

Excerpts of passages which refer to the DP Hospital St. Ottilien

**Tape 1:**

(Rabbi Klausner tells how he arrived as Jewish army chaplain to Dachau and noticed that the camp survivors most of all want to associate again with their relatives. So he started to draw up lists with the names of survivors).

(page 11) "... And the first book that I published in 45 in June contained the camps that I was familiar with. Dachau, Freimann, Landsberg, Schleissheim, Pending, St. Ottilien, Neustaedl, Feldafing, Pasing, Buchberg, Mittenwald, Garmisch. These were the first group of camps, if you want to call them camps (page 12), they weren't all camps. St. Ottilien wasn't a camp, it was a hospital, and that's a story in itself. In fact, the first meeting we had, and that was already with the Brigade people, that was with Hetter Ishai and Ben-Asher present, took place at St. Ottilien. This was a meeting at which certain questions were asked and there was quite an ideological debate all the time, but that was actually the first place. Anyway, these lists were drawn up and they were published, and of course, just stating the fact is misstating the historical moment: how it was published, where we got the printer to do it, when it was illegal to print, how we paid for it, how we got the paper, all these things of course became stories in themselves. It so happened that after I had been in Dachau for a while, I became an important figure in Dachau. Dachau was a large military installation. ... I became an important figure in the sense that whatever I wanted was given to me. ... (page 13) ... The first part of our job was to make up these lists, and that became part of the work. The second job that I reorganized was that we could not continue to keep the people in Dachau behind barbed wire, and that there were many sick people throughout the area and so I had the thought that it would be best if we could gather these sick people together in our own hospitals. At this point, we would have to tell the story of St. Ottilien and to tell the story of St. Ottilien, we have to bring in a person by the name of Zalman Grinberg. Unfortunately, Zalman is institutionalized now, I don't know whether you know that."

"This was a theory like that said that who could have survived that."

"Well, that's my theory. In other words, after I had come to know the picture quite well, I had to ask – well, who survived? ..."

"You wanted to say how you moved these people to St. Ottilien."

(page 14) "Oh yes. That was the second of the problems. The first was of course to get the lists together and I'm not telling you of the dramatic moments that we experienced in bringing the lists together. The next problem I set for myself was not to get the people to St. Ottilien, but to see if we could bring them together in our own hospitals. I was terribly disturbed by barbed wire. Even Dachau, which was the best of the installations at the time because of the care that the people were given was the finest under the circumstances – not that it was good, but it was the finest under the circumstances – was an enclosure. Barbed wire. And I just couldn't stand seeing these people behind barbed wire. And I felt that the sick people should be taken to installations that were real hospitals, with pass, and fresh air and good food that was proper and so forth. Now in the meantime I met Grinberg and I was impressed by him and we became very good friends and we remained good friends for years. He was an exceptional man; he was a doctor. A number of other doctors who survived were not interested in helping the D.P.s. Their attitude was – they had suffered enough and they had not developed in themselves a feeling to help others. And this too, of course, fits in with my theory about those who survived. But Zalman, strangely enough, was a rare personality, and his story is told in this little pamphlet, so I am not going to go into it except to say that he started what later became St. Ottilien

Hospital. He started with a group of people who were in a train being moved from the Kaufering area of camps into the interior, by the Germans.”

“Oh yes, I know that story, the major and the Americans.”

“So, you know the story. There was an officer involved, a man by the name of Hyman, who was not Jewish. I mention that because the name may sound Jewish and you were to write the story you’ve got to give proper credit to all the American officers and this wasn’t a Jewish undertaking in the sense that only Jews were concerned... (page 15) Hyman was the first man on the scene and he gave Grinberg the first bit of help that he needed and had threatened the Germans that, if they didn’t help him, he would be back. Well, I met Grinberg, and when I met him of course he had his little group in this hospital. Now this hospital was a Catholic monastery to begin with, and what had happened was that the Wehrmacht had taken over the whole monastery as a hospital and the clergy had been dispersed. There were no clergymen there – even the big cathedral was used as a hospital. And so, actually, it was still a German hospital, only Grinberg had a little section in the hospital, and the doctors, beside Grinberg, or maybe another one perhaps a third, were German doctors.”

“Hungaria, I understand. Hungarian Nazis, actually.”

“Again, this is a detail I’m not familiar with. But anyway, when I became aware of the St. Ottilien situation, it occurred to me that we could bring the patients from Dachau up to St. Ottilien. I discussed this with Grinberg, and he thought this would be a wonderful idea. But we had the problem, first of all, of the Germans there. We had to get rid of them. Well, this was not too difficult, because there were what were called medical collecting companies of the U.S. Army, who were in charge of the German hospitals, that is military hospitals, and their job was to make sure that those who were recuperating would be taken from the hospitals and into these compounds or prisons. And so all we had to do was to get in touch with the medical collecting company and have them moved, or we could check ourselves to find out if these men could be moved.”

## **Tape 2:**

(page 1) So here we were, we had this place, St. Ottilien. Grinberg was there, and he was not only willing but anxious to take all the patients in that would be brought to him. We had the problem of getting rid of the Germans, but then how do you get the patients? After all, you can’t walk into Dachau or any other such large institution and take patients out. In the meantime, something else happened. I came across a hospital in Gauting. Now I had developed a technique, or a practice. Whenever I was travelling in an area and I would see a sign with anything that had to do with military installations or hospitals, I would go and inquire. I came to this place in Gauting, and I found that it was a tuberculosis hospital, a very fine hospital, and again – to think there were about thousand beds there – and it was filled with Wehrmacht people, but there were a few D.P.s that somehow got into this place. ... Well, one day I walked into the medical officer of Dachau ... and I simply asked him if he could give me all the tuberculosis cases in Dachau. ... (page 2) A couple of days later, he sent for me and he said to me: “Are you serious about this tuberculosis business?” I said: “Yes, I would take them to a hospital – a good one.” And he said: “May I see it?” I said: “Sure!” We walked over to a map, and I showed him where it was and he said: “Fine. I’ll send for you.” A day or two later, he again sent for me and said to me: “You can have all the patients.” And then went on to say further that any supplies that I would need – X-ray equipment and so forth, to be sure to come to him. I was then assigned ambulance corps, and I began to transfer the TBs to Gauting. But instead of transferring only TBs to Gauting, I also decided that I would start taking our patients and send them to St. Ottilien and I would force the issue there by crowding the place. And then I could move the Germans out, so each morning, I would get the ambulance and would take half the ambulances for the TB patients and half for St. Ottilien. I had a lot of trouble getting the Jews to go.”

“They didn’t want to go?”

“Oh, no. They didn’t want to go. This was a problem we always had.”

“They didn’t want to leave the place where they were?”

“Yes. There was always the problem of sending a delegation up to see what the new place was like and so forth, and of course I was new at all this and I became desperate at times. Here I felt that I wanted to help people and it was so difficult to help them. But that’s a lesson you learn. Well, anyway, the movements began and began to move the sick people out of Dachau. In the meantime, of course, as I became more of a figure in the complex, and people learned about it from all over, news was always being brought to me by different army officers and so forth – anyway that happened – the entire area, word would be brought to me. Problems started to appear – and I would be called for. And so I had two operations working now: the lists of names, and now the organizing of hospitals. And then I found myself into political situations which involved differences between camp people and Army representatives. This became the third area in which I operated. ... (page 8) Neu Freimann camp was a kind of collecting camp, in which they may have been ten different groups represented, among which were twelve to thirteen hundred Jews. In fact, I met Grinberg there the first time, it was a kind of celebration, and he was the speaker there... (page 16) ... The hospitals worked out very well in the sense that in a short time I was able to get every conceivable sick Jew that I could find in any place in a hospital of our own...”

### **Tape 3:**

(page 7 – Rabbi Klausner explains the beginnings of the Central committee) “... What was happening at this time was that a kind of a power-struggle developed between the group that was running the camp at (page 8) Landsberg and the people who were in power, in the Central Committee. The group at Landsberg happened to be a very fine group. Now, incidentally, the leadership of Jews in Germany fell into the hands of the Lithuanians. And this later was resented by the others, but not by the people generally, but by the Polish Jews, for example, who wanted positions of leadership. But it seems that the Lithuanians as a people were more effective, were better people, and were better capable of running the organizations, and so they came into leadership. In fact, I had an argument once with Zalman Grinberg when it was reported to me that there was not a single Polish doctor on the staff in St. Ottilien. And when I took it up with him, he indicated that there wasn’t, and he would be happy to put on a Polish doctor if I would recommend one. Well, I did recommend one, the man who brought the matter to my attention, and we put him on the staff only to learn a month or two later that he wasn’t a qualified doctor, and he had to be thrown out. This group at Landsberg took issue with the leadership, and so, at the elections that took place, the Landsberg group fought for seats. Now of course another issue that was involved was Zionism, and Zionism was the arguing point. The people who were serving on the committee, for the most part were accused of being non-Zionists and thieves. Of course, this accusation of theft, and misusing of rations and so forth, this continued right through the entire period, and no matter which group came in, they were always accused of allocating for themselves materials and foods and so forth which rightly didn’t belong to them. But this is another matter. Then the fight settled down between Gringauz of Landsberg and Grinberg of St. Ottilien. Grinberg was the chairman. And another man who figured in this was Levi Shalit. Gringauz disliked Shalit intensely. Gringauz thought of himself as a journalist also, and wrote these very lengthy articles, and Landsberg actually organized a newspaper of its own and tried to compete with Unser Weg. And they did a good job on the newspaper at Landsberg. In other words, the camp at Landsberg became a very effective Jewish camp. It became the most effective (page 9) in terms of leadership and the things they did, and this struggle went on and I stood in defense of Grinberg and Shalit. I would not permit them to be destroyed in this procedure. And I was able to save the situation, and Grinberg remained the president of the Central Committee, and Gringauz head of the Rat, or the Board. This was the establishment of a new position, and later Shalit, whom he tried to oust from the leadership of Unser Weg, remained editor of the paper. The other members of the committee were thrown out, and strangely enough, they then became active in the Munich committee, which was one of the local

committee that was organized thereafter and continued to work there, for the most part. Many of the Landsberg people now came in and served on the committee ...”

**Tape 4:**

(page 1: Rabbi Klausner speaks about the organized youth groups which arrived from Eastern Europe and some problems they caused) “... I also had similar situations with other groups, and so it was a rather disturbing situation. One little accident that I recall was a group of youngsters that came to Germany, and we finally put them up on the top floor of the St. Ottilien Hospital and actually we had by force to get rid of the leaders. On one occasion, they organized a march, it was either Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur, to march past the synagogue, to ridicule the people who were in at service. We had just brought them in, and they had taken one of the hospital rooms and used it for services. Then they insisted that were not able to separate the boys and the girls. No, we had no reason to feel that the young people coming in were any better actually in terms of their ability to represent themselves with anyone else...”