KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 1

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

Bob Silverthorne: Wentworth Films. Interview with

David Levine. Kovno Ghetto project. May 1st. Camera

roll 1. Sound roll 1.

(Tape Cut)

SB: First of all, can you tell me when and where you

were born.

DL: I was born April the 25th, 1929 in Kovno Lithuania.

SB: And can you tell me a little bit about your child-

hood before the war began?

DL: It was very normal. I went to school. I went to

what we had called a public school but it was Jewish

public school as opposed to the general public school.

My parents were middle class people. My father had a

small business and so did my mom. I had one sister and

we lived in a rather middle class neighborhood in an

apartment. And uh, I had a dog. Uh, that's about what

all I can say. My--my uh interest at the time when I

was a child, especially the ages between maybe 7 and 10

was to swim in the summer uh in the river, uh skate in

the winter and uh play soccer and--and ping pong and

this was my uh what I like to do as a child. In addi-

tion to that, I was an avid reader and I would read

many books during a year.

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 2

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

SB: Describe to me, what you recollect yourself of when

things changed and war began.

DL: Well, there were actually two changes. The first

change was when the Soviet uh Union, the red army

occupied Lithuania and that changed--I did not uh

feel--my parents did because my uh they lost their

businesses do to confiscation of private property but I

myself did not feel any uh--uh lesser life. Uh, on the

contrary, there was more to children uh in--in the

Soviet system uh joined certain--uh different palaces,

and groups and sports clubs as well as the schools were

upgraded to some extent. So personally I felt very

little. However, a year later, when the uh--Hitler's

forces attacked uh the uh the--the Soviets, of course,

retreated very quickly and--and within 2 days the

German armies had occupied Kovno. And cause in

that--that was it began. My first notice of that was

that we lived in a building right next to the river;

uh, on the riverside. And the airport was about maybe

2 or 3 kilometers on the other side of the river

and--and I--I was uh--uh--I was woked by explosions.

When I looked out the window, I saw uh calks of smoke

rising from the airport. Uh, my parents immediately

realized there's a war and when we turned on the radio,

uh we realized that the Germans had attacked and that

they were marching towards our city. As I said, 2 days

later, they were uh, they occupied Kovno and the first

order of their business was to uh--uh--uh to issue

idics against the Jews and started to tell us what we

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 3

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

can and can not do. Uh, the orders came one after

another very quickly. Uh, we had to um--uh we had to

give up our radios and our vehicles--those who had them

uh even bicycles as far--motorcycles. We had uh--we

were not allowed to have any transportation or any

communication and equipment like it. So we had of

course, radios at the time also we had to give up

cameras uh, personally, I was only 12-years-old at the

time and uh course I was extremely scared of what would

is about to come--not that I understood all that much

but what I heard the grown-ups talk and uh this-this

fear was constantly with me and--and could always feel

some kind of a energy going through my body which I

could only describe as my stomach shaking and so on

every time I saw a German soldier. The other thing

that uh I was--was completely amazed me at that time

was the behavior of the general Lithuanian population

towards the Jews. It wasn't just that the Germans had

uh--uh lead to us with their uh idics and laws and

regulations but rather that the general population, the

Lithuanians, picked up arms, first against the Soviet

soldiers, as they were retreating. They were shooting

them in the back. And then against Jewish neighbor-

hoods and--and--and Jews, in generally, whenever they

saw anyone in the street, the shot first--uh simple to

kill not because they weren't allowed to go in the

streets. And uh some neighborhoods had actually had

pagrons where dozens of people were taken from there

homes and--and massacred. Uh, several of these people

were related to me by marriage. It was my uncle's

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 4

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

family who was completely massacred during the first 2

days uh--uh of the occupation. And uh, that pretty

well set--set the stage of what was to come. And even

though I was only 12, I began to understand--to realize

that survival is going to be very difficult. Uh, in

addition to that of course there was the scarcity of

food. Uh, immediately there was--whatever we had in

the house we ate. There was almost impossible for us

to go out and to buy food. Uh, because in the stores,

they wouldn't sell us any. So somehow we had to gather

whatever we could--our--with our own wits to try to get

something to eat or else you starved to death. And

that is part of what I used to do because I was small

and young. I would go out and try to generate

some--some uh groceries somewhere and bring it home.

Uh at that time, it was pretty clear uh to me what the

next years, months or years would--would bring.

SB: Um, tell me what happened to you uncle's family.

DL: They lived in--in--in a--in a section of the city

that could called in Lithuanian it was called Viliolam-

polay and in Yiddish it was called Slovakah. And they

lived very close to--to a biblical college--a Eshiva.

And uh although they were not extremely religious

people but they were observant--but there were not part

of the univ--of the excuse me--of the Eshiva. Um, a uh

ran th--this program started. This is where it--around

the Eshiva area and--and--and many of the Rabbi's and

many of the people that lived there were the ones that

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 5

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

suffered the consequences of the pogroms. And because

they lived that close, they also took them out of their

homes and they shot them in the street. That was his

father, his mother, and--and--and 2 of his brothers.

One escaped and came to us and then he told us what had

happened and--and uh all I--all I know is what he had

said because I wasn't not there at the time.

SB: So, when you say you pretty much knew what was

going to happen, can you tell me a little bit more

about that?DL: Well, I pretty well understood that uh

we are in for a bad time with--with the Germans as well

as the Lithuanians. What we did not understand, and

especially being as young as I was, that the uh--the

end what we call today a Holocaust. And that 6 million

Jews would--would die uh throughout Europe. That was

not something that we understood. That was not what

we--what we expected. We knew that some of us would uh

would die because we saw it happen uh during the first

uh week uh a number of um uh (phone rings)

SB: Let's stop. CUT

SB: So go ahead and finish.

DL: Well a uh, my uncle himself, whose family had died

2 days later, himself was captured and taken--taken to

a place with several thousand other people. It was

called Fort number 7. And uh we called them the

uh--just to give names to the people that disappeared

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 6

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

or got killed, we sort of gave a name to every group of

people disappeared. And the first ones cause were the

massacres and the second one was that they were just

arrested and taken somewhere. We didn't know whether

they would uh live or die. And uh we called them the

first arrested. In other words, the first group that

was arrested and my uncle was among them. The one who

had lost his family and the reason is because he went

to investigate, to see what happened to his family and

they caught him on the way and they arrested him and of

course what we found out later is that there were--all

of them had been killed, uh on that Fort. And many of

them very viciously. They were starved to death and

they were--and died of thirst. It already getting warm

and they had--could not give them any water. We found

that out later and--and food and the most of them died

of starvation and of thirst.

SB: Okay, now we need to reload.

(Tape Cut)

BS: Go to camera roll number 2. Camera roll 2 is up.

(Tape Cut)

SB: Do you need to get away?

Tom: No, I'm fine.

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 7

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

SB: Now, can you describe for me, your recollections of

the formation of the Ghetto.

DL: Yes, it--it was a rather a uh--a simple--uh way uh

we were told that by the 15th of August, 1941, we had

to evacuate our homes and apartments and that we had to

moved to a predesignated area in--in a--in across the

river. That same area where my uncle's family had died

earlier. Uh and it was called Slabatka and it was

called a Slabatka ghetto and uh they had formed actual-

ly 2 ghettos because there was a main street or road

that ran through the uh city, so they had made one

large ghetto, one small ghetto with a bridge that

crossed from one to the other. And--and we had to uh

ourselves find uh a place where to live. Of course

there were a number of uh people--Lithuanians, who

lived in this area--they had to move out. In some

cases we traded apartments. Some or traded places.

They would take the place or course we could take

nothing with us except what we could carry like I said

before transportation was forbidden. So, whatever uh

we could find in--in--in the empty apartments or what-

ever what we could carry with us is what we sustained

us for the rest of--of the time. Fortunately, we found

a place at the very end of the ghetto; in the very

farthest part. And we found a 2 bedroom apartment that

was empty and um we moved in there of course the almost

the entire family that was left was moved in there.

There were as many as I believe 14 people. We lived uh

perhaps 16 people that we live in that apartment in

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 8

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

those 2 bedrooms and uh we stayed and of course whatev-

er we had we left behind. The only thing is since a

little a little innovation is that to carry some of the

stuff that my mother needed uh for the new place cause

we made several trips back and forth. Uh, we uh took a

table and turned it upside down and made sort of a sled

out of it and we put some cardboard around the legs and

tied it with strings and put some stuff in there and

then pulled it all the way across perhaps as much as uh

um 7 or 8 kilometers and that was an ordeal but

we--we--we managed to take some things that we needed

over and we moved into the new apartment and that--in

the ghetto--and that was, in a way, to get it started

cuz everyone will have a different story to tell and

how they got in and what happened cuz those uh Jews who

already lived there didn't have to do anything. The

stayed in their own homes that they had lived in for

many years. Um, and uh, just life continued for a

little while cuz the ghetto was uh surrounded with

barbed wire fences all the way around. There were

gates to come in and out. And uh, immediately after

that uh--uh the um the community--the Jewish community

started to form some--some bits of organization with a

police force--a ghetto police uh and--and--and uh

committees and--and--and uh what we called the uh--the

uh--I suppose you might call the mayor of the ghetto.

Uh and what Dr. Melkis. Some uh we tried to--to dupli-

cated some form of--of--of normal life uh but it didn't

last very long because one of the things that happened

then was that they formed brigades of workers that were

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 9

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

going out to work in areas and most--the most of the

people worked were uh at the airport. Because the

Germans started building an airport that could handle

uh--uh military planes cuz that airport was very small

before then and building runways and that is what

many--many hundreds of--of Jews were doing during the

first uh several months of the ghetto. Uh, until uh

some things started happening very quickly and of

course the first thing that happened was the--the

elimination of the small ghetto that I had mentioned

before. Um, there were perhaps as many as 2 or 3

thousand people that lived in the small ghetto and all

of them were taken to the 9th Fort at one time. I

believe that was the beginning of October; either the

4th or the 6th of October. And--and--and--and they

were taken there and--and--and at one point, they were

brought back because I don't know why. They were taken

there and brought back and--and they were telling us

that they had seen um they had seen graves--pre-dug

graves of what they thought were graves and but they

had brought them back, so we weren't very concerned

about that. But uh several days later, they took them

out and didn't bring them back. And uh and this small

whatever--whoever was left in the small ghetto was

forced into the large ghetto and uh the small ghetto

stayed empty for a while. until the 28th of October and

uh that is when the first what we called Indidist Case

Action or the large selection and that is when half the

people of the ghetto were separated from the other half

and taken to the 9th fort. Uh, it happened the 28th of

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 10

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

October and the night before, the guards outside of the

barbed wire fences were um increased. And we were told

that all of us had to leave our homes and uh gather in

a place called uh--uh the Democratu place and no one

may stay in the house and--and all the doors must be

left open because they were going to uh--going to

search for contraband or hidden perhaps weapons, per-

haps communication radios, gold, silver, furs, whatever

they could find. We were not allowed to take anything

with us except clothing that we were wearing and uh

that is what we thought was going to happen. And well

they took us out to that place and we stood there for

perhaps--we gathered there 6 o'clock in the morning and

we stood there for perhaps 3 or 4 hours waiting for the

3rd shift to comeback from the airport who worked at

the airport. Uh and--and of course since those had

worked at the airport the most, many were just men, as

they when they came into this uh place where we were

gathered, they started looking for there families;

their wives and their children. And uh w--in many

cases it uh--they couldn't find one another. Then the

uh, Germans arrived, uh the S.S. And they set up sort

of like a platform and they told us that we had to

march by them in a single file by family. Every family

by itself. In the beginning we weren't quite sure what

was happen but after an hour or 2 uh it became clear

that they were separating the old and the children and

the lame and uh those uh couples, that say had 2 or 3

small children went to the right and those couples that

were who's is teenaged child or 2 went to the left.

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 11

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

And uh it at first it wasn't clear which was the good

side, which was the bad side but uh--uh it became clear

after a while that the left side was the good side.

Um, my father, my mother and I uh walked through--we

were sent to the left side. Um, my ant

whose--whose--whose husband was already dead--killed in

the beginning uh, she had a little girl and she walked

with her unmarried brother and my grandfather, who was

her father, they went to the right. Many of my rela-

tives went to the right. Uh, we lost half of our

family uh during that selection. As those who were

also went to the left side were taken on the other side

they had made a--a--as--as--as the main body of the

gathering--

SB: Wait, let's--we have to just stop and reload up.

DL: Am I being too loud?

(Tape Cut)

(Beep)

BS: Camera roll--sound roll 2. Camera roll 3. Inter-

view continued with David Levine.

SB: Okay, you were just telling me.

DL: Yes the uh, as the main body of people became the

less because they moved through the line where the uh

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 12

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

German who name was--who's name I'll never forget. His

name was Ralka and he is the one who made life and

death decisions of who would go--who would go in what

side. Uh, those who were went to the left to the good

side so to speak went all the way around and came back

to where they came from to the Democratu plots. The

others were taken over in the other side. So as those

who had not yet gone through the selection, there was a

piece of room between the those who had already gone

through, those who had not. And occasionally some

would realize this was the good side and they would

sneak over, even though there were Lithuanian guards

guarding all the way across. The line--the

marking--those who had not yet been gone through

the--the uh selection and those already who had gone

through to the good side. That went on until very late

that night uh and when it was over, those who had gone

over to the right side, the bad side, uh were taken to

that small ghetto that I described earlier and there

they were held. Us, we could go back to our homes an

when we came back to our homes we weren't quite sure

what to make of it and uh the--the wish was that they

would be living in the small ghetto and ours would

become, because we are um, uh people healthier and the

older the children we--we would become the workforce

and they would become someone that had to be helped.

But that was just the way is should we did--deep in our

hearts, we knew that this was not going to happen and

uh we uh had to gone to uh sleep--we were very tired at

uh 4 o'clock in the morning, my father woke me. Uh,

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 13

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

and of course, at that time, our household was reduced

from 16 members to 9. 7 were had gone to the other

side. And uh my father had woke me and said that they

are beginning to move the people from the small ghetto

out towards the hill; towards the 9th--9th Fort. And

since my mother was not in very good shape, he said

that he will stay with my mother because she had gone

into a stupor and--and she just sat there and would not

speak and would not eat or uh tal--or anything--she

couldn't sleep. And she hadn't slept at all and uh he

asked me to go back to take a look what was happening.

I did go back and cuz they wouldn't let us uh close to

the fence, of the small ghetto, so I was uh standing

th--th--that was the--the--the Jewish--the ghetto

police who kept us about 10 meters away from the fence

and what I saw crowds of people walking up the hill and

the first--the first hundred meters or so, the road

they were walking was very close to the fence of the

large ghetto and they were walking right by and then it

turned away from it. Those people realized what was

happening and those who had very small children

uh--babies that uh were rather light and they carried

them, began to throw them over the fence; the babies

to--hoping that uh...(Crying)...and hoping someone

would pick them up. There was uh...and one baby got

hung on the barbed wire and I saw it uh perhaps mortem

by someone got out of the barbed wire and the child was

screaming; fear and pain. And a Lithuanian guard shot

the child point blank and--and had--and--and it splat-

tered all over. We knew what was happening at that

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 14

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

time. I went back home and didn't say anything to my

parents. They didn't see what I saw and to this day, I

never told them--cuz they never knew. The had had both

of them. Um but uh as the morning progressed we lived

very near to the hill and we could hear the machine

guns um starting to work in--in--in bursts. And--and

we knew what was happening. Every time the machine

guns would start shooting, I could feel my stomach

turning inside out. I could feel the pain and--and

that I will never forget. That was uh something that

has stayed with me forever. There are many things that

happened during the 4 years of uh ghettos and concen-

tration camps that I've forgotten or I don't think

about but this day is--is--is one of the 2 days that

stays with me forever because I witnessed all that. My

mother who was sitting and still not speaking suddenly

got up the next day because it took more than one day

to kill 10,000 people, uh she uh got up and said, 'Oh,

I hear the machine guns.' She said, 'But I know they

are shooting over their heads because they are just

trying to make us believe that they are killing them

but they are just scaring us. The want us to stay in

line so they are shooting over their head making us

think that they are killing those people.' Of course

let her believe that. That was her way of coping

with the tragedy that she lost a sister, a brother, and

nephews and nieces and--and--and her father, my grand-

father that uh disappeared in that--in that selection.

She never--uh some of the things that my--her sister

left behind, she kept for the rest of the time that we

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 15

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

were in the ghetto. She wouldn't let anyone touch it

because she says when her sister comes back, she's

going to want that. That was the end of the innocent

time in the ghetto. And that 2 days, 10,000 or half

the pop--nearly half the population of the ghetto

were--were uh killed. That was a tragedy that will

remain for me--with me until the day I die.

SB: Then, you were 12, then you--you had to work and

you had to try to find food among other things.

DL: That's right. That's correct.

SB: Tell me a little bit about the kinds of things you

did.

DL: Well, when the uh...when the 10,000 people were

killed cuz uh there were um empty spaces left in the

ghetto or what the Germans and the Lithuanians thought

were empty spaces. So they cut piece of the ghetto off

and made the rest of us move in a diff--towards

the--the--the front of the ghetto. So where we lived,

we had to move out. We--so we found--we eventually

found a--a--a small empty uh little house, we moved

into and we again started to uh try to make some sense

out of the rest of our lives. I grew up very quickly

in those few months and uh I knew that part of our

survival would have to be that everyone has to pitch in

to provide something to eat uh I joined uh, at first,

the workforce, the brigade, uh to uh we use to go

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 16

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

outside to uh um work and there we would take things

with us to trade, with some of the uh Lithuanians

outside, for food. Perhaps a tablecloth or--or--or bed

sheet or couple of plates or--or a silver spoon or

whatever things that we still had and they needed or

wanted, they would--we would tra--

SB: Let's reload.

(Tape Cut)

BS: Go to camera roll 4. Camera roll 4 is up.

SB: So we're talking about daily life and trading and

food and...

DL: We (cough) I...personally worked in--in a for a

time. It was called the uh children's brigade. Our

job was to pull weeds out of gardens so that was a good

place to work because pull out of the gardens uh usual-

ly there were carrots and--and--and potatoes and uh all

sorts or different vegetables and radishes so we could

at least eat some there when they didn't see us

and--and occasionally we could even take some and bring

it home. In addition to that we used to take uh some

things to trade and uh occasionally you would uh, uh

get a stick of butter or a piece of bread or a sack of

flower. Then one time, I remember, I got a chicken

for--for a table cloth and um the chicken was live and

we had to kill it. That woman gave a small axe and I

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 17

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

had to um chop the head of the chicken and I did but

the chicken got up and started running around without a

head and finally I--I it died and I put the chicken

inside my pants and--and--and tied my pant leg around

so uh nobody would see the chicken and I walked

back--when we walked back to the uh--uh ghetto gate I

carried a small sack of potatoes that I had gathered

and the chicken that I nobody did see but uh they

started searching us and uh and--and all the time I was

while I was walking, I was so happy that I would bring

home a chicken for my mother. We hadn't had a chicken

perhaps at that time maybe a year and I was so happy

that my mother would see a chicken and uh when I got to

the gate, they started searching us and--and--and uh

they found the chicken and took it away uh. I--I was

heartbroken. They let me keep the few potatoes but

they took away my chicken. Something that you remem-

ber--something that I remember. Uh, but in generally

speaking, we had a relatively uh period of quite in the

ghetto. Um, there were everyday people were being

killed and being shot and dying. The underground was

working and--and--and the that we heard about uh they

were taking up arms against the Germans and the force

and in the highways and the Germans were shooting back

and taking it--taking revenge of some of the Jews in

the ghetto because they had a standing order that is

anyone kills a German, 100 Jews would die. If they

could uh if--if they could prove to themselves which

they didn't really have to, they could kill Jews any-

time they wanted to. And they did it sometime. But

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 18

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

other than that it was relatively quiet. Uh, they had

taken 500 people and they took th--to--to uh--uh send

them for work in--in--in Rega, in Latvia because all

the--all the uh Latvian Jews had been completely uh--uh

destroyed and massacred. The uh, the same as in the

beginning--the same as in Lithuania. The one thing is

that in--in--in the--in--in the first 7 to 10 days of

the war uh, all of the Jews in the small towns

were--were massacred completely, all died--all my

relatives--all my grandparents were killed by the

Lithuanians not the Germans. They--they took them out

in the middle of--of--of uh--of a uh square and machine

guns were waiting and just--just mowed them right down

the middle of the square and then they--they

uhh--who--whoever volunteered to carry the bodies for

burial would get to keep their clothing and whatever

el--else they had with them. So this is how they got

the Lithuanians to do their work in addition to--to the

fact that their hatred of the Jews was such that uh

they--they--they did it very gladly. Uh, and--and so

uh another time they uh took uh several hundred new

people to uh Estonia to work and--and my sister and her

husband and her husband's mother uh went to that area

and so this was the last of our relatives in the ghet-

to. And after my sister and--and her husband and

child--she had a child but what happened the child was

supposed to go with them and uh so my ha--her husband's

mother substituted herself for the child because they

knew the child wouldn't survive and the child was taken

with us. So my mother raised or took care of that

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 19

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

little boy and--and um--uh that was it. By that time,

we were the only 4 left from our family. The rest of

them were gone. Uh, so but as--as time went on, things

sort of quieted down. Eh--eh--eh I finally got a job,

working in a shop. Inside the ghetto we had shops that

were making shoes and wooden shoes and toys uh

and--and--and clothing--there was a tailoring shop

and--and all sorts of different things and--and many

Jews were employed to work in what they called eh the

Verchstactin. And--and it's I finally got a job work-

ing in there. Of course you had to and you got certain

uh--uh certificate that you could stay in the ghetto

and work there. And they had to shift day shift and

night shift. And uh my father also got job working

there so my father and I worked the same but not the

same--not the same unit--we worked a different units

but the same place. My mother, on the other hand, she

would still go outside to--to work in--in--in--in a

some brigades because one of the things you had to

trade for food and--and--and the other thing, of

course, you had to work. So we switched back

and forth so somebody could stay behind with the child.

So when she--I worked night shift and they worked day

shift and then we would switch back and forth uh-uh so

somebody could care for the baby. And that pretty

well--that is pretty well went on for about a couple

years until--until um the 19--uh--uh the beginning of

1944 and there was another thing that uh one of the

other days that was completely uh stayed with me forev-

er--you know there were many things that happened in

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 20

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

those 2 years that were uh pretty uh--pretty bad but

it--it--it were things that were so often that you

don't remember the incidents one--one after the other.

But when something horrible happened that stayed with

us. That was almost to the end of the ghetto. Um,

many people already had left uh another group of people

had been taken over to the airport they were

building--rather than walk them everyday, they just

took the people and move them over there in barracks

and by that time, the number of people in the ghetto

was less than 5,000 and uh our family was still there;

my father, my mother, me and that little boy. We still

stayed in the ghetto and uh...on day and it was

March--it was March the 27th, uh 1944. Um, I was

working night shift that day, so I was home in the

morning uh with--with that little--with--with--with

that little boy, my nephew and my parents had gone to

work and the night before again they had doubled or

tripled the guard around the ghetto, so we knew some-

thing was--was--was something was coming up but we

didn't know quite know what. What could

happen--there's only less than 5,000 people--there's

are only a few children left and what could happen.

But the thing that we didn't even contemplate. They

had I--I--I--I heard screams and I looked out the

window, and--and--and there were buses. There were 3

buses lined up, in front--our--the window of our apart-

ment faced the gate of the ghetto and uh I saw buses

lined up on the ghetto and there were--there were uh

Ukrainian soldiers that had joined the Nazis and Ger-

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 21

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

mans--the S.S. that were taking small children and

putting them on the buses. Instinctly, I knew that uh

what was happening--they were taking the children. We

later called that what we call the kinder action, the

selection of the children. In the addition to that,

they also took some uh--uh people, older people, that

were incapacitated as well as--as uh disabled. And

uh--

SB: We need to put another roll of film.

DL: I'm talking too much.

SB: No.

(Tape Cut)

BS: It's Wentworth Films. Kovno Ghetto project. Mono,

7 « IPS. 24 frames per second. 60 hertz. Continua-

tion with interview with David Levine. 5-1-97. Sound

roll 3. Camera roll number 5.

SB: So why don't you just back up just a little bit to

seeing buses and knowing what was going on to you.

DL: I suppose start over. It--it--it was March the

27th, 1944. That was the day that what we call was the

kinder action--selection of the children. I worked

night shift that day and uh when all of

sudden I--I heard a commotion and I heard noise outside

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 22

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

the window. Our window faced the gate of the ghetto.

When I looked outside of the window, there were buses

lined up in front of the gate and I could see that the

Ukrainians and Germans were taking the children into

the buses. The were taking babies, children ages--all

aged to 10 or 11. And uh I had a child. I had my

little nephew. He was only 2 and half years old and I

knew that they were going to come and I could see that

and um so what I did very quickly, I--I pulled a suit-

case out from under my bed and I put him in the suit-

case and I told him that you may not cry, you may not

speak, and you may not say anything or shout because if

you do, I said, 'The Germans will take you and you will

die.' He understood that even though he was only 2 and

a half. He knew exactly what--what was happening uh

he--he--he--he--he had a feeling and I put the suitcase

back under the bed and I jumped on top of the bed a

couple of times to--to cause the dust to settle on it,

so it would look like the suitcase had not been opened

recently and I went back to the window to see what

happened. Uh--uh--the uh--within a minute there was a

Ukrainian soldiers came through the door of the apart-

ment and uh he asked were there any children here and I

said no there aren't any and he said I going to look

and if I find any, he said, 'Not only will I take the

child, but you will come.' Of course, in the begin-

ning, he examined my papers to see I was only 14. I

was strong enough to be able to work but he looked at

my papers and so that since I worked, he let me alone

but he said that, if he finds a child, I will go with

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 23

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

him. And I said well there aren't any and he looked

and looked. Of course, he didn't find the little boy

didn't say anything. Uh, he was distracted because

suddenly he heard a baby cry. And he walked out into

the hall and there was uh--uh somebody had uh stuffed a

baby into a linen closet in the hall and--and I never

knew whose baby that was--I had never seen that baby

before. The baby was perhaps a year and a half

old--a little girl. And he grabbed that child and

walked out. So he left me alone. I went back to the

window and--and--and as he had taken that lil--child

and put it in the bus and--and then of--the child was

crying of course once he got on the bus, the voices

were muffled. Um, and then I--I--I heard screams and

crying and I look back and there was another Ukrainian

soldier and he was dragging a woman, a mother and she

had two little girls and uh he was uh--he was--she

wouldn't let go of the 2 children, she just held on to

them and they held on to her and he was beating her

with (cough)--with a uh the butt of his riffle

and--and--and she was bleeding uh from her mouth and

from her nose and blood going down--I could see her

face--even today I could still see it and uh but she

wouldn't let those 2 little girls go. One must have

been about 3 and one about 5 and--and uh when he got

close to the bus, he couldn't take them away and--and

so the German came over. He was a S.S. Lieutenant uh

and he said, 'What this commotion? What's going on?'

And--and--and he says she won't let go of the children.

So I--I could here him say, first of all he laughed he

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 24

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

with--with--with this uh cynical and--and--and--and

terrible laughter and--and then he um he told her that,

'Okay, if you love you children so much, I will let you

take one...and the other one we'll--we'll take.' And

of course he's asking a mother to select one of her two

little girls. She um immediately had quieted her down.

She stopped struggling and the two little girls under-

stood what he said because they knew exactly what was

happening and both started talking to her and say uh

'Mother, take me. Take me.' And uh she--she stopped

the struggle and took the two little girls by their

hands and walked on the bus with them and of course she

died with them uh that day. Uh, when the day was over,

um 11 hundred and 83 children were taken and uh killed

that day. Uh, those were the last Jewish children in

Lithuania, outside of those perhaps a few dozen that

were hidden previously and a couple--some that somehow

got hidden during this selection like I hid my little

nephew. Uh, and that was end of the Lithuanian uh

Jewish people. Uh, most had died at the beginning of

the war, in the first week. Uh, there were 180,000

Jews, uh perhaps uh a hundred and forty were killed in

the beginning and the rest uh little by little

were--were killed through selections--massacres

and--and--and simply shootings and starvation and, of

course, the children that we kept as long as we could

uh died then; that day. My nephew cause I--difficult

to say this but uh, he--he lived another um for a month

or so and--and then he and my mother both died in the

gas chambers in the gas chambers in Auschwitz. Had it

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 25

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

not been for him, um my mother probably would have

survived. Uh, she was a strong young women. She was

only 42-years-old when she was killed and uh um

and--and--and in part I--all the years I have sort of

blamed myself because if I had not save that little

boy, my mother would have survived. I had a

choice...also. (crying) That was very well...That was

very well the end of the ghetto because after that day,

(crying)...whatever hope I still had was gone after

that day and we were resigned to uh--to our final

destination. We never believed that the rest of us

would survive. It wasn't long after when the Soviet

armies started to uh advance towards Lithuania and they

decided to liquidate the ghetto and uh we were taken

by--we walked from the ghetto to uh--uh several kilome-

ters to a train where we were loaded and taken to a

place called Studhoff, where my mother and the child uh

was taken off the train and my father and I continued

on--on this day. We were never taken off train, we

continued on to towards uh Dakow. And later learned

that the she and the child were taken to Studhoff,

where they lived several weeks and--and uh then those

were women who were strong were and by themselves uh

were taken to work somewhere in Poland or in East

Germany somewhere. Uh, the rest, those with children,

were taken to Auschwitz and--and the fact is I um have

the date when the died. They died July the 15th of uh

19 uh 44. And my father and I continued on and finally

wound up in Dakow, uh near--near Munich, where we spent

the rest of the war time.

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 26

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

SB: Okay we're just about to run out. I want to put

one more roll and ask you a couple of other short

questions.

(Beep)

DL: There's stories that kept some of the uh Lithuani-

ans that--

BS: Roll 6. Camera roll 6 is up.

SB: Tell me a little bit about the council.

DL: I don't know a lot about the inner workings of the

council. I just know that uh whenever the uh Germans

uh needed to select people for uh to send out like to

Riga or to uh Estonia or to other areas, they would

come to the council and ask them to um--they would ask

them to uh provide the names of people. Now,

in--nobody knew whether these people would

survive--whether they would actually go for to work or

whether they would die and there were a burden on the

council was to uh--uh to actually themselves uh be the

judges of who should live and who should die. And that

was a great burden on them. As far as the council,

itself is concerned the inner workings and how they

as--is--is isn't--isn't something that I know very

well. Uh, know

some of the people that served on it and then but

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 27

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

nobody was really um angry with them because everybody

understood that they really don't have much of a

choice. Uh the--what I do know for instance, is that

before uh the--the what we call the great actia, there

was the council that. The question was whether or not

we sho--the council should cooperate with the Germans.

And--and ask everyone--all the Jews to come out to the

Democratu Plots--eh--p--place. And--and but they

didn't know there were some who said yes and some who

said--said no. We shouldn't have to make that decision

so they went to one of the Rabbis who--who uh--who uh

thought about it for days because they are--they knew

ahead of time--the didn't just--they weren't just told

the day before and--and uh he--he--this Rabbi

apparent--the way I understand--what I know was for

many days, he was studying the time would see whether

the council has the right or the moral right to ask the

Jews to make the sacrifice or whether to tell

nothing--let the Germans decide what they want to do or

should they help the Germans. Which would be better

for the Jews and finally the Rabbi's decision--they all

agreed that the decision would be that of the Rabbi. I

can't remember his name right now but perhaps some of

the other interviewees will remember. He--he

rendered--he rendered the decision and--and--and said

that yes they should--they should help the Jews. It

would be better for the entire ghetto population if uh

if--if there's order.

SB: And what about the Jewish police?

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 28

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

DL: The Jewish polices was um--um the same as any

police force. Some were uh took their jobs too seri-

ously and some--but most were pretty decent people

who--whose uh--who was thought--who thought that as--as

a job--as an easy a--easy work for them, as compared to

going out and working on--on the airport that the

Germans were building or to got to other working bri-

gades. So they took the job, although they knew that

this would--would not going--this isn't going to be

very uh--uh popular with some people. But in--in--for

what I know and the policeman that encountered, I uh,

they were pretty decent people, most of them. With

exception of a couple who--who took their jobs vacti-

tiously and became very--very aggressive and uh and

--and--and--and selfish. Especially those who worked

at the uh well the had the--the--the gate police who

worked at the gate of the ghetto and of course there is

that they would, some would ask who ever brought some

stuff in, they would ask for--for a--for a--uh piece of

the action. So if you brought in uh, uh, 5 pounds or

flour you would have to give them a pound or so just

for letting you by or--or--or--or getting the German

out of the way, so you could go in. So that--that is

something that happened in--in every society where you

have a little bit of power and authority, you use it.

But normally they were decent people.

SB: And tell me what happened to the children in the

kinder action. What occurred.

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 29

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

DL: What happen is that I--I--I at a time, I knew there

was something wrong with the buses but I didn't put my

finger on it but--but later learned that the uh--the

exhaust of the uh bus exhaust was redirected--exhaust

gases were redirected inside the bus. The driver was

separated from the rest of the bus eh with--with--with

a partition and--and--and--and--and as the children

went into the bus, their noises were muffled because

they started breathing in the--the us um--the exhaust

gases. Uh, by the time the children were taken to the

9th Fort, where they were buried, most of them were

dead and--and those who um were still alive or were not

quite dead, were buried alive because during that day,

I did not hear any machine gun fire. So they had to be

disposed of or killed uh in other--in other ways

and--and that is most likely the way they were killed.

SB: And did you ever talk to any Lithuanians who maybe

worked at the 9th Fort or have any contact with any

perpetrators.

DL: I uh Lithuanians who were--

SB: Who--who maybe helped with any of the killings or

any--

DL: Well, I never talked to any except two years ago, I

was invited by uh the Justice Department to come as a

witness in Philadelphia uh where they had caught a

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 30

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

Lithuanian uh who was a lieutenant in what they called

in the uh what the Germans called the Shootsmanshaft.

Which is translate loosely were uh eh guard units but

really what they were--were--they were killing units

and they he had come to America under false pre--uh

false pretenses as in he ha--had falsified his records

that he had where he was during the war and uh

when--when the Soviet Union fell and Lithuania became

independent, the Justice Department started looking for

documentation on who were the people who immigrated to

America. They caught this particular one and uh I was

one of the 2 ghetto witnesses uh of who he was uh but I

never talked directly to him. I was just in court,

presenting my side of the story.

SB: And had you ever seen him when you were in the

ghetto?DL: No--no, I was--this was not a criteria for

being a wit--a witness.

SB: And in the ghetto, since you were pretty young, do

you ever remember a incident that was fun? Do you ever

remember a great time that you had?

DL: Yes--yes uh--uh we uh--I uh formed myself--I--I was

uh--uh--you can't see it now but I was an ath--a good

athlete when I was young. And I was a good soccer

player and I had formed my on team uh with a group

of--of boys and--and--and--and--and we were there were

other teams formed and we were playing even uh games

for--for uh championship of the ghetto and my team won

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 31

Interviewed (5-1-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

the championship and I so that was a big deal and, in

fact, the team was named after me. So I created the

team, I named it so I used my name. And--and the uh

that was uh fun uh um beginning to talk to girls

and--and--and hold hands with girls. At my age was

something that uh happened under the circumstances uh I

remember this little girl and--and--and one is New York

today and uh that uh we hung out together with some of

my friends who--who--who--who are alive today.

And--and when we get together we reminisce about those

times. It's--it's interesting that the only time we

talk about what we talked about here today, is when I

talk to people like you. Uh, when we talk to one

another, it's we always talk about the times that we

could laugh--times that we enjoyed, songs that we sang,

poems that we composed uh--uh looking at the moon um

and--and--and thinking perhaps uh the moon up there

looked the same moon is shines over America. While he

would it be possible perhaps to uh just jump over, you

know these sort of things. And--and we remember that

when we get together but we have to be together--the

same people that were there and--as a matter of fact,

we were together last night because two of these

people that I'm talking about, live in Baltimore and

they came over to our hotel. We had dinner together.

So we did reminisce even last night.

SB: Thank you. BS: Sandy, should we get some room tone?

SB: Um-- (Tape Cut)

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_