

RIGHTEOUS JEWS
INTERVIEW WITH ISADORE HORNE
JUNE 17, 2004

ISADORE HORNE:

My name is Isadore Horne. Or my name in Poland or where I was born was actually Isaac Goldenstein. So I was born nineteen sixteen, so that means I am now eighty-six. I was born in a very small little town. There were only a hundred families, a total probably about five hundred people that it sheltered. It was strictly hundred percent Jewish people. Not even one person non-Jewish lived in our village. I did not have a father, uh, he died in nineteen eighteen.

That was during the First World War, so at home there was a sister and a brother and my mother. They divided Poland in one half occupied by the Russians and one half by the Germans. The eastern part was occupied by the Russians where we lived so we were under the Russians from nineteen thirty nine to forty one. In nineteen forty-one, Germany attacked Russia, so the war started between the Russians and the Germans. We knew that time already as soon as the Germans occupied and took it over, they will kill the

Jewish people. But, there was no way to run away so we - -
we had to stay there.

So we lived in our place, which was a ghetto anyway for the
- - for the Germans, they us-- they usually, uh, make
ghettos wherever they come to separate the Jewish people
from the non-Jewish people. So when the time comes and they
have to kill 'em they know where the - -to - -to grab them
all and kill them. And in our place we were all Jewish
people anyway. So we lived still under the German regime
from nineteen forty one till forty two and the summer of
nineteen forty two, they came in and they said that we have
to leave our little town and we have to go to the next. The
next little town was only two kilometers from our town. It
was also a Jewish town.

So they took us out from our little town to the next little
town and our little town, living under the Polish regime,
we didn't know too much about the anti-Semitism because we
only were Jews. We were like a ghetto. Only Jewish people.
And the people the- - they live in the big cities they
expected that they, uh, knew a, had a lot a anti-Semitism

in the schools and everywhere, it's true. But we didn't experience that in our little town. And forty two when they came and took us out from our little town and brought us over to the next little town, so we were together over there already, by about, more than four thousand people.

Every day as they put us up maybe in thirty homes, four thousand people. We didn't have what to eat. It was the German officer used to take all the people to the center of the little town and talk to the people to tell the people not to worry because that was their trick. You know, to pull the people to say the women and the children we will take them in - - in separate places. The men will be working for the Germans and then the war will - - will be over, you'll be united. And certain days they used to come every - - night was their time with my mother and my sister and, uh, my brother here we were together and my neighbors, you know.

They came in one day in the morning, the - - the big talks, and they start taking the people out two kilometers which was prepared, - a big grave was over there. But the people didn't know where's they taken, it was - - it was - - they

didn't even know that - - that they's digging a grave for so many thousands of people and the women and the children they took on the trucks and the man they tell 'em to walk. There was maybe - - maybe five German officers but maybe fifty or sixty police, Ukraine, was here, or helped the Germans to do the job.

But they start doing this thing and the people, uh, I walked out, uh, outside of the room with my next door, he was a cousin of mine, uh, a boy by the name of Benjamin, and we looked it up and we see there's a attic, like a, you know, 1- - it's not a second floor but it looks like where people used to store jewelry and things, you know. And, uh, I was, uh, you need a step ladder, you know, to get up so we say let's go up over there maybe we can hide ourself so they wouldn't take us. Over there with all the rest of the people. We didn't know what they do.

So we went up the two of us, 'course nothing was there on the second floor and, uh, we saw a chimney, a big chimney like a cupboard, like a little, so and there was a little door to open to get - - I say let's go in inside here we'll stay in the chimney. So we went into the chimney the two of us, we just could stay straight and, uh, half hour later,

more or less, one Ukrainian policeman walked up to see if nobody's there up in the second floor, but he looked around - - he looked around he didn't think that somebody's in the chimney, uh, and, uh, we - - we saw him through the little - - little holes - - we saw he walks around.

Well if I would have been a Partisan that time before we would have jumped out and we would take care of him the two of us could take care of him and take over the ammunition. But we didn't know about ammunition, we didn't know about fighting things like this. So we stayed and we kept quiet and he walked out - - he walked down but we had a feeling that something - - something is wrong here. That was more or less around twelve o'clock, twelve noon, summer days and when the day was almost over 'bout six, seven o'clock in the - - the afternoon, they did their job over there.

They killed all the people. They - - they undressed naked all the people and just tell them to walk straight to the grave and shoot one after the other and one after the other one and they killed them all about four thousand people. They came in after when the job was done. They came in back

and they were singing and were happy, you know, and probably getting drunk and, uh - -

QUESTION:

And where were you at this point?

ISADORE HORNE:

And I was still in the chimney.

QUESTION:

Still in there?

ISADORE HORNE:

I - - we were still in the chimney listening.

After and it got dark we got out from the chimney the two of us and we were - - we wouldn't know where to go so we were sitting in the house, you know, because then, they didn't go no more and they - - they killed everybody except who ever ran away, you or hide themselves. The next day when it got light we knew already where the place was so we got up and we went over there to look where they killed the people and the ground was still shaken. It was a big - -

big - - big grave for so many thousands of people so we stayed over there a while. We cried and we left.

QUESTION:

Did you realize your family?

ISADORE HORNE:

We left and all my family all everybody was there un- - under was killed, we knew everybody's was killed.

ISADORE HORNE:

We didn't know where to go and we didn't know what to do. We will go to the woods. The woods were very close, maybe one kilometer away was the big woods, so we decided we gonna go to the woods and we will hide ourselves over. Was in the summer more or less like, uh, the month it would be probably like, uh, July, August, July or August in nineteen forty two. When we came to the woods and we will said, we will stay over there, so we didn't know where we going.

But in meantime we met a Polish man and the Polish man start talking with us, he was in the woods and he tells us that there in the place was they killed all the people. He

says some Jewish people run away and they are in the next woods, he told us the name. He says if you wanted you can go over there and stay with them. Okay. So we walk. When we came over there and we met the people and the people know us and we know them from before and they used to sleep over there, you know, inside.

QUESTION:

Underground?

ISADORE HORNE:

Underground. There was about, uh, twelve people. Twelve people. This man that, uh, he had a gun he says that - - that we can go to near the grave where the people are buried, there was a Ukrainian man lives there and he killed a lot of Jewish people too. And he says we should go and kill the man, you know, so we went over there to his place and we got it inside and we took, uh, the and, uh, and we find inside in the house all Jewish stuff from the grave which he hid in this place, we took him and we took, uh, he had a pig in the house and we put the pig on the wagon and we told him to drive us over there into the woods and over there we got rid of him in the woods and we in the

meantime we had the pig so we - - we have what to eat for a while, we didn't know what to eat.

QUESTION:

You got rid of him?

ISADORE HORNE:

Got rid of him. We killed him, this guy he had a sho- - a gun. The guy he had a gun. The guy, we killed him 'cause he was a murderer. He killed the people.

QUESTION:

Right. Did you want to do it?

ISADORE HORNE:

We feel - - maybe we will take revenge if you'll able to if you can do something, you'll do it. Because if you don't kill them he will kill us. Okay. We were there on the roots. All winter - - the winter of forty two, forty three and we used to go out, you know, like the day when spring came, you know, to dig it up from the fields to get something to - - to eat. That was the spring of forty three. We see while we were walking some guys on horses. We

- - we didn't know who they are. We thought they was Ukranian. You know, so we stopped - - we stopped - - they walked over and start talking Russian and since we knew how - - how to speak Russian and he says we are Russian partisans.

We are traveling around here and we are fighting the Nazi's, the Germans. We will not touch you. Don't be afraid, we don't wanna kill you. And, uh, we have a lot of partisans in this area in the thousands and say - - and said we will take you to the partisans. All of you, every man and every children and you'll stay with us over there. Well we knew already more or less that we are safer than laying in the woods. It was a chance to be killed every day anyway. We got into the partisans. The women of course, they gave us jobs to cook, you know, because in the partisans we had our own place, we used to stay, they used to cook and - - and have the food. We need food, we used to drive in - - in the village and take it, whatever we want. You know.

From the Ukrainian people.

Job what's they used to do to partisans over there the - - Nazi's the Germans used to travel practically all the time on the trains to Russia, to transfer the soldiers to transform ammunition. He told the staffs he used to travel, so we used to go over there as partisans, lay down and see where they used to pass and we used to put up , um, whadda you call it. The - - the b- - you blew up.

QUESTION:

Dynamite?

ISADORE HORNE:

Dynamite. You used to put dynamite right there and used to blow up the trains with ammunition. And kill the Nazi's over there. That's what we used to do as partisans.

Used to fight constantly we did. We were over there with them from - - from spring nineteen forty-three to spring nineteen forty-four. 'Bout a year.

'Bout a year. And that group that we were there, we were over a hundred. Several hundred but we were - we had ammunition. We had, uh, the - - the, I mean everything and we were not afraid that the Germans will come to the woods because our job was go over with dynamite and fight

whatever the Nazi's and thing - - things like this. But they used to show us how to go around with the - - with the guns, with the - - the rifles, you know they used to show us. And, uh, we lived like this for about a year. When we joined the partisans that time when they came and took us out from the woods, so it was a big change.

First of all we already f- - felt that we more or less, uh, have a chance to survive better than in the woods and of course in the woods you could have get killed everyday. People could come, Ukrainian people and kill us, we did not have any ammunition to defend ourselves and you know when we came to the partisans we were like - - like a regular army. We used to go in, s- - there - - there was no problem as far as, uh, food, as being hungry. We need food, we go in - - in our village and we took it out. And we go in - - into the homes and say we need food. This - - this - - and of course they gave it to us.

Uh, on the other end we felt a little bit, uh, much better that we could go out and take advantage and do something with - - with the - - the - - the - - with the Nazi's. What

they did to us. If we could go out and blow up a train, uh, and carry ammunition to the front for the soldiers to fight and things like this. So we felt like we fighting, uh, back and that was a very good feeling so, so in the partisans we felt like we are human beings, you know, and you can do something too. Nazi can only do with us what they would over the war and, uh, and in the maybe no way, uh, that's why it - - they, uh, couldn't survive the war too.

The Germans against the Russians. Because the partisans did a lot of damage to them, their fights with them - - with the Germans you know, when we fought back. And, uh, one thing was, uh, as much as it were, came and killed the people but they to the woods. They were afraid to come. They were afraid for their own life. There were a lot a Jewish peop a pure Russian, uh, Jewish we should go to leave those in the partisans 'cause they were also Jewish.

But, um, as far as the Jewish people is their group that we left, uh, to go people in the woods, we were all in the partisans. All of us. Used to go up every day - - everyday we used to fights, if you didn't have fights with the

Germans, we had fights with the Ukrainians. And the partisans I did not - - I cannot saw that I've, uh, experience any - - anti-Semitism among the Russian people. I didn't experience that.

QUESTION:

Do you remember your dreams?

00:22:03

ISADORE HORNE:

Well, I don't. I have more dreams now than I had at that time, 'cause we were so tired during the day. Do things that, uh, you fall asleep, we slept. Today after the war many - - many nights, uh, it - - I dream about the war, of running away and things like this. Many times. For all those years I still remember when I start talking about being in the woods and being with the partisans and I still remember how it was. How, now I don't remember things what happened yesterday.

You remember now. When I put fifty-eight years, sixty years ago.

When we were in the forest we didn't know what goes on in the war, because we didn't have no newspapers, we didn't have no radio. Well, uh, in the big ghettos they couldn't run away because we were locked up watching them all the time. The - - the Nazis the Germans, with the help of the Polish people, with the help of the Ukrainian people. First when, uh, we survived, uh, ourselves, the two of us. We - - it was a miracle that we didn't die from cold or from hunger. You know the - - the clothes we have with us, the - - the only answer is because we were young. That's why I - - I survived.

If you wouldn't be young boys, you couldn't survive. We for instance du- - the few boys that we were in the woods, and when they came the partisans and take us in over there and we joined them, then we went out then to fight, we did this more because we knew what they did to our people. We were there. We were there when they killed all the people in our families, so we were happy if we s- - if, if we have to leave we can take revenge.

It made us, it gives us strength, you know, it give us strength and it give us hope. Maybe the world it didn't come to a help because when we were there in - - in the - -

the - - the - - the village and they killed, everybody, we thought, uh, any day you'll be killed too so, you know, no hope to live. But being in the partisan we saw that we can do something to kill them instead of they killed only us and we used to do this all the time. We used to be happy, to do this.

To take revenge was a, to what they did to our, our people. At the time it didn't live in the ghetto, they used to come with the lies and tell them you gonna take it up easy, you gonna just work for f- - uh, the war. And then later all you'll go back to your families. She - - I mean that's, uh, what they used to tell the people.

The people believed it, they would go out. And then later after with they - - all leaved it together or take them to the concentration camps. They were already physically so weak. So weak they didn't - - couldn't even walk. They couldn't fight. They couldn't fight, already half sick and to - - and to them was already dead, [UNINTELLIGIBLE] they - - they - - they lived that way. The [UNINTELLIGIBLE] there was resistance, practically in every ghetto. Every ghetto.

But most of the people, not most but ninety nine percent were killed, all those people from the ghettos, who's gonna tell the story. The same thing happened. I was not in a concentration camp but I know the same thing happened and they already [UNINTELLIGIBLE] at concentration camps they nobody survived there, very few survived from a concentration camp so who's gonna tell the story? But I as a survivor know that there was resistance practically in every ghetto.

That's as I told you. And this was tough - - but I think you had less chance to survive, uh, being at a concentration camp. We already felt that we, uh - - uh, good chance to survive, being in the partisan. But we - - we - - we knew, they told us, but as in the thousands up there means we fight back. So we knew this of the - - of chance to survive than being in the woods by yourself, without ammunition, without food, do I - - I really don't know if you wouldn't have gotten into the partisans. If we wre- - if we would have been survived, for another year in the woods.

For the, you know, the Ukrainian would come and killed us or we would die from hunger or from cold air. So it - - we survived one year but I don't know if we could've survived two years by ourselves, being in the woods.

I'm sure not. But after, when we got into the partisan, the Russian partisans. We already feel that we have a good chance to, to survive.

Well in the partisans was everyday it - - the same thing like being a [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. If we used to get up, have our - - our, uh, food and - - and be on the way and things but - - but we used to cook, we used to have kitchens and cook a lot of potato things, you know, and stuff and uh, we didn't have steak. Uh, how - - how di- - what did we do everyday.

Well it was like everyday the same thing. We used to get up, get ready and [STUTTER] fighting to go it this way or go this way, to watch over there where the Germans passing by to attack them, to this, used to always, uh, be on the - - on the way, everyday.

Everyday was just like a regular in a war.

But, uh, but no fear here was anymore.

No fear - - we didn't have no fear to - - to be afraid. To be afraid, you know, because we knew that they gonna come and kill us, we've gotta kill them first maybe.

So - - so the - - the hope was - - it was easy to survive everyday 'cause we knew we do something, then we take revenge and - - and we are not just like, uh, d- - they're gonna come and killed us.

No my experience is a little bit different. My experience is a little bit different. Uh, I was not in a concentration camp, you know, but it was an entire different way - -way I survived, you know, and the way I lived, the way I got married and the faith.

It's in- - every story's different from survivors, how they survived.

Not everybody survived the same way. Experience is the fighting the Nazis.

We were in the partisans a year, could be hundreds or maybe thousands of, uh, German Nazi's which we used to go in the front to fight. We used to blow up the - - the trains with food that they used to sell and everything. Who knows how many, that's how to, you know but I know there was a lot all the time.

QUESTION:

Mm-hmm. I think that's really surprising.

ISADORE HORNE:

No, people don't know that. Who knows, uh, only the ones who were there know. Here - - cause my - - all survival's different than the concentration camp.

Entirely different.

Of course they lived with the fear of death everyday, we were little bit different. We were with hope. You know. We never saw any Nazi's, any Germans coming into the woods but you know they don't go to the woods, uh, they were afraid.

Well they knew that there was some - - if somebody, uh tries to survive in the woods, hiding, but they didn't go to look for them.

It was another reason why there wasn't that much of resistance is because when the Germans came in they took the young people in every big city. They used to take young people to [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. From nineteen to thirty six or whatever, to come to this and this place, the register for work. And those murderers took them over there and shoot 'em by the leg on the spot. They didn't even know that they not even see what's gonna do? Kill them right over there the young people. So they knew those murderers, if they get rid of young people the women and the children and the elder people is less - -

QUESTION:

No resistance.

ISADORE HORNE:

For resistance and this is all of a sudden another thing they told that's what happened everywhere. They used to kill the young people first so this, so nobody could resist. And they took us out every day [BACKGROUND NOISE] on the way in the center of the city and tell us story, every day the same thing, a German officer used to come up

and talk. Don't you worry he used to say. You the man we'll take you to a place to work for the government because it's a war and the women and the children, they will - - will live in - - in a ghetto and later the war will be over, you'll be united. And the same times was a grave ready for them.

Ah, see and this is a have come out and talked like this everyday with lies. That was everywhere I guess.

Um, he, uh, there were think was prepared and planned how to make it easier for them to kill the people so they don't resist.

And it's very hard to resist if somebody has a gun and you are weak and hungry and - - and - - and life to you doesn't mean more or anything.

It's a - - it's a that's the way it happened. So as somebody always ask a question. How come they didn't resist, how come they didn't do - - it's - - it's not so easy to fight and somebody has the gun against you and you

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will stay with the it's easy to ask a question. And that's
the truth.