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Title: Oral history interview with Norbert Wollheim

Interviewee: Norbert Wollheim

Interviewer: Linda G. Kuzmack

00:00:00

**Q: Would you please us your name and where and when you were born?**

A: Uh my name is Norbert Wolheim, born on April 26th, 1913 in Berlin, Germany.

**Q: Can you describe your childhood and young adulthood in Berlin?**

A: Well uh I...my family was a closely-knitted family and my father, bless his memory, was uh uh a commissioned salesman and he had uh developed his own business before World War I when he was called into service and the business then had to be closed. My mother, bless her memory, was a housewife and she took care of us during the time when my father went away to war. I was only one and a year year...one and a half years old when he left us to serve in France and in Russia with the German army. He was a member of the medical corps, and when he came back in 1919 or so, after the end of the war, my mother always told me that uh I had difficulties to to to greet him as a son because he had become a stranger to me because he had been away for so many years, and I grew up during the time of uh the Weimar (ph) Republic. I had an elder...an older sister. Uh our parents saw to it that we had a good education and though uh we we longed...belonged to a called...would call it here to the middle \_\_\_\_\_ families, uh and things were tough in economical terms uh after the war, during the inflation and later the Depression, but uh as I say our parents saw to it that we had a solid education, a solid uh general education and also a solid Jewish education, so we all...my sister and I, we went to a to a to a upper elementary schools to high schools. My sister to a Jewish high school. I was in a non- Jewish high school where in these years over there uh since I...we had not too many Jewish uh children, I met a certain amount of anti-Semitism but not uh militant anti-Semitism but it was you called more kind of cultural anti-Semitism but uh uh we managed.

**Q: Could you describe that a little bit, what you mean by cultural anti-Semitism?**

A: Well, that we were not included in the human...you had you had groups uh who who did certain things, uh whether be it in sport or socially, and so I was not invited. I was not invited so it I didn't suffer from that, especially not when I, after my bar mitzvah, I joined the Jewish Youth Movement and which asserted me of my Jewish values and my Jewish heritage because that was also somehow I would say a turn in my life because I became uh active in that group. I was thirteen, fourteen years old, and uh it was a group uh uh which was believing in the uh in in political and ideological terms in a synthesis between uh Germans and Jews. In other words it was a non-Zionist movement. The uh major value of this was that you met the people who had uh were devoted towards this idealism and hoping for a new world, for a better world, and the working \_\_\_\_\_\_ that go by working on yourself. That means in educational terms uh we http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.we we uh read. We were at this time influenced I remember by writings of Martin \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, studying the bible, studying our history...uh which as I say it was a very special value, but also uh uh by by trying to uh to make a contribution we did a lot of call it social work, which means taking care of needy uh uh children, especially uh uh children of our age in distress. We worked with them. We we we we invited them. We we tried to help them. We tried to alleviate their problems by just showing that we are there for them and for them, especially for children who came out from broken homes, who had who had uh a brush with the law and so on, so that we considered them as uh as people who had to be saved and this was part of our work between our contribution to try to help them, and uh this was I would say very important because there we established personal friendships, uh girls and boys and and uh we we we we followed the principle of Boy Scouts. We we we discovered nature. We were hiking. We stayed overnight in tents and we enjoyed the beauty of of of of nature. But at the same time we had very interesting evenings in discussions. People had to be prepared to deliver let us say a lecture about whatever the subject matter was, be it literature, philosophy, or whatever it is and Jewish and German kings or whatnot...general things, and that that was very, very attractive for all of us and and it gave us a certain sense of future responsibility. I would not say leadership but responsibility and therefore whatever...

**Q: We need you to stop...\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. They're not getting quite the angle they want. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ TECHNICAL CONVERSATION**

**Q: Linda is asking me to have you personalize what you're saying a little more, how you as an individual experienced what's happening. Uh did you have a good friend in the Movement? What your favorite experience that you recall from those days? Did you have a leadership role, rather than a general, more of a...from your own eyes is what they're looking for, and also uh if you could, more about your family, talk about that. Also I don't think you mentioned the name of the movement, so when the tape starts again, you probably need to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. TECHNICAL CONVERSATION**

**Q: Would you continue to describe the the youth movement, its name and what you personally got out of it?**

A: Well the name us first the called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which is the German-Jewish Youth uh uh Alliance and later called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the Association of Jewish Youth, and and uh what I got out of it was that uh I found people of my age and and my call it mentality and and uh http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.my ideals and we we we uh worked together. We met actually during the week almost twice or three times on evenings. We met over the weekends. We we were hiking uh in the area around Berlin which is beautiful and uh then as I say we uh we were really call it enriching ourselves with with knowledge which which came about by exchanging news, by by putting people to work let us say to to uh uh uh prepare a lecture or whatever it is in whatever the area was. At the same time I would not uh uh minimize the influence of my of my parents on on on me. We uh...my father, bless his memory, came from a very traditional home in in the eastern part of Germany, from Posen (ph). He had a very basic Jewish education and uh we were uh uh not orthodox but very conservative. Uh uh we observed the holy days certainly uh and uh especially during the holy days we saw the families and and friends and then uh my father and after the war as a veteran became active in the Jewish War Veterans uh uh movement, also doing social work for needy uh veterans and my mother, blessed memory, joined the auxiliaries there and so we all...and my sister certainly was also active, so we were all active in in one kind of Jewish affairs or the other, but there was one day or one evening when all this...when when we assembled around the uh the uh family table and that was Friday evening. Certainly having kiddish (ph) and having the Friday meal and having having the relatives uh who joined us, but mainly after that then people were dropping in for coffee and cake and then then the the events of the week and the events of the day were discussed and I got out a lot from that because first of all it was a wonderful family...family uh uh atmosphere in spite of all the difficulties we had around us because the diff...the economical situation in Germany during the inflation and then at the time of the Depression was not easy, but there was a warmth of a of a Jewish home which which I appreciated very much and I think formed me and and and therefore my my my rightful family and my my love for family, it came from there uh and which was held up in all as I say in all...in spite of all difficulties. My father worked hard to make a living uh but on Friday night as they say in that famous uh uh uh song, Yiddish song, that on Friday night every Jew is a king, and this this was reflected uh in the observance of the rituals and then also in in a social way and uh uh that was known to us so and there there were no invitations sent out. People just dropped in and we were happy to have them and shared with them whatever we had. Uh and uh in the youth movement, not only did we do uh uh intellectual work and educational work but certainly uh they developed ties with with friends and I must say that for for...over the years these ties became very...have remained very close, up to today. They are not too many people left survive, but some of them I I went to together to Auschwitz and I lost them, but uh especially I must say when I came for the first time on a on a visit to this...to America. I was sent by the United Jewish Appeal in 1946 to this country to bring the message of the survivors to to to the American Jewry. I met some of my old friends of that time and uh it was interesting that we could...as if nothing had happened in between. These ties were there again in spite of of of distance and and time. We got together again, irrespective of our changed political orientation in many a time or ideological orientation, but this tie...these personal ties were strong ties and have remained uh uh and I would say still today for ourselves, the old guard, we get together whenever we can and and this has remained. I also met my first wife in the youth movement. We were very young http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. 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**Q: And until what age did you stay in the youth movement?**

A: Actually I stayed in the youth move...youth movement as long as it existed, because in 1945 our group was dissolved by the Gestapo. Uh we tried but in in spite...in other words they did not allow us to to continue uh to to operate. Certain other groups were still allowed to operate till 1938. We were not. In 1935 as I say, uh we were liquidated, but irrespective of that uh uh we we uh kept our contacts. In other words, what we did was then that we we decided \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Every week we had birthday celebrations. We came to...got together and uh well certainly under the Nazi time things had changed completely with uh our approach to...or our thinking in political and ideological terms changed. Uh there came a time when we came to the conclusion that that there is no future for for for Jews in Germany and we should help to prepare young people to get out of Germany, especially in the years 1940...1935, '36 when slowly but surely uh we we did understand that uh uh uh the Nazi regime was there to stay, that it was not a transitory uh thing, and that uh uh uh uh there was, as I said, no future for for...especially for young people. So uh uh if you want to...I've never left the the the \_\_\_\_\_\_ Youth Movement. It it's still in me somehow and uh interesting enough, this is something which...a pheno...phenomenon which is not only restricted to Germany. When I speak with my friends from the east, uh there was also something that they called the youth movement and it's interesting when you meet the people who are who are came out of that, they have a certain special approach to to the Jewish community and to to life which I share very much with them.

**Q: Yes. Can you begin to describe now about Hitler's rise to power and how that affected you and and the Jewish \_\_\_\_\_ in the early '30's?**

A: Well, uh uh this is a loaded question uh because certainly in the '20's uh uh the Nazi uh uh party became stronger and stronger. There were differences of opinion...would they last, would they not last, but uh given the political weakness of the Weimar Republic which was not uh uh able to enamor itself to the to the people, the fact that the uh democratic parties and the social democrats lost more and more in influence...uh uh we we...in spite of all that we thought that the Republic would do...the Weimar Republic uh representatives would do something to try http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.to stop the movement. They were not able to do it, so you had certainly a...during the Depression you had millions of unemployed and Hitler was uh uh able to...and his henchmen...to capitalize on that and uh in addition to that that certainly there was a nationalistic feeling that uh Germany had not lost the war but was stabbed in the back and therefore the German army was not defeated but was was uh defeated by the so-called home-front, which means by social democrats and communists and the Jews. Uh since we had our own Jewish values, I would say, it didn't affect us what the Nazi were were were were teaching and preaching, uh but on the other hand we were no doubt concerned what will what will happen in political terms. One consideration was that uh uh if Hitler should try to come to power, the uh the uh powers around Germany...England, France, Czechoslovakia, Poland...would never...and Russia...would never allow him to do so but this was certainly an illusion as we learned later, and irrespective of that uh I and my friends and my future wife, we tried to uh uh participate as actively as we could still in the cultural life of of Berlin which was in this respect a wonderful city. It was leading in the in the area of music, theater, literature, and so on and we tried to uh to uh to uh to uh to participate to the best of our ability. In 1938...'31, I graduated from high school and I entered the University of Berlin to study law and economics and as students we had certain, certain privileges which...not privileges but certain uh when we went to the theater or the opera, it was for very cheap money and we we we uh it was then still an accepted fact that we participated fully as Germans in this life, last not least due to the fact that in this cultural life you had many uh leading Jewish personalities. After all, in a city like Berlin...it was a city of Einstein, in the field of music of \_\_\_\_\_ and Otto (ph) \_\_\_\_\_\_ and and and so and and say we uh we uh we really uh enjoyed it. Still we we were concerned about the fact that the uh the uh Nazis uh in a democratic way, uh were able to uh to uh add to their power because when it came to voting they increased their seats in the in the Parliament, especially in the years of 1931 and 1932. Uh life at the University, for instance, already was also influenced by the...remember that, you know, there was there was uh uh a time around eleven o'clock when we all assembled in the lobby of the University in Berlin, Jewish groups, the the leftists, and so on, democratic groups...sorry, not leftists...democratic groups, but also the Nazis and that didn't take long and uh there were brawls and there was fighting and so and since the University was ex-territorial, uh they didn't allow the police to interfere so it was very unpleasant but the uh classes and also the classes of the Jewish professors, were not actually affected, at least not in Berlin. There was cases in Bressler (ph) we know where they where they tried to disturb classes and so on, but not in Berlin and uh uh on the other hand uh also amongst the students it was taken up, amongst the intellectuals who originally \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ very much from the conservative groups of Germany, who had never become uh uh uh engaged in the principles of the Weimar Republic or democratic principles. Uh there was no real rebirth. I mean, democracy uh in after 1918 in Germany did not become a real fundamental political system, and uh especially these these uh nationalistic conserve...conservative groups called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, they uh were uh...they produced most of the students. Also due to the fact that uh uh then education became a monopoly of the of the uh more wealthier democracy in in Germany. There was not enough done in order to get people also out of less wealthier groups of http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.the of the of the progressive let us say, so we had our our our difficulties and still uh irrespective we we did our work as students and uh and uh then when Hitler came to power on January 30th, 1933...I remember that day very well. I was a student then and I had taken my classes and then all of a sudden came the news that Hitler had been called in to office by the German President. Now I want to emphasize that uh this was done in a very democratic way, which means that uh that there was no uprising. I didn't see...I remember in Berlin when I came home from from the University, I didn't see any soldiers uh walking in Berlin. Just the other way around the Nazis prepared for the tremendous torchlight procession they they they had organized for Hitler on on the evening, and there was no opposition. Uh to emphasize in a very democratic way which means that that uh and this was the shock we had that he had actually succeeded in killing democracy in Germany with a means of democracy. Uh at the beginning in the first couple of days uh uh the uh the uh especially the rowdies and the militants amongst the Nazis, especially the Brown Militia then tried to take revenge against their opponents, but uh I luckily was not affected uh but we heard there was quite a number of cases where they tried to uh to uh to get even with their political opponents, especially social democrats, democrats and so on. And there were a lot of acts of violence and we tried to follow up on it and to report it to the police. In certain cases the police which uh uh uh was not at this time Nazified completely tried to help uh but also they...but slowly this this this uh disappeared. So uh after a certain while uh this uh...these militant acts uh came to an end and the Nazis tried to organize themselves but then uh accepted the power more in in a legal way which means after the the uh burning of the \_\_\_\_\_\_ uh and obviously it's my opinion that the Nazis had an act of \_\_\_\_\_. They promulgated very stringent laws taking away the uh the basic rights of people uh and uh then I came to the conclusion that most probably to continue studies at the University for law or of law uh would uh would not guarantee me any future. After April 1st, 1933, certain uh laws were promulgated whereby doctors and \_\_\_\_\_, uh Jewish doctors, Jewish doctors, lost their license, with the exception of those who had served as veterans in World War I, and since my father was uh uh...had seen action in World War I in France and in Russia, I was entitled to continue uh with my studies, but as I say I did...came to the conclusion that uh this would not guarantee me a future, not in Germany, so then in uh in uh April-May I I stopped with my studies and I uh got...I was volunteering in in some kind of Jewish community work because when I was in the youth movement, the work done...especially the social work being done was always connected with the Jewish community. The Jewish community in Berlin was a a very well-organized entity and had departments for the care from the cradle to the grave, I would say. Uh uh babies' homes and old age homes and so on, and we had a special department also for youth work and we were uh associated with that group. Don't forget the Jewish community in Berlin uh uh consists of approximately two and one half thousand members. There was a certain tax system under which people paid uh like they paid their income tax, they paid their Jewish taxes, and the Jewish community financed all the activities out of these funds. In addition certainly there was certain private donations. So uh what I did was then I uh I became more active in in in this work, looking for something else but then in 19...and my my my family uh was not personally affected http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.though it was more difficult for my for my father to continue his work as a commissioned agent. On the other hand...and this is so absurd today when you're when you're hear this...uh one of the things Hitler did was to uh to uh establish a a new order. My my father, for instance, had come home with his decorations, his Iron Cross which was considered...was...he cherished it very much, so then one of the things Hitler did in '33 was to establish a a special medal for those people who had seen active service at the front, and my father was a beneficiary of that which means that even Jews who had served in World War I also got this decoration, in the name of the Fuhrer, absurd as it may sound today. So uh...and uh since most of the customers my father had were non-Jews, I mean this decoration which you could display in a certain way, helped him so he was still accepted as a as a German, if you want to, because at this time there were no Jewish...special Jewish \_\_\_\_\_\_ or something like. That came later. But things uh things uh...and then interesting enough uh somehow by his force...by his...by introduction of certain uh laws alleviating the economical hardships and certainly the rearmament on which Germany started, the economy somehow improved, uh believe it or not. And uh things also in this respect became somehow easier for my father and and he didn't bad...do badly, to the same extent that uh you can say that Jewish business did not...I mean certain of them closed but Jewish business, retail stores and so on continued to exist. Depart...Jewish department stores continued to exist and had a...benefitted from the improvement of that situation and especially when it came to 1936 when we had the Olympic Games in Berlin, then the Nazis for propaganda reasons certainly stayed away from any from any hostile activities and so on. Also because in connection with the political developments, the Nazis uh very gradually uh tightened the screws. In other words, they they didn't start with the Holocaust immediately. It it was that they they started to feel their way around. They had to establish they have power. After they had taken care of all the opponents, the communists and the social democrats, the democrats, then they they they they uh uh felt that they were independently powerful and didn't have to listen to uh to uh any anybody else and in in this this gave them then also uh as we all know unfortunately a power to to stre...to stretch their muscles in in international terms. In other words, the expectation we had that eventually the powers like France, England and so forth resist, evaporated. Especially we had \_\_\_\_\_ started to march into the Rhineland (ph) and uh though...we have learned this later...the uh German army was was uh uh under the order to return if if there should be resistance, uh and they had no heavy weapons for that, but neither the French or the British resisted. France at this time already...they had one of their crises so uh so Hitler was successful and when he felt that his power was growing also in international terms, then slowly the party also came to the conclusion that that more should be done in order to exclude Jews from public life and from from economical life, uh especially after the uh the uh the uh Olympic Games. I, in 1935, seeing somehow the signs that the war and and we also in our groups who had believed in our future in Germany came to the conclusion that we had to change our our our approach, that whatever we can do we should do to help people to uh to to get out of Germany, and also for those who live, as I say for one reason or the other, didn't or didn't want to go to Palestine, to other countries. There were certain uh agricultural educational centers established to give those people who let us http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.say thought to go to South America or to North America and and enter agricultural life in these countries, to give them the tools and the education. In 1935, as I said, I I entered a firm which...a Jewish firm...which was active in the export-import business, especially in metals and and ore, doing business with Sweden. LONG PAUSE IN TAPE ...so that people hopefully will learn something.

**Q: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. It was interesting to me that as people get older and they remember all these things from early on in their lives, it means that nothing is ever lost. It's all in there somewhere. It's just not easily retrieved.**

A: Yes. And certain people don't forget one \_\_\_\_\_, you know. They cannot live \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ memory. I I think \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ had this when we were checking people in connection with \_\_ of that trial I had against \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. They give these millions of \_\_\_\_ and we brought the people in to check them out and I said well, for instance, where in Auschwitz, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ TAPE INAUDIBLE

**Q: OK. You can start again.**

A: In 1935 I joined a firm, a Jewish firm, uh \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ firm in the import-export business specializing in metal trade and ore trade. This firm had excellent business contacts with England, Sweden, France and the eastern countries, so it was my hope that when I would join that firm, I could establish also some kind of a contact in order to find a way out. I was working there as a kind of an administrative assistant. I didn't love that my little work too much, but it was alright because I still at this time uh uh remained active to...in in in in Jewish affairs, especially with the Jewish community and youth work. Uh for instance, the Jewish community at this time had developed a program which was interesting. Since we couldn't have Jewish summer camps any more in Germany, uh the man who was my youth leader at that certain time was very active and innovative, had established contact with Sweden and Denmark and had asked the Jewish communities there to accommodate Jewish children from Germany during the summer, and they responded favorably. In Denmark, for instance, they uh had uh established special special summer camps near Copenhagen where they took hundreds of Jewish children from Germany to spend the summer there, which was very pleasant and in Sweden interesting enough, the Jewish community in Malmer (ph) and Stockholm organized a a program taking Jewish children into Jewish families during the summer and uh I was able to accompany these transports, so I had a first...I got a first uh uh uh experience how to handle these kind of transports and then certainly when we went to Sweden and Denmark, we also uh certainly got http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.familiar with the families and with the organizations, so we thought that somehow would be helpful if if if need be. And uh so these were also the years where let me say that uh in spite of the Nuremburg Laws which which were established in in then made it clear that Jews couldn't members of the of the German \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, German people and uh uh created the uh the uh laws about racial racial uh associations and so in other words uh for...were forbidding the marriage of Jews and non-Jews and certainly we we we uh we...I wouldn't say we accepted this but on the other hand we also said it doesn't affect us in our Jewish attitude, in our in our...in the judgment what our Jewish values were. We...and I can say also personally...I said the Nazis cannot tell me what kind of a human being I am. I'm a Jew and proud of it. I will not and cannot deny that that Germany, German culture, German language, formed my my my my uh formed my my intellectual being, but the Nazis have no uh...even if they do this, if they consider Jews as second-class human beings, it doesn't affect me because I'm I'm I'm proud...and that as I say, the uh the uh education in the in my home and in the youth movement had given me that certainty that that I didn't feel offended by it. What I felt influenced by it, certainly did not develop any inferiority complex, or any inferiority complex, so and then came 1936 were the Olympic Games where where all political radical activities in Germany came to a certain halt in order to to present to the world the best face Germany could show. And as you probably know, also the American team which came to Germany was very much affected. The head of the team, Mr. Brundige (ph), uh uh did not make a favorable impression on me when he when he uh uh developed this kind of closeness with the Nazis and and certainly when this happened with Jesse Owens and and and Hitler was uh treating him the way he did, we were I cannot say glad but it it...we were we were glad that the world saw what what Nazism and the racial superiority com....and racial superiority complex meant to them. Then in the years '37, '38, uh when Hitler felt that his power was growing and that also the uh German army got got stronger, uh and uh the the Nazi Party probably came to the conclusion that there should be more radical solutions as far as the Jews are concerned and they could then \_\_\_\_\_ slowly feel that uh they tried to exclude Jews more effectively from all ways of life and and especially in '38 I remember uh department stores, retail business and so on were...went more and more into the hands of non-Jews. They called it \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which means very often under under pressure people had to sell their business and...but it was still done more or less in a certain...in a certain legal way. Uh until then we uh we uh uh uh in '38, in I think in September, I lost my position with that firm because this firm also had to change ownership, was forced to change the ownership and all Jewish employees lost their positions, I myself included, and uh then I already had came to the conclusion that I should try my best uh to to try to get out. I got married in 1938, in summer of 1938. Things in Berlin were not pleasant because before I got married in front of a big synagogue in in Berlin, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, there were certain riots against Jewish uh Jewish retail stores and department stores. They smashed windows. They attacked the people walking the big streets in Berlin so was...there was a question even whether we could have the uh the ceremony in the synagogue or not. But uh then this somehow uh uh died down and and I got married in the summer of 1938 to the to the to the lady I met in the youth movement and uh we uh uh uh and I http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.lost her in 1943 when when we were deported to Auschwitz, but that's another chapter. And we all tried then strongly to get out. I...we were we were we were registering under the quota system at the American Consulate for instance and my...and I felt a responsibility also to do something for my my parents. My father could not continue anymore with his activities in the...after November '38 and so we were...he was drawn into...also into the forced labor groups in Berlin doing doing construction work and so on, so he was on in years but he was still...he was a strong man and he was able to uh to manage and I decided to to try to do something to offer when I got out, because I knew with studies of law, economics, I couldn't establish a position outside wherever it would be, and uh the Jewish community again as a place where where where needs were met of the of the Jewish population, had developed a lot of vocational training uh uh courses and I decided to participate in a course for welding, for \_\_\_\_\_ welding. I uh...it was a couple of months, and since I had lost my position I had the time to do that, and uh I must say I somehow established...uh I got to like it because uh uh some work with your hands which which which I found interesting, especially ordinary metal, metal welding and so on. Never was an expert, but at least that saved my life somehow. So uh uh and then we uh we uh in No...in October of 1938, uh my wife's parents had come from the east, came from Poland, and as a matter of fact they still spoke Yiddish. My wife, born in Berlin, my first wife born in Berlin went to a German school so she knew both German and Yiddish and in in October 1938 the German government got into a dispute with the Polish government because the Polish government was was not very friendly to Jews, very reactionary and almost anti-Semitic, accepted a law that uh the passports of people living outside of Poland had to be renewed, but that the passport of Jews living, for instance, in Germany, would not be renewed which meant that uh those people would loose their their their Polish citizenship and nationality and the Germans uh...and after all, there were thousands of Jews from Poland living in Germany still then. We had quite a big well-organized group of Polish Jews, for instance, in Berlin, and and the Germans then came to the conclusion that they will not accept this challenge by the Polish government because then they would be burdened as they thought with stateless Jews which they couldn't deport if they wanted to to especially to Poland, so what they did was that before the uh the laws uh became valid, they uh uh uh rounded up uh Jewish families of Polish origin I might say, all over Germany and in in Berlin just the man...in in in other cities, full families and deported them to the...deported them to the east into the no-man's land between Germany and Poland and uh this created a terrible situation. And of course in a matter of hours or so that that they they invaded their homes in the middle of the night and took people out uh uh and amongst those who were deported were uncles of my wife and uh who had come from Poland and had made their way in Berlin, so we were also personally affected, but there was nothing we could do. Uh the the only thing we could do was again that the Jewish uh community went into action and established interestingly enough call it cooperation of the police and the Gestapo and some relief uh uh and work at the uh railway station where these transports came through and I participated also in that work uh uh because especially bene...came to help the younger people, the contact between the youth movement members was still there irrespective of their ideological http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.orientation, Zionists, non-Zionists. There was a job to be done and we did it and uh it was it was...there was utter confusion. It was was was a ruling because uh the Germans pushed people into the no-man's land, especially in the area of uh Posen (ph) or this \_\_\_\_\_ what they called it, in in east Germany and Upper Salasia, and the Poles didn't accept them, so for many many days the unhappy people were exposed to the elements and and were not admitted to Poland and certainly were not re-admitted to Germany. Uh so uh but eventually uh uh this was somehow solved. Poles admitted some groups and organized relief action, as I found out later also with the help of young people of the Polish-Jewish youth movement in Poland, and uh it was so absurd that I remember when we did this work, uh there were transports still rolling towards the east and on the other side of the of the railway station, uh wagons, coaches came back with Jews who had not been admitted and had been pushed back, but they originated not from Germany but from Vienna, for instance, so that the problem for the Jewish community was to bring them back at their expense to Vienna because they had nothing to do in Berlin and uh amongst these uh uh people who were deported were were were was a couple from Hanover by the name of Greenspan (ph), and uh as you know from history, young Greenspan who had lived in Hanover and had left his home in Hanover and had went...had gone to Paris and lived in Paris under abominable conditions...he was not...he had no permission to stay. He was frightened by a deportation ordinance so obviously in his in his despair then uh bought a pistol and went to the German Embassy and shot this uh German. He got \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who interestingly enough was not an ardent Nazi. Uh when this happened uh we were all alarmed and I know that I was deeply alarmed because something similar had happened before in Switzerland. A Jew with the name of Frankfurt (ph) had had shot and killed the representative of the Nazi organization in Switzerland by the name of \_\_\_\_\_\_, but at this time the Nazis obviously didn't feel strong enough that they could do anything. Uh so uh but now we knew something would. Also uh uh shouldn't forget that this November's events came after Munich, the all...I remember that I think it was September...thought we were somehow on the brink of war in 19...September 1938 under these four, Hitler and Mussolini and and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and Chamberlain got together in Munich and hammered out the agreement selling out Czechoslovakia to the Nazis and this also uh somehow gave the Nazis the feeling that now they were very powerful because actually uh Chamberlain had submitted to them and then he was so foolish when he got back to to London to to wave this paper saying that in the morning before he left Munich for London he had another meeting with Heir Hitler and this is to say the proof that we have peace in our time, so when the November events came, certainly Germany already was in a much stronger political and military situation, and for us uh uh it was the indication definitely that that uh the end of the Nazi regime we had all hoped for, because we had thought that for economical and political reasons there would be...it would be only be a transitory existence...that this was not true. And I uh uh must say that uh... END OF TAPE 1 ...especially Kristallnacht because it's a Nazi label. http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.

**Q: OK. They asked me to stop you at this point. The tape is almost finished and they want to change...**

**Q: Could you pick it up with what happened in November 1938?**

A: Yeah. Should I go back to the youth movement first?

**Q: Yes. If you want to talk about how you got....whenever you're ready.**

A: I'm ready.

**Q: OK.**

A: Uh before I continue with the events of the November 9th, I think uh it would be interesting to know what kind of a position I had in the youth movement. We call it uh...we were not standing on formalities. We had no statutes and so that no charters didn't exist, but I was a member of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which we considered the executive and I I belonged to the to the leadership of of this group as long as we could...uh we were able to operate which means up till 1935, and then uh uh uh later as I told you when we were still trying to keep the contacts, it it was in a very informal way. There was no position or special position. Just I was...I...based on my seniority if you want to. I had \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Now to go back to the 9th of November. Uh when it happened in Paris, I was deeply concerned like all of us and I had a feeling that something was going to happen, uh something basically that means the Nazis now aware of their power and of their new won role in the world would say well, we don't take this, and they were whipping up their propaganda. The headlines were deeply depressing. But there was nothing we could do. We had just to wait and see where where where where where...somehow where...when and where they would act. On the November 9th, uh I interesting enough, it was a day when I had to be prepared for my final final examination of the welder course and uh then uh in the in the morning when I got out, somebody was in the street I met and said Norbert, the synagogues are burning, and I couldn't believe it. And then a he...look at these stores...you know, there were still Jewish stores...and I saw that uh that uh they were smashed, that the windows were smashed. I didn't hear that during the night, and I couldn't believe this, so uh what I did was I went to my synagogue where I had been married and I saw that the the the the flames were coming out from the roof, from the cupola...beautiful edifice, and the fire engines were standing by doing nothing, only protecting the buildings next to it that the fire shouldn't extend to them. And I still couldn't believe it. I went to to another synagogue which was a very prominent synagogue in west Berlin, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and I saw the same...uh flames coming out and there, however, was already I could see a tremendous amount of destruction. I was standing there and listening to what the Germans had to say. There was glee amongst them. Uh you know, they said now they got there what they deserve and so on, and I asked myself is this the people, uh is this in whose http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.civilization you believe. Is this the people of Gerta and Shiller (ph) and of the German philosophers, the people of the of the philosophers and poets? And and and I simply...I couldn't comprehend it. It was not acceptable for me. I wouldn't say not acceptable. I saw it but I couldn't digest, not not intellectually and not emotionally. And then I went, for instance, to a synagogue where the famous Rabbi Prince (ph) had had uh been, had off...officiated over the years, and there the building was almost completely burned down. The only part which was still left was the lectern from which he had always delivered his very famous and encouraging sermons for for the Jews there. Of course, he was a very proud Jew and a very active Zionist. So uh uh and I and and I asked myself is this possible. What goes into into people to do these things? Uh I had...my my knowledge was...I had read about pogroms in the Middle Ages in in in especially before the Crusaders went to to liberate then Palestine uh uh but and when the Jewish communities in in in especially along the Rhine had been destroyed by these Crusaders before, but still I was...we were living in a modern age, and I really...I had believed in...that was part of our education, the goodness of man. Could this be possible? Uh and uh then I went through to take my exam, and uh my then wafe (ph) then wife came to me and said Norbert, you're not going home. We were at this time still living with my parents in the eastern part of Berlin. I said why. She said because we heard that the police is going around taking men into custody, so uh I've arranged already uh that you will stay with the mother of a friend who had just left for for America recently and and she is alone and she would be glad you come so that she feels protected somehow, and I said what about my father. She said also for your father we have made arrangement to uh to uh to uh take shelter in the apartment of a sister who is a widow. And uh that's what we did, uh unaware what what uh what the next step will be. And then the next day more or less we...and I I was going around...I mean you could go around freely. There was no restriction. I saw what what had happened in the main streets of Berlin, uh \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which were the main business streets where you still had quite a number of Jewish stores, retail stores, and they had been smashed and vandalized and the merchandise had been looted. Uh they say that uh I I couldn't control it but...couldn't check it but that, for instance, the ladies of the night had helped themselves to the fur coats out of the of the some of the retail stores on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in Berlin. And uh so I spent uh uh a couple of nights outside of my apartment and uh then uh more and more uh news reached us...and I took cont...tried to contact my other friends and found out that also the uh the uh major administrative buildings of the Jewish communities had been somehow vandalized, so that uh there was no...there was no activity. That was for quite a number of days and and and and well, I realize now that uh completely that in this respect the uh the uh saying of my my spiritual leader and rabbi, Leo \_\_\_\_\_, who was the senior of of and the leader of uh call it German Jewry, was right when he said that the historical hour of German Jewry has come to an end. And my question was what am I going to do now. Especially I felt new responsibility for my parents, for my sister, who uh also tried to do something to get out of Germany, and uh then something happened uh when uh we heard that \_\_\_\_\_, some of the men had been taken into custody, had been taken away, and we didn't know where. There were friends of mine amongst them and then we found out that http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.especially those men who had been taken into custody in Berlin had been shipped to the concentration camp of Saxonhausen-Orianenburg which was the uh big camp in the north of Berlin. And that was all we knew. Uh so uh a couple of days later uh somehow uh the Nazis thought that it would be right at least to release those people who had been veterans of World War I, and some of them were found walking around in the streets of Berlin, and uh but they were...there was a terrible, terrible appearance because their heads been shaved. Their...the the Nazis whenever you come to a camp, were delivered into a concentration camp, the first things they did was shave your hair and their clothing was completely crampled (ph) because it had gone through a so-called disinfection process, so uh...and then one building of the Jewish community had started somehow to operate again, and one of my leaders of the youth movement had immediately uh started to organize some kind of relief for those people who if they had been taken into custody in Berlin, they knew where to go, but many of them had come from cities outside of Germany, from northern Germany, from western Germany...those who had not been taken to Buchenwald or Dachau had come especially from places like west Germany or rural districts and so on. And we organized...and and he organized this kind of relief action and he called me into that, to uh try to pick up these people who came by railway from the concentration camp into Berlin, and you could recognize them immediately, and to bring them to the Jewish community where they uh first of all were treated medically. Some of them had terrible wounds because of frostbite and so...give them a decent meal, and especially those who had uh come from other...who originated from cities outside to establish the first telephone contact with their family. That was part of my work, and that was really...I mean uh call it emotionally rewarding, and I said listen, I have here Mr. so and so. He would like to speak to you. And very often you heard on the other side an outcry so so uh this kind of work uh uh became became uh uh took on took on very substantial dimensions because more people then were released, and as I say, I participated in that and to a certain extent also my then wife, because she had also lost her position, and that was not a \_\_\_, a work from nine to five, and there was...that was not on a salary basis. It was simply...it was just relief work to do what had to be done and also, for instance, to organize that these people could get back...uh had by by by railway to their different places. Uh and one of the things they they asked uh time and again when these people came, and said what what what what do you know about about us, what what does the world say? Tell us. Tell me. What does London and New York and Washington say about this? And uh I must say this was one of the of the questions uh I...we...none of us, myself couldn't answer. We felt very bad about it, because certainly luckily we had not...I had not been affected. I had avoided the the the the uh the uh this kind of action and uh when they...when these people asked me and said uh fine, you are doing all this work. It's wonderful, but the future is now dark there. I can't...I mean I know that that that my business is destroyed or I am not uh entitled to continue in my activities. Uh we were told uh you will be release...you are being released here from the from the concentration camp under the condition that you leave Germany as quickly as possible, so what can you tell us? And my answer was unfortunately nothing. Certainly uh for those of us who, you know, to to listen to uh radio Strasburg (ph) in in German or to BBC London, it was was http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.prohibited and there were very severe penalties, but still it was being done. So the only thing we we...I could also say from the information I had that there were demonstrations in New York and a big meeting in Madison Square Garden, a tremendous amount of words, uh also but no action. Nothing. And uh I felt almost lost when when when these questions...and the people were...felt lost. Certainly they were they were happy to uh to uh be out of the concentration camps. It was...all of them somehow were under shock, because the treatment they had uh experienced in these camps was torturous. They told us about the details uh where where in also...I mean I had heard before what what people had been exposed to when they were taken to Buchenwald or so but but you know, here you heard it for the first time from people that had just come back (cough) about this this this...the amount of violence to which they had been exposed, so...and the beatings and and standing in in in the cold for hours and hours without...or, for instance, just marching without any sense or or or shoveling uh uh sand from one heap to another and then...I mean without any sense. Uh so uh I see in this respect we all felt lost. I felt lost, and uh there was nothing. Even when I discussed it with my wife and my parents, uh there was helplessness, absolute helplessness. And and we we felt lost by the world. Now uh then one evening when I was doing this work, the man who was in charge of that relief operation came to me and said, listen, I have just received a call from the head of the uh central organization of Jews...the name was the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of Jews from Germany, which means the representative of the rights of Jews in Germany...his name was Otto Hirsch (ph). He also had been taken into a concentration camp, had just returned and he called me and said uh uh...and he was rather emotional...uh there is something then very new development. Uh believe it or not, the situation of the Jews in Germany and Austria, because Austria was also affected by the November events, it has been discussed in the House of Commons and there is some action under the auspices of the former Prime Minister of of England, Baldwin (ph), and Jewish prominent leaders like uh uh Viscount Samuel (ph) and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and so they have agreed to uh to uh accommodate ten thousand uh uh oppressed children, Jewish or non-Jewish, but oppressed children so uh uh this is is now to be organized also from here, from Germany and uh Mr. Hirsch said well, we have terrific social workers who gradually were flocking back to the office, you know, in order to do work, but they need technical help and this is something you have to do. And I said to him, Martin, excuse me. I I'm in the middle of my preparations. I would like to to leave Germany as soon as possible because we all are in the same situation uh and and and he said yes, but you know that's part of our education. There's a job to be done and uh uh in Germany you would call it \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, in other words to do a thing just for the cause and not for the reward. So see...he told me next morning, see uh Otto Hirsch in in in his office and he will tell you all the details, and I came to him. As I say, he was the executive director of all operations, Jewish operations, because we had a centralized uh organization for that. I knew him because he was the father of a friend who was also in our move...youth movement, now living in in Washington, and he gave me details, telling me that (clearing throat) uh he just had been advised that this is what the British government has agreed to and to...but no special conditions. The only conditions were children have to be healthy, had to go with the permission of the parents because the parents could not accompany http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.them, and uh had...were restricted to the age of twelve to seventeen because this would be considered the age where they could be...could go without the accompaniment of their parents and and and uh wouldn't create special educational problems. So Otto Hirsch told me uh uh kindly help us, because uh our social workers are very devoted and excellent workers but uh unfortunately they have no experience in technical matters. I said but I have never done something like that. Certainly I have participated in the organization of summer camps in England, and and in Sweden and Denmark. He said still uh kindly help us. I said but don't forget I am in the middle of my preparations also to leave Germany, and he said well, uh I can give you my promise that when this will be done and will be successfully done, it will be our commitment and our obligation to help you and your family to get out of Germany. Well, it's a promise to which he couldn't live up because uh in early in 1941, I think, he was uh taken again into custody, was shipped to the concentration camp of Mauthausen and murdered there in cold blood. So what I did then was, I went to this office where there was a department for children, immigration which \_\_\_\_\_ had established before because there was a trickle of children uh who had been given the opportunity to go to France, Belgium, Sweden and and America, within the quota. And uh I came to that office and uh when I saw what was going on, I almost died. I...my stomach turned around, which was certainly can be explained only from the situation we were in. Uh there was a big conference room in that uh office, covered with uh cards, heaps of cards and there was a desk which was covered with papers and the telephone was constantly ringing and I was given to understand...uh there was a lady who was in charge of it. She had before been uh in high service under the Prussian government, a Jewish lady, uh had been assistant to one of the uh social democratic ministers from Prussia, and uh a trained social worker, and she told me that something has to be done to to organize this properly, and uh after having seen that and having recovered a little bit, the first thing I did was to call in some of my friends, again from the youth movement. We all uh at this time had no...were not gainfully employed in productive work, and all purposes more or less lost our positions and uh the first thing I organized were these cards...these cards were so called...when I asked what is it...these are permits which had come in already from England to give uh children the the permit to come to England. In other words they didn't need passports and so there were special cards worked out with the cooperation of the home office in England, with a picture and so...which had come from England and then the German police had certified the the the uh the names and the age and so on, and these were cards which which gave the young people of that age a license to enter England, so the first thing we did...was I did was, with the help of my friends, to organize these cards in alphabetical order and in geographical order in order to have some kind of a of a of an idea what was what, and then it would give me some some working room at the desk and organized the telephone calls to such extent that, you know, when, for instance, it happened a telephone call came from a from a desperate parent from anywhere and said what's about the application of my of my of my child, and then one of these social workers jumped to that table and they they they fished out of the of that mound of of paper the the the permit, because they said yes, I remember it had arrived this morning or yesterday morning. And as I said, there there was disorder but not...but not \_\_\_\_ http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.because they wanted but things were...had had had had...were were in a rush and and and and had overwhelmed them, so uh then I found out that we...it was...we...it was organized in such a way that people, that parents were advised in Berlin and the Jewish communities outside of Berlin and also under the rules and regulations, they had set already with the with the...believe it or not by cooperation with the with the Gestapo, under which the the \_\_\_\_\_\_ had to work, that uh uh the Jewish communities, the the welfare agencies uh and \_\_\_\_\_\_ agencies had to select the children, which means that the children...the parents who got a way of assist of this project, made an application to the proper Jewish communities and then the social workers, the local social workers, then checked the...if the conditions were right and and then they they made the application. I had nothing to do with that, so what my task was, and I was advised to do that, was to organize the transports so that they could get out of Germany. Now also that was not an easy task because we had to live under certain rules and regulations because in order to prepare a transport, you had to prepare the proper lists, the records. One copy had to go to the Gestapo. One copy had to go London in order to advise the people in London that the children were coming and whoever were the prospective foster parents or the the hostels which had to be prepared for these people had to be had to be made ready, and all this was done. Certainly there were no faxes and no computer systems and and and when you made...had...the telephones did not uh...there was no push button system. For instance, to make a telephone call to London from Berlin could last hours and hours and even within Germany it was not...you know, it was still in the age of...the the age when most of the work or all the work had to be done manually. So somehow this we got under control and I set up a certain...I can't say I because uh I was then I was made responsible for all technical aspects of these transports, so that means uh first of all to see to it that the that the lists were properly prepared, that the parents were were advised uh when to when to bring their children to Berlin, especially from eastern or northern uh Germany and middle Germany, because the starting point was Berlin. Then I had to uh approach the railway authorities to give us reserved coaches, because they couldn't travel with the other public. Uh then a special room had to be made available as an assembly point in a railway station. The local police had to be advised, because uh certainly all this was done under the supervision of the police authorities. Uh then we had...and I...that was also my responsibility to find escorts. Parents could not go with their children, so we had to find escorts to take them, to take these children, so again there was the the human resource...of of the young people of the of the of the members of the youth movement, irrespective as I say, Zionists, non-Zionists, all this disappeared. And we found wonderful people, teachers and and youth leaders and so who who volunteered for that service. Uh and uh at the beginning we were...it was made clear to us that uh these escorts could only escort the uh the youngsters to the border, but there was no chance to take them to England. This luckily changed very soon thereafter because we were able to convince the authorities that uh it was in the German interest also to take them up to London, and they agreed under one condition...that all these escorts uh were to return again to Berlin. Now at this time uh starting in the summer of 1938, all Jews who who were holding a German passport had stamped...and irrespective of the Nazi laws, we were still considered German nationals...all http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.German passports had printed a J into their passports, and when people came back, especially after the November events, to Germany they were taken immediately into custody and shipped into a camp, in a concentration camp, so in order to protect our escorts, the uh Ministry of the Interior, the Nazi Ministry of the Interior, gave everyone who who was an escort, they call it protection letter which he could use for the border police to say and it said that so and so, in my case Norbert Israel Wolheim, you know that's my name, was was is is traveling in German interests and should be \_\_\_\_\_\_ and so uh we had the first transport under those conditions ready in January. And I was instrumental in...that was my first responsibility, and uh together with some friends who were also escorts I uh accompanied this transport to the border which was uh Bentheim (ph). It was a German...a Dutch border. I also had to inform not only the people in England but people in Holland, Jewish...the uh the uh relief organizations because they wanted to help the children when they were traveling through uh Holland because the technical arrangements were that people...as I said, before came from all kinds...from all cities, assembled in Berlin. Then from Berlin the train left, went via Hanover to the border in Bentheim, uh uh went into Holland, uh went from to \_\_\_\_\_\_, Holland where they boarded a ferry and the ferry took these children uh through the Channel or via the Channel to Harwich (ph) in England where they landed in England and they had to undergo immigration uh checks and and customs checks and then the train took us from Harwich to London where at Liverpool Street Station, the Jewish Committee of of uh of London had established their reception center where then the parents and the uh the uh officials came and and and distributed the children. This first transport uh uh still is very vivid in my memory because when we came to the border, uh the SS guards who were uh uh doing custom duties and they were not all of them, or none of them was trained in this respect...they ascended the the the uh coaches and they behaved like vandals. They did not attack the children, but they treated the luggage...it was completely vandalized, the luggage. Were tearing it apart looking for jewels and for foreign currency and for things like that. Couldn't find a thing, but at least this is what they did, and any attempt to talk to them and so certainly was in vain. And uh then uh it was so bad that they uh separated the coaches with the with the Jewish children from the other train and the train left for Holland and when this train without the children arrived in Holland, the authorities there were waiting and saw the children were not there. And amongst the people who were serving...I mean who were uh the cause was was were two ladies whose name should be remembered in in gratitude. Both non-Jewish. One was uh Ms. Fontaine (ph) and the other Mrs. Weismiller (ph) who even even had dealings with the \_\_\_\_\_\_. Very courageous, wonderful uh lady. She was the uh the uh the wife of a banker, a prominent banker in Holland, had no children and had devoted all her time to to help especially children, Jewish, non-Jewish, and she all of a sudden came from Holland. She had made her way from Holland to Bentheim and uh when she saw and she heard what has happened...uh don't forget, it was before the beginning of the war...she lashed into these SS people. It was...I was so grateful, and \_\_\_\_\_ one of these SS men, said I have the feeling you don't like us very much and she said well, personally I might but as a group you are impossible. But then, interesting enough, by her interventions she...they they stopped their their vandalism. The two coaches http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.were then attached to a later train which still made in time for the ferry and we then uh uh were able, as I tried to explain before, to get the permission of the of the Department of the Interior to get passports to take these children to to to to England. Now to select these people was a very uh uh uh difficult thing and I felt the responsibility because certainly everybody uh who had a chance to go to England certainly looked for a chance, and there were friends or relatives pressing on them and said are you stupid to go back, but this was the condition, and they had...the the Nazis had told us in no uncertain term that if people would not uh obey their order, then these these transports would come to an end and this certainly we could not afford. So as I say, I was very, very careful in the selection of those people and thank God with the exception of one case, it worked. Now we had uh uh uh approximately I think twenty, twenty transports uh which left Berlin. Uh it was my duty to see all of them off, and I was uh uh uh every morning when they came together, I was there to to arrange it, so uh uh whether I went with the transports or not, that was in a in a big hall in in in call it \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Berlin, and also part of my duties were to see to it that the children came to Berlin in time so that they were pre...and certainly they came with their parents or their relatives and this was then the uh the the moment of their goodbye, so uh there was a problem uh with the first transports which...for which I had not been responsible. A smaller group had left in in in December I think, and the parents had accompanied these children to the to the trains and certainly parents in good faith they try to get the best window seats for for their children, and there was a certain turmoil and the police told us in no uncertain terms that if this would be repeated, they would control all the all all these arrangements. We were able to convince them that we will take over, that we will see to it that order should prevail and that they shouldn't interfere, that they could be present if they want to, not \_\_\_\_ present fine but they shouldn't interfere. And I think it worked. So uh when in the morning when when when such a transport was due to to leave, as I say, I was there and uh it was a very, very, very...I remember that very distinctly the atmosphere, you know. It was...there was tension in the air. There was an atmosphere of expectation. There was concern by the parents. There were...there were kiss...there were tears of laughter and tears of of joy and and the concern and pain and it was a very, very special atmosphere which was difficult to describe. And then when the when the hour of departure came closer, I uh ascended a a chair, some kind of a lecture, and told the parents...ladies and gentlemen, the time has arrived to say goodbye, because we are under strict order not to let you accompany your children to the platform. The escorts will take over and the baggage handlers had to do their work before to to handle the baggage, but you cannot come and don't...please uh cooperate and don't make our our work more difficult. But this is the time you have to say goodbye. And there were, you know, last kisses and last hugs and and and and...but in general I still admire these people, how courageous they were. Nobody broke down, but also there was the expectation that uh sooner or later they would be reunited again. Very often I asked myself the question later, where did I take the courage to do that you call it \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, where where from? I was young. I was only twenty-five in these days, and I thought uh uh that this is a job to be done in order to help these children and I also I must say that at this time I and nobody else could have thought for a moment that this would for many, for almost ninety http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.percent, the last goodbye. Nobody could expect that let us say a year and a half later after these transports had rolled to the west into freedom, that transports would leave for the east into the into the slaughterhouses of Hitler in Auschwitz or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or Treblinka. I said nobody could foresee it in the worst of of of your vision, and then uh thus I I say this probably also...yes, gave me the justification to say to these parents and many I talked to to the children who were safe...I said that this is a moment, one of the most important moments in their lives which they still remember vividly, and I was involved in that. But I came to terms with that by saying this is the contribution which which which we had to make and in the long run, at least for these children, it turned out for the good. And uh when we landed in in England, uh we were uh helped...the the Jewish Committee was then the Bloomsbury (ph) House in in England which cooperated with the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. It was the central headquarters of the board of Jewish deputies in England and and helped us to stay in England for two days or two...two and a half days. I had...constantly I had uh uh discussions with my counterpart in the in the Committee there to streamline operations, to uh...also there were certain requirements in England which had to be obeyed and there was always...I didn't have too much time in England to see friends or relatives though I tried to manage somehow, and also I had the privilege...the other escorts on their way back had to take the train. I had the privilege to uh to uh to take the...to fly back which at this time was still a big thing, but since I was needed in Ber...Berlin so badly, I, as I say, I could fly back. We did not see where the children were going because we didn't have the time. Our job had ended the moment we handed them over to the committee at Liverpool Street Station and they were then uh uh acquainted with their foster parents or or or the families they took them in or the hostels. Only one transport I took uh uh from London up to the north of England. That was the transport of \_\_\_\_\_, of trainees for for for then Palestine, because uh Lord Balfour (ph), the father of the Balfour decoration, who had no children, had made his castle in in Scotland, near the \_\_\_\_\_ near Edinburgh, available to the Jewish agency and the Jewish agency had used one of his janitor homes or so to establish a kibbutz there where the young people were educated uh for and prepared for for Palestine and uh I think a group of ten or twelve of mainly boys I took to that place because I wanted to see what was going on, but that was the only time when I was really...at this time when I became familiar with the conditions of the children we are taking to England. Certainly later I've seen a lot of literature about these events. I saw the problems, the tremendous problems, and I think this should be made part of of history because uh uh first of all, it is part of the Holocaust history but I would also say it is something which which for which we have to express gratitude to England. After all, when they discussed it and when they promulgated this this project, they were still somehow under the influence of Chamberlain's policy of appeasement and uh nevertheless under the impact of the events in Germany, especially in November, uh uh they came to the conclusion that we want to do something. They did not uh make uh uh work out charters to see after so many years the children have to go back or they can't stay longer. Nothing of this respect was said. Just England wanted to give shelter to these people...to these children to to to uh to save them from oppression and in this respect I am using a word, when I talked about it before, of of the man I admire so much, Winston Churchill, when http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.he said that even this was England's finest hour, and should recognize that and I think we...to repeat it we should make it a part of the record even here in Washington in the Museum in my opinion, because this belongs to the to the to the successful action and reaction of the rescuers. Uh the last transport which left Berlin was prepared uh in the end of August. It was supposed to leave Berlin on September 1st. I was supposed to go because there were certain uh problems which had come up and which had to be discussed with our people in London. I had my passport. I had my protection letter. I had my ten marks in foreign currency. More we were not allowed to have, but certainly the the the war fever developed into a pitch and uh then we were bombarded from England with a request to try to somehow uh change the date of the departure to an earlier date, and it took tremendous efforts to do it because all the children and all the parents had to be notified and things had to rearrange, so anyhow we were able to to to uh uh to uh have it, to change the departure date from September 1st to August 29, and I decided then uh on account of the situation not to be the leader of that transport because uh my then wife was in Berlin and I and my parents and my sister and I felt responsibility and and I was concerned that if something would happen, especially if a war will come, I will be cut off and I I felt that uh uh I could not have done this toward my family and this is the reason why I was caught in Germany. The transport luckily left uh Germany on the 29th, had difficulties to uh get through Holland. Holland had already mobilized. Uh there were no boats available at the beginning, but also with the help of our people in Holland in the last minute they found a ferry, ferrying these children to England and when they arrived in Harwich they they...England had already...was already in a state of a blackout, so they came to England or I would say on the eve on the war. They...I think they landed on the...on September 1st or 2nd, before England had declared war but Germany had already entered...start military operations against Poland. That was the end of the uh of the project. From Germany we had uh been able to get out between six or seven thousand children. Uh Austria also a couple of thousand. As I said before, we we we didn't have any contact with Austria. We were not allowed to corroborate with them, so that was extra, extra operation and uh then after that, still a few transports, small transports, left for Denmark, for instance, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, for training there, but that was all. The the the the children immigration stopped by the beginning of the war and that was the end of that.

**Q: What was the total number of children that you got out?**

A: I said from Germany approximately seven thousand.

**Q: Do you remember any of the children particularly?**

A: Uh, no, because uh uh, you know, don't forget these were thousands of children. I I remember certain certain uh children. I I remember the grandchildren of Rabbi \_\_\_\_\_\_ who who were taken to England so uh uh but I never met them after the war anymore, but it so happened that not too long ago, uh I addressed a group of children, kinder (ph) they call themselves, in Los http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.Angles and a man with grey hair came to me and said, you must have been my uh leader of the transport in February 1939. And I said yes, I do, because that was the first transport I took from Berlin to London, and this is true. I certainly didn't recognize him anymore, and uh then at the same evening a lady came to me and said, and you must have been my my leader in April 1939, and I told her it must have been approximately on April 18th or so and she said, yes, but how do you remember, and I said I remember that when I flew back uh it was Hitler's birthday on April 20th, and the Germans had illuminated the the major uh avenues of Berlin, so when I flew back and I had that privilege, the pilot would do us a favor to show the spectacle of Berlin, seeing this this sea of of of of of light from the air, and I think I came back on on April 21st, and and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and by the way uh this was also little little little...it is not revenge but but call it satisfactions I always had when I landed in in in in in Berlin, the airport at this time was on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ which was...the airport which was used during the bridge...the air bridge, and when I landed there and I met the uh the border police and there was a fellow, you know, almost out of a \_\_\_\_\_\_ opera with a with a with a like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with a big metal shield and all kinds of things put on there, and I showed him my passport and he thought already he had caught one of those who could become his uh customers, and then very very slowly I took my letter out and show it to him and he couldn't quite grasp it and he said one moment please, because he had to go to his superior to verify that this is genuine and so on and then he let me go, to his regret, so that was a certain...call it a certain amount of satisfaction.

**Q: Was attempts...were any attempts made to let the children...the parents know that the children had arrived safely?**

A: Oh yeah, because uh because as...before the war, there was correspondence and some of these children then, and it was one of the first things they did, was that they uh uh asked their foster parents to help them to get the uh the uh the parents out. In certain cases they were successful, but I would say between eighty or ninety percent were not, and then you had the situation that when the war broke out, you could only communicate via the International Red Cross. And uh that took a long time, but it worked at the beginning but then starting with the deportations, these letters didn't arrive anymore from from Germany and the children, you know, are quite desperate \_\_\_\_\_\_ the events slowly realized that something must have happened, but they became fully aware of the situation only after the end of the war when the truth came out. Uh you might ask me if I have special...special memories of that. Uh there are two stories I like to tell because they are so very interesting and typical. One was uh in the summer of 1939, uh we were advised by the British government through the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ House and Bloomsbury House that we should...ought to be careful with the import of merchandise which could be used for commercial use. What does it mean? Since uh you couldn't take out funds from Germany...we all were restricted to just ten marks...uh certainly parents and other groups which who uh tried to get out, took with them whatever they could...uh jewelry if there was the permission to do it, but also uh expensive cameras and and so on and these cameras or uh music instruments and so had http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.found their way into the uh uh British market and the Chamber of Commerce in England had brought it to the attention of the government that they considered it unfair competition because, you know, when the people came there with no money, they sold it for whatever they could get for it. So uh we advised the parents accordingly and tried and hoped that...so on one of these occasions when I was the transport leader, we came to Harwich and uh then all of a sudden I heard a a voice, my name, Mr. Wolheim, and there was a customs official and I asked him what's the problem, and my English, thank God, was good enough, I mean my schooling which was good enough to communicate with him...uh what's the problem? He said, sir, we have a problem here because we just found that this this boy or this this lad has has a has a...is carrying a violin. I said what's wrong with a violin? He said, it's not an ordinary violin. It's a very valuable violin. Uh certainly it was not a Stratovarious (ph) or \_\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_\_, but it was a valuable violin, so I said, sir, but most probably the parents gave this to the boy because he liked music, and uh this was probably his violin before so he took it along, and he took it along because he liked music. I didn't know that the boy was able to play. So he looked at him and he said...then in order to save the situation I said, why don't we let him play something so that you can be...uh see that this is something which actually belongs to him. He said that's a good idea. And that fellow started to play, and you know I was very nervous because I didn't know would it succeed or not, so he started to play and all of a sudden everything around that boy and us became very quiet and I didn't realize at the first moment what had happened, and then I came to to to realize that he had started to play "God Save the King," and because of that, you know, the customs officials couldn't continue to operate, so I started...tried to stop him but he was playing all three stanzas. When he was finished and I felt better and asked, sir, are you now convinced that this boy loves music. He said, oh yes, thank you very much. And the other story I like to tell is uh, you know, we were under a very strong regulations to see to it that only children up to the age of seventeen were coming in, and we checked the the uh records carefully and the cards back and forth and we thought everything was fine. On one of these transports when I was the leader, you know, when when when when you got to uh to uh \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Holland and put...and the children boarded the ferry, we put the children to to sleep. They had certain bunks and so we, the the escorts started to work in the lounge in order to pre...prepare for the next morning because we wanted to be as helpful as possible to the immigration authorities not to have any hitchup. So still working on that and uh we were treated very, very nicely by the crew of that ferry and that was really, in comparison to Germany, was a wonderful thing. In the middle of that a friend of mine, was an escort, came to me and said, Norbert, we have a problem here. I said what's the problem? He said look at the card. I said what is it. He said that boy is is is is...has passed his seventeenth birthday. He's eighteen years old. I said let me said again, and sure it was true. So I knew we had a problem. I said let me see...let us ask the boy. So they brought the boy out of his bunk and when he came, I almost...I almost fainted because he had just been released from a concentration camp. His hair was shaven and obviously he realized that something was wrong and he was shaking like a \_\_\_\_\_ bone. So we asked him when were you born, and sure enough, he was eighteen years old. So we went into a huddle with the other http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.other members of our escorts and there were two opinions. One was to throw ourselves at the mercy of the immigration officer the next morning and say sorry, but that would mean that uh he had to obey his rules and regulations and had eventually had to send him back and if he would have been...if they would send him back that was the end of him because they would take him back into a concentration camp immediately, and there was the other group, and I was one of them, who said well, the only thing is effectively is to say it was a mistake made by the German police, and they entered the the date that they made up...that they changed the...the the date they put in was was wrong, but we had to tell the boy that this was it, and made him our ally, so uh he realized that and we said listen, you are not born in this year. You are born one year later. You understand that. He said very well. And we...also one of our friends who was a teacher said you know what we should do it is we should somehow try to program him that even in the middle of the night we should ask him when were you born, so that when the question will come up in England that he can...that he will not stutter and and and stumble but will say it. OK. We landed in Harwich, all tired, dead tired, uh went through the usual process. All of a sudden I hear, Mr. Wolheim, kindly see the immigration officer... END OF TAPE 2 ...what's the problem. He said well uh I cannot admit this young man uh because uh he is eighteen years old and you know very well that uh under the uh rules and regulations adopted he cannot be older than seventeen years. So I said well, ask the boy, and when the boy came, you know, and he was shaking and he sort of...hair was shaven...that officer also I mean somehow uh fainted. Something had to be done, so uh uh uh uh how do you explain this. I said it must have been a mistake by the German police. He said but the German police is well known and almost infamous for their accuracy. I said yes, but today under the Nazi regime, they brought in a lot of people who came in just for the party affiliation and not for the efficiency and and bureaucratic work. He said is that so. I said definitely. So he again looked at the card, he looked at this boy and there was a moment of silence and and and really I felt...I felt...I mean this was the moment where we...a decision had to be made about the life of a human being and then he said to me, sir, could you guarantee that this is a mistake of the German police, and I said by all means. Now he knew that I was lying and I knew that he knew that I was lying, but then he took a stand, admitted to the United Kingdom, because he knew that if not, something terrible could have happened to him, so this uh...he saved his life.

**Q: We need to stop right here.**

A: Well, the second story I would like to tell because it had a very interesting, human aspect is uh under the rules and regulations, uh we were not allowed to bring in children over the http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.age of uh seventeen and uh therefore we we not only prepared the uh papers and the lists, we checked carefully everything so that we shouldn't have any problems coming to England. On one of the transports uh when I was the leader of that group uh uh we had a problem because uh usually we uh when we landed in in...when we got to uh \_\_\_\_\_\_, Holland, we put the children into their bunks and the ferries then took us from \_\_\_\_\_\_, Holland, to Harwich which was a trip of approximately six hours, sometimes a very rough crossing of the Channel, but for us, for the escorts, uh there was no time to relax because we had to prepare our lists and our papers for the next morning for the landing in Harwich and in England in order to make it easy for the immigration, to help them. So we were sitting in a lounge uh doing this kind of work, treated nicely by the crew of that ferry to tea and cookies uh and all of a sudden a friend of mine approached me and said uh uh...who was also an escort...said there is a problem. I said what's the problem. He said this boy here has passed his seventeenth birthday. He is definitely eighteen years old. I said I can't believe it. He said look at this. So I looked at this and sure enough, found out and had confirmed that he had completed his seventeenth birthday, so the question was how to handle the situation, and there were two opinions. One was to throw ourselves at the mercy of the immigration officer and tell him that there was a mistake, an honest mistake, and appeal to his uh uh sense of fairness, if you want, which certainly uh could endanger the boy because uh he could say no, I am not allowed uh to to admit him. But first I said, let us see the boy who it is. Uh we asked the boy to come down from his bunk, and when I saw him I almost fainted because it turned out that he had just been released from a concentration camp. His head was shaven and he was shaking uh because he realized that something was wrong. We asked him how old are you and sure enough, the uh date reflected on this card was correct. He was already eighteen years old. So as I told you, for in this deliberation what to do, the group uh...the one group uh thought we should we should inform and stick with the date and and let it pass, hoping that the immigration would have mercy on us, and the other group, and I belonged to them, thought it would be easier to say that the Germans had made a mistake when then entered the birth date, but also tell the boy that he has to lie in his own interest, and the boy understood this very well. So we told him that that was...the majority then came to the conclusion they uh try to convince immigration of a mistake. And one of our escorts, a teacher, said well, we have to try to program this boy, even during the night have to wake him up to tell that he has to confirm that he is one year younger than the paper says. We came to Harwich. Didn't take long. Uh I was called...Mr. Wolheim to immigration office. I want to see you. What's the problem? He said sir, we have a problem, the immigration officer said, because uh I cannot admit this this lad, he said, because he is over seventeen years. I said I I can't believe it. I said ask him, so that boy came, shaking, pale, but when the immigration officer saw him with his shaven head, somehow happened to him...I could feel, I could see it...so he asked me what is your explanation here. I said uh the police made a mistake and he said well, the German police is not known for easily making mistakes, and my reaction was to tell, well the police is not the same police you are knowing from the old days. Many Nazis just on account of party affiliation have entered the service and they are not of the same quality as before, and I'm http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.fully convinced that is so what the boy said, that he is seventeen years old, so he looked at me and he looked at the boy for quite some time and I...it was minutes uh uh just sounded like eternity and then he turned to me and said sir, can you guarantee the fact that the German police has a mis...has made a mistake, and immediately I answered yes sir. I can do it. So he knew that I was lying, and I knew that he knew that I was lying. He looked again at the boy, took a stand, and stamped admitted to the United Kingdom and in this way he saved a human life.

**Q: Can you tell us now what happened to you when the war broke out?**

A: Well, when the war broke out we uh we uh uh...when I say we I mean it means also myself...lived with the expectation that they might do something, the Nazis, take us into to labor camps \_\_\_\_\_, being afraid that uh we might endanger the German war efforts, who knows. All kind of crazy things were possible, but but nothing happened. I continued my work uh for the uh central office in in Berlin, for the Central Jewish Office in Berlin, for a certain while. We had still a couple of small transports going to Denmark, to the \_\_\_\_\_ center, but this fizzled out soon, and then I was asked to take over the administration of the vocational training uh schools, uh the the...this organization uh had set up, especially outside of Berlin...carpentry, plumbing, metal work and so on. These were very good schools uh uh and let...by Jewish and non-Jewish teachers. Helped very much uh children to acquire vocational training, and so I also had to travel to a certain extent in Germany which was not easy at this time but I still...it was it was possible. And uh then uh uh in in the summer of '41, uh in the course of the uh events and especially uh after uh uh...after uh Germany was successful in Poland and in France and in in in Norway, and had taken over all these countries and occupied them, uh there started what we called the the final solution also in Germany, especially in Berlin, and uh then I came to the conclusion that uh it's better to stay away from work in the central office because there was nothing we could do any more for our for our Jewish people, and I had the the feeling and I want to be careful in this respect, that we more or less uh would be in the danger to be more helpers to the Nazis than than to do what what was necessary to do in the Jewish interest, though I realized fully that all these leaders, devoted men, most of them had become martyrs, tried to do their best to save Jewish lives, but uh uh there was nothing anymore to be done, so I decided to to become separated from the work for the for the rest...\_\_\_\_ call them...of Jews in Germany and I uh uh had to uh report to an office which distributes uh distributed uh Jewish workers in in...for forced labor. In other words, the uh Jews who had lost their jobs and who could not work any more in in in offices and so they were drawn into all kinds of work, digging work, transport work, uh uh factory work, whatever it was, because also on account of the uh disappearing manpower of of Germany, they needed us for this. That's what we thought. So uh I was uh uh...I reported that I was a welder, so I was uh then uh sent to a firm, to a German firm in Berlin uh which had a Jewish group which means at this time uh Jews could not work as individuals. Jews could only work in groups and the people who had taken on these groups had to provide special facilities, special toilets and so, so that Jews and non-Jews didn't mix. And uh this group I I joined certainly not voluntarily but http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.but uh the special problem was that this was a factory which was located in the eastern part of Berlin, uh the northeastern part of Berlin. I was living at this time on the west and it was a long way to the factory and I had to get up between four thirty and five o'clock in the morning in order to make it on time. Uh this was also the time when the first uh air raids started of the British air uh air force against Berlin, so uh during the so-called alarms, when I was at home we were...had to take shelter in a basement. Jews were separated there also from from non-Jews and later we realized that these basements certainly didn't give any kind of protection, but this is actually what was done. But also in that factory, uh Jews were were pressed into service uh for for as...not air raid wardens but uh uh uh a group to uh to uh fight fires or whatever it is if something should happen, so that uh very often I didn't come home uh uh for for almost two days, didn't know what was going on at home. Uh in in in November '39, by the way, uh my wife and I had our child...a boy was was born and uh since we had not uh...yeah...I forgot to tell that certainly at the beginning of the war, Jews were not allowed anymore to have a telephone or have radio, so I was not...was not was not able to communicate with them, so uh so uh uh that means very often, especially after an air raid and if it was a heavy air raid, I didn't know what happened to my family and my family didn't know what happened to me, and uh then in the summer of '41, there started what we called the final solution. Uh we...in Berlin the head of the Jewish community was called to the Gestapo and he was told that (clearing throat)...excuse me...that for a thousand people uh apartments should be made available uh and uh the uh the people should uh should assemble in a synagogue uh and not be accommodated at another place. Now I think I overlooked one thing, that uh also in September '41 there started...laws were promulgated to force Jews to wear a yellow badge, and from this time on...that was September '41. By the way, it was also the time when no immigration was possible from Germany anymore. Even during the war in the first part, there was still certain possibilities to come to America via Portugal or later after the campaign in Poland, via Siberia, by train through \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but in September '41 this this was over and uh what I'm also sorry I forgot to say that we tried very hard but the German...the American Consulate uh with which I was registered uh asked us very late to uh to uh to uh get our papers, our affidavits, but that was not easy to get in America and also the the Consulate stopped very early to process applications. It also set conditions which were impossible. More can be read about this in the book of David \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ about the abandonment of the Jews. The American bureaucracy at this time was not very helpful to save people it could have saved. Now uh in connection with the with the promulgation of the laws about the about the yellow badge, there uh other restrictions started. We were not allowed anymore to uh to use certain streets. We were not allowed to uh to uh to buy and to go shopping, only at certain hours. We certainly...we couldn't see a movie or our theater and uh uh any...we were were also...we had to to place the Star of David at the outside of our of our doors in the in the apartments. So life became became became more and more uh difficult, almost impossible. We still tried to uh get to...I, for instance, saw friends if possible and we uh we uh...and my parents lived in the easter part of Berlin and we, as I said before, in the western part and certainly my parents were very much interested and also the parents of my wife, to see our boy but uh http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.when we were not allowed to uh to uh use the public transportation, we even walked that way which was two and a half or three hours. Now at the beginning we did it. Later we did it under the protection of darkness which was dangerous, uh uh hiding the Star and then at least to give our parents to see to see us and and the boy (clearing throat) because uh uh communications over the telephone and so didn't exist. Uh in in the course of of of that time, the restrictions became became became became more uh rigid and also then uh to come back to that order to the heads of the Jewish community, not to make room for the people who had to uh make their apartments available, to provide them with other shelter...there started the first deportations to the east. Uh we were not fully aware what...and I I uh uh uh tried to get information wherever I could, but uh don't forget that at this time you had no public press anymore. Uh uh the press was completely controlled. There were no letters to the editor or free speech or free writing and so and certainly the press did not report about anything like that so it were mostly rumors you had follow in in order to find out what was going on, but the deportations started first with the with the deportations of elderly people who were not uh in the in the...part of the forced labor program, because they considered them as uh as disposable and so transports went to first to to the ghetto in Lodz, or what they called, what they called, the Germans, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and other places like Riga, Kovno, Minsk, and some of these transports, as we know from from from information later, never arrived. I uh uh uh...it's difficult to say how did I react. I know we were exposed to a development over which we had no control. I realized that uh all my attempts to save myself and my family, or to save my family and myself had been in vain and, therefore, we we had to take whatever, whatever...I can...only had to hope that uh the military operations would result in a defeat of Germany and that only in the course of that defeat we could hope to be free again, so that means all our...it was my thinking about survival was to see that that uh Germany was defeated. Uh certainly there were, especially at the beginning, uh many of our friends and somehow we still tried to meet and exchange uh information about the military situation and so we were convinced that Germany was invincible, and there was not only of...then when you read today the the reports which came out from the father of of Joe Kennedy, he also thought more or less that uh uh uh the western world is...and Russia is defeated and that uh Germany will be will be victorious. Uh but we uh...I pers....personally must say uh I was a great believer in in in whatever Churchill said. Not whatever, but but his way of of telling the the people, you know, we will we will never surrender. We will fight at the beaches. We will fight wherever we...we will never surrender. This gave me hope. Also my expectation that one day uh public opinion in in America, which was rather isolationist, might change and become aware that Germany is not only a danger for Europe but also for for for America in the long run, so uh and also that that especially after Germany uh attacked Russia, that there was a certain parallel for anybody who knew history, that when Napoleon tried to uh to uh to fight Russia, that was end of his of his Empire, so I I was convinced that uh in spite of all the the military might Germany had developed, that uh uh it could not last. The question only was how long? And in this respect also I...how did did I know. We were cut off from the world. We we couldn't see uh uh any any news objectively. Whatever we saw in the headlines...and by the way we were not even allowed http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.to to buy a paper. A neighbor of mine brought me a paper once in a while, but that was all regulated \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and uh only the suc...the success was reported but defeat were not. But uh then when I was in in this in this labor gang, if I may call it, and uh the attacks by the air force became stronger after Hitler had proclaimed and \_\_\_\_\_ had proclaimed already that the British were defeated. It gave me no hope, and my wife also the same way, that in the long run uh uh uh there must come a turn, and uh then uh especially when when when the military uh events uh changed the whole situation by the defeat of Rommel in Africa and especially after the defeat of Stalingrad. Uh this gave me a tremendous hope and gave all of us a tremendous hope, but this was a time already when one transport after the other left, for instance, Berlin, and the question was how long will it...when when when will when will the sword come down on us. Uh I had uh uh in this labor gang in which...where we were working, there was one member, a Jewish fellow who worked with us, who was uh what we called a privileged Jew. That means he didn't have to carry the the yellow badge, the Star of David, because he was married to a non-Jewess and their children were educated as as uh Christians, so he had still the right to uh to keep a radio, and with him we could arrange...I say with him, with some friends in that labor gang, that during the night he should get up and certainly that was something which was uh...the threat of death penalty if he would be caught...to listen to BBC London and and and to the German service to find out what the situation was. He did it under the condition that we would provide him in the black market with with coffee because he said when he had to get up during the night and he couldn't find sleep immediately, in the morning he was dead tired so he needs real coffee in order to survive the day. This we could do. And I I...I said I was one of them who was instrumental in this, so every morning when we came, he whispered to us what he had heard during the night, and in this respect uh we, or I was fully familiar with the progress of uh the Russian army in Stalingrad and of the other defeat of the 6th German army under \_\_\_\_ in Stalingrad and especially when when when it came to an end with the with the loss of approximately three hundred thousand German soldiers, so the question came, how long will they be able? Would that mean the end of it and how fast would would the end came. Uh but uh uh on the other hand, uh the the the Nazis, in spite of of uh these military developments, continued with their deportations. In December 1942, my parents were deported. Uh I was...on the way home I tried to to see them. Then I was told that uh uh the Gestapo had come, had taken them on short notice. Uh later I found out that they were in a collection center which was in the former Jewish old age home. I was able to get them some food, prayer book and so on, but then in a short time they were...this uh uh home was was cleaned out and later then I found out that my parents, blessed memory, were were in one of the first transports which went from Berlin directly, directly to Auschwitz, and certainly in Auschwitz uh uh uh they they obviously got murdered the the first uh moment when they arrived.

**Q: How did you feel when they were taken? http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.**

A: When they were taken? Certainly I felt lost and and and call it depressed, but still I must say my my power of resistance was still there because I had...together with my wife, we had...call it we made a pledge, call it an oath, whatever it is...that we will not try...we will not give in, that whatever the circumstances, we will try to to to hold out. And and and uh uh though we we have no means to communicate with the outside world, with relatives and friends left in the western world, and so being alone and and but still uh this spark of life was still there, that uh in spite of everything that we will try to to remain alive, last not least to tell the tale, to tell our story later. Still we didn't know at this time about Auschwitz, so when I came to the apartment and and a neighbor of my parents told me, told us, certainly I I I was I was shocked. More than shocked, and and and it was almost...uh it didn't sink in immediately, that this...that I would never see them again, and that this this was the last...when they were when they were taken away, we couldn't manage to see them in the old age home, because this was closely guarded by the by the SS, so uh it didn't occur to me immediately, but certainly it affected me, but I said to myself I do not like to to that this bad news, the terrible news should overcome you or should should should paralyze me. I would like...I would I would try whatever I can to survive, to survive this monster, and uh uh I think this is the spirit which which certainly I've tried to carry forward and also later, so uh when when...that was in December uh and then I think it was early in February, after the defeat in in in Stalingrad, \_\_\_\_\_\_ made a speech to which I listened inofficially, because as I told you, we were one of the last to have a radio...when he said well, uh uh certainly Stalingrad could not deny that this was some kind of a defeat, but now uh it...the time has come for the totalitarian...total war and uh the time has come also to uh to uh uh make a final uh...to to get even with the with the domestic enemy, with the internal enemy, and he used a certain expression which is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which means now uh people arise and storm uh uh uh...start in other words to uh to uh...like like uh I think it was as a parallel in history like uh in Paris in 1870 when the the \_\_\_\_ I think they call it...to to have an uprising of the people in order to save Hitler and the the regime. And uh soon thereafter, and I was still working in that labor gang and it was still \_\_\_\_\_\_, and though America had entered already the war, uh we didn't feel the effect of it immediately because they had to get installed in England and they had started with the first air raids, but not towards Berlin. Uh and then my sister was also supposed to be deported but since she was a (clearing throat) skilled stenographer and writer, they took her out to do secretarial service in the collection center, so she was able to help me to get something to my parents there. Uh and then we were...uh one transport after the other left Berlin. Some cards...post cards, interesting enough, arrived from the people who had managed to throw post cards out of their wagons and none of them certainly knew exactly where they were going. We heard rumors about uh...and I heard rumors about uh uh events in Poland, about the the attack, about the ghettos, about the murder uh uh...the uh killing actions in in these areas, but don't forget (clearing throat) that all this could not be confirmed. This was just to the same extent that I asked my friend who listened to to to the radio, to BBC, what does BBC London say, and he said uh nothing. There is a certain uh uh uh appeal or certain address which was delivered by \_\_\_\_\_\_ where he indicated that uh Jews were taken away from France and so, but no hard facts http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.are available, and uh I also uh still had contact with my people of the of the Jewish organization, and when I had a chance I saw the head of that, at this time was Paul Epstein (ph) and we exchanged some more information, but all the information only said that there is a turn, but but we came to the conclusion (clearing throat) for the Jewish situation in Germany, it anyhow might come too late. And uh uh then in in uh at the end of February, early in March, uh from one day to the other, Berlin was was...there there started...there was...came the end of the so so-called final solution. The SS, interesting enough, the elite SS called the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of Hitler, occupied in the morning all factories where Jews were working in these groups, and certainly for them it was easy to get to to them, because they were working in groups. I for one reason or the other had been advised the night before...said stay home. You never know what's going on, and I was staying home, and uh then uh a neighbor came running and said I just heard they have taken away my husband. He was working there and there and don't know where he is. It's terrible. What is your...what what what can you do? There's nothing. You just have to to wait and see. So I tried to read and to to to to even write a letter to a friend in Sweden, because with Sweden there was still...since it was neutral uh you could have still uh an exchange of letters though it was censored, so uh uh and then uh uh in the afternoon of that day, two uh uh policemen who were members of the Gestapo came and told us that uh uh we we are under custody and we uh we uh in ten minutes we should leave. Now in connection with all these transports, my then wife uh had prepared a knapsack with all kinds of things we thought would be helpful when we would go to the east to some kind of a labor camp and so what we expected, and had some some uh underwear and some books and the bible and and a chess set and so on, and certainly things for the for the boy, and uh had that ready so in order to grab it whenever whenever the occasion would arise. And uh as I say in that afternoon they came, and gave us ten minutes and my son was sleeping, so we managed somehow to...we all, after all, spoke the same language, to tell them after all we have to get him ready and should give us some time and uh with some hesitation they said alright, we'll wait. To talk to them was almost impossible. Uh uh I tried but uh I knew it was dangerous because for these were people who were fanatic Nazis and and and they took...uh take out their wrath against you on the spot. They had the right to kill you on the spot and nobody...nobody would would take them uh to court for that. So uh then we took our knapsacks and we took our son and and and then we went down. We were living in an in an apartment in the back of a big building and uh uh when we came down we saw a truck uh surrounded by SS guards with rifles. It certainly was not a pleasant...pleasant uh uh moment, because we certainly didn't know what was going to happen. And uh then we were...when we were ascended this truck and saw other Jewish people because they all had the star and they all had the same destiny that their husbands had been taken but uh uh uh the...since they had the address of these people at home, they were picking up the people in their in their homes. Those they didn't found in the factories, they found at home and then we were cruising around in in in in Berlin. It was in March, early in March. It was cold. It was...it was raining. It was miserable and then they stopped and cruising and we were absolutely uncertain, but I had the wonderful feeling at least my wife and my son was with me. The others were in that unfortunate situation http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.that they were separated from their families and uh also I must say my then wife was in a rather good mood and let's say whatever will come, will come, as long as we can stay together, and uh then we were taken to a to a big place in the middle of the night. Don't forget that Berlin was completely blacked out on account of the air raid sit...of the air situation, and uh then from that big place we were transferred...transferred to another place uh where also my parents had been before. It's a collection point. Also in between we were released for a day or two to our apartment again uh uh and we could do something because we had uh red arm bands to help uh to to be...to bring some food to a place, but that was only very minor. There was nothing...nothing really where you could say uh you can help people. We were all exposed to the same...to the same danger. So uh uh and then uh uh again we were we were called in and we were taken in to that place in in the old age home, and on March 11, 1943, we were we were (clearing throat) made part of the transport. Interesting enough, two days before we became...and I became the witness of the first major air raid of the American air force against Berlin. As long as the British air force came, certainly I mean they had tried what they do, but they are...the the damage they were they were inflicting on on on the on the buildings in Berlin were rather minor, though they were there I mean and it was...you never knew where they would hit and what would be hit, and we were part of that, but when the American bombers came, I mean there was...there for the first time I realized that was a massive attack and you'll see when we when we uh looked around that Berlin was really burning, and we had to hope that the railway uh uh would be destroyed, but that didn't happen. And then on the 11...uh March 11th we were made part of of that transport. Uh we were taken together with...I think we were all in all a thousand people out of that uh collection point. Men...wo...men, women, children, elderly, young...and uh my sister was with me, with us and also luckily some of our friends from the youth movement and we tried to stick together. We were uh shipped to a freight yard within Berlin and there were forced to board one of these cattle cars, uh approximately I think a hundred people in a car, so we could could hard...we couldn't lie. We could hardly sit...mostly stand. There was just a hole for for for...there was a hole in the car for ventilation (clearing throat) and one bucket there for for hygiene purposes and uh...but still I would say that I, in spite of that, and also my then wife, had a feeling well, we'll take it...we can take it, because none of us uh was aware what was going to happen. Uh we didn't know where we were going. Uh I only noticed on my watch that exactly at four o'clock in the afternoon this train left and was moving east, because I was familiar with the geography of Berlin and Germany, so we know we were were uh going to the east, and uh as a matter of fact, uh since we were together with other other friends, in order to to not kill times but to somehow alleviate the situation within ourselves somehow started to sing Jewish songs we had uh learned uh uh in the in the youth movement. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. How nice is it to to be with friends, under those conditions. It's absurd today, you know, but you see this was still part of the of the mood we were in, and I remember that also my wife also wrote some of these cards which were very safe because you could throw them through the hole and sometimes they were picked up and people uh then mailed them. Uh it was Friday night and uh when it became dark, interesting enough, one of the ladies there uh aware of http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.this was a Friday night, uh took out some candles she had prepared, was lighting the candles, was bless...blessing the candles, and and and uh expressing the prayers, you know, to welcome the Sabbath, and you know, the...later very often thought about this, you know, what...how how absurd life can be that, you know, here there was a group, just a death wagon of a hundred people, most probably ninety percent of them did not live to see the next evening anymore, but still riding in that car, they were blessing God and welcoming uh the Sabbath, in that mobile uh prison going from Berlin to we still didn't know where. So we traveled all night and uh then I realized in the morning that we were going via Breslau (ph) in this area and uh uh came to Upper Salasia and uh then uh in the afternoon, almost twenty-four hours later, we uh we stopped in a kind of a railway station uh and there I saw for the first time written the name Auschwitz. I was not aware what Auschwitz was in spite of the fact that I had uh uh listened to to to BBC London, had tried to get all the information I could in Berlin. We knew about uh ghettos in Riga. We knew about the ghetto in in in Lodz. Auschwitz...I didn't know what it was. And uh obviously also at this time uh uh neither BBC London nor any other information uh sources, had any any concrete idea. Auschwitz was new. So uh uh when the train stopped uh they they they the doors was opened and we were all somehow stiff and so it was a cold night and so and so, but we were driven out. There were...there were SS guards with the with the uh uh uh sticks and uh yelling like animals, and uh beating people out of the cars. Uh there I also saw when we left our uh wagon that two of our people who were with us or three had committed suicide, so uh uh because they probably...it was it was too much for them, and then outside we were we were assembled on a platform. Uh we were ordered to leave all our uh belongings there, all our knapsacks we had prepared carefully and whatever it was remained there, and then they ordered us to uh line up in different groups, men, uh women with children, and women. And this was the moment when when when I was separated from my wife and my child, and this is where my wife then said well, this is the moment I have...I was...I will be...I was afraid of. As long as we were together...and sure enough uh uh this was the last uh uh day I have seen her and my child. We were lining up and uh uh there stand a man in a in a very elegant SS uniform. Later I came to understand it was Dr. Mengele, and uh when he approached he asked only how old are you, what's your profession, and then he directed people to the left or to the right with his thumb. And he asked me how old. What's your profession? I certainly did not say that I was an administrator or a law student. I said I was a welder, and he directed me to one group. I had lost track of my wife and my son, but then also what I saw and what was completely new to me was all of a sudden women in SS uniform with with their pistol holsters, you know, where they...the pistol uh dangling, and they also prepare...behaved like animals, and they uh uh uh were especially busy with the women with children and the elderly and then we saw uh and I saw people in in a certain uniform I had never seen before, with stripped clothing and peculiar kind of a of a of a cap, and uh so then trucks uh were were driving up and one group of people, especially the women with children and the elderly were put on one truck and we still had to wait and uh then this truck left and it so happened that my wife and my my my son had...they were sitting or were standing at the end of that truck, and my wife was somehow waving to me. And http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.that was the last I've seen of her. We had to wait and then were were were pressed into another truck, and though we thought it was full already they they uh they still pushed I don't know how many people into...it was less...it was worse than sardines. Uh and there certainly everywhere were SS guards. We tried to uh to uh to uh speak to them, but interesting enough they hardly spoke German because they were what they called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ which means ethnic Germans, but their main major language was Polish, but they had volunteered obviously for the SS and did this kind of duty. So we couldn't find out anything from them and then we were driven away from that railway station and passed by a tremendous uh uh area of industrial buildings. I don't know how many buildings we could see that was under construction. We couldn't understand what it was. We didn't know...after all, we still didn't know where we were. And uh then after having passed this area of industrial buildings, uh we entered...we...all of a sudden I saw a a camp surrounded by by barbed wire, with watch towers and SS guards with machine uh guns, machine pistols, and when we drove into this I said to my friends who were standing next to me from the youth movement and luckily we were still sticking together...may God help us to get out of here alive. So uh that's the moment when when we had arrived and I had arrived in Auschwitz. What happened to my wife and my son I did not know. The others didn't know what happened to their people, so and then we were ordered uh to descent this truck and and and uh were driven into to to some barracks and were ordered to undress completely, only to keep our our shoes, our glasses certainly, our belts and uh then the SS ordered us to take off our rings, our watches, whatever...and uh uh then we were were...I together with these other people and we were approximately I would say two hundred people in this in this group, from Berlin...uh were were led into a shower. We were not quite clear what what it was. It was cold. It was miserable but even later when we...when the water came down although it was cold it was somehow, it was...believe it or not some kind of a relief after this trip that we hadn't eaten. We had not...we were not in in very good shape, but in all tense (ph)...I I remember that everything that I...I said at this time to myself, register in your mind whatever is going on. With God's help one day you might be be be called to give evidence about that, so somehow I I tried and not to forget and uh then we...after that...in that...then we were in that shower. A man came also with a uniform, with a stripped uniform, and we asked him who are you and he said I'm from Hamburg. I am a political prisoner, a Jew but a political prisoner. I have taken part in the uh fight of the of the Spanish Republicans against Franco. I was caught there and and and and delivered by the Spanish to Germany. I am in the camp already four years. You have arrived in Auschwitz. The camp here is named Buna. You will be working for a big factory where they are trying to produce artificial rubber and it is under the under the administration of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for us had a special name. It was like DuPont in...or British British Chemical and so it was a tremendous firm. It's stocks were widely held, also by Jewish stockholders, so this is what you are going to do, and we asked what's about our chil...wives and children. He said don't ask about them because uh I can't tell you. We don't ask questions. We are here already. You are lucky that you came now. We, the old guards, the old timers, called old-timers are here already for years. We have gone through Buchenwald and Dachau and Saxonhausen and now Auschwitz, so http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.try to make your best. Try to be strong. Try to take it. Otherwise you are lost, and uh then after the shower was over, we we were given the same kind of uh dresses these people had. It was not fitting, you know...it was terrible. And some caps also with the same stripes, and then we were led to one of the barracks we had seen there in that camp and a man who called himself the elder, the block elder, blockaltester, block elder received us. He was a political prisoner who was uh allied with the communist party and so and had been caught very early, so he had already seven or eight years of imprisonment behind him, and he said I want you to be clean. I want you to \_\_\_\_ and so and we were then given our our beds, which means in this barracks there were rows of bunks, three tiers and there was...there was a thin blanket and the so-called mattress was a straw sack and uh and uh we were given to understand that this is our place where we can sleep. There was no place to leave your things. There was...there was uh no place uh to rest, to sit down, so uh...and then I realized that uh...the events were so fast and so over-bearing and so shocking that it was not possible for me to fully analyze what was going on, but uh I realized one thing that certainly uh I I...that the Nazis had tried to dehumanize me by taking away all my private...my most private things, my hair, my clothing, to make me a number and that I was degraded to to become a slave, that I was a prisoner, that uh I was not any more able to do what I wanted to do, that I had to uh follow uh orders...how nonsensical they were...and uh that that all this in the name, I said, of German civilization...I was puzzled. And also uh especially then came a little bit...got used to this...came to the realization that there was no way out because uh certainly the camp was was was surrounded by more than one fence of barbed wire, was electrically loaded, that to run away would be impossible and even if so, in a Polish area...it was still a Polish population where you don't know the language...was hopeless, so that the only hope which was there is to to live to to see uh that Germany was militarily defeated, and had surrendered.

**Q: I think we should stop here...\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. We're at a good stopping point. END OF TAPE 3 ...I had to get out and uh one of the first things you learn in a concentration camp...one of the first things was to to make your beds, and the Germans, the Nazis, in this respect uh they had an obsession for for for orderly uh bed building. It had to be done in a mathematical, straight fashion and since I I had the bunk on top I was the first to have to do it because other...the people...and I had to stand on the on the rim of the of the second tier and the first tier, so, therefore, I had to finish it first and then the others could do it. Now that was a thing, and then we were...I was treated to my first uh breakfast there which consisted of an awfully tasting coffee and a piece of bread and and that was all. Oh, a little piece of marg...of sausage or so...I don't know, but anyhow this first day was a day when when we were registered and and and also again people came and asked what was your profession and I stick...was sticking to my lie that all my life I have been nothing but a welder, because people had told me who had been in in a camp http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.before in the action that the Nazis despised tremendously any people looking somewhat intellectually or or professional or so the worst were the were the lawyers and and and when they found a lawyer they really...they they mistreated them very very badly. So I said I was a welder and then we got we got...uh I got my number, which was 107984. Uh we had to...I had to...I got some patches of of of stuff of linen and and had to to sew it on my uniform, and also then uh somebody came and tattooed this number on my left arm, so uh that means I I I...and I still have that...uh which means that you were completely uh uh...you were...you have become a number and one of the first things I said to myself is I would like to become not a number. I had a number but I'd like not to become a number, so still there was that spirit of resistance if possible. And then on that first day also I I went through something which never uh uh experienced before, what they call appell. The Germans and the Nazis, they are in this respect and especially at this time, they had obstinent appell, you know, and counting was one of their hobbies. Uh and they had it at least twice a day, so we were all led to a big place, a big square and there we had to line up...our block...in in rows of five and had to wait until an SS man came, and there were...were the head of the camp, the SS that was...the SS stormfurher which means captain. Uh since it was cold, he had the privilege of wearing a nice fur coat, uh a military fur coat, so we were counted again and again and again, and uh uh then uh the next day, it was the first day when when when I was I was uh uh commanded, after the appell in the morning, to go to a certain kommando they called it, working...working uh squad or working platoon, and uh the newcomers had no choice. They were attached to a very special one. I only later I found this one of the kommands to uh to wear us down, to grind us down, uh which we called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the the killing...killing kommando, the murder kommando, uh number four. So then we uh we we we we walked out, again in military order, uh always five because that was easier to count. We were counted at the uh square before. We were counted when we marched out and at this time the SS uh uh guards were walking with us left and right, so uh in other words each kommando had so and so many SS guards attached to them, and uh it was quite a....quite a distance we walked and uh...well, I was still able to do that. Of course I had still a certain strength in me, and then uh uh then we were...we entered the factory area where where you had these num...numerous buildings there under construction. Uh streets were not completed. There was a lot of mud, \_\_\_\_ soil, especially since it was a cold morning, it was all flour (ph) and we had...we had just the this very thin kind of dress and and and it was not easy and uh then I was led together with the others uh to a certain place where we had to unload uh uh uh railway wagons of metal and cement and so on. And this was done mostly uh not in an ordinary way, but running. I mean metal...you cannot...big beams you cannot transport by running but but for instance when you have a sack of cement, then they wanted you to run because it had to be fast. And also for the first time I became acquainted with an institution I didn't know uh uh before, that each kommando had a a a inmate leader called kapo. Where this term originated I don't know. I have never found out. It comes from Italy somehow. Uh but they called it kapo and it has been...had entered the the language of the concentration camps, so you had a kapo as the leader of the...and he had certain foremans to to to help him, especially in bigger kommands, http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.bigger bigger bigger kommandos, but then you had the SS also so they all then uh uh were around us to to watch what we are doing and how we are doing it, that it went fast enough and so on. And uh I remember that on that first day uh when we were when we were doing this kind of work and I had done part of it in Berlin so it was not completely new to me...I I saw that one Jewish fellow of another kommando uh throw himself in front of a locomotive of a small uh engine to commit suicide so that was the first that I I saw there uh and it was the first which was followed by many many more. So uh when it came to uh to uh to uh the so-called lunch break, some trucks came with some watery soup which was called buna (ph) soup because the name of that factory was Buna and it was provided by the firm which they think was a tremendous uh tremendous gain for us. It was very often absolutely stinking and and and consisted of nothing but just water uh uh with some some vegetable remnants or so. It's awful. And so uh and since...and also we had...there was...yeah...one of our possessions was uh a bowl which you always had to carry with us. That was your only possession and a spoon. When we we got the soup, we couldn't sit down and so it all has to be...had to eaten standing up and then after a short while the the work continued up to the very end of the day. So at the beginning...I mean it was hard but but but I also considered bearable, but then, you know, not a couple of days later...was early in March, uh terrible rain storms hit the area and the area became muddier than before so the work became more difficult, especially when you have to carry these cement bags. That was not...the paper was not of the best quality so they very often broke and when you mix cement with water, you know, it it becomes very hard caked and it was setting also on your clothing and so...now the other problem was that I couldn't change...change the clothing. I I I...there was no way to clean yourself. There was so-called washroom but the washroom was there for hundreds of people. To get to the faucets was almost impossible, so to keep clean was one of the most difficult things, and also there was always the danger uh that you you would acquire lice which then would would uh result in typhus. So how to keep clean I don't know, but anyhow that that was one of the problems and also, you know, you certainly you didn't need a a a comb anymore because you had no hair, but you even didn't also didn't have a towel. You had...really you had practically...you were devoid of any things uh uh which makes fundamentals of of life. Who speaks about about books and paper and and...it didn't exist, simply did not exist. You were really uh a slave. You were rented out by the SS to \_\_\_\_\_\_. I was, therefore, a slave working uh uh uh for the benefit of the SS for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I was aware of the fact that I was allowed to live only as long as I as I was able to do this kind of work. The moment I became weak or the moment I would I would uh contract any any illnesses and so that was the end, so therefore I I also tried very hard to uh to keep myself clean but, of course, I mean especially when you had these rains and you came back in the evening and the the uh the uh so-called uniform was was covered with with the cement dust. You went to bed and you were you were wet. Everything was wet. So how to sleep under those conditions I don't know, but but, you know, obviously human beings can can can can can can tolerate a lot. Uh many of our people...I wouldn't say many...some of our people simply said enough is enough and uh I remember distinctly that that uh uh starting the third or fourth day uh certain of the people who were also in our transport and http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.were still in that same kommando, simply when we were walking out of the camp, ran what they called \_\_\_ so the person had ran away, tried to ran away and then the SS started to shoot immediately and shooting him to death. Uh and the SS loved to do that because for any for any victim I think they were paid at this time twenty or twenty-five marks and a bottle of of of cognac and so on and a day or two of rest. And I remember for instance we were walking uh one one morning. It was the fourth or fifth morning. A father was walking with his son and the father then when we were out of the camp, gave the rest of his bread and whatever he had to his son and said uh uh I don't need it any more, gave it to his son, ran out in order to be shot, in the presence of his son. And uh uh uh this I saw. These first days uh especially became the the worst I would say in my life and very often when we came home, you know, we...after you came back from the factory, you were counted again. You were counted when you entered the camp. You were counted again in the evening, and uh this sometimes could last uh hours and hours because Germany was the place where where let us say where where scientists work on mathematics and make progress, but these people were not good in math, and very often when the when the when the numbers didn't didn't didn't jive, we had to wait and and and and they did not uh let us uh let us go before everything was was just just right to the last man, so it happened, for instance, I remember that one evening of the fourth or the fifth, one of the men of my transport just collapsed in front of us. Uh we he was a cantor, a man I knew well because I had attended his service. Weisman (ph) was his name. A wonderful, powerful voice, and and and and well, highly-educated man. He collapsed and when the appell was taken and the SS man came and kicked him with his with his foot and he could hardly move and uh then when the appell was...when the roll call was over, uh we decided we had to take him to the so-called uh emergency..the krackenbaugh, the hospital and uh it was not easy for us to carry him but we did it because we thought it's the only way to help him, and then on the way, which was quite a long way over there at the end of the uh place, he expired and he died in our hands and uh uh this was, I must say, the first uh casualty I witnessed of somebody I knew well, and then from this day on, many many things happened because the resistance, the power of resistance somehow evaporated. How I did it I don't know. I I thought out all kind...I I also felt that I I became weaker. As a matter of fact, one morning I fainted and my good friends uh lifted me up and the whole day was difficult for me. Uh but I somehow managed. It was one of these miracles, but uh but uh uh after one month I would say, from the two hundred and twenty or so we had been when we were newcomers, only I think a hundred and fifty had survived, but to save the other's place, later, after liberation when I tried to find out how many of our transport had survived, of the thousand who had left Berlin, not more than six, and I am one of those. So uh uh I myself asked the question, how long would I be able to to to tolerate that and uh also uh we were cut off. We didn't know what what was the latest on the front. We were waiting for the second front and didn't know any...hear anything because we were cut off from any news. We didn't hear anything about uh what was going on on the eastern front, so I said how long can it last. And I remember that one moment then when I went to the toilet, I found a piece of newspaper that probably an SS man had left there, and it so happened that I took into my...you know, pockets I http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.didn't have, but...yeah...was hiding it under my underwear and and, you know, we had to be careful to to to handle this and it so happened when I was in the block with my friends I said watch that somebody should discover us and uh I read it and it so happened that was a piece with the report of the of the German Wiermacht saying that they had been driven out of Krackow (ph) which gave me an idea that the front, the Russian front, was advancing, but more I didn't know, but somehow it it added again, you know, to the spark of life and uh then uh there was another day when I almost lost uh my my my uh belief that I would be able to make it. In our group was a man who uh uh was very active also in our youth movement. He uh was uh uh a Jewish civil employee, and he was a man with a beautiful voice. He had studied music because he wanted to become a cantor, and he had been in another kommando and uh I met him and he was desperate. I said to him uh...his name was Fritz Shafer (ph)...uh what happened. He said I've had enough. I can't take it any longer. I said what are you going to do. He said I have uh...I was sick. I went to the hospital. After three days they threw me out. I can hardly stand on my feet and I don't like to be to be to be kicked to death, so I'd rather take my own life, so I argued with him. I said Fritz, how can you do it. Think what we have gone through. Think what we have been taught. How can you take your own life. After all, you are observant Jew. It's un-Jewish. He said, this is my decision. I don't want to be to be to be kicked to death, because what happened here...for this there is no provision in the bible and in in our scriptures, and the next day I heard in the morning whatever shooting going on during the night. Very often the SS guards on the tower, they were sometimes shooting because...to keep themselves awake let us say, and they could order you...they had these Jews that they saw something in there for the...it was suspicious and therefore they were firing, so uh so we heard shooting constantly, and next day somebody said you know, did you hear the shooting this morning. I said yes, what happened. They said your friend, Fritz Shafer...he uh he uh he tried to be admitted to the to the hospital again. They didn't accept him, so he said under those conditions I I \_\_\_\_ went against the...you know, this was one of the ways in which people also put an end to their misery. They went to the to the wire and then the fellow from the the gangster from the...the SS gangster from the watch tower was shooting because that was his order, so he went to the wire in order to be shot and and that's what happened. And I remember it still...it was on April 3rd, 1940...'43, soon after we arrived. Uh so when I heard this, I must say I I I I was almost lost because I had lost a battle and I saw the parallel and I was uh said...asking myself how long will we all be able to make that, and then uh one day or two days later, all of a sudden there was uh uh a special roll call that people should register again their their their uh profession, so that gave me another hope and uh there was what they called the labor service, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Again registered and I registered myself again as welder. The uh reason was that the Germans had lost on account of Stalingrad a lot of manpower, had uh uh inducted into the army also skilled labor, so they were short of labor, and obviously were interested to to now somehow in our in our skill, if you want to. So I I I uh registered. Nothing came out of it but somehow it gave me some hope, and there was another event which uh was of immense importance. All the time when when I was there at the beginning, we were constantly under the under the supervision of the SS gangsters, and they http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.were brutal, brutal, brutal uh uh beings. I cannot say human beings. So uh uh even, you know, when you wanted to go to the toilet and so you had you had to to to honor by taking off your cap and asking for permission, for his permission and so on and what they did in order to play around was very often to take, when you when you take off your cap, take the cap and throw it away and when the moment when you...when the people went to get, to collect the cap, then the SS man was shooting him on the pretense that he was trying to uh to uh to uh run away, so uh that...and this this was the uh the situation the first couple of weeks. Also in connection with the Stalingrad defeat uh they then came to the conclusion that they wanted to save manpower and they organized the uh the uh guards in such a way that they were surrounding completely the whole area of that industrial complex, so that when we marched out, when we got into into into the factory area, the SS stayed outside uh keeping guard out...yeah, keeping guard outside but we marched in only with the kapos. And that alleviated certainly the situation somehow because then the kapos in order to keep their pos...their position who were very, very rough with their own people...they were mostly German criminals and and anti-social elements and so they then were not not not provoked anymore by the SS to to to become tougher with the...so this helped somehow, but still it was no no no no solution and and as I say, I I I I thought what what...still I was able to move but but I said something has to had to be done. For instance, we were then...I was put in another kommando under the command of a kapo who was a Polish criminal. He had committed one or two murders uh and and he was such a human being the only regret he had that he had waited too long to murder his wife and his mother-in-law, so uh so uh and he was taking...he was not sent...sentenced to death for one reason or the other because uh...so uh he was a kapo there and he had uh used the foul language especially in Polish, because he was also was also one of these ethnic Germans who didn't know exactly where they belonged. You know, they they they they they had a double standard. They wanted to be Germans, and at the same time uh uh they wanted to to remain with their fellow Poles, so uh...and he he uh he was the head of a digging kommando, and that was also that was that that uh he was called in a German expression was Juden Franz (ph). Franz is a German name, but Juden Franz was Jew Franz he got because he was a grinder of Jews. He had shown so many Jewish uh casualties on his conscious. And he would always say, well I had to do it in order to enforce the \_\_\_\_, and we were not protected. There was no protected because not only had I lost my my my name and my hair and my clothing and my family...I also had had lost completely my my right to claim any human rights. And uh that's what certainly these these people, these gangsters knew very well that there was no protection and uh then one day uh the uh the uh...we were called again to the labor office, again for registration, but this time in the presence of a representative of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. And again we were asked what is your uh uh profession, name...uh not name, number and profession, and I said welder. He was somehow doubtful, for what reasons, but uh then he asked me certain technical questions and I was able to answer them, and then uh uh two days later I was transferred into a kommando where I I got out of this grinding work of transport, digging, and all this and uh was attached to what they call a German meister (ph) uh and uh uh the work was...and it was a great help...was to clean big plates which were used in the uh gasoline http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.columns which had come in order to uh to be installed in the in the factory. That gave me a chance somehow to to to to rest a little bit in between because I was not under the super...this the kapo there was a political prisoner from from \_\_\_\_\_ so uh I could recover a little bit. The only thing which I dreaded very much that because of that I was transferred also into another lager, to another barracks and had not the daily contact with my friends there who were still doing work and as I in that terrible kommando there. Well, uh so uh uh especially, as I say, uh uh at the beginning uh life or the day in in Auschwitz was simply a day of getting up, starting to run, uh being exposed to uh to uh the whim of the blockaltester or kapo, so hardly be able to to sit, uh watching what what what uh left and right uh what what was happening so that it shouldn't happen to you and especially uh to to try to to do the work, which was not work, which was really slave work reminding you somehow of the illustrations you saw in the \_\_\_\_\_ when the Jews in in Egypt were building the pyramids. Uh it, as I say, it improved somehow, and I felt at least the improvement uh when when when the SS guards were taken away...**

**Q: At that point did you make a decision to try to ration your energy very carefully? How soon did you do that...**

A: Especially when I when when I came to the conclusion that what little I had, I had to to stretch out my energy. For instance, there was...I don't know if it's right, but I got the bread in the morning. I didn't eat it immediately. I kept a little bit and kept it in my pocket somehow so that they say, when when it's drier, then it has more nourishing value, or one instance I tried to uh to uh to uh...especially after the SS was taken away from the kommandos, to go to the to the toilet unobserved as often as possible to have to have a minute of rest, or for instance uh you know, uh uh we had as tool only our bowl and a and a and a and a spoon. Now I came to the conclusion in order to cut the bread...we had no knives certainly. That was dangerous for the Germans, for the German state. Uh I sharpened part of that of that spoon so that it was easier somehow to cut in order to save energy and and and this...and also uh uh uh what I tried in spite of all obstacles to to to remain clean. Uh because I realized that the moment I would give in, that could be the end easily, so uh uh and then when I was working for that first German meister, uh uh who was who was more or less pleasant, uh uh because he treated me not as an inmate, as a heftling, as a slave. He treated me as somebody who was like a helper or uh...not in his category but as a helper and uh then I tried, you know, to sit down as often as possible and to to relax to to...whenever I could and not to exert myself, do anything special, certainly not to run anymore and so to try to to to walk in a way that that I don't consume too much ener...energy. Uh after a certain while I lost that job because there was a conflict between \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and the and the and the \_\_\_\_\_\_ which was doing this kind of work and uh then I was uh uh handed over to another fellow who...as a welder...uh the German meister who came from Saxony (ph) and he was a first class worker, but his religion as you have it very often in in Germany...his whole religion was work. He didn't understand anything about politics. His politics was work. He didn't like it. He didn't like the war but this doesn't affect it. He was just...as long as he could work, and he was http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.very proud in his work, so at the beginning it was not so easy because I was not an accomplished welder, but I tried to learn from him and he realized that and I must say in all fairness, he treated me like an equal. And when he saw that I made progress in whatever he wanted me to do, then he gave me some cigarettes uh which I didn't use certainly because I then bartered the cigarettes for bread which was very important, also to to get up some more energy. And uh uh so uh also what was a tremendous advantage, that uh when I worked with him I could work under a roof so that the elements...I was not exposed to the elements. I also remember that uh when I entered this building where I worked then, I for the first time in weeks I saw a mirror, and I looked myself into the mirror and I was aghast. I was simply...I I I mean this was the worst, one of the worst things I must say that happened to me. I didn't recognize myself anymore, certainly without hair, unshaven you know, because we had a chance only to to be shaven once a week, and I said for goodness sake, what happened to you. Uh uh but still the fact that I was somehow now in a better position helped me tremendously and and I was still felt sorry that for my other friends that they having no skill and having nothing to offer in this respect were not able to alleviate their situation somehow, and uh so I I I worked with this man for a certain while and again then something changed uh because because uh uh uh they wanted to have welders in in in in the camp directly. There was a welder kommando and the Buna was constantly expanding and at the beginning when I came, the total of was approximately two thousand or two thousand five hundred. Then we we we grew to approximately ten thousand. What they did was also that uh they uh and the Germans were...the Nazis did things which are not well known but should be should be recorded. At a certain time, they established brothels for the German uh inmates and the Polish inmates, and they brought prostitutes from Poland and from Germany into a special barrack where the the the Polish uh uh inmates, non-Jewish Polish inmates, or the German inmates had an opportunity to go whenever there was...there was a certain schedule for that. There was a special barrack built in the middle of the \_\_\_\_\_\_ and we were called to uh to do the heating there, to establish the heating so they needed welders and I was one of them which gave me a tremendous uh uh...which was a tremendous help. Number one, I mean I was suffering from certain \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, from from swollen feet, so I didn't have to walk these long distances to the to the to the factory and uh also I became acquainted with the with the people there in the camp, \_\_\_ people and so and I started to do certain things in my free time, using scrap and making hooks for the beds, or or for the curtains and things like that and I...and it turned...there was no money. I mean none of us was allowed to have any money certainly, so you were bartering for bread and and and so this kind of work uh uh uh...I wouldn't say I liked but it was helpful also to to come back to my to my somehow to my health and to my to my energy. Uh also uh in in...in between I started to work outside in in that area with a with a with a man who was, interesting enough, a Polish national but who was an artist as a welder and I learned a lot from him, and...though he was a very nationalistic Pole, he was no anti-Semite. He was special, and we got on good terms. Uh he bought me papers, newspapers, I mean \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and once in a while a piece of of of of uh sausage. I even could could ask him to write for me a letter to a neighbor of mine in Berlin with whom I had left some money and some things, and http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.sure enough this lady, a wonderful lady, wrote back and and sent money and some food to this Polish man, so I left him with the money because I couldn't use the money. It was too dangerous but he gave me the food and that was manna for me. So uh uh and also this...\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ was his name...he had a very interesting technique. Since he hated the Germans so much, uh and hated certainly to work for \_\_\_\_ for the war effort, he had developed a certain technique, you know, when you weld pipes you have to be very careful because uh under high pressure they could burst easily and therefore you have to be have to be very accurate. I knew how to do this. I knew how to do it, and then he taught me how to do it that it looked good from the outside, was bad from the inside, by, for instance, apply more oxygen or an abundance of oxygen so that bubbles would would would would build inside the the the metal and it would...the weld of metal, and certainly the pressure...and the pipes would not be able to to to to tolerate the pressure. Uh and that's how...I say when I worked with him for the first time, we established a contact. Then I I worked in the camp for the...partly to establish that brothel and then when I was working in the camp, I heard one day that there were British prisoners of war who had appeared in that factory and sure enough, uh what the Germans had done was uh the British, as you know from the records, had fought Rommel in North Africa, had surrendered at \_\_\_\_\_. The soldiers who had been taken prisoner in \_\_\_\_\_ had been brought to Italy and when Italy got out of the war, the Germans didn't let them go but transferred them to Germany and to Upper Salasia. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was that camp, a tremendous prisoner of war camp and against the rules and regulations of the Geneva Convention, they brought \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of these prisoners of war to Auschwitz, not to work like us, I mean like inmates, but in their uniform. Uh they had a special camp, a special prisoner of war camp and they were guarded by German...by German soldiers, by by by by by army soldiers, but they put them to work in that factory and when I heard this I said I have to come...I have to meet them. How I didn't know, so I uh arranged it somehow that I got an assignment with the same kommando I was before, this \_\_\_\_\_\_\_...(pause) and uh when I saw the the the...they also when they got into the...under the uh uh area of their \_\_\_\_ complex, they were marching, but they were marching differently than we were. They were marching to such extent that the German guards were mostly elderly fellows and they could hardly uh keep up with them, and when they saw us, I tell you they were throwing cigarettes at us and whatever they had and uh keep up these good spirits and so it was tremendous. And uh I could almost weep when I when I saw that. That was a tremendous...tremendous uh...give us a spirit...tremendous spiritual uplift, and I could feel it and then I I thought how could I come into contact and luckily when I was transferred back to that fellow \_\_\_\_, uh British uh prisoners of war were working in the neighborhood and under very, very careful circumstances and all because they had to be careful. Uh uh I was then able to establish contact with them, and luckily my school English was good enough...\_\_\_\_\_ English which I had improved during my my years at the University. The British were very careful, on an individual basis, because they never knew with whom they were meeting, you know, and slowly but surely, and I say it with pride, I was able to to establish a very close personal contact and the moment the this kind of sound barrier was was was pierced, they became the best friends you could imagine, and what they did was not http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.only for me but many others, for instance, they had, you know, there was a different categories of of soup for the luncheon and uh the quality of our soup was the worst. The quality for the German civilians was the best. For the English prisoners of war, theirs was in between, but they didn't need it. They didn't want it because luckily they had their International Red Cross parcels, so, therefore, they had already clients amongst our people, our inmates, to give them the soup which was very helpful because it was of better quality and uh they uh...since I was on such terms with them, they helped me with chocolates and and things like that. At the end actually I had British...when I walked out from Auschwitz, I had British socks. I had British shoes. I had British underwear, so uh uh because they had enough of that stuff and they didn't need all this, but what was most important was...or two things I \_\_\_\_ the British \_\_\_\_ was, one day uh uh they told us that would...you know, they they they they had chocolate and cigarettes. They were also trading with the civil population in that in that in that area, in that complex, uh so they they were able to construct a radio set via uh like in what...Stalag 18 (ph), you know...and they every night were listening to BBC London. They had certainly technically tech...people with technical knowledge and so on, uh so...hiding it certainly from different German guards and after I had established this uh atmosphere of confidence with them, uh they uh agreed to tell me what they have heard, so that I actually was able to uh to uh to follow the news of BBC London in Auschwitz and compare this news with what was written in the newspapers...discuss it with them. Also they asked me...once in a while, you know, they met girls, Ukrainian girls, Polish girls. They said they fell in love with them, or girls from Czechoslovakia, and they wanted to communicate with them but the girls certainly didn't understand understand English, so I volunteered to write in German to these girls. After the war, when it's over, we'll come and marry you and I give you my word as a prisoner of the of the of the English uh soldier that I will never forget you and so so that was that was that was uh uh with them and and I must say this this helped uh tremendously, because it it kept us...at least kept me...I couldn't communicate with everybody in the camp but with the close circle of friends I had, what we had heard and what what what the progress were and one one of the most was...emotional days was when first uh there came the news...you must remember that by error a girl had played around with a telegraph in London and the the news had gone out that the Allies had landed in Normandy, and then it turned out it was a hoax, but on the day when they did land, uh somehow there was an electrifying atmosphere in Auschwitz and the Germans became very nervous, and I immediately went to my friends and said what what uh happened. They said we don't know because we don't like to talk about it before we have a confirmation, and the next morning uh uh they were jubilant and almost drunken, so said it happened. They have landed, and then I could come back to my friends in the camp and said listen, that's it, and it's created...I mean then we somehow we we knew that it was simply a matter of time when when when the the front in the east and in the west would come clear and though we were more or less aware that the Nazis might not allow us to live to to to experience the day of liberation, that at least that that there's some hope. And that that we can look forward to that moment eventually, so uh as I say, the the role of the of the British prisoner...I I I'm very very grateful to them and I must say for for for for most of my http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.friends. Uh years ago, BBC London brought me over to uh to London, because they had a show, "This is Your Life," of one of the prisoners who interesting enough had been a member of the British army, had survived Dunkirk, had had been had been had been taken prisoner at Dunkirk, had been I don't know in how many prisoner of war camps, had tried to to escape and unfortunately could never make it, and he was a daredevil. He was some kind of a \_\_\_\_\_ and uh so uh uh uh they they they uh uh he had the courage to smuggle himself into our camp to find out what it was or what \_\_\_\_\_ was, because when I talked to these people, and I said listen, uh you I'm sure will survive. I, I don't know, because we don't know...but I want to give you all the facts and when you come back to England and come back to your families, tell them our tale because I'm not...I cannot be sure, and they very often said to me, Norbert, how is it...how can this be possible. I mean what you are telling us is so impossible. Uh uh there the Gerries (ph) are going around, even these gangsters in SS uniform, and you know, we had also cont...SS control in the in the camp...in in the area, \_\_\_\_\_, but they look like human beings would with with their noses and their eyes and their mouths are the same like others. How is this possible? And uh uh (coughing) I said I have no explanation, but this is what it is and especially when in the summer of 1944 when the Hungarian transports came en masse...that's a transport uh with which, for instance, also \_\_\_\_\_ came from \_\_\_\_\_ to Auschwitz, to our camp...the gas chambers worked over time, but the crematorias were not able to uh to uh to uh to uh do their work anymore, so hundreds and thousands of corpses were burned outside of the crematoria so the area of Auschwitz was filled with the...call it stench of of of burned flesh and uh then when this also waved into our area, I went around and I said to \_\_\_\_, you know, this must be it because we were aware \_\_\_\_\_, and uh uh uh in in...luckily, you know, under...amongst these British who had no nobody who had any sympathy for Hitler or his racial \_\_\_\_. They were really wonderful friends with with with with uh with a sense of solidarity and as I told you, when I came to that BBC show, this man, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was his name, they said this is your life and they brought me over as one of the of the witnesses to to give evidence what...what he had done and how he done it and and uh uh to repeat this again, I hope that this story of the British prisoners of war in Auschwitz will be told one day, because it deserves to be told. Uh...

**Q: Did you...uh could you tell us about the...your birthday in 1943 with the \_\_\_\_?**

A: Oh that was...that was that was still at a very bad time. Uh uh you know, it was...my birthday was on a Sunday and uh I turned thirty on that day, on April 26th, 1943. I had been in Auschwitz uh six weeks and uh I was uh uh run down but not not completely desperate but not in good mood and uh especially on that day, on that birthday, it was a Sunday. We didn't march out to work uh so it was a beautiful day and uh Auschwitz was not far from the \_\_\_\_ Mountains, beautiful area in Poland, and the air was so clear, blue sky...you could see the mountains and their beauty, and somehow that affected me and uh uh uh gave me gave me some courage and then on that day for one reason or the other, uh we got bread and some marmalade, which was not given too often and uh when one of my friends from the youth movement said you see, on http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.that birthday...it's almost better than cake \_\_\_\_\_ and that that that happening somehow, that that was really a...you see, you you are...every little bit was was was helpful in order to to to uh to to uh strengthen your your spirit of...your spirit of \_\_\_\_\_\_...your your...yeah...your spirit to live. Uh also uh I must say in this respect, another experience is interesting. Uh we had in our block amongst the old timers a man who originated from Vienna. He was uh uh a \_\_\_ scholar, and he was taken with a so-called Polish...Polish action in September '39, uh was taken to Buchenwald, from Buchenwald to to Auschwitz where I met him, and he was one of those who uh knew the bible and \_\_\_\_\_ and so very well, but, you know, you had no no books there. Whatever was done there, were taught or discussed was was from from your memory, and he established a a service on the block so uh thought I was not...I mean certainly I attended service in Berlin, not every day but certainly on holy days and so so then under certain precautions, under precautions uh uh he assembled in the corner to have a minion (ph), to have ten people and he said the morning prayers and he knew them by heart certainly and uh, you know, this is...this was an expression of directly resistance, that in...you know, God was treating us as he did treat us as we thought, \_\_\_\_\_ had forsaken us as we thought, but nevertheless we said, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, we still believe in you, and we came together for service and it was, I must say, I had the experience of unforgettable uh uh service. We had Yom Kippur service in in in Auschwitz with a few of our people uh and uh uh there was a cantor who also recited all the prayers from memory and we said our prayers. Certainly we were very very careful that the SS or \_\_\_\_\_\_ would not discover us, and in spite of, you know, in other words praising God in spite of everything, and uh I must say uh it it was strengthening us spiritually which was also very important only...after all, you don't exist only physically. You also exist spiritually and one can be uh uh uh the function of another, uh so uh uh this this...all this added to the to the coming back of energy I would say, that I wasn't...after one year, let us say, I wasn't used to Auschwitz. I still was despising...but I had become somehow numb. I knew I couldn't change things...all these people I have lost, all these victims I had seen, all these corpses I had seen lying around, and by the way I lost also then within a short time, two of my close friends be...because they they could...one was a man who was highly idealistic and he couldn't take the misery and the the this this this this height of inhumanity, so he he uh said enough is enough. Didn't take his life, but he just resigned. And another friend of mine contracted jaundice and there was there was no no way to help him, so as I say I lost but I also were able to establish contact with other people who had come...from all over the world people had come to Auschwitz. I had met people from from from \_\_\_\_ with whom I communicated in my broken French, and and tried to help them somehow. There were people coming from all over, not only Poland and Yugoslavia but also Holland and Norway and and and uh France and and Germany and uh then after a certain while, because they knew that I had this call it information service and had contacts with the British, that uh they came to me once in a while, tried to help. For instance, one day a man came to me whom I met in the in the barrack of a friend of mine. He was the elderly of this block, an old timer, still alive, now residing in Los Angeles, and uh he came and he said he was looking for me, so uh what do you want, and he said he just came from a from a branch camp, from a from a mine, from a coal mine http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.camp. Uh Max \_\_\_\_ was his name, and he said I need you. I said what do you need me for. He said I know that you have special contacts with the British. Try to help me. I said why. And he told me the following story, that he uh uh originated from the German-speaking part of Czechoslovakia, uh \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He was a gynecologist, practicing doctor, but also was active politically against the Nazis and when they took over Czechoslovakia, it was time for him to to flee, and he was able to reach England and when the war broke out, he volunteered as a doctor for the for the for the military. They didn't take him into the army for one reason or the other, but they gave him a position as a doctor on the merchant marine and here was was...got a position with the...I think it was the Blue \_\_\_\_ Line in in in Manchester, in Liverpool...sorry...Liverpool. From Liverpool uh ships at this time went to still to the Far East, so he made a first journey from Liverpool to Singapore and came back and it was absolutely uneventful, but when he went on a second trip, he came to Singapore and when he left Singapore, his boat was attacked by a German raider which had come from Japan, and that German raider was armed and had already \_\_\_\_\_ some other ships, so it attacked his ship, was overwhelmed because they were not were not properly armed and was also taken into \_\_\_\_ and and they made their way...I think it was in the Strait of \_\_\_\_\_\_ where they were attacked, made the whole trip through the Indian Ocean, around the Cape of Good Hope into the Atlantic Ocean and landed in Bordeaux (ph) and were not interfered with by the by the by the by the Allied uh ships or the Allied Allied Allied air force. There was a time when when when England was very very weak but...when they came to to Bordeaux, he together with the crew was taken to a to a uh camp for the merchant marine, but when they searched the uh safe of the ship, of the British ship, they found out that he was not a British nationalist but a Czech. Why the British were so stupid to to to to mention that in this I don't know, but they did it. And they then investigated in \_\_\_\_ who he was and found out that he was active against the Nazis, so very soon after he landed in this merchant marine camp, he got an order signed by \_\_\_\_\_ personally to be transferred to Auschwitz, and he came to Auschwitz in the uniform of the British merchant marine, and he was looking somehow to bring his message out. When he was in the coal mine he couldn't find anybody, but when he came to Buna he heard about me (coughing) and uh I said what can I do. He said try...he said I know, and we informed of that, that amongst these British prisoners of war, there is a system that every month or every second month, every third month, one of them...it's like a military action, has to try to escape to make his way into Switzerland, and there he is bringing news and information about about the life.... END OF TAPE 4 http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Interview with Norbert Wollheim May 17, 1991 RG-50.030\*0267 http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy. PREFACE The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with Norbert Wollheim, conducted on May 17, 1991 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview. http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy. NORBERT WOLLHEIM May 17, 1994

**Q: Could you tell me your full name again please?**

A: My name is Norbert Wolheim. I was born on April 26th, 1913, in Berlin, Germany.

**Q: OK. Norbert, where we left off, we were talking about Auschwitz and you had been describing its \_\_\_\_\_. There were some stories about Auschwitz that you had wanted to share with me in particular.**

A: Yeah. I think in in connection with the with the daily question we were confronted with...how do we survive, because once a \_\_\_\_\_\_ asked me I should tell him something about the art of survival, and the answer is their is no art, so I will...in Auschwitz it was an accident, or a chance. Uh certainly you had to have the the will to survive and I must say after the first couple of weeks or months, where very often I was confronted with the question, will I be able to make it, or should I rather uh uh uh put an end to my life in order to be liberated from the misery, but then after one year or so when I got the better job and could work as a welder, and also was able to uh to uh get some additional food here and there for certain activities, for instance, when I was was uh appointed a bed-maker and and also when I was appointed to be the secretary of the block in order to keep the records, that gave me a chance uh then to to uh somehow keep myself cleaner and and uh also to...my my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I would say was was strengthened by by by that...

**Q: How did you...can you tell me about becoming...how did it happen that you became the secretary of the block? http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.**

A: Well, uh because I I I helped out to a certain extent to uh to uh to uh...for instance, when there was...when food was distributed, you know, there was a certain order had to had to be established. I was able with my school French, for instance, to speak to the Greek prisoners, people from Greek who spoke only Greek and French. That was...or or or Latino (ph). Latino certainly I didn't know, but my French was good enough to communicate with them, or also with the people from other countries in order so that that uh \_\_\_\_\_\_ I was trying to help and then obviously the secretary uh uh who was doing the work before left, so I was asked to do it and and I accepted it gladly because uh I didn't become an officer of the of the barrack, but at least it gave me a certain chance to to to improve, which was...improve, you know, and and and and uh whatever improve means, you know...conditions somehow. Uh so therefore as I say, the the the uh the chance to to survive, the chance that, call it that on the morning you didn't know if the evening would be yours or in the evening when you went to bed, not to be sure that the next morning you were still alive...somehow turned more into the positive angle. You wanted to survive. You wanted uh to to to survive and and reach a normal world again, at least that was my feeling to, as \_\_\_\_\_\_ formulated it once, to tell the tale, to tell the world this is...and and and beware of it that it should never happen again, and there were many, many facets of that. I think I told you last time, for instance, about the role the British prisoners of war played to help to strengthen our morale uh and when they came, they gave us courage. Uh uh I had...I think this we covered already...I had the good fortune to begin...to become their friends, so they shared the news with me which they got illegally with their receiver, so we knew that certainly the war for Germany was lost and especially after the second front had been established in France, that it was only a matter of time, and the question only was, would we be able to hold out that long and certainly we knew that the Germans http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.uh were were loosing at the eastern front and every day was another step uh uh uh and one day hopefully the eastern front would would reach us, because we were in the eastern part of...located in the eastern part of Europe. Uh the...that was one of the things in which the British were so helpful, and also to provide food and and support directly uh and I was also the beneficiary of many of their good deeds and I'll never forget about it. One of the things which interesting was that one day a fellow who came...he was from India because his father was a sheriff in India in the British administration. He had never seen England and when we talked, I could tell him a little bit about my experience in London and so we exchanged views and so we became friends. And he told me then one day...and then as...since our life was such a peculiar kind of life, without papers, without books, without...with hungry for for for some spiritual food also. Uh he told me somehow that he has gotten something from I don't which...an organization in Boston, and I asked him, do you have contact with Boston. He said sure, through my military mail I have. He said I have an idea. Could you eventually try to establish contact for me with my friend...with friends I have in America, in the United States. The address I knew by heart...you know, we had no address book anymore, but my memory, thank God, was good enough. He said sure I will, so I formulated for him a letter in which he said I met Norbert here. He is alright. He is fine. He doesn't know anything. He doesn't know where his family is right now. I mean we had to be very careful and he hopes one day to be able to see you again, so this letter he sent out, and it reached my friends, probably after months or so and uh in the closing days of Auschwitz...I think it was already in December when when most of the industrial area was was badly, badly smashed and destroyed...he was...all of a sudden came running and he said I have good news for you. I said what was it, another uh big uh big uh victory on the on the western or eastern front. He said no, but believe it or not I got a letter back from your friends. Now this was something which Auschwitz hadn't seen before, and I couldn't believe it so I was so http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.excited I I ran to the toilet house in in the area where we were working. Uh the man who was in charge of that was also an inmate and I said, listen, close all the doors and I give you...I don't know how much I have or not have...I have to read this letter. And I read from my friends who obviously did not quite understand what was going on. How could they? Uh said well, I'm glad to hear about Norbert. Just assure him when you see him again that we are the same friends we were, because we were friends from the youth movement, that when the war is over, he should come and be with us and and and and and uh uh he uh he should be of good..good courage and so on. So when I told this my very close friends, nobody could believe it, so I had the fortitude to bring this letter and to smuggle this letter with me into the camp, which was terribly dangerous certainly, but I wanted to show them also to give them some kind of courage. There is still...you see, can see even from Auschwitz, from behind the barbed wire, there is a connection you can establish with people in America, and uh then I came to this count...to America in '46 on a visit. Uh I saw my friends in Decateur (ph), Michigan. They had a farm there and uh uh I asked for that letter because I wanted to to make it part of my museum, and they said uh no, they will never give it away, because...but what they...at this time when they got the letter, they were completely puzzled. They said, for goodness sake how can he be...they didn't certainly know which location it was because it was a military number under which it was sent...how could it be he is a British prisoner of war. What happened to him, so they were completely flabbergasted until I explained it to him, to them and they they they got aware uh that actually that this was something in which a British prisoner of war became call it the conduit for a message to America, and I must say this gave me a tremendous lift up and and and and and uh I told some of my friends. Uh he could hardly believe it, but this is what you could do with the British because there was this solidarity of man. They understood you. And they didn't accept any kind of anti-Semitism or racism amongst them, because for them the Nazis http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.were not only enemies on a military uh basis but also certainly on a political and moral basis I would say. That was one of the things uh I certainly have never forgotten. There was also...I want to emphasize, there were other ways of spiritual resistance, to uh to uh nourish us spiritually. I think I talked about the service. But uh a typical example uh how how how spir...spiritual resistance can work is this example which I've cited very often. I met in Auschwitz uh very early at my arrival, an elderly man. He originated from somewhere in Galatia (ph), had served during World War I in the Austrian army, and uh after the war, after World War I, he had made his way to Berlin, had established some existence as a cobbler, had married, uh had a nice family, and with a so-called Polish ar...with a Polish accent, in September 1939 and he had been taken a prisoner and and and was shifted from Buchenwald to Saxonhausen, from Saxonhausen to Auschwitz, and so so he had, when I met him, already he had spent quite some years behind the barbed wire. He was a won...a simple man, uh a pious man, very religious in spite of everything, in spite of everything, and he said his his prayers every day and he always when when things were were difficult, he gave us certain quotations from whatever he had to to say well, uh they cannot succeed. Uh we were stronger in spirit than they. One day...it was uh uh in fall I think of '44...whenever it was, the weather was terrible. There was...it was a rainy day and the winds come blowing down from the \_\_\_\_\_ Mountains and we were standing for a roll call uh and it lasted and lasted because something was...went wrong, had gone wrong with the figures, and the the people there were not too good with figures, but if it didn't tie in properly they...you, you couldn't couldn't be released so we were standing there and and and it was...really, it was horror. People fainted and and and couldn't take it but nevertheless uh it went on so uh the the the moments in your life and I would seconds are minutes and minutes are hours and hours are years, and I was standing in my formation, you know, at fives, next to this friend and I noticed that he was praying and I asked him, I said \_\_\_\_\_, what are http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.you doing. He said as you can see I'm praying. I said but I'm certain you said your morning prayers and for the (cough) evening prayers, I said it's too early, so uh what are you praying for. He said, well, I'm not praying not the morning prayers, not the afternoon, not the evening prayers. I'll sing a special prayer to God. I said what are your praying for. He said I'm thanking God, and I always was bewildered. I said \_\_\_\_\_, thanking for what, for that misery we are in, for the for the terrible situation, for being forsaken here by God. He said you don't understand. I am thanking for God, God for one thing...that he didn't make me like them, the murderers around me. Uh and interesting enough, a couple of months later uh we had to undergo one of these infamous uh selections. That means when there were too many people especially in the uh in the in the hospital, uh then the \_\_\_\_\_ and the SS came to the conclusion that they should uh uh...that those who cannot or were were too long in the hospital just should be exterminated, because they they were not worth uh uh to be fed anymore and and they had become, in their opinion, a nuisance. So uh this friend of mine certainly was an elderly man and had grey hair, hair...you can about grayish...and we were afraid that uh the selection would have would would would uh be his end, so two or three friends...I was already a schriber (ph), a secretary...uh came to the conclusion something has to be done. Now in connection with that selection I also, since I was the secretary I changed the dates, the birth dates, because there was not...we didn't have any ink, just pencils, so pencil you can erase easily so I changed some of the dates, especially of elderly people, hopefully to to save them, so and the selections happened in this way that you have to line up in a...and and people have to pass an SS man and he would then say, like like Mengele...left, right, left, right. In other words, to die or to live, to continue to live. And in order to save this man from this from this experience, we came to the conclusion that there was only one way out...that means to hide him in these straw sacks which were also called mattresses, even if there was a danger that he would suffocate but at least it was http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.seen the only way to do it, and he was an an old uh camp man and he knew all the tricks and so he said yes, I I'm willing to undergo this risk, so that's what we did. We put him into the the mattress, covered him with straw and when the selection went on, somebody else went from for him and uh uh when they also checked the the the barracks, didn't find him in the in the in the mattress, so he luckily survived and he survived also the the end of the war and just two or three years ago he uh he uh died in New York at the blessed age of ninety-two. There's another interesting uh uh facet of this which uh \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ has also uh described in his book, \_\_\_\_\_. Uh it was I think already I think in the fall of 1944. We all had the feeling it's a matter of time because we were aware of the events, the the military events and uh the the second front had been established and the the Allied troops were already deep in France, so three of our uh uh our comrades who were old-timers, who were already there for years, had come to the conclusion that since you never know what would they let us...would they let us live to see the day of liberation or not, had uh decided they want to try to escape, which was not an easy task because uh first of all so many barbed wires around the camp but also uh you can never...could never be sure of the population uh around Auschwitz, whether they wanted to cooperate with the Germans or not, but they said we'll risk our lives. We never know what what the end will be, and obviously uh in the middle of their preparations, uh somebody had discovered that. Up to now we don't know exactly who it was, and uh uh certainly the uh the uh the uh the uh punishment and the penalty for that was death. Now the SS gangsters in Auschwitz as in any other concentration camp, made a cruel spectacle out of that because they executed people by hanging in public, and we all had to stand there and watch and at the end we had to to uh march by and and and see that that this was uh the..that was the penalty meted out for anybody who would dare to escape, so one...and we didn't know for many many weeks, we didn't know what would the destiny be, because many attempts were made to to save them, but uh uh uh Berlin...I mean the http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.death sentence was usually confirmed by by \_\_\_\_\_, by the by the Gestapo, by the uh uh by Himmler's (ph) office in in Berlin, and then one day when we mar...came back from work, we saw the gallows uh uh erected at the square where we had our our our roll call, and we knew that uh that uh...we didn't know exactly what we saw...three gallows awaiting there, and then we got aware that these were these three friends who uh who uh obviously uh uh the order was...who who could not be saved and uh we all had to stand there at attention and the atmosphere was terribly tense because most of us knew them, appreciated them, loved them, knew about their courage and their dedication for fellow, for fellow inmates, so we were absolutely down and depressed, and then the spectacle began. They were led to the gallows and then one of the SS gangsters read the so-called death sentence, which was confirmed by Berlin that because of their attempt to flee they have been...the Reichsfuhrer (ph) Himmler has decided that they should be put to death, and when they were under the gallows and the ropes already around them, one of the three...by the way uh uh one of them is the brother of our friend Freddie \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who is very active in our affairs in in California. One of them all of a sudden penetrated this deadly silence with a voice which could be heard all over the the place and he said it in German. I will translate it in a moment. He said to...or he he cried out uh \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which means, comrades, keep your highs heads...keep your heads high. We will be the last, which means let uh...liberation is on the march, and certainly we will not live to see the day of liberation anymore but you will. And for a moment when this happened we thought that the SS uh standing on their towers, on the watch towers with machine guns and so on, the other guards uh armed to their teeth, would open a blood bath and so but this didn't happen, but you could see that they didn't feel good about it but it had a tremendous effect on all of us, and though it is now uh uh more than uh uh forty-five years after that, we are still speaking about it, still uh uh asking ourselves the question what gave them this strength, knowing that they would meet their maker in in http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.minutes, uh to tell us don't worry about us, but you will have the uh the the the chance to see hopefully the other world waiting beyond the the barbed wire. So uh uh you see, and this this is this is this is uh just amongst the many things we we know from that time, proof that uh phys...spiritual resistance had remained in spite of the fact, and I can say for myself also personally, to say that well, they tried to make us a number but they will never convert us into a number. So this this this was, as I say, it was already at a time when when when when uh the air, the political air was was so different. People still died uh daily. There was still enough victims unfortunately, but when it came uh to this time, uh uh uh there...it it...the whole, the whole atmosphere had changed when particularly when certainly was that you could feel slowly also the military effect of the advances of the of the advance of the Allies in the east and the west. In uh...I think it was in in August, early in August, we saw from from our places in the factory and the camp, we saw our first major attack by the American air force uh uh stationed at this time in Italy, coming from Italy. They had attained almost completely already supremacy in the air and they uh uh...I think it was early in August attacked a refinery in \_\_\_\_\_\_ I think is the name, and for days we saw the black smoke covering the whole area, so we we thought for ourselves, well one day they must come and and also try to hit this factory which did not produce yet but was very close to completion and sure enough, on on August 20th, 1944...it was a Sunday...the American air force uh to attack the \_\_\_\_\_\_ uh uh combine...uh area in Auschwitz. Uh I at this time...at this day was working in the camp to to do some some uh uh paperwork, but I knew that many of my friends were outside in the factory and were certainly concerned. Uh it was an attack which lasted fifteen or twenty minutes and uh what they did, they they hit the the factory uh uh to such an extent that that uh it threw them back for years in our opinion, but also we lost on that day approximately eighty people of our own uh which we said well, this is the price we have to pay, or as the French would say, la guerre comme a la guerre http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.(ph)...that is the price. Uh one bomb, interesting enough, also by mistake uh uh went down in our own camp, which is outside of the factory...which was outside of the factory. Didn't do any damage, but another bomb by mistake hit the British prisoners of war. They were sitting outside of some kind of a trench and uh uh forty of of those people were killed. They were playing gramophone (ph) music because they liked it so much to see the the the \_\_\_\_\_ but then the bomb unfortunately hit, and amongst them was also a nice friend of mine, a man whom I befriended who who originated from London, but also the British said well, that's it. That's the price we have to pay. Uh this is when we...when we went into action in Africa. We knew that that something like this could happen so that was it. What we...what what uh we thought after this, after this experience was why don't they come also to to uh hit the railways leading to Auschwitz. We didn't know at this time that, for instance, Jewish leaders were storming the chancellories in London and in Washington uh uh to do something like that and certainly we we didn't know that there was a letter then written...I think under the signature of the then Assistant Secretary of the Army John McL\_\_\_\_, saying that uh uh the uh governments have to concentrate on the completion of the war and also they are afraid and this is the the wording, that if something would be done in the interest of the prisoners, the Nazis could become more vindi...vindictive towards the prisoners. Well uh uh...

**Q: How did you feel when day by day went by and they did not bomb the railroad lines?**

A: I couldn't understand that. I couldn't understand that. Uh as I say, this question came up more after the war when I asked the people what...we we...on the other hand, peculiar as it may sound, we were so glad to see them because we were...when the attack came, for instance, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the only protection we had was outside in trenches where you could see these hundreds http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.and hundreds of fortresses, of flying fortresses, coming and and and and there was hardly any anti- craft fire from from the Germans. Certainly our people, many of our people were were crying and so and and praying, and my reaction was, I said be happy uh to see them because you might have relatives sitting in the cockpit, you know, and and doing this work in our interest, and certainly you had to reckon that you could be also amongst the targets, but this is...in war, you know, you you you unfortunately you don't know where it hits. Uh so after the first event in August, after that very effective attack, we were put to work immediately to try to uh undo the damage, because they wanted...they had a certain date...I don't know which...to uh to uh uh not to start production but to uh to also to get into production somehow, and I think the day before the deadline, the the bombers came again with another attack and then uh the next uh day, the next target to to have the repair, the damage repaired was I think the day after Christmas, and sure enough on Christmas they came again, and they smashed the factory to smitherings and to such extent that nothing could be done anymore and there was...then the the morale I would say broke in this respect that they said there's nothing to be done anymore, so we were just trying to play around and play for time if possible. Also uh then realizing especially in December that the Russian front had become very close. We knew that \_\_\_\_ had been taken and that that certainly that they came pretty close, the Russian army close to Krackow, and uh then uh uh in the course of the military events, in January when the uh Russians started their offensive across the \_\_\_\_\_ I think, and uh reached Krackow...Krackow was only, I think, sixty kilometers from Auschwitz in the east, then a day before that uh uh the order came not to wal...not to march out any more to the factory, and the question was what's going to happen, because certainly uh uh without knowing the uh the uh the uh thinking of the of these SS gangsters properly, what are they going to do with us, it was touch and go. Would they dynamite the camp and then blow us up or whatever it is...so we spent that day uh more or less in in tension. http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.What I had done in case they they should drive us out, I had put on my my British underwear and my British boots I had kept available in so in case we we were we were driven out, and sure enough...

**Q: Excuse me. I'm going to pause because I want to know where did you get British underwear and British boots?**

A: From my friends, from the British soldiers, you know. They had enough stuff and part of it...as I say I was one of their benefactors and they gave me what...not only certain things I hadn't seen for years like chocolate and once in a while cigarettes which I didn't smoke, but gave away, but they...when I told them that and we talked about...they had wonderful stuff, uh uh which they got from the International Red Cross, that certain underwear and also I had a pair of shoes I I could call it organize from them, and they were very generous and very gracious to me. I might owe the the British treasury something for that. I don't know, but uh anyhow that's what it what it was, and uh yes...on August 18th, uh somehow we heard that the the Russians had uh uh broken through the German lines, had uh entered Krackow. We saw on the on the road adjacent to our camp, we saw already all these trucks, the German military trucks and tanks and so passing by, but in the direction towards the west, so they were fleeing. And uh the question was will the Russians uh liberate us or what's going to happen, and then uh on August 18th, uh in the middle of the day, the order came that we had to be ready by four o'clock. We didn't know what...I mean we had no watches so it was...four o'clock was on their time. Everybody had to be ready to uh to walk out with the exception of those people in the in the uh uh hospital who couldn't walk, and we were certain that uh they would be killed there because they wouldn't let them fall into the hands of the Russian army, http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.of the Red army, and also we saw the day before by the way, that a lot obviously of papers uh uh had been burned, so the SS got already uh marching order with the with the with the order also to take care of papers which could be could be uh uh used against them, and then on the 18th in the afternoon we walked out and also the the the women of the of the brothel walked out and it was approximate...it was a a terrible wintry day, approximately we heard this...it was minus eighteen centigrades, which I think is less than zero fahrenheit. There were the icy streets on which we walked, and that was the first time that I saw again the outside there. The uh guards were very, very tense and afraid because they were they were deadly afraid that the Russians would overtake them and certainly uh being in an SS uniform was not...they knew it would not be very helpful for them. We uh...whatever we had, I mean we had a little bit of bread and that was...a little bit of...I don't know...margarine. That's all we could...we had to...that was for the whole the whole time, we could carry, and uh we were...as I said we walked and marched, so called marching order and very soon on account of the weather and so people people dropped left and right, and if they did were shot at...on the spot. Some, interesting enough, especially of Polish people, non-Jews (cough) who knew that eventually or who hoped that the population around Auschwitz would help them, tried to escape into the woods, which during the night was was was daring but still most of them were successful because all all the shooting didn't help because most of the bullets hit the trees and not the people who had who had escaped, but for us there was there was no choice. We walked all night. We walked and and, interesting enough, we we saw, we heard the guns blazing. We saw the fire shine of the of the guns and any time we hoped that the front would come...would would be faster than we were but was hope against hope. Uh there was a bridge to be made over the \_\_\_\_ which was a a river near Auschwitz, and after the \_\_\_\_\_, after we after we had passed the \_\_\_\_, the SS guards became a little bit more relaxed because they were afraid that the bridge would be blown up before http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.and they couldn't make it to the other side anymore. The whole night we were walking and he who couldn't make it, that was the end. And we walked part of the other day and then reached a place uh in called Nicholai (ph) I remember where you had a a a brick factory and they drove us into that and wherever we could find a place to sleep or to stand and and we spent some time of rest and then we were driven out again in the direction towards Germany, and after another day or so and a night again, we reached a camp near the city of Leipzig (ph). Uh the people there in Leipzig had left already the camp and uh certainly also...by the way the SS (cough) \_\_\_\_ certain travel because whatever they carried, they couldn't carry so long because there was not enough there was not enough moving material in order to to to uh to to...so they had to leave certain of their of their of their of their goods they had acquired in Auschwitz, they had to leave there on the road, and in Leipzig we spent uh a night, a day. Then they march us out again and we are told we will be on the way to uh another camp called Gross Rosen. Uh during the night there were heavy, heavy air raids and obviously fights but uh the front did not reach us. We walked towards Gross Rosen which would have been approximately a hundred fifty or two hundred kilometers or a hundred fifty miles, but then in the mid...we were hardly out of town when we were told we cannot use that road because uh for military reasons, so we went back into our camp and thought that would be it. It was not, so the next day uh uh we were taken to a to a railway station, to a freight railway station, and there were in spite of all the military uh uh uh situa...in spite of the military situation, the Germans did not...had still been able to pro...to make a freight train ready for us and we were all loaded on open cattle cars, open cars, approximately one hundred, hundred twenty in one car...I don't know (clearing throat) ...understand (clearing throat) they were counting us before we left, and we were approximately six thousand on that train. The train uh then uh...completely exposed to the elements. No food, no nothing, so uh and we started to travel and then noticed that we are traveling http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.towards Czechoslovakia and uh across the border \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I think, and it was on an afternoon when we reached the the uh the area of Vitkovitch (ph), which is an industrial area in in Salasia (ph), which is already in Czechoslovakia. Uh Vitkovitch was a a was a big a big...tremendous iron works, uh still working, still in production obviously, and we were halting there in in a station for a certain while uh and the people saw and and and this was probably just when there was some shift of the workers and when the workers saw what was going on, they took their packages with sandwiches or whatever they had and threw it into our wagons in order to to show us their solidarity and to help us somehow because it was not only hunger but thirst which was which was uh uh uh really giving us trouble. We saw women uh uh falling down on their knees in prayer. The SS was shooting uh mostly into the air luckily, but the people, these Czechoslovakians, they didn't budge. Whatever they had they gave us and that was really...that was heartwarming. Though we were in let's say in very bad shape, to such extent and the train left then. People started to die, to collapse and to die. We didn't know what to do with them because there was hardly room for us to stand, certainly not to sit and uh so then some of the...especially where there were quite a number of German crim...criminal...criminals and so amongst them said well, the only way is to throw them out of the the wagons, and that was done. And uh when this...the the car...the the train was certainly accompanied by SS guards and led by two uh commissioned officers, one with the name of uh Mull (ph) who interesting enough was the man who was in charge of the gas chamber operations in Birkenau. (Clearing throat) The other with the name of Ruggers (ph) who was the the uh Kommandofurher (ph) we called him, in other words in charge of the SS on the factory area in in Auschwitz in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Then all of a sudden the uh order came not to throw any any corpses out anymore but to wait for the next stop in order to collect them because obviously the uh the uh the uh...it had to became...become known that on that way of the train uh corpses are lying left and right http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.and uh they were they were concerned somehow, the Nazis, about the effect of that. So one place uh where we stopped uh uh the corpses were were taken down and then these SS gangsters Mull and Ruggers came and said well, uh since we have the corpses give us also the mussulmen now, which means mussulmen are the people who uh almost ready to die but were not dead yet. Uh uh I must say to the honor of my Jewish uh fellow inmates we refused that, but some of these uh uh German criminals said alright and uh there was nothing...we couldn't stop that, so what they did then was uh uh brought these mussulmen down and then both of them, Mull and Ruggers, took their pistols and shot them uh uh on the spot. Uh what happened later with Mull we don't know. Probably he disappeared or was taken by the Russians and so Ruggers was discovered after the war uh and was tried in the in the court in \_\_\_\_\_ and I was one of the witnesses against him. Uh uh he uh pretended that he didn't shoot and he didn't...and the court was very tough and rigid with me to that I really knew that the people were still alive when they were shot and so on, but the whole the whole uh uh court procedure in my opinion, though it was a German court, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_...it was a farce. The uh the president of that court was a was himself a political, political persecutee but who was afraid of his own shadow and and and (cough) I think uh Ruggers was sent to jail for fifteen years, whatever, for murder. That that was all. So much probably he is now walking the streets of Germany if he if he is still around. Now then the uh the uh the uh train continued its way to uh to uh via Czechoslovakia and wherever we stopped and the people again tried to help, especially we were terribly thirsty. Thirst is worst than hunger. Luckily there was snow around so so we could have...we could also wash with snow so that...uh uh and then we left Czechoslovakia and got into Austria. There was nobody to help us anymore. Nobody to ask...even when we asked for for for some snow or for some water, there was no...no no no positive reaction, and we were taken to a to one station uh next to the camp of Mauthausen and we were there for two or for two or three days http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.and nothing happened. Still standing there, trying to sleep and standing. There was hardly food or they they threw some bread into the wagons but but it was very difficult to grab it so...and I must say this was this was something which which uh was was then in history it's now called...it's a death march, which affected me very, very deeply and I know I had some kind of visions uh not so much to food but but to to be somehow to be under a roof, not to be exposed to to the snow and to the elements and to take a bath, a hot bath, and to sleep somewhere, but to sleep, sleep and and forget about everything else. Two days after having having waited in Mauthausen, we were told Mauthausen were filled. They cannot accept us, so they took the same train, brought us back uh through Czechoslovakia and took us to Germany and we crossed the border into Germany uh at place which I knew because uh I was hiking there. Also I had spent some some some vacationing there in the mountains. It's a beautiful spot called the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Swiss they call...\_\_\_\_\_\_, Switzerland. They crossed the border but \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ via Dresden (ph). Dresden was still perfectly alright at this time. It was January after all. We left the the...I, as I told you, on 18th of January we got out of of uh Auschwitz and this was in the second half or last half of January, so as I say, Dresden was still alright and they took us and I was familiar with that with that uh uh route because I had traveled on that before between Berlin and Dresden. They took us to Berlin and uh then I saw Berlin again for the first time, and it was already in very bad shape and interesting enough, our train passed by one of the stations uh from which I had to leave when I went to work during the Nazi time in the morning. I was absolutely numb uh uh cold and the hunger and the thirst and so it it had affected me and but when they said we're at Berlin, I was sure that this would be the place, uh Saxonhausen-Orianenburg. And this is where they actually took us. A friend of mine who was on a wagon next to me uh because he couldn't manage to be with me, was in bad shape and just when when we were already on the way between Dresden and Berlin, somebody http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.yelled to me and said...his name was Bruno and he was...he came to Auschwitz almost at the same time I had been...Bruno had just uh uh uh perished this morning. He is dead, and interesting enough, his parents were still living in Berlin because his father was married to a non-Jewess and and she saved him in Berlin, but on the way from Dresden to Berlin he perished. Then we were taken to a to a to uh Saxonhausen to a placed called \_\_\_\_ and were asked to descend the...we could hardly walk down because we didn't move for days and days. We arrived there, I think it was on January 31st. We were on the train almost ten or seven days. As I told you uh when we left Leipzig, the roll call was approximately six thousand. When we came to uh Orianenburg, only two thousand had remained. All the others had perished...hunger, starvation, tried to escape, and so on. And when we came to that place, interesting enough, that was not directly the main camp but it was like uh uh uh auxiliary camp which they had established within an airplane factory called \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is a famous brand in in German aircraft building, but there was no no windows left anymore. It was already also in bad shape and we uh we were directed to that place there. Uh you couldn't warm up because there was no heat and the windows, as I said, were were were smashed, so the first two or three nights we were sleeping on on the cement floor which was not very healthy and...but we got we got something to drink, at least something...I don't know what to eat. Interesting enough, uh some of the prisoners were Polish uh criminals. They knew what was coming on. They said well, you can have a glass of water. Give me a gold watch or something like that because they still expected that people had taken certain of the riches from Auschwitz uh to uh to that train. Uh then uh some of the people who had reached Saxonhausen were taken on another transport going to southern Germany. I managed to stay there and again I was lucky. Uh I was uh I...lucky for one specific reason. Uh I didn't have a chance certainly to shave myself during all these days on the \_\_\_\_, but one of the first things with the help of snow was that I shaved and when... http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.

**Q: Where did you get a razor?**

A: I still had it from the...also from the British. (laughter) \_\_\_\_\_\_. A razor and some soap, what...was whatever I had, but I I tried to to to at least to shave, and then came...they came from the from the from the kommando and said we need people who are able to type, so I said yes, I am able to type and since I looked clean and shaven, I I I had the good fortune to be taken there into into the uh what they call kommando stuben (ph). They were mainly non-Jewish prisoners and there they were not too badly off. They had food...uh uh some reserves of food, some soup and they offered us...uh there were two who had been selected for that job, and uh they offered us whatever they could and uh we really felt good for the first time to be in a really warm room and to to to eat and to fill our stomach and interesting enough when they asked us about where do you come from and so we told them Auschwitz...they knew very, very little about Auschwitz. We had to tell them all about Auschwitz. They were old, old inmates, old helflings, but had hardly any knowledge what Auschwitz was. And so I say I I I was lucky that I I...we worked mostly uh mainly lists had to be prepared...I don't know what, and we were typing but then don't forget it was near Berlin, so air raid warnings came almost every night so when air raid warnings came, we couldn't work so at least caught up somehow with my sleep and there I recovered slowly somehow and was assigned to a to a barrack where where I could at least find also a clean place and this this kind of worked and uh tried to establish some some some contacts uh uh especially with the wonderful people from Denmark who were also uh uh kept as prisoners there and Norway. These were mainly students or policemen who had tried to protest against the German oppressors in Denmark and in Norway and had then become prisoners and they were taken to the concentration camps and landed in http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.Saxonhausen-Orianenburg, and these are people with a wonderful morale and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. We knew it was only a couple of days. They said alright but what will will happen to us, and one of them gave me a very \_\_\_\_\_. Said first of all try to uh to uh be become part of us, of the political prisoners and and but if they come and want you to shave your hair, don't allow that. Say you are a political prisoner. You speak German like any other Germans, so try that and try to advise also your fellow...especially those who know German well, to somehow mix with us because uh the order anyhow is breaking down here slowly but surely so this is the way, one of the way, hopefully way you can save your life. Then interesting enough the Norwegians but especially the Danes, in March, I think, early in April were taken out under the so-called Bernadotte (ph) Aktion, which means uh Count Bernadotte who was the head of the Swedish Red Cross and who had contacts with either the National Red Cross or the German Red Cross, had arranged that the people, especially the these political pris...I think it was an arrangement he had with Himmler, that they should be taken out and should be returned and that's what they did. Uh so still we we we're there in Saxonhausen. We we...at least I did not did not strain myself too much anymore. There was not...some of our people unfortunately had still to work in a factory, a brick factory where they did some nonsensical, heavy work. Also uh food was...became short. There was, for instance, salt became very short because they needed it for chemical purposes, the salt. But there was one terrific advantage. This camp had a radio, interesting enough, for the for the whole camp and when they were playing music or whatever, this sometimes it was interrupted...I remember that one evening somebody broke into the music and said here's Frankfurt, the the occupational radio of the American army or something like that. This certainly gave us a tremendous hope. We knew when when it came close to March, April \_\_\_ the weather luckily became became uh warmer, still the the...there was another...spring is always that time where you exert your \_\_\_\_\_. You you want to be alive. http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.

**Q: OK. At this point...excuse me...we want to stop. We're going to pause and change tapes. TECHNICAL CONVERSATION END OF TAPE 5**

**Q: OK. Uh we're on tape. You are in Saxonhausen...and can you just repeat it...**

A: On that that uh we we were coming and we knew...we saw, for instance, a lot of air activities, also air fights. I remember when one uh uh fighter plane was was I think following a German fighter and shot him down. That was a terribly an atrocious moment when this came down and exploded, not far from us uh so we saw already that the war came came closer. It was April, after all.

**Q: And you were in...tell us the camp?**

A: That was in Saxonhausen which was...which was approximately twenty to thirty kilometers north of Berlin. Now since...we we didn't know all the details but we knew that the American army had penetrated Germany uh uh deeply and that the Russians uh had had uh at least uh reached the uh the uh \_\_\_\_ River, so the question again came up, what's going to happen and since we didn't know by whom would...we thought that the the Nazis now had enough of us and what would either kill us or or leave us alone, but no. They they still had to...they they treated us http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.like cattle (ph) till the very last moment, and we uh we uh uh knew...we knew then that the Russians had had made...were marching towards towards Berlin and on April 20th...that's that's Hitler's birthday...we uh uh saw in Saxonhausen an air attack going towards Berlin uh uh of a dimension I have...I had not seen in Auschwitz and I didn't believe was possible. The air was...there were not only hundreds...there must have been thousands, and since it was a clear day, a beautiful day, the air there was filled with...it looked like sheet music in the air because of the of the the evaporating trails, and they went towards Berlin. How Berlin could survive under those circumstances, we were not quite clear, but they didn't \_\_\_\_ Berlin. One bomb, interesting enough, also fell into our camp and luckily hit the munitions depot, so we when...then then we said to ourselves, those bullets exploding cannot do any harm to us anymore. When this was over...and it lasted a long time...and by the way, we had no shelter, no nothing, so we could see it but on the other hand it was interesting to to to to to watch it, but when this was over, after hours, there was no water. There was no electricity, but what for us was very important to know that no electricity in the in the in the barbed wire, so we thought and we had amongst ourselves days before spoken about some tentative committees we should build. Those who were able to speak English and French, in case the the the uh especially the Allies should reach us first, and those who are \_\_\_\_\_ Polish and Russian, uh uh for in case the Russian army should, because we were certain that they would uh enter Saxonhausen in in the course of the military operations. It was not to happen. On that same night...and as I say there was no light, no water, no nothing...I heard this...I still remember...I had...I couldn't sleep too well...a courier came from the kommando, from the from the main headquarters saying the camp, the whole camp has to be ready to march out at six o'clock in the morning, which means that they they put us on the march again. In connection with preparations, I had acquired a jacket, a civilian jacket, without stripes and also pants without stripes, but you know, in the back of the jacket there http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.was a still a sign which characterized me as an inmate, so what I I...at this moment when I had then decided I'll I'll throw away the uh the uh other the uh the prison garb, took the pants and this jacket but covered me with a with a coat, which was...had still striped coat and uh uh my my cap, which I have with me. If you want to see for a moment...

**Q: Later...no, we'll do it later, OK?**

A: So we walked out and interesting enough, we saw already the German army in defeat. They were...we walked in towards the woods surrounding Saxonhausen, we saw that uh army trucks and and and uh uh tanks and uh uh troop carriers had taken cover in these in these woods. We saw women for the first time. We hadn't seen women for for weeks and weeks. And we saw, interesting enough, also German refugees who obviously were running away from from the front because what had happened was that the Russians...uh and we didn't know that they were supposed to take Berlin, that under the agreement they had with the Allies, the Allies and Americans were were to stop at the \_\_\_\_\_\_, not to advance, but that the Russians would surround would surround Berlin and take it. Uh that...in in the course of that operation, refugees had taken to the road, also to flee to the north with the hope to meet the Allies because they thought that when they meet the Allies they would be better off than to meet the Russians. So we walked uh towards the north, not knowing where, not knowing why, not knowing what the purpose was, but still under guard and uh interesting enough, the the the what the Nazis then did was that they had taken some of the German pris...uh inmates, especially criminals, and put them into into into SS uniform, so we were walking and uh during the night uh sleeping in the woods. Thank God I was a Boy Scout. I knew how to build...uh we had some blankets in order to protect yourself and also to come as close as possible, http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.because the nights were still pretty cool...it was April after all...so we walked uh quite some stretches for a couple of days. We saw (cough)...excuse me...more and more refugees. We did not know what the military situation was certainly, because we were cut off. Then uh uh we...we knew that this...my geography was good enough for that that I knew we were walking out of the province of Brandenburg (ph) towards Meklenburg (ph) somehow, to the north, and then uh we passed by, interesting enough, one stretch where we saw a terrible picture of uh dead horses and corpses and and and uh destruction because in the night before American fliers had had uh uh uh \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , they called it, had strafed the area and since there were also military groups, military columns marching and walking, they certainly from the height couldn't see that also refugees were there, so there were quite a number of casualties. The advantage was that uh dead horses became a source of supply, especially for the French who knew very well how to get to the liver or so in order to to get some meat out which they could use uh because we had no, no other...the little of food we took with us was was used up very soon.

**Q: So what you're saying is you were able to use some of the horse meat yourselves?**

A: Not at the beginning. I mean we were...I was very reluc...we...I mean we didn't believe that that...but you know, when hunger is striking you, you know, you don't ask any more.

**Q: When did you finally and where meet up with the Allies?**

A: I'll tell you. We uh uh uh were driven for quite a number...we drove out on the 20th, and we were walking approximately uh ten or twelve days already, uh stopping in one big forest, http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.almost...it was just on the day of my birthday I remember, on the April 26th, we were somewhere in a place, in a beautiful area but uh and the question came up should we try to escape, but uh here again the question was uh uh to which extent could you rely on the German population.

**Q: OK. So this...explain something, if you would, because I...it was a little unclear. You were still then under guard?**

A: Still under guard. They were still shooting if anybody is tried to get away and we were still...though we were...from the air we were bombarded, but also the guards were still there. The guards uh uh were not very happy about this because they were also afraid of their lives, especially that that they would be subjected to attacks. After twelve days I think, we were driven to a point where it was was...all this area is is forest area, at least it was at this time, and when we were walking...a real pretty week I must say...I had some of my friends still with me, not to loose contact with them. Uh all of a sudden a bicyclist, a motor bicyclist, a German with a bicyclist came and said to the to the SS guards there, idiots, where are you going. The Americans are already in \_\_\_\_\_, and when we heard this, we became alert, because we knew from the signs there that \_\_\_\_ could only be what fifty or sixty, seventy miles...uh kilometers away, so were ordered into a into a forest there to stay there for the night and a friend of mine with whom I was together from Auschwitz all the time, he had the courage to take some horse...to to get some horse meat and we were trying to make a fire in order to cook it which was not easy because it was pretty wet in this this forest, and we were in the middle of preparations in order to get something to eat when all of a sudden from the back of us, obviously the Russians opened up with heavy guns. Now you have to understand we http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. 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The SS was still there and when they see us or saw us running, they were still shooting after us, but luckily uh our name tag was not on their on their on their bullet, and then all of a sudden uh we reached an area...meantime it had become dark, where we were we were somehow in no man's land, but not completely because on that road we had to reach, there we saw the the remnants of the German army, also trying to make their way to the north, and refugees obviously coming from Berlin with all kinds of vehicles, fire trucks, hearses, milk trucks...whatever moved, they had used, and sometimes put together because they didn't have enough gasoline anymore, so they had tied...had tied these together, and we then said well, probably the safest is to mix with these people, and after all, I had thrown away the the the the stripped coat and I took...had thrown...not thrown away but put it my pocket the the cap, so I I looked at least like a civilian, and my friends also whatever they had. We mixed with the the population, and uh so they walked rather slowly. There was no marching because there were hundreds and thousands of people, pressing towards the north. They obviously knew that they were pressing towards some kind of of of army lines, of the American army or the British army. Nobody knew who was operating there, so uh uh then in this way we were walking the whole night. We heard some shooting. We didn't know what it was. We were even stuck by by some German soldiers and they said...and luckily we spoke http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.German and we said the Russians are driving us out and we are going the same way you are doing. When they heard about the Russians, then they were...they were...I mean, when you said Russians it was always for them a cause for alarm and when we were walking slowly and and and and and and it was dawning slightly and uh somehow...I don't know whether in my...I couldn't sleep and you walk, but I was dozing somehow...all of a sudden sudden a friend next to me said to me, Norbert, isn't that the American flag, and I looked up and sure enough there was a bend from one forest area to another forest area, and there uh uh uh was the the the the American flag, stretched over the over the the the crowns of the of the of the trees, and uh with the with the uh headlights of the jeep...it was showing that this is now American-occupied territory and this is where uh the American army had stopped, because what we didn't know was that uh the 8th Division of the American army had been lent to Montgomery to cut off the northern uh uh Germans from the southern Germans....from northern Germany from southern Germany, reaching the city of \_\_\_\_\_ obviously, and that was the 8th Division. And but at a certain point, uh uh headquarters probably had decided not to continue operations anymore because they didn't want to take any casualties anymore.

**Q: Let's take this back to you. What did you...you saw this flag. I would like to know what you felt?**

A: It was...first I I...the the the first moment I didn't realize that it's true, but uh when we saw that, there was a feeling of...we were laughing and we were crying, embraced each other and and it was unreal, because it was a feeling of being born again. When you are born you don't know about it because you have no recollection, but this moment of rebirth is something...it's very special. I think you cannot describe it properly. The human language is too poor to do that. Anyhow, this http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.American flag, the symbol of the American flag, has remained for me something which I I I keep holy because it meant a new lease on life for me and for us, and whenever I see a flag abused or dis\_\_\_\_ or burned, I feel deeply offended. Uh uh...just to repeat this...this flag was and is and remains for me the symbol of life. When I see, for instance, on the Day of Remembrance uh when the flags of the regiments are brought in, you know, your heart is beating faster, so when we saw that, there were there were...well, these few are jeeps and and a few soldiers, but it was a very loose, loose uh uh...from the front line, so we walked a few...a few hundred yards and all of a sudden we saw, uh on that road, an American officer, obviously, and when we approached him, he directed his pistol at us. After all, he didn't know who we were. And thank God my school English and the English which I had brushed brushed up with the British prisoners of war was good enough to tell him, uh said sir...and he must have been...later was explained to be somebody with a Texas accent, because I didn't...I had certain difficulties understanding...between his accent and my accent, it was not so easy, but anyhow I said, sir, we are we are we are your friends. We are prisoners of concentration camps and uh thank God we have reached you. And that fellow was was was...I mean he had seen action obviously everywhere, but this was something new to him. Now you have to understand, those German soldiers who were reaching the line, had to leave all their packages, all their cars, everything...they were just driven to a big field nearby and then the soldiers are looking if there was ammunition or dynamite, whatever it is, and then they tell to the soldiers to assemble somewhere to take them into custody as prisoners of war. The war wasn't over yet. So uh he said, you're welcome. If you need anything, you go and you can take whatever you want to, which means whatever there was on food, we could, and we were one of the first groups that there were with us were two of my friends and some uh uh French fellow, a Belgium fellow, a Dutch fellow, a Ukrainian fellow...we all stayed together, and when we saw all of a sudden all that food stuff and so http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.we thought, well, we have to be careful because because it would become very dangerous because these were these were very uh fat things and it could be dangerous for our stomach, and sure enough since then slowly also other groups had crossed there, some of them jumped at this food, and and and and some of them dropped dead on the spot. So uh uh and then you know all of a sudden we were safe and we realized and I realized at this moment uh...well, I was with friends but I was alone, that uh uh I had...when I was still in Auschwitz, uh one day a fellow had come from Birkenau, and uh that was a time believe it or not that we still believed that women and children would be around, would be alive, and we asked him, have you heard that is in Birkenau there are children and and women, and he said are you crazy. I lived in Birkenau now for a year and a half, next to the gas chambers. When you arrived what happened, and I told him that my wife and my child too was taken away immediately. With that he said I'm sorry to tell you there's no hope, and I still could not completely...completely believe it, though we lived already in the shadows of the crematorium and the shadows of the gas chambers, but then when I reached the line on...was the night from from May 2nd to May 3rd, 1945, which I call my and our second birthday, I realized I was alone. I was certain my parents were gone, my family was gone and and and I was joyful but at the same time terribly sad, because I couldn't share in the joys of the other...for instance, of the Belgium fellow and the French fellow and and the Dutch fellow who was certain that they could go home soon and and go back to normal life and find their home and find their families. I knew I had no family anymore. I had no home anymore and and I had...I don't know...didn't know what the future would be, but really, that was that was what what made this moment so so terribly sad. Uh but nevertheless we con...we continued uh on that road which led into the city of \_\_\_\_\_\_. Landed in the morning there, and there you could see what a defeat of a big army meant...hundreds and thousands of wea...weapons had been thrown away by the by the Germans. The war was still on...including http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.machine guns, bazookas, uh machine pistols, rifles...you you name it. Uh we didn't take any of that to shoot the SS. It didn't occur to us. We were not made that way. It probably would have been better to do it, but we trusted uh that justice would would prevail and that that these criminals would would would get what they deserved to. Well, that's another story. We reached the city of \_\_\_\_\_. We came to the...we were directed to the to the...by the way, on the way we saw, for instance, American troops. They were they were cold, but they had put on a fire and they had gotten somewhere bundles of German marks, you know. They were using these bundles to to lit a fire, and came...we were directed to a building which was called military government...that was new to me. Military government...I didn't know what it meant, but it was closed. Six o'clock...there was no office hours, you know. So uh uh and and uh I didn't know what to do. One of my friends I was with was very sick. He could hardly walk anymore, so I then took the initiative and uh went into into one of these uh uh buildings in \_\_\_\_\_, and I was told by that French fellow that...the lady was nice enough. She gave him some some some water so that he could could wash himself and so I went, and I had in my pocket still twenty German marks I had smuggled from Auschwitz, and I went to that lady and said uh I need two rooms for for my friends and myself. We are this and that and says well difficulties...the families are evacuated, fled from the Russians and so...and you know, at this time you didn't accept these these apologies and so I said I need two rooms. And as a token of my good will, I give you my last twenty marks, so luckily we found these rooms, so then we could somehow clean ourselves after all these days and those ten days...I mean we looked terrible. I shaved again, but I \_\_\_\_ and I put our friend who was in very very bad shape shape to bed and I was looking for for for help. I went back to the military government. I was coming and going and I said for goodness sake, amongst these people there must be some of my old friends from the youth movement and so have joined the army. Eventually I could meet some of them. And all of a http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.sudden I saw a jeep uh driving up and uh a man came down and \_\_\_\_ a racial mark...I thought he was Jewish...a hefty fellow. I approached him and, you know, at these days uh the the troops they were carrying their pistol mostly on on in front of them or or they had these short machine guns and so uh so I approached him, and asked are you Jewish. And he said yes, but what's it your business, and I whispered to him uh I'm also Jewish. He said for dancing (ph)...what are you doing here. And so I told him. I said uh just hours ago your Army liberated me and a few of my friends. I'm happy to shake hands with the first Jewish soldier. (Pause) (Crying ?) Excuse me.

**Q: It's OK. Do you use kleenex?**

A: Yeah.

**Q: Use kleenex. Take your time. It's alright.**

A: It's so long ago, you know, and still it's it's gripping you. So uh he embraced me, and he was crying. (Crying) And he was a fellow who has seen action in Normandy and so on and he was a hardened soldier. You could see his decorations and so...but uh...crying like a child, and he said uh \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which is that old Jewish salutation, peace be with you. And uh after this uh after we had somehow uh and \_\_\_ then go this way. Beyond the uh the uh the uh encounter when we first on the group with American flag, this was one of the things which has remained one of the strongest story of my life...uh to greet uh for the first time, after all we had come through, a Jewish soldier who had come from far away, had crossed the ocean, had had left his family, had left his home, and had carried arms against Hitler, and was one of my liberators and uh uh then his first question was http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.uh what can I do for you, and uh well, I told him uh uh after having calmed down, we're just uh short of everything, and he just looked at how I looked. I didn't have a Brooks Brothers suit, so uh what do you need. I said we need everything. A friend of mine...where do you stay. Where are you? I told him that have found uh shelter with a with a with an apartment with a German lady and so uh he said well, I don't know...I should like...would like to see our chaplain but I don't know where he is but uh tell you uh now it is so and so and you know, they had the watch...I will never forget...on this side \_\_\_\_ for one reason or the other, not here but here. Be here in two hours. Now I was ashamed of myself. I didn't have a watch, you know, so I tried to be there ha...one one hour later because he said he would come back, and sure enough he came back and he had already recruited some other Jewish boys of his unit. It was a tank unit. A tank unit which had been uh had seen uh quite some \_\_\_\_ action from Normandy uh through via via northern Germany and so on, and uh he came as he had promised and he brought all kind of things uh they had just gotten together...some K-rations and so they didn't like anymore, and that certainly that was manna from...and and and I was happy that I could tell my friends...and then he wanted to know where where we are...

**Q: I'm sorry. Say it again. I couldn't hear you.**

A: Uh he wanted to know where where I'm located..he wanted to say where are you put up. I wanted to see...I want...I want to see that you are well off because, you know, as they say these these boys were the first and best untrained social workers I have ever met. They didn't need any training, because they had seen what they had seen. They felt deeply. They understood very well, and they reacted just out of a of a sense of human solidarity, call it also Jewish solidarity, and so http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.they didn't ask of Army regulations or this and that. Certainly they wouldn't be allowed to give the K-rations to civilians, but for them it didn't matter. So what. And then he came...uh this fellow was from, by the way, Pittsburgh. He's not around anymore unfortunately. And uh he wanted to see where we lived. The landlady was was was deeply afraid. She thought that they would come after her because her husband uh had been or was serving as an air force major I think, and you know, the Germans had a very bad uh conscious certainly and a certain guilt complex...

**Q: OK. What what I need to do...because we want to make sure we have plenty of time...is can you tell us in little short about what...briefly...where he took you and what happened so we can move to the DP camps. We want to talk about what you did with your work with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

A: Well, that's another story because because certainly uh...

**Q: What ha...where did he...where did he take you....?**

A: Yeah...I tell you...because...here he then helped us with with certain things we needed, especially bread, for instance. And I went...still I I looked for some contacts and I was told that amongst the CSC, the the CIA...the the counter intelligence...the Jewish fellows from Germany or so...and I went to the to the Supreme Court building in \_\_\_\_\_\_. The city was not badly bombed by the way, but I met only some Austrian fellow who was only interested in my story about \_\_\_\_\_\_. I've never lived in \_\_\_\_\_. I couldn't help them. What I did not know was that in this intelligence unit was a man who originated from Frankfurt, a lawyer, who had escaped to America in time, had http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. 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I will come. I will work with you a little bit, and he came and in his jeep he brought things we hadn't seen for for days and for years and for years...not only K-rations but also packages he had gotten from America and so and he gave us, my friends and me, and he became a close friend of ours from this day on. Four months ago he unfortunately passed away at the age of ninety. He was a was a lawyer and member of one of the leading law firms in New York. When we met, he said from the beginning, what is your intention, and in our naivete I said well, uh get us an American uniform and we'll go with you. He said don't be ridiculous, because it will take much longer than you think uh to to to get over it...don't you want to go back to Berlin. I said under no circumstances. I know that I have nobody to find there. Uh then he told me that the Russians will take over the area and uh so he helped us to get to a place called \_\_\_\_\_ which was not badly badly bombed and he was also very very helpful, almost instrumental to find the group I had collected in the meantime in \_\_\_\_\_ to take to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_...some fellow inmates from Germany, from Poland, from Lithuanian and so and we came to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ then approximately...we stayed in \_\_\_\_\_ uh May...early in Ju...June. We were able to uh...and there again we found some temporary shelter http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.in some German...German households as subtenants, and I was always staying together with the same friends with whom I had run away and one of them, by the way, was the was the first husband of my wife now, who unfortunately uh perished...uh passed away uh years ago. In \_\_\_\_ we heard over the radio that there's a camp Bergen-Belsen. The name was never...never heard about it before, and that there approximately thirty thousand Jews had been discovered so uh to get there was not easy because all the uh roads were closed, militarily controlled. \_\_\_\_\_\_ was under British administration, but I managed somehow to establish a contact with the office of the International Red Cross in \_\_\_\_\_\_, and one day they took supplies, which they didn't need for their prisoners of war anymore, to Belsen, and I I talked to the...and and the fellow said I cannot...nobody can give you a passport here. You have to try to smuggle yourself from here to Belsen. So I went in the morning to one of the drivers who was a Swiss fellow, and he said yes, I have...but listen, I I cannot help you. They will not let you because the bridges in \_\_\_\_\_ are are are strictly controlled. I said leave it to me. You have...I understand in these trucks there is a certain opening where you sleep sometimes during the night, so give me a chance just to crouch into...to sneak into that and when it's over then...so that's what he did. I went and before we reached Hamburg, I was sneaking into this caboose they call it, and when we were beyond the bridges...he as a Swiss certainly had the right papers...we we uh we uh were on the way to Belsen, and before we uh we entered Belsen...there was a whole convoy with supplies of Red Cross parcels...we were waiting there. A man drove up in a British uniform, a staff sergeant, introduced himself as Staff Sergeant Kline (ph)...and I later found out that he was one of the first to enter Bergen-Belsen with the amplifier unit to to to to announce that Belsen would be free in Yiddish and in German and in Hebrew and in Polish and in Russian. That was the so-called amplifier unit. And we talked and he said where are you from and I told him my story of Berlin and he said we have in our unit a fellow from Berlin. That's interesting. Uh http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.what did he do? He said he was...he did work in an orphan's home. I said what is his name. He said Harry Harrison. I said Harry Harrison...this is no name which was usual in Berlin. Would it have been eventually Hans \_\_\_\_\_\_. This fellow I knew from our youth movement and he was closely associated with my sister, blessed memory. He had to flee Berlin because he was stateless but my sister wanted to join him and couldn't get out any more. He said no...Hans \_\_\_\_\_\_, I never heard it. It's Harry Harrison. He said I have a suggestion to make. Come to our mess and you will meet also our officer who is an interesting fellow named Derrick (ph) \_\_\_\_ and uh have uh lunch there. Now this was for me...I mean to have lunch in a mess...anyhow terrific. I got there and became acquainted with this wonderful fellow Derrick \_\_\_\_, who by the way has written a very important book about Belsen uncovered, and we...but Harry Harrison wasn't there. We were waiting and then all of a sudden, after lunch, he came because he has another mission and certainly it was Hans \_\_\_\_, and when he saw me he almost fainted and he said to me then, Norbert, we're entitled to a bottle of whiskey every week or second week. I've never touched it because as you know in the youth movement, you didn't use to drink. I always gave it away. Today I have to...now I have to empty this bottle. And then he certainly asked questions about his parents, about my sister and all this, so it was Harry. Doesn't...in this way I got to Belsen. And I asked him what is it I hear about thousands of Jews. He said yes, uh there is...I'm trying to to uh be helpful in to do something for the children here but it's still very chaotic because the typhus was rampant. Uh the old camp has been burned down. People have been transferred into this new camp which it was an old army barracks, the Panther \_\_\_\_\_, the Panther School of the Germans, but I advise you try to make your way to a building there where you'll find uh uh people who are trying to organize some some some committees. I got to that building and I met met a fellow in a peculiar kind of a uniform. Later I found out it was a Yugoslavian uh army uniform, and the man I met was the senior chaplain of http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.the...former senior chaplain of the Yugoslavian army by the name of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, now \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, who had studied in Vienna, spoke German perfect and and told him that I have come from \_\_\_\_. We have almost eight hundred DPs. Uh we need help badly and we hear there's thousands of people and you obviously have the support of the army and the committees and so...and no...he said it is now so. We are still in very, very difficult uh in a difficult situation. For days my activity here was since I was a liberated from an officer's camp of the Yugoslavian army, was my first function to bring people to to bury people by the hundreds and by the thousands. Uh it's still very chaotic, but wait a second. There is a committee and the man who is leading is a man by the name of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He is our \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Now \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is something which I couldn't understand because \_\_\_\_\_ is something in German, used in northern Germany as the as the head of a of a city or so, and I didn't know that it was called president. And after a certain while there came a a man of a rather small stature. I'll never forget...with a with a lily white shirt, clean like a whistle. His hair was still very short because uh he was shaven, and with with burning eyes. So uh he spoke Yiddish. I spoke German or my so-called Yiddish, and uh we started to talk. He said what we're asking...what can I do, and I told him what the situation is. We need uh help, and I tried to smuggle myself here into Bergen-Belsen because I heard about you and I heard that the Jewish chaplain here and so on, and he said listen, what the radio says is something else. We are still in a very difficult situation. We are trying to bring order into this chaos here we have. Sure, there are approximately thirty thousand Jews. Most of them are terribly sick. Every day still we are loosing I don't know how many in spite of all the attempts, especially by the British army who is giving us wonderful help, but if you want to try to do something in order to to alleviate our situation, we have to join hands. Try to come uh I think in two weeks or one week or two weeks, and we'll have a meeting of our people we are trying to organize, a Jewish uh committee. You want to help. You are very welcomed. And that http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.was the end of that day, and I smuggled myself back again with that Swiss driver, came to our people and the people, and you know, we had to start also to organize something in \_\_\_\_\_ where interesting enough, the synagogue was not completely destroyed. It was vandalized but not destroyed, so we had already the first services which was an emotional experience of a special kind and and and we had org...since in other words and the the uh community building next to the synagogue was not destroyed, so we had already started to try to organize some kind of a new Jewish community, because there were two, three or four Jews married to non-Jewesses who had been saved, and you know about the community and so, so they all wanted to know what could they achieve. I said they achieve nothing, just to hope that something will happen, but and then work on it to uh to uh to get to Belsen two weeks later, which was not easy because I was still...they have strict controls but I was able in the meantime with the help of another Jewish-American soldiers to organize a small car and and and to get visas was a whole experience (coughing). Luckily I had my driver's license uh uh made before the war, so I made my way uh uh...yeah, and I was ready ready to to to go to Belsen, and all of a sudden, the next day, when all of a sudden people came running from...there was a small DP camp in a barracks in \_\_\_\_\_, and they came running to me and said listen, there is a truck and on the truck, on a military truck, on top there is written uh uh in Hebrew \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The the people of Israel lives, and then, interesting enough, when he was talking, this truck drove up at my place where I found shelter and out came a man who introduced himself to me as Mr. Trobe (ph), as the European Director of the American Joint, and Leonard Cohen as the Director of the Central British Fund in in England. They were on a fact-finding tour to find out what what happened to Belsen and they had come to \_\_\_\_ because they were told there were Jews living...probably based on my report, so we talked. I gave them a run-down of the situation. They said listen, we go back tomorrow to to Belsen, and I understand there is a meeting. Join us. And http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.that was very helpful because he said if I have difficulties at the at the military controls, you can help me out, and that's what what what we did, and we came to that meeting and there was uh was...for the first time a representative of the of the uh of the Joint, a representative of the Central British Fund of England, a representative, I understand, of the Pope, because there were not not Jews only in Belsen, and the...this representative spoke spoke uh French only, and interesting enough, there was a lady amongst us who answered him in Fren...in French, and I thought it was a good friend, and this was \_\_\_\_\_\_ because you know, she had studied in France for a certain years and spoke French fluently, so uh that was that was...call it stock-taking and we we we we we spoke about our hopes and our this and our needs and they said alright, we will try as soon as possible, we'll go back to England and to America to organize help for you and uh at this time, uh \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ made it already very clear that this ought to be done in cooperation with the organized group of the survivors. Uh and then when the meeting was over, he invited me to the room of \_\_\_\_\_, who had in cantino they call it a very her only room. It was special because I know there was there was an easy chair where you could sit down uh, almost in luxury, and there was a couch, not these military beds or so. And uh we started to talk and all of a sudden we were in the middle of our discussion about uh Stephen \_\_\_\_\_ and Franz \_\_\_\_\_\_ and and and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_, and so, so uh it it it was...and this established my my friendship with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from from that moment on, and uh then again uh we came to the conclusion we should try to meet more regularly and I was advised that I should definitely come back in another two weeks because another uh uh uh delegation is expected, and I came to Belsen and we had a meeting with the first members of the...especially of the committee in Belsen and also to this meeting came the then uh uh senior Jewish Chaplain of the British Army, \_\_\_\_\_\_ Levy (ph), and we were advised that a delegation sent by President Truman would come to Belsen and we would sit with them. That was a delegation under the leadership of http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.Earl Harrison and Dr. Joseph Schwatz (ph). Now Earl Harrison I understand at this time was the Dean of the Law School in Philadelphia. Later, if I'm not mistaken, the President of the of the University, and based on on on reports about the plight of the DP's in general and the Jewish...in general and the Jewish DP's especially, President Truman had appointed Harrison and asked him...for a fact-finding uh mission.

**Q: I'm going to encapsulate a little. Just tell us about the meeting with Harrison when he came. And say it that way, when Harrison came...**

A: Yeah. So uh uh these were the participants. And the first to report about the situation was uh \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, in Yiddish...

**Q: Excuse me. Where are we now? Is this in...?**

A: In Belsen. In Belsen.

**Q: In Belsen, with Harrison now?**

A: With...Harrison came. In this company was Dr. Joseph Schwartz who was then the European Director of the Joint, and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ who was for many years associated with the Committee for Intergovernmental uh uh Committees, and uh we met in Belsen, one of the barracks, and uh reporting about the situation because Harrison...Harrison was interested. He wanted to know exactly what was going on, and it was already I think in...in early fall or so. The next to speak was http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.\_\_\_\_\_\_Levy and he...well, it's not only that he's an excellent speaker but a very powerful speaker, and for the first time in my life I heard a man in an officer's uniform who is a rabbi, taking his government to task about the deficiency and about the short-coming and about the fact that in spite of all the appeals also he has made, uh uh as a rabbi and and and as an of...as a member of the Jewish community in England, almost nothing had been done, and I was flabbergasted because this in my background, you might call it Prussian background, this is something I I didn't expect. \_\_\_\_\_\_ spoke also and then uh uh they asked me and asked me to make a presentation in English, and I was sweating because it was still...I mean my English was call it acceptable but but it was still difficult and I said and but but the heart dictated me what to say about the uh the mental disposition, about the expectations we had, that we are liberated but not free, especially free from need, that we need almost everything, that the winter is threatening, that most of our people are still cooped up. They don't want to go back to Poland or to to to these places, like I don't want to go back to to to Berlin, that all this is transitory and that that this...we don't know...uh we have no expectations of the future. We don't know what the future will bring, but there is still dire needs that uh uh after we have buried most of of our victims and this is the first thing we did actually, uh now it's the time where we are trying to at least give them enough food that they that they that they can fill their stomach, enough to wear and and also work out a program what can be done for the future because those people who are liberated, with a very few exceptions, do not want to stay in Germany, and it was very...made very clear and we had accepted already that line that certainly the the emphasis is that people want to go to then Palestine, but also those who want to join their relatives in England and America, should been given the opportunity as soon as possible to do this because Europe is one big cemetery for us, and therefore we we we we uh we we...the sooner the better we we'll get out because otherwise it will be demoralizing to stay with a population which considers us as http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.enemies just just only weeks ago, and uh to start again what what the generation did for us...establish a career, establish uh uh a business or what...we are not tempted to do that, and uh so uh as I say with difficulties I managed to make that statement and uh I felt...what can I say...uh very very \_\_\_\_\_ (laughter). So interesting enough, I...half an hour later I met Harrison in the same bathroom and and he was a wonderful man, by the way...charming, warm-hearted, compassionate and I said I'm sorry but uh this is my English. I hope I can...one day it will be better, and he said don't you worry. It's not important how good you speak in English. It is the meaning of what you try to bring out which is important to me, and this is what I will try to bring to the President, and sure enough, as you know, Harrison immediately went back uh so gave this uh uh report to uh to uh to uh President Truman and Truman almost immediately then used this report to...he could only give directives to Eisenhower in the American zone, but at the same time then with a request that a hundred thousand DP's should be should be given the opportunity to to leave Germany immediately for for Palestine and this and that, so uh uh in this respect the Earl...the Earl Harrison mission was, I would say, a milestone. It wasn't as successful as as we had hoped, because things were still too much in turmoil in these days. Uh the state of Israel was was was not in existence. The British were stubborn in their policy not to admit, and America was still before the DP bill, strictly adhering to the to the quotas, but uh uh somehow it had, I would say it had penetrated the sound barrier somehow. And after that uh we...

**Q: OK. At this point we're going to stop. We'll change tapes.**

A: Good. http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.TECHNICAL CONVERSATION END OF TAPE 6 TECHNICAL CONVERSATION

**Q: OK. We're back. Uh Norbert, tell us about the work now, please, that you did in Bergen-Belsen with the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and would you repeat the sentence that way.**

A: Uh well, after the Harrison mission...but I had started before already...we concentrated mainly in our...first of all to to organize our committee, to our committee, uh uh in other words taking in whoever wanted to be represented of the of the camp in Belsen along certain call it party line...labor and \_\_\_\_ and so on, I mean the old, the old tradition from Poland had been carried on also in Belsen, but the other...because also to bring all these people outside of Belsen into the fold, into the committee which means communities uh uh which were which were organized in cities like Cologne (ph), and and and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Dusseldorf and Hamburg and so on, and we...we then were able, interesting enough, to uh to have a united central committee of Jews originating from Germany, from Poland, from Hungary, from Lithuania, from wherever it was, in one institution in order to try to work on whatever the problems of the day were. One of the problems we had at the beginning immediately was that for instance people of German nationality were treated by the occupational authorities as German nationals and they were told that they can have help only from http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.the...could get help only from German mayor (ph), which was absurd, it was at this time, but we...that was one of the the ideological contacts and in this respect \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_ and all the other friends who were with us in the central committee, this is...call it some kind of heritage we are taking along with us from Auschwitz, that we had Auschwitz uh uh experience, not as Germans or Lithuanians or Poles or or Hungarians but as Jews, and that therefore the the solution of our problem could only be found in in finding an answer to the Jewish needs. Now that certainly was to to find a way out of Germany, uh one way or the other. Uh there were other dire dire needs at the beginning. Uh uh we talk about food, clothing, religious needs. Uh there was also a a problem to bring relatives together. Uh men were looking for their wives, hoped...in the hope to find them. Wives are looking for their children to to find them. We prepared lists, for instance, which were uh uh exchanged with the with the people in in the American zone and other DP camps and so forth. Uh but also uh at the beginning very strongly that help should be forthcoming to alleviate the physical situation, and in this respect then luckily the Joint was able to bring the first uh supplies in and in that committee in Belsen, it was decided that everybody should get the same, irrespective of origin, irrespective of whatever it was, whether living in Belsen or living outside of Belsen, and and that worked well. We had some kind of a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ we called it, which means economical uh department and we got together with the Joint and with the Jewish relief unit and we were sitting together checking the needs and then making the distribution and the central committee had a say in all this and not only that we were working together. We were very proud of this in in organizational ways but we became very good friends. It was it was really a a deep friendship which developed and which it lasted for a long time after we left Bel...Belsen already and which manifested itself whether there was uh many weddings, for instance, occurred and we went there together and there came came came \_\_\_\_\_ and there came came came all kinds of occasions and we http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.were we were always together and and and uh I would say in this respect, I must say, Joseph (ph) and \_\_\_\_\_\_ were very instrumental in developing an atmosphere in which you did not only (cough) discuss business but also asked, you know that Yiddish expression \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_...what is going on with the family, what...and people then revealed what what what what their their innermost...what's bothering them and so so you knew you had a place where you could exchange not only views but your mood with with with friends. Uh it was not always easy. We had a situation, for instance, when the British decided that uh uh uh people who had tried to reach Israel illegally...the Exodus, with the famous Exodus ship...should be brought back to Germany and they were were then forced to to land in in Hamburg and were brought to two camps near the place where I had my my home, my transitory home near \_\_\_\_\_ and that was a very, very difficult uh situation for us because tensions were high. Amongst those people who had been brought back in force were our friends and relatives and so it...we had a a terrible responsibility somehow to regulate the tension because there were people, certainly militant people who wanted to take it out on the British and uh we felt as responsible leaders that we should try to avoid it. After all uh \_\_\_\_ was the spokesman of the people in the camps. I was accredited to the British authorities as a spokesman for Jews living in the cities, so we had a certain standing but what was more important, we had also established a close uh line to our friends of the World Jewish Council in London uh who as members of Parliament like Sidney Silverman and and \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, were able to help us in whatever was to helped. Two fold as I say...with the the help of food and and...and also the religious help. Belgium, for instance, helped the people in in the cities around with \_\_\_\_\_, with with with religious people and so but the other work we were involved in was call it political work...to know that this is a transitory existence, that living...that life in a camp is no normal life, that it has to come to an end, and that's the reason why when \_\_\_\_\_ and I were traveling very often http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.to London, and we had...with our friends of the World Jewish Congress...we had meetings with the politicians, with the head of government, not with a representative, interesting enough, of the British Army or the British Military Government in Germany, but we met very often with the with the...because we had a shorter line \_\_\_\_\_. You know, in Germany everything had to go through channels and in London with the help of our friends, we didn't need that and uh Joseph (ph) was one of the first ones to come to America. He was the first \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the first messenger and and lift up interest for a for a solution (coughing) and he did not uh uh...that was not a fund raising speech. These were not fund raising speeches he made. He made speeches just to say don't let us rot away in in the camps. Don't let us...don't leave us alone to repeat this. We are liberated but we are not free. And we don't feel free before we have a chance to build a new existence, wherever it was...in Palestine or in America or wherever it is, but a normal existence for for our families and for ourself in order to reestablish life and a new career and and and and to make our own contributions. This went on...we had this for...I remember uh uh that things were were so terribly difficult in London. \_\_\_\_\_\_ and I met uh \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and that was at a very very difficult time and we needed badly moral support uh in order...because the people really almost got got into despair, and what could we...what could we tell them time and again. Have hope and it will become better and so...so we asked uh \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to come to Germany, and he said no, I can't, uh for two reasons. Number one my foot will never touch the bloody soil of Germany again, and number two, what kind...what kind of a message can I bring to the survivors...lies. I cannot bring lies. And there is nothing I can bring them. These were the situations under which we were working, and uh then luckily uh you know, came came the development after Exodus which was a really a very difficult chapter, that then in in in May 1948, Israel was created as a state and then slowly but surely we knew that those who wanted to go to then Israel would would would be able. Not immediately because there was a http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.technical problem. Uh Israel was at war with the Arab neighbors. Uh people volunteered to go to Israel. Some of them did. Many of them who came to Israel were pressed immediately into the \_\_\_\_\_ and and gave their life away, especially in the battle of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, had hardly seen the country and were killed in action, so it was a was a was a troublesome uh time but then slowly but surely things got organized and the the camp could be could be could be uh uh uh...I wouldn't say cleaned out but could could be evacuated with...and also then the...luckily the uh the uh DP bill came into action, so people who wanted to go to America had the chance to do so, but the Americans had an interesting practice. First they they they take care of the American zone of Germany so the people in the British zone had to wait, but it was all not that easy either, because I remember when I came...was invited by the United Jewish Appeal in 1946 to come and to bring the message to the Jews of of of America in the west...in the east and also was taken to Los Angeles and Seattle and Portland and San Diego and at this time I reported about the situation, that that not even the the quarters available were be...were used, and uh but that in in the British zone, but that in the American zone, they were...they had made already...they had begun to do this, and I went to the head of the immigration department. I think I was taken in Washington here, and uh this man...obviously he was not the smartest...gave us as an answer that they have not enough funds available in order to establish processing centers for security, to to check security and so on, so the man I was with then was was leading our delegation, said if that is so sir, I might suggest to the Jewish community in America to make a fund raising for the government of America in order to uh to uh finance the immigration department, but still it didn't help. But when the DP camp...uh DP bill came into into...I mean was was started, then slowly all those who wanted to leave left and that was the majority of the DP's. Some were left. Some had built uh built new lives in Germany. I don't want to talk about that, but those...and I must say then we felt that our job in Germany was http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.done and that we could leave because...but it took us longer than we thought. It was almost five years after until until until uh the Belsen ceased to exist and also uh uh uh those who couldn't leave then found a place in Norway or so for medical reasons or other reasons, so that was then and and I decided then also to leave to leave Germany. I was asked by my friend...at this time I had already started to take...to have uh contact with the progressive uh forces in Germany...progressive political forces and and and was asked why did you leave Germany. Uh we need you here and I said listen, I haven't destroyed Germany. I have no duty to build it to build it up again, and I I can't. For me, Germany is one big cemetery. I have nobody here, and in the meantime I'm married again. I found a lady from my youth movement and married in Belsen. I married her in Belsen. We had two children in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and then we came to the conclusion that also in the interest of the children, we would not stay in Germany, and this is then when we decided to to uh to uh leave Germany. There was still another job to be done in which I participated and that was uh uh...that was under the military statute, a so-called successor organization was built to claim the heirless and community property of the Jewish community. This was under Allied law with the seat in London and uh I became one of the founders and we were able then to solve the problems by putting all the funds which which which uh accumulated out of community property which was not used by new communities, and heirless property into one fund and uh this fund was administered by a mutual committee of the communities and the major Jewish organizations and then distributed especially for social purposes for needed people in Israel and in in America, so that was the Jewish Trust Corporation and and and then I came to the United States. I landed in and was in 1952 together with my then wife and my two children.

**Q: What did you do when you came here? Where...how did you establish yourself? http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.Answer. Uh uh I I learned one lesson from my from my teacher, my spiritual mentor, Leo Beck (ph), who said America is not the country of social continuity. In other words, what I had done in in Germany, studying law and being a social worker and so on, wouldn't work, and then after a certain while many friends advised me if I would still have...like to do something with law so many newcomers, especially of Germany, had had had found uh uh a way to establish themselves and have a career in the field of accountancy, so uh I I went back to the University. Luckily NYU, the New York University, was generous enough to give me certain credit points for my studies in Germany, and I took up the uh the uh studies of accounting...of public...and became a public accountant. I never was an enthusiastic auditor or or or tax tax preparer, but it was a a profession which which uh uh guaranteed me an income to give my family whatever was required and and to make a a a call it comfortable life and uh this is what I did uh from the moment then when I entered the professional life and uh uh until recently when I retired after having done enough uh coming to the conclusion that whatever I had done for \_\_\_\_\_\_ would never be enough in order to meet the requirements of the budget, so uh uh as I say I was...but irrespective of the of the of the accounting business, I still kept my interest in in in organizational work. Certainly at the beginning I had to establish first my family. I had a home and and so on and get settled uh and uh then I I also took some time out to do something for for other things again. I, for instance, there was when I was still in Germany one day uh \_\_\_\_\_\_, which is the equivalent of of the duPont in America, uh star...published a a statement saying that the former stockholders should uh file...should register their claims. Now I told you before that we worked in Auschwitz for the factory \_\_\_\_\_ was building there, but that we never got a penny from them paid at whatever...that we just uh uh worked in order to keep...to stay alive, but that \_\_\_\_\_ paid a certain amount of money, small money http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.to the SS which considered us as \_\_\_\_\_ and and and had a profit out of our work, so when I saw that statement in in papers saying that...and after the war when you had a West Germany and an East Germany, the \_\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ uh uh where the records had had been lost somehow and they wanted to register the stockholders and claims which certain people had against \_\_\_\_\_\_, so they published that statement and there all of a sudden I had a brain-storm, and I said if they ask for claims to be registered, I think that we also...I also have a claim. They never paid me a penny for my slave work. Uh I'm entitled to something, and I approached with this question in mind, a man who I had befriended when I was living in \_\_\_\_\_. He was a refugee from Frankfurt, had returned with the British Army, had participated in the liberation of Bergen-Belsen and he had then become an officer in the control commission, regulating the admission of people to the press, to the movies and so and I met him when I became a witness against one of the movie directors, but that's another story \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_in Hamburg. He uh returned to Germany to open a practice again in Frankfurt, and him I approached with the question. I said what do you think. Uh not under the Nuremburg Laws...under the Nuremburg...Nuremburg... the rules of the Nuremburg...though I had been a witness against \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ before the American Military Tribunal in in Nuremburg, but don't you think there is under the civil court of Germany, there is a certain claim and he was doubtful. But at the same time I befriended uh uh in connection with the with the case which was pending against a Nazi director of uh...\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was his name, a man who was the the prosecutor, the chief prosecutor in Hamburg, but he originally was an expert on labor law, German labor law, and when we discussed it, he said my goodness, that's that's there's dynamite in that. Nobody can tell you you'll be successful, but this is...by all means you should bring suit, so my friend \_\_\_\_ alright. I'll take the case, and we brought suit against \_\_\_\_\_\_ in my name and uh then all of a sudden when the papers started to write about it and uh then there was a trial in in Frankfurt. Quite a long story...and http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.some of our...my British prisoner of war friends came as my witness to give evidence against \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, like they did, by the way, also in Nuremburg, so I got a verdict in my favor by the by the District Court in Frankfurt, the German District Court in Frankfurt under the German law saying that the people like me had worked under the...in the shadow of death, in the shadow of the gas chambers, that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ knowing this should have taken better care of those people and give them human consideration, but had obviously accepted these people as slaves and therefore they are responsible for for the treatment, for mistreatment, more treatment, and they...we had uh asked for an award of 10,000 marks. This is a technical thing because 10,000...you know, under German rules and regulations you are giv...you are responsible if you loose, you are responsible for all the costs in court and of the other...of the lawyers of the other side, but 10,000 guarantees you also to run a petition of appeal, so uh when that...when the verdict came out I was already in the United States and in the German papers, there was an outcry, even headlines, that I'm endangering Germany industry because not only \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ had taken had taken slave labors, but also \_\_\_\_\_ and the others and \_\_\_\_\_\_ and by the way, we had arranged it in such a way that my uh case should be considered a a class action case so that that the others, the thousands who are...were still alive would then be entitled to the same claim I had satis...I I got...had satisfied, in order to avoid and avoid a flood of of of uh procedures in the German courts, so uh uh uh as I say the press started to to to to get desperate and uh then it became very serious because then \_\_\_\_\_, they did not give in. They didn't have the the moral fortitude to say yes, we know something went wrong in Auschwitz. Yes, (cough) we feel there is a certain if not legal, at least moral responsibility, and we agree to to act uh uh in response to that to that responsibility. They said no, they had been forced to do that and in certain briefs...I saw that just recently again...they even tried to sell, to tell what a kind of a sanitorium it was they had created for us in in Auschwitz, and another interesting facet of that which http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.their lawyers found that if they hadn't uh taken us as slaves in in Auschwitz, then we under normal conditions probably would have to go to the Russian front and could have been killed there easily so I say this is something which is is unbelievable. Uh they they did not give in and (drinking-pause) I uh reactionary...reactionary forces in Germany which were prevailing, at that time of the Buna's (ph) Republic already...Buna's Republic..Federal Republic. They said no no...you we have...you have to go uh and encourage \_\_\_\_\_\_ to run a petition of appeal, and this was negotiated in the meantime knowing that I was...uh my lawyer and I were not strong enough to to fight this fight alone. I approached \_\_\_\_ Goodman, you know, the...blessed memory...the leader of world Jewry at this time and uh I knew him personally through \_\_\_\_\_ and uh I asked for help and for his support, and there was already a situation created by him for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ claims against Germany called the Conference on \_\_\_\_\_ Claims against Germany, briefly, the Claims Conference, and he saw to it that uh uh support was given and in this way we were able to uh add to Mr. \_\_\_\_ uh uh activity, the help of two very famous lawyers, Mr. Christian (ph), a non-Jewish man, and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ who came out of a very famous practice in Munich originally and had fled to Israel. Uh the court in in in then in the in the appeals court said well, we are we are not able to make history. This is a case which we are not able to make history, and they advised very strongly \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to look for some kind of a...call it amicable settlement, and uh after this happened again they tried through the press in Germany to say what it would mean and what German industry would go into bankruptcy and they had just started now after the establishment of the Federal Republic to find their way in the world, in the economical world and it would be terrible...I would do terrible damage. Uh also there was...I had some help in America, because there also some stories brought into the Times, and so it were helpful to needle them, so that I knew that they were not silent. Uh to cut a long story short, uh uh negotiations were started between representatives of the Claims Conference and \_\_\_\_\_ and it settled http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.in a so-called amicable settlement of thirty million \_\_\_\_\_\_ for all survivors, for all those who had survived on the basis of that in addition to claims they could make under the German \_\_\_\_\_\_ Laws, they could claim additional five thousand marks for work they had performed for \_\_\_\_\_\_ in Auschwitz, and a whole mechanism had to be uh uh established to to work on that. There was a special German corporation built just to receive the money and to distribute it and with the help uh of uh of uh fellow survivors who checked applications and so, it took quite some time. Uh these were paid on the basis of those who were in Buna at least six months, that five thousand marks and those were in Buna less than six months, two and a half...two and a half thousand marks, and uh...**

**Q: For the purpose of the tape, would you just explain that Buna was the subcamp...**

A: Buna was the subcamp of of Auschwitz where where the \_\_\_\_ actually had had established...had tried to build in the interest of German war industry, a factory to produce artificial rubber, so all those who had worked like myself there, were then were then given an additional uh uh uh call it compensation. Based on that, the Claims Conference also tried to negotiate similar deals with \_\_\_\_ and all the others. In some cases were successful, in some cases it was not. One of the successful...unsuccessful cases remain the group of a man by the name of Flick (ph) who was brought to Nuremburg as a war criminal, was sent to prison, had time in prison to re-establish his empire including Mercedes (ph) and others, and up to his very...to the last day of his life, he refused categorically to hear anything about additional compensation for slave laborers, so he went to his grave or to to to hell, wherever he may be, with...and he can say for himself, be satisfied that that he didn't do any favors to former slave laborers. Uh and then with some money which which was left over from this, we were able to establish in Israel at the end some kind of a loan uh uh loan uh uh http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.fund for needy people. There was especially after the Six Day War and so so uh that that...and so uh now this chapter is is closed because it took years to liquidate all this. Uh the question is, was I right in doing it? Was I not right in doing it? Very often I doubt that that what I did was was was so smart for the very simple reason uh they, the German...German and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, some of Germany...I will not generalize...I don't like to be unfair...used the the the fact that \_\_\_\_ had paid what they paid as an argument to say well, what we have done...it was...we were not legally..it's not legally...we were not under legal liability but we did it our of our good heart in for and consequently the record is clean with us. We didn't do anything in in Auschwitz. What they did in in Nuremberg was was a was a crime that they sent us to jail for for for participation of this uh uh...we did it out out of our good heart and and even helped the the prisoners there, so as I say, I'm not very happy but it's water over the dam. You cannot rewind the the film, but it is a certain chapter which was called the the beginning of the slave labor programs, in order to give our people, especially those in need in Israel, in South America, where the \_\_\_\_\_ had a certain importance, where it was somehow helpful, and I'm glad that that some people, even with five thousand marks, could could make life a little bit easier for themselves.

**Q: Good. I thank you. Uh tell me, while you were going through all of this with \_\_\_\_\_ what...and you were talking about all the publicity in the German press and whatever, were there any kind of attacks on you personally? How did people react to you for instigating this?**

A: No. I I must say frankly I was never attacked personally with one exception and I'll tell you that. Uh they tried probably to to get some dirt together, uh to collect some dirt uh but obviously couldn't found anything in my police records. I had not stolen any where silver spoons or http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.so. I had not been a prisoner because I had uh uh committed fraud or or or uh embezzlement, so obviously these attempts were in vain, so therefore in this respect I was never attacked. I was attacked in the German press in another connection. I was, as I indicated before, a witness in a couple of uh uh war...call it war crime trials. Uh the first was in Nuremburg against \_\_\_\_\_\_ uh where I was a witness and gave evidence especially against the man who was in charge of \_\_\_\_\_ in Auschwitz, Dr. \_\_\_\_\_, who by the way was sent to prison but very soon released and very soon got a terrific position again in German industry uh so uh uh then I was a witness in...when I was still in Germany, against this film director who created a vicious poisonous anti-Semitic movie called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the story of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. And I had, must say this was used, which I found out only later, in certain concentration camps to whip up the emotions, the anti-Semitic emotions of the of the guards against us, so after I had seen it after the war, I said I wonder...I I'm surprised that anyone is still alive after these people have seen it. It was heavy, very effective anti-Semitic stuff, and he was accused in German court uh for crimes against humanity, but he could prove that he didn't meant...that he didn't mean it and he was released from all charges. Uh as a matter of fact there was one one case against him. Then there was was appeal and when I was asked as a witness again in the second court trial, I sent a letter to the to the to the president of the court saying that I refused to appear as a witness because I considered this would be an injury to the memory of my...of the of the of the victims, that I have found that...I didn't find that he had...that he had been a fair judge and I refused to. Now it could have been dangerous at this time for me, but they didn't do that because the the prosecutor was a friend mine, said listen, the fellow can...this judge can ask me to take you into custody. I said alright. You know, in these days you did...I I dare...let him dare to do so, but since he was himself, that judge a member of the Nazi party, I was assured that that something could come out in the press. Then I was a witness uh in in in in a case for which I was brought over http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.from from America already against this fellow who was participating in the shooting of the of these poor people on our way from Auschwitz to Mauthausen when they brought them down, and then the last was in the second...so-called second Auschwitz trial in in in in Frankfurt uh against a man whom I had observed making selections in Auschwitz, and he was accused in Auschwitz and then the...my my lawyer with whom I had worked in the \_\_\_\_ case, uh told me uh you have to know that the president of that court is a man who was active as a pilot in the Legion \_\_\_\_\_, that is the Legion \_\_\_\_ which was lent by the Nazis to the Spanish DeFranco (ph) and had participated, for instance, in the bombing of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. So he was uh uh...but obviously the the administration today thinks that this this is nothing burdensome for him, so they made him a judge, and a judge in the Auschwitz trial, so after I had given my evidence, and interesting enough the lawyer of that fellow didn't ask one question because as my lawyer said, he knew that he probably would have made it worse for his client, but the president, this this pilot of the Legion \_\_\_\_\_\_, asked me, don't you have anything good to say about the about the man who is accused here, so after I had recovered a little bit from that question, I lashed out and I I really gave it...after all, I was at this time already an American citizen and I had the American press there also, so so I felt strong, and I told him...I gave him my indication what goodness means for SS people in in Auschwitz.

**Q: What did you say, and repeat again which trial we're in now?**

A: That was the trial against a man who had participated in selections of people for the gas chambers, and and and and and I told him, I said what kind of goodness do you expect from anybody who has become a slave of that criminal machinery which with with with the...which liked to kill people everyday at whim, for whom any human being or every Jew was nothing but just http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.vermin (ph). What kind of goodness do we expect from them? So then at the end of it, interesting enough, when the judgment was was rendered, I was considered as unfri...unfriendly witness. Now after that, when I came back, I I asked a friend of mine who was writing articles for the Times and so, that I had enough, that I would never accept an invitation again to go to give evidence before a German court, and certainly this article found its way into into the German press, and was re...reprinted there, and the uh there was a semi-Nazi paper in Germany called the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and the soldiers' paper. They picked it up and then they at...attacked me personally uh that I probably would like to re-establish...I liked more the cause...the courts of \_\_\_\_\_ and so on, and so but but the...I didn't react to it. I I I I...because it was in the German press and I let it go, but I kept my promise. I never...never appeared again uh in Germany before a German court.

**Q: OK. I thank you. Tell us now...we have time...you said there were some things you had wanted to tell us.**

A: Are you asking about Leo Beck (ph), no.

**Q: Yes. Yes. Yes. Do tell us about Leo Beck. You...you had a special...**

A: Well, Leo Beck, Leo Beck was my...he was...was my teacher and my spiritual leader, if I may say so. He was...he was the the head of the Jewish central organization, not because he was a politician. He was far from that, but a man of impeccable moral and ethical attitude, uh who did not only preach as uh preach ethics and and morale but also also practiced it and uh uh I...we got together actually uh on a more personal basis when I was working uh at the beginning of the war for http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.the central organization in Berlin and when we had the first air attacks there by the British...by the British uh uh air force, uh we were uh taking cover, or we had to take cover in a so-called air shelter which was nothing, with no protection. Uh with the other members working in that office and very often Leo Beck would...certainly came. He was a very, very uh disciplined worker and and uh uh he uh he gave all the time to the Jewish work and I tell you in a moment why. Uh he was there and we we were listening when the bombs were falling, and he told us well this is far or this is very close or so. Why? Because he was one of the few with experiences of World War I. He had been an Army rabbi, especially in in France, so he was familiar with with with the military...with military practice, so he could teach us or could enlighten us if the bombs were deadly close to us or the ones were far away so we didn't have to worry about it. Leo Beck was, for instance, a man uh when he his wife died...I think in 1938, sometime \_\_\_\_...uh he got offers from a lot of universities outside...in England and America, to teach philosophy, to teach theology and so, and he refused and his reaction was as long as one Jew needs me in Germany, I feel I have to stay with him, and as I said before, he was not only preaching ethics and morale, he also practiced it. He stayed. He knew what his destiny would be. Uh he was taken to Theresienstadt in March, I think, of 1943 or February, but where...by by a miracle he survived and this is a very interesting miracle. He told us this miracle when he came uh uh to Germany. You know, he was saved in Theresienstadt. He then made his way with the help of the American army to his daughter in in London and then in '47, I think, or '48, he came to visit uh Jewish communities in Germany. We needed him badly to give us some some hope, some spiritual encouragement and uh uh then he...when we were sitting in a small circle, he told...he was very...a very shy, a very private man. He didn't say a word about about about what he did or what what some heroism or so, some heroic things or so, but he he said uh... http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.

**Q: I want to ask you just to repeat Leo Beck's name because I'll need it that way for the tape.**

A: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Uh...

**Q: Leo Beck said...to you.**

A: Uh wait a second...I lost...I lost it for a moment.

**Q: You can just say Leo Beck was sitting in front of you and you were going to repeat...**

A: Yeah...now the story about uh uh...

**Q: About how he survived.**

A: Yeah. How he survived...excuse me.

**Q: That's OK.**

A: Yeah. It it was in...

**Q: Leo Beck...**

A: Yeah...he was incarcerated in Theresienstadt, in \_\_\_\_\_\_. http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.

**Q: I'm going to ask you really to repeat the word Leo Beck.**

A: Yeah. Leo Beck was incarcerated in Theresienstadt, in \_\_\_\_\_. There was a practice in \_\_\_\_\_\_ that uh uh the name of famous people, let us say of leaders, of Jewish leaders from Austria, from Czechoslovakia, and so who were all incarcerated in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, who had to be reported to Eichmann (ph) and he had a...was one of his bureaucratic whims he had...he had to know who of the people he knew uh had had had had had died. And one day he was advised in one list that a rabbi Leo Beck had died, and he thought it was the Leo Beck. Next to that name, nothing was mentioned from which place this rabbi had come, but there was a rabbi Leo Beck in \_\_\_\_\_\_ in Czechoslovakia, and he had died of old age. So when Eichmann came to Theresienstadt, to \_\_\_\_\_\_, shortly before the end of the war, ten days or twelve days before the Russians entered, he all of a sudden find uh found Leo Beck there, and he was absolutely flabbergasted and in the words of Leo Beck he said, Leo Beck. He said yes. He said wouldn't say rabbi or doctor or so...he said Leo Beck, what are you doing here. He said \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I understand you are dead, so Leo Beck who was a very courageous man also and a witty man, said you know there is a saying amongst us that when you are...when you are believed dead, you live double of your time. Now Eichmann did not have the courage anymore, because it was ten days before the end, to let us say have him shot or have him...because...and he couldn't certainly dis...have him deported to the east anymore, so he left it at that. And that is the way, according to what I was told when we were together, how he had survived at Theresienstadt and was saved by the Russian army and later a group of of, interesting enough, an American colonel, of the \_\_\_\_\_ family I think, made a special way when they heard about Leo Beck to Theresienstadt to to take him out and by special plane he was flown, flown to London, so uh uh but http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.and there was also something else which I...and it's the last I want to say about him. In uh in writings, especially also in the book of \_\_\_\_\_\_ about the banality of evil, there were very unfair text against him, against Leo Beck, based on a story which I consider a historic lie. In 1945 a man who had entered Germany with the American army and who wanted to make probably a quick buck, wrote stories of survivors uh under the title "We Have Survived." And he published one story which he published in such a way as if it was the writing by Leo Beck, but anybody who was familiar with the writings of Leo Beck could see immediately that it was not his writing. And he told of the story that Leo Beck had been advised in 1944 by somebody who had escaped Auschwitz successfully, who had come to Theresienstadt to advise him that in Auschwitz people are being gassed, and he kept it as a secret and did not make it known to the people around him. I personally consider this as a I say, a historical lie. First of all, the number of people who succ...Jewish people who successfully uh escaped Auschwitz, you can count on one or two hands of your of your of your two fingers of your hand, but number two that a man would have the folly to escape as a Jew successfully from Auschwitz, make his way into Theresienstadt, penetrate the the wires or the walls or whatever it is, to look up especially Leo Beck and tell him, listen, I want you to know they are gassing in Auschwitz. It's so absurd. I asked especially in the work I did for the...with the...after the \_\_\_\_\_, I went...I was...I met hundreds and thousands of fellow survivors, if that fellow heard about somebody who had come from from Auschwitz and gone to Theresienstadt. They never heard about it because it's absurd. It's abso...not only absurd. I would say it's obscene, but \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ picked it up and and and it is sticking in her book. I think somebody else also were picking it up, but I consider it as...Leo Beck would not defend himself. He would not say a word about it. That was not his system. Personal attacks he would ignore, because he knew who he was and he then...he knew that others would speak for him. That's he agreed for \_\_\_\_, but that he would say http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.and I'll write an article and make a statement and so and he wouldn't do it. And I say I I...he was he was he was absolutely he was he was a great man. Unfortunately uh uh his...you know, because he lived at a time which was a terrible time, he could not live up to his full potential, you know, as a as a spiritual leader, but whatever...whatever he wrote after...it's interesting. When we took \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I remember, people told me when he came to London, and for the first time they asked him to speak to the people and there was an overcrowded hall and they thought he would talk about something about Theresienstadt. Not a word. He talked about \_\_\_\_\_, about Moses Mendelson (ph), about about whoever he wanted to, but not about Theresienstadt, because he doesn't...didn't want to be want to be to give even the appearance of a hero who is a survivor. So may I say...may I close with with this remark...everybody is reacting to this chapter differently, and and and and I'm glad that I had the opportunity to to tell you. Probably I could cover hours and hours more of that, but it's my belief that what what you are doing here and what the the Holocaust Museum is doing by putting the archives together together is of tremendous importance and of tremendous value, irrespective of the revisionists uh telling us Auschwitz was a hoax or like in that book of uh David Irvin (ph) with pages and pages just tried to prove that Hitler did...never knew about the Holocaust. It was only...it was only Himmler and the others, or the attempts to say just uh Hitler and Himmler and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are guilty, but all the others are...I never believed in collective guilt, and we never spoke about it, not even in Belsen after the war, but I also never believed in in collective innocence. That means that we all have to try to learn a lesson. The Holocaust happened, unfortunately. What could come out is that the world and especially those who luckily were safe from it, have to speak out and have to to to to teach what can happen if human beings become become...or forget the concepts of morale, of ethics, and especially that...and I think this is one of the tasks of that museum and of that of that of that of your archives...to say to the world, look at what can happen. Therefore http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.bigotry is evil. Racism is evil. The the the uh damage of human rights is evil and anti-Semitism is evil. It happened once and let us hope it will never happen again.

**Q: Thank you. TECHNICAL CONVERSATION**

**Q: You had said that there were a couple of pieces of testimony that were particularly compelling or a couple of incidents. Could you tell me about them?**

A: Well, there were there were there were there was evidence from me from from me as a plaintiff, but there was also testimony for the defendants. Now for the defendants, they had brought in some people who gave them an accounting down to the last penny in a typical German/Prussian way, why \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ should not be held responsible because they actually lost on the slave labors because they gave so and so much. Even that was too much because the capacity, the work capacity was was nil and so he proved to the court that \_\_\_\_\_\_ certainly should not be kept responsible. On my side, you have interesting uh Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_ selected carefully very interesting people. One friend of mine...unfortunately he's not around anymore...was a professor of medicine at the University of Strasbourg, and he gave a very powerful statement. The other was a a a lawyer who was I think a teacher at the Sorbonne in in Paris, and then there came three British prisoners of war and uh told the court what they had seen and how they had reacted, and interesting enough the court said in its verdict that uh to their to their regret, that none of the German uh uh witnesses they could believe, that uh especially the British prisoners of war had made a deep impression on them, http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.and that uh I think this is a formula I don't uh get it verbatim, that the British prisoners of war had to show the Germans how even under stretching circumstances, you can keep the values...human values alive. And uh so that was a very important important uh argument to keep them responsible and tell them you have to pay.

**Q: OK. Thank you. Conclusion of Interview. http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.**