

Moshe Prinz

Oral History Documentation September 1994

Translator's preface:

I have translated only Moshe Prinz's narrative, and only occasionally the interviewer's questions because they were not always clear (most likely due to the placement of the microphone). In any event, the substance of her questions can be understood from Mr. Prinz's responses. In some cases, I have included the questions, or inserted space breaks to indicate where the questions were interjected.

Explanations in square brackets are mine. I attempted to retain the flavor of Mr. Prinz's speech and expressions as much as possible.

Parentheses indicate asides by Mr. Prinz.

Because the translation was done from a recording (video), spellings of proper names and place names may not be correct, although I attempted to verify them. Words enclosed with question marks indicate names or expressions that I could not verify.

Ilana Kraus, translator

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Zurawno

I am doing this recording at my daughter's initiative. She knew about my experiences [what happened to me] and wanted her children to know about them too.

[Aside from myself] My family included my father, mother, two sisters and my grandmother.

My parents married during WW I, in 1916. I was born in 1919. When they got married, Zurawno was at that time part of Austria Hungary, before Poland was established. It was Galicia. We lived in a small town, which was halfway between Lvov and Stanislavov.

My father was a soldier in the Austrian army. (I am deliberately emphasizing this because I will make a connection to this fact later on.) My father was a merchant. He had a clothing store for ready-made clothing, which was well-established, and so we enjoyed a rather high standard of living, for a small town in those days in that area.

I finished elementary school in Zurawno. Because there was no gymnasium (high school) in Zurawno, I attended a Jewish gymnasium in Lvov. The studies were on a very high level. Because it was a Jewish school, the Polish government demanded high standards and the school had a very good name [reputation]. It was also Zionist. All the teachers were Jewish. The language of instruction was Polish. We studied Hebrew and religion, more than in other schools. This greater emphasis was because the intention was for us to eventually go to Eretz Israel.

It was not the norm for all children to attend gymnasium, because not everyone could afford it. This was a private school, not funded by the state of Poland and parents had to pay a large amount for the tuition.

I lived in Lvov with my uncle, my mother's brother, so I did not have to worry about paying for room and board. Lvov was 70-100 kilometers from home [Zurawno]. I would come home for Hanukah and summer vacation, twice a year. But because my father was a merchant and would often come to Lvov to buy merchandise, he would visit me often, and my mother would, too. She missed me, and came to visit. So we would meet often.

My only grandmother was my mother's mother. My father's parents were already dead. Father had a large family, three brothers and three sisters. After WWI, the economic situation was difficult with the establishment of Poland [as a state], and those who couldn't get along [found it difficult to make a living] went to the U.S. (so like many other people). Only one of his [my father's] brothers remained in Poland. [The rest left.]

Until 1939 we lived a normal life and wanted for nothing. In 1939 the Russians came [took over.] We had a house of our own, one half was rented out to someone else and the store was attached. That was the way things were then. The house and store were together. This way Mother could be a housekeeper and also help out [in the shop]. That was the way it was.

I had two sisters. One was three years younger than me and the other eleven years younger. The older one and I, we didn't get along so well. I was very mischievous [not in a bad way] and she would always tell my father what I was up to so I would get hit [punished] [and get back at her Mr. Prinz hinted]. This was only up to a certain age, of course. By the time she was 17, our relations had changed entirely. I was already going out with girls her age. As we got older of course, our relationship improved. I loved the younger one sister very much. [Mr. Prinz cried when he mentioned her.]

Relations between my mother and father were exceptionally good. I never heard them fight. There was full cooperation between them and they never argued. Mother was an excellent housekeeper, everything was very neat and orderly. She took very good care of us. We were a well-established, financially secure family.

My grandmother was a very difficult woman because she lost her husband early and it was her own fault. Because she was so [overly] pedantic, everything had to be super clean and tidy. He had been a cattle

dealer. It was in the winter. And once in winter (the winter in Poland is not like winter in Israel), she had washed the quilt cover and the ticking of the feather quilt as well. And then he came home and he had nothing to cover himself with. He died of pneumonia. This is the way I heard the story from my mother. She [my grandmother] felt guilty. His death was on her conscience. She would fast every Monday and Thursday [out of guilt] to make up for what she had done. She was a difficult woman. We couldn't hold onto a maid very long because she [my grandmother] was so pedantic about everything. What the maid did was never good enough. Everyone in my mother's family, all the aunts [all the women in the family], were the same. Crazy about cleanliness, keeping everything tidy everything had to be perfect. The door handles were even covered in cloth so they wouldn't get dirty. My father suffered from her, but what could he do, that was the way things were then. No one put their parents in old folks' homes.

I was naturally a member of Hashomer Hatzair. Being a member of this socialist [Zionist] youth movement made me look upon my father as an exploiter of the goyim. He did not work at physical labor. One day, it was a fair day, and the shop was full day of customers, he asked me to watch the store but I refused out of [socialist] ideology. I can't forget what I did that day, I refused to help in out in the shop, even though it was full of customers. I was young and I had joined Hashomer Hatzair.

In 1939, when the Russians came, my sisters had not yet finished their education. So my sister went to a Russian gymnasium. Everything was fine until 1939. In 1939, when the Russians came, they threw us out. We had to live move out and live in one room, five of us in one room.

The Russians confiscated our merchandize. We had to give everything up. But my father wasn't a fool. He took the good merchandize and gave it to a goy whom he knew well and trusted. But there was no lack of informers, even among the Jews. Once I heard a Gestapo man say: every time a Jew is born, another snitch is born.

Our situation deteriorated. Father couldn't get a job and neither could Mother because they were considered "anti-socialist elements." They had [were left with] no way of making a living. So they lived by means of the black market. A black market was set up immediately [after the Russian occupation] in 1939 because there were shortages. Until 1941 we were with the Russians.

Question: Was there anti-Semitism?

There was a lot of fear, but not so much anti-Semitism. If someone said "Zid," a derogatory term for Jew, they could go to prison for that. "Ivrei" was the proper Russian term for a Jew, but calling someone "Zid" was a punishable offense.

It's not that there wasn't anti-Semitism. But there was fear.

Apropos anti-Semitism, Jews who came from USSR, would deny that they were Jewish because of covert anti-Semitism. Jews from USSR, you could tell who they were by their noses.

We were on a list of people who were supposed to be sent to Siberia, because we were "anti-socialist" elements. In 1941, they began to take Jews to Siberia, but they didn't get around to sending everyone.

Question: As a member of Hashomer Hatzair, were you also considered anti-socialist?

Yes, of course. There were Jewish boys in our gymnasium who were communists and they sat in Poland in ?? *reza kartutzak*??, which was a terrible place, like a Russian gulag. They sent them there and afterwards no one knew what happened to them. They accused them of being Trotskyites. They were looking for thieves, the worst elements. Anyone who was intellectual... [the intelligentsia]

As the son of such an [anti-socialist] element, I, too, could not get work, but because I was a sportsman, they made me a life guard. There were large rivers in the area.

One large river, the Dniester, begins in Poland and flows into the Black Sea in Romania. I was the life guard there; that was my job.

In 1941, we started feeling that the war between Germany and Russia would break out, and I suggested to my parents that we run away to the USSR, like many other families. We didn't know that they were killing people. They did it systematically. [They had a system.] We got letters and cards from our

relatives in [German-occupied] Poland that they were getting married, having a bar mitzvah celebration. So when I said to my father: let's run away to Russia, they'll kill us, he said:

"Me, as a German soldier, with medals from the war, they would kill me? They won't harm me."

So I said, "if you don't go, I'm escaping on my own." And I did run away. But in this escape I had such pangs of conscience. What am I doing.

Question: You talked to yourself? Did you think about this?

Yes I did. What am I doing? Leaving a mother and father, two sisters and I'm running away? It's behaving like an animal. So I went back. It's not right [I said to myself]. So I went back.

Question: How did you intend to run away?

I could run away to Russia of course. No problem. The border from us to Russia was no more than 70-80-90 kilometers away. It was not dangerous. They let us pass. [People were going] with horses and wagons and cars. A lot [of people] ran away. The majority fled. Well you can't say the majority, but a lot of people did. Many came back and some remained.

When the Germans came they took me to hard labor right away. We had bridges to work on. Stones, taking away [removing] heavy rocks. All sorts of very difficult jobs. And in this way I worked from 1941 to 1942. (Yes, the Germans when were already there.) There were already murders and deportations. The Germans came on September 1, no September 7, 1941.

I forgot to say that my father was the chairman of the General Zionists in Zurawno, as well as the sexton of the synagogue. So it bothered him that I was a member of Hashomer Hatzair. And he was also a Jewish representative on the Polish city council. We weren't religious, but because he was a well-known merchant, he was given respect and he sought respect as well. He was very active in these areas.

The Ukrainians were naturally one-thousand times worse than the Germans. They were anti-Semitic carried out pogroms, killed Jews and pillaged, all with the acquiescence of the German's of course.

Now in 1942, in the summer, the first *aktion* took place in Zurawno. I knew it was going to take place. So I took my parents to a mountain covered with a forest, Bakotzin (a few, 4-7 kilometers, outside town). We stayed there and two days later we returned.

How did I know the *aktion* was going to take place? There were rumors and they made the rounds. People felt that something was going to happen. We didn't want to take a chance so I took my parents. When lived in the center of town, near the main square of the town, the nicest place in the town. Everyone knew where we lived.

Question: Did your father then say maybe we should have run away?

He knew that he had made a big, a foolish mistake. My mother had wanted to run away. Very much. She couldn't persuade him. He was so convinced that they wouldn't do anything to him that no one could get him to change his mind.

Question: When the Germans entered the city did he try to introduce himself as a German soldier?

No. He saw that it was not the same. He saw that they killed people for no reason, on a whim, when they felt like it. So he knew that his alibi was not worth a penny. But we didn't say anything to him about it. We didn't want to make him feel bad. We accepted it [as it was].

So after this *aktion*, they made a ghetto. We had to move from the room where we living in to another place. In the meantime grandmother died and she is the only member of my family who is buried in a proper Jewish tomb, buried properly, in the Jewish cemetery. Of course, now nothing remains of this cemetery. After the Russians came... [Anyway, then] we were able to have a proper Jewish burial.

Question: Were there edicts?

Clearly, there was already a Judenrat. The Judenrat had been given orders to gather up all the money, gold, furs, jewelry, from the Jews. And we gave away everything. My mother gave her fur to a non-Jewish woman who had worked for us for a long time, despite my grandmother's objections, because she had been very devoted to us. She [the woman] received many things from us. She was like family; she was part of the family. They made the ghetto, but it didn't last for long. The Jews searched for ways to remain in the town, knowing that it was not for a long time. They bought [tried to obtain] permits from the Germans to gather rags, bottles, materials to give to the Germans, to have documents [to show that they were usefully employed].

I tried to get my father to do this, but he was very apathetic. He felt that there was no point, no way of getting out of this. [This apathy] was a sharp contrast; when he was a merchant, he had been very energetic, immersed in his business, his work. He devised all kind of schemes. In 1939 it was very difficult to do business. Anti-Semitism was rampant and the Poles had made cooperatives amongst themselves – to keep out the Jewish merchants. Outside large commercial enterprises [owned by Jews] there were picket lines, they didn't let non-Jews enter. It was like in Germany.

There was already rationing, but Jews couldn't trade with goyim. Jews were not allowed to do business with them, it was like in Germany. This is not surprising because they were extremely, terribly anti-Semitic.

Question about anti-Semitism: Did you feel it personally?

Of course. When I was a kid. I felt it. I felt the discrimination. I was involved in sports and even when I won first place – I was one of the best swimmers – they said I came in behind [later]. And when I would win, they would deny it. For no reason, just to ... I had Polish friends. They would tell me that I was an O.K. Jew, but all the rest, they're thieves and cheaters and what have you. I had Polish friends who were o.k. You can't say they were all like this, but most of them were. You can't say that they were all like this, though.

After some time...

Question: You said your father was apathetic.

Yes, I tried to tell him. Do this. We need to do it. How much longer are we going to be able to stay in our town? We don't know where they might drag us. They said that we would be moved to a bigger town, to Stry. What do you need this for? Nothing fazed him, not my mother's attempts to persuade him either. I tried to convince him, but I couldn't. Nothing.

Then later on after this *aktion* we already knew everything, that they are taking us to Belzec, and that that meant you were going to death. Some had escaped from the trains and come back and told us what was happening.

In September (October, no September) 1942, they took us to Stry, to the Stry ghetto. That is, they gathered up all the Jews from the [surrounding] towns and villages and took us to Stry. They had given us the order to move, naturally at our expense, with our belongings in wagons, with the Ukrainian militia overseeing the operation. They had set up the Ukrainian militia immediately.

Question: Can you describe the day?

The mood was very difficult. We knew that death awaited us, that we would not remain alive. So they took us to Stry. We were pushed into [allotted] one room. I was immediately taken to a work camp. There was a very large lumber mill in Stry that supplied wood [logs] to the entire Galicia region.

This mill had been ordered to make [supply] cabins to the German army and my job was to load the cabins onto train wagons. This was all right as long as the wagons were low, [but when they were higher it was more difficult.] While I did this we were given a soup that hardly contained one potato and 200 grams of bread. I was never one of those hefty people, more or less as you see me now and it was very difficult work but I did it anyway because the will to live was so strong.

Every Friday we were allowed to go home. My mother, father and sisters lived in the ghetto. My mother looked for work, [for a way] to make a living and bought herself a grinder so she could make bread. She bought a grinder and ground nuts [seeds] into flour which she used to make bread. At this point, what we had hidden with the goy we couldn't take with us. They did everything to make us apathetic.

(They created a situation that led to your becoming apathetic so it would be easy to go to your death. There is no [other] example of this process. They brought us to a situation that made us apathetic to pending death, so that we would meet death without [giving them] a problem. And they did this with maximum precision. No other nation could do this like they did, with precision.)

The director of this plant was a good German (not all of them were evil) to such an extent that when he heard that there was going to be an *aktion*, he asked us to bring our parents, our families to the mill and we would hide them among the [piles of] logs [wood]. This continued until the Germans found out and stopped telling him ahead of time about the pending *aktions*.

At the end of October, I had come home on a Friday and my mother said: "Look everyone is running and looking to hide themselves in bunkers and you come home?" [Something must be about to happen] So I said, "But the director of the mill didn't tell us about a pending *aktion*, to take you to the mill." (Panic was an everyday occurrence. There were rumors of *aktionen* all the time so everyone would flee. These rumors spread like wildfire, so this was a normal thing.)

My mother said, "Perhaps it is as you say. But your aunt, my brother's wife, said that she was going to a bunker and there was room there for me." [us] But we didn't go and on that Friday there was an *aktion* in Stry and we were taken away.

My feelings on that day, I don't have to tell you what they were. I ate myself up alive. I was with them, because we had been given leave to go home. At 12:00 or 11:00 they came and took us to the square. The Ukrainians that came to get us hit us, struck us with a rifle butt, on my father's back, so I immediately tried to shield the blow for him.

[Long digression] (I didn't tell you how I got food for my family from the Germans. I put myself in danger every day. I went to villages and gathered food, like you see those boys in the Warsaw ghetto. Just as I had not been, well, not the best son during normal times, in these times I did a lot, endangering myself. Everyone appreciated what I was doing. I went to the forest and chopped down wood for heat. I became a different son. Changed myself entirely. I knew that [the responsibility was with me] without me... My father was apathetic, my sisters couldn't do what I was doing, And I did this [gathering food and wood], not only for myself and my family, but also for a very good friend. He was a very talented musician. He only had a mother. His father was dead; he had been a judge, the only Jewish judge in all of Poland. He was very talented, knew Greek and Latin. We studied that in gymnasium. He would play music eight hours a day. He was very talented, but physically, he was like a little girl, he would go to the forest and gather twigs. I would say to him, Ludwig, that was his name, you expect to heat the house with this? So I would load wood on my back for all of us.)

(No this was not a problem for me. I was a sportsman, I had always engaged in sports. So physical labor did not bother me. I was not bothered so much by the hard physical labor, I did very hard physical labor and it didn't affect me. But the lack of food, that was the main problem.)

(For a time I worked for a gardener. That was before I went to Stry, when I was still in Zurawno. And there, too, I hauled all kinds of things. We had a real prince [who owned] with a lot of land. I worked for him, too, and I would steal potatoes from him. Steal. Yes steal. I put them in my pockets, in the cuffs of my pants. I put rubber bands there [to make room for more]. Yes, they would do searches.)

(I knew [the area]... I would ski on the Bakotzin Mountain every winter. I was familiar with all the villages [in the area]. Every summer, every vacation I would go on long hikes in the Carpathians with friends. I had lots of friends and knew the area very well. Every winter I would ski in the mountains. I knew all the mountains. I knew about nature, the stars; this helped me later.

(I wanted to stress that I did whatever I could to keep [us] from dying of starvation. People were dying of starvation.)

In this *aktion* they gathered us in the square in Stry. Stry had 20-30,000 people. When I was in that *aktion*, I was actually relieved (imagine this egocentric thought) when I saw my aunt with her son in the square. The daughter already had Aryan papers. [Had we gone into hiding with them, we would have been caught too, like them. They would throw tear gas into the bunkers (to force the people to come out). They had to come up with a consignment of 1,000 Jews. There was one extra, so they sent him home. Not 999, or 1,001. One thousand is one thousand. That's that. Can you imagine, it was absolutely absurd. They knew he wouldn't run away, they'd take him next time.

Question: You mentioned egotism?

When they brought my aunt, it assuaged my conscience. I said to my mother: "you see, if we had been in the bunker all we would have gained was a few hours. In the end we would have been brought here anyway."

I have to tell you an episode to show what the Germans were capable of doing.

The minute there was an *aktion*, they published an announcement, all over town: If a goy goes into a Jewish house that was vacated and steals something, he will be killed. So there, while we were in the square, we saw how a goy, of short stature, with a basket ... and a German SS officer was standing right there, with a cigarette in his mouth, making small talk with a very beautiful woman. The goy, the idiot, decided to walk right by him at that moment. The officer said Halt (stop in German). And he put his hand in the basket and took out a bolt of cloth. He unwound the cloth up to the height of the top of his [the goy's] head, put down the cloth and put a bullet in his head. He saw that this wasn't enough [did not do the job], so he shot the goy in the head again. He then turned immediately back to the woman and took up the conversation again. I wanted to relate this on purpose to show you what a German is [what they are capable of].

I saw this happen right in front of me, just as I see you now.

They did do anything to us. We were just standing there. We knew we would be taken to Belzec or another camp...

So then they took us to the synagogue, the main synagogue. (There were smaller ones in town as well.) It was very impressive.

I was with my parents all the time in the synagogue.

Now I had a cousin who I knew was in a [special] bunker. Suddenly I saw him coming into the synagogue. I was a curious boy and I wanted to know how they had caught him. Also tear gas, he related. While I was speaking to him, the Gestapo came: Raus raus raus, they cried, and started hitting us with a whip. What could I do, I was one of the first and I had to go out. I couldn't just stay there. There was a mass of people in back of me. There was a lot of screaming and shouting. I walked down [down the stairs], there were already Germans, SS, standing there and they arranged us in groups of four. And I looked around and thought that when my parents would come, I would join them. And after a long time, there were already about 20 rows arranged, I saw my parents and sisters and I started walking toward them. The German who was standing there saw that I had turned around and he thought I wanted to run away. He said to me in German: If you take one more step I'll kill you like a dog. Everyone wants to live. So I thought to myself, "it's a long way from the synagogue to the train station. I'll look for a way to get to them. Somehow I'll be able to get to them. And I had a friend, I thought we could get together. But I couldn't do anything. He [the German] was guarding me as if I was the only one there; he never let me out of his sight.

I came to the train. They started to count 70; 70 per wagon. See what fate is.

I was among the 70. If I had been the 71st I would have been put in an iron [closet; casket] wagon, from which there could be no escape.

And that was that, I never saw my parents again.

That was the end of the story. I wasn't able to take leave of my parents. Not in the synagogue. That was the last time I saw my parents and my sisters.

So we went into the train. I had taken with me a hammer and a screwdriver from home to open the window of the cattle car. I knew this from rumors, of course. When we went into the car, we immediately began to organize everyone, to calm everyone down. We were young men. We stood in line. One next to the other's legs so there would be room [for everyone]. We took all the food and divided it evenly, like in real communism. So everyone would have something to eat. There were those who had taken something with them and others who had nothing. I had nothing with me because it was all with my parents.

I had a jacket and I was wearing a coat. It was the end of October in Poland and it was already cold, so we were wearing appropriate clothing. We were properly dressed. No one had furs, but they were dressed for the season.

(I had no shortage of clothes. Afterwards I'll tell you. I have to go back in time.

When I was older, when I was no longer in Hashomer Hatzair, and I would go out with girls, to dance. So I dressed well. I helped my parents in the store. I was a good dresser, dressed elegantly as a sort of model for the Poles and the Ukrainians. I was a salesperson and I got a percentage of the sale. For every item I sold, I received a percentage from my father. I needed it for girls, for cards, for all sorts of things.)

(I couldn't do anything else. When I finished the gymnasium, I wasn't able to continue my studies. Father sent money to the Technion. [And I applied] But just as I was good in Latin, in languages, I was not so good in mathematics. My grades were not good enough on the matriculation certificate in math, so I wasn't accepted to the Technion. My father wanted to send me to Israel and made efforts to get me into the Technion. I wanted to go illegally as well. But I couldn't do that either. In Poland, when you finish gymnasium you are considered an officer and I went to (preparation for military service; training for teenagers; like Gadna in Israel). But as a Jew they didn't want to take me to be an officer. So I was caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand I couldn't leave because I was supposed to be in the army, to enlist, and I couldn't go illegally because up to Romania (where I could board a ship to Palestine) I needed a passport. I looked for a way to leave. There was nothing keeping me in Poland. I couldn't get into university. I was unemployed. I had nothing to do. It was degrading, unpleasant, for me, a man at the age of 20, to live with my parents and take money from them. But that was the situation. This relates to the time period when I was well dressed.)

So I got into the wagon. And we organized things. And right then and there we organized as partisans. We, the young men, planned to jump out and meet at an appointed place in Stry and join the partisans.

Question: There was no German guards in the wagons?

No no. There were strange things. A Ukrainian shouted the name of a family, and said: You open the wagon and I will come to that place and I will come and get you. You can't say that everyone behaved the same. I heard this with my own ears. A family was told to jump out of the wagon and this Ukrainian would come and take them to his home.

So we began to organize. We opened the window. It was a very narrow window. It was a cattle car. And someone who had a large stomach could not get through, only someone like me. But there were heroic acts. There was a family with an infant. They threw the baby out the window and jumped out after the baby, and got to the Stry ghetto, all of them in one piece. I know because I saw them since I went back there, too. There were unbelievable things that people did. We helped those who were capable of getting out to get out of the wagon. There was one woman, Mrs. Pristiger. She was called Pristiger. Her husband was no longer alive nor her children. Mrs. Pristiger, we said to her, what do you need to do this for? But she wanted to live. So we helped her anyway.

(But before I go on, I have to tell you a story. We had very good neighbors [with whom we were close], who also had a dry goods store. Her son, who was a poet, a lawyer, a talented person, got appendicitis in 1939 and died. Her daughter was a pharmacist and her husband was as well. And they had a child who looked exactly like his deceased uncle. At the age of three this child could read a newspaper. I'm not making this up, we were neighbors. She was by herself and I met her in the Stry ghetto. Will we survive

this war, she asked me. I was astonished. I was shocked: She was on her own. She had such talented children and now she had no one, she had nothing. And she asks me something that in normal times, no one would utter. I'm saying this because I remember a family in Lvov, one after another the family members died and the son who was left committed suicide. In normal times that is a normal thing to do. Everyone is gone, what is there left to live for. And I didn't forget this. I also found myself in this situation, asking myself: Why am I living. What is there left to live for?)

When I jumped from the train, I was struck here on my chin. Imagine, my teeth had fallen out of my mouth like a set of false teeth. On the way, I found a friend and we remained together. We found a train switch operator and he gave us milk and bread. But even though I was as hungry as a dog, I couldn't eat the bread, since my teeth had fallen out of my mouth like a set of false teeth. Before I met my friend, we had made an arrangement: If I jump first I would go back toward Stry and he would go forward and we met. We went into this goy's house. And then we went on our way.

This was at night. Absolutely, at night.

Yes, in this train that I was in, the Germans were already shooting at those who jumped. We knew a girl who jumped and injured her foot but managed to walk with the injury all the way to Stry. It's amazing. In these times, what people are capable of doing... These were real acts of heroism. Walking all that way with a foot injury.

I will tell you afterwards what I did.

Question: What distance had the train gone?

The train left at around 2:00 in the afternoon. A train like that doesn't travel at full speed, but in any event it had certainly reached about 60 or 70 kilometers away from Stry.

We continued to walk along the train tracks until we came to a small town from which Jews had also been taken. And we entered a house. It was empty so we rested for a while. I cried the most in this house. I couldn't stop crying, like a little boy. It came to me for the first time that... I was as if in shock before that. Jumping from the train and everything, but here I sat for the first time, relaxed and ... cried. What had I done? Where were my parents?

We met as planned and planned to join the partisans. We returned to Stry to organize the partisans.

(There I heard a story that my mother and two sisters had returned to Stry. Since the Germans needed more Jews, so the Jewish police grabbed them in another *aktion* and sent them back [on the trains]. So in this other *aktion* they took my mother and sisters again. I don't know if this version is correct. Rumors abounded. My aunt wanted to take her out and she said she was my mother in order to save herself. One woman asked if I was Prinz, because my aunt had promised to take her out... She said she was my mother in order to save herself. It was impossible to figure out which version was correct.)

There is no doubt that they entered the [train] wagons [cattle cars], that they were taken from the synagogue and got into the wagons. No one was able to leave once they got in. The place was heavily guarded. All around on all sides. No one was left there. There were a lot of guards, Ukrainians and Germans, Gestapo, and my mother and sisters were put on wagons. But the story was that they jumped from the train and returned to Stry. If this other woman, Pristiger was able to jump, my mother could surely have been able to jump. I was not the only one who jumped. A lot of people jumped, they knew where they were being taken. But there are so many stories and it doesn't help me at all these stories. It was no longer a secret. It was possible that they jumped.

We organized ourselves. We were 30 people. Our task was to go to the Carpathians, which was not far away. We would be the advance group. We would get everything organized [in place] and the others would bring everyone else when we would already have established ourselves in the forest, in the mountains. The plan was a very good one. I was not one of the organizers. One member of our group was an engineer and he was the organizer; he organized all of this. You could say that I was a foot soldier. I did what was asked of me. I remember that I carried a sack of beans on my back so we would have

something to eat. This was also arranged, for example. The liaison [contact person] between the [RED] army and our unit was a Ukrainian. He was a communist, and so on [trying to make an impression]. So we walked at night and hid ourselves, which is a story in itself. But I'll tell you, I didn't spend too much time thinking about all these things because one thing followed the other. There was so much fear and so many obstacles. I was occupied almost exclusively with taking care of myself. I didn't think of writing a diary or a journal. This story is in itself not a simple matter. To walk from Stry to the Carpathians is a story in itself. 40 kilometers, but I didn't think too much about it. Because my task was to carry 30 or 40 kilos on my back and what occupied my mind was how to get bread, something to drink, and fulfill that task. So I don't remember all the details about this phase.

We arrived, and two days later, we were told to meet together in a village in a certain house that was isolated. There was a Russian major. I already knew how to handle a rifle, since I had been in the pre-army unit. He gave us instructions, how to throw grenades, etc. Then suddenly, shots were fired, screaming, and we understood that this Ukrainian had informed on us and brought the Gestapo, he had been the informant. But I dragged my good friend. Pulled him by force. He wanted me to get away on my own, but for some reason I didn't want to leave him.

No this wasn't Ludwig, this was ??? vila shesta?? He was agile like me. He knew how to run, how to get along. Come with me, I said. We spoke Polish, naturally. It was seconds. I jumped. And I escaped. Another girl and I managed to run away. All the others were caught.

I ran away from there. It was winter, December 1942. I ran amuck. I ran towards Drogobych [Drohobych], an oil center in Galicia, and from there where could I go? Again, back to Stry. All by running. It was like a marathon run. Without water, or food. Of course there was snow, so I could drink. And I returned to Stry. But there was no more ghetto. There was a camp. To go to a camp meant certain death.

What was I to do? There were not many choices. Oh yes, and I heard that that girl had gone back to Stry and they were looking for her. So they also had to be looking for me, too. Oh yes, and there was someone else, a man named Stein, who was a commander in Betar. He had also run away from those partisans. These were good [strong-willed and strong] people, talented people, each of them. But he was caught. She didn't want to get caught so she jumped from the third or fourth floor and was killed. I heard this from those few people who stayed in Stry. There were a few individuals remaining in Stry.

I was finished with the partisans after they betrayed us. After this incident I had nothing more to do with the partisans.

It was a matter of luck. I was lucky to have escaped. I found somewhere to jump in a crack and managed to get away. But my conscience bothered me about that Vinik. I have a picture of him.

The only choice I had, the only thing left for me to do was to return to Zurawno. Why, because there you could still have a permit to gather things, rags, for the Germans. And I had a friend there, a pharmacist. He was much older than me, but we were friends because his wife and sister would go skiing together with me. I thought, he was there, and with the prospect of scavenging things for the Germans, I thought...

There were 200 people and I thought I would be able to get along.

Question: How did you get to Zurawno? It sounds so simple?

I walked in the fields at night, among trees and bushes, taking food from the fields.

It took several days. Stealing food from the fields. That's a story, everything is a story.

(It's nothing in comparison to looking at death in the face. When the Russians came and I met people in Poland who had been in Auschwitz... They looked death in the face all the time. How can you compare what you did with what they faced. I saw death, but what can I say in comparison to them, who saw death every minute. There are no limits to the suffering people went through.)

Up to now I didn't tell anyone about the partisans. I was working, I was busy. I would have had to devote to this ... You have to start from the beginning. It was the beginning of the partisans. We didn't manage to accomplish anything. There were no acts of heroism. We got organized, that was all. There were others who accomplished quite a lot. In Vilna, in Lithuania. What we did was nothing in comparison to what others did in Lithuania, in Congress Poland. We organized and were wiped out almost immediately. There is no story to tell.

So I came to him, this pharmacist. And he said, look, I'll give you food. But you'll have to find someplace else to stay. Yes, he was a Jewish pharmacist. He and a doctor, Ashkenazi, who was a close friend of my family, and a dental technician; these three people were the only ones who remained, aside from those who were gathering things for the Germans. In this way, I moved around from place to place among the Jewish houses that had been abandoned, but not in a room, in the roofs of these houses. Suddenly one of the Jews tells me that the husband of the woman who was our housekeeper all those years is now the mayor of the town and that he is looking for me. Why? I wondered. I was told: since your mother's fur is in her hands now and she wants to keep it, he is looking for you and wants to get rid of you. Look to what depths of contemptibility people can go. Because you have the mother's fur, you want to kill the son. And this man had invited us to his home for Christmas. My mother and father did not go, because it was not kosher, but I went happily with my sisters. We were like family. What didn't we do for them?

And from the end of December, I went around like this. To tell you that it's comfortable in the dead of winter to sleep in the roof, it's not. It's better to sleep in a basement, but not in a roof.

Yes, the Jews knew that I had returned. The husband of our former maid knew, it was dangerous. Yes it was dangerous

I went around this way, until,

Look what chance [luck] is: On February 4, [1943] I was looking for someplace to sleep and I walked by my house. In my house a Ukrainian tailor called Popadin lived, on one side, on the other side lived a Pole, whose name I have forgotten. They lived there since the Russians came and divided the house. I was walking by my house and I wanted to stay in the roof of the neighbor's house because it was a low roof and I could jump up and get into it easily. And this man, this Popadin, sees me and asks me where I'm going. I didn't know him, but he said he knew me. Everyone knew who I was. But his conscience was bothering him.

He said: "I'm living in your house and you are suffering. Come with me to my house."

I said, "Do you know what you are saying? When they search for me at your house you and your family are endangering yourselves, putting all of you in danger of death.

"I know what I am doing," he said. "I won't betray you. If I wanted to betray you I could do it" [could already have done so]. So with a stock taking with myself, I said to myself. What have I got to lose? But it wasn't so simple. It wasn't 100% certain, the story he told me. I was coming to him full of lice, I told him, infested with lice. You can't imagine a worse thing than lice. You can go crazy with this. You can't get rid of it. No matter he said. He told his wife. Take out a large pot he said. Put your clothes in this pot and I will give you some of my clothes. And you go to my workroom. He put a straw mattress on his tailor's work table, where he would cut the fabric. The Hilton couldn't have compared. What can I tell you, it was like a dream.

In the morning I heard that Pole (the neighbor) calling: "Popadin, Popadin, they're taking all the Jews (he meant all of those who were gathering rags for the Germans). And I hear what he says. And I see through the window how they are being taken.

Question: He doesn't betray you?

Oh no. God forbid. He comes to me and says. Calm yourself. Go into the cellar. The cellar was divided into two, between the two neighbors, as was the attic, the roof. You can't stay here. I lived in this goy's house several months, from February 4 till the beginning of June.

(When I was at the pharmacist's, I asked him for potassium cyanide, the strongest poison, so that if I fall into the hands of the Germans, I could put some under my tongue and that would be it. He gave me the

potassium cyanide. He knew that I was staying with Popadin, he and the dental technician. Why did they let the pharmacist remain?: If they, the Germans, needed medications, and the dental technician, because all the Germans would come to him for their teeth. The doctor, too, if they got sick, there should be someone to take care of them. The same thing. This doctor, a friend of mine, had a hiding place arranged in the home of a Pole. Both his daughters had Aryan papers. He had money and had arranged a hiding place for himself in a Polish home. But as long as he could, he remained free. Living in a bunker in the home of a Pole isn't so much fun [comfortable]. [But one of the Germans living in our town, promised to warn them when he heard that there was going to be an *aktion* where they would take them to a forest and shoot him and that would be the end of that; but I will tell you later.)

I was at this goy's house. I sat in his bedroom. The closet was in the corner. I sat in that corner all day. He had two children. They would play with a ball and when it would come to me, I would throw it back to them. This was where I would sit during the day. When it became hot, they took me to the roof.

Question: Did the children know that you were there?

God forbid, no, they did not know I was there. This way I sat there and then I went to the roof. What was it with him? What motivated him to keep me? It was very important for him. He was a dilettante and I was able to give him what was missing from his life. Discussions about books. When I was in gymnasium, and later on too, I studied all the classics, in Polish, Russian, and German; I was fluent in German. I talked to him about books. It opened his mind. He was an intelligent person, but he hadn't gone to school and studied. We talked for many hours, into the night (he wanted to learn). This is apparently what motivated him to let me stay with them.

But his wife became hysterical. Because she knew what a danger I posed for them. I had a Doxa watch. The pharmacist came to me, at the Ukrainian's place, and said to me: "This guy isn't rich, why don't you give him something." So I asked him to sell the watch and give him the money. And that's what he did. After that, I saw that Popadin was not satisfied, was upset by this. But after the fact, there was nothing I could do.

[Mr. Prinz had a page on which he thought he had written down the exact date of the following incident, [when they took the doctor] but could not find it and went on with the story.]

In the summer, in June, I witnessed from the roof, the Gestapo officer, who had told the pharmacist that he would notify him before an *aktion*. He himself (this officer) took Ashkenazi (the doctor) to the forest to shoot him. But Ashkenazi and his wife had the same poison (potassium cyanide) and took it so they were not taken out and shot. I know this. The pharmacist ran away before this and survived. We met later on in Poland.

Among those who gathered rags was a man named Lieberman, who had been a friend of my father's. He was in the Judenrat. He did not do what others had done, but it was on his conscience (his conscience bothered him). He sent word to me at Popadin's that he was going to run away to Lukowiec, a Polish village to a goy by the name of Kukhta and if I found myself in danger, I should come to him. So I felt I had something like a safety net [something to latch onto.] That was very important. But as long as Popadin was willing to keep me, I would stay.

But after they took the dental technician Dornstrauch and his wife (they had no children) [and killed them] and Ashkenazi was killed [died], I said to Popadin: "your wife is right. I'm the only Jew left in Zurawno. That's the end. Everyone's been killed." So he said, "you know what, I'll take you to my wife's mother. She lives outside Zurawno." She put me into the pig sty. It wasn't so great there, but there I suffered terribly, from hunger, extremely. Now they were very poor and didn't have a lot themselves. The situation made it worse... It was very difficult. In 1942, the rivers overflowed and flooded the fields, and there was nothing to eat. So I didn't have any complaints against her.

(When I was looking for a place to sleep in Zurawno, Dr. Ashkenazi let me sleep in his cabinet [office] for a few days and I slept there. He had a sofa, but he couldn't bring blankets there, or anything, because that would have been suspicious. And I suffered there a great deal. It was a difficult winter, very cold at night, and I had to get up and run around in that office to keep warm. Why am I telling you this? After the war I met his daughter. She is photographed in several pictures together with my sister, and her other

sister was the same age as my younger sister. In any event, I met her here, she also became a doctor. We met often and remained on friendly terms. She also had a tragedy. She had married a simple Polish man, but he had kept her, helped her. It affected her. She had a child, a girl with him. She was never able to reconcile herself with this. She died a while ago; she had been very sick.)

(Last year a friend invited me to a gathering of Zurawno [people]. Suddenly I see a woman and she comes over to me and says "I'm Misha Ashkenazi." It was like seeing my sister. It affected me a great deal; I burst into tears. I'm very sentimental. I wasn't always this emotional, it must be my age. She had also married a goy and she has seven children, Poles. A son and daughter came here to Israel. And here she is really a Jew (full-fledged) and they are making things difficult for her. So I told her to come to Israel. I'll swear at the Rabbinate that you are Jewish, I said. There are other former Zurawno residents here (who would do the same). And she had

(Two of her children are here, they are considered Jews.) I met her sister's daughter and asked about her. She sent me a letter that she would take my advice and come to Israel. Two of her sons are chronic alcoholics. And she has two children here. The others there are real goyim. What does she have there in Poland?)

Before we go on, I would like to add that at the time that the Germans organized the Judenrat, since my father was known as a public figure, they wanted him to join. He apparently understood what they were going to be asked to do [understood that something smelled rotten] and that there would be pressure. He absolutely refused to join, even though he knew that joining the Judenrat would be good for his family [that his family would be better off,] that they would be able to survive longer, since they would not be taken in the early *aktionen*. The Judenrat members were generally left for last. He refused point-blank. Under no circumstances whatsoever would he agree to become part of the Judenrat. They asked me to become a policeman. I refused and he told me turn them down without hesitating. He said we should absolutely not become part of this "game." Afterwards we saw that even Dr. Ashkenazi and attorney Sandower and Lieberman joined the Judenrat, people who were known to help the public and to be interested in their welfare. But the Germans called the shots. It's not surprising. They made Dr. Ashkenazi, a short, loud person who spoke his mind, drink an entire bottle of vodka; this made him go crazy. No wonder.

This is one thing, and then, when we sat at the *aktion*, my little sister, Yuzha was her name, she turned to me and said [he reminds the interviewer that he was very close to her and she to him], "Tell me, why do they want to kill me, what have I done, what crime did I commit?"

What could I say to her? I had to add this.

I want to correct what I said about Popadin and when I was in his mother-in-law's pig sty. It was before the last *aktion*, before they took the dentist away. Why? I remembered that she made a huge fuss about me being there. So he came and took me back to his house. I was also thinking about the business with the Doxa watch; I had wondered all the time if I shouldn't have given it to him. I thought he might have come to take me back so that he could finish me off [be finished with me] – to take me to the police. This is not surprising. All these thoughts of bad things were running around in my head. I saw everything as a stumbling block, an attempt to trip me up, to get rid of me. Here they want to kill me, there they want to get rid of me. So I accompanied him to his home with mixed feelings and fear.

He asked me why I was so frightened. How could I tell him? He took me back to his house and the game started all over again. I sat behind the cabinet, moving around from place to place. But it was summer and I preferred to sleep in the attic. And then I think it was June 5, I saw with my own eyes how they came to take away the dental technician and his wife.

I told him: "You can't keep the last Jew in the town. It's impossible." I knew, was almost positive that the goy who my father had given [entrusted with] our possessions [all the things that belonged to my family], who had been such a good friend of my father's, would take me in with open arms. So I said to Popadin, "I can't thank you enough; there aren't enough words to describe how grateful I am to you." I added: "Even though we're under a Stalinist regime and there aren't so many prospects for private property, but you never know, I am at least signing over the house to you. So that at least you will have

something from me. I wrote over the house to him, even though I knew this was a utopian act, that things would not change the regime there, and so on.

Question: Did you know that you had no more family? That no one was left?

Yes, yes, I knew. By then I knew that there was no family, my close family, my parents, that there was no one left.

So one night, and his wife also became hysterical, rightfully so. I was not surprised since it meant death on the spot, if they were caught, especially since he was among those who were to be sent to Germany for work. It was the pharmacist who told me that he was on that list. Not enough that it was dangerous for him to harbor me, but there was the danger that they would come for him and then find me there. So I left him and his home. I took clothes with me and swam across the Dniester, without using my arms, on my back. I crossed the Dniester, since it was the border between my town and the villages on the other side. The bridge over the Dniester led to a Polish village. The Poles were interested in populating Galicia with Poles from Silesia, Slask in Polish, to offset the large numbers of Ukrainians living among us. From there people could take the train; we didn't have a train in our town. The train went through the Bakotzin Mountain, which I mentioned before, and finally, and there at the end was the Polish town of Lukowiec. I thought that I would go there. So at night I left Popadin's house and swam across the Dniester. This was not a problem for me, a short excursion. I dressed and walked there. I knew where he was living. I knocked on the door and he opened it. He looked at me and it was like with the husband of our maid. I saw his face and I knew immediately that what I had thought was an illusion. There was no point in expecting anything from him. So what to do? I said goodbye and left. He asked where I was going. I just said goodbye and went. Otherwise he would have turned me over to the Germans. Look at that, my father gave him everything and I had been sure that he would be sympathetic, helpful .

Since I had an address for Lieberman who had gone there, I had an alternative. And I went to where he was staying with a goy. Now this goy knew my father as well. Everyone bought from my father, the entire village, without exception, everyone, and not just in this town, but all the surrounding villages. The shop was the largest and the most well-known ready-made clothes shop in the town and it had an exceptional reputation. They knew that he was an honest person who didn't cheat. He sold according to the price on the ticket and took the profit that he was meant to take. That was the way my father did business. This is why he remained in business where others, almost everyone went bankrupt, but him. The Poles didn't want to buy from Jews. They set up a cooperative. But my father had a good name and all his customers remained loyal to him. This man, Kukhta was his name, knew this as well. The goy my father gave all his good to was called Oska and this man, Kukhta, knew me very well.

I said to him: "[I know who is here]. I want to consult with you about what I should do.

So he said, "Look, I can't. It's three people I have room for. They were there in the barn upstairs. I made a place for them, not such a bad place. What can I do for you? I will go with you to the forest. This was not the Bakotzin Forest. It was a forest that separated this Polish village from the Ukrainian one. I will show you where to make a bunker. (They spoke to him and he helped me.) You'll make yourself a bunker in a new forest, not an old section. They'll chop down trees in the old section during the winter (for fuel), but not in a new one, since they want the trees to grow."

This was very sophisticated on his part. And he went with me on his own. And I made a bunker there.

Question: How?

I dug the bunker myself with a spade. And I covered it with camouflage. He showed me how to do it. I didn't really know how to go about it. I knew how to do this quite well, I knew how to get along. I wasn't a ninny [like my friend] I had learned to work during the occupation and during the times of the Russians. At home I was spoiled. But that had ended immediately and I knew I would have to get along on my own. And slowly I brought, little by little, ...

[Prinz]: O.K., you might say, so you had a place to sleep but what about food. You had to eat.

Question: So you slept there. On what? On twigs?

I slept on straw that I would bring from the village, a little each time. Since it was still summer, this was not a problem.

Question: He brought you straw?

No. I would go and take. I would sneak about ...

It's good that you ask, and I said sneak about:

The German regime was such that, it wasn't enough that the hatred between the Poles and the Ukrainians had always existed, was there all the time, but the Germans increased the hatred a thousand fold. That is, there were guards that sat on one side of the forest and on the other side Ukrainians, because they would attack each other [the Poles and Ukrainians], setting fires, throwing people into wells. They did all kinds of things it was awful. And imagine that I as a Jew had to sneak into the village [to search] for food, at least twice a week. Water was not a problem, because in Poland it would always rain. So I had water. And I had a cup on me all the time, on the rope that held up my pants. So I had water all the time. I never had a problem with water. While I was there getting food from this goy [Kukhta] was always a problem because each time I would have to sneak among the Poles, and I could not trust them. It was like a military operation each time. And don't forget that this was not a one-time thing. It went on for about one year, from the summer of 1943, to the summer of 1944. With the winter in between (about 18 months).

Question: So for one year you hid in a pit?

Yes, in a pit. That I dug.

Question: You had to fend for yourself?

Food I got from him. But I had to go into town and getting to him was very difficult. Sneaking into town was a constant battle, each time. It was not always easy. Sometimes there were clear nights... Sometimes there was a moon which made everything like daylight. [defect in the recording; only a few words or a sentence]

The Ukrainians weren't the problem because I was on the Polish side of the forest, not on the Ukrainian side.

I didn't move around in the forest. Most of the time I was lying down [in the bunker] so I wouldn't be seen. No one came there, but it was an ongoing battle. In the difficult days of winter, when the temperatures dropped to 20 something, I was with the goy, together with them [the others]. I felt that he was very unhappy about this arrangement because the minute it became warmer, I went back to the forest. They [Lieberman and the others] couldn't persuade him to keep me either. As it was, they were happy that he was willing to keep them at all. Because there were cases, many cases, like with my cousin, who had managed the estate of the prince, Zaturitsky, and he was on very friendly terms with many goyim. One of them took him in, took his money and then took a hatchet and killed him on the spot. There were many cases like this. Afterwards, if he [or any goy] told the police about a Jew in hiding, they would get sugar or oil or something else. Awful. What they did was terrible, unbelievably awful.

So this way I managed to survive [maintain myself] and one day, it was Sunday, no before that, I don't remember what day it was, suddenly I heard noise. Out of the ordinary, unusually loud. I will explain so that you will understand. I was with lice when I came there. The others also had lice, so I was in good company. So in the summer, I would take off [my clothes]. I already had the clothes worn by goyim, a white cotton shirt, what the villagers wore; thick material like jeans, but coarse. This is what I wore all the time. How long could one set of clothes last? But that was all I had. Yes, I had shoes, almost without soles.

Your questions are to the point, but they were so unimportant [inconsequential under the circumstances]. You have no idea. A strong wind. Every leaf that rustled in the wind frightened me, startled me, forced me to be alert. [This is true] till today. My wife asked me about going to relieve myself. The sounds, every little sound, would startle me. Till today, I don't sleep well; I'm a terrible sleeper. I'm never relaxed, there is no such thing as relaxed. Every night I have dreams about what I experienced, it bothers me all the time, till today.

Suddenly I hear an unusually loud noise, dogs,

I almost forgot [to explain]. I would wash my clothes and since it was summer I let them dry. I was naked, until the clothes dried, but no one was there. Why do I tell you this? Because it is connected to what I'm telling you.

I hear the noise. I had nothing to lose. I was young.

I took out the potassium cyanide I had with me and waited to see what would happen.

Usually, the Germans came searching [for hidden Jews] with dogs. And I see that these were not Germans, so I put aside the potassium cyanide and I see a group of young Polish men with dogs. Who are you? What are you? They asked.

I'm Prinz's son, I said. Prinz's son, they said. Everyone knew my father. What are you doing here? I'm hiding. This was about two or three weeks before the Russians came. I already felt the geulah (salvation). I hadn't seen anything, but I knew. When I came to him (Kukhta) to get food, he had said: "You can relax, stop worrying, the Russians are coming. They're already in Tarnopol, about 100 kilometers away from us and they are getting closer. They'll get here very soon."

They came [the young Polish men]. Don't be afraid they said. I'll tell you what happened. One young boy had seen the clothes by chance; they were my clothes hanging on the tree. He told this to the villagers and it was thought in the village that there were apparently Ukrainians sitting there [waiting to attack], a tall tale, of course, but the story worked. "A real story, but now that we see that you're not a Ukrainian, don't worry," they said. It was like the Garden of Eden had opened up before me. They brought me potatoes, butter, bread, things I had seen in ages. I had nothing to do all day except to eat. And they brought me a newspaper, a German paper, since I was fluent in German. I understood that their situation was really very difficult. And if I could compare this with the Soviet newspaper of the previous period, 1939-41, I could tell you that it was a democratic paper. ??Shwartzenkotz?? it was called. I don't know how they got a hold of it; it was an SS paper, which wrote about the situation as it was in reality. It was my bad luck (I found out later on) that the Russian army contingent that came there [to the area] discovered a vodka factory; they didn't need anything else. They went inside and got drunk. They took them all away in trucks; threw them into the truck, like sheep, because they were all drunk. [There was no one left to fight, they took them back, away from the front] So the Germans returned to the direction of Kiev and fought back. This delayed the return of the Russians.

But for me it was an easier time. These young men brought me food. And I knew them. I continued to stay in the bunker. Suddenly, one early morning, I see two boys walking, one with a scythe on his back and other with nothing. I suddenly went out of the bunker and said good morning to them. I thought [they were like the others.]

I saw their faces, and realized that I had made a grave mistake. I was struck by fear. The one without the scythe came up to me and took a gun (revolver) out of his pocket, which was attached to a thick rope. He placed it on my chest (heart).

"What do you want from me? What did I do to you? Have I harmed you in any way?" I said.

"The others come and bring me food."

"Do you have gold?" he asked me. So he was looking for a pretext to kill me and asked me if I had any gold.

"Please, if you find it, it's yours," I said. But if by an abnormal instinct he turned his head aside, to the other boy, the one with the scythe, who had just been standing there without intervening.

I said to him [the one with the scythe], "Yanek, (I suddenly remembered his name)," "you're going to kill me? Me? I served you so well [in the store]. I dressed you so well and you're going to shoot me?" I remembered his name. And he went up to the one with the gun and put his hand on his arm. "Let him live. The son of Prinz. He's a good guy. Let him live." [Mr. Prinz is crying as he tells this episode]. This was a terrible shocking thing, awful. "No I'm going to kill him, that son of a bitch." Then he [Yanek] tells him again, leave him alone. In a flash, while they were arguing, in an instant, while he was holding his arm, I jumped up and started to run. They ran after me, but it was impossible to catch me. What a person under such duress is capable of doing, you have no idea. Like I ran away from the partisans, running amok, marathon man, running and running. Halt Halt I heard screaming. They could shout till tomorrow. They didn't know where I was running and suddenly I see in front of me a huge

bush, a huge thistle. I jumped inside there, with all the momentum of my running and sat there for a long time.

I sat there for a long time until it was quiet. No one was around. It was already getting dark. This took a whole day. And in the evening I emerged to reassess the situation. What should I do? I knew that since he hadn't caught me he would come looking for me. He knew that if the Russians come, I would hand him over to them. So what should I do? Not far from the forest there was a field that belonged to Zaturitsky, the prince. Now a wheat field there was not like here. The wheat grew to a height of a 1.8 meters [5.91 feet], or 1.6-1.7, or even higher. I went into this wheat field and I slept there. At dawn, I put dew from the wheat into my cup and drank and I ate the seeds. They were already pretty ripe. It was the end of July. Although they harvest the wheat there at the end of August, the seeds were already ripening and you could eat them. I stayed there for three days this way, until hunger began to gnaw at me terribly. I couldn't go on this way. What should I do? I would go to Kukhta; he'll give me something to eat. I went to him. But before that I went to a garden and looked for beans, something to eat. I came to his house and knocked on the door. He opened it up and made the sign of the cross. "My God, what did you do to me," he said. "They'll burn my house down. Everyone is looking for you. The entire village is looking for you. What wrong did I do you?"

I said to him: "Mr. Kukhta, look, first of all bring me a bucket of water, before that I can't say anything." He brought me a bucket of water and I put my head into it like a horse and I drank. After that I said to him: "If they kill me, they'll leave me out in the open as food for dogs. If you kill me, at least I'll have a grave."

"Mr. Prinz, what are you saying? What are you talking about? I would kill you? I helped you and now I'm going to kill you? What kind of nonsense is this?"

"So bring me food. I haven't eaten for four days, only wheat kernels. And tell the Liebermans that I am still alive."

"Where are you staying," he asked me. And I told him in Zaturitsky's wheat field. "I will call my son. Go with him." His son knew about me [us]. "The Russians will be coming soon. You stay there. Don't go back to the woods. They'll look for you there. It's a very good thing that you are staying there [in the wheat field]. You will show him where you are sitting in the field and he will bring you food."

I kissed his hands and feet. [Mr. Prinz cries as he relates this] and he really did bring me food. Not every day. Then one day he came and said: Mr. Prinz, you're free." You can imagine how I felt. [This was a very emotional account]

I came to his house. The Liebermans had already come out [of hiding] we kissed and hugged. After that we wondered, what should we do? We'll go to Zurawno. After all that's our town, where we lived. Before that, the guy who tried to kill me knew that I was still alive; in a village everyone knows what's going on. He came to me and kissed my hands and feet and begged me not to hand him over to the Russians. I said: You, you I'm turning you over directly to the Russians. You, you... But he said, "I received orders from the Polish army that was stationed in England," which was true. It was called the Armaya Krayova, the people's army; they received orders from the Polish government in exile to exterminate any Jews remaining in Poland, that Poland should be free of Jews. This is a historical fact. This guy was in the partisans and received orders and came to kill me. I did turn him over to the Russians and I don't know what they did with him. It was not my concern.

I went to Zurawno and went to Popadin; he kissed me and hugged me ... and he fed me (received me like a long-lost brother; better than a brother). There I met the Reiter family, whose son is here in this photo, in this photo in army dress. We met, and here in the picture is another guy, he was with his father, who was in the cattle business. They worked in the fields, were exceptionally good at it, and both of them worked for Poles, impersonating Poles. They knew Polish and Ukrainian like natives. They worked and had what to eat. They went to church with them. The Reiters were also living with goyim, he and his wife and two sons. I am in close touch with Reiter. I've visited him in the US and my daughter has been there three times, and is going to visit him again. We are more than brothers. Why? After the war when we were already in Germany together, in the UNRWA camps, I lived in his house like another son. His mother cooked for me and did the wash for me. She did everything for me.

In Zurawno, I saw that there was no reason to remain there because the Ukrainian partisans, they were called the Banderowcy, were already there [in control]. They fought against the Russian army; they wanted freedom, [independence] for Ukraine...

And I have to tell you about another episode: there were... not Reiter or his son, but Sheister, who is now in Israel, and Laufer, also living in Israel. He is the owner of the Lechem Chai bakery. He became rich; his uncle had been living here in Israel. He [the uncle] formulated the recipe for this bread, lechem chai, (sprouted wheat). Since the uncle had no children, he gave his nephew the bakery. Laufer and I vowed [shook hands] that we were going to seek revenge against the Germans. We would enlist in the Russian army, not in the Polish army – because of anti-Semitism, we wouldn't be accepted – so we went to the Russian army. Laufer went to avenge himself against the Banderowcy. Why? Laufer wrote a book, Chayat Sadeh (animal of the fields). It's worthwhile reading this book. He survived with his father, who was a cattle merchant. When the war was over, the father started to run his business again, but in the end they killed him. Imagine. He survived all that, and they killed his father, so he wanted to avenge his father [against the Ukrainians] and I went to the Russian army.

In the Russian army, I began to fight [entered the fighting] on the other side of the Vistula. Domitz. That's where I began to see action. The fighting reached the German border at a village called Opel, where I fought in a battle. I was in the commando unit, but I was injured in the head [Mr. Prinz smooths the back of his head] and they took me to the hospital. I remained there from the end of December, till the beginning of March. I wasn't injured so gravely. But there I assessed the situation [weighed my options] You did enough. You went through a lot, you killed [Germans] or not; I had no way of knowing. Maybe it's enough. So look for a way to get out of this. And in March the war was almost over. I had a Russian [non-Jewish] friend. So I asked him...

And oh yes, most of the doctors in the hospital were Jews. Our password was "amchu" [the people/clan]. If you said "amchu" and the other person responded, you knew he was a Jew. When I came to the hospital and saw a doctor with a Jewish face and said the password and he answered, I knew. Since I was a Jew, they kept me over and above the allotted amount of time [took very good care of me]. I reached the stage where they could release me; they couldn't keep me there forever.

So I asked my Russian friend what he was going to do. It was already March and the war was coming to an end. He said, "I'm not going back to the front. I'm going to sign up to the school for the tank operators, the [armored] corps. By the time we finish the training, the war will be over." So I said, "You know what, I'll do the same thing." When I went to the place where they were signing up soldiers for tank training, being Jewish, I tried to "sniff out" what was going on. I asked around, and I heard they were saying that they weren't taking people from the Ukraine, from Western Galicia, because they were an element that could not be trusted. A Jew or a goy, it didn't matter. So I asked my friend what I should do. And he said: "Idiot. Do you have to tell them where you're from? Tell them you're from Russia." I said, "What will I tell them when they ask me where I'm from? Moscow, Kiev, I don't know anything about Russia." But I had a friend, a very good friend, who had been taken to Siberia, the Siberian oblast (district), in the Novosibirsk region, to a certain village (Lechtiske). So I gave them that address and told them that I come from there.

The Russian sergeant major looks at me suspiciously tilting his head to one side and asks: "You, are you trying to drive me crazy? Are you actually trying to tell me that you, a Jew, were born in Novosibirsk? In such a tiny village? I can understand Novosibirsk..." So I answered him with chutzpah: "Is that what you think then, that all Jews are born in Kiev or Moscow or Odessa or Leningrad?" O.K. There was a line of soldiers behind me, so he let me pass. I was accepted.

I get to the school and I see that I've made a mistake. This is terrible. My Russian was very weak. I never studied Russian. I lived under the Russians from 1939-1941, and that wasn't enough time to learn the language well. I came to the tank school. The officer, the technician, was using all these technical terms and I didn't understand them. It was like Chinese. And it was my bad luck and this guy who was my friend was sent to another class and I was left, the only Jew among goyim. "What is this ??; what is that?", I'd ask them. And they would say: "Where did you go to school? You don't know this word?" To make a long story short, I finished the course and I had to take a test. I studied for the test (an oral test). I go in to the test and there in front of me are a general and a major, sitting there, administering the test,

and I was a little nothing, a tank driver. I began to stutter and stammer and hesitate. I could hardly get a word out of my mouth. So they wrote: "passed the test but spoken Russian is terrible." But since you don't have to speak in order to drive a tank... I finished this school. All that was left for me was to get a tank to drive. My Russian friend knew what he was talking about. Until you get a tank, until you get the ammunition for the tank, with their organization [or lack thereof] the war will be over, he had said. And this is exactly what happened. The tank was 500 kilometers in one direction, the ammunition, 500 kilometers in the other direction. Once you get the tank, things came with it, things that were stolen from Germany, from Poland. Amazing what went on there: bottles of wine, bottles of other things, sheets and everything that they stole went with the tank and you drove it from Poland, to Germany. (No need to go into details.)

Afterwards, I'm a tank driver, suddenly I hear that they were calling me to headquarters. I was in Vienna by that time.

Question: You were with the regiment in Vienna?

Yes, I was already in Vienna.

They called me to the headquarters. So I figured that they had caught up with me. They must have found out that I wasn't from Novosibirsk. They would put me on trial; now I'm in real trouble, I thought. I get there and see that this was the NKVD, not just headquarters; it was the military intelligence. A major is sitting there and he invites me to sit down. There was a German there, a short man, I remember him as if it was today. There was also a Jewish tank corps lieutenant, who was the translator. The major asked him to ask the German how many boys he had. This was the initial interrogation, you understand. They were looking for [trying to ferret out] SS men and so on. But instead of saying boys in German, he [the lieutenant] asked the man: "How many heavens do you have." So [of course] the German said he didn't understand. But the lieutenant insisted that he spoke German. Well I couldn't help myself. Now in the army they called me the "Western democrat." I just couldn't get used to this terrible regime. So I spoke up: "Comrade major," I said, the comrade didn't ask the question correctly. He should have asked [I said in German] "how many boys do you have." [When he heard my version] the German immediately answered "two." The officer [lieutenant] looked at me as if he was ready to eat me up alive: he had a good job here in the office instead of in a tank [and my correction undermined his credibility].

After this was over the major asked me: "Did you write a letter requesting a transfer to our unit? [Mr. Prinz laughs]

This was crazy, of course. "Comrade major," I answered him: "I don't feel in any way qualified or worthy of something like this." [such a position.]

"What do you mean?" he said. "[Are you implying that] I've made a mistake? Don't I know how to read," he said.

"But I didn't write a letter," I insisted. "Perhaps I can see this letter," I asked. He showed me the letter and I see that it that it was signed by someone not Prinz but Prinsoff, a typical Russian name, Russian par excellence. "Comrade major," I say, "this is Prinsoff, who wrote the letter." (There was such a person with us. He didn't want to scrub the tank [to get his hands too dirty] so he must have looked for a soft job.)

So the major says to me, "I know that you know German..."

"No," I protest, "I don't know German, just a little..."

"Don't feed me that line," he says. In short, what can I tell you. A different world opened up to me. They lived on a high standard [on an entirely different level]. Not like us. They wanted for nothing. I never looked this good, even when I lived with my mother... I have a photo. I looked like an athlete. We had five fingers of bacon, wine, every day, what didn't we have.

So, I did important work there. I organized a group of German anti-fascists, and they gave me the addresses of Gauleiters, district administrators. They were worse than the SS because they sent everyone to their deaths. [We uncovered] Gauleiters and SS and they were very pleased with my work. I was interested in finding as many as possible so I was pleased as well. I found the pilot Yaeger, who was none other than the son of Goering's brother. Can you imagine that for a long time I held onto a portrait of him and his backpack, but I don't have it any more, how long can you keep these things. We moved...

And now you may ask me. How did you get to Israel when you had said you were from Novosibirsk. Once I went with him [the major] to a village to look for a Gauleiter. And he, out of the blue, says to me: Look you've been working for me for a few months now, and I don't know where you're from. So I see that this is my chance so I tell him I'm a ??Zapat?? Sibiriak. The soldiers from Siberia were the best soldiers. Those from western Ukraine were the worst. So they [the latter] were called, in irony, Zapat Sibiriak. So he asks me how I came to be accepted into the tanks corps. He knew that I had come from the tank corps.

So I answered: "What? Do you think I'm a Banderowcy? I'm a Jew."

He swallowed this. When he believed my story... In my battalion I was a king (because I had been bringing them so many delicacies from the villages. When we would go to a village, for instance, I would bring back a pig. I would bring it to a butcher and he would make all kinds of things out of it. I would pass it out. This was all my work.)

When this happened, I took my army I.D. card, tore it up and burned it. And after a while I said that I had lost it. So they told me to go to the battalion office and get another one. I have a photo of me sitting with them, eating and drinking with them. I took bacon and drink, and salami (I had plenty to hand out), and when he was good and drunk, I told him that I had lost my I.D. card...

"Take whatever you need," he said. He let me fill it out myself. So I wrote that I was from Zurawno, Stanislavov, the Lvov district, etc. [and I had] a new military I.D. card.

From Vienna I went... well there were other stories. I told them that I had a brother in Poland who was waiting for me. They were uncomfortable with the idea that I was wearing the uniform of an officer that bore the insignia of a sergeant. It didn't look right that I had an officer's uniform while my rank was sergeant. And he [the major] was a high-ranking person. I was with him, a translator, sitting with the head of the Party in Vienna and the mayor... I would translate from German to Russian. This was much more difficult for me than translating from Russian to German. It was because I didn't know Russian all that well and they felt it.

In the end, this officer said that his wife was coming from Siberia. And it's Vienna you know, after all. I made a lady out of her. I dressed her in style. Then I told him that there was an order that they were releasing Polish citizens. But he said, "You, I'm not releasing you so quickly." I tried to get him to relent through his wife. Imagine, he dragged me all the way to Hungary. I spoke with a priest in German and he said: "Even here you know how to speak." I said no...

In short. I was released from the army long after... In 1946 I was released from the army. And I returned to Lvov to see if maybe, despite everything, someone from my family had survived. No one. No one was left. I had another episode there with someone from the Carpathians who said he had seen my sister. This put me into an emotional havoc [and sent me on a wild goose chase]. I involved the Red Cross. I went to the Liebermans, who had gone to Krakow [in the meantime] and asked him [them] to look for her. Nothing came of it, of course. It ate me up alive. Because to travel to there [to Krakow] from Lvov you needed a pass [permit]. But I had just been given my release papers from the army because I was a Polish citizen. I didn't know what to do with myself. [It was not that simple.]

I told you that I was an atheist from the age of 13. When I got to Przemysl, on the Russian-Polish border, I raised my hands [to God] in thanks from being released from them. But I had [gotten] it from both sides.

This is my story.

I came to Israel.

Question: But you said that you were in a DP camp.

I was in a DP camp.

I'll tell you. When I was in Vienna I also met quite a few girls I became friendly with. I was after all a young man.

When I came from Poland to Vienna, I lived in the home of a woman who knew me as a Russian soldier. But she didn't know that I was Jewish. I knew that she wasn't a Nazi and we got along. But I left her. I saw that she wanted to marry me. But I said to myself that this was not for me. So I ran away. I left her and went to Krems, which was also in Austria and there I saw the crematorium. They also had them there. From there I went to Wetzlar in Germany. It's well known for its optics and cameras, microscopes. [It's the home of] the Leitz company. Till today they have that there.

I met my wife at the border between Poland and Czechoslovakia. But I left her, naturally. I went to this woman in Vienna and had a great time [a crazy lifestyle] with her. She lived in a fantastic flat on the ?? strasse?? in Vienna. She would make me all kinds of wonderful dishes. We went to the opera, theater together. I lived a mad life. Afterwards I met my wife. I left her. But again when we were in Wetzlar, I met her again, when we were on the way to some place and I met her there.

And imagine, my apartment in the camp was opposite hers. It was [as if it was] all arranged in heaven that we should marry. We married and came to Israel.

We got married in camp on July 28 [22], 1948. [In Israel] it was very difficult at first. I did all sorts of jobs, difficult work, manual labor, construction, plumbing, sewage. But then I got a good job in the Tel Aviv municipality. In the meantime I had learned the language, taken a course, etc. I got a job under mayor Rokeach. The job had tenure. But I left this job and went to the private sector. But luck in business I didn't have. I had luck in life, but not in business. Everything I tried didn't work out, so I returned [to the public sector] and got a job in the Ministry of Agriculture where I worked as an internal auditor, and that's what I'm still doing, till today. I took courses on higher levels at the College of Management. My wife worked all these years as a bookkeeper, and she is still working today. We have a daughter, an only daughter, because we have Rh factor differences and in those days there weren't any shots against this. The doctor warned us that we could have a mentally retarded child. My daughter is very successful and so is my son-in-law, very talented. We like him very much. They live very well. I have three grandchildren. I have a lot of "nachas."

I will show you some photos.

1. This is a family photo taken in the summer of 1939, in Zurawno, in the Zaturitsky park.
2. This is a photo of my two sisters with friends, the daughters of Dr. Ashkenazi, a family friend. (I told you I had slept in his office during the occupation.)
3. This is my cousin, my uncle's daughter. (The daughter of my father's brother).
4. This is Popadin. Thanks to him, I'm alive. He did so much for me. Naturally I sent him packages with goods to help him out, what he wrote to me that he needed. I also sent him food and fabrics, as he continued to work as a tailor making suits, etc. This helped him make a living. I wrote to him and each letter I received from him, he would thank me, was a very emotional experience. Each time I wrote back, I would thank him. What I did for him was nothing in comparison with what he did for me.
5. This is the son of Reiter. All of them [the people in the photo] are living in Israel, except for Reiter. And we are all in touch, not on a constant basis, but in touch. Aside from Reiter, they all live in Israel.
6. Series of photos:
This is my granddaughter.
My daughter, her husband and two of her children.
This is my daughter with the grandson and granddaughter
Here they are except for the eldest daughter, who is abroad somewhere
Here we are all at a Pesach seder with my brother-in-law and family, which is a tradition. This is my wife, my grandson, my daughter, and this woman is a friend of my brother-in-law.

(Apropos of why they called me the "Western democrat" [when I served in the Red Army]. Once I went with that major to a dentist in Vienna. I saw to it that they [the officers] lived very well there. I used to

supply them with women, too, even though soldiers were forbidden to have German or Austrian women, but these guys could do whatever they wanted. [But he needed a dentist.] So I went with him to the dentist. "Who was Jesus in your opinion?", the major asked me. "According to what I have read," I answered, "he was the first socialist." That's true. At the time, that's what he was.

He looked at me cross-eyed and cried, "What, you're a bigger dog than he is."

I asked myself: Why did you tell him stories like that? Are you looking for more trouble? He's already made enough trouble for you. Trying to send you to Siberia and then an officer's course, what have you. They could send you to Siberia anytime, [on a whim]. They frightened you all the time, but I was already used to it. O.K. I had to get out of this one. We were going to the dentist, and he [the dentist] probably knew a thing or two.

When we went to the dentist, I told the major to ask him dentist the same question. "You'll understand his reply because you'll know the words Jesus and socialist." (This was so that the major wouldn't think I was trying to hoodwink him, since Jesus and socialist were words he could understand.) When the dentist replied that Jesus was the first socialist, the major said to him, "You're even a bigger dog than he is." So the dentist asked me in German what he had said. I told him that he was better off if he didn't know.)

Poland was not exactly the height of democracy, but you could speak freely [speak your mind]. Naturally it was not a good idea to go around saying that Pilsudski was a thief or things like that, but there was free press, you go travel wherever you wanted to. Night and day in comparison [with the Soviet system].

My name is Moshe Abraham Prinz.

I was born in 1919.

I have a daughter. Her name is Esti. Named after my older sister. Because my mother's name is Tzipporah and my wife's mother had the same name, and Jews don't name....

My grandson Chen is also named Pinchas, after my father. So my parents were Tzipporah and Pinchas. When my grandson took out a passport, it had his full name, Chen Pinchas, and I was very pleased about that.

I live in Givatayim since 1988. Before that we lived in Ramat Gan, Krinitzi Street. We have a very nice apartment. We are financially secure. We live a good life. I get payments from Germany. We travel abroad every year. We have a car. We go to theater and films. We have real friends, people we've been close to for a long time, the kind that help each other out when they need it, who do anything for a friend. During hard times I borrowed money from one of them who was well off. He did it without asking me anything, when I would repay him. I am very pleased, satisfied with my life here, much happier that I came here and not to the U.S., as I told you. I've been there and I saw the life there. I realized that it is not for me. Most important, my daughter, too, who has been to the U.S. many times, said that the life there was not for her. The way people relate to others, I don't like it and I'm very happy that we live here.

I have a friend with an only child, a son, who lives in the US. When my friend goes there to visit they have to meet in a hotel, because the wife won't let them in the house. And these are not simple people. He is an engineer and she is a high school teacher. That's the way it is there. It's very sad.

I hadn't thought of making this tape. It was my daughter's idea.

When I heard the stories of what others had gone through in camps, in Auschwitz, I thought that in comparison with what others who were in the camps went through, my story was not so important...

Although the story about running away from the partisans and what I did in the forest not everyone has these experiences. And jumping from the train was also not a picnic, but in comparison with them, I thought, what do I have to tell.

But my daughter insisted. Why shouldn't you tell your story, she said. Why shouldn't your grandchildren know what happened to you. In fifty years no one will be able to tell the story. People forget. Our politicians count on people forgetting what was said one year or so ago.

I want to thank you for the way you conducted everything. Your handling of everything was excellent.

Thank you.

I also want to mention and show the postcard my cousin in the U.S. gave me. When I was there, I mentioned that I have nothing at all from my parents, except for the photograph. My cousin remembered this postcard, which my father had written to his father during the war. He gave it to me and I have kept it. It's very important to me.

I also said the same thing to another cousin and she told me that she had received a matza cover, a kind of pillow, from my mother. My mother had made it and sent it to them in the U.S. My cousin apologized that it was not in proper shape, because it had been laundered.

Thank you.