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Irving Skolnick, transcript only

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LB We'll start, if you would, please, and ^{you} tell the machine and me, your name.

IS Skolnick, Irving.

LB Irving Skolnick. And your birthplace?

SK Bratslav.

LB Bratslav. And what part of Europe is that?

SK It's in the eastern part of Europe.

LB Is that in the Ukraine?

SK Ukraine, near ~~to~~ town, near Tolchin or Nemirov. *they're historical towns.*

LB Nemirov?

IK Nemirov, yes. Near Nemirov and Tolchin.

(Wife speaks into conversation in the background.)

LB Excuse me. And could you tell me what year you were born?

IK What year? 1902.

LB 1902, so that gives us twelve years before the first World War started. Right?

Now could you tell me, in the town of Bratslav what was the size of the Jewish population?

IK Approximately 1500.

LB About 1500 families or people? 1500 families. And did they live in the usual pattern, like in the center of the town...

IK Center, yes. Concentrated in the center.

LB And on the outskirts lived the non-Jews?

IK Non-Jews. Gentiles.

LB Goyim.

IK Gentiles. Goyim. Yes.

LB And the Goyim were, what? What nationality?

IK They were Greek Orthodox most of them plus a minority of Catholics. Basically they were Greek Orthodox.

LB Greek Orthodox, or Ukrainians?

IS Ukrainians. And a minority of Poles.

LB So you had Poles there too?

IS Sure. We had a church, a Catholic church, in the center of the city. In fact that area belonged once to Poland. It was Polish.

LB That's right. I know.

IS Yes, before Chmelnitski, if you know something about Chmelnitski...

LB I do know. I do know about Chmelnitski. I don't think Bratslava ~~(sic)~~ is on here.

(Looking at map.) What district are you in? Volhynia?

IS Podolia. Podolia.

(Some discussion, proing over map as to just where Bratslav is located.)

This is White Russia and this is *Kremenchug*.

LB Let's see if there's another map here.

IS Oh there's another one.

LB No, that one is Hungary. That one's no good. That's Poland. I have another one.

IS Give me Podolski, Podolski Gubernya.

LB It might not be on.

IS It's a small... though it was a region... Minsk, Kiev, Berdichev, *Poltava, Kremenchug,*

Podolsk, ~~here's~~ *Kamenets* Podolsk, ~~the~~ *the Bug used to run there. Nikolaev*

where the water used to go in the Black Sea, Kishinev. No. So you haven't got our town.

LB But where would you be about?

IS I would be about near, you haven't got even the main town. Vinnitsa you haven't got either. This is the state capital isn't here either. Vinnitsa isn't here either. There's the Bug. Podolsk, It must be here, Kamenets Podolsk. It's in this area.

LB It's near Kamenets...

IS The fact is that Kamenets ^{was} the state capital, but they moved it from Kamenets Podolsk, ^{and} they moved it to Vinnitsa. And you haven't got Vinnitsa here. You should have it. Because that's the state capital now, *Vinnitsa*.

LB And where's Bratslav?

IS Bratslava should be right here, on the Bug here.

LB You know what I think. I think that Chmelnitzki came up this way.

IS Yes, he came from our area by the way. Ours was the ^{center} ~~area~~ where actually the whole movement started, to move around. And even 1919 when Petlura came, again it started from our town. The first shot was from our town. Bratslav, yes. Bratslav. Bratslav is historical as far as the uprising of the Ukrainians against the Russians and against the Poles. National movements. They call it a Russian word, ^{chinese} ~~samoschestinnye~~, that means to be on their own. Independent. Samoschestinnye. And it actually started from our town.

LB Samoschestinnye? *Samoschinie*.

IS Samoschestinnye *is an Ukrainian word...*

it means independent. Samoschestinnye, that's an Ukrainian word. That's where it actually started. The first shot was ^{from there.} ~~fired.~~ And then ^{went} to Proskura *and spread out over Ukraine.* That was in 1918, against the Soviets.

LB So you say, now, 1500 Jewish families?

IS Approximately.

LB And in the area all around, how many Goyim? Non-Jews.

IS Well, this...non--Jews, ^{there were many.} We were surrounded by the peasants. Villages, very many villages. Couldn't tell you the state. I mean the region.

LB I mean, what you would consider...

IS The smaller villages around us, what would you consider...close to the town?

It st ~~started~~ in the uprising... *well*, in the area, about 15,000. Because when the uprising started, it started with thousands and thousands. About 15,000, approximately. The region around us, close to our town...

LB Was about 15,000?

IS In that area, yes. Because they had many villages. Especially since they could visualize that the uprising started against the Soviet government. Thousands and thousands *were there.* And they were very close to it except the bands

that came from different sections. I'm talking about the immediate uprising.

That was only ^{from} the region. In the area of 15,000 approximately.

LB Now was Petlura himself from Bratslava?

IS No. Petlura wasn't there but we had our own. We had ~~one~~ ^{by the name} Shliakhovich.

LB What's his name?

IS Shliakhovich. He was from the town and he was one of the assistants of Petlura. Shliakhovich. He was known by the ~~name~~ ^{name} in that time. He was killed after by the Bolsheviks.

LB He was.

IS He was killed after, but a long time, he was operating. He, combined with another group, who by the way, you have it in the... Sokolov, ^{there were two of them.} Sokolov and Shliakhovich. But Shliakhovich was our own native son. Sokolov was from a different region. From Kherson. But they were combined. The fact is that when they came in to our town so Shliakhovich's didn't kill our town people. But the Sokolov's did kill the people in the town.

LB Now are you talking about Jews?

IS We lost about six hundred... Jews, Yes. But Shliakhovich, because he was a native... ^{his} so ~~the~~ Cossacks did not kill Jews of our town. But they were together. So Sokolov killed and Shliakhovich's did not kill. If that means something to you.

LB Yes, it does. Could you spell his name in English?

IS Lyachowich.

LB And the other one was Sokolov.

IS Sokolov. Put them together because they operated both of them.

LB And they were Petlura's lieutenants...

IS Petlura's assistants. Very important, yes. They were very important people, as far as that's concerned. This is ~~very~~ characteristic of our town. I mean, by the way, during the Revolution. During the counter Revolution ~~and the~~ ^{or} Revolution

1918, 1919. When the bands operated in that region.

LB Now tell me, before that time, something about your family and ^{your} ~~the~~ life there.

How many people were in your family? Your own family?

IS Well, you have the children. Well, we were (Pause) my father, my mother with three children, naturally. And then I had my, the other one, grandmother and ...we had about fifteen people anyway.

LB I mean living in your house, in one house.

IS In your house, we were five, three and ^{my parents;} ~~two~~ ^{is} five and then we had my grandmother and her daughter, five, seven or eight. Eight. The daughter lived there too at at that time. Eight people. That means two separate sections in the same house.

LB So you had two separate families essentially?

IS We lived, my family and ^{they had separate,} ~~me~~ on one side and/in the same building, in the same house.

LB Now who was on your side? Your mother and father?

IS And we were three children.

LB Three children. That's five. And on the other side, was your grandmother...

IS Grandmother with her daughter and another, two of them, three of them, Dora used to come occasionally.

LB Who is Dora? An aunt?

IS An aunt, yes, ^{my mother's sisters.} Two sisters. Two aunts and my grandmother.

LB O.K. So that's eight altogether.

IS No, one used to travel around but she used to come and stay with them. She used to teach and she was in Bessarabia but she used to come occasionally.

LB That's your aunt Dora. And what did your father do? For a living? If he was able to find a living.

IS Well, yes. No, he was able. The fact is, he was originally a shochet. You know what a shochet means. And while he, ^{that means something to you,} but he couldn't take it. ^{He} ~~It~~ was very symptomatic. ^[Sympathetic] So he was in business. He had store, leather goods.

LB In Bratslava?

IS In Bratslava. But my father didn't come...he was from...my mother was from Bratslava. My father came from a different town. But he was married to my mother naturally. He came from ~~Tivol~~ ^{Tivrov}... ~~Tivol~~ ^{Tivrov} was another town.

LB Tivol?

IS ~~Tivrov~~ ^{Tivrov}. It was near Prilucki, by the way. That's where your parents come from, Priluki. In that area. In that region. Again/ Podolski region. Gubernya. If you know what that means... Gubernya means state.

(Wife interjects that ~~Tivrov~~ ^{Tivrov} was not from Podolski Gubernya)

IS ~~Tivrov~~ ^{Tivrov}. No, ~~Tivrov~~ ^{Tivrov} was Podolski. Priluki was Podolski also. I remember, yes.

LB So, your father was in the leather goods business.

IS He was originally a shochet but he was sentimental so...he changed.

LB Did you read the story The Slaughterer?

IS By whom is that?

LB By Isaac Bashevis Singer.

IS Singer, yes, yes, yes.

LB Well, that man also couldn't stand it.

IS No, no. He couldn't stand it. That was the problem with the thing. The tendency was at that time to...the fact is he graduated the Yeshiva. And he was a shochet. And the first time he had to go with the , he couldn't take it and... But he had the background, *I mean that was his background.* You had to graduate Yeshiva for a shochet. So that was it.

LB So what kind of business was it?

IS A retail store selling leather goods and ready made leather goods. Ready made,

that's all
A shoes, boots and that's it. Ready made.

LB So he had to buy them from someone.

IS Buy them, naturally.

LB Was there a big enough market in Bratslava?

IS There was a big market, yes. Was a big market. Because it was the uyeznie, how do you call uyeznie, like a county. Uyeznie, let's look up uyeznie in the dictionary. We were a center. Our town was a center with, the county center.

LB Trading?

IS Trading and even when they had to report to the army, they have to come to our town. We ~~are~~ *had*...

LB You had like an army recruiting center...

IS Recruiting center. Recruiting center, yes. They had to come from the whole *region to our town*. Was a uyeznie town. What will you call uyeznie? (To his wife) Take a look here (in the dictionary). You look here, uyeznie. (Time to look.) It's interesting.

LB (While husband and wife are looking) O.K. So that's what your father did and now would you say that you were poor or lower class?

IS No, not poor. We weren't the poorer class. We were the upper...not the upper class, we were the middle class.

LB Middle class.

IS Because we had our own house. We had our own business. We had an education which ~~is~~ *ex* in *shtetel* was a *hard to get*. We had a Hebrew education, Russian education....

LB Tell me about your education.

IS About the education. Well, we had the Hebrew education, if the education means something to you in this case. We had a good Hebrew education. *It was a must.*

LB You started in cheder...

IS Cheder, *higher, higher, higher.*

LB How, don't take anything for granted. Because if the student listens

he will know nothing. You started with cheder and you went until what age?

IS We started cheder with seven years. And you wanted the specifics of the cheder, Chumash, Gemorah, *and all that;* does that mean anything to you?

LB Yes.

IS Well, how many years? Well, until, it went parallel to the Russian education.

I took after Hebrew, modern Hebrew. First I took...

LB What do they call that davdeke? Davdeke melamud?

IS Dardeke melamud. Dardeke means elementary. Right, starting from the dardek, from the elementary actually, is the dardeke, ~~then~~ from the Gemorrah melamud, and then from the Gemorah, I didn't go in that direction so I took modern Hebrew. Modern Hebrew. Which was a different phase. Lets say, if you went ~~to~~ with the Gemorah all the time, you could have gone up to Yeshiva, let's say, a shochet or rabbi or something of that sort. I turned in a different direction ... (Pause. Wife cannot find uyeznie in the dictionary)

LB O.K. So you lived in your own house. Was it a wooden house?

IS Wooden...No, it was brick and wood, naturally how they built it in those towns.

LB Brick and wood. It was a good sized house?

IS It was a good size, yes. Becuase it was in the center of town. *We were in the center of the town.*

LB And how many rooms do you have, do you remember?

IS One, two, three, five rooms put it. The whole house. We had three rooms, but big rooms naturally, that was the style. And they had two rooms.

BS (wife) Don't forget the kitchen wasn't considered a room. The kitchen was not considered a room.

IS And then we had to the kitchen, we had another one ^{*the same;*} ~~sunny~~, put it that way, it was approximately...it was the European towns ^{*we*} ~~were~~ you know, very generous, ^{*we*} ~~places.~~ ^{*places.*}

LB Now when your father had the store, did your mother help him in the store?

IS Yes, yes, definitely.

LB So did you have, did your parents have someone who came in to help with the housework? Or you/sisters...

IS No, there was actually...yea actually, they used to help but even my grandmother or something like that, but she was ^{actively} actually participating... *She was a good business lady.*

LB Your mother?

IS Mother.

LB Well then, if your mother was busy in the store, was there anyone...who did the housework, cleaning and the cooking?

IS No. Furthermore that was the question is of certain hours. The person, the day of doing business was up till, practically, let's say up to three, four o'clock. That was actually the activity as far as the store. Then she would go home and my father used to stay there the rest of the hours.

LB Were the store and the house connected?

IS No, it wasn't in the store area. Occasionally I would come out. After I was helping as far as the business was concerned. *Very actively participating.*

LB O.K. Now how did you get along...Oh, we started with your schooling. So you had a good Hebrew education...

IS Hebrew education, naturally. Hebrew education. As far ^{as, if} as we mentioned ⁱⁿ the shtetel, you should remember the Hebrew was predominant ^{in that time} [ly]. For instance when you come to the ^{Polish} region there Yiddish was very popular, by the way. ^{Yiddish} Because there you have the movement of the Bund. I don't know if you know that one. So, there you had industrial people already. Jews, industrial people, who worked in factories...

LB Let's just stick to Bratslav.

IS Our region we had for instance, a Hebrew education.

LB A Hebrew education.

IS Exclusively. And then, as I mentioned, later on as I advanced I had a Hebrew, yes Hebrew, modern Hebrew, contemporary Hebrew.

LB Now what about your secular education? What kind of a school did you go to?

BS Gymnasia.

IS Gymnasia. Naturally, it was the high school.

LB Now was this a public gymnasia or a private gymnasia? Who ran ~~ex~~ it?

IS The gymnasia was a government gymnasia.

LB Government gymnasia. Was it in Bratslav?

IS In town, yes. We had ~~our~~ gymnasia. We had, first the high school which is about five classes high school, high school. Above

five classes. And then we had the gymnasia. We had the gymnasia in our town too.

^{to}
~~IS~~ LB Now did you have to pay to go to the ~~by~~ gymnasia?

IS In the gymnasia we didn't pay either. No.

LB Did you have to go on Saturdays?

IS No. We didn't. *I don't think we went*
yes. ^{on S_{at}urday?} We did go S~~at~~urday. We did go Saturday.
(Wife's voice in the background).

LB You did. Because in some places, in some families there was difficulty and the children were not permitted to go, to continue their education because they would have to write on ^{at}Saturday.

IS Yes. That's correct. But in our town...

LB How was your family a very religious, pious family?

IS It was a very religious family. But up to my age, because my grandmother ~~id~~ died, when I started to go ^{to} the school, the gymnasia or the high school, so my grandfather wasn't alive anymore and my grandmother wasn't influential enough and my mother was, by the way, she ~~was~~ ^{had} an excellent Hebrew education, ^{good} education in Hebrew. But ~~I~~ again it became, let's say, modern. A modern approach to the problem of education. And there I actually, I came in with *my* Saturday business.

LB So then, it was permitted?

IS Well, it was that!

LB That's the way it was.

- IS That was ... *you have to accept it.*
- LB But on the other hand they kept kashruth. *they kept the home kosher.*
- IS Oh yes, yes. As far as kashruth and everything else, was kept. Good. Good. In this sense it was very kashruth.
- LB How about your father, did he go to ^{shul} ~~school~~ regularly?
- IS Oh yes. Yes. My father was, the fact he was a baal keri he used to...
- BS To blow the horn.
- IS No, not to blow the horn. He was the, he used to read the Torah, well he was a learned man, anyway. He wasn't a Hasid. My father was not a Hasid.
- LB Oh he was not.
- IS ~~Because~~ No he didn't believe it. Because we had the Habad Hasidim and we had the Misnagdim over against the Hasidim. Oh, you know something about it?
- LB Yes, I do.
- IS He was of the one who criticized the Hasidim.
- LB So he was a Mitnagid.
- IS He was under the Misnagdim. Because he had a good education in Hebrew and Torah *and soon,* and so he, *and* the Hasidim were more...
- LB Lower.
- IS That's right. O.K. So ~~he~~ he did not. He was not a Hasid. No. In fact he used to laugh at the ~~the~~ Hasidim. He was more of the pious, of the religious...
- LB Of the strict orthodox, rather than the Hasidic...
- IS Not in the strict, in the sense of a fanatic, but an Orthodox, yes.
- LB Well, a lot of people keep using the word fanatic. And they say, well he wasn't a fanatic, but he was very religious. Now how would you define the difference between what is a fanatic and what is a strict Orthodox? I mean, I wouldn't even think of using the word but I've heard people use it over and over. He was not a fanatic. What does that mean?
- IS Well, for instance, if a fanatic, could follow the tradition, you know the habits *of everything,* whatever it was given over from generation to generation. He, for instance, was

philosophic about certain things. He would not accept all those things. For instance, he even accepted my going to school...

LB To school on Saturday.

IS School. This is, by itself, is not fanatic. Or, for instance, if he gave me a modern education, was something that fanatics would not permit it. The Hasidim wouldn't permit it even. There you have the collision. For instance, in the way of bringing me up, for instance, I used to go Saturday skating which wasn't something unbelievable. Saturday you sit in shul, or whatever you do on Shabbos. O.K., it's not important. But here you are. So that means...and he permitted me to a degree, naturally, not fully. But to a degree. So here you have this different directions. There, he wasn't a fanatic in the sense of bringing me up, the same way maybe he was brought up. He gave me freedom to a degree, he gave me freedom. So I suppose I give you a little definition of the fanatic.

LB Yes. I heard it but I didn't know what it meant.

IS That's exactly what it is. For instance, *old fashioned. you find it in the Hasidim.*
For instance, too again, a modern approach,
a certain modern approach from the Hasidim, a certain old fashioned. He stuck to every word and to every tradition or to every habit, whatever it was given over from generation to generation *following* the same line. For instance, if you see the fanatics right here in this area right here? (Miami Beach) With all this stuff, with the...

LB With the pais...

IS Pais, tsitses you know ... and the little kids, you know, this is a fanatic. A fanatic in the full sense of the word because God didn't say you have to do this and this, *this is a fanatic*. And the modern approach was You accept it, naturally, he was a Jew. He was, let's say, religious, up to a degree, *when philosophy came he started* to disagree with certain things. And more or less, I mean, roughly speaking, *this is* ~~it's~~ a little definition of fanaticism. Small towns. Small towns.

LB But you couldn't actually deviate too far, could you, because you ~~had~~ *had* the

weight of public opinion, that you would have to then, fight against. Isn't that correct, in the shtetel?

IS In the shtetel, public opinion played a part, no question about it. But ^{this} ~~that~~ means *within the limit of the* public opinion, naturally. You couldn't be ~~a~~ excluded or an exception in this sense, you go just contrary to the opinion of the shtetel. There was a certain pressure, from the shtetel, you have to go withing the limits *more or less.*
 EXAM For instance, ^{even} my way, going without a hat, let's say, Saturday and carrying your skates, *I'm speaking individually* that meant something for the public opinion, who look at this, Thier son is going and... But that wasn't ^{fanaticism} ~~anything~~ any more. That was the freedom *to a degree. A certain degree of freedom.*
 You see, I'm giving you more or less a type, I mean the trend of that time. What a meant. It was a good thing that our shtetel wasn't provincial too in that sense. Because it was more or less...

LB Well then you were exposed to other influences, you were saying.

IS That's correct. Because of the army. They used to come to... It was more or less a progressive or modern or civilized, more or less, in terms of a small town. Because it had an influence of people *every year...* they had to come for conscription, Right? (to wife). The army. ^{the recruits} They had to come to register and they had to train them there, a small part of the army and so on. That means the high officials were there. It was a town. It was a town. They ^{we had a} had the gymnasia, school, we had even a technical school and so forth. So we were more than a small provincial town. We weren't a provincial town. We weren't a big city like Odessa, but we were not a small town.

LB Bratslav is on the map quite often.

IS Yes, well it had to be because Bialik, if you know something... Bialik when he mentions the ^{he mentions there} Bratslav, Bratslav, Nemirov. *they're two towns.* You don't know Hebrew I don't think.

LB I know some Hebrew.

(Wife speaks from background).

IS Kishinev? No he had something about another one, one of his . . .
Well the fact is that ~~it was~~ ^{when they} ~~made the~~ pogroms, Bratslav is in history ^{prominent}
starting from 1600, 1625 I think.

LB Well the Chmelnitski rebellion started in 1648.

IS '48. That's the time. *Chmelnitski* started to operate on the Dnieper, *in that area,*
around Kiev and the Podol, the Podol. That's the whole state. The Podol state.
And ~~the~~ Bratslav was the town where the Ukrainians had a good...there they were
entrenched. As I said before when I mentioned samoschenye, ^{that} ~~it~~ was the original
Ukrainian word, independence.

LB And that place was also owned by the Poles, then.

IS Yes it belonged to the Poles. Podolia belonged to the Poles, yes.

LB Until the final partition.

IS The feudalism, the feudalism, it belonged to the Poles. It was Polish and then
the Ukrainians started to fight against them. We have even drawings when Poland
I think they have it in a drawing,
demands, ^{if} they come to Chmelnitski they should give in...

LB Oh yes. I saw that. That's a very famous painting.

IS That's a famous painting, yes. They laugh~~d~~ at the one who came with the message
from the Poles.

LB They were lovely looking types.

IS They were laughing at the representative who came and wanted them to sign. Yes.
So, there the way they came and the Ukrainians were laughing ~~at~~ them. They'll
never give in.

LB Now tell me, most of the Jews in town then, since this is not a very small, a
little bywater, how did they make a living?

IS Well, *the livelihood* was the same thing. First of all, they had the small town
business. I mean the small town storekeepers. Naturally, storekeepers. And we
have those carpenters, blacksmiths, tailors, what do you call it, the small town
businesses. *what they lived from.* Then charity played a little part too.

Very poor.

LB Now one of the men I interviewed the last couple of days said that any Jew could move to any part of Russia, provided that he had a trade and a job. He did not ^{need} permission. I had never heard that before.

IS No. That wasn't that way. You had first of all a few ways that you could come. But that ~~was~~ ^{was not referring to the} for instance you could ^{travel,} come to a city there were a few ways. First of all that was the official document that you could be there, otherwise you couldn't ^{sleep in} ~~go into~~ the city.

That was in the period of the cor...ghetto. They called it ^{that means} ~~Cherdow~~ ^{limited area.}

LB That's the Pale. That's what they trying to say. Could you transilliterate, what was it? Cher... Cherta...

IS That means an area. Ossedlotsi, where you lived, residence. Cherta Ossedlosi. Ossedlodtsi. Cherta ossedlotsa.

LB I want to write this down. Now that's the second time I've ...

IS That's a very important expression, at that time, before the Revolution.

LB Cherta ossedlosi. And then there's another word after that?

IS Ghetto? Well the ghetto you could see.

LB No, no. That I know. Now what was that...

IS It means up to a certain line you could live and not further than that. Not to overstep.

LB Was this in every single village or...

IS No, no, no. not the village.

LB We're talking about the Pale then?

IS About the areas that you could live. Cherta ossedlosi.

LB Areas where the Jews could live.

IS Could live and not go out of that area. Now for instance, ^{even} to stay ⁱⁿ ~~even~~ the villages you had to ~~p~~ have permission to stay in a village.

LB If you were travelling?

IS Well, travelling was not the question. But if you come to live in a village, you

had to have permission for that.

LB That's what I thought.

IS Yes that is correct. Now as far as moving from one city, it's not a question of going to a city but a question of settling in a city or staying in a city. They give you a limited amount of, how many days you could stay in a city. The only ones who could stay in a city or settle down in a city is a merchant they called it merchant pervii guildi, first, high merchant.

LB O.K. I heard that.

IS Perviii guildi.

LB That's the first guild.

IS First guild, right. That means, pervii guildi, then you could live there. That means you had to have a big business. That was one, now as far as I'm talking about staying in a city, not a transit...

LB To live.

IS To live *in a city. Not to pass a city.* That was pervii guildi. And then you had the question of... (discussion with wife from background) professional, not even professional. Again you have to be of the highest guild... By the way there is a very important question that you would want to know is pertsenti norma. That means the percentage of the Jewish population who go to school. That's a very important thing.

LB Yes, But I'm still not clear on this other thing. You said percenta norma?

IS Percentni norma. That is a percentage of the population. Percentni norma.

(End of tape).

Side 2

000

LB Now when you talk about the percentni norma, are you talking about the percent of Jews who were allowed to attend the schools? Percent of Jews compared to the percent of Gentiles, or compared to the total population.

IS No, no, no. Compared to the regional... I suppose that was *worked*

according to the percent. Or maybe it was ^{a uniform} even too, A certain percentage of Jews, but it had to come proportional to the population of that region.

LB So there was like what you call a quota.

IS A quota system. That is correct. Yes. But that specific term, percentni norma
...

LB Now that's the first time I've heard it. I've heard of a numerus clausus, and I've heard of a quota. I've never heard of a percentni norma.

IS That was the actual literal expression.

LB Now in your gymnasia, the one that you went to, which was government run, you were taught in what language, Russian?

IS Russian, yes. Completely.

LB And what subjects did you study?

IS What subjects? Literature and naturally math, languages...

LB What languages?

IS In fact we had ^{to have} three languages, French, German and Latin. In high school too.

In high school we had to have three languages, compulsory, German, French and Latin.

LB Most Europeans had quite a good education if they managed to get to school.

IS As far as education, it was a real solid education.

LB Right. Did you have history?

IS Oh sure. History was very important. Ancient history, that was the beginning... the first ^{classes} ~~part~~ was also national history, ^{the} Russian history and then the ancient history.

LB Now while you were going to this gymnasia you were also pursuing your Hebrew education. Right?

IS Parallel with it. That was the modern Hebrew. I'm talking already about the Hebrew education, not the Talmud. Not the religion.

LB Now, you would go to the gymnase from what hour to what hour?

IS From the beginning, from nine o'clock let's say to two thirty or three o'clock.

LB And then after that, you...would go for your Hebrew schooling.

IS Hebrew school: *A teacher* with several students ^{*until*} At night naturally. It wasn't set hours. Sunset, Sunrise and sunset.

LB Were you expected to do homework?

IS We did homework under kerosene lamps. Kerosene lamps.

LB You did. You had kerosene lamps.

IS It was the beginning, the beginning...of the end.

LB Of the century. The beginning of the end, is right.

IS The beginning of the end.

LB The beginning of the end. That's right. Would you say that living in that town was a happy time for you?

IS Yes, it had certain thrill. Yes, it had a certain excitement, no question about it. Specifically, in that line, in times ~~of~~ when we were. We had an education we were, so to say, not small townish, *in the town, that we were* ^{*villagers*} ~~or~~ ^{*small*} townish, provincial. Then, for instance, besides, I used to tutor too, tutor while I was in school. Then I did a little charitable work. *Collecting for the poor. That was the actual charity as they say.* I used for instance to tutor the children who the rich used to pay for them.

LB You tutored the poor and the rich paid for it.

IS And the rich paid for it. That's right. Well naturally they had to *pay* for your meals. The ones who paid ... or with handicapped children. That's why it was a certain thrill in the whole thing.

So talking about the group, my type of people. I mean that group was...

LB Did you have a lot of friends in that town?

IS Yes because it was more or less considered a bigger town so the same thing, They also went to school. Then outside, it used to be, at that time we ^{*were*} ~~used to be~~ Zionists, *the Zionist* ~~this~~ movement.

LB You were?

IS *In the Poale Zion* ^{Zion} ~~Not problems.~~ *Tserei* Zion. The young, *Tserei* means young Zionists. ^{Poale Zion} Poale Zion is Labor Zionist which we didn't mean

a thing like I mean in a small town. But Zion, that much I was, One of the *Tserei* Zion. Which was by itself an activity too. And that was permitted by the government, at that time. I'm talking about those years which ...

LB Now which years are you talking about?

IS A Socialist group was not permitted. ^{Socialism} /At that time was not...I'm talking in terms of the Czar. That was before the Revolution. Zion was permitted, was permissible.

LB Do you remember what year? Beginning with what year it was permitted?

Because you know what they do, they turn it on and off like hot and cold water.

One year something would be permitted and then it would not be permitted...

IS No, it wasn't. For instance, *Tserei* Zion, it wasn't completely as a political party. It was close to Zionism just by, abstractly. Leaning toward the...

LB You mean through social activities.

IS Social activities, that's all. But it wasn't in the full sense of a political party. Participating, let's say, in city affairs. It was a close group of youngsters, young Zionists and that was the *extent of activities* as far as the political activities were concerned.

LB What was the age, upper age limit?

IS Youngsters. Youngsters.

LB What age? Fifteen.

IS Well first of all, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, small towns, we were active very young... *It was an early childhood.* We were pretty active because the environment was such anyway. *The good ones* or the popular ones were active in every phase actually of the town.

LB So, up to about fourteen.

IS Fourteen, that was the movement so to say, But it wasn't a political *movement* ^{*the Zionist movement*}

LB Did you read the Zionist writers? Did you read Jabotinsky or Achad Haam? or Herzl?

IS No, no. That wasn't that time. No, not yet. *In those years...* It was more of a social nature more than a political nature. As I said, *It wasn't well said, actually what it was driving at.* But we were a Zionist organization.

LB I see. I see.

IS That was the inclination, the tendency.

LB Did it ^{ever} occur to anyone in your family to emigrate to Palestine?

IS No, no, not from my family. Not to Palestine. *Now when you'll come to that Nachman Brosse, there you'll read that he did travel. He was in Israel. He was twenty seven years... but that was something different - not personal.* And he came back and he died. But that's Nachman Brosse! That's something else.

LB Well, as you were growing up, what would be the major influences, that shaped you as you remember them? Would it be Judaism? Would it be Ukrainianism national movement? Would it be Zionism, Socialism...What?

IS Well, wait a minute, let's see. It's a period too, *for instance* when the Revolution came *it swept over the whole province.* *We started to be revolutionary too.* we started to be influenced by the revolutionary period.

LB How old were you then? Oh you were eleven.

IS *Twelve years.* That was the time. After the war, 1919. That was the first...the Kerensky revolution was the first in March, *in* February...

LB February. Depending on which calendar you use.

IS March. Kerensky - *about 13 days. Yes that was February.*

So that was the Revolution that was actually swept all over. That was the Menshevik revolution. You know what Kerensky revolution, Menshevik revolution, February revolution...until the October revolution. And then we had new ideas brotherhood and so forth and so on. I mean that was *a new approach* and the youth got in into it. But the *Kerensky* ~~character of the~~ Revolution was something

revolutionary in the full sense of the word. Because, first/^{of}all doors opened up, completely as far as electing even, they called it the Duma, the city government was started to be elected. Before we didn't have it.

LB You're talking about, now, Bratslav.

IS Bratslav or every town, it was involved. That was actually, the reformists ^{who} wanted the Menshevik revolution, the February revolution, Kerensky revolution.

LB Well, I don't think I would call it actually a Menshevik revolution. I would say the Kerensky government ~~coming~~ came into power, because it was a coalition government actually, wasn't it?

IS

IS Yes, but it was a Menshevik in the sense...it was a coalition government but it was inclined on the Menshevik side, not on the Bolshevik side. The Bolsheviks for instance, you know what the Bolshevik and the Menshevik means? Minority ^{also} and the majority. Yes so the Kerensky party, that was/a Social Democratic Party. So the Menshevik was the Kerensky group, a whole group of them and that was the Bolsheviks, that was in 1905. I don't know if you are familiar with the *literature* In 1905 was a Congress and that was the crucial period where the Mensheviks, they had to decide what is the socialism...

LB That was the Second International Congress?

IS That was the Second International Congress? No, I'm talking about the Russian socialist party. Russian Social Democratic Party. And that was the split between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. And ~~what~~ was the definition why Menshevik and Bolshevik. Some decided they would go through reform, ^{as far as} /Mensheviks were concerned. Revolution, slowly, they will educate the people. The Bolsheviks said we have to build the party, that the party will take over. Never mind this reform or changing or education and so on. We have to take it by power, the power is in the hands of the ones who have the power. That was Lenin's revolution. The Bolsheviks. So the Bolsheviks were ~~on~~ Lenin's side and the Mensheviks were ~~on~~ Kerensky's side. *That was* the minority and the majority. So that was the revolution of the February revolution. And ~~when~~ the February revolution came naturally the whole, life all over the city, ^{es all over} the small towns started to

bloom you know, ^{started} New life. Schools started. Courses started. ^{Evening} ~~How~~...

courses, modern approach to education...a whole new life started with the February Revolution. Didn't last too long, but that was *a central point*.

LB Now were you involved in either one of these political...

IS No and even the let's say, the Tseriei Zion were involved too, because they were part of the *game* that time. The Tseriei Zion. Because revolution it ^{was} ~~was~~ freedom and so on, against the Czar and so on, so we participated in our own way. *Celebrating, participating*.

LB Well, but what I'm asking you is...you were only eleven then, so you could hardly have been a Party member...

IS *No,...* we were older than that. It was in 1917, yes 1917. But that was young yes. *But that was... we were all pretty active.*

LB Now what about your father? Was he in any way connected...

IS No, that was the pogroms. When you come to 1917 my father was killed.

LB Your father was killed.

IS My father was killed. That was the time of *Liakhovich*. That was a group. That was a national group. Along with Sokolov. He was killed by the Solkolovs. And that night, we had two, three nights, small towns and there were ~~about~~ six hundred fifty people were killed. And there where the problem came out and I actually buried my father and everybody was afraid to come out and so on and so forth. They were three days, two days. Two afternoons where the whole thing happened. That was in, that was 1919. After the Petlura *started and* there the *Liakhovich's* and Solkolovs came to our town and they had even separate, dressed differently. *The Liakhovich and the Sokolovs.* The Solkolovs killed the *Liakhovich* only robbed but they didn't kill the people. Though the Lahovichs in other towns did kill. But not in our town. So here where they actually split and we had two...or mutual or a way of working together. He did one part to one *chapter...* *Sokolov + Liakhovich*
If that means something. *That means, by the way,* in poetry by the way in Yiddish

there is mentioned that *about those years*.

LB You mean in Bialik's...

IS Not Bialik's. Later on. Later on. Where they lived through all those pogroms.

There's a guy Cantor, Kantor a poet, mentions all those things.

LB Kantor?

IS Cantor. A poet. He died. Was here in this country. He came from the same...

next town to ours. A small *business distance. Very short distance.*

So that was the 1919, that was the time of the pogroms.

LB Well, actually the civil war wasn't over till about 1921.

IS ^{that was} In 1920, 1921. Yes/still with the Polish...I don't know if you're familiar with

the civil war, with Trotsky. They went to, near Warsaw. They had to retreat.

LB Petlura went to Warsaw. No?

IS No, Petlura stopped at ~~the~~ ^{Kiev} *at the Dnieper*. That's where he stopped. He claimed that he's the head of the Ukraina... *nine states.*

LB Oh maybe Budyenny went to...

IS Well Budyenny, no not Budyenny. Trotsky actually went. Trotsky was the Commissar

at that time, Secretary of War and he was the one, he went...no Budyenny

wasn't the one...and he went straight up to Warsaw. And there where the Allies

organized the terrific pressure on them and they had to retreat and they were

disorganized *and they retreated very...* That's where Trotsky actually lost his hold on the Russian government, that time, 1920, 1921.

LB That was how you saw it then?

IS Yes I was in Kiev at that time. We had leaders, General Zofolsky, *then I travelled around* as long as my father was...when my father was killed I started to travel around, over Russia. ^{In} *And the armored trains* and that was the civil war. *That was the civil war.*

LB Well you had to have a position in order to travel around.

IS No, no. I didn't have a position. I travelled because I was in the ^{*I studied,*} ~~born~~ *a student.*

And I travelled in the sense I was in the armored trains. I travelled

to Odessa, and back and on the way...

LB Well that was Trotsky, armored train.

IS The armored train for generals, the Red Army. But as far as Warsaw was concerned that was the offensive up to Warsaw and then they had to retreat. The English, American army, the Canadian army gave them supplies, big supplies and there they started to pressure them and they couldn't hold on any longer and they were disorganized, running back.

LB Now my mother claims that that's when they sacked the town that she was working in, I don't remember the name of that town. She was working in an apteka at that time. And she thought it was Budyenny's men who came through that town.

IS And what happened?

LB Well they got drunk. They were on their way back...

IS Oh no that wasn't the Budyenny army. I know *what she means*. There were two armies *Baguntse & Taraschantse*. They're both the Red army.

But they were up front. The avant garde. And when they came in, as in every army, it's the same thing, though the Red Army were looking for peace, not for peace, for order, so to say. But the forefront, they were actually the avant garde, and when they came in, they did the same thing as the Petluras. The first ones. And then immediately came in the government, so to say, and everything was in order. But the front, they were the *Baguntse & Taraschantse* not the Budyenny.

LB Not Budyenny. Who would it be? Could you spell it?

IS Taraschantse Baguntse.

LB Baguntse. They were the forefront. ~~By the way~~ These were two generals?

IS No, they were two armies, the Red armies. Taraschantse Baguntse, under certain names. *That was the name - Taraschan i Bagun.* Maybe under certain names. But did you read the And Quiet Flows the Don?

You did read it. *here* They have something else about the Eighth Army. The same thing was with the Eighth army in And Quiet Flows the Don by Sholokov. There you'll find it. That that army, that was the Taraschantse, Baguntse and the Eighth army

when finally they came in and they grabbed him, he was in our section, ^{the section where your} the ^{mother came from} Eighth army, there's the name of the general, we remember him, until he came out and started, ^{he started, I'm the} General, ^{and} of the Eighth army, so and so, and grabbed him and they exposed him and so on and so forth. There you'll find it. Finally there was an order from Moscow, that we'll wipe out all that region and you'll find it there. And that was the ~~time~~ two of them who were very rough. When they came in the impression was always that they are the Petluras. But they were the forefront, the first ones, ^{they used} to come in, dressed even not like in the army. It was anything, whatever they had on the way, they put it on, all kind of jackets and so forth and so on, but they were the front. The roughest of all of them. And as long as they moved on further, in came the government or Commissar whatever it was, ^{and they brought} in order to the city. I had the same thing. They came into our town. Not Bratslav. I was in Nemirov. I was sick with typhus at that time. They came in and nearly killed me that time. I had a high temperature. Anyway that was the situation because they were the rough ones, ^{who came in -} the impression was they're bandits. But they were the front. Front line. In every army it's the same. In the American army the same thing. ~~The~~ All the army ~~is~~ The rough necks are being sent in front and they are reckless, whatever they can do, they do. Permitted. It's permitted. You can't control them anyway. Because they're so wild and desperate and so on. They'll come in and do anything. They'll rape and rob, but as long as they move a little further, immediately comes the organized power, organized government and everything. So she didn't mean Budyenny. Budyenny wasn't that time in that area. It was the ~~the~~ Baguntse/Taraschantse, if the name means something, it was that movement.

LB No, it doesn't to me, but I know she kept repeating Budyenny.

IS Not Budyenny. No. Budyenny no.

LB Where was he?

IS Budyenny was that time...first of all, he wasn't known that time. He wasn't one of the...

LB Was he a Red?

IS Sure! He was a Cossack. He was a Cossack. He came from the Don.

LB But he was a Bolshevik?

IS Naturally. He was in the army. And he was in the army, the Red army. But he wasn't that known. That time, there were other, if names mean something, Zatonsky was a good general. Voroshilov was a good general that time. Voroshilov who died...

LB He became, later a general in the second World War.

IS Later, Secretary of State, uh, Secretary of War. No, Secretary of War. We had some other ones. At that time, ~~for~~ for instance, in the first Russian Revolution, uh, in the beginning we had Tukhachevsky, who was a known man but he was shot after by the Stalins. Tukhachevsky was very known. Yakir, there are many Soviet generals. You'll find them in the Chronique, you know, in the history. They were outstanding generals as far as the civil war was concerned, but after Stalin's ^{through a truck} with Hitler, there was a whole ~~group of them~~...

and they were shot, by the Soviets. And they were the outstanding, the most brilliant generals. Tukachevsky, Yakir, Ignov a whole group of them were very prominent during the Civil War. For instance, in our area, it was a general, Brusilov. By the way, in our area, Podolia. Brusilov was a known general of the Czar army. And after he came over to the Russians, to the Red army and the Soviets controlled him. Controlled him but he was a good general. A prominent general, Brusilov. He was in our region that time, Brusilov. He was an old Czarist general but suddenly he saw he couldn't find his way out and they put a commissar, a political commissar over him, controlling him, checking him, so on, but militarily, he was very good, and his strategic ...

LB Now what happened to him?

IS Well, he lived. They didn't shoot him. He wasn't shot. But he was an old general. They shot, actually, the old good commissars, the old Communist

commissars, they shot. But he was an old Nikolas, one of those group, Ivan Ivanovich, uh Nikolai Nikolievich and that Brusilov was one, so he died after all. But they let him go on because he had a good... ^{prominent} ~~Communist~~ ^{But} generals were controlled fully, politically. As far as militarily, they let him go. As far as politically they checked and controlled him. That was Brusilov.

That was in our region. The Red army *came under Brusilov.*

LB The problem now is, let's see, you left, what year was it when you left Russia? Actually.

IS I left my town in 1919 after the pogroms, I left my town.

LB After your father was killed, you left.

IS Well, I left. Yes. The town became, hard to live there, and I went to Nemirov.

Nemirov, that's another town. In Nemirov I started to be active in every way.

I started to teach in public schools. Anyway, I was very ac-

tive in the Zionist movement. There where I became in Halutz movement, the Halutzim, I travelled to Galicia, through Galida, I stopped in *Chertkov, Skala*, certain towns. I came to Stanislaw.

Though *it* was *fugitive* because I was active under the Soviet system, I worked there. I had documents. I was teaching in the public schools, at that time, in Nemirov, and I had documents that I used to teach. And through those documents I went ^{with a} ~~to~~ the group across the Galician border and I came over to the Polish side.

LB And what was your purpose on the Polish side?

IS Going to Israel at that time.

LB You were going to Israel?

IS Israel. At that time I was definitely outspoken, fully Zionist.

LB But you didn't get to Israel.

IS No, I stopped in the Bukhovina, Cernovitz.

LB iIn the where?

IS Bukhovina, Cernovitz. In the Galicia. And then I went to Kishinev,

Kishinev, Bessarabia. And I did have documents. The fact is I was *the* *you had to have an*
head of a group of Halutzim but they didn't get my documents. *The official document*
coming from Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. So I went to Kishinev, to Bessarabia. So
that's where a new life started. I became a revolutionary and so on.

LB You started to be a revolutionary in Bessarabia? Once you were outside of Russia
you became more revolutionary?

IS More revolutionary. That was natural, because *I started,* *it was strange.*
Everything
was strange, as a matter of fact I wanted to go back to Russia. In Bessarabia.
And I started to *pack*, I started to work. I graduated technical school.

LB Where, in Bessarabia?

IS In Bessarabia, Kishinev. That was the expense the Joint paid already. The Joint
Distribution Committee. And I graduated from school, a technical school and I
had my test in City Hall, I got my license there as an electrician. In the mean-
time I worked in the factory as-electric *machinery*. And I became a rev-
olutionary there. There I actually turned more left.

LB Now this was after you left, the Soviet Union?

IS That's correct. Because the environment actually. When I was, for instance, in
Galicia, I was there several weeks, I worked very hard during the night, with
the mill you know. In fact, the environment was extremely heavy you know. No
friendship, *especially in Galicia. I was in Chortkov where the - Rabbi -*
Chortkov...
and conditions were very, very hard for us. And so I started to move further.
And I came to Bessarabia. And in Bessarabia I naturally I didn't know the...
the language played a part with me, though I spoke Russian. In fact I used to
teach Russian there, Russian in Bessarabia. Because the Russian language was
predominant...still Russian. Though Rumania had it, at that time.

LB What year are you talking about?

IS That was in 1919, 1921, 1922.

LB So the war was already over three years.

IS Oh yes. The war was over. In fact, when I left Russia the war was practically

over. 1921. The war was over.

LB In 1918. The war was over...

IS No, no. I'm talking about the civil war, the war with Petluras, the war with the Polish and so forth and so on. The war with the ^{bands} ~~bands~~ and so on.

LB I'm talking about the world war was over.

IS Well, the world war was over when the Soviets, they settled the Brest Litovsk peace. That was the end of it. *There where Stalin... there wasn't so much difference between Lenin and Stalin anyway, as far as concluding the war. He called them back and dissolved the army, Lenin, and that was the big hit, in that time.*

Because the army was exhausted, the Russian army wasn't prepared for the war.

Especially dragging that long. And they were betrayed. And the generals weren't working. And the equipment wasn't there. They were exhausted actually. *Nobody could have survived.* They lost the ~~the~~ *tremendous*...

They weren't equipped for the war, for the war with *Germans especially*, so, as far as I was concerned, so I went on to Bessarabia. Again it was *strange* environment and the language. In fact, just coming to this country, I was here five years and I went back to Russia. And I lived in Russia and I had a big position there.

LB Is that right.

IS In the Caucasus there, where what's his name, he wrote a book in that section It was in Rostov I was for a year and a half. There I had a position already in the Soviet government. He wrote And Quiet Flows the Don. Sholokov. I lived in that area for a year and a half in Rostov, the capital of the Caucasus.

LB Now what year was it that you went back?

IS Back in 1931 up to 1933.

LB You were there a year and a half.

IS I lived in Rostov.

LB In what capacity?

IS In the capacity, I supervised certain work. I had charge of a political job already there. As far as helping the Russian workers with the foreign, I was there with the *oil fields* ~~oil fields~~, the shoe industry. The shoe industry, ~~there~~ the agricultural machinery was there, the biggest factory in Russia, Rostov, the biggest factory of agricultural machinery. Plows, combines, all that. I was in ~~in~~ *in* ~~COZUC~~ where they had ~~the earth drills~~ *oil fields*. The biggest ~~earth drills~~ *oil fields* in Russia and I was the intermediary, between the foreign workers and the Russian workers. The Russian workers, They get the best out of the foreign workers and then to lift the Russian, there was always a rift between the Russians...they couldn't adjust themselves. They couldn't understand each other. So I was the one, not only myself, there was a whole group who worked in the area to... the Russian and the foreign workers, Czechoslovak workers, German workers or English workers or American workers. First of all they lived separately, the Russian engineers lived separately. The idea was to bring them together and exploit each others knowledge. To get the best out of the American workers or the English specialists. So that was my job that time. That was my job. I was there, I lived there for a year and a half.

LB Now did you go over alone?

IS No. With my wife. But that time we were just married. The fact is, as far as conditions, I had the best conditions. In fact, I didn't want to come back any more to this country. So then I got married and that was the time she *came, she gave birth immediately.* The fact, ~~is~~ *that expected* she gave birth on the boat, so she just came...

LB Oh, she got pregnant. So she wanted to come back?

IS She wanted to ~~xxxxxx~~ give birth here. And as far as conditions, the economic conditions were, for me, specifically, because I was a privileged, high position, I had a very high position, the fact is my job was to travel. They gave me the best accommodations and I travelled. And that was the purpose of my job, you see. *To take up, while I was in America* I knew fluently Russian and English already at

time. So

take advantage of...

Because there were rifts all the time. Frictions. All the frictions. The English couldn't understand the Russians and they kept them separate, and they didn't take, *after all they paid them high wages* at that time. At time, specially in those years when money was very scarce because they were...there was friction in the Party. *There was the cleaning up* the Communist Party at that time.

Including the party of Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, all that. Anyway, so that was it. I was very close to them, so that was my job, *because the fact I had* economically, politically I was extremely good. And the best conditions. But she, Brucha (his wife) she wouldn't feel like staying, giving birth to a child. Take that time, 750 rubles, the center of the town were my quarters

and I had the biggest hotel suites. I wanted to stay and never thought of going back. I don't know eventually what would have happened. That's something else..

But at the time, it was excellent. I was in a high position, *on the pedestal*

They kept me there. But

she decided, we

came to the, write to the authorities, *the fact is* I gave even up even American *papers that time.*
we were I mean for just five years, we came back, *to...* Then explained the situation, so and

so and so, and they gave us back the papers. *They gave us everything.*

That was the end of it.

LB Is your wife also from Russia?

IS She's Russian too. The fact is, they gave her all the chances. They wanted to

send her to a conservatory; *she decided* *and clear* *in Rostov*

In Moscow they wanted to *put* her in the Comintern, she should work as a translator, but we travelled...as long as I had a high position and...

but that was the *situation*...the fact is, I had it good, especially in 1933, conditions were impossible at that time, you know before the New Deal, it was the most

depressed situation in American history. Unemployment and so on. So I, *liked my high position*

I didn't feel like coming back, but we decided that was it. If she gives

birth, she gives ~~birth~~ it right here in this country, not in Russia.

LB Were you sorry to come back?

IS In the beginning I was extremely sorry, because I didn't feel like coming back.

First of all, the language which meant at that time, and the environment and the social conditions, the economic conditions and so forth. And as far as specialty was concerned, I mean as far as qualification was concerned, I mean I...

(Tape ends)

(Side 3)

000

LB I won't keep you too much longer. You know, it's sort of interesting because you were raised in a very, in a fairly religious home, right? and you were not a revolutionary to start with. You correct me if I say anything wrong.

IS Correct. Correct. Correct. It couldn't be because the environment was *that*.

~~IS~~ Religious education, upbringing

LB Upbringing and environment and ~~a~~traditional surroundings, right?

IS Right. This is the background.

LB And then all of a sudden, you become a revolutionary.

IS Yes, because conditions were...don't forget the environment changed.

LB Did you see that this whole thing seemed to promise something good ~~is~~^{for}/the future? Is that how you saw it then?

IS Naturally. First of all, my way of life changed. My way of life changed. I started to earn and there I had a certain...a roof over my head, I had certain economic conditions...

(Wife re-enters after telephone conversation. Tape off.)

LB Let it get started again.

IS Now, let's talk more specifically, yes?

LB Well, I'm being very specific. Because I want to know what it was that made you do a "flip"? You flipped..

IS It came out of that environment. Because I came out of that environment. I

started to work, as a young...early age...

LB What were you working as?

IS I was there working as a I said. I came, for instance, when I crossed the border. First, the revolutionary, because the revolutionary period is also sweeping all over the country. It was a sentiment.

LB I know. In Russia...

IS In Russia, right.

LB In Russia itself. In Bratslav. As soon as your father was killed, you left.

IS Right. Right.

LB And you started travelling around the country.

IS Country as a, as a protection. You see, at that time it was a ^{question of} protection because of the cause/~~xxxxxx~~, bandits or the counter revolution or whatever they called them, the Petlura, was still ~~counter revolution~~, they were operating in all those regions yet. So I ran from one area to another just for safety's sake.

LB O.K. But you say you travelled in the armored cars.

IS Armored cars because that was the only way to go. There wasn't anything else.

LB But how could you get on to an armored car?

IS It was permitted. Because they would be actually moving from one town to the other. They permitted people to come into these cars. ^{That was the way they ran} ~~From the way they ran~~ from towns. *the population ...*

LB But didn't you need to have a pass or money or something? There must have been millions of people on the run.

IS No. Free of charge. Free of charge. They didn't ^{charge you for} tickets. There was just armored trains with the army, running from one region to the other. Whoever could come in, the fact is I was lying on the roof of this train, not even inside. It wasn't a question of permitting you, or a question of a pass or something, you came in, that was ^{it} ~~this~~. You see, you travelled with him. And there was the army running from one area to the other one. The fact is, from Kiev, to Odessa, they kept on running there and back. You see, every time they need supplies and so on. And on the way they were stopped, let's say, and they had to run

out. The fact is, in certain regions we had to run out and bring wood for the locomotives. They didn't have coal that time. We had to, well I didn't handle a gun, but they put everybody with a gun to run out and meet the...because they used to cut off the railroad line and so on and so forth. There was the problem. ^{that time.} And I actually ran for safety/ And as far as normal conditions, ^{running trains, they weren't} ~~all I can say~~ ^{trains.} ~~is there safe.~~ They were all under control of the army. That was the army.

There were the trains.

LB And this was the Red army.

IS That was the Red army, operating *with the Red Army. Well, I couldn't go with Petlura.*

And I ran for safety. I came to Odessa, let's say, and I stayed there for a while in Odessa and I came back to my town. Not to my town. I came ^{back} to Nemirov.

And I ran again to Kiev and again...like they had in the...Brucha (to wife) what do you call the *persons?* *Bez...*

LB Oh, I know what you're trying...

BS ^{a Russian word.} is a word, a special word/ Neglected children.

LB An orphan? Displaced?

IS Not neglected. Not orphan either.

BS Not orphans, no. But they are neglected, just a moment. Des

means somebody takes care of you. If nobody takes care of you, it means

IS I understand you. Here's a picture...the Russian picture...

LB I've heard the word.

BS Children or persons they're neglected ...

IS We ran. We ran, without anything.

BS And that's the best explanation.

IS There's a word for it. You have it in English. You have a good word for it,

So that's what we ran. And we ran just for safety and then protection and then ...

LB But you say wound up at Nemirov?

IS Nemirov. In the beginning. Yes, that's what I said.

LB You were teaching there?

IS And I was teaching there, yes.

LB And you said you contracted typhus there.

IS And there was typhus there. And there what your mother mentioned

Dragunzi pereschals, they came in, ~~they~~ that was the Red army who chased out the Petluras. And when came in, they just walked into the house and grabbed everything and do anything ~~xxxxxx~~ and shoot and so on and so forth. Because they were very reckless ~~restless~~ and so on. Until...and then when they came in they knew I was alone. Everybody was hidden in the basement. Everybody. There wasn't a living soul. But while I was left, it was in a different town. It wasn't in my town. *they found where I came from.* So ~~we~~ lived in a room and I was left alone and I was, I had a high temperature. So they came in, the group came in, the whole group of them, Who are you? They said it in Russian. I couldn't even answer them. *They saw that* ~~xxxxxx~~ I had a high temperature. *they spared my life.* Otherwise they could have shot me that time. I mean, there was no problem. That time, it was a question of killing and so on and so forth. That was the core of the trend. And after, that was *the ones your mother mentioned,* the Dragunzi

LB That's what the man told me this morning. He said, Life was not worth anything. Killing was nothing. If ~~you~~ ^{he} came into a room and there was a body blocking the door, he said he would just push it aside, you know, he didn't even look to see who it was.

IS That was the time. That was the time when deaths were actually...for instance, as I mentioned in our town, ^{after} that first night there were about 120 dead. Lying in one place. There were even a few Gentiles. They were under the impression that there was a Jew, *this old guy, give him a...* so they were lying there and then there was...in the beginning it ~~was~~ ^{looked} a little

strange, I mean for a small town, to approach that person. And then it became just natural, during the war ~~xxxxxx~~ you know, ^{when you read} what was his name that wrote the report from the war, who was killed *too, by the way...*

LB Ernie Pyle.

IS Ernie Pyle. That's right. Ernie Pyle or the others who were ^{Jim} ~~was~~ ^{wrote} ~~in~~ The Best Years of our Lives. They all ~~wxx~~ wrote... *(a name)* I think if I'm not mistaken. So, *they* gave me the same thing. But that doesn't mean anything. You just take it. That's all. *Right now, Vietnamese* the ~~Japanese~~ War. In Malay ... *whatever it is*. So that was it.

LB So that's something that you had to, well, that in itself was a revolution.

IS *that by itself* was a revolution, naturally. You have to come to some tranquillity. And that was to a degree running away, but on the road, on the road to glory, on the road, while travelling you had *your hardships*, that you weren't used to them. You weren't prepared for them. You actually weren't equipped for ~~them~~ those hardships. Naturally, it had to lead you in a different direction. And that was the direction in that time. Thinking that this will solve the problem. But maybe ~~we killed the~~ ^{*it's guilty*} ones because that system created it, the old system. That means the new system will eliminate all those hardships and shortcomings and all that stuff. That was the cause. It didn't justify. That's something else. But that...

LB Well, nobody knew that.

IS Well that's something else. Maybe every revolution had the same shortcomings as far as that's concerned.

LB I expect it does.

IS Well, that isn't, *you* expect everything. You never know the *events*.

The French Revolution which turned out to be completely different as they foresaw it. You know, at the time of the French Revolution all those, Dante and the others, Robespierre. They paid with their life. And they were outstanding revolutionists and at the end they were guillotined. Same thing with the

Russian revolution. All those revolutionists were killed after...counter revolutionists. That's the Communist...

LB Well that's what they were called.

IS Yes but they were the creators of the revolution. They worked together with Kenin, they were in line with Lenin. All of them, Zinoviev, Kamenev, the whole group. And consequently Stalin found them being counter revolutionary. And that was the end of it. So that was the cause, the trend and I suppose every revolution has its consequences. It doesn't justify itself or maybe it goes in a different direction.

LB Well probably once it starts, there's no way to control which way it's going to go.

IS And then conditions. Local conditions. National conditions. International situation develops and so on and so forth. We have it right here, right now. We're facing problems (unclear) *which is a problem*. If it's Angola or Vietnam or if it's Cuba or Middle East. Something it's hard to foresee and hard to plan. You know when Karl Marx wrote his theory he never foresaw so many things that he could have never seen those things.

LB Well, he didn't plan a socialist state either.

IS He did so, as far to a degree. He wrote his Manifesto, he wrote *that* revolution will break out. Karl Kautsky wrote about revolutions and it didn't turn out the way they predicted it *or saw it*. So according to their blueprint it didn't work out. In fact the Russian revolution didn't work out. According to Marx, revolution in Russia could have never *opened*. It has to be an industrial revolution not a peasant

LB I know. It has to be a bourgeois revolution.

IS Yes. That's right. Lenin made it somehow patched up and he made it, and it still doesn't work out. It doesn't work out.

LB Well, nothing's perfect.

IS It's not a question of perfection. It just went in a different direction com-

pletely. Now Russia has to come for wheat to us. Unbelievable. She used to feed the world with wheat. And now with the revolution, with all that stuff, she's in trouble.

LB It's interesting.

IS This is the *concept*...

LB Tell me something, the way, as you recall your youth...how did your ~~father~~ ^{finally} get to the United States?

IS That's a separate chapter altogether. It's a different chapter altogether.

LB You never told me that. You mean, you told me you wound up in Bessarabia and you were becoming a revolutionary...

IS Yes and in Bessarabia I had to go back to Russia and while studying, that was another chapter. My wife was there too, in Bessarabia. We were together. Not married. Right Brucha?

BS What?

IS We weren't married in Bessarabia?

BS In Bessarabia? ~~In Kishinev~~ I met you there. Did I? I don't remember where I met you. I think in Kishinev, yes.

IS So I was studying and I studied with another one, a nephew of a certain man, *Skwirsky* who was the head of the Joint Distribution Committee.

LB What was his name?

IS Skwirsky. He was known in the...

LB Skwirsky?

IS Yes. He worked in the Joint Distribution Committee. I studied with his nephew. His nephew was very backward. He couldn't ^{go on}...I helped him in his work and he..
(Wife says something. Tape off.)

IS This is a chapter by itself. And I worked in a place at that time, a metal worker, in Kishinev and the head of the...the owner of the place was an active member of the Zionist movement. That Skwirsky nephew, recommended me to his uncle, I had nobody here in this country. After I found out I had an uncle in Texas. But that

time I didn't have anybody. So he recommended me to his uncle that this uncle will see to it that I should go to the United States. I had no papers, nothing. So, I met that Skwirsky and that man where I worked for, he was a member of the Zionist movement, so both of them worked out and they gave me papers and money *and dollars and so on* and that was the time that they sent me to this country *to the U.S. the intention was of going back to Russia from Bessarabia.*

LB But I thought originally you went to Bessarabia with the Halutzim group to go to Palestine.

IS Yes. But as long as that didn't materialize so they decided to go back. In fact is he decided to go back too.

LB To Russia?

IS To Russia. He decided from Bessarabia to go back. But while they decided to liquidate the refugee problem there, they refugees in Bessarabia, so that was the way. But that Skwirsky recommended me to his uncle together with the other guy who worked together and they gave me all the papers, everything, and they ~~sent~~ sent me to this country. And that's...

LB Did you want to come here?

IS No. Basically I didn't. I wanted to go back to Russia.

LB No. Well why didn't you go back then?

IS So as I said, as long as the chance came up to go...

LB I know, but that's not a reason, is it?

IS Yes coming back again it was a problem of facing, my parents lived, I mean my mother lived in a different town already, not in Bratslav anymore. And again the chance just going to the United States. That was the only...

LB One man told me today, it was an adventure. Why not go?

IS It was an adventure. Naturally. I was always dreaming and reading about United States, of the economic conditions, the political specially, freedom and so on. That actually ^{attracted} ~~affected~~ me. That There's a certain *hook*...

about the freedom and labor movement and so on and all that, Propaganda stories. And I read it and I was very much impressed because Rumania was so suppressed. As far as political freedom was concerned in Rumania, That was under the King yet. So especially they suppressed the Russian speaking you know, it was the refugees. So that ~~xxx~~ actually was what attracted me and I went to United States, though I had a chance, naturally, that didn't work out. So that was it. So that's why we went.

LB And were you married at that time?

IS Not yet, no. My wife, she came to family here. She had *documents everything* so we went parallel, both of us. Same boat.

I don't know how much you'll get out of those circumstances.

LB Well. We'll see.

IS Well more or less I gave you a picture of a *period* ~~theory~~, it's a *period* ~~theory~~, it's not ...

LB It sounds like a lot of confusion. It sounds too, as if you've skipped a good deal.

IS Well, the confusion may be certain transition periods. Periods, well maybe *you have to* be more specific in that. But naturally I skipped. Surely. I mean, many events, naturally I would skip.

LB When you were growing up, before the war and before the ~~the~~ revolution...did you feel oppressed as a Jew? Did you feel that the anti-Semitism was affecting you?

IS Yes. It was to a ~~degree~~. First of all, the percentni norma as I mentioned. All right, I was in school already, but still the percentni norma. For instance, Individually you can't ask me because I, my appearance had something to do. I wasn't typically sensed as a Jewish looking. I saved myself during the pogroms. I ran. My father was killed ... my mother was a different direction. My sister was different. I ran not knowing where I was going. And I ran to the villages where actually they ~~are~~ *Killing more*, killing every-
where ~~one~~. And for instance in the summer I used to wear a long,

wearing a long ^{coat} ~~skirt~~ with a ...

and I was in a technical school at that time. And they were under the impression that I knew ^{fluently} the language, ^{fluently}.

LB You knew Russian?

IS Russian, Ukrainian and so on. ^{Fluently}. And the impression wasn't of a Jew. So for instance personally I didn't...so I was saved that time. They ^{got} me actually, face to face. They asked me, Why did you run? And I answered them, Well, accidentally. I didn't know it was all right. And I saved myself. But in other cases I would have been killed immediately because that was the sentiment at that time, that was the spirit. Whoever didn't ^{agree} immediately they shot him. Or they chopped him. Whatever they did. That's not what I want...So, personally, but generally speaking, naturally you felt the anti-~~Semitic~~ Semitism. ^{But personally,} naturally ^{because I was} ~~was separate~~ in school. ^{I knew fluently} I mixed with Gentiles. The great majority were Gentiles. There very few Jewish. We were just chosen ones so to say. Privileged ones. So here you are. So personally maybe I didn't feel it to that degree but naturally you ~~felt~~ it. Personally I didn't feel it because I was in a different, somewhat, environment. For instance, as I mentioned, if we were going skating Saturday ^{after the morning} Jewish boys wouldn't go skating on the lake, especially the Bug there. The Bug goes from Kiev to Odessa to the Black Sea.. But I used to go. I wasn't afraid because I was among, with "them", ^{with the Gentiles. For instance, if they used to see a Jewish boy at that time, they'd}

beat him up, that time. I didn't have that pressure ^{I didn't feel it} because I was with them. In the course of time, all the time, I was in many cases with Gentiles generally. Even in Kishinev I lived among Gentiles. So that somehow, psychologically it didn't affect me to that degree. Though I came from a family where the Jewishness was felt everywhere. But in the course of time, in the course of my living, so to say, somehow I didn't have that pressure, as you say. Individually.

LB I understand, I do. Because when, if you're young and you're mingling with the Gentiles you don't feel, somehow, that you're one of the oppressed ones.

IS That's correct. Yes. That's the situation. For instance, if I would have been with the pais, with the shtremel, with the with all this business now, and we lived in the ghetto, extremely, you know completely isolated and a Gentile would see me and immediately recognize me as a Jew and he might give me some vulgar expressions. You know. Maybe that would have been.. pressured me. I would have been conscious of it. But I was^{it}unconscious personally as far as that was concerned. Conscious of it. I was one of the...mixed with everyone, specially with the Gentiles. And so physically was the same thing. Tall, whatever I am. So I didn't look nebuch (like a nothing) I wasn't a nebuch in this sense. And I felt I could defend myself. All this business worked so psychologically to the degree that I didn't feel it. I didn't sense it to that degree. Naturally, the sentiment was there, *in the town...*

LB Did you ever have the feeling/^{maybe}that you would have liked not to be Jewish?

IS No. I don't think so. No. I wouldn't say that. No. that assim...No, it didn't come to that point. I told you, it didn't press me to the point that I'm so exploited, I'm so you know, taken advantage of and so on. No. Personally. I'm talking about personally.^{Maybe}Others would have. Maybe my background would have been different, maybe I would have felt that way. Why do we have to be among those depressed ones, suppressed, oppressed...but I didn't. Personally I didn't have it all to a degree to, What do I need the whole business. That whole background sits in my way. And that's another situation that developed. I started to travel. The race or the religion problem didn't bother me all. I was mingled to where I became a city person. Travelled and lived in big cities actually. So that problem didn't bother me at all. I didn't feel, like I said, *that isolation.* I didn't feel that pressure of being cooped up. I didn't feel it. Somehow, all my life, I didn't have that critical period, which is pressing you and making you feel, What do I need the

whole thing? What for? So what? *Not what Moses* ... I didn't have that.

I wasn't caught in that period. Travelled, travelled...

LB Well, actually those Jews who were the most prominent revolutionaries were were amongst the most violent anti Jewish protestors. Or you know, adherents. They felt all religions should be done away with. Not just Jews.

IS That's the period of atheism or internationalism. That's something else. That's a different period. For instance, you have the political movement, the Bund, the Social Revolutionaries, certain groups in the Party, they didn't believe in isolating one group of the other. That means that human ways will be solved by internationalism. Communism came on that platform, claiming that all this barriers will disappear completely. And they, all, humanity will live like one family. That was the basic, ~~but~~^{that} actually attracted the youth of all those towns. That's why you'll find all those youngsters of my period, of my age, we immediately ran into this movement.

LB So you did feel that attraction?

IS That attraction, naturally! We thought that the ghetto will disappear, pogroms will disappear, hate will disappear. All this business that actually comes *Communism* Socialism or the revolution, it promised it. And it did work in the beginning to a degree. It did help. ^{When} They came into a town the town was quiet and peaceful and more or less you could freely walk around. You could entertain yourself. You could do anything you want. You used to go into the dancing/~~halls~~ the balls, at night you were never scared. The schools, the students...so there that actually was attractive. Which injected that ^{light, life} right, into the youth, especially into the provincial towns, the smaller towns. Let's say the big cities didn't feel it that way. But the smaller towns did feel it. So naturally we ran immediately into that movement. I ~~must~~ mean most of them.

LB But in a lot of big cities a lot of young people felt the same way.

IS And furthermore, not even among the Zionists, you have the left wing of the Zionist movment who were actually revolutionists in the sense that they were

revolutionaries but in Zion, in Israel. But revolutionists. If you think in terms of capitalism the fact is the students, the first Aliyah, the first ones, the ones who went the first, the second, ^{the third} /the fourth, the fifth... I was in the fourth... the fifth, so they came the same revolutionaries, they were Communists. That's where the Kibbutzim were built, on Communist foundation. Nothing *needs* capitalism, to build again the same old system that will create again hate and so on. But actually that was even among the Zionists. In the Zionist movement in Russia there were two wings, there were the Kharkov and Odessa. Two groups, separately. One group was more conservative. And the other was actually Communists but in Zionism.

LB Kharkov and Odessa were the two groups?

IS Two groups. There were two groups in that time in the youth movement in Zionism. So one was a conservative...

LB Now what were the names...

IS I think, I think the Odessa and the Kharkova, if I'm not mistaken, and one was a revolutionary group.

LB But you don't remember their names?

IS These are the two groups, Kharkov... two centers...

LB That's where they originated, you might say...

IS Not where they originated, the swing, in one direction or the other one.

LB Yes, but you don't remember the other name.

IS Kharkov and Odessa.

LB They must have had some other name, like a Hebrew name for a Zionist movement.

IS At that time, it was the Hasomer Hatseir, the Poale Hatseir, Poale Zion, Poale Zion, by the way in the Labor movement, the labor Zionist movement.

LB Right. So where would that come from?

IS And by the way, the Poale Zion were *there these* That was the Poale Zion.

One was disregard socialism, disregard revolution, disregard everything. Come and build Israel. First of all. The other was definitely on a foundation

a socialist foundation. And there where the kibbutzim were built. On socialist foundation.

LB So you're saying that there were two wings, the Kharkov and the Odessa.

IS And the Odessa. Two wings.

LB Now which one was the more left wing?

I think

IS If I'm not mistaken/the Kharkov was the left, the more left. If I'm not mistaken.

On this I'm a little fuzzy. I remember I belonged to the left. This I know for sure, to the one who built the society in Israel. And forget about capitalism and forget about the petty bourgeoisie and all that business. We built a communist Israel. It's true we must run away from the ~~mother country~~ ^{other countries} ~~but~~ because of anti-Semitism but when we have our own country, we have to build it on a different foundation. And the foundation was socialism. And there's where the kibbutzim came in. ~~And~~ The kibbutzim actually are collectives. They live collectively.

BS You want some water?

LB No, thank you.

IS So that was the collectives, Communism *(continued)* and you get whatever communism promised. I mean, that was in Russia the same thing. You'll get whatever you need from the cradle to the grave and this is it. You wouldn't have the exploitation, the hate and so on and so forth. So that was the...

LB That was the dream.

IS That was to a degree. Well they built but naturally *again* you take the same problem as revolution, the same thing with Israel. The same problem *with Israel. You come you don't find the same thing as you dreamed of. We were there.*

The kibbutzim are disappearing to a degree because new kibbutzniks are not coming in. A different element. Here for instance the intellectual came to Israel in those years. Intellectual students and came with the intention to building communism, socialism in Israel. Now they're a different element.

They come in to live in an American way. The more you *get* the more you live. it's a different system, completely, now. Except the kibbutzim who are still *preserving*. Kibbutzim still have the foundations.

LB Now I'm going to turn this off and I'm going to... *(Tape off.)*

LB I want you to tell me about the synagogues in Bratslav.

IS First you have the *Bratslaver* kloise. That was the Bratslaver Hasidim.

LB They were the Hasidim. O.K.

IS That was separate of the ordinary people, so to say, if you call them ordinary.

Then you had the bes midrash, that was the aristocracy. Aristocracy, that means the spiritual *aristocracy*, the bes midrash. Then the shiel, there actually working people used to go, there, the shiel, the big shiel you know. Not much learning. Then you have a klein shielechle, that was the small one, an insignificant, and that was it.

LB So you only had four?

IS We had one, two, three, four. Yes.

LB In a city of 1500 families?

IS Yes.

LB Oh, but Bratslav was smaller than Uman.

IS Oh, Uman was a big city. A big city. Uman was a big city, yes.

LB So you had a Hasidic shul...

IS Kloisel. Kleisel. Special name. They called it kloïssel.

LB That's for the Bratslaver.

IS For the Bratslaver Hasidim. Hasidim. Especially for them. They used to go let's say every year to Uman, to compose songs; to compose compositions, come back, and Simchas Torah they used to ^{dance} ~~drink~~ the whole night long. Simchas Torah, you know. They used to dance the whole night actually. That was the Hasidim only. And then, as I said before, you had the shul, which was the ordinary, I mean tailors, I mean plain...

LB Ordinary people

IS Working people. And then we had the bes midrash, was the elite...

LB Now who were the elite?

IS Elite, I mean the intellectual... *the Hebrew intellectuals.*

LB What about the rich people?

IS There weren't very many... the rich went with the intellectuals, naturally.

LB Oh they did.

IS *the rich* naturally. Her uncle was for instance, the rabbi in our town. He
davent (prayed) in the same place. The bes midrash.

LB So your wife comes from the same town as you?

IS No she comes from a different town, but her uncle was in *the*...

And the bes midrash, you know what bes midrash means? A house of study. Shul
is just... And then you had a little one which isn't very important.

LB Now which one did you and your family go to?

IS The bes midrash. That was the... a shochet, naturally... they were the... they
didn't look for big hazunim (cantors) but they looked for high, you know,
yichus, knowledge, naturally, the pilpul That was the bes
midrash. And her uncle was the *rust in this*...

LB Actually what happens, I think, is that in every town or village or city, you
would get a differentiation based on class, but it would differ. Because in
one town it would be, the bes midrash would be working class...

IS No!

BS No!

LB An my father's town it was. His was very much smaller and the kloise was the
upper class.

IS No! Kloise... kloise itself... *I don't know if he knows it. The fact is*
its practically a universal expression. Standard expression. The kloise is a kleisel.
It means the small *one*, kleisel. And a kleisel means the small *place* ~~kloise~~ that
the Hasidim usually, any Hasidim, it's not just a question of Bratslaver
Hasidim. There were many Hasidim from different... even in any town. It happened

our town were the Bratslaver Hasidim. Others had the Gerer, ^{Seligser} the Skverer. We had all kinds. The shul was big. Modern, with a hazan who may not be well known in the Hebrew, may not know Hebrew, but he was a good singer. That was the shul. The bes ha midrash is actually bet midrash. You have to sit and think. So actually it is a standard ~~of~~ approach. It couldn't be different in the town where your father... Maybe, I don't know. I really can't disagree with him. But generally that was accepted. Kloise was a kleisel. Shul was a shuel. They gave money. They had a good hazan. But he didn't *mean* much, ... ordinary people. Bes ha midrash where the actual intellectuals, the Hebrew intellectuals sitting and pilpul, you know, and they didn't care much for a hazan

It was a question of baal tvilah, who could bring out the words properly, you know, and know what he's saying.

And in the klein kleisel, you know, very often they came in just for a minyan.

I mean talk about small towns. ^{Big} Cities, that's something else. *You see, maybe the rich*

~~The rich~~ go to shul. I'm talking Odessa. But that's something else. There was a different approach. I'm talking about the small towns, now, specifically. For instance, the big cities, had a different approach. the big shul, where the rich, they actually contributed the money and they built a modern temples. Look you have it right here...

(Tape ends)

Side 4

000

LB Did you have something called a Kalte shul? Kalte. And a Heise shul? One where there was no heat?

IS No. I don't think so. Especially in Russia. A kalte, a heise, no.

LB You never heard of it.

IS Not in our town. Maybe in

As far as I know, no, Kalt and heis, why should it be kalt and heis (cold and

hot) We had to be heated.

LB No, it would be heat, you know the one that was heated every day and there would be one that was heated only for Friday night and holidays.

IS That wouldn't be in a small town. In a small town the shuls were always open, more or less. That's in the big cities they come only for a minyan.

LB Oh, is that right?

IS right near the shul. But the big shul was for the whole week. But next to it, attached to it was a smaller shul. They come into it in the early morning minyan and they come in. I imagine in the bigger cities, in cold cities in the north, I suppose they warmed this little one and the big one, they haven't got many, they don't come to pray. So maybe you have it, but smaller towns people used to go to shul anyway. They may not go to the shul but they used to go to bes midrash. The ~~gi~~ big shul was But cold and heis never heard of that expression.

It was a religious background, baalabatische background, you know, a different background. Everybody what it means to toil, to sweat different different composition, different situation completely. Slowly when we started to move, when we started to I mean the whole generation, started to move. Came from to Galicia. Had to work at nights, all night. they never knew what it was, baalabat. And there the we were youngsters. and the exploitation was unbearable especially there, in the Galician part. the whole night. And the income was so limited, that we had to sleep even outside in some cases, because the income was so limited to pay even for rent. And then naturally that created in us the desire then we started to think, What is it? You know? We actually faced the facts of

life. Then the revolutionary started to come in.

Started to

the youth. But the exploitation was unbearable.

LB Who were you working for? Were you working for a Jew?

IS For a Jew, yes. A Yiddel. Ist geven

And it was a terrible thing. You worked nights, you were so miserable. And our income...

LB What was it, a shoe factory?

IS Not a shoe factory. A mill. What do you call it, Brucha (to his wife) ah meile...a mill, a mill. You make flour.

LB A flour mill.

IS A flour mill. We worked nights. And he was a very rabbi, a rabbi. But he was such a, you can't imagine, especially at that ~~time~~ stage of our life, we were a group there and all of them the same type and there was Rats all around. Conditions were The earnings were so little you can't imagine. And what happened, certain nights we even slept in the rabbi's That actually led us in a certain direction.

LB To the left?

IS Then came the revolutionary phrases, slogans, ideology, especially for us, for youngsters, we were just like in the limelight.

We could share with our knowledge.

That was actually the whole generation went through that. They became revolutionaries. The same thing, a great majority became outstanding communists, in Russia, in the small towns their fathers and their parents and their families and so on. Because they started to hate the whole thing

that created that. Let me to the Vietnam situation, right here. With the youth actually burned Same thing happened to us in that period. You know the Vietnamese situation when the youth were so reckless. They burned colleges. They burned everything. And they killed professors. It was a massacre all over the country. And don't forget this was still in peace, more or less. Russia was actually burning. The whole country was aflame. So the youth, was natural, you were going into it and were immediately raised to the highest where we could do, we could help that movement. We possessed that knowledge, the experience so to say, so naturally it was the cause, the natural cause. And and I came to this country again I started to, in that movement again.

LB Oh, you started here too.

IS Again that movement. Because again ~~at~~ I felt at home with it. I had the language. I had more or less the knowledge, I read and so on. I started to myself more and more and more...

LB Where were you living in the United States?

IS In New York all the time.

LB In New York. And you lived in New York from 1924, was it?

IS 1924, yes...

LB Until 1931.

IS Until 1931, yes. That's right.

LB That's seven years.

IS Less than that. We left in 1931. And that was it. We took out the papers and we went back to Russia with the intention of staying. Leaving this country. No intention of staying in this country. Both of us, by the way.

That we are not staying in this country because there were many elements that, that, actually were in our way. Like the language. Not a question even if I qualified for something, I couldn't get even into unions.

union cards qualifications, unions, language and assimilate yourself to find your way out of it. Your background. You need some pull, big business you know, especially when you have now what you know but who you know and all this business. That worked against you. And again you were young, so why should we suffer? Why should we go through all this misery, this agony? What for? When we come back to Russia, we are on top of the world. Naturally, self preservation. Self preservation.

LB Well, what made you change your mind to have your baby here in the United States?

IS Brucha. She didn't want...Actually she didn't want...

BS Not that I didn't want. It was a natural instinct...

LB I can't hear. (Wife is sitting across the room) I don't think my tape will pick you up.

IS Come over here.

LB Sit here.

BS Oh You want to...

LB Well, this particular question I'd like to have you answer. Well, just wait till you come and sit down. The question was, Why did you want your baby born in the United States?

BS Simply because, when we were there we saw that for every little thing you have to sit three hours in a line, while we were there we were accepted. We were appreciated. But we were foreigners. And he had a very important position there. So, more or less, even ~~though~~ those with a position had to stay in line, but we were, had extra privileges because we were foreigners. And once you decide to remain and have a baby, become a citizen of the Soviet Union, then I'll have to live a life like all the others. And I, we decided...I said, No. That's not going to be. I want to have a child, she should be free. I should be free to do whatever I want to do. We had no money when we came back, We were simply broke. But, still, I took along some work to the

jewelry work, something, things that I should help out. And I started looking for just anything just to survive. And we started a new life and that's all. There we lived, and here, while we were away, we always lived with the thought of home.

IS Going back.

LB Going back.

BS My mother was still there. His mother was still there. Then mother died. We brought my mother here. And she used to help with the child and all that and then I could do whatever I wanted to. But the whole thing was to have freedom. I shouldn't have to stay and wait for a piece of bread or for a piece of meat or for a half a pound of butter or things like that. And I would like New York, in America, to taste that like now that's a fact. Some of them remained but they were miserable. They couldn't have...they gave up their citizenship...

LB I understand. Once you give up your citizenship then you're in another...

IS We gave them up. We gave them up.

LB No. Once you give up your American citizenship...You were there as a Russian?

IS We were there, we gave them up, everything. But after when she got married and and while I had the position...

BS Not married. I got pregnant.

IS She got pregnant. And I came in to the proper authorities and I told them distinctly that my wife cannot...

BS I cannot do it.

IS She doesn't want that. So they gave me back the papers. Others had a problem. I had no problem.

BS But for how long could say...

IS We had the papers. He gave us papers Moscow.

There was no obstruction. In fact, he gave us...any way we go...

BS He came back in a Ezarist car from his travelling. On the way back.

IS Oh yes. They gave us extremely good accomodations.

BS They offered me a job. I took up...

IS They wanted to send her to the conservatory.

BS First of all the conservatory. And if I don't want, to work for the Comintern. I knew the commercial work you know, typing and steno and all that. I took up that also with the intention of living there, to use it. But then they had me singing and said immediately they wanted to take me to the conservatory in Moscow and they'll support me I said, No. No. No. All I want is my freedom.

IS No at that period, to quit our life, we had there, add to come into this Depression here

BS I didn't miss. I wasn't sorry I came. Here I had a hard time.

IS No, that was a real agony/ to do a thing like that. It was very tragic, you see, to come because I had every door open for me. I was really...and she would have been the same way. In other words, to come here in the depression, again come back...

BS A good friend of his, an engineer, a close frined, he worked in Moscow. And he had such a hard time then...

IS And he was married to an American girl. She worked in the Consulate.

BS He took an American girl with him and he went there and he had such a hard time. Not only that with food or anything. But the surroundings, the jealousy of the other people if she put on another dress or what she had a little bit something extra that they didn't have. Finally they He died.

IS In Moscow.

BS Another thing, if he would say something not the way they like it, right away they named it Trotskyism

I said; This is not a place to live because before you know it you'll have one head shorter. I was just afraid. I was simply afraid.

IS Well, there was fear of death I mean, but while we were there, we had it very good.

BS While we were there, of course.

IS And coming back in that period and being at that ~~pedestal~~ pedestal, at that height, ~~you~~ and coming back here in this country, looking for something

BS Here it doesn't make any difference. You live like a human being.

IS No, I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about that specific period. That turned out all right. That's not the question.

BS Here if you want to live a little nicer because you are somebody you have to be corrupt and you have to be selfish and you have to get your way no matter how you want it, just to live the way you want to, because you're a little bit of a higher stature, you have to live nicer you know. You have to have a nicer apartment. How did he live? The one that ^{we} ~~he~~ came to him, what was his name?

IS

BS No, no, no. Not The one that we came, that took us out what was his name?

IS ~~Moscow~~ Where, Rostov or Moscow?

BS Moscow! When we first came.

IS Oh, He was the Secretary of Agriculture. We were with him, yes.

BS You ought to see the apartment.

IS Well, he had a villa there in Moscow. He participated in the Civil War.

BS He had a villa and his child was in...the way they lived. Never mind. But they lived! They lived like rich people live here.

IS Well, there you live like the rich if they give you the chance, that's all. Like a rich person.

BS My brother is a very important man there. He's so important that he's afraid to write a letter to us.

IS It's near the Siberian border.

BS And he is a chemist and engineer and he's doing...my cousin came here, one of the cousins came from there so he tells me, You know what Kissinger is to Nixon, that's what he is to the Health Department there. The head of the Health Department. Here he has a very responsible position. He's afraid to say that...if he would say that he has relatives in America, then it's kaput.

IS No, not exactly. No. Maybe when they registered...You see the situation was

BS There was a time when they registered...

IS And they ask them there if they have family somewhere, relatives...and he mentioned I suppose, he has somebody.

BS He was afraid.

IS Because, again, his social background is a bourgeois background.

BS Yes! My father was also

IS So that was the situation. He was afraid and I suppose he mentioned that he has nobody.

BS Since then, he's afraid to write us a letter. But I found out...I found out through this cousin that came from Moscow and he was in Leningrad and he found all the information and he gave it...

IS That's your mother's friend...

BS Oh yes, you know