-TITLE- ANTONIN KALINA

-I\_DATE- JULY 22 1988

-SOURCE- CHRISTIAN RESCUERS PROJECT

-RESTRICTIONS-

-SOUND\_QUALITY- FAIR

-IMAGE\_QUALITY- GOOD

-DURATION-

-LANGUAGES-

-KEY\_SEGMENT-

-GEOGRAPHIC\_NAME-

-PERSONAL\_NAME-

-CORPORATE\_NAME-

-KEY\_WORDS-

-NOTES-

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Born on February 17 1902 in Sabich(ph), Czechoslovakia.

He is one of 12 children.Toni was the second oldest. His older

brother died in the First World War.His father was a shoemaker and

made shoes for the ballet. It was difficult to nourish all 12

children. His mother stayed at home with the children every day. In

1939 his father had a stroke after the SS came and took Antonin

away. His father died in 1948.

Q. Would your father have done the same if he was in similar

circumstances with Antonin?)....Yes Antonin was a secretary in the

camp Buchenwald. He remembers getting chocolates for the children

in his barracks. His father would have done the same thing. He was

the same kind of man.

(Was there anti-Semitism in the town where you were raised?)....

Antonin then told about how many children he had in his barracks:

1,300 children and 1,200 were Jewish. He then answered the question

concerning anti-Semitism in his town. His response was there was a

Jewish community, a Jewish cemetery, etc.

(Were your parents political?) They were Social Democrats.

(When did you join the Communist Party?)....Early in his life.

He had a tradition of a working family.

(Did you risk your life in the camp?)....Thousands of times.

Not just for the children in his barracks but also for some adults.

Toni used to help the "to be exterminated" to change their names

with already deceased prisoners.

(Do you think of these camp years often?)...No. Then Toni tells a

story. Once there were six students which the SS said must die.

Toni helped them switch names and numbers. He told them to stay

with these new identities. But if they were to survive it would be

hard for them to get papers because they would have been listed as

dead and their family would have been notified.

The SS asked Toni, "where are the Belgiums in his block. He said

that his block was a transport block and people changed every day

but he said he would look for them. When he returned he said that

one died of typhus, the other of pneumonia, etc. After the war some

men from Belgium were looking for him. There were five boys. He

went to see them at the rendezvous place. There were five big men

waiting for him there. The five big men were the same boys that he

had saved. They threw him in the air with joy. They were the ones

who at the end of 1944 were prisoners. (Antonin, were you beaten?)

He said that he was the leader of block 66. But even though he was

a block leader it was said that he saw people from the inside and

not the outside.

Antonin then talked about the transports. When they came in they

had over two thousand children. But they did not come in every day.

When the children started coming in large shipments he asked the

committee chairman if he could make his block all children.

The committee chairman agreed that it was a good idea but the other

part of the committee didn't agree. They didn't want all those

children together. The committee thought that people from other

blocks would tell the children about their parents. So Antonin said

that he would put up a sign that would not allow the others to come

into the barracks.

Once Toni was talking to a Capo and told him he had been here for

five years. Then he told the Capo he needed some materials for the

children, he needed the chief of the resistance to do so. He then

went to the SS camp fuhrer in the hospital and told him that he had

a block of children for three and a half years and he needed some

supplies for them. The SS was furious at the question. But it was

possible to speak to the SS. Then another SS asked what was going

on. Toni said he was ordered to make some beds but they also needed

some covers. Antonin new some Germans before the war and so he

asked this one he recognized for some blankets.

--(Toni drifts)

Earlier when he was in Dachau on his first day a German capo took

a chair and threw it at the newly arrived Czechs for not

understanding him. Toni then jumped on him and tried to strangle

him. Toni then said to the capo,"You are a communist(as was Toni),

aren't you ashamed of what you are doing." The capo didn't seem to

care about what Toni had said to him.

Toni thought that when you are in a camp for six years you forget

all that you have learned as a child and in school. Toni then said

that one doesn't realize that if he is to survive the camp that

people will ask you how many people have you killed. --(Toni then

returns to the original story concerning the blankets.)

He then asked a capo that he recognized from Dresden in 1933 if he

could get some blankets from the store. The capo asked how many,

five or ten, Toni answered 2,000. He said that the children were

cold and were just disinfected. In the morning Toni gave the

children covers.

(Why were you helping the children?).... It's instinct.

(Were your brothers and sisters the same way as you?) Perhaps.

In 1941 came the first soviet prisoners as they arrived the Germans

made them run around naked to show the other prisoners that they

were nothing special. The prisoners from the other barracks used to

bring bread to the Soviets.

The prisoners had to where different colors to separate them. Red

for politicals, Pink for homosexuals, green for criminals. In all

barracks there were political and those who denounced the Nazis.

The response from the chief SS was that the criminals were to be

the block leaders not the politicals. Toni's block leader soon left

to join the army 5 or 6 day after he was made the leader. They

needed a new leader and so Toni who was the secretary became the

leader. Later he was caught and it was said that he had three

inciters in his block. He denied what they said. For three days

they went without food. Toni went to the SS and said that the three

weren't just denouncing them they were denouncing everyone. Toni

said that he had read it in one of their letters. Toni convinced

them.

(What did the children do all day long?) It was impossible to teach

to those who had just seen their parents go to the gas chamber.

Toni did manage to get them to sing. And once he told them about

the French Revolution and they loved it because they could feel it.

(Did the war teach you anything?) No.

(Did it change you?) No. Nothing in the world has changed him. Once

in the camp the SS asked him how long was he in here. He answered

five years. They then asked him if he was still a Communist. He

said yes and they gave him the sign of block master. The SS must

have liked his directness. Nothing has changed Toni.

In order to survive one had to be the eternal optimist. Toni

believed in people. The stupid with no identity always died in the

camp. The optimist had a better chance to survive. Toni believed in

himself. (What would you want to tell children about your

experience?) He answered that his children from Buchenwald were

now adults. These children had written him after the war. He feels

that no children should have to go through a similar experience.

Right before liberation the SS came to him and asked for his Jews.

Toni said that he had no Jews left. He said that yesterday they

went on the transports. He said that he had only children who were

not Jews. Before the SS came to the barracks he had told all the

boys to say that they were not Jews if they were asked by the SS.

The SS believed him even though 90 percent of his children were in

fact Jews.

(How does it feel to have saved all those lives?) Toni didn't want

to answer, he just said that he had received a lot of cards from

the children after the war.

After the camp had been liberated Toni took all the boys to a house

not far from camp were some of the SS used to stay. They stayed

there for a while.

(How old were your children?)

They were between 3 and 16 years old. At the house Toni sent

letters to the American commander who was at Buchenwald. Toni asked

him for packages, especially chocolates for the children.

(When was the first transport?) The first transport arrived in

1941. The children were from parents whom had already been

exterminated. Later during the summer of '44 to '45 the transports

came more from the west.

(Are any of the children still in touch with you?)....No.

(What have been the best years of your life?) Before World War I,

when he was happy all the time, when he was a child and they went

bicycle riding everywhere.

(Did you find the war years exciting?)....Yes, sure.

(Would you do it again?)....No, once was enough.

(Do you have any regrets?)

Toni regrets nothing.

(Are you still a Communist?)...Yes.

(In 1968 what role did you play?) The same as now, Toni hasn't

changed his attitude towards Communism.

(Did your beliefs in Communism help you keep your identity?) His

answer was that there are two types of Communists: the real ones

and the others, Toni is a real one.

(Where did you learn to grow fruit and vegetables?) As a child, he

and the other children in his family had to help in 35 the garden

because his mother couldn't do it all.

---They all engage in looking at letters and photographs.---

(Were they all boys in your barracks?)....Yes.

(Did all his children survive through the war?) He knows of one who

did not.

---They end the questions and discussion and engage in a

conversation.---

.END.