

2010

Interview No. 1639

Itzhak Kotkowski

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Recommended Citation

Interview with Itzhak Kotkowski by Patrick Driscoll, 2010, "Interview No. 1639," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Itzhak Kotkowski

Interviewer: Barbara Dent

Project: World War II - Holocaust

Location: El Paso, TX

Date of Interview: n/a

Terms of Use: Unrestricted

Transcript No.: 1639

Transcriber / Summary: Patrick Driscoll

Itzhak Kotkowski is an author that wrote about his experiences in the Holocaust during World War II; he was born in Warsaw, Poland on December 25, 1921; his family was Jewish, attended private school; Mr. Kotkowski addresses anti-Semitism among Polish people, personally never experienced it; he lived in the Jewish section, enjoyed life there until the German invasion on September 1, 1939; he recalls being at home when Warsaw was occupied, had always respected German culture; he explains his father worked hard to give them an education; he describes his three sisters, one was in Mexico, one immigrated to the U.S. after the war, and another was killed at Treblinka Concentration Camp in Poland; he recalls his parents and conditions in occupied Warsaw, remembers his mother saved his life by encouraging him to leave against the wishes of his father; Mr. Kotkowski tells how one sister in the Warsaw Ghetto was rescued by a Polish Officer in the Armia Krajowa (Army of the People); he explains how the AK started an uprising in Warsaw when the Soviets were near, Stalin intentionally halted Soviet Forces from entering the city so the Germans could put the uprising down; he wants his book to show how the Holocaust happened. He recounts how he met his wife after the war when he went to fight for Israel, had previously served in the Polish and Russian Red Army to avenge his family; he admits he got tired of the constant warfare in Israel and moved to Mexico City in 1957, near his sister; decided to move to El Paso, TX in 1979, is now a U.S. citizen; he talks about his experiences fighting in the war and the search for his family, explains that collaborators were hated worse than the Germans; he says he wrote his book for his sons and grandchildren, happy he got to continue his family name; he relays his fear that youth today do not know about the evils of the past and that they still exist in the world today. Mr. Kotkowski concludes by describing material in his book, how he got it published through a Baptist printing company in El Paso; he states most accounts of the Holocaust are about the concentration camps, his is about the Jews that fought with the Russians against the Germans.

Length of interview 42 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a