

Transcript of the Shoah interview with Simon Srebnik

Translation by Sarah Lippincott - Volunteer – Visitor Services – August 2008

Note: This is a translation of the French transcript of the interview that Claude Lanzmann conducted with Mr. Srebnik for the film *Shoah*. The transcript is in an unedited format and includes segments that were used in Lanzmann's final film. Any segment that appears in the final film is NOT available at the USHMM. The Claude Lanzmann Shoah Collection at the USHMM contains only the outtakes from the film. Outtakes are sections of a movie that are filmed but not used in the final version.

-Page 1 (part 1)-

SREBNIK 4 *English, Hebrew, German*

In Srebnik's house in Israel. Lanzmann is speaking English, Mrs. Srebnik is speaking Hebrew which is translated. Srebnik and Lanzmann speak German to each other.

C.L. I would like Mrs. Srebnik to tell me, with all the details she can give, when she met Shimon, where she met Shimon, and how he was. But she must answer not shortly, but at full length with all the details she can give.

M.S. We met after the war, in '47 or '46, in Poland in a kibbutz

C.L. What is a kibbutz in Poland? It was not a kibbutz, it was a preparation for a kibbutz?

M.S. It was a preparation for coming to Israel . . . they gathered Jewish people for the purpose of bringing them to Israel. They met in '47, '46 in Poland in the kibbutz and they were there a very short time. From there they went to Italy and Austria. They were in the kibbutz two years, and afterwards they came to Israel together with the kibbutz. After they left the kibbutz and came to Israel, my parents came after me from Germany. Then we left the kibbutz and we were with our parents together. We got married and raised a family.

C.L. Very well. And how was he, when she met him for the first time?

-Page 2 (part 1)-

M.S. We were all children. We had a childhood, Shimon too, but what he had in his childhood, I didn't have. I didn't suffer as much as he suffered. We were problematic children; we didn't learn a lot, like all the other children in normal times.

C.L. Ok, but can she elaborate more about him?

M.S. I don't know what I can say.

C.L. Ok, tell her that the first time

M.S. I don't remember what about him, I don't remember what exactly . . .

C.L. She told me once, the first time I came here and she talked about him, that when she met him he was a completely crazy child. He was like a wild beast. I would like her to say this and explain it a bit.

M.S. He wasn't an educated child, like in normal times with parents He didn't grow up in a home. When he was nine he left home. Without parents and seeing such dreadful things, it's not easy.

C.L. Can she give examples of the fact that he was a wild beast?

M.S. There was nothing special; we were all like this.

C.L. She was a wild animal too?

M.S. She was all the time with her parents, she didn't pass through the camps.

C.L. She did pass through the camps?

M.S. She didn't. All through the war she was with her parents. 'Our family stayed together.'

C.L. But was it difficult to bring up Shimon to a normal way of life?

-Page 3 (part 1)-

C.L. What did you want to say? You said that you wanted to say something about that story.

S.S. You asked my wife what I was like when I was a "kibbutzler," right? I don't remember very well anymore, but, I was completely wild.

C.L. Wild?

S.S. Yes. When I arrived in Poland, I told myself that everything must be just as I had learned in Chelmno. I wasn't afraid of anyone.

C.L. You weren't afraid?

S.S. Not at all. I thought that was the way of mankind, that was how it was Afterwards, I saw that it wasn't like that. The life of men, calm and ordered... then I, too, became a human. And then I met my wife, and we were married.

C.L. How old were you?

S.S. 19 years old. I was a soldier. We married and we lived with my wife's parents. And now, as you have seen, the family and children

C.L. Yes. A great success.

S.S. Yes. Now it's good.

-Page 4 (part 1)-

SREBNIK 5 *German*

C.L. I've seen everything that was filmed in Chelmno, and I have a question for you: do you remember the interview with the priest in the church? That really surprised me when I realized that this priest was telling lies, for the most part.

S.S. Yes, he lied. He lied constantly.

C.L. Yes, but during the interview, you didn't say anything. You didn't say to the priest, "Why are you lying?"

S.S. I told him this: he said that he didn't have any idea what was going on there. I asked him when he went into the church, if the church was already clean. He said, "No." I asked him, "So you saw all of the inscriptions on the walls?" He said, "Yes." "How is that possible, if there was no one in the church? There were thousands of inscriptions on the walls of the church." There's the proof that he was lying. Afterwards he said...

C.L. Yes, but at the beginning you didn't say it with very much conviction. I got the impression that you were afraid...

S.S. Yes, it's very nice in Poland (?). Like I said, when we filmed in Chelmno, in the woods, right? I said, with the Poles, the Jew they caught when he crossed the water You also have . . . what was his name . . .

-Page 5 (part 1)-

S.S. he was in Poland with us . . . he left with us . . . Teppe. He left . . . I arrive in Poland, I'm not saying that the Poles are bad, right? He left, and then I told the truth about what happened there. I said that, too. In Chelmno, one of the Jews escaped and he wanted to cross the water. A Pole captured him and turned him in to the Germans. The Germans shot him.

C.L. Yes, unfortunately they weren't filming while you were talking about the Poles. I would have liked

S.S. Well, now I've just said it. After the Poles captured him, he was shot. The head of the Chelmno camp arrived, and he said, "10 men must come forward." We came forward, and Kolm (?) called out: "Count off." We counted off, and he noticed that someone was missing. He asked where that person was. No one knew where he was, or at least no one said they did. We knew that he'd left. So he made pulled two or three of us aside, brought them a little farther away. We found him, already shot, and we brought him back to the chateau in Chelmno. Afterwards, he took 10 people,

-Page 6 (part 1)-

S.S. who he placed in a circle, and he had them all shot. Then he said that if anyone else tried to run away, he would slaughter us all. From that moment on, no one tried to run away.

C.L. Some people saw this scene in front of the church with you and the Poles, and they wondered, "Why is this Srebnik still laughing?" You didn't say anything, only the Poles spoke, you didn't say anything and you were laughing. People wondered, "Why?"

S.S. I'll tell you. When I found myself back in Chelmno, I couldn't speak. I was so shocked, and the memory of everything that happened there came back to me. I saw the whole picture of Chelmno in front of my eyes. So I laughed, but inside I was crying. Everyone saw the smile, but no one saw what was going on in my inner-mind. That's why I laughed. It had never occurred to me that I would find myself back at Chelmno. That would have been impossible. But there I was at Chelmno again. They said to me, "Look, you have come back to Chelmno." It was like a dream.

C.L. That really made an impression on me, that the Poles were so friendly and yet they were also antisemitic.

S.S. Yes, at Chelmno they were friendly, but also very bad. At Chelmno I asked people,

-Page 7 (part 1)-

S.S. "Where are . . . (a few names of certain Poles but they weren't at Chelmno.) Those were very antisemitic but they weren't anymore at Chelmno. After the war, when the Russians arrived in Poland, all of the people who were antisemitic, they took away (?)"

C.L. You said something about gold, that they stole a lot of it.

S.S. Yes, that was during the trial of Eichmann. I was attending it, and there was a lawyer from the German bureau. During my testimony at Eichmann's trial, I mentioned the names of Haefele and Bothmann. He asked me, "You know Haefele?" I said, "yes, and I can even tell you where he lives now in Germany." He said, "Well, where?", and I replied, "in Karlsruhe." He phoned Karlsruhe and, just as I'd said, he was still living there. He asked me, "How do you know where he lives in Karlsruhe?" So I had worked with Burmeister in a barracks. There, we sorted gold teeth and the gold of the dead, which I wrapped up and brought to the post office. I saw them write the address in Karlsruhe and I brought the package to the post office. And then I thought

-Page 8 (part 1)-

SREBNIK 6 *German*

S.S. I worked with gold and money at Chelmno. When they sent it from Chelmno, IBothmann had I took out gold and gave it to the Poles. They got lots of gold from me and they gave us food to eat.

C.L. You gave it to them?

S.S. Yes, I gave it to them.

C.L. But . . . after the liberation?

S.S. No, at Chelmno. Every day I went out . . . for Bothmann. So I always took packages of money and gold and diamonds that I gave to the Poles, and in exchange they gave us sausage and bread, which I brought back to the camp in Chelmno. The Poles in Chelmno received a whole lot of gold.

C.L. And did the Germans know about it?

S.S. They didn't know. If they had known, I would be dead.

C.L. How did it work? Did you have chains?

S.S. Yes, I wore chains. I also had a basket for rabbit food, in which I hid the gold and other things, and I

-Page 9 (part 1)-

S.S. would go out to get food for the rabbits. I would go, under escort, to the Poles, and give them gold and silver. I said to them, "Bring me a little sausage and bread." They would wait for my arrival, because they knew they'd be getting something.

C.L. Where was this? In the street?

S.S. No, out back. They were always waiting. They knew that I was going out with my basket to get food for the rabbits, and that I always brought things of value to give them.

SREBNIK 7 *German*

S.S. It was the by order of the commander, [Alois] Haefele: when I would go get food for the rabbits, I was to be carefree and sing. Why? They wanted the peasants in the surrounding areas to know what was going on at Chelmno.

C.L. But the peasants already knew.

S.S. They knew, but they wanted them to know exactly what was going on. If someone like me went out without chains around his ankles, singing, then perhaps they would see that it wasn't that serious. But it *was* serious. So Haeefele told me I had to sing; so I sang.

-Page 10 (part 1)-

S.S. We even learned songs, and I sang them when I would go out to get food for the rabbits.

C.L. Where did you get this food?

S.S. I showed you in Chelmno, it was next to the lake, right? There was lots of grass for the rabbits. Now the water is very dirty, not pretty at all.

C.L. And you were alone?

S.S. With a guard, one of the soldiers of the SS in Chelmno. I would ride out on the water, I would get food for the rabbits, I would go back to Chelmno and I would give it to the rabbits.

C.L. You would go out on the water?

S.S. On the water. In a boat.

C.L. And would be alone in the boat?

S.S. All alone.

C.L. And you would sing?

S.S. I would sing.

C.L. But was that an order? That you had to sing?

S.S. Yes, it was an order. I was still young at the time. What they told me to do, I did. Besides me, there wasn't anyone at Chelmno who spent a year there. I spent nine, ten months at Chelmno. Every two weeks, there would be a "selection," and they would shoot them all.

-Page 11 (part 1)-

C.L. And would the others sing, too?

S.S. The others didn't sing.

C.L. You were the only one.

-Page 1 (part 2)-

CLAUDE LANZMANN – L'HOLOCAUSTE – POLAND : CHELMNO

BOBINE IMAGE

BOBINE SON

Interview with Mr. Srebnik.

S.C. = Corina translating Srebnik from Polish.

Bobine No. 114

Bobine No. 92

CHELMNO 45

CH 45

Scene shot in the car as it drives down the road in Chelmno. No one speaks.

CHELMNO 46 *Polish; French*

CH 46

In back of car

C.L. Corina, ask Mr. Srebnik if he recognizes anything What is that on the left?

S.S. He doesn't remember.

C.L. Surely he will remember.

S.S. Meanwhile he doesn't remember . . . now, no . . . he wasn't here . . . he hasn't been here . . . he never walked around.

C.L. There's Chelmno, Mr. Srebnik, look!

S.S. He never walked around here, he's only been to the back of the camp, to the kitchen, and that's all.

C.L. Oh yes . . . well

S.S. They only went to the . . . to the village. He thinks that the bridge over there is a bridge he's been to. Oh! Now he remembers.

C.L. Ok.

S.S. Chelmno is over there. There, over there used to be the camp.

C.L. What is it?

S.S. It's the church where they held people, once upon a time... to give water to the people. They saw that they were walking with chains on their legs and no one believed he was headed for the gas - they gave them soap and a towel, they just thought, the people, that they were going to take a shower.

C.L. Tell me... ask Mr. Srebnik... this church, did he see it every day?

S.S. Not every day, only every two or three days, when there were new arrivals and they couldn't gas them immediately, they would put them in the church.

C.L.. Yes, but he, I mean, the church, did he see it every day?

S.S. Yes, from the camp, he saw the people... um... the church.

-Page 2 (part 2)-

C.L. And are we going to the camp now? What does he want to do, he wants to walk where he wants us... because that's 150 meters from here.

S.S. He wants to go on foot.

C.L. Sure, sure... let's go.

Bobine No. 116

CHELMNO 48 *Polish; French*

C.L. Good, Corina... tell Mr. Srebnik we're going... over there, where the mansion is... but I want to ask him a question: is the church exactly the same as it used to be, what changed?

S.S. From the outside it's exactly the same; on the inside, I have no idea.

C.L. But outside, it's exactly the same; the same gate; the same color, all of that?

S.S. Yes, everything, everything was the same.

C.L. And how does he feel?

S.S. He feels fine, given he's back here again, he feels fine.

Bobine No. 93

CH 48

C.L. Yes, why?

S.S. He never thought he would return to this place, so he feels fine.

C.L. Why, because it was a one-way trip?

S.S. Exactly!

C.L. Sure, it's difficult to imagine him here at thirteen years old...

S.S. He was thirteen and a half when he arrived here.

C.L. Yes.

S.S. He didn't arrive here, at the church, he went straight to the camp.

C.L. Straight to the camp... but the mansion, at the time, was already gone?

S.S. No, it was still there, but it was in ruins

C.L. Yes, it was in ruins, yes...

S.S. They began to... to clean out the mansion, they found feet, hands, all sorts of things still.

C.L. That were left behind?

S.S. Yes.

S.S. Yes, yes.

C.L. Okay, cut.

-Page 3 (part 2)-

Bobine No. 117

CHELMNO 49

at Chelmno

Bobine No. 94

CH 49

C.L. Okay, he can go ahead.

S.S. When we arrived here, we arrived with twenty-five ... twenty-five men and over on this side there was (two incomprehensible words) ... they put ... chains around all of our feet

C.L. Around your ankles.

S.S. Around our ankles, when we were . . . after . . . after that they took us to the manor which was over there, that was already in ruins, they asked us to clear the space and clean up and there were body parts in there, there were feet, there were arms, there were all sorts of things. Afterwards, the Obersturmbannfuehrer Bothmann came and said whoever . . . whoever was tired could go and rest. There were a few men who said they were tired, that they would like to take a rest. So he got a . . . on the other side . . . he got a gun and he shot them.

C.L. He did that himself?

S.S. Of course! After that, no one else wanted to take a rest. We worked here, over two weeks to clear the place, and then we went into . . . into the woods.

C.L. When was that?

S.S. He doesn't remember.

C.L. When was it? It was in the summer of '44?

S.S. It was in the summer of '44.

C.L. He was arrested in Lodz?

S.S. Yes, he and eighty other men.

C.L. Does he recognize it? Could he show us where What has changed, what's still the same?

S.S. He recognizes that building over there. In that building, is where everyone slept.

C.L. Him, too?

S.S. Yes, him, too.

C.L. Was he expecting that, when, all of a sudden . . . when he arrived . . . he discovered heaps of coal, wagons, kinds of warehouses

S.S. Something else must be there, now There were a lot of people killed here.

C.L. Yes. And the trees, does he recognize them?

-Page 4 (part 2)-

S.S. Yes, over there the trees were the same, here there weren't any trees and there, that spot where, where the house is now, there was a big tent, about the same size, where they put all the belongings of the people who arrived here.

C.L. The people that they gassed? Cut, cut, we'll stop.

-Page 5 (part 3)-

INTERVIEW SIMON SREBNIK

(Part German)

Boite 117

CHELMNO 50 *German*

C.L. With the Germans, did you speak in German?

S.S. Always in German. Or, there was also a German there who spoke Bavarian.

C.L. Bavarian?

S.S. Bavarian. That is very difficult German. I didn't understand much. But when someone... when someone spoke, he called us and he said: "yes, bring from the barrack" - there was a barrack with coats and socks - he said, "bring me some socks, please."

C.L. Yes?

S.S. There was a guy who didn't understand what this meant. He didn't know what that meant. He beat him to death. Then he came towards me and he said, "Spinnefix, come here, bring me some socks from the barrack." I didn't understand either, but I went to go see Alois Haefele and I asked him, "Erwin told me he wanted '*Struempfe*' but I don't know what that means. So he said to me, "Yes, he wants socks." So I went to the barrack and I brought him some socks. So he shouted, "No one understands me. Only Spinnefix understands my German!"

-Page 6 (part 3)-

C.L. Spinnefix?

S.S. Yes.

C.L. You can explain that later. Yes, but I think that we could speak in German together.

S.S. Yes.

C.L. Two Jews, in Chelmno, speaking German together, that makes sense, right?

S.S. Yes, what can we do, I can't do anything else.

C.L. Yes.

S.S. Anyway There, that was where we slept.

C.L. Where? There in that

S.S. There in that

C.L. Building.

S.S. Yes, there were two The trade workers lived on the top floor, and below was the Forest Detachment (*Waldkommando*), and the trade workers were above them.

C.L. That's where the Forest Detachment was?

S.S. On the first floor.

-Page 7 (part 3)-

C.L. Where? And above?

S.S. On the first floor. Yes. That wasn't there, where they've built something now.

C.L. Yes.

S.S. The Forest Detachment (*Waldkommando*) was on the first floor and the House Detachment (*Hauskommando*) above them, above them there was a

C.L. How many people were there in the Forest Detachment?

S.S. In the Forest Detachment there were 40 . . . 85 people.

C.L. 85 people?

S.S. 85 people.

C.L. While you were there?

S.S. Yes. Each day we left from there. There was a roll call. There were 40 or 42 chosen, in all, who would leave. They would be led into the woods. Only 20 would return.

C.L. Yes.

S.S. Because the others who had been brought there would never return.

C.L. They... they were shot?

S.S. They were shot in the forest.

C.L. Every day?

S.S. Every day. Only later, when the transports started coming. In the beginning, they didn't shoot them because there were no transports. We worked there like that for four

weeks. The same people always did the work. Afterwards, when the transports began to arrive, each day they shot half of the Forest Detachment that they'd take from the transport.

C.L. New people?

S.S. New people, yes. That was in January. I . . . out came . . . arrived.

-Page 8 (part 3)-

S.S. There was a Master Lenz

C.L. Lenz, yes.

S.S. Yes, and he said, "5 men outside."

C.L. Yes.

S.S. Okay. And the first I was one of the first 5. We went out there, to that spot. And there, he said, "On the ground!"

C.L. Yes.

S.S. And then he took his pistol and he shot at each man. Next he took 5 more men, then 5 more, all from the Forest Detachment who were on the lower level; he shot them right there.

C.L. Was it night? Day?

S.S. It was at 10 o'clock at night, I believe.

C.L. In January?

S.S. In January, yes.

C.L. Of '45?

S.S. Of '45, yes.

C.L. Was it very cold?

S.S. Very cold. Yes, there was snow. And afterwards, the people who were at that window...

C.L. Yes.

S.S. From that window up there, they saw that... the workers, they saw what they were doing with the Forest Detachment and they didn't want to come down.

C.L. Oh, the people from the House Detachment?

S.S. The workers, yes. They had already seen from the window how all the others were being shot, so they no longer wanted to come down.

C.L. But the Germans wanted to liquidate the camp?

-Page 9 (part 3)-

S.S. To liquidate it, yes. That was two days before the Russian army.

C.L. Oh, yes, that was at the end, yes.

S.S. Yes, at the end they

C.L. Can you tell me exactly what happened?

S.S. Yes. I'll tell you exactly how it went. So, they had the Forest Detachment leave, and the House Detachment saw what was happening from above...

C.L. How many people?

S.S. On the second story? There were about 30 workers up there.

C.L. 30.

S.S. Normally I was also on the second story with the workers. They . . . that particular night, I wasn't with the workers. I always slept with the workers, yes, but that particular night I slept here.

C.L. Below?

S.S. Yes. And that's why I went out with the first 5 men. I laid down there...

C.L. Where, here?

S.S. There, here on that spot. There, that's right. Or perhaps more like here. Yes, that's it. We were here.

C.L. Can you say exactly

S.S. Exactly.

C.L. If it's possible.

S.S. Yes, exactly.

C.L. Show me.

S.S. Yes, he asked, "Where should I shoot them?"

C.L. They asked?

S.S. He! Lenz asked Bothmann, "Where should I shoot them?"

-Page 10 (part 3)-

S.S. "Where should I kill them?" He said, "How about there!"

C.L. It was Lenz who asked?

S.S. It was Lenz who asked Bothmann.

C.L. Who was he?

S.S. He was *Obersturmbannfuehrer*.

C.L. Oh, the *Obersturmbannfuehrer*.

S.S. Yes, and he said, "On the ground!" And I lay down with the other 5; I was in the middle, at the center. And I heard the first shot, and then the second - we were lying like this. I went like this with my head and I took the shot in the nape of my neck.

C.L. Were you frightened?

S.S. What?

C.L. Were you frightened?

S.S. At that moment there was no such thing as fear. But here, there, like that, all around us the SS were standing.

C.L. A lot of them?

S.S. Yes, there were a lot of SS officers. There was a doctor. A Czech doctor, who we called Imo who came out and saw all of this, he just went crazy . . . he went crazy just like that. I've never been in such grave danger. I thought . . . this is it.

C.L. This is it?

S.S. Yes. I was hit by the bullet, and then I felt like I was [illegible], and then that I had fallen, fallen to the ground.

C.L. Where did the bullet hit you?

S.S. Just here. Here, here's where it came out.

C.L. A bullet in the nape of the neck.

S.S. A bullet in the nape of the neck. After that my nose was torn.

-Page 11 (part 3)-

S.S. I asked a doctor why my nose was torn open when the bullet exited through here. He told me that there was a shard of glass in it. When the head falls, it falls heavily forward, and that's how I hurt my nose. And that's how the entire Forest Detachment was killed right here. Afterwards

C.L. How many people died?

S.S. They all died. There were a few who were still going "ch, ch" like that and Master Lenz came over and shot them.

C.L. Why do you say Master (*Meister*) Lenz?

S.S. That's what they all called him. He was like that. He was "Meister." He was Meister Lenz, that's what they called him. He was the type of man who had to kill someone before breakfast or he couldn't eat. That's how he was.

C.L. Lenz?

S.S. Lenz. Every day. Middle-aged . . . he was a middle-aged man. And the others had already seen what has going on here; they didn't come down. They brought gas. They left by car for Dabie. Yes. I was still in bed here and Meister Lenz came up; he shouted, "Five men." And the workers grabbed him and brought him inside. And so, while I was still on the ground, there was

C.L. There was a revolt!

S.S. A revolt, yes. So--I was on the ground--there was someone... someone from the army, Hause, who ordered (?) So, from up here they shot Hause with Meister Lenz's gun from the window. So they had shot Hause here. And then, I was lying here, I regained consciousness...

-Page 12 (part 3)-

C.L. But you hadn't lost consciousness?

S.S. I lost consciousness when I was struck, but I regained it after two or three minutes. And when Master Lenz fell there, I felt relieved and I wanted to run out that way. But I couldn't, so I crawled over to that side.

C.L. Yes?

S.S. Over there. Over there, there was a hedge and I collapsed over there. Over there was a shack, it's a shack. And it's there that I went through the hedge, then I rested there some more. And they poured out gas and set it on fire. They even killed those who were here, they threw them in, and they were all burned. But they noticed they were missing one.

C.L. One of the bodies?

S.S. Yes, one of the bodies. They noticed that they were missing a body. So they searched for it. They searched and I was here, standing against a tree...

C.L. A tree.

S.S. I was clinging to a tree because I couldn't stand. So two SS passed by me and they were saying, "Where could he be? Where could he be?" They searched, but they didn't see me. Then, I passed through the hedge and I slid down... I slid down like this, all the way to the village below... until I came to... one of those things for pigs...

C.L. Ah, yes.

S.S. I went inside... (illegible) I was in there with the pigs... there were also geese. They began to squawk, so I left, because of the geese, yes, I left there and I went to a ... okay what do you call that... there was a lot of hay inside...

-Page 13 (part 3)-

C.L. Yes.

S.S. I went inside.

C.L. Wait, cut.

-Page 1 (part 4)-

Boite 118

CHELMNO 51 *Polish, French*

Srebnik with a Polish man, with villagers standing behind them in Chelmno

S.S. There were several families in the village with the name Krol.

Int. Yes, but now there's only one left. She lives somewhere along the road.

S.S. Every day I would go to town, to Mr. Miszczak's.

Int. There was a group of workers who were digging clay. From them I received... because he, he watched over...

S.S. Here there were raspberries. Where are the raspberries?

Int. Yes, yes, wild raspberries?

S.S. No, regular ones.

Int. Were there patches?

S.S. Here there were raspberries, there were trees. It was beautiful. There was a park.

Int. Oh yes, yes it was beautiful. Yes, beautiful, beautiful, it was beautiful but now all that's changed.

S.S. That didn't exist, that didn't exist, that didn't exist.

Int. Tell me, since you were there: why they would take people from the manor and chase them, there were screams, they would pile them in trucks and why would they drive them behind the barn?

S.S. No, here they only brought empty trucks.

Int. They stopped over there...

S.S. What year was this?

Int. '45, no '43, '44.

S.S. In 1944 I was here, in 1943 I wasn't here.

-Page 2 (part 4)-

PO. Each truck was behind the barn. Here they... and then they left.

S.S. It's possible that happened in 1943.

PO. Did they plug it in to the electricity, or was it gas?

S.S. No, here they didn't plug it in. But there was gas that came out of exhaust pipes of the trucks. The same gas that came out of the exhaust pipe went through to the inside.

PO. And there were hermetically-sealed doors.

S.S. Yes, they had hermetically-sealed doors, closed and they drove towards the forest 4 kilometers from here.

Int. They went into the forest.

S.S. And during the trip the gases filled the interior...

Int. And meanwhile suffocated them.

S.S. Yes, they suffocated them.

Int. Because when one of them disconnected the gas... and where is the stand (?)... it jumped... (?)

S.S. It wasn't...

Int. They shot people, they shot each other, they shot from all sides as they could.

S.S. At that time I wasn't here yet.

Int. The people crawled, crawled and they were black as the...

S.S. No, no I wasn't here, I was here when they began to build the cremation ovens. In the woods. That was when I arrived. In 1943, there was no cremation oven in the woods.

-Page 3 (part 4)-

Int. No there weren't any. There were only trucks.

S.S. No it wasn't trucks, but they dug... what do you call it?

Int. Graves...

S.S. They shot the people, then threw them in the graves.

Int. Just like that.

S.S. But they realized that...

Int. The earth moved, it rose up.

S.S. Yes, it moved. It smelled bad.

Int. Yes, there was a continual fire, always, all the time.

S.S. That's why they stopped. And they started to build the cremation ovens. You can't last here.

Int. And all that, they've dug the graves out again.

S.S. I arrived at Chelmno and... here was the ruined manor.

Int. What was it called again...? The manor.

S.S. The manor that was destroyed, destroyed, when I arrived here, they told us to clean it up...

Int. The rubble.

S.S. The legs, the hands. So we asked, what's all this? So they told us that a bomb had been dropped.

Int. Because when they had the first group from the ghetto and then blew up the manor and liquidated it.

-Page 4 (part 4)-

Int. They blew up the manor and that was that.

S.S. And that was that.

P.O They surrounded it, circled it.

S.S. There must have been... on the other side, there was a well where we would draw water.

Int. They've buried it by filling it up with earth.

S.S. But it was there.

Int. Yes, there was a very large well, but now it's been filled in.

S.S. And this house, we lived in this house, and over there... ?

Int. No, no, it's not that one. They've built something here.

S.S. I slept on this side.

Int. On the second story or the ground floor?

S.S. No, I slept on the second story, and the last night I slept on the ground floor, that's when they came to shoot us, I was sleeping on the ground floor.

Int. Yes, yes, when they lit up Lodz, that's the night they made everyone come outside and they shot them.

S.S. Yes, yes.

Int. Yes, that night, when they killed those people, my uncle died, and we saw the lights and immediately after there was an uprising in the ghetto. But if you had known at

that moment...

S.S. As for me I never thought I'd return to Chelmno...

Int. Incredible, incredible!

-Page 5 (part 4)-

S.S. If I could have returned to Chelmno, come and go...

Int. And look, look... But at the time, if you could have saved the people on the second story...

S.S. I was sleeping here, next to the window, next to the window. I was sleeping next to this window.

Int. Kaziu, Stephan, turn on the lights!

Kaziu or Stephan: Yes, yes, here.

S.S. Yes, I was sleeping next to this window. Here, on the second story lived...

Int. A second...

S.S. The tailors...

Int. But you had no contact with the people living on the second story.

S.S. Yes.

Int. Because it was blocked off.

S.S. I know precisely that I slept near this window. There we had... there were, yes excuse me, the shitters...

Int. The shit...

S.S. Yes. The artisans lived on the second story. It was like that...

Int. Yes, it's always like that.

S.S. It was like that. And one time I slipped and fell... the *Obersturmfuehrer* came, I was on the second story. He said, "Spinnefix, come here." And I was standing over there.

-Page 13 (part 3) *continued*-

Boite 118

CHELMNO 51 *German*

C.L. It's exactly the same? (It hasn't changed?)

S.S. That's it, that's it, exactly. This is where I slept, next to the window. And there, there were, excuse me, the shitters...

C.L. The shitters...

S.S. Yes, here... up there were the workers.

C.L. Yes. And it's still the same thing.

S.S. It was just like this, here, it was just like this. There, from here one time I... I was upstairs, he arrived and said, "Spinnefix, come over this way!" And I got up...

(The end is without sound)

CHELMNO 52 *German*

Lanzmann and Srebnik are standing where the barracks once were in Chelmno

C.L. Action!

S.S. Yes, at this spot, there was a lot of blood because they shot all of them here.

C.L. But you were in chains!

S.S. I was in chains and I had no... I was not dressed.

C.L. You were completely naked?

-Page 14 (part 3)-

S.S. Completely naked. I only had my underwear. The chains and underwear.

C.L. In January?

S.S. In January, yes. I was like this... I had one foot all swollen, with like, like a stick at my feet. And I went over there, to that side, and down there I passed underneath and I arrived at a... a thing with hay. I was over there...

C.L. Yes. How old were you exactly?

S.S. 13.

C.L. You were 13?

S.S. 13 and a half, yes.

C.L. You were the youngest.

S.S. Here, yes, I was the youngest. That's why they called me Spinnefix.

C.L. Why? What does that mean?

S.S. Okay, well Spinnefix is a very quick spider. I would... When someone would ask me for something I would always run very fast. Here, at this spot, there was a gas pump. And that was also where they repaired the machines.

C.L. Yes... Ah, the gas vans.

S.S. Yes. I was in chains. At first when they put the chains on, I couldn't walk. I walked like this... that's how we walked.

C.L. And the chains... they were always on.

S.S. Always. Then, he gave an order, "Whomever makes it to the gas pump first" -- this was Bothmann-- "that man will have the right to longer chains."

C.L. My God.

-Page 15 (part 3)-

S.S. So, they...

C.L. This was a game?

S.S. Yes. They were all standing there. And we ran like this all the way to the pump. But I didn't run, I dragged myself like this on all fours.

C.L. Were you able to make it like that?

S.S. Like that... that's how I advanced. And I was the first to make it to the gas pump.

C.L. Yes.

S.S. Then, those who were behind me saw what I was doing and they did the same. But I was already ahead. Then they put me in longer chains.

C.L. Longer?

S.S. Yes. I attached them with a rope "au Pasik", to my belt, here. And that's how I walked, with long chains.

C.L. Long chains?

S.S. Yes.

C.L. And the Germans called you Spinnefix?

S.S. Spinnefix, yes. They always called me that... yes... now I remember something. There were... how do you say in German... Maline (in Polish)? Translator: blinds.

C.L. Yes. There were... okay... There was someone who had caught a rabbit, but they had let it go. So they said, "Spinnefix, if you catch the rabbit, you'll win the right to two weeks of good treatment."

C.L. Two weeks of good treatment.

S.S. Two weeks of good treatment, yes. So I began to run around over there... all the way to those trees over there. And I caught

-Page 16 (part 3)-

S.S. the rabbit. So I had two weeks of good treatment.

C.L. Yes, and could you...

S.S. "And if you don't catch it, I'll kill you."

C.L. And can you explain why the Germans didn't... excuse me... Why the Germans didn't kill you?

S.S. Ah... yes, there was that, too...

C.L. Yes, why?

S.S. I... There, there was a barrack, right over there. And Burmeister, the *Unterscharfuehrer*...

C.L. Burmeister...

S.S. Yes, Walter Burmeister, that's it. He... I worked with him, there in the barrack. He told me, "When the war is over, I'm taking you home with me. You will be my son."

C.L. Burmeister.

S.S. Burmeister, yes.

C.L. My God.

S.S. And when they called roll, the *Obersturmbannfuehrer* Bothmann would come over and ask, "How long have you been here, how long have you been here?" And if you said, "For 8 days already," he would say, "Tomorrow you will go into the woods."

C.L. And that meant?

S.S. In the forest, it's all over.

C.L. Yes.

S.S. As for me... at that time I had been there for three weeks. He came over to me and asked, "How long have you been here?" So I told him, "4 days," and he said, "You're lying!" I understood that I would be going into the forest, you know? I cried. Walter Burmeister saw that and he came out and he said something to him and then he let me go. Walter Burmeister always kept me by his side. If it weren't for Walter Burmeister, I'd be gone, too.

-Page 17 (part 3)-

C.L. Yes.

S.S. I would have been taken into the woods.

C.L. But, can you explain this...

S.S. Yes. He told me, "I have no children, I have none. And you, I will take you home. You will be my son." And that's what he told me.

C.L. Yes.

S.S. What he was thinking, I have no idea. But I believe that's how he really felt. If not, then...

C.L. Yes. Cut.

Bobine No. 119

CHELMNO 53 *German*

C.L. You know, Mr. Srebnik, two years ago I went to Flensburg in North Germany to find Burmeister.

S.S. Yes.

C.L. But he was already dead. For two months. But how do you explain this humanity on the part of Burmeister?

S.S. He was different...

C.L. Towards you, but he was a criminal all the same.

S.S. Yes, he was part of the SS, but he was different. Here, among the SS, there was an Erwin and a Bobby. I think that they were just... they had... They were so evil that every day they had to eat... like Meister Lenz, they had to take a few Jews to shoot. Then, they could eat their breakfast in peace.

C.L. Each day?

S.S. Each day.

C.L. Before breakfast?

S.S. Before breakfast. Otherwise they couldn't eat.

-Page 18 (part 3)-

C.L. Yes. They couldn't eat breakfast without killing a Jew?

S.S. I remember one time, it was Sunday, Obersturmbannfuehrer Bothmann made us all come outside and sent us over there to sit down. He got in a Mercedes and he came from over there. We were sitting with our feet like this and he ran over them with his

Mercedes, he ran over us. Those whom he ran over, he crushed their toes. So he said, "Everyone stand up." They stood up, but the ones whose toes were crushed couldn't stay standing. He said, "Come over here!" Shot, shot. Then, he went and sat down over there, over by the well there-- there was a well there, on the other side-- they tell me they've condemned it-- and he chose 5 men, and he said, "When I tell you to, stand up-- when I tell you to, lie down." And he sat there and did that. And the men stood up, sat down, stood up, sat down, until they had no strength left, none at all. And while he was doing this, I was creeping out of his sight. And I did nothing. The other 4 didn't stop. He asked them, "Okay, can you keep going?" But they were already too weak. "If you can't keep going, you'll be shot." Then, he asked me, "Spinnefix, come here then. Can you keep going?" "Yes, boss, I can keep going."

C.L. Boss?

S.S. "Yes, Boss, I can keep going." "Okay, go ahead, then!" I obeyed. "Okay, that's enough." Another time, he... There was a barrack here, he came in. It was there where I would pull the gold off of the teeth they'd pulled in the woods.

-Page 19 (part 3)-

C.L. That was your job?

S.S. Yes. I would be seated there and I would loosen the gold from the teeth with a hammer; I would make piles.

C.L. How long did you do this?

S.S. I worked there a long time with Burmeister. He sorted the gold and I would loosen the teeth.

C.L. Teeth from the Jews...

S.S. From the Jews who had been executed in the forest. Because each night we would receive a big suitcase full of teeth.

C.L. Each night?

S.S. Every other night we would receive a bag full of teeth.

C.L. Full of gold teeth?

S.S. Full of gold teeth. But... they would tear them out along with the... the flesh.

C.L. Along with the flesh.

S.S. Yes, that's right... it stank tremendously, all of it in here. And I was sitting here when Both... the Obersturmbannfuehrer Bothmann came in and he said, "Spinnefix, come out!" I went out and he said, "Lie down." I laid down, and he tried to shoot me. So I... he was so tall, I escaped and ran through his legs, I went through...

C.L. Ah, yes?

S.S. Yes.

C.L. He was very tall.

S.S. Like this, he was this tall... And...

C.L. A young man?

-Page 20 (part 3)-

S.S. A young man. He was 35 years old.

C.L. Yes.

S.S. I looked at him and began to laugh. He said, "Why are you laughing?" I replied, "The Boss won't do it. That's why I'm laughing." He said, "Damn it all, get up and get back in the barrack." I believe Burmeister had talked about me to him... But he did this... Each time he made me go outside... he made me hunt and trap the rabbit; then he made me sit, then stand, sit, stand. He did that sort of thing. He was one of the tallest.

C.L. Did Burmeister kill people, too?

S.S. No. He just pulled teeth.

C.L. Teeth.

S.S. If someone said their teeth hurt, he would go to see Burmeister, and Burmeister... he had a dentist's uniform-- and he would pull their teeth.

C.L. Yes?

S.S. Yes. He was no saint, Burmeister. And all the others... it was terrible here. There would be a lot more to tell but it isn't so easy. It's very hard, very hard, very hard. There was... I remember well two brothers. They were there and one fell ill. His brother came out and went to tell Alois Haefele that his brother was sick. So he said, "What can I do about it? Bring him here!" The other brother didn't know he had come to find him and he came outside. So Alois Haefele saw that he was sick and he took his revolver and shot. Yes, you stayed here 4 days. You couldn't stay for more than 4 days.

C.L. Yes.

-Page 21 (part 3)-

S.S. On the fifth day you were taken to the woods. And each time, the men changed.

C.L. You were there for six months?

S.S. I stayed here for six months. I stayed here.

C.L. Yes.

S.S. Yes. For over six months. It's true.

-Page 22 (part 3)-

CHELMNO 54 *Polish, French*

M.B. = Barbara translating Poles from Polish.

Discussion with a group of Poles at the camp in Chelmno

C.L. What is he saying, what is he saying, this man, what is he saying to Mr. Srebnik?

M.B. He worked with the Jews in the forest ...

C.L. This man?

M.B. Yes. He says, for example, there were 150 people working, who replenished the wood, and there was only one German. So, he says, he still can't believe they didn't kill that German.

C.L. O.K., we should ask Srebnik that, so ask him why.

S.S. He says that's easy to answer.

M.B. His brother would tell him ...

C.L. Go on, go on...

M.B. His brother would always tell him, he couldn't understand that, the brother of Mr. Slivida (?),... he would say, there were 150 of them and only one German, so why, why didn't they do something? That was in 1942.

C.L. So?

S.S. Only one person survived, as Mr. Srebnik said; the others were terminated; the Jews knew that no one ever left here alive. If I run away, they'll find me, because I have no place to hide or find shelter... so if I go to your house, you're afraid,

-Page 23 (part 3)-

S.S. because you'll pay, too; so where can you go? I knew that from here there was no exit and so I stayed here.

C.L. And what does this man say? What Mr. Srebnik says seems like a strong argument? What does this man say? Ask him... wait. (The discussion continues)

S.S. Mr. Srebnik says... says that he was lucky, he says he never thought he would return to Chelmno, where they would have killed him.

M.B. He says you have good presence of mind, you... it was you who broke the lights.

S.S. He says: yes, yes, yes that's right; the lights of the Mercedes.

M.B. The lights of the Mercedes.

S.S. You remember now?

M.B. Of course.

C.L. So they, the Poles, what did they think of all this?

M.B. Yes, everyone was afraid, Mr. Srebnik said so, too, but they were scared also... there were the gypsies, the Czechs... there were priests... nuns, children.

-Page 24 (part 3)-

Boite 120

CHELMNO 55 *German, Polish*

PO. = translating Poles from Polish

[Note: The dialogue for this reel may not match the film.]

S.S. There was someone there who reminded me, yes, when I went towards him without my chains. I was reminded, I was reminded afterwards: Bothmann made me go out and he went hunting; he removed my chains. He said...

C.L. Hunting?

S.S. Yes. So he went hunting. He had an open-roofed car; it was a Mercedes that he had. And they left for the woods to hunt, and he killed two geese, right? He said, "Spinnefix, go get the geese." And I ran like a dog.

C.L. Yes.

S.S. I was a dog for him. And I ran and I retrieved the geese. One time he brought me along, and that time he shot a pig.

C.L. Yes?

S.S. And he gave us the pig; this pig, we had to... there was a butcher shop. Joratzki, he was the butcher and he prepared the pig, and we had the pig for lunch. A few times, like that one, we had pork for lunch.

C.L. Ate?

S.S. Yes, we ate pork at lunchtime.

C.L. Hey, Barbara, ask the gentleman, did he know that there were only three survivors from Chelmno.

PO. Yes, he knows. He knows.

C.L. In his opinion, could there have been more of them?

PO. He says that in any case it's a miracle that the three of them escaped and that they ... all that is thanks to ... Mr. Srebnik

-Page 25 (part 3)-

PO. had great presence of mind, because he broke the lights ... the headlights of the Mercedes.

C.L. Oh, the night of the revolt?

PO. Yes, that's right.

C.L. But I don't understand, because the gentleman seemed to be saying that the Jews could have escaped, that he doesn't understand why they didn't escape.

PO. It's time (?), only, everyone was so afraid, and everyone was waiting for the moment to come when something would happen when they could save themselves. But he says that everyone was very, very afraid and that's why they didn't do anything.

C.L. In his opinion, would the Poles have reacted the same way in those circumstances as the Jews did?

PO. He says, it doesn't matter, if they had been there and they knew they were going to be killed, they would have done something anyway.

C.L. And what does Mr. Srebnik have to say about that?

S.S. He's of the opposite opinion, and the other gentleman replies that he, he believes him! (The gentleman says something in Polish)

C.L. Translate, translate, translate!

PO. So, he says that the Poles, doesn't matter, they fight, or they'd rather defeat or die, but in any case, they would have done something,

-Page 26 (part 3)-

PO. while the Jews were much more afraid, and they were waiting for something maybe, maybe, maybe they could have saved themselves.

C.L. Does he think that Jews are fearful people?

PO. Yes... So, Mr. Srebnik asks, when the priests were there, why didn't anyone do anything to save them?

C.L. Good question!

PO. So, first of all he says that here they were much fewer, there very few Poles here, and furthermore he's relating an occurrence, that is, a time when the Germans were playing cards here, they fought with them, there was one who lost consciousness, so they said that it was the Poles who beat him up. And they had already captured all the people in the village, in the surrounding areas, they were already up against the wall to be shot and it was at that moment that the German who had lost consciousness regained it and he said in fact it wasn't the Poles, but the Germans who had beaten him up, and so they set

everyone free.

C.L. But wait, I would like for Mr. Srebnik to respond to all that, because Mr. Srebnik, he is... Mr. Srebnik is Israeli. O.K., so what does he have to say to this gentleman?

PO. So, Mr. Srebnik says that you must know what happened at Lodz, that there, everyone was hungry. There were lines to find any kind of food, so...

C.L. In the Lodz ghetto?

PO. In the Lodz ghetto.

C.L. Yes.

PO. But for him it was that.

C.L. Yes.

PO. And so now that gentleman, the Polish peasant, is saying, "Yes, I believe you, it was like that, yes, I believe you, it was like that." All the time. And so Mr. Srebnik is saying to him, "But, they told us that at Chelmno,

-Page 27 (part 3)-

PO. we weren't going to work, and that's why everyone accepted it. We didn't know anything." The gentleman is saying that's right. I'm sure that it was just like that. So finally, we couldn't do anything because no one warned us.

C.L. Absolutely. Does the gentleman believe that the Jews are cowards?

PO. They're not like the Poles.

C.L. But Mr. Srebnik knows quite a bit about courage after all.

PO. Yes, he was very lucky. Luck was on his side.

C.L. Was it luck or was it courage?

PO. It was luck and courage at the same time.

C.L. But, tell me, Mr. Srebnik served.... in the Israeli army! I would like him to talk about that.

PO. The Polish peasant keeps saying, "My brother couldn't accept that idea (his brother is not still living, he was older than him), that his brother couldn't accept the idea that they let themselves be killed like that. He would talk about it all the time and he couldn't accept it."

C.L. So?

PO. He says, "War, that's another thing. There, everyone is fighting." He also participated in the war. He took part in the defense of Warsaw, he was a liaison with the general staff (l'Etat Major)... of the general staff.... Mr. Srebnik is right, he speaks very, very well... If you had been there, you ... (incomprehensible) ... after all very hot ... we'll never leave you again. Because you're surrounded by Poles. If you had gone to the Poles, they would have said to you, "Something must be done for you." I'm not saying the Poles are bad, but they, too, were afraid.

-Page 28 (part 3)-

C.L. Mr. Srebnik, ask Mr. Srebnik if, in his opinion, there were many anti-Semitic Poles.

S.S. No, absolutely not.

C.L. Not in Chelmno. No, no but in Poland.

PO. The people here were good.

Voice: Miszczak, Miszczak...

C.L. Yes, yes, I know.

CHELMNO 56

Mute. Polish children gathered around Srebnik.

-Page 29 (part 3)-

Bobine No. 121

Bobine No. 97

CHELMNO 56 (announced as 57) Polish

Children gathered around Srebnik and Poles in courtyard

C.L. Tell this storyteller here.... I don't understand this whole story of...of Jewish women who would give birth while running.

M.B. Okay, sure. It's a story that his sister told him...she lived close to Powietecke, to the Zawadki mill...

C.L. To the Zawadki mill, sure...

M.B. ...And there, when there were convoys on foot... who were traveling on foot—there was a Jewish woman giving birth; so another, the other Jews carried her in their hands...on their arms...and when she gave birth the baby fell to the ground...

C.L. On the road?

M.B. On the road, and a German approached and kicked the newborn; there you have it...

C.L. And did he kill him?

M.B. Those who could not walk, that is... that is the elderly; um, they would kill them by hitting them with the butt of their gun.

C.L. How long did their stay there...the Jews held in the Zawadki mill?

M.B. Two or three days, no more, because here, when they had a free spot, as the gentleman mentioned, they came here.

C.L. A free spot, what does that mean? That is, room in the gas trucks...

M.B. Yes, basically; they would prepare a convoy so they could gas them.

C.L. And, do the Jews remember these gas trucks?

M.B. Yes, of course.

CHELMNO 57 *Polish; French*

Bobine No. 98

Interview with Mr. Slivida in the courtyard.

C.L. Yes, ask them: does he remember the gas trucks?

M.B. Yes, of course.

C.L. Could they describe them? What they looked like?

M.B. It was three black trucks that would drive continuously.

C.L. They didn't stop driving around? But where did they drive between?

-Page 30 (part 3)-

M.B. OK, one of the trucks would go to the woods, and the other would leave from here, you see...

C.L. Yes.

M.B. It was to-fro, to-fro, basically.

C.L. Yes.

M.B. ...Yes, that's to say, a truck would go to the woods and the other would come from the woods?

C.L. That's right; a truck would transport the Jews...

M.B. That's right; and the empty one would arrive here.

C.L. Yes; that was during the first period... during the first period, the trucks... they would kill the Jews in the gas trucks here, inside, in this where we... in the courtyard of the mansion.

M.B. Yes, yes, yes: here.

C.L. And during the second period, so, the period of the church, how did that go? During the period of the church?

M.B. OK, here: the people who were at the church were brought here to bathe, and then, right away, they put them in the gas trucks.

C.L. No, no, no, during the second period, the people, the people... no that's not right;

the people would leave the church and get right into the gas trucks...

M.B. Yes, but exactly...

C.L. Ask him.

M.B. If they would get right in the truck?

C.L. Yes.

M.B. No, no, no, first they had to bathe...

C.L. No, but they didn't bathe! They were lying to them, it's not true.

M.B. Yes, but that's what they told me. That's exactly what they told me.

C.L. No, no, no. I don't understand that at all... but during the second period, when there was no manor here, during the time that Srebnik was here...

M.B. Yes...

C.L. ...The people were held in the church...

M.B. ...yes...

C.L. ...and they loaded them directly from the church into the gas trucks.

S.S. No, no there wasn't... Okay, here: Mr. Srebnik says that when there was no longer a manor, the gas trucks went directly to the church; they filled up the truck, the people got in the truck and the truck went towards the woods; in the meantime the people were gassed...

C.L. And they... gassed them along the way?

-Page 31 (part 3)-

S.S. Along the way.

C.L. Between the church and the...

M.B. Between the church and the woods.

C.L. Between the church and woods, yes.

S.S. And after that they would unload the bodies, the truck would return to the church, pick up...

C.L. ...another load...

S.S. ...another load, and that would continue until there were no Jews left in the church.

C.L. So...how many people would be in the cab of the truck... the drivers, would there be one or two?

M.B. Only one.

C.L. Only one.

M.B. ...and, as far as the loading, as you said, there were about 80 people...they were all like that. One time there was an accident, the truck overturned...

C.L. Overturned, yes...

M.B. And the semi-conscious bodies flew onto the road...

C.L. Yes; that... that happened where?

M.B. It was at the bend in the road, there, where we were already at the camp; the gentleman will show us when we go there.

C.L. Oh, yes; and did they see it? Did they see that?

M.B. The gentleman saw it because he was going to work, actually.

C.L. And so, could he... could he tell me what happened?

M.B. Yes, of course.

C.L. Tell him to go ahead... Wait, wait, wait...

M.B. No, but, I'll explain it to you.

C.L. Yes...

M.B. The road was slick, is that how you say it?...

C.L. Yes.

M.B. And that's why he took the curve badly and came to close to the edge of the ravine; the tires slipped, and that's how...

C.L. ...not a ravine! A ditch, please... there's a big difference.

B. It's not a ravine?

C.L. No, a ravine is much deeper than a ditch.

B. Yes...

CHELMNO 57/2

Continuation of the interview in the courtyard. Two old men are conversing. Mute.

-Page 32 (part 3)-

Bobine No. 122

Bobine No. 99

CHELMNO 58 *Polish; French*

Mute, cut short, followed by an interview in the courtyard. Two other old men conferring.

C.L. OK, ask the gentleman to tell me again the story of... the story of the gas truck that overturned.

M.B. OK here's how it happened; one day, the road was slick and one of the trucks, at the curve in the road...that was going directly to the camp, came too close to the edge of the ditch and...

C.L. It was going to the woods, right?

M.B. Yes, and two of the tires went into the ditch and that's when the truck lost its balance, the door flew open; there were semi-conscious Jews who fell out and then, after that... there was no blood yet, but when they were pulled out after that, there was blood, too...

C.L. But who pulled them out?

M.B. Well... OK, well; there was a misunderstanding about the blood... that is... that is, they were pulled out... it was basically... it was like... like those gentlemen said... But Mr. Srebnik says that, because they were already being gassed, they were biting each other, and that's why there was blood on the snow.

C.L. When the truck was overturned, the doors flew open... and the Jews were thrown onto the road, is that right?

B. That's right.

C.L. OK, but ask him.

M.B. Yes.

C.L. Good, the gentleman was there, he saw it happen?

M.B. Yes.

C.L. OK, so what happened when the bodies fell into the road?

M.B. OK, he was pretty far away... So, when they saw that, they had to back up and they were only able to see that the Germans had reloaded the truck and kept driving toward the camp...

C.L. They reloaded the truck?

B. Yes, that's right, and then the truck, the truck went back towards... towards the camp.

C.L. Does Mr. Srebnik remember the incident?

S.S. Yes, yes, he says that the door flew open and the bodies fell into the road. So the... there was only one driver in the truck; so they halted traffic... and they took ten people to help reload the truck and they drove back towards the woods.

C.L. And so these trucks... these trucks, were they big?

-Page 33 (part 3)-

S.S. Yes; just about the size of that truck over there; but it was taller, and the trucks were black.

C.L. They were completely black; entirely black?

M.B. Yes.

C.L. And so people were killed in the truck... how? With the exhaust redirected to the inside, ask him if that was it?

S.S. Yes. Okay, well Mr. Srebnik says there was a sort of grill on the floor of the truck and in the pipe there were little holes for the gas to escape.

C.L. Oh, the gas came directly from the pipes that... that went under the truck.

B. Yes, yes, it was a kind of grill... so the people weren't dead yet when they opened the doors in the woods; the people would fall unconscious, but they were alive... one time, for example, one time a woman who had left for a half hour got up just like that... she was alive.

C.L. After a half hour in the truck she was still alive?

B. No, when they took her out of the truck and left her on the ground, she stayed there for a half hour, then just got up.

C.L. Yes, I understand. And people would bite their hands, bite each other inside the...

S.S. Okay, when they would open the door of the truck, they found that people had bitten, scratched, scraped... and it was just that people were flailing about, doing anything to get out.

C.L. Did Srebnik ever board one of the trucks?

S.S. Each day he would clean the trucks.

C.L. Yes, and how would you clean them... what did you clean?

S.S. Well, after... you had to clean after each transport; meaning he would remove what he calls he grills, he would clean them. He would sweep the truck and then it would be ready for the next transport. He did it so that when people first got in they wouldn't see anything, they wouldn't see any blood.

C.L. What was there in the truck? Blood, excrement? What was there?

S.S. ...well, there was blood and then also scraps of torn clothing that blocked the pipes and so you then had to... he would wash it with clean water... well, and then the truck would be ready for the next transport.

C.L. Yes, yes. Was there a smell?

-Page 34 (part 3)-

S.S. No; you could smell soap, because each, before... they gave each person a cake of soap beforehand.

C.L. Yes, they made them believe that they were going to take a bath, yes.

S.S. So it smelled like soap.

C.L. But, you were talked just now about the smell that you absolutely couldn't stand; ask him to talk about that some more.

M.B. ...well, at first the bodies would ferment, because there was a very strong smell; and then they would put wood on them, spray them with some product... and then, when it was burning, it still smelled... there was still a smell.

C.L. And, for them, was this smell very difficult to tolerate?

M.B. Yes, it was a very, very terrible smell, and when it was windy, you could smell it 20 kilometers from here.

C.L. Oh, what did they do to withstand it?

M.B. You couldn't do anything; you had to get used to it.

C.L. Would they close... close the doors? Wait, wait...

Bobine No. 123

CHELMNO 59

Mute

-Page 6 (part 4)-

CHELMNO 60 *Polish; French*

End - two more minutes in Polish.

-- Thank you, we would like to thank...

-- Thank you. Shall I meet with the butcher?

Bobine No. 100

S.S. I knew the intermediary. He's living currently in Israel.

Int. I worked in the workshops. He always lived there. He had a wife and a little boy.

S.S. Where does he live now... in Kolo?

Int. Yes, in Kolo across from the workshop, on Zelazna Road. I knew him. I even repaired his record player. We knew each other. He was tall and strong.

S.S. Yes, tall. He's still living.

Int. Yes, he had to leave; yes I knew him.

S.S. Yes, yes I knew him.

Int. As for me, I came from the east, from Zaleszczyki. I didn't know anyone here. I didn't come here until after the war. You see...

S.S. Monsieur, you're new here, then?

Int. Yes, I'm new, you see, this is all fascinating to me. You know, over there it was Ukrainians who murdered us.

S.S. Oh... oh... and...

Int. My God! We were in the same boat, as they say.

S.S. Yes, in the same boat.

Int. Here, they don't understand that...

S.S. Yes, yes.

Int. But they say here they kicked the ass of the Boches. (inaudible) you shouldn't reveal that.

-Page 7 (part 4)-

S.S. That's life.

Int. Yes, you know how we lived. I went through that. I keep looking at people through this prism. The people here are capable of anything.

S.S. Yes, I was about to tell you, Sir...

Int. Yes, they're capable of selling their brother's soul and their own to the devil.

S.S. Yes, that's right. Now everyone says he wouldn't let it happen.

Int. Yes, yes, yes...

S.S. But if they had been there; it would be another story.

Int. And now no one here smokes cigarettes because...

-Page 34 (part 3) *continued*-

CHELMNO 60A *French, Polish*

Srebnik with the Poles

M.B. Well, people who lived right around here had to close their windows and even the... that is the... even block up the tiniest cracks...

C.L. ...in their houses. All the holes...

M.B. No, all the holes that... Even if you close a window tightly, there's still a...

C.L. ...they sealed everything? That is, they were living... What did they seal it with?

M.B. ...because he says that this odor was strong enough when they went out of their houses... with cotton.

C.L. Did they succeed, that is... in doing this, did they succeed in completely eliminating the smell inside?

M.B. Yes, yes, yes.

C.L. So, what did they do when they had to go outside?

M.B. He says he doesn't know.

-Page 35 (part 3)-

C.L. But when it was very hot out, what would they do?

M.B. When it was very hot out, they would still keep everything shut.

C.L. But when it got very hot out what would they do?

M.B. He says he doesn't know, he can't say.

C.L. But, ask Mr. Srebnik... did this smell still affect him, or was he rather so used to it that he couldn't smell it anymore?

S.S. No, he got used to it; it didn't affect him at all.

M.B. ...well they, the people who worked here the whole time, were used to it. When they would come out of the forest in the evening, when they smelled this odor on their clothes and they couldn't wash themselves, they had to get used to it.

CHELMNO 60B

CH 60B

Lanzmann, Barbara, and the priest in the church; church bells ringing.

CHELMNO 60C *Polish; French*

CH 60C

Lanzmann, Barbara, and the priest in the church

C.L. Father, do you know what happened in Chelmno, in your church?

PR. Yes, he's heard about it, but at the time, he wasn't here yet.

C.L. How old were you, Father, at the time?

PR. 26.

C.L. 26 and you say you've heard about it; you've heard about what? Could you tell us what you've heard about what happened in this church here in Chelmno?

PR. Well...the Father... the Father says that here, there were occurrences, rather atrocious occurrences. For example, there were people who had farms here, and they made them move several kilometers away; if you took the road from Chelmno to come here, you risked being killed on the spot by the Germans, if you drove along the edge of the woods.

C.L. Yes, and what about in the church?

PR. In the church, people have told him there was a warehouse of clothing that they would sort... and then they would transport it elsewhere.

C.L. They transported it elsewhere...that's all he knows about what happened in this church?

PR. He only knows that from what other people have told him.

C.L. From what other people have told him... and according to him, nothing else happened in this church?

PR. The church was just a warehouse.

-Page 36 (part 3)-

C.L. Solely for belongings?

PR. Yes, a warehouse for belongings.

C.L. And I would like you to ask Mr. Srebnik, please ask him—I didn't think that the interview would take this turn—I would like you to ask Mr. Srebnik what he thinks about what the priest just said and if he has any additional information to give him.

S.S. Well Mr. Srebnik says that... there was a railroad line that would stop here and that there were Jews who would arrive on this railroad... so they would put them in the church, these, these people, and then they would tell them they were going to take a bath, they took them...

Bobine No. 124

CHELMNO 61 *Polish; French*

S.S. So, according to Mr. Srebnik, according to what he saw, there were transports of Jews that would arrive. They would put them in the church in Chelmno and they would spend the night there; then they would tell them they were going to take a shower and instead of going to take a shower they would put them into gas trucks that would drive into the woods; in each truck were approximately 80 people and when they would arrive

Bobine No. 101

CH 61

in the woods, they would already be poisoned by the gas that killed them inside the trucks.

C.L. Yes, yes. So it was human beings and not belongings.

S.S. No, there were people here; yes?

C.L. It was human beings; okay, but what I would like you to ask the priest... is that everyone in the town of Chelmno knew it, since all you had to do was walk outside, everyone talked about it... how is it that the priest could have believed that there was never anything more than belongings here?

PR. Well, what the priest says is certainly true, because the priest heard about it, too; here, only he doesn't know very well where the warehouse was, he wondered whether it was here or at the manor.

C.L. What warehouse?

PR. The warehouse for clothing, belongings, like you said... he didn't know where the warehouse was, here or at the manor.

C.L. No, I don't think I understand. The priest said quite clearly that in this church there was a warehouse of belongings and that there were never human beings here.

-Page 37 (part 3)-

PR. But now he adds that people told him about it—that they were killing Jews—he knows very well, but at the same time people told him that there was a warehouse... he wasn't sure if the warehouse was here or at the manor.

C.L. Yes, yes I understand... But does the priest know that Jews were penned up in this church before dying, before being gassed in trucks, and that this went on for months?

PR. Yes, he has heard about it...he knew that they were gassing them, but given that many things were happening, both at the church and at the manor, he was never interested in verifying it.

C.L. It never interested him to know that, for months, Jews spent their last night in this church and that they were penned up in here, before they were made to board gas trucks in the church yard?

PR. He heard that...one time there was an accident, that during the transport, the doors of a truck opened and quite a few people fell into the road, still alive...It also seems that when they were running low on products to poison them with, they would give them less, so people often suffered greatly before dying, because it wasn't effective enough.

C.L. Could Mr. Srebnik tell us what happened in the church, and have him tell us in detail...You came into this church?

S.S. Okay, well...one day he came here into the woods with the head of the manor (Alois Haefele) and he told him, "listen, we're going to the church because the people have arrived and they're thirsty." So he came here, to this church, they distributed water; but these people knew nothing...that they were going to die. No one wanted to believe that they had come here to spend only one night... that it would be so quick, after this night, the gas trucks would arrive to kill them.

C.L. No, but did this happen every day? Were there people here every day, every two days?

S.S. Every two days.

C.L. Every two days.

S.S. Every two days. Or rather, every two nights.

C.L. And how many people would they hold in this church?

S.S. He thinks 2000.

-Page 38 (part 3)-

C.L. So, it must have been very, very crowded, right?

S.S. Yes, yes, of course. So, he was at the entrance and people would approach him and he would give them water.

C.L. And the Nazis often gave water to people they were going to kill?

S.S. It wasn't often... at the beginning, of this undertaking, they would give them water, after that, no.

C.L. And why did this happen? How many times did Srebnik come to the church?

S.S. Maybe four or five times.

C.L. And so, could he tell us exactly what happened, how they... they lived in the church... What did they think was going to happen to them? Because.... We found---and there are even things that I don't understand very well because the priest showed us an inscription that had been left here by a German Jew from Leipzig; he wrote his name, which you can't read anymore and he told us that the whole church was covered in inscriptions... the people who had left their names, who must have known... well, that these were their last words. So I don't understand this whole story of the warehouse at all, I would like to revisit that, because I would like to actually understand... Why does he say that the church was a warehouse, even though, when we're not in front of the camera, he has seems to now perfectly well that the church was filled with Jews; and I

would like my question to be asked in its entirety, please.

B. That's rather difficult, because it's quite long.

C.L. Okay, the gist of my question, in any case! The essence!

C.L. (seeing that Mr. Srebnik is getting ready to respond) But my question was for the priest!

B. No, the first one was for Mr. Srebnik, for him to tell us what he saw.

S.S. So the people who arrived here didn't know at all what they were going... Quite simply, they thought that the next day they would be sent off to work. But there were those people who were suspicious anyway, because, for example, there was a Jew who tried to go through the window, jump out and escape, but there was a German on the other side who shot him on the spot. Nobody wanted to believe that the next day, all these people would die.

-Page 39 (part 3)-

Bobine No. 125

CHELMNO 62 *Polish; French*

Bobine No. 102

CH 62

C.L. Yes, I would like... I would like to revisit this whole story of the warehouse because I don't understand very well... Yesterday, when we were in front of the camera, the priest explained that, when he took charge of this parish, the walls were covered in inscriptions from Jews who had spent their last night, well, and who had left messages... messages saying what town they were from...etc. And so yesterday he seemed to know very, very well that Jews were penned up here. So I would like to revisit that, and have him answer my question, as precisely as I have posed... I would really like to understand! Why did he tell us at the beginning of the interview that the church was just a warehouse?

P.B. ...The priest as convinced that the gassing was talking place at the manor and

there, when he came, they told him that there were warehouses here, but given that he was sure that it was taking place at the manor, he didn't think very hard about it.

C.L. No, but I don't understand! How does he explain that there were inscriptions on the walls? He showed us one, the last, the only one that remains, one from a Jew from Leipzig who left his name, barely legible, but you can read Leipzig, and so... how does he explain the inscriptions? That's what I want to understand.

P.B. Well he says that the other priest, the one who restored the church, simply left it, as evidence of what had happened here.

C.L. Yes, but I don't know... I have the impression that something is bothersome to the priest in the idea that the Jews were penned up here, passed their last night, before boarding gas trucks to die! And if something is bothersome about this idea, I would like him to explain it.

P.B. The priest doesn't understand your question.

C.L. He doesn't understand my question!

P.B. Yes, it's a very great problem, but he doesn't understand very clearly what you want to hear.

C.L. No, but... he doesn't seem to be bothered by the fact that the church was turned into a warehouse, that they deposited clothes, and at the same time, it seems quite difficult for him to admit that this church was death's antechamber for a very large number of Jews. So, ask him the question. I don't know if I'm mistaken, but...

-Page 40 (part 3)

P.B. For these people it was necessary, they chased them here, they didn't have any other choice.... They had to stay... Yes, it wasn't their fault, all that.

C.L. It wasn't their fault that Jews were sent to the church?

B. No, the Jews were in the church, what else would they had done?

C.L. No, no. I would like you to translate my question exactly! Ask the priest, what does he mean when he says that... it was necessary? What does he mean? That the Jews weren't guilty for having spent their last night in this church?

P.B. He means simply that, in that situation, you do what you're told; sometimes people even lose their personality, they do what they're told... they can't do anything.

C.L. Okay... I would like Srebnik to describe, but in detail please, how things happened in this church. Also, I will ask the question myself: when you were outside the church... what would you hear? Were there noises, were there murmurs, were there cries?

S.S. No, it wasn't like that.

C.L. So, how was it?

S.S. No, it was completely silent

C.L. There was a great silence.

S.S. Yes, everybody stayed quietly in his corner, waiting for them...to... to be taken... for them to come and taken him the next day to work.

C.L. And where did these Jews come from; the Jews who were in this church?

S.S. From Lodz, from Wostlavik, from Sked, from Pabienike, from the Lodz region,

generally speaking.

C.L. So these were Jews who had spent years... years in the ghetto already!

S.S. Yes, yes, yes.

C.L. And so, how does Mr. Srebnik explain the inscriptions on the walls, if the people didn't suspect anything?

S.S. The vast majority didn't want to believe... that it could end badly. But there were still some people who suspected something and they were the ones who left the inscriptions on... on the walls.

C.L. There were quite a few then! Is what the priest has told us correct? Were the walls really covered in inscriptions?

-Page 41 (part 3)-

S.S. He wasn't there; he says he saw many inscriptions, how many exactly, he can't say.

C.L. Yes...

S.S. But... well there they left inscriptions but did... there were people, for example, even while they were on the train, as Mr. Srebnik says, even he, who wanted to write something: "I was here." He thinks that's what it was.

C.L. I don't believe that it would just be that, but...

S.S. ...for example...

C.L. And the Jews who went to the... who, before being gassed at Chelmno, spent

their... who were assembled in the synagogue in Kolo, all left inscriptions on the walls, saying, “brothers, this is our final journey, etc., etc.” and so they suspected something.

S.S. Well, um, here at Chelmno, one time Bothmann came, told them, “Listen, tomorrow morning, I will take 80 people who will go to work in Germany... in Israel. So he said, “40 people will leave tomorrow.” And then so they asked one of those who was chosen to keep a close watch and if he was going towards the forest to leave a message in the truck.

C.L. Yes.

Bobine No. 126

CHELMNO 63 *Polish; French*

C.L. Father, I would like to know, how, when the church had this function here, during the war, that is when it was either a warehouse—which it was, in effect, during the first period—and when subsequently Jews were penned up here, how did you worship here in Chelmno?

B. How...

C.L. How did you worship in Chelmno?

PR. There wasn't a priest here, at that time...

C.L. There wasn't a priest...

PR. Well... it seems that there wasn't a priest until '40, because you can see in the baptism register, still, the record of his imprisonment; but afterwards, all the registers were taken by the German government; so here, there wasn't a single priest... there wasn't a priest. And services were restarted at the beginning, only after the war.

C.L. But that happened, the same phenomenon happened in many other churches in the area, in Povikie, in...

-Page 42 (part 3)-

C.L. Dobra, in Grabow and the churches served as warehouses and at the same time as pens for Jews.

PR. So in all this region, there wasn't a single priest, it was... one of the priests from the German army who would come to all these villages, who would perform baptisms but only at people's homes, not at the church.

C.L. ...that must have been hard...

PR. ...who would perform last rites, too; so now we go to this register for information on this period, but without proof.

C.L. ... That in a country as Catholic as Poland, what did they do about baptisms, burials... etc...

PR. So from time to time there was an old priest who hadn't been deported by the Germans and so it was he who took care of all that. That is, he would baptize the children at their homes, directly in their homes.

C.L. So how does the priest explain that the Germans did that, precisely that they used the churches, either for penning up living Jews, or for depositing belongings that had been stolen from Jews?

PR. They wanted to destroy this country's character; they wanted to destroy the things that comforted them.

C.L. Yes.

PR. And is that why in the country towns for example, it was common for school teachers and priests to be the first to be deported.

C.L. And how does the priest explain that this whole thing happened to the Jews?

PR. It was the German regime that wanted to destroy this people, as written in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

C.L. And the priest was a priest in a parish at that time?

PR. He escaped, he crossed the border of what they called the "protectorat;" he was in K(?), he had nothing, he had to buy everything new, all his clothes and everything; but he wasn't a priest yet, he was a cleric.

C.L. He wasn't a priest at that time...

PR. No. After the war they came home with a single habit, shoes full of holes, and we couldn't even consecrate them, because all the bishops had been deported. Except in Kiemse there was what they call the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy; that is there was a priest who could consecrate them.

-Page 43 (part 3)-

C.L. Ask Mr. Srebnik if he believes in God.

S.S. He doesn't know, he doesn't know.

C.L. I didn't ask him a good question.

S.S. But he wanted to answer you. After what he saw, he doesn't know if he should believe or if he should not. Before, yes, he believed, but now he doesn't know anymore.

-Page 44 (part 3)-

Bobine No. 130

CHELMNO 81

Srebnik, in his boat, seen from the bank (cut).

Bobine No. 106

CH 81

CHELMNO 82

Srebnik, on his boat going up the river and singing in Polish.

CH 82

Bobine No. 107

CHELMNO 83 *French, Polish*

CH 83

Barbara translates. Lanzmann, Srebnik and a few Polish men by the river Ner in Chelmno

C.L. Barbara, please... ask these gentlemen... why this river, the Ner, is so dirty, black... stinking, polluted to the bone? What happened?

M.B. All of this comes from the factory in Lodz (?).

C.L. Yes, but it's very sad, isn't it?

M.B. Yes, it's very sad, but they say that they pay a lot for that.

C.L. Who pays?

M.B. It's the factory on the island that pays; but the factory is national... so... in fact it's... it's in the same country that it's happening!

C.L. Yes, that's (laughs)... There are no more fish, are there?

M.B. There aren't even frogs; nothing grows here... nothing at all.

C.L. And what was the river like in '44 when Srebnik would sing on the river?

M.B. This one was very strong, very strong...

C.L. Yes.

M.B. There were lots of fish and people would swim among the fish.

C.L. And was the water clear?

M.B. Very clear... and Mr. Srebnik would swim in the... in this river.

C.L. Oh! Srebnik would swim! Ask him.

S.S. Yes, yes, that's right. And now, you can't... you can't even look into it...

C.L. Clearly.

M.B. You can't even get near it.

C.L. And Srebnik would sing on the river in his boat.

M.B. Yes, every day.

-Page 45 (part 3)-

C.L. So, why do they all look so emotional as they remember Srebnik singing and when he sings today on the river? Why are they so moved by that, the people of the town of Chelmno?

M.B. When I heard him, my heart beat much harder, because it was... um... what happened here, was murder... I truly relived what happened.

C.L. And him, what does he say?

M.B. He says it was a child singing there, it was really the irony... that this was a child singing during that time.

C.L. That's right, it was a Jewish child who sang on the river and...

M.B. They were killing people while he sang.

C.L. Yes. And ask Srebnik why he sang on this river.

S.S. Because they told him to sing, they ordered him to sing.

C.L. Who ordered him to sing?

S.S. It... It was the Gestapo who asked him to do it. Each time they left, they would tell him to sing.

C.L. But why? Because they thought he had a nice voice, well... what was...

M.B. Perhaps so that no one around would know.

C.L. Does he think that's it?

S.S. Yes, he thinks that's it.

C.L. No, but everyone knew, anyway!

S.S.. But *they* thought that they didn't know.

C.L. And so what kinds of songs did they teach him?

S.S. Allaki (?), German songs, a few Polish songs.

C.L. Yes, he didn't sing Jewish songs.

S.S. No.

C.L. And... I mean... could you hear his... throughout the... throughout the town?

M.B. He was thirteen and a half, he had a nice voice... he sang in a beautiful way and you could hear him.

S.S. So Mr. Srebnik says that he was a child at the time, that he didn't understand well... and his mother died.

C.L. What doesn't he understand?

S.S. He knew that they were killing people, that they were burning people, but he was a child and so he thought that was how it was supposed to be.

-Page 46 (part 3)-

C.L. And he thought that that's how it was ... that was the only world he knew, is that right?

S.S. Yes. He spent four years at Lodz, in the ghetto, he didn't have anything to eat, everyone thought that ... to have a scrap of bread.

C.L. Yes. But why did he just say that ... I didn't understand. His mother was dead, well, when we were talking about ... songs?

S.S. He didn't see his mother here, he saw photos of his mother, of his mother and

him, and he knew that his mother was burned here.

C.L. Where did he find the photos of his mother?

S.S. He was working for ... with the documents, and he found his mother's bag with all ... all of her identity papers, and everything else that was inside.

C.L. His mother was burned, was gassed here, and ... he was in the woods, is that right?

S.S. That's right.

C.L. And he thought that was normal?

S.S. At the time, things were different... things were different at the time, you didn't think about your mother or ... of your mother, you thought about eating.

C.L. Yes ... Did he grieve ... Um, when he found the documents that ... proving that his mother was dead and ... had been gassed?

S.S. No, he was used to it.

C.L. Wait...

Bobine No. 131

CHELMNO 85 *Polish; French*

C.L. Ask Srebnik if he was sad, if he felt sorrow when he found the photos, the papers, the documents ... um ... proving to him that his mother had been gassed here in Chelmno.

S.S. I was a bit sad, but I was used to it.

Bobine No. 108

CH 85

C.L. For him, it was ... it was normal that his mother ... should be gassed here and burned in the woods.

S.S. He thought that it was supposed to be like that.

C.L. He thought it was supposed to be like that ... and

S.S. He saw that every day in Chelmno, killing ... they would shoot Jews every day.

C.L. Corpses, teeth, all of that was ... was life as usual for him?

S.S. Yes, teeth with flesh, all of that ...

C.L. And his father ... his father ... how did he lose his father?

-Page 47 (part 3)-

S.S. He had gone for a walk with his father in Lodz and they...

C.L. In Lodz, where? In, in...in... When he was in Lodz, he would walk with his father?

S.S. Yes, when they...

C.L. Yes, when they were in the ghetto.

S.S. Yes, when they were living in Lodz.

C.L. OK, OK, so?

S.S. And they shot him.

C.L. What do you mean they shot him?

S.S. Quite simply, an SS... was there, he killed him... he shot him.

C.L. Right in front of him?

S.S. Yes.

C.L. And that happened how long before he arrived in Chelmno?

S.S. It was on Dzejinska Street (?); and the Gestapo took us in a truck with 80 other people and they brought us here.

C.L. No, but that, that was after his father's death; I think he didn't understand my questions... my question is: his father was killed how long before he arrived in Chelmno?

S.S. 6 months.

C.L. 6 months before.

B. 6 months before.

C.L. And while he was singing, was he happy?

S.S. No, when... (Barbara interrupts to ask the question again)... yes, yes, I was happy.

C.L. And according to the Poles, did he look happy? Does he remember? What did he look like? Ask the Poles.

M.B. Yes, he was... happy, he was young... he was... well.

C.L. Physically... What...

B. Physically, yes.

C.L. What did he look like physically?

M.B. He was well-dressed.

C.L. And?

M.B. A gentleman says that he saw him sitting on the (two inaudible words).

C.L. On the boat?

M.B. No, when he was singing in front of the church.

C.L. Oh! He also sang in front of the church!

M.B. Yes... and the gentleman was passing in front of the church as Mr. Srebnik was singing and it shocked him, he wondered... a child singing here... Oh! He said it was truly the irony of the Germans, that... they were killing people... and he had to sing... That's what I was thinking.

-Page 48 (part 3)-

C.L. He's right.

M.B. Yes, he's not sure if he's right.

C.L. Excuse me?

M.B. He's not sure if he's right?

C.L. Why?

M.B. Yes, he's right. Well, well it wasn't possible... *they* were shooting people and *he* was singing.

C.L. At the time did they understand the meaning of that... the significance of it?

B. Not the meaning of the song?

C.L. No, no.

M.B. It shocked him because... he couldn't get close enough to see, but he saw me from afar.

C.L. But could you say that Srebnik was kind of the Nazis' clown?

M.B. They thought that the Nazis did it on purpose that...

C.L. Of course.

M.B. ...that he would sing. Yes, they thought that Mr. Srebnik was a plaything... yes, a plaything to amuse them.

C.L. And what does Srebnik think?

S.S. He thinks that's right, he thinks the same thing.

C.L. Was Srebnik happy, when the Nazis congratulated him,, when they would tell him, "good job"?

S.S. Of course; he was happy not to be shot.

C.L. Yes, that's understandable! But was he happy... um... aside from that... well, I mean, was he happy, when they... when he won the race, well... (two words muffled by a cough)?

S.S. He couldn't do otherwise.

C.L. Yes.

S.S. He had to do it.

M.B. And the gentleman says that he was singing, but his heart was weeping!

C.L. Do *their* hearts still weep when they think about it?

M.B. Of course! A lot. Of course, about what it looked like!

C.L. Do they think about it often?

M.B. When the family gets together, they still talk about it... um... around the table. Because it was public, right on the road, everyone knew about it!

C.L. Everyone knew about it, yes. And how do they explain that the Germans didn't try harder to hide it?

M.B. Yes, they didn't... they didn't try to hide it at all.

-Page 49 (part 3)-

C.L. Yes, but how do they explain that...

M.B. They were sure of themselves, they thought that they were going to conquer everyone; they thought they could frighten everyone, the entire nation, so they wouldn't have a hard time later... so everyone would be afraid.

C.L. Of course.

The conversation continues with shots filmed with the end of the roll (consequently, disconnected rambling)

M.B. When we would see the Germans, we would hide in every hole because we were afraid they would find us and shoot us. At every moment you believed you were going to die.

C.L. Did they think of the Jews as... as foreigners or were they rather a part of the... of the Polish nation?

M.B. They lived together, the Jews, the Germans and the Poles. The Jews were very good merchants... they... they were the ones who took care of that.

C.L. Yes... are there any Jewish merchants now?

Cut

Bobine No. 132

CHELMNO 86 *German*

Lanzmann and Srebnik walk down a dirt road in the forest toward the camera

First reactions

Bobine No. 133

Silent shots of the market in Grabow: merchants and shoppers.

Bobine No. 109

CH 86

Bobine No. 110

CHELMNO 87

CH 87

A cart, carrying a pig, leaves the town square in Grabow.

CHELMNO 88 *Polish*

CH 88

Passage of a cart with two peasants conversing in Polish (not translated).

Bobine No. 134

Bobine No. 110

Silent shots of the passage of the cart. (identified as CHELMNO 89)

Silent shots of women in front of a white house.

Bobine No. 111

CHELMNO 90

CH 90

Interview with the two Polish women.

-Page 50 (part 3)-

Bobine No. 132

Bobine No. 109

CHELMNO 86 *German*

CH 86

Srebnik arrives in the forest. The first reaction. Walking.

C.L. Here are the... the graves.

S.S. Yes. (continue in silence)

C.L. Do you recognize anything?

S.S. It's hard to recognize, but this is it.

C.L. This is it.

S.S. Yes. Over there is where the people were burned. There were many who were burned here.

C.L. Yes?

S.S. Yes. It was in this place. Anyone who was brought here had no chance of

leaving.

C.L. And were there three huge graves like...

S.S. At the time I was here, there were no graves here. At that time, they had only built big ovens and that's where they were burned.

C.L. Yes. And in 44?

S.S. In 1944.

S.S. Now, that's not true. There was something entirely different here. It was another barrack. It was here.

C.L. Where?

S.S. Over there, I think. Right behind there, down there, there was a barrack. It was here.

C.L. Yes?

S.S. Yes. At each shipment, they would choose ten people and order them to write letters to Lodz, to members of their family in Lodz.

-Page 51 (part 3)-

C.L. This was for the Jews?

S.S. Yes. They would send letters to Lodz. And the letters would arrive in Lodz and explain that they were working here, that they had everything they needed, that all was well. And the people who received these letters in Lodz would leave the next day to come here.

C.L. Yes.

S.S. Yes.

C.L. They...

S.S. That was how, at each shipment they would choose a few people to write letters to members of their family. Yes. They would give them paper and a pen and they would write letters to... Litzmannstadt, to Lodz to tell them they had everything they needed, that everything was fine, that they had food and that they wanted their families to come as well. And they would come here. But when they arrived, they would stay here. No one ever escaped from here.

C.L. Yes, and it was the gas vans that people...

S.S. Yes. The gas vans came through there. There were two big ovens, and they would throw them inside... into the oven, and the flames would rise into the sky.

C.L. Into the sky?

S.S. Yes?

C.L. Huge fires?

S.S. It was terrible.

C.L. And these... these ovens were very large?

S.S. Yes. They were enormous. And they were like this, right on the ground, and at the bottom they were straight and they were almost bigger. And the gas van would arrive

at the oven, two men would get inside; one would grab the feet while the other grabbed the head, and they would throw them like this into the oven. They would throw in men, wood, men, and then more wood, and all of it burned. The first batch they would light with gasoline.

-Page 52 (part 3)-

C.L. Ah, yes.

S.S. Then, when it... it would burn by itself, on its own.

C.L. Ah, yes.

S.S. And that's how they burned the shipments every two days, they would burn them.

C.L. With wood.

S.S. With wood, yes with wood. Over there is... I saw over there, a little further off, a... the same wood they used to burn the... the bodies.

C.L. Yes. And was there (illegible)? How... how... (illegible)

S.S. Yes. Yes. And the SS would stand all around, and they would shout, "Faster, work faster! Throw them in faster, throw them in faster!" And we, we would work until the entire shipment had been burned.

C.L. Yes. Perhaps we will go...

S.S. (barely audible) No, today there is nothing left, but in the past it was a... You can't even describe. No one can imagine what was once here.

C.L. Yes. I think it's absolutely impossible.

S.S. Impossible. And no one could understand.

C.L. Yes.

S.S. And now I think even I can't understand anymore.

C.L. You can't?

S.S. No, what was once here... what once stood in this place.

C.L. Yes? Why can't you?

S.S. I've come here now, I can't believe that I... I can't seem to understand that I'm standing here again.

C.L. But in 1942 and 1943, were there graves here?

S.S. Yes, they were already here, in 1942, 1943-- that's what I heard from a, from...

-Page 53 (part 3)-

S.S. There was a guard, and he's the one who told me. They had dug two graves, and so they would throw the bodies in. But afterwards, all of it would begin to rot and the stench was incredible. So they took them and they covered them with chlorine, and they cleared all of it out. Then, in '44 they... at the beginning of 1944, they built the ovens here. And they took...and they... to burn, not to... no longer in graves.

C.L. And where were the ovens?

S.S. The ovens were over this way in a spot... I can't remember exactly. There was something over there... there was something here... They were over there. I can't

remember now where they were exactly. Now, everything is different here. It wasn't like this here... all of that.

C.L. Yes, but the spot was...

S.S. The spot was... the spot was... there, there were also big slabs of concrete.

C.L. Yes?

S.S. And we would pull out the large bones and we would grind them over there, the large bones...

C.L. In a bone mill?

S.S. Yes. The mill that would, like this...

C.L. Yes?

S.S. ... a thing like this. And then, we would pour it into bags and the ashes were scattered in the... in the Ner. In the water of the Ner, from a bridge.

C.L. In the river?

S.S. Yes, in the river.

C.L. Yes.

S.S. Now, I don't know where the ovens were. I have no idea.

-Page 54 (part 3)-

Bobine No. 139

CHELMNO 101

Mute . Srebnik searches the grounds at Chelmno.

CHELMNO 102 *German*

C.L. For us, seeing such a tranquil, beautiful place, it is absolutely impossible to imagine...

S.S. It was always this peaceful here. Always. Even when they were burning every day, or every two days, let's say, 2,000 people, Jews, it was always this peaceful. In this place, there were the two ovens, one there and a second there, and it was always as peaceful as it is now, as we are here.

C.L. But, there were no... no screams... no...

S.S. No, absolutely not. No one screamed. Everyone did his job, everything was silent.

C.L. Silent.

S.S. Yes.

C.L. Yes.

S.S. Just as it is now.

C.L. And even you, can you describe it now as it was then? Today?

S.S. Yes, I can describe it. Over there was a path and it was from there that the gas trucks would arrive, through there, over there were the ovens and they would back up like that, and in each gas truck were 80 people, but they were already... okay... how do you say... they were... okay (in Yiddish: poisoned). But they were still alive... some of them

were still alive. I remember one time in particular. There was no more room in the oven, to throw more people in the oven, and they stayed here, like that on the ground, and they had taken them out of the truck and the... the truck left to go get another shipment. They were all moving a little and they came to, like the humans that they were. And when they were thrown in the oven they were still very much alive.

-Page 55 (part 3)-

S.S. They felt like the fire was... roasting them. And they turned like that, and they... but... and there was a... a (in Hebrew: how do you say a layer?)... they threw in another, okay (layer)... of wood, and then a... okay. They threw on more wood, and then more people, and then more wood on top and then the flames would reach into the sky.

C.L. Into the sky?

S.S. Into the sky. And it burned like this; the two (illegible) burned like this, and there was a big fire that burned directly on the ground. And it was... rising (illegible)... all that, the fire and smoke, all of it rose into the sky. Then, all day long, the trucks would arrive with people, and here they would burn them in the ovens. Then, a little farther away, over that way, there was a... a slab of concrete, and the ... the bones that weren't cremated, the big ones, like the big bones in the foot or... we would pick them out with... with like a... it was a box with two... with two handles, like that, and we would deliver them over there where someone would grind them. It was very... it was really... ground... so finely. Next, they would package this in bags and when they had... when they had quite a few bags, we would leave for the banks of the Narwa; down there was a bridge, so we would dump that in the Narwa and it would be swept away in the current.

C.L. In the water, in the river?

S.S. Yes, in the river. And it would be swept away... it would be swept away with the... with the river.

C.L. Yes, and there was a... what was it like, there was a mill?

S.S. No, not a mill. It was a... a ... from the woods;

-Page 56 (part 3)-

S.S. they had taken a big... that they cut from a tree, and like that... like that with... with one hand like this, a... like... that was how they ground them.

C.L. Oh, yes.

S.S. Like that. Of course, the bones were quite burned, they were dry, and when they would crush them, they would turn to ashes, the bones.

C.L. Yes. And the fire, it burned night and day?

S.S. No. When we would leave here, the fire wouldn't be burning. We had to clean the ovens, for the next day... A shipment would arrive every two days. We had to clean, everything would be neat, ready to receive the next shipment that would come from... from Lodz or other towns.

C.L. Yes and when... when the gas vans would arrive, what would happen? Can you describe it in detail?

S.S. Yes... when the... when the gas vans would arrive, the SS would say, "Open the doors!" And we would open the doors, and the corpses would fall out. And someone would say, "Two men inside!" And two men would get in, there were two men in particular who usually got in and who were quite skilled in the job. And one would grab the feet and the other the... yes, before there was also... there was a man, Bobby, who would pull with pliers... the people who had gold teeth in their mouth; he would go up to them with his pliers and pull the teeth.

C.L. Bobby?

S.S. Yes. Bobby. He would pull their teeth. When he had finished pulling their teeth, he would toss them like this. And there were SS who would shout, "Throw them in quicker, throw them in quicker. Look, another truck is arriving!" And it was like that all day long, just like that. And then, in the evening, they would gather all the... teeth, and people had

-Page 57 (part 3)-

S.S. just hidden, gold with money, and when they... when they were... when they threw them in, they threw them in, too, until they knew which ones were still hiding money. Then, they took them down, they made them lie down over here and searched each one to see if he were still hiding money. The women had a lot of money on them in these...

C.L. _____

S.S. Yes. [In the] first period they did not look, but after that they... nobody said that they had seen money, because they had burned it. And on the next day when they took down the next group of women, and looked and, everywhere with the women, and they took out lots of money.

C.L. All over?

S.S. Yes, all over.

C.L. Yes, and what were the ovens like?

S.S. The... the ovens... once we had built the ovens, they...

C.L. Did you personally participate in the construction?

S.S. Yes. I am... I was here. But I didn't work here, because the shovel was bigger than I was. The SS were standing over there and they would shout, "Dig faster, dig faster!" But when the men had worked an hour or two, they didn't have any strength left. And when someone ran out of strength, they would tell him, "So get out of the way."

Bobine No. 140

CHELMNO 103

Cam. Announce!

Ass. Chelmno, 103!

Re. Maya po yehudi chad...

-Page 58 (part 3)-

Qu. No, no.

Trad. In German!

Qu. Excuse me, so, cut, cut, cut, cut. Yes, cut.

Ass. Chelmno 104

CHELMNO 104 *German*

S.S. There was a Jew who... they called him Bobby. He was there. They called him "the dentist." He was the one who would pull the teeth here and then he would search the women to see if they were hiding money or gold. That was his job. When we built the ovens here, I wondered what are these ovens about, and what will they do with them... what will they be for. One of the SS said to me, "we will make charcoal, to iron (!)! He said this to me. I didn't know. And when the ovens were done, and the first transport arrived, we still didn't know. Then, when they came and when they... when they had put

in the first layer of wood and poured the gasoline to light it and the... the gas trucks arrived here, we understood why the ovens were built. And it was like that all the time. It was like that... here... I think it went on for five months like that, five months like that.

C.L. What was your first impression of the first transport?

S.S. My first impression... yes, I didn't feel anything at all. Why: I had already seen so many things at the manor. One time, for example, Meister Lenz made me come to the manor and he said to me, "Spinnefix, come here, bring me a large receptacle. I want to see how much brains a Jew has." I brought him a receptacle and he made a man come out and he told him, "Lie down!" And I held the receptacle under his head and he shot him in the head. And the brain fell into the receptacle. I saw so many things, when I understood... it didn't move me.

-Page 59 (part 3)-

S.S. My God, I didn't understand what it meant; how... how.. I thought that was how it was supposed to be.

C.L. It wasn't especially frightening?

S.S. No. I looked at the things... I saw that at the manor. He was always doing things like that. One time, he took some people and told them, "Whoever can't work, who is tired, I'll send you out for some fresh air!" There were a few who said, "Yes, I'm a bit tired, can I go out for some fresh air... can I go out?" He said, "Good, come over here." And he took them. "How many others would like to go out?" They left... 5, 10 people left. "So, you want a bit of fresh air? A bit of rest?" Bothmann said. And they replied, "Yes, Boss, if that's all right." "Okay then, lie down over there." They lay down and he took his pistol, saying, "This is what I call fresh air!"

C.L. And the people...

S.S. Then, no one... no one else wanted to go out for fresh air. They were all afraid. They already knew. But at first they had no idea, rest, everyone wanted to rest. Then, no one else went out, but when they noticed that someone was weak or whatever, that someone had a trace of blood on his hand or something like that, they would shoot him right away. There you have it, and I came here and I saw all of that but it didn't affect me. And then, there was another transport, and then another. I went with Bothmann and Bothmann came to see if the work had been done well. I followed him like that for a week... it didn't move me.

C.L. That is impossible to understand.

-Page 60 (part 3)-

S.S. It's... I was... how do you say...

C.L. Excuse me.

CHELMNO 105 *German*

C.L. Yes, it's impossible to...

S.S. Yes, I was telling you, when you asked me what impression that made on me, that perhaps I didn't understand. Perhaps if I had been older I would have understood what they were doing. Perhaps I didn't understand what it all meant. At that time, I hadn't seen much better. In the ghetto I had already seen, in the Lodz ghetto everyone... when someone left, dead, dead. He would fall, he would fall. I thought that was how it was supposed to be.

C.L. That this was life as usual.

S.S. That this was normal. That's right... When I would go out in the street, in Lodz, I would walk, let's say 100 meters, there would be two bodies. So, a truck would pass, collect them, throw them inside and take them away. I would say to myself...

CHELMNO 106 *German*

Srebnik stands in the field where the crematoriums were in 1944.

[Note: The translation of camera reel 106 differs from the original transcript. The English translation represents what actually appears on the tape.]

S.S. Yes, when you ask me what impression that made on me. I arrived here, as it was, I had already seen all of these things in Litzmannstadt, in Lodz, in the ghetto. It was... People would receive two kilos of bread, that's all they would get, for ten days, and in two days they had already eaten it all. And for eight days everyone would go hungry. And they would go out in the streets and they would fall over, they would fall over. A truck would arrive, they would fill up a truck with human corpses, they would take them away. I arrived here and saw all of this, the fire and all that. It didn't affect me. Perhaps if I had been older,

-Pages 61 to 62 (part 3)-

S.S. perhaps that would have affected me. But I was only 13 years old and with all I'd seen in my life, I came here and all I saw were corpses, bodies. And when I arrived here, truly, it didn't affect me.

C.L. It was the same for the other children?

-Pages 62 to 65 (part 3)-

Bobine No. 148

CHELMNO 107 *German*

[Note: The translation of camera reel 107 differs from the original transcript. The English translation represents what actually appears on the tape.]

S.S. Yes. In the ghetto it was like that. For ten days we would receive two kilos of bread, 200 grams of coffee and a half-kilo of sugar. And we would eat it so fast that at the end of two days we were already out of bread, out of coffee. We would eat the coffee on the third day. After that we had nothing to eat. Everyone went hungry. And in the

streets, they would go out into the street and they would fall over, dead. And there were also cases where a son would steal his own father's bread to eat it. There was so much hunger. Every man wanted... how do you say... to stay alive, right? Everyone would steal from his neighbor. And when I arrived at Chelmno, I was already so... everything was all the same to me. I would tell myself that if I lived, I wanted only one thing: five loaves of bread all to myself to eat. Nothing more. That's what I thought. I didn't think of anything else at all. And I would dream, too, "if I live, I will be the only survivor."

C.L. Oh, yes?

S.S. Yes.

C.L. The only one?

S.S. I would be the last man alive in the world, if I... if I get out of here. I didn't pay any attention to those things, to the people passing by with... with that massacre of people here, and all the rest. I was so... it was all the same to me. It didn't interest me, not at all. Here, in this spot, they brought a big case full of gold, silver, gems, gold teeth. They would say, "This will be for the Third Reich, the Third Reich needs a lot of gold. It will be for the war." They would say that they had the right to have all of it and that Jews had all the gold.

C.L. It was stolen?

S.S. Stolen from Jews...

C.L. Was it stolen?

S.S. Stolen from Jews who... who were burned here, right? They would take everything and they... I saw it go to the manor, they would send it to the manor, whole cases; a truck would arrive, an armored truck. Everything was wrapped up, placed in the

truck and shipped to... to Litzmannstadt is where they brought it. And from Litzmannstadt, they would send it... I have no idea how... how they sent it. There was a lot of it. Everyone who was burned had their belongings on them. They thought they were going to find work and that they might stay here. Those who had gold or silver at home brought it along. But they all remained here, in this place. No one ever left here.

C.L. And it was at this spot where the gold and silver used to be?

S.S. Everything. It was here where we pulled the teeth and where we would put the gold into suitcases, and the suitcases would go to the manor. At the manor we... it was Burmeister and myself who took care of it, and I still believe something: I believe that it's thanks to that that I stayed alive here. But no one was allowed to enter this barrack.

C.L. Why?

S.S. Because there was lot of gold and silver; there were also gems. If they had come in here they would have stolen everything, the... the.. the SS. The Obersturmbannfuehrer Bothmann had strictly prohibited it. He had said, "No one may go into the barrack. Only Walter Burmeister and Spinnefix."

C.L. Spinnefix?

S.S. Yes, that was me. They would come by every day. Haefele, too, would come to see me each day and he would say, "Today I would like something for my," (he would say this in Polish), "I would like something for my Kochana. Spinnefix, make me a nice little present." I would say, "Yes, Boss, what would you like?" He would reply, "I would like a pretty chain, a gold one." "Okay, Boss." I would go into the shack and I would choose a chain, a pretty one, with a pendant, all gold. I would make him a package and I would give it to him. So, he would say, "You are worthy. You are unique." That's what he would say. Then Erwin would come, too. He was the... the president... the supervisor at the mess hall. "Spinnefix, I'd like a few rings." He would say this in difficult German

and I wouldn't understand, so I would ask Haefele: "Boss, Erwin told me such and such!" "Okay, he would like a few gold rings." Okay. I would leave, I would make him a little package and I would bring it back to him. "Boss, here's what you wanted." He would open it and he would shout, "*Donnerwetter* again! "No one here understands me, except Spinnefix understands what I say, what I tell him." I didn't understand him either, but he killed anyone who didn't understand him. He would kill them, he would shoot them. That's to say, if he said something and you replied "Boss..." or even if you didn't bring him what he wanted quickly enough, he would say, "Come here, lie down!" And he would shoot him on the spot. Here, it was... a human being was like a, a... spider, a fly, that's how they saw human beings. Because here you didn't have... any... you had no say. A human being was like grass. A human being was nothing. When they would return from the forest, the men from the Forest Detachment (*Waldkommando*), when they would return to the manor and when they called roll, the... the Staff Sergeant (*Oberwachmeister*) would announce, "25 'pawns' back from work."

C.L. Pawns?

S.S. Pawns, yes. But 25 pawns -- when we would leave in the morning, there would be 80, 85 of us; and only 25 would ever return.

C.L. And why "pawns?"

S.S. Why "pawns?" Because we weren't human beings. In the eyes of the Nazis, we weren't human beings. We were only "pawns"... and they would give us names. Spinnefix, the man who worked here, whom they called Bobby, in reality his name wasn't Bobby. They gave him that name. And that's how things went around here... 6, 5 months, 6 months. I remember something else now: one time, a transport arrived and there were 2 or 3 pregnant women... I think they were about to give birth, and they... they threw them in... and the stomach exploded and we could see everything in there. The baby was still alive. Meister Lenz arrived, he took his pistol and he shot into the fire at the baby. And yes, there would be so much there, so much to tell, but... it's...

C.L. Yes.

S.S. It's a bit hard.

C.L. And the men, Haefele, Erwin, did they sleep with the women here?

S.S. Yes, there was also...

C.L. With Polish women?

S.S. With Jewish women. But they had their own barracks. I remember: one woman arrived. They noticed there was a woman with a guitar, a beautiful girl, and one of the SS wanted to take her into the barrack, but she didn't want to go with him, so they... they shot her. And they also took women by force. Yes. And they would take them into the barracks, and the SS would... the SS would be in there, too... I have no idea what went on in there. But I... I saw, a half hour later, they would come out with the women and they would shoot them. They did that many times. And Haefele also had... in Chelmno, he had his...

-Page 65 (part 3) *continued*-

Bobine No. 143

CHELMNO 108 *German*

S.S. There were... The barracks were over there, and they would go to the manor, to the church; there they would take ten girls in a special car to one of the barracks, and they would make them go inside. And the barracks... They would do this from time to time. You would hear screams coming from the barracks. After 15 or 20 minutes, they would come back out and

-Page 66 (part 3)-

S.S. they would shoot them here, the... the young Jewish women. And I remember

one time: there was a man who also worked in the Forest Detachment (*Waldkommando*), and he was... he came back one night and he said... he told me, "You know, today I'll empty the buckets from work... from what the Forest Detachment did at the manor. Today I saw my sister and I can't stay here any longer." I gave him the buckets and he left, and he emptied the buckets and a... a watchman passed by. And the watchman didn't look to see who was leaving, or maybe he wasn't paying attention. And he escaped. He escaped, but he had a chain around his ankles; he had succeeded in slipping it off and he had attached it to his foot from behind. And he went down to Chelmno towards the Ner. Down there... there was a Pole down there and he asked him to ferry him to the other side of the Ner. He said, "Okay." And he was already in the... in the boat when the Pole noticed his chain. And because his... because there was an SS at his daughter's house, he said, "Wait a minute, I need to go get something." He got out, and he told the SS, "Hey," in Polish, "there's a Jew who's escaped from Chelmno." The SS came down, saw him, and... he shot him on the spot. This was in the evening. Haefele... Haefele came in to call roll, and he said, "Count off!" We counted off and he said, "There's one missing. Where is he?" "We have no idea where he is!" "Okay then. Four men!" Four men left and went down to the village,

-Page 67 (part 3)-

S.S. and they collected the man who had just been shot and...

C.L. What were the Poles like at heart?

S.S. They were like that. The... the women in Chelmno were all working with the Gestapo. I know... I know, I know well what they were doing with the Gestapo.

C.L. What do you mean by "working"?

S.S. They were with... they were like... how do you say... okay, they slept with the men in the Gestapo...

C.L. Oh yes?

S.S. They did everything with the Gestapo. When we brought him home, the man, he said, "You see, he tried to escape." Bothmann... ten minutes later, Bothmann arrived and said, "I want 10 men!" But nobody wanted to go; they all stood still. He came towards several of them saying, "You come, you come, you come, you come!" And he made them get in a long... line: they were lying next to each other, heads together, like this, and he walked by, took out his... and one after another shot all ten of them. He said, "There, if anyone else tries to escape, you will all be shot." There you have it. But I don't know, even now, I still don't know how he was able to remove his chains.

C.L. Oh.

S.S. ...off of one foot. Because you couldn't take the chains off... no one else ever succeeded in getting them off.

C.L. And the Polish peasants, the people who worked in the forest, did they know about all of this?

S.S. All of it. They knew very well what was going on here. They knew all of it. But no one did anything at all.

-Page 68 (part 3)-

C.L. But they said that the Jews lack... that the Jews lacked courage.

S.S. Of course. When they arrived here, they came from Lodz. They were already very weak. And they had to work here; they worked all day; it was difficult work. And they were already falling over, they were falling over on their own, and once they saw someone who looked a little weak... that's why there were always 40 fewer, 30 fewer who returned each day. Anyone who looked a bit weak, they would shoot on the spot and then they would take others from another transport. They would go into the church and

take another 40, another 50 to work.

C.L. And the Poles, did they have courage?

S.S. I... I know one thing: Miszezak, he was a good man. If it weren't for Miszezak, I don't believe I'd be here today. He was very good, he saved me, Miszezak. But... the Poles were also afraid of the Germans. Who wasn't afraid? Everyone. There was Haefele. He was... He had such feet. He moved, Haefele, and he bent down... I remember when I arrived at the manor and Haefele moved like that, I... I cried with fear. He had teeth so... he had teeth so big that they poked out, black teeth, and feet like that, Haefele. So... so big!

C.L. Enormous feet?

S.S. Yes, he had feet like this, and he was so tall. And Bothmann, Bothmann, he was like a... I can't even describe what he looked like, Bothmann. He had a head like this,

-Page 69 (part 3)-

S.S. with little eyes, like pig's eyes. And he had two feet that could take steps a meter and a half long. I am... He would say, "Spinnefix, come here. Right away!" He would be standing up, like that, and I would walk by right away.

C.L. Without...

S.S. Without anything. He had that allure, this... this Bothmann. They were like animals here.

C.L. And you, were you an animal?

S.S. I, too, was an animal, yes. Of course, that's what I was just saying. When that... I... I said to myself: when the war is over, I... if I'm still alive, yes, if they don't kill me,

I'll be the only one left.

C.L. But you, were you afraid of... of death?

S.S. No. When? Back then?

C.L. Yes.

S.S. Back then, I wasn't afraid. But now, yes, I'm afraid. Now I understand everything that happened back then.

C.L. Only now?

S.S. Only now. In fact, not exactly now... for a few years now. Since I... after my marriage; when I got married, I thought back on all of these things. Deeply. I saw that I understood what had happened here back then. At the time, I didn't understand, not at all. Back then I thought-- now, I see the world, men go about their lives, no one does anything to them-- but back then I thought: people are like... like animals. You go hunting, you kill a... an animal, and it's the same with people. But now I understand the whole thing, everything that happened, 30, 32 years later.

C.L. Yes. Cut, cut.

-Page 70 (part 3)-

CHELMNO 108 *Mute*

Bobine No. 144?

CHELMNO 109 *German*

C.L. Don't you think that the Germans, like Bothmann and Haefele, for example, weren't that big after all, but that you only saw them as that big? Because of the power they held? Didn't you see them as so big because you were only a child at the time?

S.S. No. That... now, yes, if I saw them now, I would still be afraid. So... so, I would be overwhelmed, I would pass out. These were not men, no. Men like that, they're... you can't... I still can't... I had already been in... in all of Europe, but I had never met men like that, men of that kind. They were... you can't find men like that anywhere.

C.L. Yes, but perhaps that was only because...

S.S. No, no, no, no. That... like that... no! You don't see men like that. Men like that don't exist. I have just been to France, too, I've seen people, in Israel, in... in... I went to Germany recently, too, I went there last year. I didn't meet a single man like that, I never met one.

C.L. You went to Germany?

S.S. Yes. I went to Germany, to... to the trial of... of these SS who were at Chelmno. When I got to the tribunal, they were all sitting there, each one had his lawyer, they were well dressed with a tie, a nice suit, they were even... they were happy. "We didn't think Spinnefix was still alive!" This was in criminal court. The criminal court judge asked the accused, asked Laabs, "Do you know this witness?" He said, "No." He asked Burmeister and he said, "No." And Haefele, "No." There was another Burmeister, "No." The lawyer, the second one, who was with me, said to Haefele, he said,

-Page 71 (part 3)-

S.S. "Perhaps you remember. At Chelmno, there was a little boy you used to call Spinnefix." So, he nodded his head, and he went like this with his head. The judge of the criminal court asked Haefele, "Do you recognize Spinnefix?" He said, "Yes." Then, the... my lawyer asked me to describe everything that had happened at Chelmno. I talked for 5 minutes perhaps, and then he took the... all the books that he had, the documents, and he cried, "The session is adjourned!" and he went outside to cry. And everyone went out after him. Three days later, he... they called me back to the trial, and I spoke again

for another ten minutes. They cried, "The session is adjourned!" At the third session, there was no... it was a judge... it was a judge...

C.L. A man?

S.S. Yes, there was a man at the tribunal, but also women. And I gave my testimony a certain number of times, then the women left also... [cut off]

C.L. Why?

S.S. They couldn't stand to listen to it. A lawyer, Laabs' lawyer, I think, yes, Laabs' lawyer, he grabbed all of his papers and the... the... and he left in the middle of the trial and shouted, "I've had enough, I've had enough, I don't want to hear anymore!" The next day, the German press wrote that they couldn't publish what the witness had said at the trial. It wasn't *zu seien* (?) for human beings. They couldn't write about it in the papers. And when I arrived in Bonn, early in the morning I was sitting in the hotel and I picked up the German paper; I saw that indeed that's what it said. I kept the newspaper, I still have it at home. A doomed man had arrived,

-Page 72 (part 3)-

S.S. but no one could see him.

C.L. No one could...

S.S. ...could see him. It was I, the doomed man. That's what the press said. I had all these reporters at my house. I had all the court reporters at my house, the German press, but also the American press, the Israeli press. Then I went to... to Hannover to the trial of Guenther Fuchs. He was the watchman in Litzmannstadt, in Lodz. I also went to his trial. He said that he didn't know anything about Chelmno, the name didn't mean anything to him. He also received 15 years of forced labor. Then I went to another trial, in Frank... in Han... in Frankfurt. And now, I am, how do you say, in Israel. And I have

a wife and children... but what happened...

C.L. How did you start up in Israel?

S.S. I lived on a Kibbutz in Israel. Then I went into the military service.

C.L. But how...

S.S. ... into the military service...

C.L. What was the difference between Chelmno and a war?

S.S. Okay. In Israel, you're free. There, that's one difference. In Israel, when I was at war, the first war in Israel... I was in 4 wars in Israel. But I went knowing that I had something in my hands. There, I had chains around my ankles, but in my hands I had nothing. I couldn't defend myself. But in Israel I could defend myself.

C.L. Oh, so there was a big difference.

S.S. A very big difference. And then, now it's much better, but this history, I can never forget it. I will never forget it.

-Page 73 (part 3)-

C.L. Do you dream?

S.S. Yes. I walk with... as I'm walking I can see it all again.

C.L. What?

S.S. As I'm walking, I see them all again, Haefele, Bothmann, and all the rest. I can see them all again... I can see them all again now.

-Page 74 (part 3)-

Bobine No. 146

CHELMNO 111 *French, Polish*

Barbara translates the interview with Polish peasants at the end of a mass in Chelmno

Bobine No. 118

CH 111

C.L. So, this is Chelmno's festival?

G.B. Yes.

C.L. And what holiday is it? What or whom are we celebrating?

G.B. It's the birth of the Madonna, it's her birthday?

C.L. Oh! It's the birthday of the Madonna!

B. Yes, yes.

C.L. But there are lots of people here, tons of people, right?

G.B. (muffled words)... because it's not very nice out, it's raining... there's...

C.L. And ask them if they're happy to see Srebnik again.

G.B. They are very pleased.

C.L. Why? Why?

G.B. Yes, they're very happy because they are seeing him again and because they all knew he survived; now, when they see him as he is now, they're very, very happy.

C.L. They're very happy?

B. Yes.

C.L. But why does the whole town remember him?

G.B. Well he remembers this “guy” because he went around... he walked with chains around his ankles, and we would draw water from the river to... for the manor.

C.L. For the manor next door?

B. Yes.

C.L. They remember him walking around in his chains?

G.B. Yes they... (muffled words)... in sixes or eights, so they would try to give them something to eat... or something else... when... when the Gestapo was well... the one... the one who would escort them.

C.L. Oh! When their guard was sympathetic?

B. Yes, that’s right.

C.L. Yes... so they would give them something to eat. But what did Srebnik look like at the time?

G.B. He was maybe sixteen years old, says the lady—less, fourteen, he was quite young—he was fourteen.

C.L. And so? What did he look like? Was he thin... was he... ?

-Page 75 (part 3)-

G.B. He was very thin... very thin.

C.L. Very thin and...

G.B. He... he... you felt... that he was... (an inaudible word)... in his coffin.

C.L. Oh! That he was ready to... to...

B. Yes.

C.L. He was so thin that he had one foot in the grave.

B. Yes, yes.

C.L. And did he look happy or sad?

G.B. This woman even... well when she saw this child, she said to the German, "Listen, let this child go!" So he asked her, "Where?" "Why, to his father and mother!" Well, at that he looked to the sky and told her, "Yes, soon enough he'll be with his father and mother."

C.L. The German said that!

B. Yes.

C.L. Do they remember when the Jews were held in the church?

G.B. Yes, they remember.

C.L. Well, how...?

G.B. They would bring them in trucks here to the church.

C.L. At what time of day would they bring them in the truck?

G.B. All day, and even at night.

C.L. And so what would happen? Can they describe it? Can they tell me in detail?

G.B. Well at the beginning, they would bring the Jews to the manor and only later would they... um... would they put them in the church.

C.L. During the second period, yes.

G.B. ... and in the morning, they would take them to the woods.

C.L. And so, did... how did they take them to the woods?

G.B. In trucks, in big armored trucks... and from... that was where the gas would come from.

C.L. So... they brought them in gas trucks, OK.

(G.B.) Yes, yes, in gas trucks.

C.L. And so where would the truck come to pick them up?

B. The Jews?

C.L. Yes.

G.B. Here, at the door of the church.

C.L. Here, where they are standing now, is where the trucks would arrive?

G.B. No the trucks would pull right up to the entrance.

C.L. Oh! The trucks would pull up right to the door of... of the church!

-Page 76 (part 3)-

C.L. And so... what would happen next? They would open the doors of the truck?
How did it happen?

G.B. Well... the trucks would pull up... would pull up to the door of the church...
there were Gestapo who would stand on either side so, they would make... um... people
get into the trucks.

C.L. And everyone, everyone knew that these were death trucks, that these were the
trucks where they gassed people?

G.B. Yes, they couldn't not have known. Translation barely audible: The woman says,
"I didn't know!" Then afterwards they would bury them in the forest and... and...

Cut.

Bobine No. 147

CHELMNO 112 *Polish; French*

C.L. So the Jews would spend a whole night in the church?

G.B. Yes. Private conversation at the beginning... because they would also put them in
the Zawadki mill.

C.L. Oh! In the Zawadki mill... that's (two inaudible words, possibly "all set")... the

Bobine No. 119

CH 112

Zawadki mill. OK, well I'll repeat my question: "They would spend the entire night here, and at what time would the truck arrive in the morning?"

G.B. Around 8 o'clock.

C.L. Around 8 o'clock... It took... ask them... how many trucks would it take to empty the church? How many Jews were there in the church, approximately?

G.B. They were very cramped... they were very, very cramped... more than 1000 people.

C.L. Over a thousand people, here!

G.B. Maybe 1200.

C.L. Would you hear cries at night?

G.B. They would moan... they were hungry.

C.L. They would moan, they were hungry!

G.B. Everything was closed; they were very hungry.

C.L. And did they have anything to eat?

G.B. ... you couldn't even look around this side; you couldn't speak to a Jew.

C.L. You couldn't!

G.B. Yes, but you couldn't even glance over here.

C.L. They didn't look at them?

G.B. No, even if you were passing along the road here, if you glanced

-Page 77 (part 3)-

G.B. at the church, they would beat you!

C.L. But tell me, did they see them leaving in the morning?

G.B. You couldn't approach the church... so they didn't.

C.L. No, but did they look anyway?

G.B. Yes, there were trucks that would come here and take the Jews away... you could see them, but discreetly.

C.L. Oh, discreetly.

B. That's right.

C.L. Sideways.

G.B. Yes, that's right, with a sideways glance.

C.L. And what kind of cries would you hear; what kind of groans at night?

G.B. Well... they would cry to Jesus, even Mary, the Good Lord... in German!

C.L. The Jews cried out to Jesus, Mary, the Good Lord in German!

G.B. The woman says there were many nationalities... there were even children, nuns,

Polish priests, a little bit of everything.

C.L. And when they think about that, that these Jews were locked up in a Catholic church? Because it's not their religion!

G.B. At that time, religion was of little importance... they mistreated people and the Germans... the Germans even... um... locked up horses in the churches!

C.L. Yes.

G.B. ... so here, there was no religion, Poland wasn't religious, as the woman says. And there, in the parish there was a warehouse filled with suitcases.

C.L. Oh? Suitcases that belonged to the Jews?

G.B. Yes; there was gold.

C.L. There was gold.

G.B. In these suitcases.

C.L. And how does the woman know there was gold? Ask her. Oh, the procession! (church bells ringing)

Bobine No. 150

CHELMNO 116 *Polish*

Barbara translates. Srebnik with Polish villagers in front of church in Chelmno

C.L. Barbara, ask them... were there as many Jews in the church as there are Christians today?

G.B. Almost.

Bobine No. 121

CH 116

-Page 78 (part 3)-

C.L. And how many gas trucks did they need to empty it?

G.B. About 50.

C.L. It took 50 trucks to empty it! Was there constant traffic?

G.B. Yes.

C.L. And they were just saying that they couldn't speak to Jews, that it was forbidden. But did they try to warn those who were waiting, even by signs?

G.B. That was absolutely forbidden.

C.L. So they didn't even make signs?

G.B. No, you risked being shot... shot in the head.

C.L. Oh, yes, of course. And the woman... the woman was saying just now that in the house across the street they stored baggage, suitcases that belonged to the Jews?

G.B. There were earrings, rings, even gold, the church was filled to the brim with suitcases, with luggage.

C.L. Yes; and was...?

B. During the first period?

C.L. ... in the bags? ... during the second...

G.B. Bread, pots, everything.

C.L. Was there money, jewels?

G.B. There were double boilers.

C.L. And what were inside the double boilers?

G.B. Precious objects, objects of value. Yes, there was also gold in the... in the clothes.

C.L. Ask them if there was a lot of gold.

G.B. Yes, a lot.

C.L. A lot... and what did they do with all of it?

G.B. They transported it to Lijmajda (?).

C.L. And did they find gold buried in the ground?

G.B. When they would give them something to eat, sometimes the Jews would give them money... well, sometimes they would give them precious objects.

C.L. And ask them: "Are they sorry about the Jews or not?" Everyone.

G.B. Of course, we cried just as they did. The gentleman... would give them food, bread and cucumbers.

C.L. Cucumbers!

G.B. There were also quite a few Poles over there.

C.L. Ask them... in their opinion, why did this happen to the Jews?

-Page 79 (part 3)-

G.B. There were quite a few Poles who were exterminated... it's true... so he's going to tell you what one of his friends told him; it happened in Majdanek, near Warsaw.

C.L. Go ahead.

G.B. So the Jews from Majdanek were grouped in a place and the rabbi wanted to talk to them. He asked an SS officer, "can I talk to them," and the officer replied, "yes." So the rabbi said, "It's been a very, very long time, about two thousand years, since the Jews condemned the perfectly innocent Christ to death..." So when they did that, when they condemned him to death, they cried, "May his blood fall on our heads and those of our sons."

C.L. Yes, yes.

G.B. So the rabbi... he... um... told them, "Perhaps the moment has arrived. His blood must fall upon our heads, so do nothing, go ahead, do what they ask of us... here we go."

C.L. So, he thought that the Jews were atoning for the death of Christ?

G.B. He... he doesn't believe it... and he doesn't think that Christ would seek revenge... no, he doesn't hold that opinion, it's the rabbi who said that.

C.L. Oh! The rabbi said that!

G.B. It was the will of the gods, simple as that.

C.L. Yes, yes.