

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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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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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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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 Viliolampolay 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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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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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.

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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 Slabotka and it was called a Slabotka ghetto and uh they had formed actually 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 whatever 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

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those 2 bedrooms and uh we stayed and of course whatever 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 duplicated 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

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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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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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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 relatives 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. Interview 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

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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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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 splattered all over. We knew what was happening at that

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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. They 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 grandfather 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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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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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

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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 remember--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 anytime they wanted to. And they did it sometime. But

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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 ghetto. 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

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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 working 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 forever--you know there were many things that happened in

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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-

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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. Continuation 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

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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. They 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 suitcase out from under my bed and I put him in the suitcase 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 apartment 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 beginning, 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

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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

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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

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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 kilometers 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.

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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 Lithuanians 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

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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?

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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 police was um--um the same as any police force. Some were uh took their jobs too seriously 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 brigades. 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 vactiously 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.

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/DAVID LEVINE page 29
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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

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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

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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)

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