. And I remember and comes the High Holidays. There was a Jewish synagogue. And plenty of people, my mother went over there. And they was praying. And the first time since--when we come it was Passover time, in April--the first time for so many years we was getting *matzahs*. The *matzahs*, all *matzahs* was coming from the United States. And all the thing what's involved with the Passover holiday. And it was so remarkable with that weather, with that sun, and with this, and we was believing that it will be a Jewish life.

HR: Did you have a *seder* that first year?

HS: We had a communal *seder*. They organize in the Jewish Committee a *seder*. And now it not was such a ritual *seder*, just for remembrance and for bringing this back. And being in that town, we started to catch up with our life. We start to look again how I say for friends and for relatives. And our all life activity was only involved to find out who is alive, who survived and this. Because plenty Jewish from the concentration camp was in the last day of war sent to Norwegian and sent to Sweden. And everybody was believing maybe...

HR: Family.

HS: Maybe. No, nobody was survived from us. Nobody survived from our what we left in the in Warta from our relatives. Nobody survived. We have only news that two girls was alive maybe a two weeks before liberation. And they couldn't, and they died, right. Mine two cousins what I had the cousins, three cousins, what that mother permit them to take with us...

HR: Yes.

HS: They come to Russia. Now, they didn't want to stay one day in Poland. They went to Germany. Through the Jewish Committee we find out about them and we get in

contact with them. We find out that, somebody told us that the other relative what we took them out, is somewhere around, in Giambitsa [phonetic] and some in Kolonitsa, you know, in such small towns around. So I decided to go to look for them. And the traveling at that time was very terrible, like in the war time. There was no tickets. We just go in in a train and if you have muscles you go in. If you can't, they throw you out. And I was going from town to town to look for them, to find the mother. I was sleeping in the railroad station in such rooms and always with the gun, because they was killing every day and every night, constant killing of Jewish people killing and constant killing of Russians. I remember I was laying in a station, in a room. I barricade myself with a chair at the door. Not the barricade, just to hear if somebody goes in. And I hear somebody moves the door I just prepare my gun. And somebody put a light in mine eyes and I put a gun in his face. He walked out and I didn't say nothing. I just give a episode, you know, how...

HR: How it would work.

HS: How it was. And until and I find in a small town in Zmijowiska I find them through the Jewish Committee that family that was living.

HR: These were your cousins?

HS: Not the cousins.

HR: The cousins that...

HS: The other family.

HR: The other family.

HS: Right. It's amazing, when I came over there I was in Russian clothing, you know. I, and I come over there. They didn't recognize me. And I come in to that apartment to them and they are looking. And she say, and I hear she talked to him in Russian, "*Shtom hotchet etteh choloviyak.*" [phonetic] And they look on me, they look on me, you know, till their uncle say, "Are you Henry?" They didn't recognize me I was so changed. And can you imagine how that, what happening, you know?

HR: The reunion.

HS: The yelling, the crying and this and that, you know? And this was a small town. And I told them, "We will take them to the bigger town, to-

Tape seventeen, side one:

HS: My sister was already working, a bookkeeper in a factory. And we find that man what I saved once on the streets what I talking and how, you have that. And mine sister arranged him to be, to work in the factory. And we took a truck from that factory. And we went to bring up. I am telling such things that in American life doesn't mean nothing. Now in that time to take a truck and to be able, it was a whole, it's like to go now to the moon. And we brought him over to our town. And they took over a apartment. Was plenty apartments around to take. And they was living over there. Why I want to say this? Because later in that apartment by them, I married my wife.

HR: Ah!

HS: And we maked a collective marriage. Their daughter married to one, and so we maked a two weddings...

HR: In one.

HS: In one, in one apartment, because it was a little complicated with a rabbi, with everything. So we decided to make them over there. Working, I have to say what I was doing in that *Bursa* with the youth from the concentration camps. We, I had a terrible accident. One night a Polish or a German band attacked us, with machine guns. And they want...

HR: And the children?

HS: And they want to kill us. This was a combination action, because they want to make such instability that people start to run away from the provinces, because they was against that Polish people or Jewish people should be in that province. No, I, being a soldier, I was afraid from the beginning such things will happen, and I prepared myself. We had weapons. We had a machine gun. We had guns, everything. And soon at night, and we was very well barricaded. They only can storm us. So when they attacked us and they say they are the police, and I say, "Police can't come in at night. The police had nothing to do in the school at night." As soon I talk to him from the upstairs they shoot to me upstairs. So I saw that this is right away a attack. I was prepared for this. We had a few soldiers. They mobilized. We took positions and the children was instructed just to lay down on the floor. And we had a whole battle with them. And in the beginning my wife was a little panicky, scaring and until I say, "Shirley, don't be scared. Just give me the," and later she started to feed me...

HR: The ammunition.

HS: The ammunition, and everything was okay, until I succeeded to throw in in a, down, I saw where they're hiding, I throw down a grenade. And I hear yelling in Polish, "*Jesus Maria!*" You know? And one was wounded. And they start to retreat, by that sound of the battle, factories what was not far away. And the Russian soldiers was not far away. They start to come in with the, on the sound of the battle. This was forcing them to retreat. In the morning when we come down we saw a, on the fields blood signs and blooded

clothing, and we saw that this was a attack from that band. Starting from this we decided to, who wants to go to, on the other side to Czechoslovakia and to the Jewish camps before it was--there was active fighting not to let the people go. And now half an hour, *Bursa* was star--run away, the children run away on the other side. And this was amazing, you can see over there on the outskirts of the city, in the evening coming in trucks. And the Jewish people just coming up and going across the border, going to the DP camps. And from there they was going to, over to Palestine if they could. If not they was going to Italy or they're going toward Cyprus.

After that episode, I decided that I no want to live in the same apartment, in the same house. So we took over a apartment. And I was only sleeping when I have to be over there and we had our own apartment in a different street. I was very against what they want to, that the Jewish Communists start to so put on their pressure on the Jewish population and on the Jewish boys that they no permit democratic life. And when they decided to take in in the *Bursa* Polish gentile boys, I was very against of this. I say, "This is a Jewish school for Jewish children, supported by Jewish money from America. And I no believe that they should be integrated with the Polish boys. The Polish gentile boys, if they need help, they have a whole government and they have a whole Polish society that supports." Their intention was from the Jewish communists to interwove so this that shouldn't be a strict Jewish life. Should be a life mixed up with the Polish population. Not understanding that the Polish population are rejecting us. They no want to tolerate us. So, I start with them a little a confrontation. And I say, "I am not agreeing with that policy." And I say, "I intend to go, I intend to quit that job. I am not interested in that job. Because it's against my morality." So they come up with a other idea. They, I should take over a job to protect the Jewish interests in the line of the Jewish guild. You know, what is a guild?

HR: A guild? Yeah.

HS: Yeah? Carpenters and...

HR: I think, yes.

HS: ...shoemakers. By Polish law, you have to be a master, you have to go through, this is a medieval law, later a little modified and more modern. Now still you have to make the test. You have to have a diploma and so forth and so forth. The Polish, the people in the Polish guild was fighting the Jewish how do they call the people?

HR: They didn't want you to belong to that.

HS: They know, you see, if you have a diploma, or you show that you are a shoemaker or you're a carpenter or you're a tailor, you can take over a store in the new--and get rich. A baker with flour or everything. A shoemaker with leathers and everything he can take over. So they made a issue that the Polish Jewish what come back from Russia, they have no documents.

HR: And they can't join the guild.

HS: And they can't join. And without this you can't take over a apartment. So, they decided that I should go take a job in that administration and fight for the Jewish

rights. I liked, to fight for the Jewish rights I liked the idea, because I was very unhappy with what's going on in the Jewish *Bursa*. And I say, "Okay, I will try to take over the job." I come over. In Reichbach it was *Zwyozeck Cechov*. [phonetic] They call it a *cech*, the guild in Poland calls that *cech*. I come in over there. It was a really nest of anti-Jewish and anti-Polish activity. Anti-democratic activity, a nest from the Polish underground, from the reactionary Polish underground from the *Armja Krajowa*. I come over there and I have a official, I have the job from a secretary. And they didn't want to tolerate me. They didn't want to accept me, until I just, you see I was already experiencing such difficulty. I just didn't pay attention. Then we start to do my job. I start to learn what it is. I never saw this. First of all I start to study the Polish industrial law, on what is based this everything. And I studied this from A to Z, like in Russia I studied what I have to study to know exactly what I am talking about.

HR: Like you did in the fire department.

HS: Correct, exactly what I am talking what the administra-, what is the structure from this *Cechen* how this works, who can belong, and how he can belong. And I find out reading that *Przemyslawiec prawo*, industrial law, there is a article 146 what gives a dispense to a person what can show that he had documents. There is such a article. There is some situations that a person can show, you know, a reason, a fire, a reason destruction, a reason of war. So I make from this a base. And the article 146 tell you what you should do. You can bring two witnesses so they can swear that he, they know him from Lemberg, from L'vov that he have a store and he have a this and this and that. Or you have a piece of paper showing where is written, "He is a carpenter." It's already a document. Or you can show from Russia that he was working in an *arter* [phonetic], in a cooperative. This is already a basis that we can talk about. And first of all you can make him a test. I saw already that I am in a right way. I went to Breslau. This was the state town. And to a Dr. Voltsky, a whole theoretical, you know? And we start to discuss about Jewish. He say, "Oh they are, now they have no papers and they this or that." And what is that article *Magister Volsky*. A *Magister*, you know what's a *Magister*? It's a whole title, with all the *przechpana* [phonetic], with the whole thing, you know. And I come in like a small Jewish boy, you know? And he look it over and say, "What is this law?" And so I guess he never studied that law.

HR: Ah!

HS: And he study, he say, "You know, you're right?" I say, "I know that I am right." And not only by law I can take the testimony from witnesses. You no have to go to somebody. If I have the job, a secretary from this unit, from the *Cechen*, I can take testimony from people. So, and I changed the whole climate. And they start to be, a Polak is so when you hit him on his head he start to be [unclear]. And I say, "Starting from now, no more illegal meetings should be here. Every meeting should be registered by the government." And they was very afraid. This was a counterrevolution over there, you know. And I say, "No more meetings. Every meeting you have to be registered." And I

went to the Jewish Committee. I say this and this. And people start to come in. And hundreds of people I make out papers for them, and they start to be carpenters and took over the jobs and they start to be rich. And I took, and it was, in that time I was already married and my daughter was born, in 1948. And I start to be again a tremendous figure, you know, in that town, because the shoemakers and the carpenters, they was so many. And they was very influential. Because it's in such a society where is no enough shoes, where is no enough clothing.

HS: Right.

HR: A shoemaker in this is right away a rich man. And it start to go everything okay. And I start to be famous. And they come to me and the opposite. And they start already involve me in their private life. If he have trouble with his wife, she say, "I will go to Henry." I say, "Well, boys, don't make from me a god. I am not a god and I no want to interfere in your private things, you know?" Just, and I was dealing this with them.

Now, what was wrong? The wrong was that I saw that there will be no Jewish life in Poland. I saw that the Polish people will not tolerate us. Even the Polish government doesn't tolerate us. Only the Jewish part, the Jewish Communistic part, artificial, want the whole back, freeze it, you know, in that life. They the Polish people they want that the all Jewish people emigrate, and finish with that Jewish problem. Only that the Jewish *Yevseksia* [phonetic], the Jewish part from the Communistic Party, they artificial was holding back everything. And they was making such what they learned very fast in Russia. Being such dictators, such small Stalins, you know? The former shoemakers, the former carpenters, they start to, they had big jobs, and they start to dictate their will to the, you know? When they come, let's see, from that Central Committee a Shimon Zacharias and he start to talk like Stalin with a pipe in his mouth, slowly every word, you know? And they start to dictate, suppress the other people, suppress the other organizations, to suppress the Zionist organizations, and utilizing the money what they're getting from the United States. Because the all, you see, the all cooperatives, everything was only from the, made from Jewish money what comes from the United States. The Jewish people have no to do work, so they organize cooperatives with the Jewish money from America and they was shoemakers and they was carpenters, and they was brush makers. And they was, the first like Socialist way, with capitalistic money, with American money.

HS: Money.

HR: This was the paradox. And they start to be very, the life start to be very nasty more in that Russian way, because Poland, being a coalition in government, the Communistic part started to push out the other. They make let's see a plebiscite. You know what's a plebiscite means? Or we should have such a government. Or we should accept that Mikolaichik. Mikolaichik was from London. Or we should want the return the *Zhemia Prowincja*; means the western provinces. So, and they was falsifying, they was forcing us to go three times to vote for the government, not to let the other people vote, you know, the everything was falsified. And the Russian Army what was occupying this, they was,

they're keeping their power only with the power from the Russian Army. And the Russian soldiers was really occupiers. They have closed streets where they was doing, they was robbing and killing people, and they was destroying everything. What they couldn't take with them to Russia, they destroyed whole houses! They take pianos and they throw it down from the third floor. They take, they took, let's see, bathtubs. Everything they was destroying, you know? And their behavior was like a occupation power. And the government throw out the Polish democratic part. They unplaced from the Rola Zhimerski what was the defense minister. They put in Rokosovski, a Russian Polish marshal. You didn't hear from Rokosovski that. And they Russified so in Poland. And the Jewish Communists was going in their way. How...

HS: It's okay.

HR: Yeah.

HS: Do you think it's working good? [tape off then on] Well, being already a little established over there, I decided to go back to Kalisz to see what it is, and to close that historical around what I make in my life.

HR: Finish the circle.

HS: Finish the circle, because my circle was going out to the east...

HR: And then coming back.

HS: And coming back to the west. Because we are already in the west from Poland. And I went back to Kalisz by myself, to look over the city. And in Kalisz I find one of my friends. And I find, and there was maybe 100 people.

HR: Jews?

HS: Jews, living. For protection, most live in one house. Most of the people was living in one house.

HR: 100 people?

HS: Yes. And they was living on the Marianska Street. And the Jews, the Kalisz Association from America was organizing a cooperative from tailors in our town where the people was working. The town was unrecognizable. The, all the Jewish Quarter what was where the Jewish, was everything destroyed, everything razed. The river was going through to that Jewish Quarter was closed out with everything, with the synagogue, with the hospital, what they bulldoze it, and they throw that all refuse in the...

HR: River?

HS: In the river, and make out the river.

HR: And redirected the river?

HS: And redirected the river. And when you come over there--I was born over there--you couldn't recognize in what part, where are you. This was not like mine town. You no recognize nothing what was involved with Jewish life.

HR: Do you mean they took the entire ghetto...

HS: Entire...

HR: Area?

HS: Jewish...

HR: Area.

HS: Area.

HR: And...

HS: Bulldoze it, clean it up, and with everything, they put everything in that river, closed that river. It's unrecognizable. And they make over there a park and other things.

HR: Oh, all gone.

HS: And it's all gone.

HR: It's as if it never existed.

HS: Not either it's impossible to recognize. If you was born over there you wouldn't recognize that part. The other parts was recognizable, you know, where we was living in that, we was living in a Polish neighborhood. A half from our house was standing.

HR: When your father had the...

HS: Correct.

HR: The butcher shop.

HS: Right. No, the butcher shop he had...

HR: Was in the other...

HS: Yeah. Now we, where we was living. And over there I told you before when the Polaks retreat, they explode a bridge near us. And a half house was destroyed. So this part was destroyed. Now only I find the spot where we bury our jewelry.

HR: Did you find it?

HS: Correct.

HR: Ah!

HS: I find that part. I dig it out.

HR: How deep did you put it in there?

HS: I no remember how deep.

HR: But you found it.

HS: Now I find it.

HR: How, what was the way that you recognized where?

HS: I, that our, that house, half a part was standing.

HR: Yeah?

HS: And that corner wasn't standing. You know, I make mine *orientier* [orientation] and I dig out over there. Yes. And I was looking in that town. I went to mine former principal from the school. He was living still in that well, and I was very, he was very unhappy with the Polish reality. He was a very big Polish patriot from before-- Pamrovchovski. I saw a few Polish friends what I was with them in the school.

HR: Non-Jews?

HS: Non-Jews. A few was very pro-government. They was working for the government with the secret police. And a few was anti-government. They didn't want to

even look on me. They saw me from far away. They just even didn't talk to me. I went to my old house where we was living in the beginning where I was born. Was no Jew left and the all apartments taken over by the *goyim*. Was, I recognize a few tenants, a few neighbors. One was a big in the Socialist Party before, Sheppan, and he say he no like what's going on. And I went to the cemetery to see where I went through with that...

HR: That new Jewish cemetery.

HS: ...with that shooting, correct. And...

HR: It was there still?

HS: Still was there. Still was the bullet holes. Everything was there. The wall was there where the rabbi was...

HR: And the graves were there?

HS: Nothing was touched. And the grave was there. And I went to the Polish, I went to the city hall and I explained where is the mass grave. I measured, and so you no see that it's a mass grave over there. I measured just from that small mausoleum what is standing, and we put a stone over there on this. Being in Kalisz, I find out, I intend to take back our property what, not ours, no, from our relative in the small town in Warta. Coming again, say coming and going, it's a very complicated story with the train over there. And from there I have a train to Sieradz where my mother was born. No Jew, not one Jew. And that Sieradz was 85% Jewish.

HR: So what did they do about property return there? Did people come to get it back?

HS: Yeah. And I, from that town, from Sieradz, I have to take a bus. Goes one the bus to Warta, to a very small town. And maybe three or four streets in the whole town. I come to that town. There was still there a *Burgermeister*, that is the mayor, always a friend from before the war, Shimon. He have a Jewish wife. He hide there by the Germans, from the Rothschilds. I was sleeping by them. I was hiding by them, because there is one bus comes in the morning and goes away 3:00. And after 3:00 you're cut off over there. And after 3:00 bands are coming from the forest, illegal. They're taking over the town at night, cutting off the telephone wires and they have the bus in the city, and making trials who is good and he is no good. And they, and it was coming in, eighteen people come back in the beginning to that town. They slaughtered all eighteen boys.

HR: Jews came back?

HS: Right.

HR: And the Polish people killed them?

HS: They slaughtered, the bands what come from the forest, they slaughtered them all. And he show me where they was laying. And when they was laying already dead, they took all the shoes, the clothing, you know? That Shimon told me that story. And he told me, "There is a possibility the band will come at night too. And this is a possibility that they saw you walking in the street."

HR: My.

HS: "So, I tell you where you have to go to hide under the roof." How do you call this?

HR: Like an attic.

HS: In the attic. And I was already scared. I want to go back and it was already too late, you know? And at night the band come, and I went to the attic. But they didn't look for me. No they, this was a normal occurrence. They come at night. They steal everything. They take food, bread and everything. If something goes wrong they make a trial to judge you, and they shoot you, you know? This is a band, they know who is the band is, everything. *Malolepsheh* [phonetic]. Only the government still didn't have power to do something against them. The same bands, you know, they're stopping trains, and taking out the Russians, and they're killing them.

HR: Oh my God.

HS: Yeah. So, finding out about that house I could take over three houses over there, from my relatives. One was, I saw the place where they make a picture, when they send us a picture to Cherepovetz with the ghetto star, he show me where the picture is. They show me where they hanged our relative. He was the head from the Jewish ghetto. The German forced the Jewish people to hang him. Right. So and I went to that Naman, to that *Notaria* what I told you, and he took out the all books, all binded in, no books, leather books. And we find over there our ancestry maybe five, six hundred years. Not only, "They say that you have fields, land, too belong," he say, "to your family." They was like farmers before. So I took out the all papers. With the whole papers I went to Sieradz and I hired a lawyer. The lawyer was named Yuzek Shebaynski. This I remember too, a devil, a bandit. And he say, "You just sell the house or do what you want and just get, go out from here because you will be dead."

HR: Yes, yes.

HS: This is what he told me, these words. And I was in that courthouse. And they called, "Skorrupa." And imagine, they called "Skorrupa," three Polish peasants get up. Their name is Skorrupa too. This is a Polish popular name, you know? So, I did everything with that Shebaynski and I make the all papers. And I took back a house. And he was the broker and he was selling. And I say, "I no want to see." I took the money. With this money I married the sister, mine sister.

HR: Oh.

HS: Yeah. She married, yes.

HR: She found, who did she marry, Mr. Skorr?

HS: She married a, too a refugee.

HR: She found somebody?

HS: Yes, and, right. And this was mine, I didn't want to get married first, you know? Because it's our as a, the daughter have to go get married first. No, it's a, such a abnormal situation was. And my wife want to get married, you know? And so this happened. Now, I come back to, from Kalisz I come back to Reichbach. And I, and it

started to be very tight, my life, you know? Why? Because I didn't want to work in their line, in the Communistic line. I saw the wrong things, the terrible wrong things what they're doing. And not only things. They want to force me that I should take over the leadership in the town. Forcing me, Russian style. On a meeting I say, "This never will happen. I no want this and it's too much for me. You can't force me." And in that time come a commission from Wa-

Tape seventeen, side two:

HS: ...go in their line. And I saw the wrong thing what they are doing. They're depressing the people that they shouldn't leave Poland. And it was already start now in the activity, the fights in Palestine. We have already the U.N. decision about dividing Palestine between Israel and the Arabs. And we have mass jubilation on the street. And no, they didn't permit to have official celebrations, organized. The Polish government, the Polish people, was more positive to creating a Jewish country than the Jewish Communists in Poland. And they start to be very repressive because they are afraid to lose their job. And they was towing the line from the Stalinistic line. What they say, they was doing, and they was actively start to repressing people. If somebody wants to emigrate, if somebody wants to do to put out his property or something, they actively, through the *NKVD*, through the Polish *Urzad Bezpieczenstwa*²⁵, they started to harass him. How I know? They was coming to me from the *UB*, on the position what I have in the guild association, ask me questions about this guy, about the other guy. And I just tried to give him neutral answers. And as soon they leave me, I just called that guy and I say, "You know this and this and this can happen from them. You have to escape tonight." And people was leaving everything--houses with property, with everything--and just escaping because they was in danger from arresting. It's clear that in such a atmosphere you can't exist long, or you're in danger from being arrested. And we start to toeing a very delicate line. So when they come from Warsaw looking for this, and I was a part from, they interview me, and so I utilized this. They called me, they send me a telegram calling me to the Warsaw, to *Ministerium*, like the State Department. So with this, having a telegram, I say, "I am leaving that job because I am going to Warsaw." I know, and they already, you see, the former shoemakers and the tailors, they're so big heroes, how long they are in their turf, you see they're really [unclear]. You know, they're not educated people. They just build with their hate. They was in prisons before the war for justice and for freedom. Soon they have the power, they no want to give you justice and freedom. They're just turning around and they start to be [unclear] just like the other side. So, utilizing this, I have to utilize, you see, already having that experience, that Russian experience, you have to see what the moment is bringing. So I say, "I can't work more here. I have to go to Warsaw for a interview." They right away released me, because they was afraid of Warsaw.

Coming to Warsaw, in the *Alaya Shuka* [phonetic] where it was once the Gestapo, and they give me a interview. And in the end they want to send me to Polish Embassy in Sweden, with one condition. My wife and my child should be left in Poland. And second, I should give them a answer why my sister left for Israel. I say, "Why my sister left for Israel? My sister left for Israel because this is the official Polish policy. There is a Jewish country."

²⁵Polish Secret Police (MBP)

HR: Go.

HS: "And they let you go. And she went to Israel." "And what do you say?" I say, "This is her private business." I know already what they think. And I, soon I come out from that interview I say, "Shirley, it's time that we leave, because I will be imprisoned. Sooner or later I will be imprisoned." Now was the question how to go out from Poland. I can't go out from Poland. They will no let me. They will arrest me. So again I have to utilize the Polish reality. In my town already I was so big, you know? I was a, my word was a, I could go into any [unclear] and straighten out everything what I want. I was, I forgot to tell you, I went to the Internal Revenue. They was harassing the Jewish shoemakers and this, harassing to making more money and I say, "Does the Jew carpenter what have one person making more money than the Gentile?" I say, "This is illegal what you're doing." And I just clamped them down too. I say, "If he makes, the other makes too. Or we both no make." So they was afraid of me too. Utilizing this, I could register to go to Israel in my town. I forgot to tell you, because I was a representative from the government. Let's see, if a tailor want to go to Israel, he have a sewing machine and other thing, I have to analyze the machine and I have to give the okay. The Jewish activists want that I shouldn't give okays. I say, "Why shouldn't I give okays? Why shouldn't a person who goes out legal, permitted by the government, shouldn't take out this to make a living over there?" So I saw I am in collision course with them.

So I decided to go to Israel nor in my own way, not through my town because they would arrest me. They have thousand ways how to arrest me. I went to Kalisz. I register myself in Kalisz. And from Kalisz I went to Lodz. I register myself in Lodz. And from Lodz I went to Poznan. I register myself in Poznan. Because there is a law in Polish police. If I registered over there, from Poznan they send you a copy to that town. From Kalisz they send you a copy. And so, I figure out that sending around papers will so confuse them they will not know where I am and how I am. And second, I saw the Polaks are not so eager to prosecute me. They want their Jews go out. The danger is only with the Jewish activists. So, and I was doing. I was so, I registered myself. I was accepted. And now they couldn't find me. I come home at night, illegal. And sleeping upstairs in the morning, three people come from the Polish *NKVD*, knocking in the door. I took out my gun. I was sitting near it because I no, I didn't want to surrender myself. They're knocking on the door. My wife opens, and she started to cry. She was afraid. She know what will happen. So, they say, "Why are you crying? What, your husband leave you? So don't cry. You're a young woman. You'll find a husband."

HR: And she say, "Yes, my husband..." [laughing] They gave her a...

HS: They gave her a reason. "My husband leave me," and this and that. Okay. And so I know, I know already how narrow is. Either when I was calling on the phone, in Poland you have to call to the post office, and the post office is calling that person. Let's see for 3:00 somebody will call you. Is not that. So, when I was calling to the post office, I call her not my wife, my mother, to confuse them. So my mother say when I was going

in, people was standing and listening. So narrow was. So, and utilizing that I have that document I have to go to Warsaw, because you have to prepare a whole document a whole papers that you no owe taxes, that you no destroyed your apartment, that you no this and that, you know? And this you have to go to fill it out. I utilized this that I go to Warsaw, taking with that paper that I no this and I no that. And they was giving me. This wasn't in their mind that I should go to Israel. I was too big that they should suspect me. So when I took all clothing and everything, with the train, we even trained our daughter when she was going out to play with the children, to say that we are going to Warsaw. And she comes back, "Right, Daddy? We're going to Warsaw." Such a *momzer*²⁶, you know? So, and we took everything out. We go by train. We took everything to Kalisz. Like I take, you see? And from Kalisz I took everything to Lodz. This was a entire different climate. And in Lodz and in Kalisz I'm already a dirty Jew. They want me to get rid of it. I'm no more a big shot. I am no more this. I am no more Henry Skorrupa. I am only a ordinary Jew what goes away to Israel. And this was accepted. In that time, you see, I had already plenty money. I want to buy, I hear that in Poland it doesn't, in Israel, is a shortage of housing. And it was a terrible shortage. I want to buy a prefabricated...

HR: House?

HS: House. And for money you can send out. Through Sweden it was a whole. In that time, when I was going from Kalisz to Lodz, to finish my registration, there was a devaluation of the money. Mine whole money, was worth 100 was worth 1.

HR: Oh God.

HS: And not only this. And everything what was 1 is increased to 3. Let's see your money is decreased by 100, but the bread is increased by 3. This was such a terrible shock, such a terrible shock. And we was in the trains and we see people--something so wild. Was a terrible shock. Now I say, "Shirley, we wasn't born with money. We will [unclear]." Okay. we, what we, and you have to stay in line to change the money. And they change you only--for us it was such a horror it was, you know? Such this. And we come to Lodz. In Lodz you give your all clothing. This is the destination. Kalisz was belonging to Lodz district. Now you have to go to Warsaw to take the passport. And in Warsaw it was the danger that somebody will see me.

HR: See you, yes.

HS: Do you understand?

HR: Yeah.

HS: So, I went with mine, I met my mother and my brother in Kalisz. I didn't want to go back to Kalisz. And I went with them to Warsaw.

HR: And your wife and daughter?

HS: No, no. They was left. No, not to go. To take out the documents, the passports.

²⁶Used as a term of endearment.

HR: Oh, yeah.

HS: I went with them, and if something, somebody will see me, this was, I go only to make papers for them. "They want to go away." Was, I can't force them not to go away, right? And, I'm telling you, and we come again on the Targova Street. Not far where was the Jewish Committee was the emigration office, with that all horror how they treat Jewish people, you know? They treat the Jewish people like cattle. "Don't go here and don't go down." And they put a number and with a this. And we submit our papers. And we was waiting and I was just only looking that somebody from the big shots they no see me, you know? Thanks God nobody see me. Was only a other mistake. My mother forget one piece of paper to submit. And this was so dangerous that, that submitting different papers you'll get different dates.

HR: Oh.

HS: It can be they have to travel a week before.

HR: They sure...

HS: Yeah, you see, this is not a normal country like United States. This is Poland where you make so. You have not where to argue, because you no want to argue. And you no argue with a government worker in Poland, you know? You no argue with power. So, I sent them back to bring that paper. And I was sleeping over there somewhere during these 48 hours until you reach back and forth. And they were so, you know, in such a terrible distress. I was afraid to the, you know, I was afraid until Austria, that they, even in Czechoslovakia I was afraid they will take me off from the train. You know, you're living, it's enough only somebody gives you a call and they take you off. Your family is going...

HR: And you're finished.

HS: And you are finished. Because in that time, if you will go back to the history, was such a upheaval of Russian despotism. This was a time when they was fighting Tito. They was fine when they was fighting Morayco [phonetic] and this is a fine, in the time when in Czechoslovakia how it was the name what they hanged him, Rudolf [phonetic]? They tell them, "These are dirty Zionists." And his wife was forced to sign a paper in the newspaper, "Thank you to the Czechish government for killing such a dirty dog." Not only do they kill, you know, you have to say, you praised them.

HR: Thank you for killing.

HS: That's right. So, you see, and this was such a terrible epoch. And I was in this, being afraid that I will be called. Now again, you know, God have a constantly, until now, a umbrella above me. You know, He--how this everything worked together? I get the papers. I manage to make them with them. I was arrested on the border for something different. I have too much clothing. Clothing for my daughter and they say, "You have to have rubber boots." And you have to have, because is so much rain in, over there, and so much dirt over there, you know? And on the *Zabkowice*, we come to the border, he say that, "Why you pushing each other like in a Jewish synagogue?" And this, you know, I couldn't stand it. I say, "What are you talking?" I say, "You're a Polish this way talking?"

You're, how are you talking against the Jews?" And since that time, when I went through with this, he was watching me. And he, what I have too much clothing. Not only that he confiscated. He put a fine on this. And I have no more the money. Before you're going in to put in, giving away the clothing, you have to surrender your Polish money. And I have my Russian clothing. He say, "That Russian clothing you can't take with you." I say, "It's not your clothing. It's the Russian clothing I earned with blood." He say, "Put this on!" And I have to put this on. I have to walk around in Russian clothing, with the medals, with everything. And I have to go to people, a half a train was already checked. They take wagons. If a car is checked, they put him on the zone what is already, doesn't belong to Poland. So, when we was checked, I was arrested because I have to pay the fine. I have no more money. They permit me with a soldier with a rifle to go to that train what is not checked yet, to go to collect money by people. And to eternal shame there was leaders from the Israeli government what should smooth it out. And he was going in in the train and collecting from every, I was giving money too if something happened such a occasion. He disappeared.

HR: Oh!

HS: He disappeared with the money. So I have to go to people to collect the money, to strange people, and promising, "When we come to Israel I will pay you back. Because if no I will be arrested." And you know what this means, yeah, my God!

HR: So they gave you the money?

HS: People give me, strange people give me money. And I collect that money and give him and they released me. You see, because my family was already on that part...

HR: That was not going.

HS: Went through. You know, and such, yeah. This was in Zabkowice. And still I was afraid that they will arrest me. There was people what was going, and saying, "What you are doing here?" they ask me. I say, "I'm going with my family." I just, [unclear], you know? They couldn't imagine that I will go to Israel leaving Poland. And being on the train already, on the other side, they say, "You're still here?" "Yes, I'm still. I'm going!" And I was still under pressure, still in Czechoslovakia I was afraid they will take us, they will take me down from there. Until we come to Austria, the whole affair, the whole episode is finished, you see, with Poland. So, this was the *Megillah* Poland. I make it a little shorter that we should finish it. And we left everything in Poland. We left our culture in Poland. We left our life in Poland, you know? And we was pushed out. The Polish people, they never accept us after the war. We wasn't either tolerated. When we go, let's say, to Warsaw, we took a big job, you have to change your name how I told you. Mine relatives, my friends, mine relative he's now in Israel--they throw him out in 1956--he was a big shot. His name was Skorrupinski. Not Skorrupa, Skorrupinski. His real name was Blitzblau. Now to blend in with the Polaks, not to show that a Jew is a leader in Poland, they have to Polanize the name.

HR: He still stayed in Poland, this...

HS: No. In 1956...

HR: Oh, they threw him out. You said that.

HS: You know, if you remember in 1956 what a big upheaval against Russia in Poland. And Golmuka was arrested in Poland that he is close to Tito. When Golmuka come back to the power, and when they want to change the government the first thing what they was doing, they was throwing out all Jewish officials from the leadership. They was heartbroken. They was committing suicide. I say, "This is only the consequence from your behavior. We no belong more to them. Either when they force you to change your name is a sign you no belong to them." And they were saying only that the Jews brought the Russians back, the Jews brought the Communism back, and before this, the Jew is destroying again Poland. Before they was saying the Jews was robbing Poland. After the war they was saying that the Jew is destroying Poland for bringing Communism. Now even by Solidarity was developed a sign from the antisemitism, a ferment in Poland, antisemitism without Jews. There is the fact of no Jews in Poland. So, I believe it is, we will finish our...

HR: Yeah, and you went you arrived, you had an unfateful trip to Israel?

HS: Well, now we have a whole, now with Israel...

HR: Your trip to Israel was okay, everything at the time?

HS: Yeah, the trip to Israel was okay, until Italy. In Italy my child started to get sick--scarlatina. And in Europe it's a very...

HR: Serious.

HS: A very serious illness. And we was on a ship coming on a ship *Gallila*. And we was coming...

HR: What year is this? 19-...

HS: 1950, end of 1950.

HR: 1950.

HS: Yeah. It was the mass emigration. And when we was traveling through Europe we was coming from the Austria to Italy. From Italy we took the ship *Venezia*. The behavior from the Israeli leadership wasn't so correct. Why it wasn't so correct? They took away from ours the documents. They was afraid that we will run away, that we will just utilize that chance that we can leave Poland, and from just being [unclear] we will go away from the train, like the Russian emigrants now going away. So they keep our passports. So the fact that we couldn't go out from the train, we was under police guard, not being able to go out from the trains. Well, we intend to go to Israel. And for us wasn't this no, you know, and their behavior was a little not so nice. When we come to Italy, we saw that ship, we was very happy, you know, to see the Jewish sailors, with that everything. And it was a ship, a tremendous ship. Now we was living like in a all people all together in the, you know, it wasn't cabins. How do you call it, like steerage?

HR: Like steerage, yes.

HS: That's correct. In that time everybody have a narrow bed where to sleep. In that time our child start to get sick. She was constantly so very happy, very happy, playing around. I remember she was playing with the sailors on the deck. And later she started to be so subdued, you know, and too she started to get temperature and she started to get sick. And the people over there, we had very nice Czechish neighbors. They tried to, and we was so heartbroken, you know? We was very afraid.

HR: Sure.

HS: And a very bad experience. They stole on the ship from us food. You know, they was, in Poland they was saying, "In Israel you're dying for hunger. You have no food whatsoever." So everybody started to make salamis, dried salamis, and to prepare margarine and all kind of things. And we was carrying this in a very primitive way, in such pots. And it's very hot. So we tried to put this away in the stones where it will be cool. We come near Haifa to collect everything to our this. We see nothing is, everything is stolen. Well, the morality was very low. People, you know, there was all kind of people from all kind of countries coming in over there. We didn't make a big issue from it. No it was a little hurting us. When we come to Haifa, imagine our coming to near Israel, seeing Haifa. Haifa, this was a very beautiful view when you see it from the sea, the Mount Carmel, you know? And it was Friday night. And they was very in a hurry to...

HR: Make *Shabbas*.

HS: To make *Shabbas*. And come in a doctor on the ship and mine wife say--and he wanted to take the child away--so my wife say, "I no give away my child. I, you want to take the child to the hospital? You have to take me with my child. I am a nurse. And I will not give you the child." And there was a whole tug of war and she went with the child to *Shar Aliyah*. This is such a transit camp, a tremendous. In that time two, three thousand people was coming daily. It was such a small country, you know, it was very, it was very, very, you know, monumental. And later they loaded us on buses. Yeah, they later they loaded on buses. And we come to that *Shar Aliyah*. This is not far from Haifa. And we come this. And over there again the same like in Poland. People was waiting seeing who is coming. Standing around who is coming. And imagine so many people from Dzierzoniow, from Reichenbach, from my town. They saw me come. You know, "And *you* come to Israel?" You know, and they was so...

HR: Surprised.

HS: Surprised. They were so shocked. You know, and they were so, no, I would say they was positive. You see, they know me from a different way. They didn't know mine behind work what I was doing from protecting the Jews. They know me mostly from the official line what I have to tow a official line. Who have to know know my unofficial line. Who have to be protected, and how they were protected. Who have to be informed that something can happen, you know? So, when they give me a very nice greeting and we come to that *Shar Aliyah*. A very bad impression. It started to rain. And there is nobody to

talk, because it was Saturday over there. Is Saturday is Saturday. And they give me a, what they give me, how do you call it, to cover...

HR: A raincoat?

HS: Not a raincoat. In a bed. They give you your *clyzan* [phonetic], you know? They give you a cover. And what else they give you? They give you some, and they send us to a tent. The tents was full of water. It was raining. Only the beds was, you know? The bed was above the water. And in that tent was some other Jews from Morocco or from...

HR: Yeah.

HS: *Mizraim*, from all kinds, you know, and with such a bad behavior. And we was such in a bad mood not knowing where is my wife and where is my child, you know? No, I say, "Well, this is just the beginning." Just not...

HR: And how many years did you spend in Israel?

HS: In Israel I spent till 1958.

HR: From '50 to '58.

HS: Right.

HR: And then you came to America.

HS: And it was a very exciting period. I was maybe the closest thing what I feel home, that this is my home. You see, I have a certain illness developed in this. I never belonged to nothing, you know?

HR: But you belonged in Israel.

HS: I had the feelings, with a I had a very other negative points I had, you know? I in one country what I was not accepted for my abilities. The opposite. Mine abilities was a minus.

HR: In Israel?

HS: Yes. They didn't accept it. They didn't want to give me a job because I can do this and this and this. He say, "This will harm me." It's a whole story, I know. That man what won't accept in a job, "No, you're too qualified. I no need you." "So what's it mean you no need me? I am not your worker. I am work for Israel." "I no need you." This was the first thing that I was resented for mine ability. And not in Poland either, and not in Russia, and not in United States. Mine ability was always, people was accepted. This was the first thing, I give you a example. When I was accepted in that job, they have to send away that man to the army. The higher man, I went to him and I explained, "What is this? What kind of ferment is this?" He was a officer. I wanted to give mine abilities to the country. And he say, "Well, he is a special man." They took that man, they sent him to *Miliuim*. You know what's *Miliuim*? It's reserve duty. To be able to accept me, because he was physically against that I should be accepted. Because I know too much. I say, "What's it mean I know too much?" What I have to know? I just want to, if something wrong I want to help. He say, "We no need your help." You know? This was very shocking for me. And I was in constant conflict with these kind of people, because I didn't want more politically

affiliate with this or with that. I wanted to be a straight Jew--work for the country, take care of my family. And they-