Well, what did you say to Dr. Pollack?

He asked me what happened to those people who were deported at that time when I was deported.

And those were 60,000 people from Slovakia.

And I told him that from those 60,000 people, there are alive 67 men and 400 women, about 400 women.

The men's number I knew exactly.

And he asked me where is the rest.

And I told him that the rest is dead.

And he asked me what he can do for me now.
And I told him that I need immediately a contact with representatives of the Jewish organization.

And this was obvious for what.

And he said that he can arrange that contact within 24 hours.

And I stayed in Čadca for the night.

And the next day, on Tuesday, on his instruction, accompanied by him, he went to the train separately.

And Wetzler and I followed him.

We boarded the train and traveled to Žilina without any documents, the first time that I used civil transportation again.
And in Žilina, on a particular place, 

we met immediately a man called Andre Steiner, whose name I knew even before as an important member of the Jewish council.

In my naivete I thought that this is the right address to start with.

I had the program to alarm the Jewish organizations and to alarm all other organizations to which I can find contact and which are known for their anti Nazi attitude.

But I started with those who are mostly concerned with what was happening in Auschwitz.
You mean the Jews?

The Jews.

OK, can you describe the first meeting with the representatives of the Jewish organization?

Well--

There must have been something.

We met in a park in Žilina.

He was supposed to recognize us.

We were, with Fred Wetzler, enjoying this very much,

being back in our native country.

And we had a bottle of slivovitz already opened, which looked very innocuous, you see.
It attracted so much attention to be with a bottle of slivovitz in the park in Žilina that the police would look at other side.

And this man, Steiner, came and took us immediately to a house in which the Jewish--

which belonged to the Jewish headquarters,

to the so-called Council of Jews of Slovakia.

And immediately there were present

the head of that council, Dr. Oskar Neumann, Mr. Engineer Oskar Krasnansky Mr. Steiner, and a number of other persons, who were in the Jewish Council, active.
They came over from Bratislava on a telephone call.

And so we met.

OK, and what happened?

Did they ask questions?

Well, the first thing was--

Did you [INAUDIBLE]?

Of course, they asked questions.

And for them, the first thing was to establish our identity.

And this was the first surprise for me.

Because they immediately could produce my card with my photograph.

In other words, they had a file of all Jews who were deported in 1942 because they have
organized those deportations.

They had a book in which each person who was deported was recorded by the day on which he was deported.

And in this book there was written who was deported with them, all members of the transport.

And because they were the only ones who could-- because once I have been labeled as a Jew in Slovakia, I had the right to deal with the Slovak authorities only through the Jewish Council services.

Therefore, my personal documents were issued by the Jewish Council before I left, or was taken against my goodwill,
to the deportation places in Poland or upper Silesia.

And the copies were in their hands.

So they came up with a list of transports

and with my personal documents, copies

of my personal documents, and with my picture on it.

I was a bit changed because some time elapsed since that,

but they could recognize me.

And they could establish that both me and Wetzler were deported on that day on which we were stating that we were deported.

Did you show them your Auschwitz tattoo?

Yes, among other things.
But I think that this was a joke in Auschwitz.

Because in Auschwitz sometimes, people were speaking what would happen if the message would be brought out.

They said, well knowing the Jews, that's what they would admire most, the number.

They would say, what a horrible thing to put numbers on people, like upon cattle.

And the big joke was what approximately the synagogue would say to that.

I mean, obviously, the people were dead.

Who cares was there numbers on their hands.
But, of course, I had to show the number.

And then they checked on my knowledge of who was in the transport.

This was-- how was it started?

That's how it started.

Number one, what are our names.

Number two--

I understand that, before you starting to explain what happened.

Oh, no, there was some talking, polite.

What have you got to say?

And in rough words we said something about gas chambers,
Did they know?

Well, they didn't say they know and they didn't say they don't know.

They listened to what I have said.

What they knew, they didn't tell me.

But from how they behaved, I would say that they didn't know anything for sure.

This is probably true.

That they didn't know for sure?

Yes.

You see, it is certainly true.
Because what people don’t want to know, they don’t know.

They organized the deportation of the Jewish community from Slovakia, which was 90,000 people.

And they organized the deportation of 60,000. That's, of that 60,000, 30,000 died in Auschwitz.

And from that place, when I was talking to the gentleman, with those gentleman, to Auschwitz was a distance of 70 kilometers.

And I could cover this distance without much trouble.

Also, the whole German Reich was mobilized at that time.

to get hold of Wetzler and me with an international warrant.

We still managed to make that trip from Auschwitz to Žilina.
If they didn't know, well, it was obvious they didn't want to know.

Because if I could make the trip from Auschwitz to Žilina,

anybody could have made the same trip from Žilina to Auschwitz and to look.

Therefore, this question, what they knew and what they didn't know, I do not consider so important.

The question is, what did they want to know?

Well, how did it go?

And how long lasted your report?

For how long did you talk with them?
Because of us trying
to say not only what
happened to the Slovak Jews,
but about the happenings
in Auschwitz in general,
we presented a statistic
about all transport which
arrived from 1942 to 1944
in Auschwitz, which was a
statistic on approximately
30 printed pages.

They took us, separated
Wetzler and me.

You mean 30 printed pages--
you came with the pages?

No.

Everything was in our head.

Yes.
Now they first separated us.

When we put it out from the head, it amounted-- when we sort of said what we had in our head, and it was typed, it was about 30 pages.

Mm-hmm.

Or 60 pages if we double-spaced it.

Doesn't matter.

But we managed in that space to present the reality of Auschwitz from 1942 to 1944.

And we did it separately.

They brought lawyers from Bratislava, Jewish lawyers, who claimed to be experts in criminal investigations.
It's not true.

I don't believe you.

It's really true?

Expert in criminal investigations?

Well, they were Jewish lawyers who

had experience in questioning a person who might say

[INAUDIBLE], if you want to have exactly.

So the first thing they did was to question Wetzler and me separately and then to compare the statements.

And it was soon obvious said either we are saying the truth or we must be extraordinarily able for being such liars.

And because our social background was by far not
as good as theirs, after
all we were selected

198
00:10:32,490 --> 00:10:35,310
for the deportation,
not them, they

199
00:10:35,310 --> 00:10:39,180
would not believe that our
abilities can be any good.

200
00:10:39,180 --> 00:10:40,500
So we must say the truth.

201
00:10:40,500 --> 00:10:43,730

202
00:10:43,730 --> 00:10:47,450
They accepted it as truth
what we were saying.

203
00:10:47,450 --> 00:10:50,945
But how-- I would like to know
how did they behave to what

204
00:10:50,945 --> 00:10:51,940
you--

205
00:10:51,940 --> 00:10:54,940
first of all, were they
shocked by what you say?

206
00:10:54,940 --> 00:10:56,520
Were they friendly?

207
00:10:56,520 --> 00:10:58,480
Are they compassioned?

208
00:10:58,480 --> 00:11:01,840
Or were they-- look at
it like investigators,

209
00:11:01,840 --> 00:11:04,690
cold investigators?
My attitude was that it is better for me--

[INAUDIBLE]

New York, (film slating)

Yes, but how did they react to what you say?

There was a shock?

Did the show sympathy or compassion?

This I would like to know.

Because I cannot believe that they were ice cold, no?

No.

No, they were very excited about it.

They showed great interest.
And I must say that they were to us perfectly polite.

Compassion-- I think that they have got the message--

New York, (film slating)

If they were compassionate, I would--

Moved?

Moved-- they were excited.

The human reactions for me of civilians were in general a bit humorous at that time.

Because I have been moving for the past two years in a completely different set of values.
Compassion was something which, in Auschwitz,

when you wanted to survive was the first thing we had to control.

And a compassion of a bunch of fat Jewish administrators, lawyers, and operators was the last thing we needed.

But they were a bit patronizing, which rubbed Fred Wetzler the wrong way.

My opinion was to take it with a bit of humor.

And so, well, the relationship started to develop in a friendly atmosphere.

To be?

A friendly atmosphere.
What I tried to create was a friendly working atmosphere.

I knew we have to do a work with them.

We have to get through not only the message,

but the consequences as far as the Hungarian Jews is concerned, and to make them feel that we have got nothing to say but the truth.

All right, but my position is, following when you described the arrival of the transport, the gas chamber and so on, even if they were fat, the Jewish administrators,

I would like to know how did they react.

Well, the leading personalities of them, they kept appearances.
They reacted in a controlled way.

There were no scenes.

What do you call a controlled way?

They asked matter-of-fact questions.

Only?

Yes.

They didn't cry or anything like that.

There were lawyers among them.

There were more than 12 people.

They were more busy on checking the data and how the data of Wetzler and me coincide.

It was a working atmosphere.
It sort of—we sometimes were a bit rubbed against our skin,
because after two years of Auschwitz,
I must say that our standards of what we expect in the behavior of people were a bit different from theirs at that time.
But I don't think that there was anything but a working atmosphere for the first two days.
How long did it last?
Well, it lasted—in the first day,
we did the main part of the work.
And on the second day, we finished the work.
Because in the first days, the thing was dictated.
It was on 25 September--

And on the next day, on 26th April, in the evening, they departed in a hurry, all of them, and left us two alone in that house with a maid.
And with some of their wives taking care of us.

This means we were supplied with excellent food and treated like VIPs, I mean, in a very civilized way.

And soon afterwards, of course, something unpleasant there.

That the information we have is absolutely important
for the information of the Hungarian Jews.

That to the best of our knowledge, and we trusted our knowledge is quite waterproof,

the imminent execution of a million Jews is impending,

that everything is prepared that it can start any day.

And that we want assurances that this information is passed on.

And we were given the assurances by Dr. Neumann, by Mr. Krasnansky, by Mr. Steiner,

and by everybody who was there.

Thee were at least 12 people.

You were given the assurance that the information

would be passed on?
Yes.

And that was the first time I heard the name of Dr. Kasztner.

Because I never heard that name before.

He was in Hungary.

Dr. Kasztner’s name was mentioned, the first time it came to my notice that anybody of that name exists.

I knew the members of the Jewish Council from before the time of my deportation.
Of the Slovak Council?

321
00:17:10,390 --> 00:17:11,848
Of the Slovak Jewish Council, but I

322
00:17:11,848 --> 00:17:14,829
didn't know nothing about the Hungarian Jewish Council.

323
00:17:14,829 --> 00:17:16,540
And I have been given to understand

324
00:17:16,540 --> 00:17:19,930
that Dr. Kasztner is an influential personality there.

325
00:17:19,930 --> 00:17:23,020
That because of my and Wetzler's arrival,

326
00:17:23,020 --> 00:17:25,990
he is now already in Bratislava.

327
00:17:25,990 --> 00:17:30,470
And they are now going to give him the information

328
00:17:30,470 --> 00:17:31,550
immediately.

329
00:17:31,550 --> 00:17:36,160
And for his convenience, the information, the protocol,

330
00:17:36,160 --> 00:17:38,950
the Auschwitz report has been translated

331
00:17:38,950 --> 00:17:42,640
from Slovak, in which it was originally conceived,

332
00:17:42,640 --> 00:17:46,800
into Hungarian and German on the spot.

333  
00:17:46,800 --> 00:17:48,460
And secretaries were working.

334  
00:17:48,460 --> 00:17:51,070
And I could see the Hungarian and German translations still

335  
00:17:51,070 --> 00:17:52,810
in Žilina.

336  
00:17:52,810 --> 00:17:56,510
There were a number of girls typing, two or three.

337  
00:17:56,510 --> 00:18:01,140
They were wives of those gentlemen who were typing.

338  
00:18:01,140 --> 00:18:04,970
It is in this report that you drew already

339  
00:18:04,970 --> 00:18:06,730
the map of Auschwitz?

340  
00:18:06,730 --> 00:18:08,290
Everything was drawn.

341  
00:18:08,290 --> 00:18:10,330
The map of Auschwitz was there.

342  
00:18:10,330 --> 00:18:12,390
What I'm missing from the report now--

343  
00:18:12,390 --> 00:18:13,330
In the first two days?

344  
00:18:13,330 --> 00:18:14,440
Yes.
Everything was just as the report has been recovered recently.

What I'm missing from the report are our warnings about the imminent deportation of Hungarian Jews.

And this was reiterated again and again by both of us, by Wetzler and myself.

And we were told, if I remember well,

that it is good for the veracity of the report that we do not prophesize the future,

but say only what we know.

They said this in proper words?

I wouldn't guarantee that those were their words,
but this was the sense of it.

358
00:19:05,020 --> 00:19:10,360
In other words, the authenticity of the report

359
00:19:10,360 --> 00:19:13,600
would be somehow weakened if we would speak about anything we don't know from first hand.

360
00:19:13,600 --> 00:19:15,220

361
00:19:15,220 --> 00:19:18,230

362
00:19:18,230 --> 00:19:20,920
In other words, we should limit ourselves to things which happened, not which will happen.

363
00:19:20,920 --> 00:19:25,360
which happened, not which will happen.

364
00:19:25,360 --> 00:19:30,490
We, of course, explained exactly that the machinery of murder

365
00:19:30,490 --> 00:19:34,030
in Auschwitz is based on the principle of no resistance

366
00:19:34,030 --> 00:19:37,840
and tricking of the victims into the gas chamber.

367
00:19:37,840 --> 00:19:42,500
And that we consider it as of utter importance

368
00:19:42,500 --> 00:19:48,340
that the content of that report should be spread among those,

369
00:19:48,340 --> 00:19:51,970
this part of the Hungarian population, which

00:19:51,970 --> 00:19:56,410
is being immediately threatened by execution.

00:19:56,410 --> 00:20:01,570
This means the Hungarian Jews, or Jewish Hungarians,

00:20:01,570 --> 00:20:04,030
whatever you like.

00:20:04,030 --> 00:20:06,490
Because among them, there were all types, who

00:20:06,490 --> 00:20:08,350
preferred one way or another.

00:20:08,350 --> 00:20:11,980
As for myself as concerned, I wouldn't care about it at all.

00:20:11,980 --> 00:20:15,310
Because for me, they were just normal human beings,

00:20:15,310 --> 00:20:16,870
perhaps a bit odd sometimes.

00:20:16,870 --> 00:20:19,930
But we are all odd.

00:20:19,930 --> 00:20:23,330
[INAUDIBLE]

00:20:23,330 --> 00:20:24,580
This was of little importance.

00:20:24,580 --> 00:20:27,122
The importance was that there was a million people threatened
immediately with death.

And they explained to us that Dr. Kasztner is not just anybody, that he is one of the great Jewish leaders.

But did you ask to meet him when they gave you the name?

They said that this is not necessary for us.

And they made it plenty clear that our job has been done.

And now what we have to do is to enjoy ourselves.

We will be supplied with money, with nice clothes, and we should play the gentlemen now.

Because we had bad times and we should now enjoy ourselves.

We deserve it, they said.

But--
It was very kind.

In the report--

Yes.

--you made, did you recommend the precise, specific things to be done?

Many things have been asked and refused to be put into the report on the grounds that the report should contain factual matter, not speculations, factual matter.

But naturally, the conditions were discussed.

We explained the principle that the machinery can work only if the
victims believe that nothing

is going to happen
to them which is

outside the international law.

That they might
be badly treated,

that they might get
bad accommodation,

that they might have a
lack of coffeehouses,

they all knew when
they went there.

But that they were
going to be gassed,

or that their children
are going to be gassed,

or their mothers are going to
be gassed, they did not suspect.

And I explained
to them that this

lack of knowledge,
this trust into values
in which they grew up, that you can't execute a person--

Well, what happened afterwards, after they left you?

They assured us that Kasztner is an extremely intelligent and responsible person.

That they listened to our advice,

but the decisions will be discussed now.

And that it is sort of not suitable for people of our standing to say what should be done on a grand scale of politics.

They will decide what should be published and when.
They will do everything what is in their possibility to save those who are threatened. They assured me that. That the information will be given to Kasztner on the same day that Kasztner is in Bratislava, so that his movement from Hungary to Slovakia doesn't cause too much--any trouble, practically. And we should wait for further developments meanwhile in Žilina. They will contact us again. And they left us there in a comfortable place without shoes. Perfectly well dressed.
They didn't give us shoes for some reason.

No shoes.

No shoes.

No shoes.

They said that there are no shoes.

We don't have to go out.

The shoes might induce us going out.

And that's now dangerous for us, they said.

I mean, they thought that the shoes will prevent us escaping.

As I say, it's a humorous attitude in their minds.

In any case, we accepted that this is a matter of discipline.

And we were really fed excellently.
They several times asked us if we are missing anything.

We said that we are missing only women.

So the situation was satisfactory.

And we were satisfied that things are all [INAUDIBLE]..

At the end of the week, the cleaning woman, who was a Jewish lady, was coming to clean up the mess after us.

There were bottles around, things like that.

And she was crying.

So we were investigating why she's crying, if we didn't behave well or something like that.
And she said, oh, no, she has got no objections against us.

We are very nice to her.

And generally, we do behave, she said.

But there is a horrible thing happening.

Two transports with Hungarian Jews passed through Žilina.

And the gentleman from the Jewish Council were here back in Žilina.

And they were on the station because they were giving them, as usually, sandwiches and milk for the children, or something like that, giving them some help on the road.

But the gentleman asked her, very strictly, not to tell us about this because it would upset us.
And that they shouldn't be upset by anything.

We should enjoy ourselves.

And that she, actually, is guilty by saying us.

But she said us.

And so we knew that the Hungarian aktion is starting to roll.

Yes, but as far as we know, the Hungarian transported started only in the second half of May.

Yes, since then I have repeated this statement several times to several historians, who quarreled with me about this and have thought, perhaps, I have been mistaken which two weeks.
And interestingly, in 1976 or 1977, a man called Biss, who was a member of Kasztner's entourage published his memoirs. Under a sensational title about-- I don't know what it-- Yes. You know? We know this. The End of the Final Solution, or something like that. And in every book there are not only lies, there must be also a grain of truth. In that the grain of truth, he publishes
at the end of his book
an informed statistics

00:26:17,990 --> 00:26:19,430
about the Hungarian deportations.

00:26:19,430 --> 00:26:22,340
And he states that before the wave of deportations

00:26:22,340 --> 00:26:28,400
started, two small transports of mainly convicted Jews,

00:26:28,400 --> 00:26:31,220
convicts, from prisons, not from Jewish centers,

00:26:31,220 --> 00:26:36,860
were transported to Auschwitz via Slovakia in April 1944.

00:26:36,860 --> 00:26:40,850
So obviously, if one goes thoroughly

00:26:40,850 --> 00:26:42,233
into the history of those things,

00:26:42,233 --> 00:26:44,150
he will find the confirmation of [INAUDIBLE]..

00:26:44,150 --> 00:26:48,620
How do you explain the behaving of these people of the Slovak

00:26:48,620 --> 00:26:51,000
Jewish [INAUDIBLE]?

00:26:51,000 --> 00:26:54,380
Well, at that moment, it obviously
was above my comprehension.

And I didn't know, really, what to think of that.

I mean, they were geared to believing that we escaped from Auschwitz in order to get new clothes from them or something like that, perhaps.

Or perhaps their attitude towards us, which from the very start, once we ended the official work, was sort of patronizing rather than friendly.

We didn't know exactly what to think of it.

We have not been trusted to know what action is being taken on the basis of our information.
Yes, but they delivered your report.

Your report was sent abroad.

Yes, that's true.

But who was deported from abroad?

What do you mean by abroad?

Into the neutral Switzerland?

Or into England?

Or into America?

That was a good thing to transport--

to deliver that report there, if they did, which is a questionable thing,

as I will explain to you later.

How it get out is still
a questionable thing.

I can explain to you later what I did in order that it should get out.

But I was not worried, or Wetzler.

We were not worried that anybody is going to be deported to Auschwitz from England or from America.

And we didn't want to inveigle allies into a war against Germany.

It came to our knowledge that they already declared war on Germany.

We wanted that information to come in the first hand
to those who were threatened immediately.

Because you can rely in the first hand in a dangerous situation on what you can do for yourself.

And then one can see what somebody else can do for you.

The whole Auschwitz experience taught us that the slaughterhouse functions on the basis of the ignorance of the victim.

To break this ignorance meant to break the slaughterhouse's machinery.

No, no, but it was my question, how
do you explain their behavior, which you told me out

of [INAUDIBLE],

this very strange

answer you give me about the money

It is a very good question.

And here, we are coming into a [INAUDIBLE]...

However, I cannot claim such a firm ground,

like when I claim facts about Auschwitz.

Because I will have--

those people did not leave any tape recordings.

And they made their dealings without the tape recordings.

We still have to find out what happened.

And it is not at all difficult to figure that out.
Let us take the whole situation.

That Jewish Council and members of the Jewish Council were all very established Zionists.

And they all were welcomed after the war in Israel.

And you talk about the people of Hungary.

Also from Slovakia.

Krasnansky, Neumann, all of them,

they were perfectly respected in the Zionist movement

until they lived, or some of them live even now.

The time is not so long as we think.
Let us see the situation through the eyes not of those who were saved, but through the eyes of those who died.

And perhaps, I might see through those eyes better because I was this time to die with them.

After all, I went with those in 1942 to Auschwitz who died.

It is sort of a freak accident that I didn't.

So I can imagine how they look at the situation and what happened.

In Slovakia, there were 90,000 Jews.

And those 90,000 Jews were one day deprived of the right to negotiate with the official authorities.
on the basis of the Nuremberg laws.

And then intermediary between the Jews

and the German authorities has been created.

Yes.

And this intermediary was a Jewish Council

which consisted of Zionists.

Of those Zionists who were approved both by the Zionist

organization and by the Nazis.

Those Zionists then were given the administrative task

of resettling people.

And drew up the lists of who is to be resettled when.

Yes, but on which grounds?
On which basis?

Well--

How did they choose?

Definitely, 60,000 were chosen not to stay in Slovakia.

And 30,000 were chosen to stay.

Who are those 30,000 had to be decided through the hands of the Jewish Council.

Because that was the only way by which a Jew had any sort of legal redress or rapport with the local situation.

I, obviously, was not among those 30,000.

I was among those 60,000 who went.
Mm-hmm.

I can't say that the Jewish Council saved me or anybody who went with me.

Excuse me, but most of the 30,000 were deported afterwards. They were deported in 1944.

Of those 60,000--

No, of the 30,000 which had been left.

Yes.