

Interview with Mr. Victor Mintz

By Jane Katz

May 5, 1984

Jewish Community Relations Council, Anti-Defamation League of
Minnesota and the Dakotas

HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY TAPING PROJECT

(...) = cannot understand

[] = transcriber's insertions.

(sp?) = spelling uncertain or not given.

JANE KATZ: This is an interview with Victor Mintz for the JCRC-ADL Oral History Project; interviewer Jane Katz; May 5, 1984.

Please tell me your complete name and your Jewish name.

VICTOR MINTZ: Victor Chaim Mintz. The Jewish name? The same thing, Victor Chaim.

JANE KATZ: O.k. And Chaim, is that C-h-a-i-m?

VICTOR MINTZ: C-h-a-i-m. Correct.

JANE KATZ: O.k. In what year were you born?

VICTOR MINTZ: In 1909.

JANE KATZ: O.k. And in what town and what country?

VICTOR MINTZ: Warsaw, Poland.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Can you tell me the names of your parents, your grandparents, perhaps even as far back as your great-grandparents, if you like.

VICTOR MINTZ: My father was David. My mother's name was Sarah. My grandparents' name from father's side, was Lazer...

JANE KATZ: How do you spell that?

VICTOR MINTZ: L-a-z-e-r.

JANE KATZ: O.k. And that's Mintz?

VICTOR MINTZ: Mintz.

JANE KATZ: O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: For my mother's side, his name was Moshe Engelman.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Is it M-o-i-s-h-e?

VICTOR MINTZ: M-o-s-h-e. Correct. Engelman. E-n-g-e-l-m-a-n.

JANE KATZ: O.k. And were they all from Warsaw?

VICTOR MINTZ: They all from Warsaw. My grandfather Engelman was in a town not far... He was living in Warsaw the last years, but he was born in a town Galsko. This was actually a big mansion. And he was one of the most known Jewish families in Poland.

JANE KATZ: Your family.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea.

JANE KATZ: Your grandparents.

VICTOR MINTZ: Grandparents.

JANE KATZ: What is the spelling of the town? Glaskow?

VICTOR MINTZ: Galsko. It was actually not far from Kutno. But Galsko was a little mansion...for what my grandfather was the baron.

JANE KATZ: Your what?

VICTOR MINTZ: My grandfather was the baron.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh.

VICTOR MINTZ: And his father got the woods of... About half of the Polands woods was belonging to him.

JANE KATZ: Half of the woods.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea.

JANE KATZ: So he was...

VICTOR MINTZ: The (...), he was cutting the lumber and exporting this to Germany and in Poland was (...).

JANE KATZ: Very interesting. And the name of the town would be G-l-a-s-c...?

VICTOR MINTZ: G-a-l-s-k-o. Galsko.

JANE KATZ: ...k-o. O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea.

JANE KATZ: So this was your grandfather then?

VICTOR MINTZ: This was my grandfather, but Galsko is (belonged?) to his father.

JANE KATZ: O.k., o.k., your grandfather.

VICTOR MINTZ: (...) interrupt a second? Yea?

JANE KATZ: Sure, yea, I'll just... (tape off)
Just briefly tell me how...

VICTOR MINTZ: No, this will come later, when we come back to Poland. Because I bought a (...)... Golek is Goyim. Start like this. Maybe after we come...

JANE KATZ: Alright.

VICTOR MINTZ: Now, you asked me about the... No, we go...after we go, maybe you want, I will you give you this.

JANE KATZ: O.k. That will be wonderful.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea.

JANE KATZ: So you were telling me that your grandfather was involved in the cutting of wood and in the exporting of wood.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea. Exporting of wood, yea.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Were other members of the family involved in this trade?

VICTOR MINTZ: My grandfather's grandfather even was involved. I find it (...) from my grandfather's grandfather is stories. (...) He was one, he's about...no, not about the nicest families in Poland. Was scholars and rich, both together.

JANE KATZ: I'm sorry...?

VICTOR MINTZ: See the scholars...

JANE KATZ: Scholars and rich.

VICTOR MINTZ: ...and rich. Scholars and Jewish (...) yea.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Now. Your mother, I assume, was a home-maker? Traditional Jewish...

VICTOR MINTZ: Traditional homemaker, yea. And... And my father passed away when I was very young. Two years old. And actually I was raised by my grandfather.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Who was a religious scholar.

VICTOR MINTZ: Moshe Sander (sp?) Engelman.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Now tell me about his religious practice, if you will.

VICTOR MINTZ: He was a religious Jew. Orthodox. But he was also very scholarly, in general. And being a businessman, he used to travel to Germany, to France, and to other countries. So he was a well knowing, around [well rounded] Jew. And Jewish culture and general culture.

JANE KATZ: O.k., now, there was a synagogue, I assume, in your area?

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh, yea. Was a lot of synagogues. In Warsaw was about every building had a synagogue.

JANE KATZ: Well was your family in the quarter in Warsaw?

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea.

JANE KATZ: I suppose one had to.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, after... This party...by...I was (leaving/leading) my...my grandfather was (leaving/leading) was belonged was belonged to the... In Warsaw was two ghettos. A large ghetto and a small ghetto. And I was (leaving/leading) and my family was leaving, belonging to the small ghetto.

JANE KATZ: Was this known by any particular name, the small ghetto?

VICTOR MINTZ: No, just a ghetto--"Small" and a "Large". See that connected something by a bridge. But I wasn't then. Just by...heard about it.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Was your grandfather very active, I assume, in the synagogue.

VICTOR MINTZ: He was active in synagogue. He was active in Jewish life in general in Warsaw.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Did they have any Zionist connections?

VICTOR MINTZ: My grandfather did...was not a Zionist, but not being a Zionist, he got...he knows Hertzl, used to know Nachum Sokolow--was his friend.

JANE KATZ: He got to know Theodor Hertzl?

VICTOR MINTZ: Theodor Hertzl and Nachum Sokolow was his friend.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Let me just get the spelling...

VICTOR MINTZ: The next (...).

JANE KATZ: Alright. I'm sorry, I'll have to stop you for the spelling of these names.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea. Of what? Hertzl?

JANE KATZ: Well, Hertzl, yea.

VICTOR MINTZ: You don't know?

JANE KATZ: Yea, but the typist might not know. H-e-r...

VICTOR MINTZ: H-e-r-t-z-e-l, I suppose.

JANE KATZ: ...t-z... I think it's H-e-r-t-z-l. O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: ...z-l. Hertzl, right.

JANE KATZ: And then the next?

VICTOR MINTZ: Next, Nachum Sokolow. He was at one time president of the Zionist movement.

JANE KATZ: O.k. So that would be...

VICTOR MINTZ: He was a journalist. He was a redactor for (able?) paper. He was living next...not far from my grandfather, and they were good friends.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh. I wonder if that will be S-o-k-o-l...

VICTOR MINTZ: S-o-k-o-l-o-w, I suppose. Sokolow, Nachum. And Nex Snowdahl (sp?)--he met him one time. Nex wasn't a friend, they just met in Poland.

JANE KATZ: Right.

VICTOR MINTZ: Just met in Poland. So... Now I want to show you that he... Being orthodox Jews, still, he knows all the people, and he was... Because he was a businessman, and he...he knows all the movements in Poland, what was, Zionist movement, and severa cultural movements... He was involved with that.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh. O.k. Now you, of course, had an education in Hebrew and in... Yiddish, I assume, was spoken in the home?

VICTOR MINTZ: In Hebrew. I had... Of course I was going before in a yeshiva. After I graduated high school and two years college.

I was an accountant--in a bank.

JANE KATZ: What was the name of your college?

VICTOR MINTZ: Business General College.

JANE KATZ: O.k. In Warsaw.

VICTOR MINTZ: In Warsaw, yea.

JANE KATZ: And you graduated as an accountant?

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea.

JANE KATZ: O.k. And did you have a chance to practice at all... What year did you graduate?

VICTOR MINTZ: I graduated in 1928.

JANE KATZ: O.k. So in 1928 you around 20? 21? No--yea.

VICTOR MINTZ: I was born 1909, so I was...

JANE KATZ: 19.

VICTOR MINTZ: 19.

JANE KATZ: O.k. And then what happened?

VICTOR MINTZ: And then I started to work... In 1929, I started to work in a bank.

JANE KATZ: To work in a bank.

VICTOR MINTZ: In a bank. Until start war after...I was their main accountant in the bank--till the war.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Now we move to the early 30's. At what point...

VICTOR MINTZ: I want you to... You want me to know about the Pogroms in Russia?

JANE KATZ: Well, now, that would come later, right?

VICTOR MINTZ: But this is before! This was in 1919!

JANE KATZ: Alright, now how did you get involved in that!

VICTOR MINTZ: When the 1914 war started, my grandfather went to Ukraine--Proskurow town.

JANE KATZ: To where?

VICTOR MINTZ: Ukraine.

JANE KATZ: To the Ukraine?

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea.

JANE KATZ: O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: A town by the name, Proskurow, P-r-o-s-k-u-r-o-w, I suppose.

JANE KATZ: O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: And... Because his son-in-law was living there, and they were afraid in Warsaw for bombardments, so he went there. And I, being raised by my grandfather, is my mother and my brother and sister went also there. This was about 1914.

And 1919, we were living in Proskurow, and there came the Ukrainians--with Petluah (sp?) was named--there...

JANE KATZ: With...?

VICTOR MINTZ: Petluah was the head of the Ukrainian government. And was this a Sabbath afternoon. They went to the city and they killed out 5,000 Jews. This was done so from a 3 hours from 2:00 till 5:00. And I saw through the window. This (...) come to our house. I don't know.

And after, in our house, they made a hospital for the wounded people. Was there about...over 100 injured people in our house.

JANE KATZ: Did you say that you "watched the slaughter from the window?

VICTOR MINTZ: From the window sill, running with the open swords of the (counts/Ukrainians?). Why didn't coming

to our house, is a question. I don't know.
Miracle!

And in this was my grandfather, also. He worked.
Was a special committee from the United States
came. And say everything. Also recorded for
the history!

And after, I was there till 1920. Was... The
governments was changing in and out there.

JANE KATZ: I'm sorry. The governments were changing where?

VICTOR MINTZ: ...were changing in and out there. The Bolsheviks
came in after the (...).

JANE KATZ: In the Soviet Union.

VICTOR MINTZ: ...this other one. The white Russians came in
after the red Ukrainians...till the Russians
took a (...) Bolsheviks.

And then I smuggled a border--my comrades and
me...with me, together--smuggled the border back
to Poland...

JANE KATZ: Well now, the transition, as I recall, wasn't
it in 1917? Or was that the beginning of it?

VICTOR MINTZ: 1917 started Russe...

JANE KATZ: The beginning.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea.

JANE KATZ: O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: But that started fights, well... there's different
groups. There was the Nicketses (sp?), there
was the Cluroffses (sp?), there was Bolsheviks.
In one... The city was taken over, one by the
other. One time was this... Even the Pollocks
was there also in. In 1918...1919 was the
Pollocks in.

But after 1920, when the... When there was
already Russia, and I was from Poland, we smuggled
the border to Poland, and I came back to Warsaw.

JANE KATZ: Very glad, I guess, to be out of there...

VICTOR MINTZ: I suppose, yea.

JANE KATZ: ...with your life!

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, and after here, was the second time for that. Three times I was by the Russians!

JANE KATZ: There were a couple of incidents of pogroms like that--in Russia?

VICTOR MINTZ: There was another pogrom, but it Deniketsef (sp?)--the white Russian. Made other, but this was a smaller...well some are... I don't know. I mean it was... some Jews was killed, but not too much.

JANE KATZ: Another time.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, other time. This was later. But this was a known pogrom. 5,000 Jews were killed.

JANE KATZ: And you were quite young.

VICTOR MINTZ: I was then old, about 9 years.

JANE KATZ: Nine years old.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea.

JANE KATZ: What an impression you must have had of the human race--at the age of nine.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, that's right.

JANE KATZ: You must have lived in fear!

VICTOR MINTZ: History repeats history.

JANE KATZ: You must have lived in fear--from then on?

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh, yea. Sure. This is Jewish history.

JANE KATZ: Yea. It's all through history.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, that's right. So where you want to start, you know?

JANE KATZ: Well, that's fascinating.

So you returned to Poland. O.k. Now that was... I mean--yea... You returned to Warsaw in 1920.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, in 1922.

JANE KATZ: And you had your education, and you began working as an accountant.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, yea.

JANE KATZ: So now we come to the early 30's. At what point do you recall hearing the tremors...? Getting the sense that the Nazis were beginning to build their movement?

VICTOR MINTZ: In '35... In '33 they took over the... Hitler took over the... Hitler took over (...) against Poland. They want back a part of Poland. But Poland was all the big countries (...).

And was 1938. The Germans...evacuated--threw out from the country, all Jews who used to be Polish citizens. This was in 1938, and a lot of, lot of refugees came to Warsaw from...

JANE KATZ: Before we discuss that, may I ask you to go back a little to tell me what your experience was with anti-Semitism in Poland?

VICTOR MINTZ: The experience with anti-Semitism in Poland was that sometimes you go into a park, some young Poles could beat you up.

And this was competitions. They used to save at stores...the Jewish stores--not to buy, because a Jewish store.

And university was the fight, because they want Jewish students to be on the left side of the room--not to be mixed--they on the right. And the Jewish students didn't accept this. So they were staying in the middle, in the hall [aisle], because they didn't want to sit on the left side. So there's a difference. And I remember one was a big demonstration of this... On one side was going a Jewish demonstration of students. I was with this demonstration. And the other side was going the... and next (...) the Polish Democratic--kind of like a Nazi Party--what was it? Anti-Semitic party. And they were walking. Everybody got... What do you call it?

JANE KATZ: Placards?

VICTOR MINTZ: Placards. And the police was in middle, protecting us from one another.

VICTOR MINTZ: But there was a lot of (...) I remember. What was? Przitik (sp?) ?

JANE KATZ: There was a lot of, what? Tension?

VICTOR MINTZ: Anti-Semitism, yea.

JANE KATZ: ...anti-Semitism.

VICTOR MINTZ: All the time.

JANE KATZ: Conflict.

VICTOR MINTZ: After was a big pogrom, in our little town, Przitik. This was close before the... Before 1939. Was, I suppose, in '37 or '38 was this.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Now Przitik, is that with a "T" ?

VICTOR MINTZ: P-... In Polish is written, P-r-z-... You can't even... I don't know in English even Pssssh! Przi-tik!

JANE KATZ: O.k. O.k., that's o.k.

Tell me about that pogrom. You, I suppose, heard about this?

VICTOR MINTZ: I heard only.

JANE KATZ: Sure.

VICTOR MINTZ: I was not there.

JANE KATZ: O.k. I suppose there were Jewish newspapers, and so you got all this information.

VICTOR MINTZ: Jewish newspapers, yea. Was also Polish newspapers. Was even a...one Jewish newspaper in Polish language. But was a lot of Jewish newspapers written in Jewish.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Now, as Nazism began to build elsewhere in Europe, you began to feel some of the tension and some of the pressure.

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh, sure, there was tension and pressure. It was... The Jewish businessman... and starts in '37 to boycott German products.

JANE KATZ: The Jewish businessmen began to boycott German ...products.

VICTOR MINTZ: ...products.

JANE KATZ: O.k. And your father was involved in that?

VICTOR MINTZ: My father was (...) died.

JANE KATZ: Your father was gone at that point!

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea.

JANE KATZ: Your grandfather?

VICTOR MINTZ: My grandfather was already retired.

JANE KATZ: He was retired.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Now you, at this point, were a practicing accountant.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Can you describe a little of the climate of those times--the atmosphere?

VICTOR MINTZ: The atmosphere was a very bad... It was a very crucial time. You got a lot of Jewish writers, Was a Jewish writers union in Warsaw, and every... About every day you got a lecture from different teams. You got there a lot of yeshivot. You know, the yeshivas...like this--Talmudic schools. You got a couple Hebrew schools--not religious, but in Hebrew language. I mean...(what you call that che...?). Was like a regular school. Not a Talmudic schools.

JANE KATZ: You mean a heder?

VICTOR MINTZ: No, not a Talmudic school.

JANE KATZ: No. A secular school?

VICTOR MINTZ: A secular school in Hebrew language. And we got all of the secular schools. This was already from the Bund. This was a Jewish socialist organization. What they've got a lot of secular schools in Yiddish.

JANE KATZ: The influence of the socialists was quite prominent at that time.

VICTOR MINTZ: What?

JANE KATZ: The influence of the Bund was quite prominent.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea... Ah, no, I figure the Zionist movement was more prominent than the socialist movement... Zionist...socialist... Was a lot Jewish (...) although it involved the communities in... Was like a rainbow! You got all movements. And everybody was... was fighting something, but not too much. Was... In Warsaw was a Jewish Kehilla. You know what Kehilla?

JANE KATZ: No.

VICTOR MINTZ: This is a Jewish...community...what was ruling by him[it]self. They got schools. And they got welfare. They's got...

JANE KATZ: Welfare?

VICTOR MINTZ: Welfare--departments. And they got... It was a... And this was...by the government--accepted by the government.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh.

VICTOR MINTZ: As a matter of fact, they could tax all the Jewish people. And if somebody didn't pay the taxes, they gave someone to like here the I.R.S., and the I.R.S. was collecting for them the taxes.

JANE KATZ: Now you're talking about the Polish government...

VICTOR MINTZ: No, no.

JANE KATZ: ...doing the taxing, or the Jewish government?

VICTOR MINTZ: Both... A Jewish...

JANE KATZ: Jewish officials?

VICTOR MINTZ: Officials. Well, a Jewish...like a...like here the Jewish Federation.

JANE KATZ: Sure.

VICTOR MINTZ: A Jewish Federation, only you...if he want you give, and if you don't want, you're going to give; and this is subsidizing schools--but they don't have schools. And this was like a Jewish government. They had there, Kehilla was this name...this a...

And they got all... They could tax the Jewish people. And they... It was elections--official elections. All the Jewish people could vote. Like regular... like you're going to a regular election. This was like a regular election; checked by the government. If it's not (...), it was done correct, not cheated.

And... What I want to tell you... It was a Jewish life...complete Jewish...very high standard Jewish life.

JANE KATZ: Alright, I get the picture. O.k.: social, cultural and economic.

VICTOR MINTZ: That's right.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Did any of your relatives live outside the Jewish community?

VICTOR MINTZ: Was not there, a ghetto. Before 1939, could live wherever you want. Was some places they didn't let so Jewish in to live. This is happened and running around America, also. But, you could even have a place where you want. But mostly was a Jewish neighborhood. Was a Jewish neighborhood mostly. But people was living all over the town.

JANE KATZ: Did you ever serve in the military?

VICTOR MINTZ: No.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Now, when the war actually broke out... Before the outbreak of the war, are there any specific events that you would like to record?

VICTOR MINTZ: Not especially.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Do you remember what it was like to be there at the outbreak of the war?

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh yea, I remember. This was 1939, September 1st, Friday morning.

JANE KATZ: How did you get the news of what was happening?

VICTOR MINTZ: What?

JANE KATZ: How did you obtain the news?

VICTOR MINTZ: From the radio...and people talking about this--all over!

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh.

VICTOR MINTZ: Was talking this, and second or the third day, was already bombardments. Seems to me that Thursday was over bombardments already.

JANE KATZ: O.k. The bombardment of Warsaw.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, and the government was taking the people to army (what are you calling it?)...

JANE KATZ: Conscription.

VICTOR MINTZ: No, taking people to army, what do you call it?

JANE KATZ: A draft.

VICTOR MINTZ: A drafting! They were drafting people to the army.

JANE KATZ: I suppose some Jews were drafted, right?

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh yea, I was... not drafted, I was... They called me Sunday morning to make trenches in the heart of the city.

What was very bad organized from the bombs. We came there out of the city, and there was not shovels, was not this... Nobody what know what do. Was sitting there a few hours, and after, here came bomb. And then was advertised on the radio to all young men to leave the city...to join up with the army.

So Monday morning, this was... Friday was the 1st. The 4th of September, I went out with my two cousins. We walked out of the city going east. And then on the highways was already bombardments. And the airplanes were going down--very down--with machine guns there was shooting, and the people died. To the left and the right, people were killed. And all of us, we used to run away into the woods when we saw the planes coming.

And we were going this was from Brussel to Brisk.

JANE KATZ: To...the city?

VICTOR MINTZ: To Brisk, Brest, Brisk is in English...

JANE KATZ: Approximately how would we spell that?

VICTOR MINTZ: B-r-i-s-k, Brisk.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Now what was your purpose in going there?

VICTOR MINTZ: We were going east! When I come to the city Brisk, the Russians came from the other side.

JANE KATZ: Now...

VICTOR MINTZ: And I followed the Russian's army already. The Germans was bombarding the highways, and with machine guns was shooting, but their army was still far away...so they didn't reach, because they were hold up a long by Warsaw were hold up.

JANE KATZ: Had you joined the draft at this point?

VICTOR MINTZ: What?

JANE KATZ: Were you drafted?

VICTOR MINTZ: I was not drafted, everybody was running. She was...the government was already in a turmoil.

JANE KATZ: Yes.

VICTOR MINTZ: They didn't draft us. They....

JANE KATZ: So, were you fleeing, or were you...

VICTOR MINTZ: Fleeing.

JANE KATZ: Were you...actually...you were in flight, o.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, fleeing from Warsaw, and was going, maybe, a...went a Sunday...and this was next Friday. Five, six days we were walking and running and hiding.

JANE KATZ: Now, is this all your family members?

VICTOR MINTZ: No, only I and two cousins.

JANE KATZ: Because the young men were the ones who would be in trouble.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, but the other family couldn't... find my... I got a sister; she got a little child. She couldn't go. And another was... Some were going. Some were staying.

JANE KATZ: O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: And then when I came to the Russian side. Let's see, from there I went to Bialystok--and this was already the Russian side. And from Bialystok, I was there till the end of December. And then I smuggled the border till Lithuania.

JANE KATZ: You smuggled yourself over the border into Lithuania.

VICTOR MINTZ: Lithuania. Because Lithuania was still a free country.

JANE KATZ: O.k. During that time, did you have any news of other family members?

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, I got news. Some people came smuggling the border from one side to the other.

JANE KATZ: They smuggled news of your mother and your grandparents?

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, they bring in a few letters.

JANE KATZ: I see.

VICTOR MINTZ: Even a coat for winter, somebody brought me over. It helped, because was September, it started to be cold, so they brought me a coat over.

JANE KATZ: Sure. So you knew that your mother was o.k. at this point?

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, I knew it. That was still not a ghetto. But I got news, and a few letters I got. When I come...we smuggled the border of Lithuania, was a few times caught by the Lithuanian soldiers. And they took away from me everything what I got--money and everything they took away. Then, till I came in a town... (What's the name of the town? I forgot already.) Anyway, a town in Lithuania.

JANE KATZ: O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: And then... No, was... the story a difference. They caught me a few times, and I got money, went out with other few youngsters was with me, young people. Then one...they caught me, some in a village.

JANE KATZ: Who caught you?

VICTOR MINTZ: The Lithuanian soldiers. And they took me to the police station. Took me to the police station and I was asleep and covered there in the police station. In the morning he said he wanted to send me back to the Russian border to Russia. If I would go to Russia, I would go--right away would go to Siberia for smuggling the border.

Anyway, was in the morning--Saturday morning. And the little town, the soldiers took me and other two young boys, just take me to the border. And we were going out...was still dark. We saw a Jew going with some tallis to a synagogue. I went to him, and we told him what is going on. Soldiers (...).

JANE KATZ: The soldiers what?

VICTOR MINTZ: They told the soldiers that (...)... The soldier want only money, this is all what they wanted.

JANE KATZ: They wanted only money.

VICTOR MINTZ: Money, but I didn't have already nothing.

JANE KATZ: Yes, I understand.

VICTOR MINTZ: They told the soldiers to come with them to the synagogue.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh.

VICTOR MINTZ: And when they come to the synagogue, I said, "Let me out through another door." And they paid 'em already the soldiers there.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh.

VICTOR MINTZ: And they took me, some, to the house. And I was there over Shabbos--there. And in middle of the night, they took our group... This was organized action there, to save the Jews from--the refugees. Took our group by horse and buggy to Vilna. This was subsidized by the Joint Distribution Committee.

JANE KATZ: The Joint Distribution Committee, is that right?

VICTOR MINTZ: The Committee subsidized the money to help to save the refugees (...).

JANE KATZ: O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: I came to Vilna. I was there in the Committee there a few days. They gave me some (us) in a house there to stay. And then was... Vilna was already a...the capitol of Lithuania. This Vilna was a fight between Poland and (before the war) between Poland and Lithuania. Actually, Poland got; and they were claiming--the Lithuanians--their capitol. That Vilna... Lithuania was claiming Vilna as their capitol.

But after the Russians came in, they gave 'em away Vilna to the Lithuanians. So the Russians... The Lithuanians didn't want to have Jewish refugees from Poland in their capitol. So they sent me out in a...to a town in Lithuania--Telz was the name of the town.

JANE KATZ: Do you know how that would be spelt?

VICTOR MINTZ: T-e-l-z.

JANE KATZ: O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: And there I start to work a little bit in accounting. And after I met my future wife there. And I got married in 1940 in December. And in 1941, in June, start the Russian-German war.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh.

VICTOR MINTZ: And we start to run again. So then I run with my wife--always going by foot.

JANE KATZ: Let me interrupt you. Were you able to live openly as Jews in Vilna?

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh, yea. Lithuania was, I think, as anti-Semitic, but was a free country. Yea.

JANE KATZ: And you were able to practice your profession.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea. I was actually not so able, because they didn't want people not citizens of Lithuania to work--not to take away jobs or something... But I got someone to...

JANE KATZ: You made a living.

VICTOR MINTZ: What?

JANE KATZ: You made a living.

VICTOR MINTZ: I made a living, yea. No, but after, when the Russians came in... The Russians came in... I was married... I came to Lithuania in January, 1940. But in June, 1940, the Russians took over Lithuania. And when the Russians took over Lithuania, I could already work--officially--and I was working there as an accountant in a factory, and I was working till June, 1941.

JANE KATZ: O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: '41 started war between Germany and the Russians. And I run away again. Then I run away with my wife--with other few people. On the way was already Lithuanian partisans. They were... They killed up (...), and more Jews they killed out than the Germans.

JANE KATZ: The partisans--the Lithuanian partisans...?

VICTOR MINTZ: The partisans, uh-huh.

JANE KATZ: ...killed more Jews...

VICTOR MINTZ: Jews, yea.

JANE KATZ: ...than the Germans killed.

VICTOR MINTZ: But just so happy, or--why avoid them. But on the highway, people told that I...came running already, "They're killing Jews on the way."

JANE KATZ: Did you always wear your Yarmulke? Were you always...

VICTOR MINTZ: No, no.

JANE KATZ: ...identified at that point?

VICTOR MINTZ: ...no, no, I wasn't (...).

JANE KATZ: How could they recognize a Jew?

VICTOR MINTZ: What?

JANE KATZ: How did they know you were Jewish?

VICTOR MINTZ: (...) recognize a Jew. Mostly can recognize a Jew. Sometimes can make a mistake, but so you recognize a Jew. It's not so hard to recognize a Jew.

JANE KATZ: O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: So, all the same. Story on the highway, the German planes were going down with the machine guns shooting. And after... But then way after, went (...) in a freight train. It will come... It came to Kovno.

JANE KATZ: To where?

VICTOR MINTZ: Kovno. Kovno, this was a big... This was before the capitol of Lithuania.

JANE KATZ: O.k., K-...

VICTOR MINTZ: K-o-v-n-o.

JANE KATZ: O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: Kovno. From then I caught another train, also a freight train, and I came to Riga.

JANE KATZ: That's R-i-g-a.

VICTOR MINTZ: R-i-g-a. And then I... My wife got a friend. I was sleeping over there over night. In the morning I want to go out, the Germans were already in city.

JANE KATZ: Now this was Latvia, right?

VICTOR MINTZ: Latvia, yea, Latvia. The Germans were already in the city.

But only by a miracle... But the depot was on the Russian side.

JANE KATZ: Pardon me?

VICTOR MINTZ: The depot--the train depot.

JANE KATZ: The depot was in the Russian sector.

VICTOR MINTZ: Russian sector, still.

JANE KATZ: O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: We went, (...) We came to the depot. There was staying a train with the families of the Russian soldiers. There were trains there. But there was not order, nothing. Nobody asked you, who you are, what you are. We went into the train, and we went to deeper Russia, till 200 miles before Moscow.

JANE KATZ: You were evacuated to a town that was 200 miles outside of Moscow.

VICTOR MINTZ: Moscow, yea. On the way, like I told you, the train stopped every 15-20 minutes, and the people got off from the train, because the German planes were bombarding the trains where they're going. But, we came safely.

There I was...about... This was, already, in July.

JANE KATZ: Of still 1941?

VICTOR MINTZ: 1941. I was there till end of August.

JANE KATZ: Do you remember the town?

VICTOR MINTZ: It was a...a culhouse (sp?). You know what is a culhouse is?

JANE KATZ: No.

VICTOR MINTZ: This is a cooperative town--the Russian name. The Russian name's called culhouse. A collective farm. I was there. This was near Danyielov (sp?). A city by the name of Danyielov.

JANE KATZ: Alright.

VICTOR MINTZ: There was there a couple nuns. And then I saw the front is coming nearer. And start to be cold, and I have nothing what to wear, and my wife didn't have nothing. So decided we will go southeast.

JANE KATZ: Excuse me, but how did you survive on the farm? Were you workers?

VICTOR MINTZ: We were working, yea.

JANE KATZ: Were you accepted as...

VICTOR MINTZ: I was accepted.

JANE KATZ: ...as Russians?

VICTOR MINTZ: Not as Russians!

JANE KATZ: They knew that you were Jews?

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea. No, there was not...especially the farmers, not anti-Semitic, these were... No, no, was not any there. In the government was anti-Semitic, but also not in the time of the war. In the time of the wars they were dependent of United States, and of England. It was not anti-Semitic.

JANE KATZ: O.k. You say they were allies. They were allies of the U.S. and England.

VICTOR MINTZ: Allies, yea.

JANE KATZ: O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: Sure, you could hear something anti-Semitic, it was single people, but not from the government, you didn't feel the anti-Semitism. There was a law against religion, yea, yea, but not anti-Semitism. Even Dansil (sp?) let down the fight against religion also, because of our allies of the United States.

JANE KATZ: So you didn't form a synagogue on a collective farm! (laughs)

VICTOR MINTZ: No. So... Then I went by... Also... The Ukrainian trains was going steady....

O.k.?

JANE KATZ: I think so.

VICTOR MINTZ: The Ukrainian trains were going steady to the east, because the front was coming nearer.

So, I went in a train. Also nobody asked you who you are, what you are. And we went and I was...Novozybilsk (sp?). And from then I went south till... Different trains, not in same train always.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh.

VICTOR MINTZ: Till we came to (what's the name of the city?) Samarkand. This was in middle Asia.

JANE KATZ: Samarkand.

VICTOR MINTZ: Samark...

(END OF SIDE ONE OF ONLY TAPE)

And then I start to look... We didn't have what to eat. We were without (...) sleep, we were sleeping on the streets, because a lot of refugees was there. Till finally I came to a little town, and I got a job as an accountant.

JANE KATZ: Really!

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, because they'd mobilized a lot of the Russians. They were eager to get somebody to work for them.

And I was working there after another place. And after I was settled in Samarkand, and I was there till 1946--in May.

In May, I was evacuated from there to Poland, because was an agreement from United States and Russia, yea, all the Polish citizens, they got to let out from Russia.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh.

VICTOR MINTZ: So I came to Lodz.

JANE KATZ: L-o-d-z.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea. It was taking about... My youngest daughter was already born. She was born Samarkand. This was not far from Afghanistan.

JANE KATZ: Not far from Afghaistan--was Samarkand.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, this was about a couple hundred miles, not more. I suppose. Maybe less. I don't know exactly, but it's not far.

And then I came to Lodz. And it was our idea to leave for Germany--then was the Jewish camps, and from there to go to Israel.

JANE KATZ: You came to Lodz with the idea of leaving for...

VICTOR MINTZ: Poland.

JANE KATZ: Of leaving Poland.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, to go to... From Poland to go to Germany, and from there to try to come to Israel.

JANE KATZ: But of course, when you returned to Poland, you heard all the stories of the atrocities, and most of your family members.

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh, yea, most of family. I didn't find nobody!

JANE KATZ: Tell me about that.

VICTOR MINTZ: So now let me tell you.

When... Being in Lodz, I heard everybody's already...is gone! The Holocaust! I heard before, but now I see... I looking for this, nobody...a relative, friends, I couldn't find nobody!

Lodz is like a little (...) people what--they know my family. And some ideas also of my sister and my brother-in-law, they taking to the concentration, and after 1945 they were (...) with a little--she got a little baby. The baby was killed. And she was driven on the highways. In Germany, they passed away on the highway, in Germany.

JANE KATZ: They died on the highways, your sister and brother-in-law.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, died, yea. Somebody told me this. And my mother passed away. My grandmother, I don't know. But being in Lodz, I decided to go out to Warsaw to visit the grave of my father, because I know how I'm going to leave already--Poland.

I coming... And my wife, I left her in Lodz, because it was very dangerous then to ride the trains, because the Poles saw a Jew, they threw 'em out of the window. It was right away after the pogrom in Kielce, done already by the Poles.

But anyway, I went to Warsaw. In Warsaw didn't find Jews at all. From there I went to Praga (sp?), this is the otherside of the river.

JANE KATZ: Praga.

VICTOR MINTZ: Praga. I went to there, that (...) Praga. Next day I went to Warsaw. I tried to come to my apartment where I was living. It's just at... All the houses were all down!

JANE KATZ: Destroyed.

VICTOR MINTZ: But just at my apartment...was not destroyed.

JANE KATZ: Amazing.

VICTOR MINTZ: Amazing. I went in there. There a man was living. I asked if I can see the rooms. Told me, yes. And after I went out, the gentile told me that, "You've got a lot of books in basement." Like... But I was afraid to go to (...), because was after pogrom.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh.

VICTOR MINTZ: I was a....

JANE KATZ: You couldn't trust any of them.

VICTOR MINTZ: I didn't trust at all. Especially to go down the basement.

So, I went from there to the cemetery. Cemetery, to my father's grave--I couldn't reach--because it was weeds and trees growing during the war. I couldn't reach. In the beginning, there was a monument of my grandmother's great-grandfather. He was the first rabbi in Warsaw.

And I coming there, I take and saw... This was right in the beginning of the cemetery, so I could go there. I come in there, I take a look to the left side... A little... What you call a stone is there, and I read the cover. This is the grave of my grandfather by whom I was raised.

JANE KATZ: Oh, you did find it.

VICTOR MINTZ: And I didn't have a camera. I didn't have with me.

JANE KATZ: I'm sorry...?

VICTOR MINTZ: I didn't have a camera with me to write this down.

JANE KATZ: You didn't have a camera.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea. So I took the cast and now I came... This is the copy of this. I want to show you before. Where is it?

JANE KATZ: Oh, right there.

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh.

JANE KATZ: Yes.

VICTOR MINTZ: This is the copy of my grandfather's stone. I took a copy of this.

JANE KATZ: How did you manage this if you didn't have a camera?

VICTOR MINTZ: No, I took by hand. I wrote this down.

JANE KATZ: Oh, you recorded the Hebrew letters...

VICTOR MINTZ: I recorded.

JANE KATZ: ...by hand.

VICTOR MINTZ: I recorded by hand.

JANE KATZ: Wonderful. And what does it say?

VICTOR MINTZ: What this says is: "Rabbi Moshe Alexander, the son of a Rabbi Yonke Vesukeh Engelman."

This was the stories that I want to tell you, is they're written. But he was written all the stories.

"...a grandson of a rabbi, of a big scholar from the city of Koll. He gave out a book, the name of Bet Aaron--The House of Aaron."

This is all what is written in this. But, after reading this, and there the book is about the second...of my grandfather's father's--they're written all the stories there.

JANE KATZ: Isn't that wonderful. This is a book that was published recently.

VICTOR MINTZ: This was published in '46.

JANE KATZ: Oh! In '46!

O.k. you said that these five volumes were published in Israel.

VICTOR MINTZ: No, this was published here in...

JANE KATZ: ...in the U.S.?

VICTOR MINTZ: In New York. 1946...New York.

JANE KATZ: O.k. And these books tell the story of your family members. O.k. Wonderful. So.... That's something to be very proud of.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea. And this is... This I took a copy only of...on the 1st. And I got a picture, so write it in English.

JANE KATZ: O.k. It may be that the people from the ADL would like this material, but I won't ask you for it now.

VICTOR MINTZ: No, no. No. I know.

JANE KATZ: I don't know. I'm sure that's very valuable to you!

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh, to me, it's a matter of life and death.

JANE KATZ: O.k. So...from the cemetery...

VICTOR MINTZ: From the cemetery, I went... I found out the day of my grandfather's...when he passed away. He passed away a few months before the liquidation of the ghetto. Who put up the stone, I don't know.

JANE KATZ: Who put up the...?

VICTOR MINTZ: The stone, the...monument!

JANE KATZ: Oh, the monument!

VICTOR MINTZ: Monument. I don't know. It this, by the way, I find it there.

JANE KATZ: What stories did you hear of the resistance within the ghetto?

VICTOR MINTZ: The resistance of the ghetto...

JANE KATZ: Did you meet people who had taken part in it?
And who had survived it?

VICTOR MINTZ: I met people what...what...resistant in a concentration camp. I met... From concentration camp, I met a lot of people!--from concentration camps. But I met a person what he was from the fighters in the resistance, and (...) him to run out. They caught something, two, three left of 'em were alive.

JANE KATZ: They...?

VICTOR MINTZ: Two or three left of them alive.

JANE KATZ: There were just two or three left, right, out of the thousands who died.

VICTOR MINTZ: All of 'em were killed that way. Yea, right, yea. That's right.

JANE KATZ: O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: After coming back to Lodz, we went to the Czechoslovakian border. And there we smuggled, and with my little daughter on the hand. She was two years old.

JANE KATZ: And this was what year?

VICTOR MINTZ: This was in 1946.

JANE KATZ: 1946, yea.

VICTOR MINTZ: No, she was a year old, not two years. A year's old. Smuggled the border from Poland to Czechoslovakia. From Czechoslovakia we went to Austria. Was always illegal, was already organized by the Bricha. You know what Bricha is? This is...

JANE KATZ: How do you spell this?

VICTOR MINTZ: B-r-i-c-h-a. This was a Israeli organization where they managed to take out the Jews from Poland to take 'em to Germany, and from Germany follow to Israel.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh.

VICTOR MINTZ: Anyway, I went with them from Czechoslovakia to Austria. From Austria we came to Germany...

JANE KATZ: What was that like--to go through Germany at that point?

VICTOR MINTZ: Was not very pleasant. I was living in a house... I got a room from the Committee in a house where her husband was a general in the German army.

JANE KATZ: How did you deal with your own... Did you not experience hostility at that point? A great deal of hostility?

VICTOR MINTZ: They were afraid. Right after the war, the Germans were afraid. But I saw a lot of this... A few times, a still... This I saw a few times. Even the...the woman asked me to...if I can't help the...make a Sunday, to clean up the stones from the...by the house there. (Because they make us a project--all the neighborhood made a project.) So, I took a look on that, and told her, I was working enough by the Germans, not to work again.

JANE KATZ: How did you deal with your own anger at this point--living in Germany...and among Germans?

VICTOR MINTZ: We got used to this. Everything. Like thing now about the running, and suffering, and not having what to eat, and the airplanes from up, shooting--is terrible! But when you're living with someone, you're not thinking him about this. The body's getting so immune to this dangers.

JANE KATZ: Yes.

VICTOR MINTZ: You not afraid more.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh. I understand. You develop a thick skin.

VICTOR MINTZ: Develop kind a... You get used to this.

JANE KATZ: And I suppose you begin to think a lot about your own survival and what it means?

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh, yea, sure. Everybody what survived, it was a miracle! Because they saw death 100 times, and you survive yourself death (...). But happened to survive. Everybody's a miracle.

JANE KATZ: Did this strengthen your relationship with your G-d?

VICTOR MINTZ: I don't know. When I went out before, I was religious. After the last few years in Poland, I was religious again, but it was already more worldly. I start to be a member of the Zionist organization. And, after coming to Russia, I completely... I was not be able to observe at all the religion.

I remember, when I ran away from Poland, this was in 1939, I never eat not-kosher food. But... and this was just Erev Yom Kippur. You know what is Erev Yom Kippur?

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh.

VICTOR MINTZ: The day before Yom Kippur. We running and didn't eat nothing. Came some a little village, and a Polish farmer gave us soup to eat. And seeing that this was the first time and I was eating not-kosher food with little pieces meat inside. But it was not eating in a couple days. And then, you get used to...during the war you couldn't have it. You started being not so religious. You was not looking for religion.

I still observed, even in Russia, being a... observed--the High Holidays observed. Passover I didn't eat bread.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh. Whenever you could.

VICTOR MINTZ: But the rest is... It was sacrilege. After I came here to the United States, and in the beginning, I wasn't so religious at all. Just the last years is turning back to...to religion.

JANE KATZ: That's very interesting.

VICTOR MINTZ: Nothing I seen so ready about. 15, 20, or 30 years.

JANE KATZ: It takes time to be Jewish.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea. I working here on Sabbath! But after... when I went in my new business, it was possible not to work the Sabbath. I stopped and worked non-Sabbath. And now my business is up and closed.

JANE KATZ: Was it the same organization that helped you go to Israel--that had helped you before?

VICTOR MINTZ: What?

JANE KATZ: Well you mentioned the Bricha.

VICTOR MINTZ: The Bricha? Yea. They helped me take from Czechoslovakia to Germany.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh. And then from Germany to Israel?

VICTOR MINTZ: And from Germany, I want to go to Israel, but Israel was still not a government--not independent. Was 1946. And I had a little girl. I couldn't go unlegal.

So a city... My wife got here in Minneapolis, two brothers and two sisters from before. So we decided to go...to United States. In 1948, we came to United States.

JANE KATZ: Which organization helped you make that change.

VICTOR MINTZ: HIAS.

JANE KATZ: HIAS, o.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: No, but actually, the relatives paid for everything. But they did it.

JANE KATZ: But HIAS worked with you. H-I-A-S.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, yea. But they did it. The relatives paid for everything, but the HIAS--they paid to the HIAS, and they did it, I suppose.

JANE KATZ: O.k. At this point, what would you say that it means to be a survivor of the Holocaust?

VICTOR MINTZ: What it means to be a survivor of the Holocaust. Sometimes we're very well off. You raise children. No uncles, no aunties, no...no grandfathers, no grandmothers, and you do yourselves, everything by yourself! And you start a new life! And... I suppose they got some on your psychology, you got something kind of print on this!

JANE KATZ: Something what?

VICTOR MINTZ: Got something on print of this--the brain is a computers. You got something in...

JANE KATZ: O.k. An imprint of what you lived through, that you never really erase.

VICTOR MINTZ: Imprint, yea, never erase, and you can never forget this. But life is life. Is going on. And this is life, lose in death, dear ones, friends ones, but life is life!

JANE KATZ: But always this feeling of being cut off from your roots.

VICTOR MINTZ: From the family--the roots, yea. But this I go a lot, trying (...) to Israel, because there I got some cousins--near cousins, far cousins. I've got some family left, over there.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh. Has your belief in a Supreme Being changed over these many generations?

VICTOR MINTZ: I told you, the reason is, you not thinking of this. Because religion's...nothing can argue this. You... Logically you think, "Why! Why! Why!" You cannot answer. You believe, and this is your tradition. This is all. It's a... Because of this is happening, I start to be not religious. I can't tell. I start to be not religious, because the circumstances were...

JANE KATZ: Right, but you didn't turn away from G-d!

VICTOR MINTZ: I didn't turn away from G-d, no.

JANE KATZ: You didn't feel that G-d had failed you.

VICTOR MINTZ: No, no. No.

JANE KATZ: Some do that.

VICTOR MINTZ: Well, some did it, yea, but... You got in the Jewish religion, you got a lot of thing, but you got rabbis asking, "Why! Why they suffered!" In all persecutions was during that last 2,000 years. And everybody asked the question, "Why!" But...

JANE KATZ: Do you have an answer?

VICTOR MINTZ: No answer this!

JANE KATZ: No answer.

VICTOR MINTZ: No, it's... You can't tell, because... You was bad, you can't tell this.

JANE KATZ: Do you find that you're cynical about humanity?
That...

VICTOR MINTZ: Cynical about humanity?

JANE KATZ: Do you find that perhaps...

VICTOR MINTZ: Here... Yea, I'll tell you, but it's not only the Germans. States... Even the Americans in this time what happened. Even Roosevelt! They come atop [reconnaissance photographs], and they didn't want to give out what they asked him to bombard there the trains what is going to Auschwitz. They didn't do it. They didn't let known. So letting even... Now, hundreds of thousands of refugees from Viet Nam, from all over. Then, they didn't let in...nobody's let in to the United States! Jews... The ships were going back to Germany. They didn't let in. The same thing, England didn't let in nobody to Israel.

So you got a cruel world, yea. Sure, the Germans were terrible. But I figure, all the world was against the Jews!

JANE KATZ: Do you think our Jewish tradition makes us different? Do you think that there's a sensitivity and an ethical value that we're brought up with that makes us different from other cultures?

VICTOR MINTZ: From the other cultures? The ethical values is got a lot to do with this, because you calling the (...), "Am a sepher--the nation of the Book." Because...really, Jews were studying, always studying. And they got a lot of, lot of, ethical and moral teachings.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Now let's go on from there.

VICTOR MINTZ: And this went in their blood--the teaching, or the moral teachings. The same thing like I told you, that anti-Semitism went in the blood of the gentiles, because they...in the churches, they were always telling him, through the centuries, that: "The Jews are the G-d--killer. The Jews are poisoning our lives and our water and everything." And this went in their blood!

JANE KATZ: Were you brought up to believe that all life, whether Jewish or gentile, is sacred?

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh, no question! No question! Every life is sacred. And this according to Jewish religion is all the whole life is sacred. Is always...

You got some things that make a difference between Jewish life and a gentile guy, but not in everything, he got to agree to this. Maybe then was tied to circumstances--to make a difference between Jewish life and gentile life. But not in our days. For instance, if I would be in a concentration camp, I would make also difference between Jewish life and German life. I will not hesitate to kill a German. Maybe this was other circumstances. Culture is changing. Conditions are changing, and you can never know.

JANE KATZ: Survival becomes the primary value in that.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, survival, yea.

JANE KATZ: When you came here as a refugee, did you feel a tremendous sense of separation from other people--non-survivors?

VICTOR MINTZ: I kind of...yes. You feel there are a difference between other people. They look... Even today, seems to me. People thinks still I am a refugee.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh.

VICTOR MINTZ: I heard some people talking... My friends, relatives, they want to say, "Take a look."--my son... "His kid make a living. Take a look how the refugees..." (forgot to say I'm a refugee, also--laughs). "Take a look how the refugee's making well now."

JANE KATZ: How they're doing well.

VICTOR MINTZ: Doing well. But this... But... I don't know, this is life.

JANE KATZ: What about the idea of "survivor's guilt" that many people have written about?

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh! I...

JANE KATZ: Have you ever experienced that?

VICTOR MINTZ: I figure, very wrong! Because you got a Jewish saying: "Don't judge a person till you'll be in his place."

If a German faces you with a gun, you angry!
What can you do! You can't fight with him!

JANE KATZ: You run.

VICTOR MINTZ: I will tell you another story. I remember I was one time in Center here. There was an Israeli; was talking about same problem. And he was saying that...Jews were going like sheeps to the slaughter. And he even mentioned this, this got to do with the Jewish religion, because the Jewish religion didn't allow you to fight, and...and this.

And I asked with him one question: Babi Yar was in 1939--no in 1941. 1941 was Babi Yar. This was after the revolution. How many years after revolution? The revolution was 1917...

JANE KATZ: Excuse me. B-a-b-i, I believe Y-a-r. O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: Y-a-r. Yea. This was about...from '17 till '41 is a story from 24 years, yea? And there was all the Jews...was there...were not religious. So they're not religious. So they're together with the Russian people--assimilated. And while thousands and thousands of Jews were killed in Babi Yar, and nobody start a fight against.

This had nothing to do with religion; this nothing to do because you're afraid; this has to do with they got guns and machine guns, and a lot of army. You stand naked!

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh. It all has to do with power.

VICTOR MINTZ: With power, sure.

JANE KATZ: And what do you teach your children about power? About this act of survival?

VICTOR MINTZ: Physical power?

JANE KATZ: Yea. As a Jew and as a survivor. How did this affect your training of your children?

VICTOR MINTZ: I always tried to teach 'em Jewish values. (...) They're always going to Talmud Torah. And my boys are going a couple of years to yeshiva, and one was going to Yeshiva University.

But... I told 'em the same thing. You gotta fight for your rights! No question! Possible on the circumstances.

JANE KATZ: But it depends on the circumstances.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea. If you are free person, you gotta fight for your rights! But if you sit in a prison, you can do nothing.

JANE KATZ: O.k.

VICTOR MINTZ: And I tried to give 'em all the Jewish values. This is all (...). Other questions?

JANE KATZ: What about the treatment of the Holocaust in books and in films--in terms of what you experienced. Do you feel that it's valid?

VICTOR MINTZ: I (...) very valid. And it's got to be written like more in English--the people to know--all the world to know!

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh.

VICTOR MINTZ: But... I was last...last week (where was this) in Saint Paul. Called the Holocaust...

JANE KATZ: Remembrance.

VICTOR MINTZ: Remembrance. Was in B'nai Emet was this. But I didn't like it. Was something... Made like a theatre. Play of this.

JANE KATZ: At Temple of Aaron.

VICTOR MINTZ: Temple of Aaron.

JANE KATZ: What was it that bothered you?

VICTOR MINTZ: This singing was not correct. It was somebody... I not like to make a (...) a theatre. Because it's a tragedy!

JANE KATZ: Interesting.

VICTOR MINTZ: Interesting is they made it a kind of a...play! I think it should be a lecture, or talking about this, explaining... No lecture was.

JANE KATZ: There was a tendency then to "romanticize" the events? To dramatize and romanticize?

VICTOR MINTZ: A little, but not too much--not to "romanticize". I don't know... I didn't like the talk.

JANE KATZ: Somehow you feel that the truth is lost...

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea.

JANE KATZ: ...as we become very theatrical.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, yea. Was with the theatricals the truth just lost. And was even there a cantor was singing.

JANE KATZ: And you don't see it as a show?

VICTOR MINTZ: Was like a show. Was singing something. And I don't know... (...) Nothing with singing. "My Dear Mr. Shane"... (...) with the melody from "My Dear Mr. Shane"... I don't know! I didn't like it. Anyway...

JANE KATZ: What about the T.V. movie, The Holocaust?

VICTOR MINTZ: The Holocaust was very good. It was other movie, but was also very good, what was it's name?

JANE KATZ: Well, there was Playing for Time, about the woman who played and sang in the orchestra in a concentration camp.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea, yea. Yea, this is part of the true life what happened! The same thing: What she could do? She could resist? She couldn't resist!

JANE KATZ: That's right.

VICTOR MINTZ: And this is true! This is true life!
That's all?

JANE KATZ: Very good. Very interesting. I thank you...

VICTOR MINTZ: Thank you.

JANE KATZ: ...very much.

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh, you're welcome. Like I told you, about... I was not in Nazi Germany.

JANE KATZ: Uh-huh. Of course.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea.

JANE KATZ: Of course. But each experience is unique.

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh, yea.

JANE KATZ: Is there anything that you'd like to add?

VICTOR MINTZ: Not especial.

JANE KATZ: To what extent have you shared your memories of all of this with your children?

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh, I've told 'em all the stories--what was happened. And if was a film about the Holocaust, I always tried to take 'em--to see it.

And there was memorial days on the Holocaust--was some gatherings, I took 'em always. But they all...even here, in Minneapolis, was...some was very good!

JANE KATZ: Are your children interested in these memories?

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh, sure they're interested. They raised completely Jewish.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Do you think of America as a land of promise?

VICTOR MINTZ: I feel America... I don't believe in America to happen this what is happened in Germany.

JANE KATZ: You don't believe that this could happen in America.

VICTOR MINTZ: Could happen... Yea. But it surprises. You got all the surprises in history. You cannot... Who would believe that this will happen in Germany? So cultural a nation.

But... America's a little bit different, because you've got different nations. It's built not from one nation.

JANE KATZ: Different nations within the nation.

VICTOR MINTZ: See now, what happened. That Jackson... What's his name here. He's... The press! Far... Far...

JANE KATZ: Farkar (sp?).

VICTOR MINTZ: Farkar.

JANE KATZ: ...and his racism.

VICTOR MINTZ: And his racism.

JANE KATZ: Right. And his many, many followers.

VICTOR MINTZ: He's got many followers. And this is the Black community! Was they also persecuted.

JANE KATZ: That's right.

VICTOR MINTZ: So you cannot (...). You've got surprises in history. Can never know.

JANE KATZ: How true.

VICTOR MINTZ: Far doesn't look from this.

For instance, if I would go to Israel, somebody else, I... I am afeared to go because he want to run away from the United States! He want to go because he know there he will be able to have a full Jewish life! But not to run away.

JANE KATZ: Well, I gather America has been good to you.

VICTOR MINTZ: Yea. I have not to complain about America. I complain of this or that--during the war in America! But not now.

JANE KATZ: And now you participate fully in the Jewish community here?

VICTOR MINTZ: Oh, yea.

JANE KATZ: The synagogue?

VICTOR MINTZ: Synagogues, yea, Federation and so forth.

JANE KATZ: O.k. Well I thank you, very much.

VICTOR MINTZ: You're welcome. Nice to talk to you.

JANE KATZ: I enjoyed it very much.

VICTOR MINTZ: Thank you.

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