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Nathan Reich, transcript only

Nathan Reich

LB You realize that this, we hope, will go into the library at Union College for a kind of memory bank of cassettes. Would you tell for the tape, would you give us your name.

NR Reich (Nathan)

LB And where were you born?

NR I was born in a village called Terszow. The nearest town or shtetel was about a mile away and it was called, in Polish it was called, Stary Sambor. Stary means old. So the Yiddish name was Altshtut. Altshtut. Stary the old town. Now when...why it developed that way, why the Jewish name or the Yiddish name was different from formal name, I don't know. It may well be that the ...before it was called Sambor it was called means town. It was called Stary , the old town. And the Yiddish translation was Altshtut. The Jews being very traditional and slow in changing stuck to the old name and only for purposes of, official purposes, mailing, school, registration and so on, they used the Polish name, Stary Sambor.

LB Now at the time...You were born in what year?

NR I was born June 6, 1900. At the turn of the century.

LB And at that time was this part of Austria Hungary?

NR It was part of Austria Hungary.

LB Now what was the nearest big city? I'm looking for a map too.

NR Well it depends on how you define a big city.

LB You define it.

NR The nearest, Stary Sambor was the nearest town. So we went to school, the elementary school and the cheder in Altshtut. And we didn't walk every day to school, we went Sunday to town, boarded with the rebbe in cheder. There were three brothers in roughly in the same...I was, I started cheder at the age of three and the other brother was five and one was seven. Three, five, seven. So we went and we slept at the cheder. The classroom was converted at night to a dormitory. And we brought every Sunday, we brought some food. Eggs, butter, and chicken occasionally and the rebbitzin cooked for us. And we paid, my

father paid tuition. You see that included probably also some compensation for ...Friday, we came home for Shabbos. That was the nearest town. Our main social was there and all/contacts...for a time, the shul that my father and we went to Shabbos, davening, was in that little town and that's a very interesting question, because it was beyond the legal limits. See Jews may not walk on the Shabbos for more than some distance. So we had to have a

we had to resort to legal fiction where you...

LB Say that again. That word I don't know.

NR Erev.

LB Erev is evening.

NR Erev is evening. But this is not...no, this is. is a symbolic, well it is a, it designates a certain symbolic function which enables you to walk on Shabbos a longer distance. If you're interested, I'll explain it, the details.

LB Yes.

NR You may not walk on Shabbos for more than a certain distance, two thousand yards, I don't know exactly what the distance is. Now our home was a greater distance... the distance between our home and the shul where we went to daven was more than the legal limit. Now, this prohibition did not apply to shorter distances. So for a time, what Jews did they actually, Friday, they moved over to town, slept there, went to shul, spent there the day and after dark or Sunday morning, they went home. And this was done, not only in our family, but it was a very tedious business. You cannot move every Friday, taking care of the home, taking care of this, and children and that was true of course in pbobably, of other Jews in previous generations when they were scattered, they faced that problem. Now you had a choice. Either stay away Shabbos frommminyan, which is not a sin, but it's not proper or solve that difficulty. The difficulty was solved by symbolic moving. Suppose you move your house closer. On Friday you move your home so you live closer to the shul, to break that barrier. Well, what constitutes moving? Well, you can move, you can move all the furniture, but when you can move only a bed, that constitutes moving. One thing, it's

not comfortable to take, Friday, to take a bed and put it somewhere in between...well, you move a part of your food. Suppose you move a challah and so on. Well, finally the thing was reduced, moving symbolically a bit of salt and a bit of pepper, wrap it up in a piece of paper and Friday, and I used to do it when I was a kid, my mother used to send me, or my older brothers before, Friday you deposited it under or a stone, on the road, halfway between your home and the shul. That constituted a symbolic move. So, according to the tradition or Law, I don't know if it was really a law, you could move more, you could walk around for more, longer distances in different directions but not in any one direction. You could walk on Shabbos more than the legal limit, half of it this way, half of it this way, half of it this way, half of it this way...

LB But the total had to be the same.

NR No, the total could be more. But the direction, you see. Now there was...you couldn't walk in any one direction more than the distance from your home. But you could walk around, for instance, on Shabbos, in a little town, you could walk to neighbors and walk to visit, but as long as any one direction of walking did not exceed the legal limit.

LB That's why they make such good lawyers.

NR Yes. So on Friday we used to deposit, now why salt and peper? I used to ask my father. Why not a challah? A dog may find it and run away with it. Or even a peasant may pick it up. Salt and pepper, nobody, not even an animal... because that had to be there. You had to be sure that this is there for the duration of the Shabbos.

LB Would you check it then before...?

NR No. No. It became just a ritual, almost a

LB Now what was the name of this?

NR Erev.

LB Spell it in Yiddish.

NR Eyin, Raish, Bet. Now, came Saturday morning, Shabbos in der free, we walked fro our home to our new home. Thatwas oll right. And our new home was the place where this little thing was deposited. And then, from there, the other direction, was the shul. That was all right. On the way back, the same. And that made it possible for us to get the benefit of Shabbos prayer...in shul.

LB At home, really and cheder in this other place.

NR Cheder was a different story. Cheder you know was only during the week. And Sunday mornings, I fold you, Sunday mornings we went to town, took some food along, either walked or we often had the chance, somebody, some peasant was driving by so that he gave us a ride. Like you have here in cars, what do you call it...

LB A hitch.

NR A hitch. And we came Sunday afternoon or noon, to the rebbe, and we stayed there overnight and we attended the cheder and when I was six, we, when we reached the age of six we had to attend public school, from eight to one or two, we attended public school and came back to the cheder. And slept there, for the night. That was our nearest town.

LB Now wait a minute. I want to ask you something first...I want to be sure where this is. Were you in Galicia?

NR Yes.

LB Oh. Where were you on this map?

NR Lemberg was the capital city of Galicia. Galicia had, in Austria some of the parts of Austria had a parliament. Czechoslovakia, Slovakia, Czech, Bohemia, Hungary and so on.

LB Hungary would certainly have a parliament

NR Hungary was still a monarchy.

LB Well, I'm also learning my history as I go along. But this story I never heard before.

NR We were just about here. Between Lemberg and the Slovakian border. The Slovakian

border would be about here. I know because I smuggled the border here when I was jailed here in 1919.

LB You were. I may have to talk to you more than once.

NR For two or three days.

LB Now, was this a Hasidic town?

NR Well, there were Hasidim in town but there was no such thing as an all Hasidic town and all non-Hasidic.

LB Was your father a Hasid?

NR MMMM, Well, my grandfather, that's my father's father was a very ardent Belzer Hasid. You know, you've heard of Belz. He died two years before I was born. I didn't know him.

LB And your father?

NR My father started out with this tradition but the Belzer dynasty, or the Belzer tradition was too rigid, ascetic. And they really imposed a great discipline. Live simply, fasting often, studying all day long and so on. My father was more attracted since he began being skeptical of that Hasidim, but he did it in stages, so he was more attracted to the dynasty which was called the Rizhinover dynasty. Rizhinover.

LB Rizhin?

NR Rizhin.

LB Is that from the town of Rizhin?

NR It's called the Rizhinover dynasty.

LB I don't know that one. I never heard that one.

NR They came, and of course they were in Russia originally, but then as they had sons, each son established a little dynasty...at that time there was a town in Bukhovina, which was also a province of Austria, and that was called Sadagura.

LB But they're here now, aren't they?

NR That's right! That's right. Now, the Sadagura, one of the granddchildren of

the Rizhinover, Freidman was their name, established a court, a hof, we say, and they lived very princely. Beautiful dress, they dressed. They cultivated the arts. They played the violin. The women were very beautiful, beautifully dressed and they were driving in You know what means? And so that my father switched to the Sadagura, for this reason, because the modernity appealed to him.

LB Now they've switched back.

NR And secondly. Yes, the Sadagura are still...I don't know what, here, I didn't follow. And then secondly he was...we lived in this village. This village was in the foothills of the Carpathian mountains. And was used as a sort of an informal place where Jews came from town for the summer. Zummerfrishen. Frischer luft. And they rented a peasant's home or in a Jewish home. There was nothing elaborate here as is here in a summer resort. And the custom developed, I don't know when, since my earliest childhood, that for every summer, one of the rabbinical, one of the rabbis came to spend the eight weeks, two months

LB From the Rizhinover...

NR From the Sadagura.

LB From the Sadagura.

NR Later on others. Because there were Sadagura and Chortkover...the Rizhinover dynasty spread out. Each time they had six children, they had to have six rabbinical courts. And they called it a hof. A court. referred to the Belzer hof. Because the Belzer people lived very simply. But the Sadagura lived in a big house with servants...So this rabbi used to establish himself and every Saturday, of course, you

You know what means?

LB That's when everybody would gather around.

NR No. No. Not everybody. Just the men.

LB All right. Excuse me.

NR And after the service on Shabbos, you sit at long tables and the rabbi presides

reads Torah, he meditates, and sometimes

and so we used to attend it...

LB You did.

NR Of course. Of course to me it was a lark. There used to come five, six hundred Hasidim for Shabbos. It used to be black you know, Hasidim are dressed in black. The Poles, the peasants used to say that the

LB Black rebbes.

NR The black death.

LB Oh is...

NR Morovye is...

LB Oh, morovye.

NR That's in a...not in a, if something comes, since they have some suspicion of these people And so my father used to attend it too and some of our relatives came who were devoted Hasidim, came Shabbos and they stayed with us.

LB Now would they hold this table, Saturday night, at your home?

NR No, no. A big tent or barn. Big tent, we couldn't hold several hundred people. Of course they used to come Friday afternoon, they began coming, carriage, walking and by train. And sometimes we had three four hundred, five hundred people.

LB That would be in the town, you're talking about.

NR No, That was in Terszow Spas ;In our village and in the adjoining village. The two villages combined. The railroad station was for both villages, Terszow -Spas.

LB Spas is the other town?

NR The other village. Village not a town, you see. Terszow-Spas.

LB How do you spell the Spas?

NR Spas. And Spas used to draw more people because they had a little forest, a

little woods where the people...and from time to time people came for cure. For tupercular people. Fresh air and good food...

LB There was one town that a Galician told me was...he lived near the Carpathians also. There was this beautiful town, he said people came from all over.

NR Kranitsa.

LB That's it.

NR Sure. That was far away. Also in the Carpathian mountatins but in the west. Kranitsa would be somewhere around...near Cracow, south of Cracow. And so this was the town...

LB How many people, Jewish families lived in your town?

NR Well, I really don't know but I would say no more than about two hundred.

LB It was a small one.

NR Very small.

LB And around you, you would have peasants...

NR Villages, villages and all of them, the overwhelming majority of the people in the villages were Ukrainians, or Little Russians as they called them. Before Ukrainian, Ukrainian Nationalism is relatively new development. Because some of them called themselves Little Russians. But then they became nationalist and the Ukrainian became a language and they began to insist on ...thec schools and Ukrainian was a legitimate subject, regular subject in the curriculum and in our village there were about a hundred and forty homes. I happen to remember the figure exactly because during the war years...

LB The first war.

NR The first war, around 1915, 1916, my father was, he was a member in the village council. He had certain...

LB You mean like a kehilla?

NR No. Kehilla was in towns. There were not enough Jews for a kehilla. There were only about six Jewish families, in the village, out of one hundred and forty.

LB Then I'm confused. In Terszow, right, this was a village.

NR Don't call it town!

LB No, don't call it town. Right. In your village, how many Jewish families were in...

NR Six.

LB Six.

NR That's right. And therefore we had to...we didn't have a shul, even, in our town. That's why we had to go down to town on Shabbos. There were not enough Jews for a shul.

LB So where did you go now? You went to...

NR Altshtut.

LB Altshtut for your shul. And now where were these two hundred families that you were talking about?

NR In Altshtut!

LB That's where there were two hundred Jewish families.

NR That's right.

LB O.K. In yours, there were only six.

NR About six. Maybe six, seven. It varies. And there were about three, four Polish families. And about two or three German families. Sometimes retired civil servants. Many of the civil servants in Austria, some, at the beginning most of them were Germans, but then the Poles acquired certain rights and the Ukrainians and the . But there were still some, so a few upon retirement, stayed on. And they bought a little house in the village in the rural area and they lived their lives there. We had about tow or three German families, six or seven Jewish families and the rest were Ukrainians. They were Greek Catholics. Not Greek Orthodox.

LB Is that Uniate?

NR Uniates. That's exactly what they were, Uniates.

Now our village is a part of Russia, western Ukraine. I was there in 1970, visiting.

LB It's gone through so many different stages since that time.

NR That's right. When I was born I was an Austro-Hungarian citizen. Then for six months I was a Ukrainian, western Ukrainian citizen. The Poles kicked out the western Ukrainians then I became a Polish citizen, from 1919 to, well, to 1930. But in 1923, in 1922, I left for Canada. And then in 1927 to the United States. I became a Canadian citizen and then an American citizen. That's five citizenships.

LB And if you were there now, you'd be a Soviet citizen.

NR I would be again a Soviet citizen, that's right.

LB That was in 1939, then. And even after that it went back and forth a few times.

NR Well, the Germans...they just covered the area during the war, when they attacked, when they invaded Russia, they occupied, of course, that part. But for a time in 1939 to 1941, we were a part of the Soviet Union. In the Soviet Union as far as governing the area. And then the Germans invaded the Soviet Unionand within two or three days, we were right near the border our area most of my people were killed by the Nazis in the Holocaust. My mother, a sister, a brother only two people survived. One, a nephew who came just in the nick of time, in 1939 as an immigrant to Canada. He served in the Polish Army and after his service they let him go. And another nephew came in 1935 and then a third niece actually survived the Holocaust. She was in hiding for two years in Dragovich. She got out of hiding. She got into contact with us. She had our address...

LB In Dragovich?

NR Dragovich. In Dragovich.

LB It's not on here (the map) but it was mentioned by somebody else.

NR And the Yiddish word was Druvich.

LB Druvich...Now, tell me something, what did your father do? There six Jewish families in this little village and what did he do?

NR My father married into this village, into the family of my mother's. My mother's father, my grandfather on my mother's side, had a farm. So this was one part of the business. But not the only one. My father married into, he was a city fellow.

LB Your father was a city fellow.

NR Well, from that town, you know. Not from a metropolis but from Altshtut.

LB Oh, I see.

NR There was a shadchan, and he had no zest for farming. Neither did I although I milked cows a little on vacation, helped out. My mother ran the farm and I had three sisters. When they grew up they on the farm, my mother and the two sisters. My father just looked around for other business. They [illegible] a shek, do you know what a shek is? The right to sell liquor. That was license because liquor was a government monopoly. It was a source of income and also a source of bribery for officials because you had to pay to get one. Then he had the exclusive right, which he got from his father-in-law--he had it, the right to sell tobacco, a tobacco shop.

LB That was also a government monopoly? Wasn't it?

NR That was also a government monopoly, yes. Every week we had to go to town and the wholesaler in that town, also he was the exclusive wholesaler and he distributed...from him you got the supplies of tobacco, cigarettes and so on. I'm mentioning it now because last Sunday I attended a meeting of the Federation of Polish Jews. And in the audience I met a man who was introduced to me. He was the grandson of that chief wholesaler. He was a colonel in the Polish Army...

LB He was a Jew? And a colonel in the Polish Army?

NR Oh yes. There were, in the Polish Army. And he survived the Holocaust, I think he was in Russia, he fled or...and then he was in the Communist Polish Army and he was emerited, sent on pension two years ago and he came to this country. And he received a Polish pension. I didn't know him. I knew his

father. His grandfather was the supplier of tobacco, from his grandfather I used to, from time to time as I grew up to be eleven, twelve, my father used to send me to get some supplies for the week or for the . So I knew the grandfather, Feivel Volvolt. His son was Avrumchik, to take He used to go to cheder with me, to school and even attempted/gymnazium but he failed There were very few people, Jewish people, in our whole town of those two hundred families only about three who went to gymnasium. Because gymnasium was not mandatory. Elementary school was mandatory. It was difficult to get in and you had to go through tests and so on. But he failed and he just...a drop out. And he is the son of this Avrumchik.

LB So your father had two businesses so far.

NR There's more. Wait! My father was an ambitious man but sometimes his ambition, his, his endurance and his application and so on, his stick-to-itiveness fell short of his ambition. So he tried this and tried that. And on the whole he was sometimes successful. Then he was ambitious enough to secure, with a partner, an exclusive wholesale right to sell liquor, in another region. Not in ours. In our region that was already in the hands of a family, Lom.. And they had it, you know, nobody could budge them.

LB But you said, he was selling liquor.

NR Retail. But the real money was when you got the monopoly for the whole region. Now then everybody had to buy from here...

LB Then you'd be the distributor.

NR That's right. Like the And he got it in a town called Uhneie, I think. And it appeared to be a very successful and a very promising. If you got that richest like this man, the/ family in our town was Lom. Occasionally, of course, he went to jail too because he bribed the...well like Bergman here (referring to the nursing home scandals in N.Y.S) They used bribery and...At any rate he served his jail sentence but he was greeted as a hero anyway by the Jews when he came back from prison. They had

a parade for him and a band of music and some of the Jewish young teen agers dressed up as Cossacks on horses and went to the railroad station to greet him although he came from jail. From having served a jail sentence.

LB Well, was the jail sentence for not having paid a bribe...or you don't know.

NR He didn't confide in me. Jail sentence is because he probably tried to bribe somebody or he didn't report the right number of, the right amount of profits for he had to pay taxes, I don't know. At any right, Lom, his son I think also got into trouble as a diamond smuggler ...

LB It's like one of my people, one of the people I interviewed said, Whatever they were doing, it was illegal.

NR Well, after all you couldn't survive during that period. In fact, in this country, if a union wants to slow up work, you go by the book. You go by the rules. Instead of a strike you go by the rules. We are so surrounded by rules, you can't, it's worse even in other countries. It's just fortunate in this country there's still a private sector which can escape from government but countries like Russia you can't do anything without breaking the law. Well, that's another story.

LB So your father is in the retail liquor. He...

NR He tried to...

LB To get the wholesale.

NR Not in our region. That was...and I don't know the details. If he borrowed money to invest it. It looked to be a very good business and he had some At any rate, he appointed a manager, because it was far away from home. My father couldn't manage it. At any rate, there was some embezzlement, some fraud. They lost all the money. And I remember it. I was about eleven years old, or ten years old. I remember it well because, at home, reproaches. Mother... although mother was a very quiet woman and she was very passive and...but nevertheless there were echoes, you know of this. The manager went to jail or to send him to jail or maybe he

8 or maybe he shouldn't do it, a Jew, my father, kinder. At any rate there was a whole tsumatochet Do you know the word

LB No.

NR means excitement, It's a Yiddish word.

LB I know but I don't remember it from home. And believe me we had them, but we must have called them something else.

NR And well he came out, he lost everything. And how they paid up his debts, I don't know. Then he had also, not all these things...

(Tape ends)

Side 2 000

LB All right, so he lost money and there was a brouhaha...

NR But meanwhile, it was never tragic in the sense we had a base, an economic base. About eighty percent of our need was supplied by the farm, vegtables, potatoes, chicken, eggs, geese. The only thing we had to buy occasionally, meat. We had cows, but cows only for milk. For giving milk. We had four cows you see. So whatever he did, essen auf dem tish iz geven (there was food on the table) So there was no problem. Rent, of course we owned the house. I was born in a house which was built in the eighteenth century. One hundred fifty years old. It was built by Radziwill. On the estate of Radzivill. Our village, the feudal lord was Radziwill. Jacqueline's (Kennedy) sister's husband's brother-in-law. So all these things are taken care of. He could improvise and experiment with all sorts of businesses. One of the businesses which he also built up, and it was seasonal but it was sometimes very profitable and that is to buy up eggs in the summer and put them in a basins with some water with some chemical treatment, we had no refrigeration in those days. So they had some chemicals which kept the eggs from spoiling and they were locked up and sealed up around September, several thousands and thousands of dozens of eggs and then around December he used to go to Berlin and sell the eggs and then ship them. And most of the time this was a very profitable business because eggs

were bought up relatively at a low price from the peasants in the summer, the peasant had no alternative and in the big city, eggs were of course a scarcity, a scarce item. And then I remember he used to have these basins and on the top of the basins there was a sort of a warehouse and around December, November, they used to hire a number of young Jewish men and they packed the eggs, They sorted the eggs and each egg was to be checked, you know that it isn't spoiled by looking at it through a lamp. And they were put in cases and padded with straw they shouldn't break. They were loaded on the train and shipped to Berlin. For the most part, this was a successful operation and he made enough money probably to pay for the whole year for whatever extra expenses we had. Sometimes they ended tragically because they were frozen.

LB I was going to say, not only the spoiling but the freezing in December...

NR If we had a severe winter, during the trip, during the transport that's... and then of course they were worth nothing and they lost usually that year's crop of eggs...was lost. He had a partner. I remember his name was Hanash. Most of the time I found out about these things not by my father sitting down with me and telling me about the business, indeed I wouldn't ask him and he wouldn't sit down with me but from the...

LB The altercations? Between mother and father?

NR Well, altercations or celebrations or whatever. So if Hanash came over, so they talked and my father told him about his experience in Berlin and whenever he went to Berlin he put his pais... (behind his ears, under his hat)

LB He did wear pais.

NR Oh yes. And a beard too.Sure. I had pais until I went to gymnasium, It was only when I went to gymnasium...

LB See that's why when you said you weren't a Hasid I was going to pursue that.

NR He had pais, yes. But to come to Berlin, a big city, and he usually wore a long caftan but for Berlin trip he had a short caftan. And er hat zich oisgepulst

Und das berdel hat er oichet...

LB Did he wear a shtremel?

NR Only Shabbos. Only Shabbos.

LB Only Shabbos. So what did he wear to Berlin?

NR To Berlin he wore a cloth hat.

LB Did he look like a Hasid when he went to Berlin?

NR Mmmmm. You see, here your people look like Hasidim. There there was no such distinction. All Jews dressed like that. All frimer Yidden dressed like that.

LB And your father was a frimer Yid then.

NR Well, he was...I had my suspicions about it but you couldn't help but being frim in our town.

LB That's right.

NR Especially my father was in public life. For two years he was president of the kehilla,coundil, which was a semi-official job and he had to live up to it. He was in charge...he had to do with appointing rabbis if there was a vacancy or a hazan and so on. That too led to a lot of tension at home.

LB Was your mother more frim than your father?

NR Mother was sincere. My father was frim but he was a skeptic, you see. And I'm sure, given a chance, brought here, he would forget about the whole thing. My mother was really very frum. She was, she was illiterate in Polish and she couldn't...and illiterate in Hebfew even, because madlach haben nisht gegagen in cheder. (Little girls didn't go to cheder.) But she prayed what she knew by heart. She fasted every fast day. And during, when the war broke out, she fasted every Monday to compel the Lord, to pray that the Lord should stop this blood-letting. For four years. Very strong, quiet, determined, honest, sincere woman. My father was, he was very clever, very good sense of humor. And he was...I suspect that he did not.

LB Was he a charmer?

NR With jokes, yes. And, now, whatever I found out about the tension, it was

only through the impact on home life. I told you, he was for two years president of the kehilla and that involved certain functions. The kehilla was recognized by the Austrian government as a quasi public body. It had the right to levy taxes...on the Jews. Now imagine, nobody likes a tax payer nor a tax assessor. So as soon as the tax assessments were made, my father bore the brunt. Now, they were after him in town when he went to town every day to collect the mail. Most of his business was in town. But if they couldn't get him in town they tried, they tried to avoid him in town, they came out to the village.

LB Now who's they? You mean those who collected taxes from him?

NR Whoever had business with him. Grievances were two fold. When you assess the taxes and then you try to collect them. Some people...and they had the right to collect by the force of law. And then he was also...had something to do with determining the salaries paid to the shochet, to the hazan and so on. Whatever you paid, is not enough so they used to come and bother him. They used to make noise and quarrel. And my mother didn't like...Vus darfst du dus? What do you need it for? My father liked koved (honor) you know...

LB Who doesn't?

NR Well, I don't know...some people more. And then, too, his amibition to be prominent did not, did not square with his strength and determination. So he, sort of...

LB Did you love him?

NR My father....well...

LB What was your relationship? No. It's not a fair question. Like you say, Do you love your mother? I don't get along with my mother but I love her because she's my mother, right?

NR Well, I got along with my mother. I had the highest ador...closer relationship with my mother. I was the youngest first of all. Then, even in my younger days, I had really developed more respect for my mother because of her

honesty, integrity and...my father was, as I said, I wouldn't say a wheeler-dealer in this sense, but he shirked duties too easily -especially in the early years. Later on, he sort of changed. And...so that was the relationship.

LB Were you able to talk to him-or if you were to talk to someone, would you talk to your mother rather than your father, or did you talk to your brothers rather than either one?

NR Rather to mother.

LB Rather to mother.

NR And to the sisters. The sisters were older...

LB Would they be older than the oldest brother too?

NR No. My oldest brother, then there came two sisters and then the three brothers.

LB Two brothers? No. One brother? Two sisters and then two brothers?

NR Two brothers and myself. Three.

LB So there were four brothers all together?

NR Four brothers. Six children. Four brothers and two sisters. But the one brother, the oldest, was sort of removed from us by ten years. And he grew up as a Yeshiva bucher. He studied TAlmud. Very clever. Very bright. In his days there was no compulsory public school attendance. And Jews did not send their kids to schools, to Goyishe schules, as they say, until they had to. Because he didn't have to sit without a hat. He had the privilege of...but that of course, became the butt of all sorts of jokes from the Polish kids, the Ukrainian kids. We had a lot of...So and then, they taught, in Austria...in Austrian schools religion was a required subject. Austria-Hungary was Catholic. So you came into a classroom, the first thing you saw is a picture of Christ on the wall. So the rebbe told us, Kek nisht! Don't look at it.

Secondly, every school day started with a prayer. (Recites prayer in Polish) I still remember that and that was seventy years ago, when I entered elementary school. So the frimer Yidden, they shied away from it. You have to know, to learn to write Polish and German, so you did it in cheder.

Some of the rebbes in cheder put aside an hour or so. Or you did it with a private tutor. So my brother did not go to school. He had no secular schooling. He went to cheder. From cheder to a higher cheder to a Yeshiva and studied Gemorra and when he was the age of eighteen he was the age, the shadchen and the mechiten, they came and farherrt im der Torah...You know what farherren means?

LB No.

NR They gave him a test. Yes.. That was a part of qualification as potential son-in-law. He had to pass the test in Hebrew learning if the mechutin wanted somebody a son-in=law with, if not, a scholar. And most rich Jews wanted at least one son in law to be a scholar. And the Yeshivas became, to a very large extent, matrimonial...

LB I was just going to say...That's the first time that occurred to me...They were like pathways to groomdom. Right?

NR They tell even a story, that a Litvak came to a Yeshiva and says I want a look. Have you got a nice Yeshiva bucher for a son in law? Well, he must be...And he showed him one and he tested him and talked to him,.. He was very choosy. So he asked him, Listen, what kind of a daughter do you have, that you're so choosy? A daughter? Who has a daughter? So what do you... Zul er arum drein in aigen, an gelernter aigen, Let there be a learned son in the law in the house. You didn't need even a daughter.

LB Now what kind of a joke is this? Who tells it? The Galicians?

NR Well, it makes no difference. It...I heard it from a Litvak. It could be ...

LB It could be a Litvisher joke too?

NR It could be. Well, at any rate, now where were we?

LB Well you were telling sort of the relationship between your father and your mother...

NR Before that you wanted to know about his business. He developed another business but these were not at the same time necessarily. For instance, the egg business was strictly seasonal, two, three months and that was done mainly after my brother got older. We lived in an area where the lumber industry was very important. A lot of

forests, saw mills and many Jews were engaged in selling lumber, buying lumber from the peasants and from the You know what poritz is?

LB The poor.

NR Landlords, no, no.

LB Oh the poritz is a landlord?

NR Poritz is a rich landlord, Pole. So my brother got into this busniess. How, I don't know. And then they developed it. They built a lumber yard around the house and for a time my father was a partner in a saw mill at any rate, so when I was already in Canada, after we left, this became the main business of...

LB In Poland, you're saying now?

NR That's already Poland.

LB He was still...Now which brother was this?

NR The oldest brother.

LB The oldest. The one that was the Yeshiva bucher.

NR He got married and he, for two years he, er hat gegessen kest. Do you know what essen kest means?

LB No.

NR A part of the dowry was that the in law, the father in law, he would stay with him...

LB You'd stay with your in laws.

NR In laws, for support, until you sort of, look around, find some...

LB O.K. I know the custom. I didn't know the...

NR This is essen kest . So he was there. Then the war broke out in 1914 and we fled fled from...

LB Your family.

NR Family. That's right. To Budapest. And my brother was already, at that time, hat er gegessen kest.. He got married in 1912 and this was in 1914. He fled from another part..And we found him later on, we got in touch after some months of not knowing where he was and he didn't know where we were. He was in Prague. He fled to

Prague. After the war, he came back from Prague and he moved into our house.

LB Back in the village.

NR Yes. With his family. At that time he alsready had a son. The son is incidentally in Montreal. And he developed that, together with father develpped that lumber business. And when I came to visit them in 1933 and then in 1937, that's the last visit, I was scheduled to visit them in 1940 but...You see we were three brothers in Montreal. We had an arrangement that every two or three years one goes to visit the parents and my turn would have been again in September 1941, but the war broke out and that's of course...So, at that time, the Thirties, my brothers...my father was already semi retired. There was a lumber business. But the farm was still there. The farm went on.

LB Actually it was your mother's farm.

NR My mother's farm.

LB And she ran the farm. Did she hire Polish women to help her? Or Ukrainians?

NR We had a maid to help. Asleep in maid. And only during the harvest and the plowing, for a day or two, you hired laborers, local laborers to do... but not steady. The farm was not that large. I don't know. I doubt very much if it was more than ten acres. It was larger when my grandfather had it. But he had another daughter soit had to be divided, on his death.

LB This is your maternal grandfather.

NR Yes. My maternal grandfather and my maternal grandmother lived with us. That is my father married into a house hwich was his. Later on we built another house, but ...the other sister married, also lived in the village, across the road and her husband, first husband, they had three daughters. The first husband died in a cholera epidemic.

LB Was that during the war?

NR At the turn of the century.

LB 1900 you mean?

NR Before I was born. And then she remarried and had three more children and they had a grocery store. Right across and they inherited some of the land. But my uncle

sideline was a grocery store which was the size of this room perhaps...(about [illegible]) and they were selling kerosene, salt and flour occasionally, candy, rice and [illegible] the part of the farm they inherited and her husband also developed a side [illegible] of... on Thursday, he had peasants catch fish in the rivers, you know. And Friday [illegible] he sold them in town. Fish af Shabbos. (Fish on the Sabbath)

LB Actually your family was quite...comfortable.

NR Yes. In that village, my father and my uncle were probably the well to do people. Now the other Jewish people were poorer. And they made a living, also everyone had a bit of land.

LB They did.

NR Yes.

LB See, in the rest of Poland this wasn't true. In Galicia it was more true.

NR Yes. A bit of land. They had their own potatoes, and vegetables and a cow and chickens. They had side lines. Two were had wagons and they delivered goods. Transported goods. In town you know.

LB But they weren't this kind of trager (carrier) (Motions to shoulders) They were this kind. (with a wagon) Not a shoulder trager.

NR Tragers were in town. In town we had tragers. They were the riff raff.

LB You want to know something? When my father escaped from Russia, and he was a young man...he and my mother and sever others...so he was held up in Bessarabia and the rest of the group went on ahead. At first he wouldn't tell us what he did. And I said, What could you do, Pop? I mean, did you kill someone? You know, I couldn't imagine what was it that he did. He was a vasser trager. (water carrier) And he didn't want us to know. In order to make money to continue his trip to the United States...you know, to me this doesn't mean anything. Ah vasser trager. So, you have to make money, but to him it was so bad...that seventy, sixty years later he couldn't tell me.

NR That's right. Because our vasser trager was a retarded man. Mentally retarded. He had to trug vasser . (carry water) That was the lowest. Because they needed no

intelligence whatsoever, except to go to the well, which is in a marked place, and then go from one to another until you're finished.

LB Ohhh,. I see.

NR Wolf, the vasser trager. Short and he was really. He couldn't...you could hardly talk to him. He was the butt of all sorts of...

LB I understand now.

NR Now the tragers...the porters...they were smart. They had to hustle for business. And that was also still very low. Any occupation that called only upon physical strength and exertion was considered low. Anything that rises from that level up, to the Talmud, Talmud chachum(wise one) his social prestige was in proportion to the distance from physical effort.

LB I see. I see.

NR You see, physical strength was...I don't know how...You wanted to say, for instance to say something derogatory about, a man says grubbe yung.

LB Ah grubbe yung. Right.

NR Fat fellow. In the United States itsthe opposite, you venerate physical strength, athletics, and so on. But we didn't. The Jewish term for being noble is edel. A German term. Edel, an edele mensch (a noble man) When we saw somebody emaciated and on the verge of tuberculosis or what have you, it's an edel ah pale. Emaciated. That was considered, because that was associated with studying all the time. And that was a completely, so alien to the West. Alien certainly to America. I remember it. I uesed to say, Ah, ah zah edele! And to running, athletics That was not done. I told you that I started to go to cheder at the age of three. This was a very traumatic experience because I remember that the first memory that I have was standing in front of a little and crying the whole day. This was the of the rebbe. Because not only did you have to go there for the day and in the evening you run to mama! But it was the whole week. So it was a great shock to me. But that doesn't count you know. What counted is that at the age of three, me darf shoin unhaiben zu lernen (one should already begin to learn) and that whole...

member once, I was about six or seven and after the cheder was over, the formal lessons were over. All the kids went home. But we had to stay there. We had no home to go, it's just we had to stay. So we ate

In the summer days, the day was long so there was still light. They let us play. The rebbe, Geht arois. Geht . So I remember we had a game where you take a, what do you call it, a top...

LB A hoop?

NR You, with a stick, you, like a, likea...what shall I tell you? What's a hoop?

LB A hoop is a thing like so (motions with hands) and circled. A round circle thing.

NR Yes. Yes. Well this is...this is round, a big one and when you chased it with a stick...

LB Yes. That's a hoop. Right. Kids do it here too. We used to do it.

NR So I got out and we were not, the cheder was not far from the bath.

LB The mikveh you mean.

NR The mikveh, the bath. Now a bather was not considered a very noble occupation either.

LB The one in charge...

NR The one in charge of the bath. So that of course was transmitted to the kids. Ah bather's ying (the young one) iz nisht geven...(was not so...) And I... he was a neighbor. So there was another kid, my age, and he had one and I had one and we chasedit. And I never expected to meet my father because my father used to come to town but around four, five o'clock he used to go home. And this time he stayed, and it was about six thirty and there as I was chasing this, my father comes. Ah Gemorrah bucher, I started to learn Talmud at the age of six or seven, very early. Ah Gemorrah bucher ZUL ARUM loifen vi ah shegetz! Ah shaigetz, Shkutzim loifen arum, Ah Gemorrah bucher, mit die pais. (A young boy, studying Talmud, runs around like a Christian peasant!... yours well bred Jewish boys do not run around. Only non-Jews are wild and physical.)

LB But you see, it was very important to him and to that life, it was important.

It may sound funny now but it wasn't funny then.

NR Of course it was not funny. It was very, very serious and so on. Now I gradually got away from this when I entered gymnazium. Now this brings me to the question that you started to ask me first, earlier, what was the bigger town. Now/in our town there was only elementary school. There was an elementary school in the village but it was a one room school, with peasant kids and my father would never think of it. And besides you have to be in a cheder. So we went to cheder and we arranged that we attend the public school in town. He needed some justification, some pull, I don't know. So we all attended. But there was no gymnazium there,/there was no high school. Now we had a six year school attendance and that was after the end of the sixth year it was . At the end of the fourth year of elementary school you had the privilege of applying for admission to a gymnazium. And you had to present yourself for a test. The fee was not very much. If you were a good lstudent, it was free. But you had to prove yourself. And every year you had to apply, for exemption. But minimum. But the test was severe. A very rigid test. And I had ambitions to go to gymnazium. But at the end of the fourth year, when I began talking about it...

LB How old would you be then? Seven!

NR Ten.

LB Ten. Oh.

NR Elementary school started at the age of six. I started cheder at the age of three.

LB You started at three. Then elementary school was six and then another four years was ten. O.K.

NR At the end...towards the end of the fourth year, when it was time to make an application and make the decision, you had to have a recommendation from the school and so on, my grandfather, my mother's father...no! As long as he was anything to say...And there too, you see, I later on, I blamed father. Mother was not a fighter. Father wanted me to go to gymnazium. But it wasn't worth

fighting for it.

LB You're not the only one!

NR That's right. Now if my mother had thought that I had to go she would have probably put up...she was not a fighter in the sense of talking loud but very determined, like her silence.

LB Yes. Nisht gezugt iz oichet gezugt. (Not to say something is to say something.)

NR Yes. Nisht gezugt iz oichet gezugt. That's right. And she was a very strong woman. So well, what could I do? So I entered the fifth year. Just forgot about it and say, Let's wait. We'll see. I don't remember what went through my mind.

LB Maybe grandpa will die. You know, it's a very real, legitimate...

NR Maybe it occurred to me. I don't remember. So I started the fifth year. And...

LB By that time, let's see, you're eleven, so it's 1911.

NR That's right. It was 1911 and I should have entered gymnazium at the end of 1910. Normally. And sure enough, my grandfather died, in January. And one day, we were in cheder, the three of us and father came, he seldom came to cheder to see us, he came over and called us out. He said, Der zaide is geshtorben. (Grandfather is dead.)

LB Zehde. (This is a matter of accent, Russian Jews having a different vowel pronunciation from Galicians who speak a "Daitscher" Yiddish)

NR I don't know how it affected us. I don't remember. And...we did not even go to the funeral but I think we followed for a short distance. And then, I said Well, now that is my time. My time has come. And I brought up the whole question again and I said, I'm not going to continue. I'm quitting school in a week or so. I said, I'm quitting school and I'm going to prepare for the exams, the matriculation. Now, I didn't have to quit school. But I wanted to dramatize.

LB To make your point.

NR That was right! As a matter of fact, I couldn't quit school because they would have arrested me for...well, not arrest, but...

LB No. You would have been forced to at least go the six years.

NR What do you call it, that...

LB Delinguency.

NR Not /Deliquency. You don't attend school. There is a term for it. (Truancy) And the reason why I took the preparation for the exam very seriously, because I was weak on zp Polish, and they paid a lot of attention...The language of instruction in gymnazium was Polish. And the Polish teachers and the Polish, they wanted to Polonize the, as much of the population as possible, to gain the upper hadn over the Ukrainians. Now Jews, linguistically, assimilated to the Poles. When a Jew stopped talking Yiddish...

LB He spoke Polish?

NR ;He spoke Polish. Just like in Quebec, English. The French have it against the Jews there. The Jews are...

(Tape off)

Side 3 000

LB So, you were preparing for your gymnazium, right?

NR Yes. The reason why I took it so seriously and with a great deal of apprehension was because, not the subjects. I had no trouble, I was good in arithmatic, I was good in whatever.the subject matter. I was a very good student. But I was weak in Polish.

LB You spoke Yiddish at home.

NR At home I spoke Yiddish, and Ukrainian but, no, I mean in the street I spoke Ukrainian and Polish and a little bit of German but at home Yiddish. But not enough. I didn't have enough contact with Polish kids to acquire a good accent and so on, even though I studied the grammar and I was correct in articulating.

LB You didn't have facility, really.

NR That's right. Because in cheder all the kids spoke Yiddish. In elementary school, Yiddish. And at home, Yiddish. And I was told they pay a lot of attention, the examiners...there's a written exam and an oral exam and they pay a lot of attention and I'd better be prepared because the fact that

I'll make very godd marks in arithmatic or history or in spelling and writing but if they find that you have a very bad accent, they'll just cancel you out. So, I spoke to father. My father finally agreed that I should start preparing and even was very helpful. He had among the civil servants, who were mostly Poles, he had some acquaintances, friends, he bribed them for occasions and various occasions and so on.

I remember myself, I used to bring butter and eggs to selected people who had the say in something that might affect my father's business. It was a way of life.

LB I understand. And it wasn't only in your village.

NR Of course. It's all over. Of course. So this man, one man, who was some kind of an official, he, the son, who was a student at the university in Lvov, in Lemberg and then, whether he finished or not, at any rate, at that time he was already home and also took a job in government. Ostrowski was his name, Ostrowski. And he talked to the father...the son said, Fine. I'll tutor him. And every day I went to him for an hour or two. And we developed a very close friendship. He was pleased that I wanted to go to gymnazium. He was pleased that I wanted to study Polish and study it well. And he noticed, of course he knew that I had resistance at home, so he, in a way he admired my determination and courage and so on. So I had a friend there and he started to stay with me longer than necessary, than the hour or two. From time to time I brought him fruit and he prepared lunch for me. He lived like a backelor. He had his own little apartment. And then, by the end of August, I had to present myself for the examination. I missed the regular. The regular period in which examinations are held is June. But because I was not in time for making the application I missed the regular examination period and I had to do it two weeks before school opened. And school opened September first, so towards the end of August I presented myself for the test. And sure enough, I passed, the tests last about two days, one day written and one day oral. And I passed all the written tests very well. If you pass the written tests you went

through the oral. Otherwise they just...and in the orals, again, there were some questions from the German. German was a language. Ukrainian was a language. And I was asked for the afternoon, I have to present myself for the Polish. The man who examined me, I still remember his name. His name was Kramer. And he was a teacher in gymnazium. We called them professors. And later on he taught Latin. I was already in gymnazium. He was a Pole. I had my suspicion that he was a convert, that the family were converts. And he was a son in law of a doctor, Dr. Bigeleisen I remember, he was a very distinguished doctor, very impressive, with a beard. And he was also, passed as Pole. And I had my suspicions about...

LB About him too.

NR No, not he, but, just like here, Schlesinger, Blumenthal and so on. Somewhere in the family. Well this Kramer talked to me for about half an hour and my accent was not very good. My pronunciation was probably miserable because... Polish is a very difficult language to acquire. I found it, I found English more easy to learn than Polish. The ch, ch, ch for instance. I always tell my friends, You want to know how difficult it is to learn Polish. Earthquake, in Polish, is chinchenizenie. Survive that, you can learn it. And we had, in our country, in the University of Lemberg, we had Englishmen who taught English at the University level. Some of them had been twenty five years and they couldn't speak Polish. Very bad language. But, at any rate, he, I think he sort of commiserated with me. And I told him the story, that I had no occasion to speak Polish. Now in gymnazium I would have, because most of the Jewish kids who went to gymnazium spoke Polish at home.. They were from the assimilated... lawyers and doctors...

LB Warsaw...oh no, they wouldn't be from Warsaw.

NR Not Warsaw. And Lemberg had its own gymnazaium. They were from surrounding areas. They were for instance, Sambor was a bigger town with about twenty thousand people, maybe two thousand Jewish families. Most of the lawyers were Jews. Most of the doctors were Jews. Most of the businessmen were Jews..

LB And they spoke Polish.

NR Those who were rising, they brought up their children already on the Polish language. Many of them. So certainly the language of playing and...was Polish for most of them. And then he passed me. Later on I was a student of his in his class in Latin. I was a very good student and he was very friendly. That's how I entered. But, to overcome certain difficulties, I had the pais. Now I would not...if I present myself for the examination with the pais, they would probably have failed me right away. I was told. There was no law against it. And I was not sure I would pass the exam. I couldn't cut off my pais because when I cut off my pais and come back home to town and to face...

LB The six families.

NR In town! In shul! There were other families.

LB Oh. Oh. Oh.

NR Uncles! And all bearded, and so on. And they began and they resented and they some of them had it against my father, Far vus hast du im gelost gain in gymnazia (Why did you let him go to gymnazium?) In gymnazium we had to go Shabbos. And Goyim and...Ah, zis nisht far Yidden. (It's not for Jews). You know the old story. In our whole town, three only attended gymnazium. Two survived, myself and another one. So, my sister came to my aid. First of all, they thinned out the pais. They didn't cut, but they thinned them out. And then with prune juice, they combed it back.

LB With prune jucie?

NR With prune juice. We had no cosmetics. Prune juice.

LB But how inventive.

NR Sticky. And I had long hair here, so this also was a constant source of irritation between, and argument between me and my mother and grandfather, Far vus darf men haben azoi fiellanger hur? (Why does his hair have to be so long?) Shkutzim haben langer hur. (Gentile boys have long hair) Jews cut their hair short.

LB Oh they did.

NR Yes. You know why?

LB The lice.

NR No. Well, lice, no...because if you put the tfillin close to the brain, this close to the heart,you serve God with the heart and with your brain, reason, man's mind. So that's why there must be no menia Menia means...

LB Interference.

NR Intefference.

LB Nothing between you and your communing with God.

NR But I, in this respect I always stood my ground and I had longer hair. Not very long but so that you could comb the pais and it would mingle with the hair here, (Behind the ears)

LB You think that's part of the reason, maybe, somewhere in the back of your head that you had this? I mean, for example, it sounds to me as if in some corner of your mind, you had already determined and you know at ten, children of ten are quite young. And you had already made up your mind about several things. So you were, as one of the men I spoke to said, Well, I when I was a very young boy. Before I was twelve. After twelve, er is shoin geven a man. (He was already a man) You see? Now, so at ten, you had already made up your mind about several things. You really didn't have any strong support from your mother or father. Nothing that you could count on over a stable period of time.

NR The only support I got I got from my father was this. My father was, loved koved, and when he came to the bigger towns occasionally, because he did business in town where there was the gymnzaium. And I walked with him and we were in uniform, the gymnazium put us in uniforms. And he took a certain pride. We met one of his suppliers or customers and many of them were themselves were already more modern and some of them without beards and I had a very good record, and in a small town, after all it's still a small town. The whole twenty thousand people, practically everybody knows who does.

well and who fails. And every year they had, they published a report and I usually headed the class and so/he took a great deal of pride in me. Dás iz mein zin. Geht in gymnazium. Er iz der bester talmid, and so on. That's the only encouragement or pride.

LB Yes, but you see you had to make the decision before and go ahead without, and then came the support. You didn't receive the support so that you could make the decision.

NR I didn't receive the support and I didn't receive the recognition except on such occasions. I remember when I was eighteen, or nineteen, passed matura. You know what matura is? Now that was also a great...and he had difficulties... but I don't want to get ahead of the story.

LB I understand about the difficulties.

NR But we were expelled from school because we attended the Ukrainian/school during the six months thatthe Ukrainian republic was established and the Poles kicked out the Ukrainians and declared everybody who attended the schools were disloyal. Only Jews and Ukrainians. The Poles ran away. They were disloyal to Poland. So we were all summarily expelled from gymnazium, a few months before passing matura. Now there was a law where, an Austrian law which the Poles took over, that one can present himself before matura without even having attended a day school. I learned it. I know it.

LB That would be in externa, for example.

NR That's right. In externa. And some Jews took advantage of it.../ orthodox Jews who didn't want their sons to go to gymnazium with Goyim on Shabbos. They studied privately and they themselves. So we presented ourselves, we got advice from people in the know, including some of our Jewish gymnazium teachers who were also expelled. One incidentally, does the name Rothenstein mean anything to you?

LB No.

NR Nathan Rothenstein was professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University, was rector of the university...He was the son of this Rothenstein. He was my

teacher of German and he was expelled. And he advised us. Now they treat an extern differently than a man who passes matura after eight years attending. Because there, it was a formality. And the examiners are your professors. But here they send the commission from Warsaw, this was in Warsaw. And tough people. And we had to really work very, very hard and most of us passed and some of us passed well. So I came home, after working very hard for three months, studying day and night and the train...there was only one train a day. It arrived at four o'clock in the morning, to the village. So at four o'clock, or four thirty I came home and knock at the door. My mother comes to the door. Ver iz du? - Nutan, Nathan. So I said, In tug gemacht matura.- (Today I passed my matura) Upgekimmen! Upgekimmen! You know what the word, upkimmen means...

LB Finished.

NR It means you get rid of some trouble. Upgekimmen. Gai shluffen.(Finished? Go to sleep.)That was the only recognition

LB So how do you account for it? I mean, some children, you know if they don't get the support, well they say, forget it.

NR You see, I don't believe very much in environment.

LB You don't.

NR No.j I think, I'm not an educator. My wife is a professional pedagogue and educator and she teaches specialists in learning disabilities and is very well known. She's included in the Encyclopedia of Gifted Teachers but, so that's a standing argument.

LB Between you and your wife.

NR Yes and her friends who come. I think a lot of it is just wasted effort. Not to the extent that...

LB Now what is your stand?

NR My claim is that, it must be in you. A part of you, in your genes. Of course, food, if you have food and shelter, that's important. But all the other guidance...

we guide our kids to death. Now here you have the best example. We had nine kids. We were six children. We were all brought up by the same parents, the same grandparents, the same environment. Not like here, a kid is sent to piano lessons and we send them in summer to a camp. We had a very concentrated environment/ And that environment remained the same for our period of growing up. My oldest brother would have been, if he had had the advantage of secular education, or advantage of opportunity at least, he might have been a very good lawyer, a very good doctor, perhaps a professor. A very bright, intellectually interested. But he took to the Talmud. That is of course...

LB That's a legitimate field too.

NR Yes. Of my two sisters, one was, would have been perhaps able/.. but the sisters didn't have, were not tested. They didn't go. They went to school for reading and writing and so on. My two older brothers, they were only two or three years removed from me had no interest in studying whatsoever. One started, he didn't qualify for gymnazium...my father would never have thought of sending him to gymnazium. He had no ambition. So he sent him to commercial school, learned to be a bookkeeper. And he failed that too. But he came to Montreal, he became a very successful businessman. They built up a million dollar business. They both died now . The same cheder, the same influence, the same cheder. The same teachers that I was exposed to, they were exposdd to. The same was...therefore we can identify the environment. Identical. And yet. The two brothers had no interest whatsoever in studying and I, from earliest childhood, was with books. And I had to overcome all sorts of difficulties. I wasn't admitted to the Polish university after 1919 after matura. So I smuggled the border, risked being jailed, starved for about a year in the university of Prague. Well, not starved, but didn't have enough to eat. And there I did get for the first time the benefit of the aid of American of the, the Joint already operated there. So we got soup kitchen and so on. But we would have survived without it too. And then came back and was admitted to the University but I

didn't like the conditions in Poland and my two brothers were at that time already in Canada, largely due to my pulling. I practically pulled them out, from Poland. One was in Poland, in Galicia, he had a very good job in a bank and he would have stayed there. The other was in, he fled to Budapest, he never came back. He was, had a job there in a munitions factory in a plant there, a bookkeeper and he would have stayed there too. But when I came to Prague, I was very much fascinated by the possibilities of emigration. Prague was, at that time, a gathering point for people who fled from Russia, Jews and Ukrainians who fled from the Polish regime. One of my teachers, Wachievich, who was an Ukrainian, he fled to Prague, died there. And there were possibilities of going. A lot of it fraud, forgery. You could buy fraudulent...I came to Prague the first time, I went to the Jewish kehilla opened...

LB This was in 1919.

NR 1919, 1920. For a year I tutored in an Italian home in Galicia. And they grabbed me right away, Vilst du furen? Furen kin Guatemala, kin cuba, kin Argentina, passporten. (Do you want to travel? To Guatemala, to Cuba, to Argentina, passports) They were selling passports and selling visas. I said, No. Ich fur nisht. (No. I'm not traveling) I just entered the university but I began pulling my brothers and one brother came there and he got a visa to Canada and the other one and I was the third.

LB Why did you want them out?

NR Well, I didnot like the future prospects.

LB You saw this already?

NR Well, I didn't see the Holocaust.

LB No. No. But even what took place in Poland between the two wars was...

NR The first thing, you see, the Jews were the middle class. They were in the businesses. And the Polish government from the beginning showed the determination...the Polish community before, for instance in 1910, 1911 when I was a kid, the Poles and the Ukrainians started to campaign, separate campaigns, to

our little town, under the slogan, Buy from your own.

LB I just finished reading about it. I mean I don't remember, but I just finished reading about it.

NR Now in 1920, when the Poles took over, the spring of 1919 after the Ukrainians, after six months of the Ukrainian regime, my father wanted to renew the egg business. Because during the war all that was destroyed. We had a Russian occupation in our part. So at that time he had to get a license. Now we were told, very openly, and very frankly, that the Jew has no chance to get a license. License had to be gotten from Warsaw. Export license. And that was very important, you got foreign exchange. If you exported eggs to London, you got pounds and the Poles needed them. But they wouldn't give it to Jews. But if you found a Pole, a front, and you for some consideration, you pay him something, you get it in the name of that Polish person and then you could do...so he dug up, I don't know, a woman, a former member of the Polish nobility, but impoverished nobility...And he talked to her and she said, Yes, she has contacts in Warsaw and she could probably get it. She made some inquiries and that was arranged. And I was going to go with her to Warsaw to take her, she was an older person and/she does the right thing and that the license is properly endowed and so on. And I did go to Warsaw in the beginning of 1920 and she did get the license. And that license was worth a lot of money. In fact some people just sold their license without bothering about sold it to another person. But the thing fell through because the local Poles had to, the representatives of the Polish government, they had to certify that the basins and all that had the sanitary facilities...

LB So they could get you on a technicality if they wanted to.

NR Well, maybe it was. But they were not really up to par. During the Russian invasion of 1916 none of the basins was restored, I mean not properly and then too, the Poles were particularly anxious because the export went to Germany. Because Germany was a poor Germany, a defeated country.

But to London. So they were extra careful that the eggs would be there of the best character At any rate, the we did not get the local certification fell through. Now, things of that sort, you wee, made me feel, My God, if you have to fight for every little bit and compete on an uneven level. Now what chance...what chance do Jewish lawyers have? Where the tendency would be in each case to support the Polish young man who wants to be a lawyer, or doctor and so on. I said, No. I have to get out.

LB Did you say this to your father and mother?

NR Well, yes, sure.

LB Did they get out?

NR No. They didn't want to. The only person who got out was mynephew. The oldest son's son. My oldest brother's son. He got out in 1935.

LB But your mother and father...they could not understand what you were saying.

NR They could understand. My mother would have...my father would have gone. But my mother said, Vuh vill ich furen? (Where will I go?) They were seventy years old at the time. And nobody, nobody foresaw the Holocaust. All right. All right! Mir haben zich gemitchet. Bah goyim haben zich gemichet und durch michen, durch arbeiten. (We have suffered. From the Gentiles we have suffered and will again suffer but still work). Economically, they were very well off even under the Polish regime.

LB Still.

NR Yes.

LB They still had the farm.

NR They had the farm, of course. And they had the lumber business. So and then after around 1925, 1926 when my brothers established a business in Montreal and business was very good, so they began to send them money, monthly support. So they felt...

LB It's so aggravating. Because, I mean, here there were passports to be gotten and Jews could have gotten out and they stayed!

NR Well, because...

LB Even, you talk to Anya and her family. They didn't want to come!

NR You don't appreciate the strength of the rootedness, you know. You get attached.

LB That's right. No there's no blame. It's just people...the fellow I'm working with says, People don't want to move! Their homes are there. Their families are there. Theyve been there for generations.

NR Without that you couldn't have any kind of established civilization. People on the move...after all, when man was migratory he didn't...

LB No, but we were arguing...because we both get upset. When there was a chance to move, people didn't move.

NR I argued with them in 1937, I was the last time visiting, I visited my brother in law. My sister had died.. She died of cancer in 1935. The brother in law stayed on in Lemberg. He was one of the richest men in Lemberg. He had a textile, wholesale house. was his name. He remarried. But I was still attached to him and he had two daughbers, my nieces. And I argued with him. On the railroad, he came to see me off in Lemberg. He came an hour early so we walked back and forth the platform. Back and forth. And his name was David, Dovidel. Dovidel, why don't you come to Montreal? He wouldn't. I advised Montreal because my two brothers were in Montreal and they had a big business and their families and so on. He said, I could sell my business for about $200,000. Well, that's a fortune. In Lemberg that's a great deal. And even in Montreal, before the war. I would have to lose $50,000 because it's not allowed to export currency, foreign currency. So I would have to find a way. You know, there's a way of transferring. I said, So why don't you do it? So he said, Well, I was thinking. I said, Do it for your daughters' sake. In fact, one daughter was killed and he was killed later on and his second wife was killed and another daughter she was the one who survived, hiding for two years. She came to Montreal and now she lives in Melbourne, Australia. That's a story in itself, of how she got to Australia. So he said, Well, look. Here I'm a well known person. I'm recognized, And I have my friends and I have an assured future. So what's all...The Poles...we lived with the Poles. We lived with the Poles,

we'll continue to live with the Poles. Their ways...and so on. Here I am, now, for the past twenty five years in this business and I'm still running it.

LB This was in 1937?

NR This was in 1937. 1939, he was killed by the Nazis and his two daughters...and his wife was killed. They had another little boy with the new wife, so the little boy was killed and the two daughters fled, to Dragovich. Why to Dragovich? I say just went there, wherever they had some hope to...

LB Where would Dragovich be on the map?

NR Dragovich would be in eastern Galicia.

LB It would be in eastern? You consider that your section was western?

NR No. Our section was central.

LB Central. So it's north of Stanislavau. Near Lemberg?

NR Well I would say from...straight south.

LB I have a sample tape here. Do you have a tape recorder home? Would you take the tapes and listen to them? Well, we'll talk about it after you've finished. So the two girls went to Dragovich... There were three daughters, weren't there? Two daughters?

NR Two daughters...One was about nineteen and one was about seventeen. They're blond, blue eyed and they had baptismal certificates.

LB Oh, they did.

NR Their life was not indanger provided they could keep their secrecy. And then the Germans announced that they're recruiting people to work in German factories, war industries. And they thought this would be a way of saving their lives and getting an income. They didn't have anything to live on. They had some from home, but... They brought with them some money, but it was being exhausted. So the older, but they wouldn't accept the younger one, you had to be eighteen. So the older one qualified. And she was recruited. She left, with others and her complete trace disappeared. Never heard from her again. She may have been, either discovered, detected by some acquaintances that she was Jewish, or many of them were killed during the bombing. See, the Allies bombed the war factories and many German

were killed. They may have killed...she never heard...

So this one was left now, a seventeen year old, Bluma was her name, and so she just knocked at a door of some...

LB Pole?

NR Pole. Ukrainian family.

LB Ukrainian?

NR Yes...

(Tape ends)

Side 4 000

NR All right, so...

LB Now this was an Ukrainian family that took her in, right?

NR A woman, whether a widow or so and whether she had some information, advanced information that that woman can be talked to about it or maybe persuaded...anyway, she took her in. And she kept her for about eighteen months, twnety months. In daytime, she was in the attic and at night she used to come down in the house. She never went out of the house. And she had some jewelrey that the stepmother gave her they left the house, the home. So she gave it to her and that may have been an inducement. But she could have taken it anyway and reported her to the Germans. And turned her in. But she didn't.

LB Did she know she was a Jew? Did the woman know she was a Jew?

NR Oh yes. Otherwise why do you hide?

LB Why do you hide? Right.

NR She said that in the course of the conversations she said, Well, it so happened that the Russians came here...the Russians occupied her home before the Germans came. The Russians took my son away. Took him to the army probably. I don't know. And maybe if I'm nice to you, God will protect my son.

LB I understand that. Because I do that for students. I say, for example, if my daughter were in this fix, I would hope that somebody would do that for her.

NR Well, at any rate, after that she came out and she found her way to Lemberg. She-

cause her family lived in Lemberg. She was a student in the gymnazium there. She knew the town and she worked for a time in, in a, little sort of, restaurant for Russian soldiers, whether it was in a bar, I don't know. She worked her way westward. She knew she had my name and address, and the address of my brothers in Montreal, the uncles. And on Yom Kippur, this was, she was liberated by the Russians in, I think in March, April 1945. Then she worked for a time. Then in on Yom Kippur night, after Yom Kippur, at the end of Yom Kippur, I got a call from somebody in the Bronx. Are you Nathan Reich? I said, Yes. He said, Are you a professor? Yes. Are you a professor at Hunter College? Yes. I have a letter for you from your... Do you have a niece? I said, I have many nieces in Europe. Do you have a niece, Stein? Yes. Well, I have a letter from Bluma Stein which my brother, my son, who was in the American army, by that time the American army already sent, to sort of in agreement liaison committees to distribute all sorts of aid...in understanding/with the Russians. The Russians occupied that territory. And at that time she was already in Cracow. She was moving westward. Cracow was already a Polish...Polish Communist government. So as soon as we heard...and they lived in gangs, all these people who were liberated, they got together and she found some friends. As a matter of fact, among the liberated people, she found a man whom she later... fifteen years later, married, went to Melbourne. Well, as soon as they heard that there's an American mission, and there are some Jews among the American people, they came in. There was no mail. No communication. No mail communication. No regular mail communication established. So she gave them a letter that she's in Cracow and I got the letter about two weeks later. I, at that time, was on leave of absence from Hunter College and I worked on the Joint's Distribution Committee. I went to Europe and visited the various camps and was in charge of relief work and so on. So I promptly got in touch with the, our representative in Cracow. We had representatives... As soon as an area was liberated from the Nazis together with the American army, the JDC representative came with them, almost. And then I got from him a message that she's not there. I indicated that she's that and that...she gave me an address...

she's not there. She left for Rumania. All right, so I waited. Sure enough, about a week later, I got a message from Rumania that she is there. So I communicated with our representative in Rumania. By the time he got it, she was in Vienna. At any rate, she was a very restless and very energetic woman. She was a real Aishus chail.

LB A what?

NR Aishus chail. Aishus chail is a Hebrew word for Amazon. A woman who is also a chail. A chail is a military man. And so finally, when I heard that she's in Vienna, I got in touch with the...I thought I'll send a parcel...and I told, in the message I told the...I knew most of these people. Because when they were recruited to do work, relief work, they went through an orientation course about conditions and I was in charge of that orientation course in New York. So, if a young girl by the name of Bluma Stein comes to you and she says she's my niece, you'll know that's true. She's my niece. But hold her!! Hold her until...and sure enough, and then we were in touch and then we advised her to go to Paris because in 1947 I was in Paris and while in Paris we arranged for the visa to Canada. We preferred that she go to Canada because most of the family was there. So, she's the only one who survived. But I begged her father to leave in 1937. He wouldn't.

LB You're not the only one.

NR Well, at any rate, to finish her story, which is an interesting...in Montreal, after about a year, she met a young Polish Jew, who was also in hiding about fifty miles away from where she was in hiding but they didn't know. They met in Montreal. And all these people stick together. Landsmanschaft like American Jews stick together.

LB That's right. Now listen, that's how I happened to think of you when I met Mr. Mendelssohn. Because I thought to myself, from what I learned, landsmen stick together.

NR He's Polish, I'm Galician, you know. He's from Warsaw.

LB Well, I understand that. But still... But even so, you would be more apt to com-

municate with him than you would with a Russian Jew. If you were going to establish a connection.

LR So, she married this young man. So, they did quite well. They were very able. They had a son, and he died at a young age. The son was about six years old. And he died after eight years of married life. And he died from a wound that he thought was healed, but wasn't. When he got out of hiding, he was a very shrewd fellow too. He was a very good business man. Keen, a very rich man while he lived. And he started trading right after this. Buying from Russian soldiers food and so on. Everybody was making...black market. There was no other market. Every market was a black market. So he had contacts with a Russian sergeant. They sold him certain goods and he sold it to the civilians and once, whether there was a...they tried to find these people...there was a search You circle around a field with a group of people and you make a search.

And he escaped, ran away. And he was shot. And the bullet hit him here. (Points to calf) And it wasn't very serious and he was taken to...after all he went to a doctor and they took it out. They thought they took it out. Apparently they did not. A part of the bullet remained.

IR In the calf.

LR In the calf. And it migrated, slowly, and he got, it reached the heart and the lungs, the lungs particularly, he had difficulties in breathing. And they took him in the hospital and he died on the operating table. Now, so she remained a widow. But there was no problem. She's a very energetic woman and my brothers were of course, at the time, well to do and no problem. And she began, after a year, she began dating other people. And then, I told you, when she got out of hiding, they met a lot, and amongthem when they met was a man who was ten years older than she was adn who fell in love with her. She's a very pretty woman. And he wished to marry her. And he said not only that, I knew your father...because his mother had a little retail textile goods and she used to come every once a month to shop and buy from the wholesaler, from David Stein. And I used to see you in the store when you were about ten years old. See now she was already eighteen and he

was twenty eight. And I was quite soft on your sister. Now you may not know it but when she grew up I wanted to marry her. Told her that I'm going to marry her too. But she didn't. She married someone else. But I'm willing to marry you. And he was very shrewd fellow, so much so that he was in hiding in Budapest. Not in Poland. He fled to Budapest.

LB Oh God! How did he get through Budapest?

NR It's not very far away.

LB No, what I mean is how did he manage to...

NR Well, by chance. He lived with a group. And in Budapest he succeeded in getting a baptismal certificate that he's a Pole, a Catholic and he associated with other Poles, genuine Poles, when they started black marketeering, buying gold, jewels...

LB Now was this during the war or after?

NR During, during...the Nazis were They did it of course with the papers and they had the protection of the Polish consulate. And a few times his life was in danger because they seized him forsmuggling operations and so forth the first thing they did, was take off your pants. And once he says, they lined them up, about ten of them, he was the only Jew and the other Poles, nine Poles knew that he was Jewish and they protected him. They were friends and they were one. And sure enough, he would have been...So after the first one, the second one, they finally said, Look here. You're wasting your time. You know we're all good Poles here and so they did not come to him.

LB The tenth man.!

NR Maybe he was the ninth. I don't know.

LB Iz shoin a minyan! (They already have a minyan)

NR When the Germans were expelled from Budapest and he came home, he had forty thousand dollars saved from the business...forty thousand dollars. So he went to Prague and in partnership with another young Jew whom he met, who presumably knew something about the textile business. Now he knew about the textile business, but the selling of it, not the making of it. The other one knew. They bought machinery

? for textile manufacturing and they went to Melbourne. They thought Australia's a new country. It needs manufacturing. And they came to Melbourne and they opened a textile plant and then he claims too, either that the partner was not, either he overestimated his ability or maybe he's not honest. Anyway they lost everything. Then he went to the thing that he knew best. To in textiles. He opened a textile business, a large And how he maintained contact with my niece. When she left for Canada, he said, Well I'm going to Australia. But let's write to each other. And they all hang together. So they were in constant communication. Then she wrote him that she married, this man. She didn't love him at that time. Why didn't she...Well, he was older and he's not my type. This one was a young fellow, about two years older. But through the grapevine and the landsmanschaft he also heard, eight years later that her husband died. He never married. Now, whether he waited for her, I don't know. So as soon as she became a widow, he began writing to her. One day, my brother sits in his office in business and this fellow comes in, he was about thirty eight years old at the time. Forty years old. Knocks at the door. Are you Reich? Harry Reich? Yes. I want to marry your niece. Just like this. He's a very impulsive...

LB Well, he wasn't all that impulsive. He waited quite a while there.

R Yes, but if he wants something...So he says, Who are you? So he introduced himself. Oh, you want to marry me

But my brothers were sort of the sponsors...

LB Well, they were the elder statesmen.

R That's right. That's right. He thought that he should talk to him, in loco parentis, in lieu of parents. So of course my brother agreed and they got engaged and then he went back to Australia and made out the papers and about six, seven months latershe left for Melbourne / through New York. And of course, we saw her off. With her boy. The boy, David, named after his grandfather. And she felt that it wouldn't be right to bring the boy to a stepfather right away. She thought there will be a period, she'll see how she will get adjusted and so on. Maybe she wasn't sure whether she will stay or not. So they put him in a school in Switzerland,

a Jewish Orthodox school with...a boarding place. A boarding school, for a year he stayed there. And she went to Melbourne and they got married in Sydney because, I don't know why. Sydney's the capital. And he chartered a plane in Melbourne and took his...by that time he had about 80 to 100 friends there. Also a group of survivors and they all did very well in Melbourne. And he brought them to Sydney and they got married in Sydney. In 1967 we visited them in Melbourne. Now she has two children, two boys with her new husband and the oldest is now a lawyer in Melbourne and he's a very rich man there. And every two, three years they take a tour, Israel, California, Montreal, New York, Melbourne. So two years ago they were here for a whole week with the two boys. Not the oldest. The oldest was here about four years ago by himself. Probably this year they will be here. That's the story.

LB Well, you know you've left out all the...I don't even know if there's time to go into it. But you can go into some of it. For example, when the war, the first war broke out,...a lot of the Galicians were evacuated to Prague. And you went to Budapest.

NR Nobody was evacuated.

LB Some of the people I spoke to...Koenigsbergs for example, Jack said that the Austrian government provided transport to Bohemia.

NR People who wanted to flee, fled. There was no evacuation. It was only a very small group of people. A very small minority. From our town, I don't believe more than ten families of the two hundred fled. In our village, we were the only ones. My uncle started to flee, but it was too late and he had to go back. So that's the story. Now we fled by horse and buggy. Rented, a peasant with two horses and he packed and we left my older brother to take care of the house, because we just went for a few weeks. Nobody thought that this is a permanent parting. And one of my brothers had a job in Sambor, so we lost track. And one sister was already married and she lived with her husband in So my father packed up, my mother didn't want to go and she thought it very selfish on his part and it was.

Because he left his mother in town and she died a few months later. She used to live with us. So he took her to her sister who lived there in poverty and the Russians came...at any rate, my mother thought it was not the proper thing to do. And I agree with her. And he was a little bit embarrassed. In fact, he was embarrassed also in front of neighbors because you passed through villages and the villages, some of the AJews there, in every village...

LB Sauve qui peut, is what it is. Whoever can save himself, does. Every man for himself.

NR But he tried to conceal...I remember neighbors, even relatives, distant cousins who lived in other villages, they came out, Shulem,vus tiest du, vus first du mit ah-mull (What are you doing, leaving so suddenly) with my mother add myself and a...Well, ich fur af yom tov.(I'm leaving on a holiday) He didn't tell the truth. And we fled to ...

LB To Budapest you said.

NR Yes, but it's not so easy. We fled to, first, our first stop was a village named Yablonka. That is where my oldest brother is living af kest. He married into a rich landowner family, Feiler. Do you know Rattmer's, the Jewish delicatessen? In New York?

LB No, I don't know New York anymore.

NR Well, the Rattners used to be owned by the Feilers, by the same family.

LB So he was going, actually south west. If he was going towards Hungary from where you were, he was going southwest.

NR That's right. We were going southwest. That's right. But we stopped at Yablonka which was on the border of Slovakia of Czecha . Now, we thought, and this is big mountains there, this was the peak of the Carpathian mountains. We were in the foothills. We travelled, it took us two days to get there by horse and buggy. We thought the Russians will never get there.. We heard naive. We stayed there for about a week and then things got hot and we got word that Russian patrols are seen ten miles from here and Russian Cossacks were seen in this village and that,

And at that time we decided to go further. We didn't know Budapest. We'll go to Hungary. Whover visits the Slovak...it's not far from Hungaria. Then it was the Hungarian border. So we packed up again, what we had and we went to the railroad station and waited for the chance, either a passenger train will pass or a freight train and we will just...and a freight train came. They put us and a few others from surrounding cities...

Oh I see. So somebody could say that was being evacuated.

In a sense it was. And fromthere, this was two, three days before Rosh Hashana we were packed in and came to a Jewish town, Satoraheli, it's a Hungarian town and there we were taken out of the train. It was a Jewish community but we arrived either on Shabbos or Rosh Hashana, I think the first day of Rosh Hashana and they put us up in a house. And we had some money with us. And there we stayd. Again waited to go back, really. It was only a matter of time. The Russians will be defeated or they will never get there and after three weeks, staying there, I remember the town very well. We used tostop in to see the shul, the davening, we finally decided to go on. And then you probably needed the cooperation of the government, I don't remember the details because we were brought to Budapest.

So it was you, your mother and father and a sister.

Father's sister and at that time, yes, another sister who was married, she came for the summer to stay with us, with her little boy, she had a boy of about eight years. about a year old. He's now in Canada and the husbnad was with her. So she was with us too. Two sisters and a little boy. The little boy took very sick. So much so that in the freight car, where we were for about three days and there was a little water. And the trip took so long because military transports had priority. Whenever there was a military train sending soldiers to the front...

You'd be on a siding.

And that, in a way, helped us because some of the soldiers were very nice, some of them were even Jewish and so they gave us bread and they brought water, as the train stopped and they talked about where they come from, exchanged words and so on.

During this time, you're talking right now about the beginning of the war, where were your sympathies?

Oh our sympathies were with Austria Hungary. Of course. Against Russia. We had a good argument. The Cossacks. The mjuzhiks. In Austria Hungary we had no, hardly any anti-Semitism. There was, in a sense, where the Jew was regarded as, to some extent, especially the Orthodox Jew, was looked by the German as alien, as strange in his customs and so on. But We had Jews lawyers, most of the lawyers and doctors. We had Jewish professors in the University of Lemberg. We had even a Jewish general in the Austrian army. So that by comparison to Russia we were considered that we live in a free country and it was free. In fact, the Russian Jews fled and Galicia was the corridor through which they fled. That is why we had a very poor opinion of Russian Jews because those who came and some settled were not of the highest level and some of them ran away from their wives and they came and married and five years later the wife turned up with two kids. So funya gonif. Funya is Russian.

Funya! In what language?

In Yiddish.

Funya!

Yes. Yes. Speak to a Galician and say Funya gonif and see what he...

I will. I never heard that. I heard of a Russicher hazer.

No. Funya gonif.

You don't know the derivation of that?

No. No. But we had, in some instances we had bad experiences with the Russian Jews and the reason why that was brought home to me, when I came to Galicia for the first visit to my parents, in 1933, they were amazed to hear that Galician Jews are not held very high. We thought that a Galitzianier, a Haitsch, you know, in every home there was a book of Schiller and Goethe. Like in our house, one is the Gemorahs and one is the German books.

Oh, you did have.

Sure. We had no pogroms. We heard about them. So my father was quite annoyed.

Vus furt die Yidden azoi. Die Russicher funya gonif and zey kimt fin Rusland.

They pointed out a few people who got settled in our town on the way they fled from Russia and they got involved in all sorts of things and their wives showed up and they remarried. So that is why it was brought home to me, the low opinion in which we held Russian Jews. It's a saying, you know, everybody is equal but a little more equal than others. And everybody establishes hierarchies. And we looked down upon the Roumanians and the Litwak looked down upon the Polish and the Polish on the Galicians...

LB But everybody looked down on the Russians. I'm talking, within the Jewish communit

NR Well, I wouldn't say everybody. We didn't make surveys. Fortunately. Thank God we had no sociologists making surveys.

LB No, but I'm saying (Laughing) In the general...the feeling was...

NR In general, yes. Suspicion. A certain suspicion. Now we, of course, I'm sure my father and others were aware that the Russian Jewry contributed, produced great writers and scholars and scientists and so on.

In the same way that the prejudice against Galicians here, too.

LB Well, I was told never marry a Galitzianer.

NR Yes, it was based on ...lots of Galician Jews produced many scholars and writers and even to this very day...But that's how it is. Everybody wants to...I don't know whether I'll tell you the Roumanian jokes. A Roumanian...

LB Well, my rabbi is Hungarian and I told him what my mother said, That among the Russians there's a saying - If you have a Hungarian for a friend, you don't need an enemy. And he said, No. No. That's a Roumanian.

NR That's my story. From Israel, a Roumanian girl, a Jewish girl came from Israel. A very pretty girl. So the relatives right away...they heard that she was engaged in Roumania in certain operations which were better not mentioned. And so they got very busy to marry her off. So they found a boy and they got engaged and before the wedding, the marriage, before the engagement, she had a problem. Shall I tell

tell him or not. So what do you do when you have a problem? Go to a ruv. So she went to a rabbi and she told the rabbi, I'm about to be angaged to this man. He's a nice young Jewish boy and I come from Roumania you know, and circumstances, I was left alone without parents and I was poor, oisgeglicht.

It slid out.

My problem is that whether, shall I tell him. So he says, Well, you don't have to tell him everything. Don't tell him that you come from Roumania.

(Laughing) Now who tells this, the Galicians?

That story, I heard here, I don't know whether it's told in Galicia.

That's very funny.

Well, we came to Budapest...

You know what we're coming to here is the end of the tape and that will mean that we have been talking for two hours, and what I'm going to suggest si that we probably both could use lunch. So I'm going to stop this now. I'm going to say Thank you.

Side 5 000

(Interview continued next day)

You entered the gymnase...

Gymnazia.

Gymnazie. I think My father must say gymnase, I'm not sure. I'll check. So you entered the gymnazie in 1911 and whtich is three years before the first world war. And tell me something about your experiences in the gymnazie.

First, when I entered, I was a little bit forlorn. It's a new, bigger city. Although to me, it was not really a city...of twenty thousand people.

Now this was in...

Sambor. And the other little town I talked about was Staryе Sambor, or old Sambor. Yiddish, Altshtat. My first day, my reception was not very pleasant and a little bit traumatic and I recall that we were gathered in a big hall in order to divide us among the main building, between the main beuilding and a brandh. The school popu-

lation in the gymnazie expanded in that year, or the year before. They bought another building in the neighborhood so they converted into a figlia. Figlia is a branch. Figlia. And they had to divide the students between the main and the figlia. Now, whether there was some justification or not, many people felt that some, not outright discrimination against Jews, but that the elite students came from Sambor itself, the sons of the local people and so on, were assigned to the main building. And the people from the smaller towns and the farms, the hicks you know, from the provinces, were assigned to the figlia. And we didn't like...we felt it was...but there was some justification for our feeling because the oldest teachers, the most experienced teachers stayed in the main building. And the yohnger teachers, the recer appointees were assigned to the figlia. We felt it was a drawback. And it was a draw back. It also had a certain advantage for the young teachers were more humane and human and even closer to us in age. They were twenty six and twenty eight and so on. So there was a friendlier and more informal relagions later on developed. There was a particular incident that hurt me very much. It had nothing to do with the school as such. I told you that there was considerable tension between the Jews and the non-Jewish kids.

JB No, you really didn't expand on that. That was something I wanted to talk about.

NR There is. There is. Now in the elementary school we didn't feel it as much because we had nothing to do...we came and at one o'clock we left. In gymnazie there was some afternoon activities, some athletic activities and so there was more contact. And during that experience there were certain tensions. But what hurt me on the first day, as we were gathered in the big hall for purposes of designating who remains here and who goes to the figlia, somebody, I was wearing glasses and we wore these hats, uniforms. The hats were of the kind...did you ever see a French gendarme, or an Austrian officer...it was round and rather high. And somebody just knocked it down with the glasses, right off the nose. For no reason, I suppose. Whether he was an older student who wanted to, like you take care of your freshmen, you know, it's a form of hazing. At any rate, I was shocked. It never happened to me

before. In the elementary school, as I said, to come back, there was tension but not as much and the tension was felt in the last few days of schooling. Because there was some tradition, in the last week of school, discipline was loose. The teachers didn't care and the students felt, Well they had nothing to fear now. We had some tough kids from the surrounding villages who also attended that school and they used to sometimes gang up on the Jewish kids.

I: On the Jewish children?

R: On the Jewish children. So we had to or we sometimes got together and ganged up in small ways...

I: You did do that.

R: Not very much. Jews did not...neither did they cultivate nor did they admire physical strength. The argument was, Vus geht? Haben zich un mit goyim? Shkutzim? Zulen zei furen. Gai avek. (What! Start in Gentiles? With Gentile men? Let them go away. The actual tone and inference behind this is one of disdain; not having anything to do with people who don't know any better than to start physical violence.) You know, Don't bother. So, we did not.

I: Now you were only eleven when you entered the gymnazie which is really, you were just a little boy.

R: Well, all the others were same. They were also eleven.

I: I know. And actually, if you consider that the time you also spent in cheder you were away from home a good deal of the time.

R: All the time. /I was away from homesince...that of course was a great problem as I told you. My first day in cheder was very traumatic.

I: Well, I would think so. You were three years old.

R: That is what I remember. My earliest recollection is of me standing in front of the rebbitzin's home, of the door and crying.

I: Crying.

R: How long, I don't remember. Well, a few months later, another dramatic event happened which also affected me and my two brothers. I'm a Kohan, a Cohen...and

a Kohan may not stay under the same roof with a dead...with a corpse. And, all I recollect, what I remember is, in the middle of the night, a few people grabbed us, me and my two brothers and moved us to another house. And, during the sleep we didn't know what's what. In the morning they explained it to us. A man died in this house, under this roof', I don't remember which. And we were yanked out. Of course we knew, later on, when the explanation was made and we accepted. But it was very shocking, particularly, I don't know how my brothers felt, I was young. I was maybe that time three and a half, maybe four years old. And I was the youngest kid and I was very much attached to my mother...

LB (laughing) I would think so, at three.

NR Very much so. And in addition, my mother suffered from severe case of rheumatism.

LB Your mother?

NR Yes. EVery winter she was regularly, at least as far as I can remember, immobilized. She was in bed with terrible pains. Summers she went for four weeks or six weeks to bath resorts. The favorite one was Pishchane, which is still...

LB How would you spell that one?

NR Pishtshany..

LB That would be in Galicia?

NR No. That would be in Slovakia but a part of the Aurstro Hungarian Empire. It's not far from Bratislava, which is the capital city of Slovakia or Pressburg. You referred to Pressburg Yeshiva. It's a famous Yeshiva. At one time. And that was another shock. That during the summer my mother was torn away from me. She went for five, six weeks. I recall that, later when I was about ten, she took me along once or wice. Twice, I think in the summer. But when I was still young, she didn't. And I could not count days, how the days when my mother would come back. The days she was away..

LB Who was taking care of...during the summer?

NR My sisters. My grandmother. I had two grandmothers. So this was no problem. We had no baby sitters in those days. We had two grandmothers live with us.

And a grandfather and by the time when I was about three, four...my sister was probably twelve, fourteen...anyway, there was always an aunt across the street. There was no problem. But I just missed her.

LB But for you there was a problem.

NR I just missed my mother. I started to count the Shabbosim. That was easier, you see. And when my oldest brother was a great tease. And he used to tease me, Vie fie Shbbosim? Vie fiehl Shabbosim? (How many Shabbos?) He used to try to confuse me. And I counted and I knew that after the fifth Shabbos, sixth Shabbos, depending, she'll be back. It was easier for me because it's not thirty five or forty. Well, and then, of course, at eleven I left home. I used to come home only about once every two, three months, for holidays. Yes, but that was true. Now, our gymnazie, population, student population of the gymnazie, which may have been about, not more than three hundred...

LB How many Jews?

NR A third.

LB A third.

NR A third were Jews...

LB And this was a public gymnazie supported by the Austrian government.

NR Supported by the Austrian government. The language of instruction was Polish but Ukrainian was taught as a language, geerman was taught as a language. There was a law in Galicia, certainly in eastern Galicia where the large, dominant majority in the rural areas was Ukrainian. The cities were one third Polish, one third Ukrainia and one third Jewish. Roughly speaking, I don't remember the exact figures. And there was a law that if a majority of the students declared that their mother tongue is Polish, then Polish became the language of instruction with Ukrainian as a language, subject. If the majority, and there were a few cities where the majority was Ukrainian, Przemysl for instance was a Ukrainian gymnazie Turka, I believe and maybe in other places.

LB Truka?

NR Turka, Tarnopol there was a large Ukrainian...there were a number of gymnazie where the language was Ukrainian. I would say the majority of gymnazie in Galicia even in eastern Galicia, had Polish as their language of instruction. And that was largely due to the fact that the Ukrainians didn't have the majority. And therefore...now, the Jewish people...the Jews were put in a quandry. The Jews usually sided with the Poles. In most countries Jews looked up to the majority, to the upper level of people not to the lower. The Poles were in civil service the welfare. Many of the estates belonged to the Poles. And so that the, in our school, one third was Ukrainian, one third Polish and one third Jewish, the Jews by, the parents, many parents of the Jews, by inclination, voted Polish. They were closer to the Polish culture. Just like in Bohemia, they were closer to the German language which the Czechs didn't like and in Hungary, they were totally assimilated to the Hungarians culture and language, which the Slovaks didn't like. The Slovaks were a very large minority in Hungary. And this was a standing source of conflict...

LB Irritation.

NR Irritationand conflict. Because the Jews side with the majority, not necessarily numberically, the majority of the people, but with the major sources of power. And I mentioned the other day, we have a similar problem now developing in Quebec. The French are furious at the Jews because the overwhelming proportion of Jews adopt the English language. Some learn French because now you need it for business purposes. You can't be a lawyer in Quebec and appear in court without being bilingual. Especially in the last fifteen years, there was a strong pressure. But I lived five years, almost five years in Montreal and I didn't learn French and I learned English. I learned some French because for a year I attended the French university but there were any number of Jews who lived a lifetime, practiclly, in Montreal or in Quebec city, and didn't know any French except for a few words.

LB I was thinking about that last night,..what you had said. And I don't want to digress now, but it did occur to me, it wouldn't have mattered what the Jews had

NR That may be another story. Well, I don't know. That is debatable.

LB All right, let's not go into that now, but I've written it down as a point.

NR That is possible. I agree with you to...I, myself, for example...

LB Is vet gurnisht helfen. (Nothing would be of much help)

NR Yes. The other argument that's frequently used, the Jews are too rich and too powerful, if they were poor it would be different. But in Poland there were plenty poor and they were not liked any more.

LB That's right. I mean, it doesn't make any difference.

NR No, but here there's a specific interest. No, there's no question about it. When a Ukrainian came to the school and he said, We're a third. The Poles are only a third. Why is the language of instruction Polish?

LB AI understand the problem. So maybe they should have three languages. There is no solution to such a problem.

NR No, you cannot have three languages of instruction.

LB Of course not.

NR Now you can have certain courses in addition to the Ukrainian as a language, as a subject language. You can say that history should be taught in Ukrainian and arithmatic should be taught in Polish. But that would complicate matters.At any rate this wasn't the case. This led to a great deal of tension later on. As we grew older, as I entered the second, the third, the fourth year, we became rather, as Jews, we became ourselves rather critical and we began to understand, to try to understand the Ukrainians. It's not really fair that we should lend our vote, so to speak, to over-rule and to help to Polonize and to deny them their right.

LB Now when you're talking about "We, as Jews" are you talking about your fellow students and yourself?

NR Fellow students. Not all. Not all the students. But quite a large number of Jews, Jewish students, especially those who became Zionist oriented, nationalist oriented and in the beginning of the fourth year to the end, which is eight years, we had a very active Hashomer Hatseir, Jewish boy scout movement.

LB So that would be when you were about fourteen or so.

NR That's right. And, finally, I recall, it must have been when I was about fifteen, in the fifth year, we began sort of trying to change that situation. Now the census or the survey, the language survey was taken every yar. The last week of the school year, the principal or the assistant principal came in and he asked everybody, What is your mother tongue? In Polish you don't say Mother tongue, You say, father's language, Yenzik poichista. Yenzik means language. Poichista is paternal, father. So we decided, a group of us, not all Jews by any means, because some of the Jewish kids in the gymnazie were thoroughly and enthusiastically assimilated as Poles. And their parents were already assimilated. They spoke Polish at home, so when they were asked what is your paternal tongue, they said, Polish. They didn't lie. And we had nothing against them, although we didn't approve or we didn't agree with them but in many ways they were outside of our circle. We were the majority. So we decided to say, Jewish. To answer to the question, What is your paternal tongue, to say Yiddish or Jewish, Zhidovsky. So the assistant principal said, and we expected, we anticipated that, the Austrian country, the Austrian census, does not recognize Yiddish as a language. It was called a jargon. We knew that. So we said, In case, in the event of our answering that question, in the event of our answer being rejected, which we knew that it would be rejected, we would say Hebraisky, Hebrew. So he said, Do you talk to your father in Hebrew? Tell the truth. So we said, No. Then of course it is not a true answer. We cannot accept that. So what happened was, he went to the office and entered Polish for all the Jewish kids. But there was some trouble. One day, I was maybe sixteen, we did the same thing, so he said, he asked to bring the parents, the fathers, not the mothers, the fathers, to school, to the principal. So I said, Well my father doesn't live here. He lives about fifteen miles away. Secondly, I don't know how my father will talk to you and how you will talk to my father. He doesn't understand Polish very much. He speaks some Ukrainian only enough to communicate with the peasant when he has to sell what he has to sell. So I said, I don't know what good that interview will bring. He thought that this was a facetious answer.

My father didn't come and he probably entered Polish. Now there were other tensions. Some had nothing to do with Jews against non-Jews, but in every class there were a few toughies, who used their muscle or tried to use their muscle intimidation, grabbing a sandwich, not much, but...And sometimes, when we noticed for instance, that the main targets were are Jewish kids, we tried to organize to counter-act. Not physically. There may have been some physical...but the main form of our self defence was to use our intellectual standing, not to help the other kids in their homework. Not to let them copy during examinations and sort of boycott them. That was a great help because, in most instances the Jews were good students. And certainly, they were always better students than the toughies. Because the toughies used...oso we organized that...

LB At that time, you were there eight years?

NR Eight years. Eight years. Really seven and a half years, because more than half a year we were away in Budapest as refugees when the gymnazie was under Russian occupation.

LB You mean during the war.

NR In 1914.

LB Yes. But what I, the point I wanted to bring out here is, did you, during all that time still have your pais pasted back?

NR No, no. No.

LB Did you cut them?

NR Ahhh! As soon as I passed.

LB Ah. That's what I wanted to know. That's what happened to most of the boys.

NR As a matter of fact, let me tell you an interesting incident. I told you I took the exam late in August, the end of August. The first week, School started in September, and Rosh Hashana was about two weeks after school opened. I had to get home and I already didn't have the pais. And I had my uniform. Well, I wouldn't dare to go to shul, Rosh Hashana, in uniform. That was out of the questic I could put on my civilian uniform, my civilian...

LB Did you wear a daftan also, when you were home, as a little boy? What was your

clothing?

NR No.

LB Just trousers and a shirt?

NR Trousers and a shirt and a jacket and a tallis , tsitsis. That we had to have.

LB You wore that.

NR Sometimes, the first few years we wore it over the shirt and then when I entered gymnazie...

LB You tucked it inside.

NR No, not only that. Because in gymnazie we had, once or twice a week we had gymnastics. And in gymnastics you had to take off your shirt. And I wouldn't want to be seen with the tsitsis. Because most of the Jewish kids didn't have it. They came from more assimilated homes. So I had mine in my pocket. So as not to be without it. In my pocket. This way I...

LB It makes a problem. You're caught between two worlds.

NR I took out insurance, by keeping it in my pocket.

LB Right. Ah! So you did cut the pais off?

NR I cut the pais off and I recall distinctly, as we were walking to shul, my father was walking and my older brother, the oldest brother was in the Yeshiva. And my brother was on a job in Sambor, so he didn't come home for Rosh Hashana. And I came home. And as we were walking to the shul, in the market square, a Jew came along. His name was Shoil, Saul Roth. He was an old man. He was a very strong Belzer Hasid. And he was a devoted friend of my grandfather who was a Belzer Hasid And he, sort of, was a self appointed trustee of my father's correctness in following the footsteps of his father. Nobody appointed him. He liked to admonish and since he was thirty years older than my father so he had the authority of age and the authority of his close friendship with his father. So he looked at my father and he looked at me, without the pais, and he spat. That was...I didn't know what to do with myself. These things stick to your mind. This happened about sixty eight years ago, sixty six years ago.

LB I know. Did your father say anything when you came home without the pais,

or your mother?

NR Oh no. He anticipated it. He knew it. Because he was in on the concealment, on the disguise.

LB You mean for the matura?

NR No, not for the matura. Matura means at the end of the...

LB Oh, for the entrance exam.

NR For the entrance exam. My mother, you see my mother didn't talk much. She carried her grievances inside. Now, I don't know how she felt. Probably if she had had her choice, she would have said, Don't, for a number of reasons. First of all, you go away from home. Because if I had stayed I would have been two more years in that little Altshtut, in the neighboring school. I would be home every Shabbos and after that I would have been home, just like my older brother, helping out and so on. Secondly, my mother was illiterate and she knew the prayers by... from memorizing. She couldn't write. Not even in Hebrew. And that was a source also of tension between the two families. My father came from town. He was a learned man. His father was a learned man, in Yeshivas. And my mother's father was a peasant. I mean a Jew who built a farm, a very strong man, very pious, very devoted, very honest but not sophisticated and not knowledgeable in matters of Halakha, Gemorah...My father looked down a bit on this whole environment and my fahter's mother, who lived with us, she died in 1915, she survived her husband by seventeen years, she lived with us. She was also a learned woman. She knew all thillim by heart, the prayers by heart. She was blind. Since I remember her she was blind, I suppose, neglected cataracts or something like that. She was good in weaving stockings, so she supplied the whole family with socks. She was sitting there for hours, chanting thillim, tehillim andpraying. She was very religious. We used to play all sorts of tricks on her. Pesach was a great... everything chumetz had to be thrown out and she used to put little cloth on the on the door knobw, maybe chasvachalilah, there was a little bit of bread there, or chumetz, it shouldn't tough it.

So we used to kid her. We used to find all sorts of things. We used to say, Bubba, Bubba, Bubba and she got scared and tried to see something and tried to touch it. Latedron, of course, we laughted but, at any rate, she too, looked down upon these peasants, this peasant environment.

LB So your mother had to live in that environment, actually.

NR Well, yes. Well it was difficult, yes. And I don't know how, maybe I'm imagining now more than it was, but they were, no doubt...

LB If you remember it this long, there had to be something.

NR There were tensions. There's no doubt about it. I remember again a tension, during when the war broke out, we fled. We came back. We had an aunt. My father had a sister, Rachele, who lived in town. Her husband left for America in 1913. He was poor and prior to the war communication was open between the United States and Austria Hungary, he sent some money to help support her and we supported her. We sent her food from the farm...

(End of tape)

Side 6 000

LB Now you were talking about the support of your sister, that your father supported her and then he wanted then to take one of her children into the home, your home. Now your mother refused and you sided with your mother, as you did in general. And that your father, you said, very often became vituperative. And that this, in turn, reacted upon your own development.

NR I recall other instances where confrontations between one of my sisters and my father. I had two sisters. One was just like my mother. Quiet, charming way . The other one, was better looking, the younger one was better looking, stronger and did not shy away from a fight. On the contrary, somtimes she And there used to be sometimes unpleasant scenes, yelling and...between father and sister. One issue, for instance, was in 1910. We decided to build another house. I was born in an old building. That building was built by serf labor and was of stone. And the walls were very damp. It was cold. In fact, the doctor

at times said, that my mother's rheumatism was probably due to the dampness of the building, it was difficult to heat and so on. So fianally, business improved, my father made some money so he said, let us build another building abou one hundred yards away. We had a big land aread around his factory (?) And then the controversey was over whether we should have small little windows on the top of the big windows, coming from the attic, there was an attic- the attic should also have what do you call it...

LB Like dormers.

NR That's right. That's right. Dormers. My father opposed it. Not because it would have cost a little more. That was not the problem, But I don't want to oifreisen die oigen of the neighbors and of the officials. Don't arouse the envy of the neighbors and they would say that Sholem Reich, my father's name was Sholem, that Sholem Reich is reicher, not only his name but he is rich, and the fiscal officers, people who assess taxes, would promptly raise the tax. There was some historical truth. It's very interesting how long institutions or practices that existed two hundred years ago left their imprint. I understand that in the Middle Ages, in many countries, including probably Poland, the tax was based on the number of windows.

LB Is that right?

NR That is right. That was true in France. Because windows were expensive . They were a luxury. And my father didn't know that, but sort of...

LB He knew it.

NR He knew it. He says, Ich vill nisht. (I don't want) to arouse, to contribute, to cause the envy of neighbors. And over that there was a big fight. My father won. Not the sister. But they were quarreling and arguing back and forth, particularly because one of our neighbors in the other village, in Spas, who was sort of, formerl a rival of my father, a business rival and in many other ways...he built a house and he has these...so my sisters said, We should have it too and that caused all sorts of...

LB But you know, the ability to make a decision and to stick to it and then to walk away from a confrontation, is not necessarily...a weakness.

NR I don't regard it as a weakness. On the contrary. In some ways, I don't want to descend to their level even. Now, I started telling you about this Federation the conference I attended of the Federation of Polish Jews and the people, the audience started booing. It was all right. He offended them, because to come to a Jewish meeting which was overwhelmingly Zionist and nationalist, when many of them were refugees from the Soviet Union and from Poland. And to come and to say that the Soviet government is not...

LB That there's no anti-Semitism...

NR But one fellow jumped up from his seat and ran to the stage, to the dais from which this man was speaking and was ready to hit him. So of course people held him back and the chairman asserted his authority and it passed over. But the interesting part of it is, I went there, of course, I wanted to meet a friend of mine, he used to go to gymnazie with me and now living in this country. He asked me, I'm vice president of that organization but I don't attend meetings. I don't bother with it. They don't expect me there. But he called me that he's coming from Long Island, he's also a year older and he doesn't come to Manhattan often and we see each other.../We used to see each other every three or four months now we see each other once a year. So he said he's coming and his wife is coming, I should come. My wife didn't come... So at the end of the meeting he said, Do you know, this fellow who jumped from his seat and ran to the dais ready to hit him comes from my town, from Sambor...I didn't know even that he knew him, because I left Sambor. He left Sambor in 1940. And he was the life-long most extreme Communist in town. Which is very interesting. You have to be extremely...if you're a communist, if you're an extreme communist,/if you become anti-...you become an extreme anti-communist. So I said, I'm not surprised.

Because a man given to extreme violent reaction...doesn't matter the cause for which he engages in violent reaction. He just changes the icon. But it requires the same worship and the same...

LB Well his personality doesn't change. It's just that, as you say, the icon...

NR The Nazis, the growth of the Nazi party in the '30s for instance, there was a considerable flow of membership from Nazi to Communist and from Communists to Nazis. Seldom from Social Democrats to Nazis or from Nazis to Social Democrats, or to a democrat bourgeois party. Extremes attract...

LB Well, I have the feeling they go full circle and they meet around at the bottom So, now, let's go back to the gymnazie.

NR We'll go back to the gymnazie.

LB Now tell me this...during those years, if you were to give any sort of label, at all, to your leanings...I mean, they weren't Marxist and, now you came from, actually from an Hasidic background, were they Zionist?

NR Well, they were nationalist.

LB Which nationalist? They could be Polish...

NR Jewish nationalist.

LB They were Jewish nationalist.

NR I was never,...in principle, I was opposed to assimilation. And I have always regarded it as undignified, to give up your roots. I still get furious if saebody if I see somebody whose name was Finkelstein, it becomes all of a sudden Stone or even to this very day. Maybe I'm wrong, some people have got other motives to do that, other reasons, so that I was alwasy, as far as I can remember, I was always in favor of retaining a Jewish identity.

LB Now was this true in your family as well?

NR In my family this was no problem.

LB There was no question.

NR My father know, your're a Jew, you're a Jew. The problem of who is ;a Jew...

LB It's only when you move out that it becomes a problem.

NR Well, when I came to gymnazie and I met those young Jews who consciously adopted the language and culture and all of the Polish people, of the Polish peple. I never liked that, never agreed with them and I didn't get into any fights with them but I shied away.

LB Were you a member of Hashomer Hatsair?

NR Yes, I was. I was a member, one of the founding members of Hashomer Hatsair and I was for about a year, believe it or not, I was the leader of the girl...

LB You were? That must have been fun.

NR Yes. I still have a picture of ninety five girls and myself. Some of them are now still alive in Israel and on my visits I see some of them. Well, you see the gymnazi there did not offer very much in the way of extra curricular school activities. Very little.

LB Where did you live in Sambor?

NR We boarded.

LB Where did you board?

NR Families took in two, three boarders...The first place where I boarded was with my brother who was about four years older. He finished, or didn't finish, dropped out from a commercial high school but knew enough of bookkeeping and typing and helped by my father's pull, you see my father was a buyer of liquor from this refinery, liquor refinery, so he had a job in Sambor. And he lived with two other young people also who had jobs, clerks and so on. So when I came the first year to Sambor, I was taken in by the same family. It was very nice family . She was a very nice woman. They were poor. The husband was a good for nothing and later on he served a jail sentence because he tried to make a living by bearing false witness, in courts, and he was caught. In fact, he introduced me, indirectly It was his father, this man's father, had a clothing store and the first thing that I had to do after I passed my exam before entering school, I had to get a uniform. Black trousers and a blue jacket with stripes. One silver stripe for the first year, two silver stripes, three and four and then one gold stripe for the fifth year and four gold stripes until you finished. So when I decided to move

in with my brother..,first there were three in the room. Now there will be four in the room and so my brother suggested that the husband, the father in law of the woman, she was a very nice person, that he has a clothing store. I should go there and buy it there. There were only about two or three in the city that had these uniforms...stores in the city that sold these uniforms. So this, so I said, fine and we agreed to come at a certain hour to that store. So I came during that hour and the old man wasn't in. He was really an old man. And this, his son attended the business. And he sold me. And I paid him about ten kroner, roughly about five six dollars for the jacket. And I walked out./A week or Two weeks later the old man came to visit his daughter. Marcus's brother. My brother's name was Marcus. Oh, the pants, hmmm. Where did you buy those things. I said, I bought it at yourplace. This man never deposited the money.

LB His son!

NR That's how I was introduced to...Well, as I said, I entered gymnazie with some trepidation. First of all I still was not sure about my Polish language, pronunciation and so on. I entered with a certain inferiority, a feeling of inferiority. And partly because of that, came December, I took ill.

LB Oh. The stress you mean.

NR I don't know. So do what the doctor said, Stay home and my mother, I lost weight and my mother should cook chicken and chicken soup, milk and fatten me up and after a month I should come back to school. I went home and they fattened me up and meanwhile I was, took along the books. I anticipated what, because by the time I came back in December I knew the whole year's work. So that was no problem. Then as I was used to it and acquired fluency in/speaking Polish and I acquired a certain confidence, security, I did very well in my subjects and I liked my tutor, so even the first year, the latter part of the semester of the first year, some of the students were coming to me for help. And I helped them out. I used to be very good in the evaluation of students. I was a teacher before I was born. I started to tutor when I was about eleven or twelve years old. My wife was She was a teacher also for about fifteen years. Together, between the two of us,

We have one hundred and twenty years of teaching.

LB Is that right?

JR So I developed the practice of grading students, as they were answering, as they were called upon by the teachers to recite and answer in history, in Polish literature or for example, in algebra at the board. I used to grade the students. And every month there was a conference, on Sunday there was a conference and one parent had to show up and the teachers there and they reported on the progress of students. Now in my case, the woman where we boarded came, because my father never bothered. He never came. My father never was inside the gymnazie. Neither my mother nor my father. Nobody! Because it was outside of their range of interest, and in most intances if a student got poor grades with me, the teacher reported poor grades to the parents.

LB In other words, they would use your evaluation as a basis for a meeting with the parent.

JR What they are to expect. And usually, at the end of the year, ofcourse we got a detailed report card in every subject, and the grade listed in every subject. And of course, out curiousity, we compared my grade...they came a week before, What do you think I'll get in this subject? I said, You'll get excellent. We didn't have numbers. We just had excellent, good, fair, unsatisfactory. Just four grades. And in most insdances my grade and evaluation coincided with what they finally got. But that gave me a certain position in school. At the end of every year the gymnazie published a report. And the report contained lists of names of all the students in all the grades and those with an excellent grade are listed on top. Sometimes a number of these were in black print. Later on they eliminated the black print but they still listed them separately. Just like cum laude or magna cum laude. I was in that category all my eight years. So that helped me too.

LB Essentially even though you were on your own, because you were really separate and distinct from your family.

NR In gymnazie, completely. That's what I'm saying. My mother didn't have the slightest notion of the subject matters and I knew and the only reason that my mother had for sending me to school, to elementaty school...first of all, you had to do it. The law required it. Secondly, it's good that you should be able to read and write. Me darf kennen lezen und schreiben. Me darf schreiben a brief, you know. (One must know how to read and write. Sometimes you had to write a letter...) If you got engaged you had write letters to your fiancee, schreiben a brief. You know, in every home there is a brief shteller. You know what a brief shteller was? A letter writer, sample letters.

LB Oh, that I didn't know.

NR Oh, sure. Sample letters. And they Taught us a little bit of writing letters home also in cheder. The rebbe sat down, Schreib a brief zum tata, zu die mama. Lieber tata, ba mir, ich bin gezunt. Ba mir iz alles gut. Es vet zein gut fun dir zu heren. (Dear father or mother. I am weel. Everything is fine. It would be good to hear from you.) Sometimes theyd tell stories it would start, Ich hab a buch veitig und a kup veitig fun dir zu heren. (I have a somach ache and a head ache)

LB It's like the letters from camp that they...

NR That's right. Just like letters from camp. And I got that from mother directly after I finished with matura. I began talking about going to the university. Now I told you the reasons yesterday why I wasn't admitted to the Polish university.

LB No we didn't really get into that. Now your stay in the gymnazie was interrupted after...you entered in 1911. In 1914 the war broke out...

NR Yes, but I just wanted to say said this. Look, Nutan. Hast gegangen in shkole, in school, and by shkole you meant elementary school, zu lernen schreiben. Nuch dem bist du arein gegangen in gymnazium oislernen besser zu schreiben. To write better. Nu, vus darf men nuch, nuch dem gymnazium? I talked about the university. And they said, Vus, vet zein an avocat? Zug ich, Nein.

LB That I don't understand.

You want to be a lawyer? To go to the university meant that you want to pursue a profession.

Say it in Yiddish again.

Du vilst zein an advocat. Zug ich, Nein. Ah doktor, oich nisht. I was interested just in my first courses that I took at the university when I got there was philosophy and science and all that. Learning for the sake of learning. I did have certain ideas. So my mother couldn't understand. Lernen zu schreiben. Besser schreiben. Vus nuch? (To learn to write. To learn to write better. What else?) And especially this was tied up with some risk, because I said that if I cannot go to gymnazie in Lemberg I would go to Vienna or to Prague, which means getting a passport. That was not possible.

You mean a university, not a gymnazie.

A university. I'll try...this means crossing the border illegaly. Oi, veh, shmuggling zich; meh vet dir hargenen. Meh vet dir khappen. Ahh! To go back to gymnazie. (Oh, you will smuggle yourself. They will kill you. They will catch you.)

The war breaks out...

The war broke out in August 1914. On June the 28th my sister got engaged.

In 1914.

In 1914 and we came home for the engagement. I came home from school. Gymnazie closed. At the end of June it's closed. MY brother who had a job in Sambor also came with me this time because he wanted to attend the engagement. The engagment party, meet the young man to whom she's engaged. And I remember the train came home in the afternoon, to the station, walked from the station and my brother was about, I was about fourteen. He was seventeen. He was a good looking man. He was handsome. The darling of all the women. So he was priming himself and I never cared about these things. But he was a nice guy. We got along very well. For a year I roomed with him I moved away. And the engagement lasted late into the night and about twelve o'clock or so, maybe even later, a peasant knocked at the door.

The peasants came down from town when they heard that there's going to be a lot of trouble because the Archduke and heir to the throne and his wife were assassinated somewhere, he didn't know where, in Bosnia. That was the day of the engagement. That's why it sticks in my mind. And then, but nobody expectedd a war. We had crisis over Bosnia before in 1908. The Balkans always were a little wars and so on. That didn't stop my mother from going to Ivonyich which was another summer resort.

LB Ivonyich? That's also in Slovakia?

NR No. That's in Galicia. And this is the reason why she went. It was nearer. If war should come and she had to come back, so Ischannye was far and this time she took me along. I went with her. And in Ivonyich, after we stayed there for about six weeks, no less than that. Part of July. But it must have been about three, four weeks and then the war came. And we immediately packed to get back home and it was a long way to get home. By the time we got to Sambor, which was the depot, we met military trains already of mobilized soldiers and we met a cousin already in uniform from Staryе Sambor, joining and later on killed on the Italian front. And we came home.

LB On the Italian front.

NR Right. He was killed on the Italian front.

LB That's what my Galician friend said.

NR Isonzo. Big battle. That was the place or the river, I don't know.

LB So you went back to your village then?

NR Yes. And of course school didn't open. We fled.

LB Did the Russians get to your village?

NR Oh yes. They were there for about six months.

LB They were. And were you there during that time?

NR No. We fled. We escaped the Russians. We fled.

LB That's when your father took your mother and you and your sisters and you finally wound up in Budapest.

Finally wound up in Budapest. My uncle who lived across the street in the village, also tried to run away. And he was too late. By the time he was away from home the Russians caught him and they sent him back. And he was taken hostage. The Russians took hostage leading Jews from every town who were held responsible for any act of disloyalty to the, to Russia...

It's the communal responsibility thing.

About twelve Jews were taken away. My father would have been one of them. So in this respect his judgement, which some people thought was premature, including my mother, who, Vu loift men? Vu furt men? (Where are we running? Where are we going?) proved right. And my uncle stayed in Russia, in Penza, which is in Central Russia until the Bolshevik, until the Revolution.

Is that right? Did that happen to a lot of Jews, do you think? Were they sent to Penza and then released after the Revolution?

Well, I don't know if a lot, but the hostages from our town were sent to Penza. If all of them were sent to Penza, I don't know.

We're going to talk about that later. All right.

So he came home in 1917. He came home also, he was a very shrewd man. Very good business man. Here he would have been owning a super market. There he had a little two by four grocery. And he came home with a lot of rubles. Packed, padded (?) but they became worthless.

They were Czarist rubles or were they

They were Czarist rubles.

They also had the Kerensky rubles.

The Kerensky rubles. But they became worthless. But he came home. He survived.

Now what happened. Your grandmother was left behind.

My grandmother was left behind. And she died.

During the Russian occupation you mean?

During the Russian occupation. Mybfather took her to the town where her sister lived. He left her with her daughter. But she was in the eighties. So that was the

only member of our family who reached the ripe old age of eighties. Most of them died at sixty eight, seventy.

LB Now when the Russians occupied your town, you were not there.

NR I never saw a Russian in my life. This is soldiers. But I saw prisoners. Prisoners of war.

LB So what you then knew was from hearsay. What did they say happened in your village when the Russians occupied it?

NR After we came back? Nothing much.

LB Nothing much.

NR Nothing much. They, the Jews established a modus vivendi and of course, in the beginning there was fear and they tookthe hostages.. Now my aunt never knew what happened to him. There was no communication.

LB That's the first time I've heard that. I never heard that before.

NR They never expected to see them alive. And there were about ten or twelve I believe. And they had physical hardships and the Russian soldiers looted a little but there were no killings, no pogroms.

LB So they were not such chazerim as I have heard from other people.

NR Well, that depends. They were chazerim in the sense that I said they looted and maybe there was occasional beating, but when we came back we didn't hear of a single...

LB Was your house still standing?

NR No the house was not standing but that was due, we were told, to fighting. We were in the foothills and there was fighting over, shooting and cannon firing over the area. And the house...we found the roof. The roof was a tin roof. The structure of the house was wood. Now they tell us that the house was damaged, but the neighbors and the Russian soldiers used the wood to make fireplaces.

LB Oh, there was nobody in the house.

NR There was nobody in the house. The basins where the eggs were...were opened. We'd locked them up and father even appointed a guard

they opened it up
The Russians came in/and they saw the eggs and sometimes, we were told, some of the soldiers took sick because they began eating en masse...

...Go protect against a war.

...That's right. Now in Budapest...

...Waif, I want to finish with your village, if you don't mind and then we'll come back to Budapest. How long were you away from your village?

...Until May.

...You mean the Russians were gone in a month?

...No, no, no. We fled in October and we stayed from October to May in Budapest.

...All right. That's October, November, December, January, February, March, April, May...that's eight months.

...Well, in Budapest itself, only seven.

...I mean from the village, you were absent about eight months. And during that time the Russians came in and then, were they pushed out by the Austrians or by the Germans?

...They were pushed out by a joint campaign of Austrians and Germans.

...All right. And then...do you know when the Austrian-German troops came in, approximately?

...In our town? Well, we followed them. Within a month we were home.

...Well, let's say about May, they came in. Right?

...Right. The counter offensive of the combined Austrian German army started around April. In May we heard... (Tape clicks)

...All right. You say the Germans and Austrians launched a counter offensive in April.

...By May they had chased the Russians beyond our village.

...Was there fighting in your village? Do you know?

...No. No. The fighting was when the Russians came in, for about three weeks, over the village, so that, for instance, people who stayed in the village, my uncle, who stayed and the peasants around, said that for about two or three weeks

they lived in basements. And at night they got out and dug up some potatoes.

LB Yes. My father would tell that story too.

NR But that lasted only about...

(Tape ends)

Side 7 000

NR So we were home either the end of May or the beginning of June. Not the whole family. Because when we heard that our area was freed, liberated, by that time, one of my brothers found a job in a munitions factory which paid well and it exempted him from military service, which was an inducemdnt. So that my father and myself came home first. The two sisters, one sister was married, since she had a child she couldn't travel immediately and her husband who was separated during the flight, finally reunited. He was in another town so he fled in another direction. But finally the whole family reunited after some effort. Very interesting how we got the information. We didn't know but one way of getting information was to go to the railroad terminal in Budapest and military trains arrived. And I used to walk from car to car and stop soldiers and say, Where do you come from? Do you come from Galicia? Do you come from there? And among them there were Jews coming from there and they heard, Yeh, ich hab gehert. Er iz

And that is how we put together and after six weeks we were all reunited.

LB That's very interesting.

NR Except one, oldest brother, who fled with his wife and a young kid, at that tim they just had a little baby. They left, they fled to Prague and they stayed in Prague for the remainder of the war. He got some work and after the war he came back to our village and he...

LB Could you...when a Jew was in uniform, at that time, could you still tell he was a Jew?

NR Well, sometimes. Not all the time. Not always. Not always.

LB But if you met a Jew on the street, for example, would you know a Jew? Out of uniform?

NR Well, like I walked today in most instances I make a take a guess.

LB I make a judgement too.

NR I make a judgement, yes. Sometimes I'm wrong, most of the time I don't know.

LB Well, you can't always assess the correctness of your evaluation, either.

NR Well, I did not stop, Are you Jewish? I met a soldier, I talked to him in POlish.. He didn't understand Polish, I started Ukrainian, German...and then after a few, certainly after we exchanged a few words, I knew that he was a Jew.

LB I understand. It's just a very interesting way of communicating.

NR My nephew told us a story. My nephew lives here. Riva's nephew. My wife's nephew. He was...no, not my nephew. My friend. He said he was in the subway. An old woman comes over to him, Excuse me. Are you Jewish? He says, Yes. What time is it?

LB That's marvelous. (Tape off.)

NR So as soon as we heard that the area was liberated we went home. Myself and father He took me.

LB Now were the Germans there in control?

NR No, the Austrian government was in control. There were German troops. Some German troops.

LB Now we have asked all of those who remember their towns being occupied by the German troops, what was the behaviour of the German troops?

NR You did not have any occupation by German troops. We had, undoubtedly some German some scattered German officers and German units, supply units. But the Austrian government was restored immediately to full control. And in our area, via, the control was via the Polish officials, starosta was the representative for the district of the Austrian government. There was no question. But I understand, of course that the towns, the enemy towns, so to speak, /the Russian which were occupied by the Germans, the cities, Warsaw and Lodz and so on.

LB Warsaw for example...

NR There of course the Russian government was immediately, or the government from the Russian was immediately removed and they were under German occupation.

Although there was some self government. There was a mayor...

LB No, but we were mostly interested in how the Jews perceived the Germans.

NR They behaved very well. The Jews perceived the Germans as liberators. No question...this was generally universal. So much so, that in a way the Germans went out of their way to win over the Jews. For instance, that was the day of the Balfour declaration. And the Balfour declaration made an enormous impact on the Jews and the credit went to England. England was the enemy of the Germans. And the Germans went out of their way to also make similar promises. For instance, they all their posters that they published in Yiddish. I understnad, I didn't see it, I understand that even the passport had some Yiddish. The Germans issuded passports that had some Yiddish.

LB You mean to their German nationals, or to their Polish...

NR No, to the Jewish nationals in Poland. To the Jews in Poland. In order to win them over. By comparison with the Czarist government, the Germans were more efficient. Jews had the linguistic facility to communicate with Germans. I lived for about half a year in Germany, on a Fullbright, visiting professorship, in Frankfurt, Riva was with me too. She doesn't know German. But with her Yiddish she managed very well, to buy and shopping. That was a source of communication and contact. Then as I told you, certainly in our part, Jews were raised on Hebrew culture, religious culture and literature. They, some Jews went beyond that, and tried to have a taste for the non-Jewish culture, it was German. So that in our house, together with the schafe...you know what a schafe is? Where you kep books.

LB A bookcase?

NR A bookcase. A schafe. Together with the schafe for the Gemorah for the twenty four volucmes or whatever, leather bound Talmud and other Hebrew books. There was a schafe containing volumes of Schiller, Goether, Grillparzer, German...

LB Grillparzer was an Austrian, wasn't he?

NR Well, German speaking. So that my sister, for instance, recited pages of Schiller Heute muz der glockenshpieler, something like that. I still remember. Not Polish.

It was only after I went to gymnasie that I acquired a knowledge of Polish literature. Because we had to study it And so we all I still remember the first lines of Pan Pan was the leading epic written by Miczkevicz. Miczkevicz was a leading Polish poet.

B Now what's the name please? Pan Taduesz. Thaddeus in English. And that's a poem?

R That is a poem. An epic poem of several hundred pages in which Miszkewicz expresse his devotion, dedication and praises the glories of Polish culture. Lithuanian... he was part Lithuanian and part Polish. They say his grandmother was Jewish. (Quote from the poem in Polish)..My fatherland, you will appreciate it only when you lose it. Poles were losing their liberty after the partition.

Miszkewicz was a very interesting person, a mystic, he developed a theory of Polish messianism. Just like the Jews had a similar theory. The Poles are the chosen people. And he had all sorts of dreams. At any rate, you may recall that about five, six years ago there were riots by students in Warsaw. Because they produced, dramatized a poem by by Miszkewicz, Diadye. Diadye means old people, grandparents or something like it. Deiady. An old man. Deiady is the plural. And that poem also romanticizes about Poland. The devotion to Poland. And people in Warsaw took it as an appeal to Polish patriotism against Russia. Russia. Soviet Russia. Or Russia. Poles don't like the Russians, in any form, in any shape whatsoever. I was there several times during the Communist regime in Warsaw and...

B So if a Jew had a choice, now, he would go...if he were to assimilate to some extent. Would he choose Polish, German...or would he choose first Polish, then German?

R You have to distinguish. I cannot speak for the Jews who lived under Russian rule until 1919.

B No, your Jews. The Galicians.

R German. There was no question about it.

B But the Warsaw Jews would choose Polish.

NR Now, the young generation, among our Jews, those who went to gymnazie, who broke away from JewishOrthodoxy and so on, and came into contact with the secular...they of course, became assimilated with the Poles, because there were no Germans, except here and there...

LB You're talking about in Galicia.

NR In Galicia. Here and there, old civil servnats. In order to assimilate, you have to assimilate to something. So when I started in gymnazie, my friends, if they were assimilated,/they were assimilated to Polish. Their language became Polish not German.

LB I know. Now which were the Jews that would choose German? Amongst the Polish Jews?

NR In Galicia you mean?

LB Yes.

NR Well, not they...

LB I mean whose affinity...because you say in your home there were German books. Was that looked upon as/just something, outside, something to aspire to and admire.

NR There's no question that in the eyes of Galician Jews, German culture was superior to that of Polish.

LB O.K. O.K.

NR But, the Germans were not there. So they assimilated to the nearest. For instance now, my father wasn't assimilated. He was an Orthodox Jew. But he knew about Schiller. He never heard about Slovatsky and Sienkiewicz, who were the Poles... or Miszkiewicz for that matter. Maybe later on, when we were at the gymnazie he heard from me or from the books that I brought home. But in our home, our house, there were no Polish books. The only non-religious books, secular,books, were German.

LB Now later on, did you read...did <u>you</u> read the Russians? Did you read Dostoevsky, did you read Tolstoy, did you read Pushkin?

NR Well, we did. But no, they were not on the priority list. Maybe if you took a

course in literature, Dostoevsky was mentioned...

LB I'm taking into account the Polish-Russian feeling.

NR Our reading was Sienkiewicz, Slovatsky, Miszkiewicz, Raymont (?) who later on won a Nobel prize for his writing and well, I don't recall reading...

LB The Russians.

NR Well, in general, I'm not a literary man in this sense. I was never enamored in literature and that's why I majored in economics and/I took literature only to the extent that it was a required course. And if you reach Macgill, my coming to Canada, I have an interesting story to tell you although...

LB No, we'll wait. I want...

NR We may never reach it.

LB That's all right. At some time we'll reach it. Was there also in your village, during this time...in the time of the war years, between 1914 and 1918, or in Sambor, did you also experience at this time, cholera, typhus, typhoid and all that?

NR No. No. The diseases that/be-came rampant...we didn't have cholera. Typhus.

LB You did have typhus.

NR And smallpox.

LB Smallpox.

NR Yes. My sister had smallpox. Typhus. Typhus probably killed, I don't know, in town, the doctor died. The doctor's wife died.

LB Now typhus is a lice borne disease, right?

NR Lice borne. The first thing that I remember when an American medical mission after the war was over, an American medical mission came to our region, the first thing they did with the help of the local health authorities was to take all the clothing people had and put them in boilers, and boil them because of the lice. Typhus was very bad. And in the city people were a little bit weakened by malnutrition. During the war they didn't have enough to eat and in the village, we did but in town we didn't. I remember when I was in gymnazi

in 1916, how carefully we had to slice our bread, I brought from home. We had to make it last longer than usual. If we came to eat in the restaurant, I often had that hot meal, in the restaurant, in the coffee shop. You had to bring your own bread.

LB You didn't have a menzer?

NR Not in gymnazie, no. In the university. The gymnazie didn't have it.

LB Is there anything about the war years that left any particular impression upon you? Because you lived through that whole time.

NR In a way, you would be amazed how little the war touched young people. Kids. We knew of course, we saw practically every week, we heard that a regiment or a battalion/which was training in Sambor, left for the war. Because music was playin and there was a parade, patriotic songs were sung and so on. And when we were free, we attended it. So we knew but you did not connect that some of these people would be dead.

LB And one thing...you did not actually starve...

NR No, but we didn't eat enough. Well I was better off than some of the others, because we had the farm.

LB Now was there enough coal to heat the gymnazie?

NR They didn't have coal. They heated it with wood.

LB Was there enough wood to heat? Some places were closed because there wasn't enough wood or fuel.

NR Well, forests were not very far from, we had forests all around...

LB So things were not so disrupted that you couldn't get wood for heating.

NR No, not at all. The fact is, some people lived poorly. They lived poorly before the war and they hungered a little bit...not in the literalsense, but not enough of a variety of food. They lived on potatoes and bread...Very few families, for instance, had meat every day. Even Jewish families had meat only once a week, Shabbos. Or fish. Now we were better off in this sense, materially better off. First we had the farm and my father was engaged in

business and sometimes he lost but sometimes he made money. So there was never a problem. Another source of income for the family that I didn't mention, there were so many...we had a schenk...a tavern. Now, the tavern, during the year, during the ten months of the year...a few of our customers were poor peasants, alcoholics and sometimes we had trouble with them when they came. They started drinking Friday night and drank until all day Sunday. Sometimes their wife came and made trouble. We had a lot of trouble. But they didn't bring in much income. Barely enough. But this business improved a lot during summer months. Not because the rebbe came with the Hasidim. They didn't drink either. But our area was an area designated for military maneuvres and every summer about a thousand soldiers or so, moved into our village and adjoining villages and they went to excercises...and they spent a lot...officers, and in cash, money, they spent it on drinks and we supplied/simple snacks, you know, bread and cheeses and herring...and at the end of this season, when they left, around September, we were usually left with about...I remember once, because there/you didn't go to the bank to deposit your money. The banks didn't exist...So you took the money that you took in and you put it away, somewhere in a safe place. So and then after this was over, you counted it...everything that was left after you paid for the supplies. And we had about a thousand kronen, which was about...the buying power of a kronen was almost equivalent to a dollar. So that was a lot. It helped out. So in a sense, I never experienced hunger. But because I wasn't home during the...because it was far, I couldn't reach there, not even once a week, transportation was poro. So we felt a little bit of the 1917 and 1918--tighten the belt. But never to...

LB But the war also ended before you were eligible for military service.

NR Just about. I appeared before a draft in May. I was just turned, in June 1918, I turned eighteen. So around April they called me, in Yiddish you say a , for a commission, a doctor, a military doctor had to examine me. And not only me but also the others colleagues in the gymnazie. The last

year of gymnazie. And they found us physically

Jews were scared of that word.

As Sholem Aleichem says, Toigen, toiger.

So the word was a very bad word. At any rate we were all tauglich But because we still had a few months to go before the end of gymnazei, to finish gymnazie, they wanted people that had finished gymnazie. Because if you finished gymnazie and you had matura, you were taken and immediately sent to an officer's school. And after a year you were a Kadet.

In the first war you had a stripe here to indicate. Considering that very few people finished gymnazie...probably less than one per cent of the people. If you marched with a battalion of peasants' sons, mostly illiterate, barely finished a year or two of elementary school, and they saw you had that so they knew that you were of the elite, you could be a lawyer, a doctor, a rich man's son and so on. So they let us go to finish gymnazie.

LB Now the war ended in November.

NR The war ended in November and by that time the Austrian Hungarian Empire fell apart. And we had a Ukrainian government for six months.

LB When was this please?

NR That was...when Austrian Hungarian empire fell apart, we were in a period of inter-regnum. I never appreciated so much my historical lessons about the fall of the Roman Empire. How does an empire fall? Well we saw an empire fall before our very eyes.

LB Could you tell me about it?

NR Well, the inkling, the first inkling that we had was that we saw officers, Austrian officers stopped by soldiers, and they tore their epaulettes.

LB By their own soldiers?

NR By their own soldiers. That was around September.

LB September 1918.

NR September, yes. Then we heard...now the press was very controlled. We did not

have a feeling that Austria and Germany are losing the war. We thought that we are winning the war. And th external signs were all in favor of that point of view. Because there was not a single enemy on German and Austrian territory but the Germans and the Austrians were in Warsaw and they were near Paris, France. They were always in occupied territories. They occupied part of Italy. So technically, they were winning. But their resources gave out. Because America came in in 1917 with fresh materiel, with fresh supplies and the Germans and the Austirians fought with the last of resources. So it came as a shock. Now, the first revolution or overthrow that took place was in Budapest where the Tiszo, Tizo government...Tiszo was the Hungarian nobleman and he was a German nobleman and a representative of the dual empire and he was overcome by a government led by Karoly. Karly Karoly. Karoly was a leftist liberal. He was the Kerensky of Hungary. A weakling and after a few months he was displaced by the Bela Kun Communist government which lasted about four, five months. Now, to come back to my gymnazie. You say,...

LB You were telling me about how it fell apart. I wanted you to tell me this.

NR Well, all right. So we saw, we began seeing armies, mobs of Russian war prisoners. Because they simply opened the gates and, Go. There were two million Russian war prisoners in Austria. And there were no facilities whatsoever for their systematic re-transport. Everything stopped. Trains were abandoned, by the conductors and by the engineers.

LB Austrian trains.

NR Austrian trains. So the soldiers, sometimes, those who came home, brought their guns with them. The war prisoners secured them. Because the Austrians left thei armories open ...so they used, sometimes, by force, they got a hold, grabbed engineers, railroad engineers and they made up trains. And they, en masse, they filled the trains and started on the way back to Russia. Some, most of them by foot. On foot. And they were subject to all sorts of diseases. And we finally organized groups of young people to pick up the corpses in the morning, of

Russian war prisoners.

LB And this is all before the war was officially over.

NR The war...there was no offidal ending.

LB Oh, one thing went into the other...

NR There was no official ending. The Austro Hungarian empire didn't collapse in a way that one day the government in Vienna said, We're collapsing. It doesn't happen that way. What happened was that there was no government. An inter-regnum. And because of the looting and the pillaging and the fear of mobs of war prisoners, Russian war prisoners who were hungry and they broke into peasants homes for food. And then, then even the local soldiers who left the armories and the garrisons and went home. Some of them brought their own guns./So It was really a period of lawlessness which was fearful and inspired a great deal of fear, so withing a few weeks we organized self defense groups.

LB Now this is in Galicia.

NR This is in Galicia. In our village, for instance, I took a gun, although I didn't know how to shoot a gun and I guarded, walked back and forth on the road with two others, so as to be a deterrent at least.

LB So you were not then in Sambor?

NR No, I came back. Because school was closed. So we came home and withing a few weeks, many of the Ukrainian soldiers who came home, the young people...

LB Back?

NR Back. And brought their guns, they began to organize. And there was already a nucleus of a Ukrainian Nationaliest group. For instance, one of my teachers became the chief, general of the Ukrainian army, Machievichhe was an officer in the Austrian army...

LB What's his name?

NR Machievich. He taught Ukrainian. It's very interesting. He became the commander and I knew him well and he had sort of a liking for me because I spoke Ukrainian well, coming from a Ukrainian village. So unlike

the Jewish kids who came from town, who knew Ukrainian only what they learned from the book...But there was a great deal of looting. And finally they organized a local Ukrainian republic. Zakhidna Ukrainska Republika. Western Ukrainian Republic./To Distinguish from Petlura's. Because in Russia Petlura had the central Ukraine. There were about three and a half million people and their capital was Lvov. But the Poles,/were in the majority in Lvov and the Poles and the Jews made up the majority. The Jews declared themselves neutral and they got hit from both sides. Ukrainians...Why don't you stick with us? We have the majority of the people. And the Poles, and this was the first pogrom I think that took place in the former Austrian territory, in Lvov. They say about two hundred or so Jews were killed. Now some say it wasn't a pogrom. It was fighting. Fighting started between the Ukrainians and the Poles over possession of Lvov. And in the course of the fighting a large number of Jews were killed.

LB Now what year was this?

NR That was in 1918, 1919. I think December or November...right after the collapse of the empire. And the Poles chased the Ukrainians out of their capital. So the Ukrainians withdrew, reorganized, transferred the capital to Stanislawau which is further east, and for about...and organized a front line east of Lvov and we were about, the line was...we were about thirty milesk from that Ukrainian front line against the Poles. We were on the Ukrainian side. The Ukrainians started to organize the government, with a parliament. There was an election to parliament. They had their own currencyl their own stamps...

LB Now this is all within Polish territory. This is separate from the Petluras. Right?

NR This is all within Galician territory. Eastern Galicia.

LB And separate from Petlura.

NR Yes. Separate from Petlura. And the negotiations, however, started between the western Ukrainian government with the Petlura government about a union, Zluka, because they realized they were only three and a half million people. The Poles

laid claim to that territory right away. They chased them out of Lvov of their capital... (End of Tape)

Side 8 000

and the Ukrainians opened the gymnazium in Sambor, under the new regime. Polish teachers fled, went into hiding or ran away to join the Polish front, Polish troops. Polish youngsters, seventeen, eighteen youngsters, disappeared also, went into hiding or ran away to join the Polish military units. We were only about twenty seven miles away.

LB What did the Galician Jews do?

NR The Galician Jews stayed in school. We stayed in school and the teachers, the Jewish teachers, stayed in school, continued to teach and the Ukrainian teachers continued to teach. So of course the school population dropped by one third and they began, the Ukrainians began insisting on the language of instruction begin Ukrainian. That led to all sorts of trouble. Because for instance we had a teacher of mathematics, Finkelstein, he was a Jew. He didn't know enough Ukrainian. And he wasn't a very good teacher of mathematics to begin with. And he was, we laughed at him because of his mispronunciation of words. The Ukrainian students ridiculed him, laughed at him ...at any rater, there wasn't much teachning done. And then, in May, the Poles organized an offensive. They chased, they destroyed the Ukrainian army and the Ukrainian army fled and dispersed and most of them crossed the new border of Czechoslovakia. Because Czechoslovakia...

LB So they went west, not east.

NR They went south.

LB Southwest.

NR That's right.

LB They did not go toward the Soviet Union.

NR No. They did not. Maybe some did. The Soviets at that time...

LB But there was also an invasion from Petlura...

NR No. The invasion was...the Soviet government invaded Poland. But that was a different story.

LB That was after?

NR That was after. By that time our Ukrainian republic was already dead and this Machieivch fled too. He fled to Prague first and then I heard that he fled to Bucharest. He committed suicide there, a few years later. But the interesting, my interesting enounter with Machievich was, after the Ukrainian government was organized there was no discipline. These soldiers, they came back from the war and they said, This is our country. So What. And they pillaged androbbed and it was very bad. So my father said, Look, Machievich is the chief commander. And he was a few miles from our town. Why don't you go and talk to him? So I said, I'll go. And I did go and I looked him up and I talked to him. He said, Look here. I know what the situation is. But suppose they disobey me. I can't risk it.

LB He said.

NR He said. To build a discipline and tried, in your own army...in this new situation where you are constantly exposed to Polish attacks and among the Ukrainians too, there were some people who were muggers and riff raff. And he said, I'm sorry I would like to do that. There is nothing I can do. Maybe in time, if we establish our forces and our militia and meanwhile organize self defense in the village. And well, somebody will get hit, we just can't help it. That's all. This is the answer I got from Machievich, which is the last time I saw him and later on I heard that he...

LB You know, this is the first time I've heard about a Galician-Ukrainian independe republic.

NR Oh yes. Zakhidna Ukrainska Repulika and the first president was Petrushevich. And the money unit was a kridnya. The currency. And... it lasted not more than six months. Then The Poles occupied our area and there was some trouble, tension.. they suspected some of the Jews had collaborated with the Ukrainians. We were expelled from gymnazium, I told you. All Jewish students who were ready for

matura...

LB No, this you didn't tell me. I thought you had already taken maturas.

NR No. No. We were due to take matura in June.

LB What year?

NR In June 1919.

LB Oh, the year following the end of the war.

NR That's right. But by that time the Ukrainians had been for a time and then the Ukrainians fell apart and the gymnazium closed. And when it reopened in September, we were told, even before, we were told that we were not eligible for matura because we were expelled from gymnazium for disloyalty to the Polish republic. And the act of going to an Ukrainian school and maybe taking an oath of allegiance, I don't remember, disqualified you. We're sorry. You're not eligible, for readmission and if you want to pass the matura you have to resort to the extern device.

LB So what did you do?

NR WEdid. We became externs. And there were eighteen of us and we started in the summer of 1919, we started an organized self study courses. And among our group, we were about eighteen, eighteen Jews...Sure the Poles, the Ukrainians fled, because most of the Ukrainians were in the army and the Poles were readmitted. They had no problem. They had no trouble. So we organized self study groups. Now in this group we had a number of people who excelled in various areas. We had a young man who was a matehematical genius, Winckler. He's now in the West. Joseph Winckler. Yusif Winckler. He was an exceptional mathematician. So much so that in the fourth year of the gymnazium he was exempt from attending any more classes for the rest of the four years because he knew as much as the teachers. Now this Winckler came, he was taken away to Russia and he was sent here as an expert, oil expert for the Polish Communist government and he defected with his whole staff in Washington.

and became an American citizen. He lieved in this city and now he's in the West. Well, so we had him. Then we had a man who was an excellent scholar of Greek and Latin. See we had Greek and Latin. His name was Menachem Stein. He was later on Professor of Classical...Anciant History., in a Jewish teachers college in Warsaw. He was killed by the ZNazis. I saw him in 1937. He was older than we were. He was a Yeshiva bucher. He never attended gymnazie, because his father wouldn't let him go to gymnazie because of Shabbos. So he knew how to study on your own, he's a life long Yeshiva bucher. So he coached those who were weak in Grek or Latin. In the matura you had to take only one language, either Greek or Latin and then we had some people who were good in other subjects. We had a very good team. We all passed. A few, about two or three passed...

LB The matura was given where?

NR In Sambor.

LB And they imported the professors.

NR Well, there were one or two locals but they also sent from Warsaw It was a very tough, stiff examination. And I was good in languages, both in Latin and Greek. I was not good in mathematics...I mean not to excel. I always passed. But I had a certain amount of satisfaction. My teacher of Latin and Greek was a man by the name of Sollak..Soliak. He was a Ukrainian who had assimilated. He had assimilated to Polish. We all knew that he was Ukrainian but he didn't want to be known as Ukrainian, so...he was also an alcoholic. Not bad, not a bad teacher. He was very much embarrassed. Of the eighteen, all of them, I think, at the beginning chose Latin for the matura. Because Latin is easier. Greek is a very tough language. So he was very much embarrassed because he was teaching mainly Greek. Also Latin. Now he thought this was a feflection on his teaching and so before the exam, I knew him from the gymnazie days. For a few years he was my teacher in Latin, in Greek. And I even had one run-in with him. I had a very good memory. I didn't bother to take down

and write down all the new words that you learned. Because I remembered them. I'm a very sloppy bookkeeper. I depend too much on my memory, my notes and so on. Sometimes it costs me a lot of time. I look for a foot note for hours without taking the trouble of writing it down. I would have saved myself trouble. So one day he came in, when we came back from Budapest and school reopened,...it was a two session school because one building was taken over by the army. So there was a session in the morning from seven till twelve and from about twelve thirty to five. We were assigned to the afternnon session. So/one day he comes in to the lesson in Greek or Latin and he says All your notebooks, you should put your notebooks on the desk. He goes from one to student to student to student...there/were about twenty five in the class or so, looks whether the words were properly, the words from the last lesson, the new words, were properly entered in the register with their Polish equivalent and he comes to me..I have no notebook. I have nothing. So I had to lie very quickly. I said, Professor, I just left it at home. I forgot. Of course I know them. I can ecite these words. If I have them in my mind I certainly put them down on paper. So he looks at me, How far do you live from here? So what's the problem? It's a small town. And I lived in the main square, market square. I said, Maybe seven, eight, ten minutes walking. He said, Well, suppose I give you permission to leave class and go home and bring it. Iz gevn tsuris. So on the way I stopped and bought a notebook. And fortunately when I came home...we were roomers with a lady, not the same lady. Pani Mishlova, very nice woman too. She had a daughter, a teenager also in gymnazi also. And they went in morning session. And another girl from another town who was a roomer and two boys. It happened, by chance, the boys went in the afternoon and I was in the afternoon. They were in the morning session and they were home. Well, I mobilized them quickly. You sit down and write quickl down words, from a week at least, back. I can say, I don't have to have from the beginning of the session if the notebook expired, it finished, and both

of them...And don't use the same ink. Use one day one ink and another day and so on.

LB You don't need confrontation with this kind of a mind.

NR Anyhow I ran quickly, out of breath, I ran to school. And Pani Mishlova was not at home. And I had no key and I couldn't get in. And so, I couldn't break in. No. He suspected that I'm lying. He looked at me...

LB He wouldn't have sent you home otherwise.

NR So he said, Well, when do you think she'll be home? Well, she'll be home by five o'clock because she knows school is over. I come home. I have to get in. He says, All right. It's five o'clock. You go home and I live not very far from you..two blocks or three blocks from the school building. You can come. I give you permission to come and knock at the door/bring it to show it to me. So, by five o'clock with an hour and a half gone, I ran home and there were six, eight pages were written. And I came and showed it to him and he said, Well, all right we'll let it go at that. I was a very good student. I always had th highest grades from him. Now when this matura time came, it was about two years later and everybody chose Latin and he felt hurt and he called me aside and he said, Reich, this is what they called, not by first name but by last...Reich, How about you choosing Greek instead of Latin. I said, Well I thought of it, I haven't made up my mind. And I was very flattered. He says, Why do you...? He said, Well...otherwise they will think the whole subject of Greek was neglected, and there is a commissioner, a representative from the Warsaw ministry of education and so on. So I said, O.K. I'll take Greek. So I took Greek. This is how it happened.

LB So you passed the matura..

NR I passed the matura...

LB Then, what happened to you?

NR Then when I came home, I told you about that night. There were two things that hurt me very much. After you pass matura, it is a sort of tradition that you run home and put on your civilian suit. Because otherwise you have to be in uniform.

Even on the street. If they caught you on the street, not in school uniform, you were penalized. So you pass the matura. Then you go home and you come back the following day or two days later, to be told whether you passed it or not. Now most people already come to that meeting where the principal announces that you pass, and he shakes hands, with everybody, many of them came already with their new suits, ties and I didn't have a suit. And my father never even thought of buying a suit, or, the whole thing. I never even told him about these things. It would have been strange the whole thing. So I was sort of left out. I felt bad. And the second thing the train that took me home was an early morning train. I arrived at four o'clock in the morning, at the railroad station. We were about five minute walk from the railroad station. I knocked at the door. My mother came to the door, Nute, Nute. So I said, Open the door, and I kissed her hadnd. This was the custom...to kiss the hand of the mother, and then she said, Shoin fartig mit der matura. So my mother's reaction was Upgekimmen? Gut. Upgekimmen means Puter gevorn. (To be rid of somtething That was the only recognition that I got for passing the matura and I passed it with distinction. Well, I still have my gymnazium reports.

LB You know, Jack Koenigsberg still has his.

NR I have the elementary and the...

LB They were very important.

NR Well than I began...of course I knew...this around September and I knew...

LB You were in 1919 now.

NR That was 1919. And I knew that Lemberg University is out. Because I did not volunteer for the Polish army. The Polish government had no right to take us because eastern Galicia was a disputed territory.

LB It still was?

NR ; Until 1924. Later on the Poles ignored it. But at that time the League of Nations was still important and Wilson was still in Paris and the Poles needed American aid so they respected it. And they, in the rest of Poland they drafted people. That part

of eastern Galicia, they had no right to draft. However, nobody could stop you from volunteering. All the Poles volunteered and many of the Jewish students volunteered because that gave them the right to ebter the university. And I didn't want to volunteer. So that was out. I was not prepared to venture and smuggle out of the country, illegaly. Partly, my parents were very much opposed to it. I didn't want to cause them additional...besides I had no money.

So, I began looking for ads. We had, in the Jewish-Polish newspaper, that is the Jewish paper published in the Polish language, Khvida.

LB What was the name? Khvida?

NR Khvida. Means the moment. There was a Yiddish paper called Moment. And they used to run ads where people who lived in villages, wealthy people, like Jewish landowners for instance, who had children and who couldn't send them to school. Far away, or they were problem children, so they were looking for private tutors. And I read an ad that a man near Rimanow...

LB Rimanow? And that's in Galicia?

NR That's in Galicia, yes. It's in western Galicia. I forgot the name of the man... that they're looking for ...and I mailed them a card, that I'm available. I have matura. I have tutorial experience, and so on. So I got the job. It was a young boy who was slightly retarded. And I stayed there for room and board and some monthly.!, and I stayed there...I could have stayed a whole year. But after six months I got restless. Boring and nothing to do and that kid just didn't...dumb kid, you know. And then I was beginning to formulate plans about leaving Poland, by hook or by crook. So I stayed there until March. I left in March. And I came home. My mother was very upset, when I came home, because the typhus epidemic was at its worst.. in the village. Far vus bist du gekimmen? Du shtarben menshen. Zug ich, Dorten shtarben oich menshen. Rimanow also had it, but not as bad. And I stayed during the summer doing nothing and I began spinning plans about leaving the country, And in, around September, I got five dollars in my pocket. My father picked up some And I put it in my heel (of the shoe) and I went closer to the Carpathian moun-

tains. Closer to the former Hungarian border, which now was the Czechoslovak Border. Because Czechoslovakia occupied out of Austrian...

LB So you went southwest?

NR That's right.

LB You went toward Prague essentially.

NR Well, I went to the Hungarian border. Prague is further north. And near the border, through local people, because this wasn't far from the place where my brother married into, I got a guide. A Peasant, a young peasant who knows how to smuggle the border, who knows how to avoid the Polish...

LB He must have had...there must have been so many people doing that...

NR Well, yes. But the Carpathian mountains are big mountains. You can get lost. And I stayed over night and in the morning I got this guide and he was a nice man. We walked for about eighteen hours, in the mountains and the hills and the valleys. You don't see, of course, a living person, or cattle, nothing. And we came to a hill...I had some food with me. And my father told me that there is a man by the name of Shapiro who lives in a town ten miles on the other side of the border. Now Czechoslovakia.

LB Now, this was already Czechoslovakia then?

NR Well, my father told me, when you get to that village, ask for Mr. Shapiro... Harry Shapiro. My father used to do trade dealings with Shapiro. You tell him that you are Sholem Reich's son, he will take care of you. Because I had no hope of reaching Prague, by walking. You know, sooner or later you have to take a train. And if you take a train, there are inspections. Soldiers came in, you have to show a passport. You have to show a birth certificate. And I didn't have it. I had it, but they were no good. So he said, Just get there. Once you cross the border and get to Shapiro, he will do everything. So I crossed the border and I came to Shapiro, dead tired and covered with mud and he was a very nice man and he received me well. He gave me a chance, I washed up. And they gave me supper. And he said, Tomorrow morning, you go to the military commander, Lieutenant So and So. He's a

good friend of mine. And you tell the lieutenant that I sent you and he'll give you a shepouska. A shepouska means a piece of paper which authorizes you to travel.

LB A travel permit.

NR Travel permit. So I was very delighted and I got up at ten o'clock, nine, ten o'clock, wahsed up, shaved and I go to the military commander to present myself there. So by luck, or ill-luck, they changed lieutenants. There was another lieutenant. He said, I don't know Mr. Shapiro. What, who are you? Where were you born? What are you doing? hHow did you get here? At first I tried to bluff my way out because the local people's language was also Ukrainian there. That part of Czechoslovakia is inhabitad by Ukrainians, Carpatho-Ukraines.But I could not lie my way out. And then I tried to say that I was caught here during the War, and during the war it was one country, Austria-Hungary, so I haveno papers. But after afew minutes of intensive questioning, I just told the lieutenant the story. I crossed the border illegaly and I want to go to Prague to study. But that didn't impress him. And the Poles at that time...the Czechs at that time had had an account with the Poles because they claimed the disputed territory of Silesia. The Poles claimed that this is theirs and...so they hated the Poles. They said Pilsudski and Haller are our enemies and they want to mutilate Czechoslovakia and I said, Look, I'm not in politics. And Never mind and they put me in the police, in a cell with a few others and a woman prostitute and right away, the first thing I did is write my name on the wall Because I saw a lot of names of people there, the first thing. And that brought some results. Because after I was released and they brought me home, under guard, for/the smuggli border...

LB You mean you were sent back to Galicia then? To your village?

NR I was sent back to the Czech border and the Czech border handed me over to a Polish patrol and I was brought/back on Rosh Hashana to our town. And it just so happened that my father, all the people were going from shul and I come with a...well, at any rate, after I rested up, a few weeks later, I got a passport that wasn't

entirely kosher but at any rate, I had some paper to show. I tried it again, this time I went through and I came to Prague. After I had been in Prague for about two weeks I met a colleague of mine who was in the Ukrainian army

He was in class with me, in school.

LB In gymnazium?

NR In gymnazium. And after the collapse of the western Ukraine republic where he was an officer, he fled to Prague. Oh, he says, what are you doing here? How did you get out of that jail? So, how do you know that I was in Jail? He says, Well, I saw your name. He also was arrested, but since he was a member of the Ukrainian army the Czechs respected and treated him and they released him and they, later on they established a Ukrainian university in Prague for many of these Ukrainian students. For a number of years. I don't know what happened to it later. And that's how I got to Prague. I just wanted to say a few things about the gymnazium. People confuse it to some extent, or they compare it with the high school. Well, first of all, intellectually it was much more demanding./We had Greek, Latin every day. Six days a week Latin. Six days a week Greek. German, Ukrainian, history, zoology, botany, physics, chemistry. It was inferior, perhaps, in the sense that we had no laboratories, to speak of. And to study chemistry without laboratories is very unproductive, so to sa The second difference is that we had no, hardly any, extra curricular activities. School was over and you were on your own. That led to the organization of a great deal of political activity. Cultural and political activity among the students. On their own. So the Poles had their circles and their scouts and they had marches and they had conferences and they/had dances and so on. The Ukrainians probably had it too. And the Jews organized. That's how we organized the Jewish boy scout movement which you call Hashomer Hatseir. And we developed parallel to the class work, after one or two o'clock, we developed a a network of classes. Hebrew classes and Jewish history, excercises, Sunday marches, physical healthactivity. And all financed by our own meager contributions. And we had an organization of about three, four hundred....gymnazium students. Also students from the commercial high school and

we created like a home away from home. The fact is that from the point of view of importance, we attached more importance to extra curricular activities. Life began at two o'clock. School you had to sit through, suffer through and do your best. And this was a very, very important. I think probably a great deal of development or independence may be traced to this fact. I'm a strong believer that too much guidance is a negative factor, is a liability. And Americans just excel in guidance. They just guide you to death. We never had a guidance counselor in high school. The first time I heard of it was over here. On your own! You'll make a mistake so you'll learn from the mistake. When I was in Hunter (College) and I was always opposed to mandatory courses...required courses, in principle almost...

LB But you had so many in gymnazium.

NR Of course! But...in gymnazium...all were required courses.

LB §6?

NR I know. But not at the university, you see. In high school at that time, we could not. The only choice, there were some choices, for instance, people could get exempt from Greek, if they chose pharmacy. A pharmacist doesn't have to know Greek. I don't know why. A lawyer has to know Greek. But pharmacy is usually chosen by students who were too weak to carry the full program. Intellectually weak. Druggists, to make pills and so on. But otherwise, you had to take... the intellectual part of the program was very taxing.

LB But what I also hear is that you maintained these friendships well on into later life.

NR Well, in my case, that was not possible because we dispersed.

LB But even so, if you hear, you remember...but if you asked me about people from Hunter I don't remember...I remember one person.

NR That's right. That was too big an institution. After all the high school had, at the most three hundred, three hundred and fifty students.

LB I expect there was a different atmosphere. You were living with them all the time. And there was no family...

NR We did not have diversion. There were no movies, no television, no radio, no

camp...in summer, going to camp. You had to be on your own. In summer we had to devise our own ...

(Tape off)

Side 9 000

NR In Hunter, at committee meetings I always tried to reduce the area of required courses. It's true I realize that the students who come here are not as mature, as the students who went through gymnazium. And there was a more selective group there. It was only about five percent, less than five percent of elementary school kids ever reached gymnazium. Here, practically everybody goes to high school.

LB Not at the time that I went. But now it's true.

NR But, in general, my attitude was, Why don't you let the students choose? Well, they are not mature enough. They'll make a mistake. So they'll make a mistake. And they'll realize and they'll either drop out of the course or do the best and stay to the end, and later on realize. Well, you have your European notions. This is a different situation. Now, I think the fact that we were on our own, not merely in school, but after school hours...that was a long day and a long weekend and evenings and they were filled. Not by professional entertainers or by community action financed by the Board of Ed. and so on, funded by this and funded by that. On our own. We paid dues. And we paid rent for a house that we rented. Student funds. And that house always hummed with activity. Everybody had to take Hebrew courses, an elementary course in Jewish history. And everybody had to take course in...

LB And this was all student organized?

NR All studnet organized and it was headed by a group of people who were, perhaps, in their early twenties. One of the leaders of our group was Professor Speigel. I don't know whether you know the name. Shomem Spiegel, who is now emeritus. He was professor...he migrated to Palestine. He was professor at the Haifa Technion.. He was professor of Medieval and Hebrew Literature and he came here in the '30s and was professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary. He was retired a few years ago. All the others are mostly all dead. A few of the members of the Hashomer

Hatseir, are still living, in Israel. When I'm in Israel I visited them. And I also write. And a few months ago I got a letter from one whom I haven't heard from in fifty years. Because he migrated to Argentina. And he lived a lifetime in Argentina. And when he retired, I think he's well to do, he retired to Israel. So when he came to Israel, he met others of that group who were on kibbutzim and some are still kibbutzim and so they gave him my address and he wrote me a letter. In Polish. Ahhh! His name was Becher. So that's how it is.

LB I would like to ask you one more question because I won't go to the end of this tape. It would take us too long. In your own feelings, because you left before you were really involved in political life in Poland. How do you feel about the Bund and the position they took.

NR Well, the Bund hardly existed in Galicia. The Bund was essentially...so I had no contact, no personal contact.

LB No, I mean your feelings. Do you have any feelings about it?

NR Well, I think that they were...Of course, I reject Marxism.

LB All right, but they took positions...they were in conflict all the time over the conflict between Marxism and Jewish nationalism. Right? They were torn apart on this issue.

NR Yes. Well, they were in a sense, they were also nationalist. Theybwere in favor of Yiddish as a language and they called their philosophy that is all problems are to be solved and with this I agree. Because very few people believe that it's possible to transfer millions and millions of Jews to Palestine and if not for the Hitler tragedy, the Holocaust, Palestine would never have become Israel. The yishuv, the community in Palestine would never have amounted to more than several hundred thousand. Because the bulk of immigration came after the Hitler disaster, the several hundred thousand Jews who survived to go. And of course the Hitler disaster shook the confidence of all people, Jewish people

wherever they lived...if it happened in Germany, it's possible to happen in Latin America. It's possible to happen in the United States. So that gave a new... So, at the time, I think the overwhelming majority of people, asked, Do you think that Palestine can absorb three million Jews from Poland, the answer was, No.

LB But there was a Zionist organization.

NR There was. There was.

LB And they were active.

NR They were active. But you know, somebody defined a Zionist. A Zionist is the man who collects money from other Jews so still other Jews should go to Israel. There is a strong American Zionist movement but American Aliyah amounts to nothing. Very little. And Israel exists already as a state. And compare it when Palestine was a little island of Jews among hostile Arabs and so on. So, I was never con-- cerned with ideological struggle of Bundist and Marxist and so on. At that time, I didn't even...I started to read economic literature only when I was at the University.

LB And you finished at Prague. Did you finish at the University of Prague?

NR Oh, no, no, no. I was there for a year and then I came back because I was already preparing myself to go overseas. Now because the first thing that I did in Prague was to investigate possibilities of immigration. Prague was a big city, the capital city. It had embassies and consulates from all over the world, practically. So, we I began making inquiries,...and there were a lot of Jews who were...even professional ...the profession involved writing false passports.... but I was not interested in that so much. But I got hints, where to go and so on. And the first thing I did was I started to coax my brother from Poland to join me in Prague. Because in Prague it's possible to have, it's possible to obtain visas, bargain for visas. We couldn't get a visa to the United States because you needed an affadavit from a relative. We had poor relatives We didn't bother. So after some time, my brother came to Prague. Well, there was some trouble. The passposrt was only for Czechoslovakia but therefore some of the embassies, the consulates, re-

fused to give him a visa overseas, because you had to have a passport qualifying you...well, at any rate, that's a different story. And then, he finally got the visa to Canada. And in Canada, he brought over my other brother who was in Budapest and never came home. He was in a good job, but that Budapest had a Communist regime and influence, so he didn't like it very much either. So he came home for a visit and got himself a passport and joined my brother in Canada. And after the year was over, I decided I too will leave. There was no point in continuing in Prague. So I came home and entered the University of Lemberg. All the time, waiting for my brothers to establish themselves in Montreal, so they should be able to send for me, either an affadavit or a steamship ticket. And that took about a year. And my father and mother just put up a strong fight against my going. Using also tears, and Vus vilst du? You're a bright boy. You can study. You can be a lawyer. You'll get guten naden. Ah voile bucher. Poland is still a country. And don't worry. And where are you going? You're the youngest, you are our last one and where are you going and...My brother...One of my brothers died three years ago, in Montreal. And his son looked through his desk. And he found papers, letters that I wrote from Poland to him, going back to 1920, 1921. And among the letters I found a long letter from my father. I never knew that he wrote that letter. My father was not a great particular letter writer. He didn't bother. And in that letter, I still have it...tears come to my eyes...where he pleads with Marcus and Harry, the names of my two brothers in Montreal, they should leave me alone. Vus velst du? Vus velst du ... ihm nuch ba mir zunemmen? Those were the words. And of course, he knew, he heard, indirectly, that they don't...zei haben zich nisht gemacht azoi groise glicken, in Montreal. The first year my brother washed dishes in a Main Street restaurant and the floors and the other brother was selling newspapers at four o'clock in the morning in a frost, cold winter in Montreal. So it took them a year and a half before they collec enough money to pay for my steamship ticket. And before my brother left, my father borrowed two hundred dollars from a peasant who came from America to give it to my brother. And that saved him. Because in Paris he couldn't have gotten a visa

without showing a Canadian visa...without showing that he has enough, after he bought a ticket, that he's got enough about a hundred dollars to live on before ...and also they wanted the name of...the steamship agent got a name...he knew somebody in Montreal, that steamship agent, and he gave his name that he is... an uncle. He turned out to be a very nice man. In fact after a year, after my brothe was washing dishes for a year, because he was a bank clerk, he was intelligent, he learned a little bit of English, so this Mirenberg from the steamship, gave him a job. A clerk in his office. And after a year, they began thinking of business, both brothers. And I helped them out from Prague, sending them samples and so on. They finally established an export--import business which now employs about sixty...so that Mrenberg/a very nice man, gave them a corner in his office, they should have the beginning of a sample room without any rent. That's how they started peddling samples among storekeepers...selling them and later on they rented a store and later on a whole building. Now they have trouble, they're worried...the French, with the vote...they may move to Ontario, to Toronto. Well, they may leave half the business here and hal in Toronto. They're really very scared that a lot of the Jews will be...

LB Now this is if Quebec secedes. If the province of Quebec secedes from Canada.

NR Yes. So this shows how I hesitated, the pressure. Finally they sent me the ticket and I said, I'm going. I said good-bye to father and mother. And meh hat gevehnt. And I came to Lvov, to Lemberg, because Lemberg was the office of the Cunard line, from which I had the ticket. And I walked in and I walked out and I came home, I'm not going. And I made up a story to save my, from embarrassment, I made up a story that the ticket was not proper. I have to write back to Harry, in Montreal. But they saw through it, I think. But they were very happy and I went back to Lemberg to continue with my studies. My sister lived in Lemberg and I roomed with my sister, staye with her. And a week before Christmas, I walked out on the street, on the way to the university,...

LB What year is this now?

NR That's in 1922. Middle of December. There was a poster saying that my year, all

people who were born in the year 1900 must present themselves for military draft. In spite of the League of Nations. The League of Nations was powerless. When I saw that, I called up my father. There was one telephone in the town, in the post office. So you had to call the post office and they sent a messenger. So I called my father and I said, Tate...and I still had the passport and I still had the steam ship ticket. I kept it as an insurance...So when he heard this, he said, Oi, vai iz mir. Fur gezunerheid. He said, Ven darfst du avek furen? So I said, I have time to stay two days here.-I'm coming. Not mother.- So he took the train, came to town, to Lemberg, to the city, which is about an hour's ride, an hour and a half and said good bye to me and vidder gevehnt nuch and I was afraid that when the Polish govern ment decided to defy the League of Nations and draft the people, they will notify the border stations that they should stop all the people of military age. (Phone rings. Tape off.)

LB So you were afraid the borders would be closed. No...finish. Come finish your story.

NR So I came to Warsaw. And the head office of the Cunard Lines was in Warsaw. And Warsaw, was still on the way to the border. A colleague of mine, from the gymnazium was a clerk there. And a guide too. He took the immigrants from the border to facilitate the formalities and so on. Izzik, I'm in trouble. And he already knew. He said, You want to go? And you're afraid now/ I don't know whether they notified. He would ride to the border once or twice a week with groups of emigrants So he said, I will go with you and I will stay on this side. They may let you throug If they don't let you through, maybe I'll be able to do something. He knew some people. So he went with me...not with a regular group, just myself. We came to the border, he stood on this side. And I crossed the border, and they stamped it... In 1938 I was attending a concert at Lewishohn stadium ...and I never heard from th guy again. I knew he went to Argentina...indirectly. When the concert was over

and I walk out, somebody taps me on the shoulder.. I turned around, it was that fellow. He's in Jersey now. I don't know whether he's still alive.

LB I thank you...very much.