

1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:31,880

2
00:00:31,880 --> 00:00:32,880
Good afternoon.

3
00:00:32,880 --> 00:00:34,880
My name is Devorah Lichstein.

4
00:00:34,880 --> 00:00:36,620
And I'm a member
of the oral history

5
00:00:36,620 --> 00:00:38,660
project at Kean College.

6
00:00:38,660 --> 00:00:43,460
Assisting me at this interview
is Dr. Bernard Weinstein.

7
00:00:43,460 --> 00:00:48,380
I'd like to introduce Alice
Lefkovic, a Holocaust survivor.

8
00:00:48,380 --> 00:00:51,020

9
00:00:51,020 --> 00:00:54,360
When my children
were small and later,

10
00:00:54,360 --> 00:00:57,230
when they were seven
or eight years old,

11
00:00:57,230 --> 00:00:58,980
I struggled with a question.

12
00:00:58,980 --> 00:01:01,541
What can I tell them and how?

13

00:01:01,541 --> 00:01:03,050

And how much?

14

00:01:03,050 --> 00:01:04,400

And when?

15

00:01:04,400 --> 00:01:07,070

How not to frighten a child?

16

00:01:07,070 --> 00:01:11,870

How can I present that being a
Jew today for their generation

17

00:01:11,870 --> 00:01:17,450

is OK, and few decades
earlier the incomprehensible

18

00:01:17,450 --> 00:01:21,710

happened just
because we were Jews?

19

00:01:21,710 --> 00:01:26,150

How can I tell them that I
had a good childhood, which

20

00:01:26,150 --> 00:01:29,720

was followed by terror
in my teenage years?

21

00:01:29,720 --> 00:01:33,860

But our children
know because they

22

00:01:33,860 --> 00:01:37,880

hear some unbelievable
stories when guests come,

23

00:01:37,880 --> 00:01:40,030

relatives and friends.

24

00:01:40,030 --> 00:01:43,670

They sense that

we are different.

25

00:01:43,670 --> 00:01:46,820

Then all the other
people on our street,

26

00:01:46,820 --> 00:01:49,430

whether they are Jews
or Gentiles, they

27

00:01:49,430 --> 00:01:54,230

know that we went
through the Holocaust.

28

00:01:54,230 --> 00:01:57,380

I grew up in a small
town in Western Slovakia.

29

00:01:57,380 --> 00:02:01,700

The Jewish community was
small, about 30 families

30

00:02:01,700 --> 00:02:04,730

observing tradition,
well-integrated

31

00:02:04,730 --> 00:02:06,680

into local economy.

32

00:02:06,680 --> 00:02:11,180

Social relations were
good, but not intimate.

33

00:02:11,180 --> 00:02:15,380

Still, every family had
some good Gentile friends.

34

00:02:15,380 --> 00:02:18,220

Since there were few
Jews in our town,

35

00:02:18,220 --> 00:02:21,470

we were only two Jewish

girls in the class.

36

00:02:21,470 --> 00:02:24,840

My two best friends
were Gentile girls.

37

00:02:24,840 --> 00:02:28,910

And one of them was a
Protestant pastor's daughter.

38

00:02:28,910 --> 00:02:33,500

I visited at their
home, and they at our's.

39

00:02:33,500 --> 00:02:38,840

The friendships were seen
with approval by our parents.

40

00:02:38,840 --> 00:02:42,110

The weekends, especially
Saturday, Shabbat,

41

00:02:42,110 --> 00:02:45,470

we socialized with Jewish
kids and our parents

42

00:02:45,470 --> 00:02:48,200

with Jewish families.

43

00:02:48,200 --> 00:02:51,680

We and our parents spoke
the Slovak language,

44

00:02:51,680 --> 00:02:53,360

attending the state school.

45

00:02:53,360 --> 00:02:56,390

And we were patriots.

46

00:02:56,390 --> 00:03:01,250

In 1938, after the annexation
of Austria to Germany,

47

00:03:01,250 --> 00:03:06,320

people, and more so the
Jews, started to worry.

48

00:03:06,320 --> 00:03:10,280

Hitler's aggression and
threat to Czechoslovakia

49

00:03:10,280 --> 00:03:13,550

became a real in
our parents' minds.

50

00:03:13,550 --> 00:03:17,770

Vienna was only 100
kilometers away.

51

00:03:17,770 --> 00:03:20,580

And refugees arrived.

52

00:03:20,580 --> 00:03:25,370

Their stories of terror and of
persecution were unbelievable.

53

00:03:25,370 --> 00:03:28,450

And sometimes they
were questioned.

54

00:03:28,450 --> 00:03:31,340

Still, their frights from
Vienna was apparently

55

00:03:31,340 --> 00:03:35,045

evidence enough for those
who wanted to believe.

56

00:03:35,045 --> 00:03:38,990

57

00:03:38,990 --> 00:03:42,920

In 1938, after the
infamous Munich Agreement,

58

00:03:42,920 --> 00:03:45,350
Hitler marched into Sudeten.

59
00:03:45,350 --> 00:03:50,640
And in October '38, six
months later, in March '39,

60
00:03:50,640 --> 00:03:53,960
he occupied the Western
part of Czechoslovakia,

61
00:03:53,960 --> 00:03:57,590
incorporating into
the Third Reich

62
00:03:57,590 --> 00:04:00,680
under the name of Protectorate.

63
00:04:00,680 --> 00:04:03,980
The Eastern part of
Czechoslovakia, Slovakia,

64
00:04:03,980 --> 00:04:07,370
declared independence
with Hitler's approval

65
00:04:07,370 --> 00:04:11,660
and became his puppet state.

66
00:04:11,660 --> 00:04:17,339
I was 13 years old, and here
these were my teenage years.

67
00:04:17,339 --> 00:04:20,600
Beginning in 1939,
1940, new laws

68
00:04:20,600 --> 00:04:23,960
were introduced stripping
the Jewish population

69
00:04:23,960 --> 00:04:27,020
of their civil

rights, encroaching

70

00:04:27,020 --> 00:04:32,540

on economic activity,
children thrown out of school.

71

00:04:32,540 --> 00:04:34,700

In rapid succession,
confiscation

72

00:04:34,700 --> 00:04:37,880

of property, loss of jobs,
and personal assaults

73

00:04:37,880 --> 00:04:40,850

became our daily ordeal.

74

00:04:40,850 --> 00:04:41,885

In September '41--

75

00:04:41,885 --> 00:04:45,560

Can you describe some of the
assaults or some of the things

76

00:04:45,560 --> 00:04:49,690

that were done to you a
little bit more fully?

77

00:04:49,690 --> 00:04:53,990

78

00:04:53,990 --> 00:04:56,400

People took advantage.

79

00:04:56,400 --> 00:05:05,250

And if somebody had some
personal disagreements,

80

00:05:05,250 --> 00:05:09,330

they could intimidate.

81

00:05:09,330 --> 00:05:12,690

They could denounce.

82
00:05:12,690 --> 00:05:17,570
They could make an arrest of
people who really did nothing.

83
00:05:17,570 --> 00:05:19,950
It was just personal.

84
00:05:19,950 --> 00:05:27,720
The personal assaults were
that people were calling you

85
00:05:27,720 --> 00:05:30,090
names, that friends--

86
00:05:30,090 --> 00:05:34,480

87
00:05:34,480 --> 00:05:39,940
before, like I was telling, I
could visit non-Jewish homes.

88
00:05:39,940 --> 00:05:41,300
And they came to us.

89
00:05:41,300 --> 00:05:43,870
Now, I was a dirty Jew.

90
00:05:43,870 --> 00:05:46,530
To the very people that you
were the very friendliest with?

91
00:05:46,530 --> 00:05:47,572
To the very people, yeah.

92
00:05:47,572 --> 00:05:51,940
Well, let's say not my best
friends, but many others, yes.

93
00:05:51,940 --> 00:05:55,220
I was a dirty Jew.

94
00:05:55,220 --> 00:05:59,490
And we were respected
until that time.

95
00:05:59,490 --> 00:06:01,310
It was a public policy.

96
00:06:01,310 --> 00:06:03,530
And people agreed with it.

97
00:06:03,530 --> 00:06:06,308

98
00:06:06,308 --> 00:06:08,630
Yeah.

99
00:06:08,630 --> 00:06:12,590
In September 1941,
the Nuremberg Laws

100
00:06:12,590 --> 00:06:15,590
were introduced,
segregating the Jews

101
00:06:15,590 --> 00:06:18,500
into complete isolation,
which were followed

102
00:06:18,500 --> 00:06:21,350
by physical punishment.

103
00:06:21,350 --> 00:06:23,810
We eagerly followed the news.

104
00:06:23,810 --> 00:06:27,960
Every month and sometimes every
day, new decrees were issued.

105
00:06:27,960 --> 00:06:32,160
The Jews accepted these as
one would accept a blow.

106
00:06:32,160 --> 00:06:35,670
They bent over and continued.

107
00:06:35,670 --> 00:06:37,220
There was little anger.

108
00:06:37,220 --> 00:06:42,380
There was mostly fear and
disbelief, desperation.

109
00:06:42,380 --> 00:06:45,140
But apparently,
there was always hope

110
00:06:45,140 --> 00:06:46,970
that this has to come to an end.

111
00:06:46,970 --> 00:06:50,160

112
00:06:50,160 --> 00:06:54,310
The change in the
community was more painful.

113
00:06:54,310 --> 00:06:58,180
Because with every decree,
our isolation increased.

114
00:06:58,180 --> 00:07:02,110
We realized that we
are blemished only

115
00:07:02,110 --> 00:07:04,510
when our Gentile
neighbors in the community

116
00:07:04,510 --> 00:07:08,770
conveyed this message to us.

117
00:07:08,770 --> 00:07:11,110
Not the anti-Jewish

laws and decrees,

118

00:07:11,110 --> 00:07:14,350

but peoples' changed
attitude brought us

119

00:07:14,350 --> 00:07:16,180

to the realization of danger.

120

00:07:16,180 --> 00:07:18,950

121

00:07:18,950 --> 00:07:22,310

Sifting through memories,
my most traumatic experience

122

00:07:22,310 --> 00:07:26,960

was the day on a cloudied,
rainy, late afternoon

123

00:07:26,960 --> 00:07:32,760

in November 1940 just
before the Christmas season.

124

00:07:32,760 --> 00:07:36,180

Our store was crowded
with customers.

125

00:07:36,180 --> 00:07:40,340

The town [INAUDIBLE] stopped
before this show window with

126

00:07:40,340 --> 00:07:44,210

a pail of white paint and
started to write with large

127

00:07:44,210 --> 00:07:49,070

letters across the show
window, Jewish business,

128

00:07:49,070 --> 00:07:54,800

tu Ā½id in Slovak,
JĀ¼de in German.

129
00:07:54,800 --> 00:07:58,220
My parents and everybody
stared at the show window

130
00:07:58,220 --> 00:07:59,870
in disbelief.

131
00:07:59,870 --> 00:08:04,550
And God knows what
they thought or felt.

132
00:08:04,550 --> 00:08:09,930
Our customers started
to depart one by one.

133
00:08:09,930 --> 00:08:14,120
And a few were left inside,
their panic increased.

134
00:08:14,120 --> 00:08:19,840
And they hurried faster
and faster to get out.

135
00:08:19,840 --> 00:08:25,070
And we stood there in the
suddenly empty store, alone.

136
00:08:25,070 --> 00:08:28,880
It was a very frightening
message of what was to come.

137
00:08:28,880 --> 00:08:31,940

138
00:08:31,940 --> 00:08:34,909
What were some of your own
feelings during this time?

139
00:08:34,909 --> 00:08:37,309
You were in the store at
the time this happened.

140

00:08:37,309 --> 00:08:40,499

What did you
yourself experience?

141

00:08:40,499 --> 00:08:42,720

Just fear.

142

00:08:42,720 --> 00:08:43,330

Fear.

143

00:08:43,330 --> 00:08:45,340

It was like on a boat.

144

00:08:45,340 --> 00:08:46,520

Everybody's running away.

145

00:08:46,520 --> 00:08:50,530

We are all alone on the boat.

146

00:08:50,530 --> 00:08:52,690

And your parents?

147

00:08:52,690 --> 00:08:55,210

How did they respond?

148

00:08:55,210 --> 00:08:56,110

I think the same.

149

00:08:56,110 --> 00:08:58,690

150

00:08:58,690 --> 00:09:01,330

Really when I'm thinking
so many years back,

151

00:09:01,330 --> 00:09:04,510

I feel that this is my
most traumatic experience.

152

00:09:04,510 --> 00:09:08,620

Because it looked

like this aloneness.

153

00:09:08,620 --> 00:09:11,610

154

00:09:11,610 --> 00:09:14,910

And probably it was so much
traumatic because later we

155

00:09:14,910 --> 00:09:16,600

were in real danger.

156

00:09:16,600 --> 00:09:18,460

Now, we were not in danger.

157

00:09:18,460 --> 00:09:24,780

It was just like a
preface of what is coming.

158

00:09:24,780 --> 00:09:28,590

It was a message of danger,
that you people are different.

159

00:09:28,590 --> 00:09:31,350

And later, we learned
that we are not human.

160

00:09:31,350 --> 00:09:34,980

That's why we can be destroyed.

161

00:09:34,980 --> 00:09:38,690

Up to that time, did you feel
that sense of isolation yet?

162

00:09:38,690 --> 00:09:40,260

No, no.

163

00:09:40,260 --> 00:09:43,060

You see, like I'm mentioning,
the laws were laws.

164

00:09:43,060 --> 00:09:44,970

This was on paper.

165
00:09:44,970 --> 00:09:46,290
And you accept.

166
00:09:46,290 --> 00:09:48,030
It's not you don't feel it.

167
00:09:48,030 --> 00:09:49,500
You just learn it.

168
00:09:49,500 --> 00:09:50,730
It's cognitive.

169
00:09:50,730 --> 00:09:52,080
It's not felt.

170
00:09:52,080 --> 00:09:57,000
But when people respond and
they convey the message,

171
00:09:57,000 --> 00:10:00,060
then it's felt.
It's not learned,

172
00:10:00,060 --> 00:10:03,570
like the law you study and
learn and know that this

173
00:10:03,570 --> 00:10:05,550
is prohibited beginning today.

174
00:10:05,550 --> 00:10:08,480

175
00:10:08,480 --> 00:10:13,001
So this was a tremendous impact,
the peoples' changed attitude.

176
00:10:13,001 --> 00:10:16,370

177

00:10:16,370 --> 00:10:19,340

After this, was there hostility?

178

00:10:19,340 --> 00:10:22,560

Was there more open
hostility to you?

179

00:10:22,560 --> 00:10:24,950

After that, also, we
avoided people, not only

180

00:10:24,950 --> 00:10:28,005

people avoided us because
you avoid problems.

181

00:10:28,005 --> 00:10:30,560

182

00:10:30,560 --> 00:10:31,960

On one hand, you were isolated.

183

00:10:31,960 --> 00:10:34,790

On another hand, we
isolated ourselves.

184

00:10:34,790 --> 00:10:38,250

How did your avoidance
manifest itself?

185

00:10:38,250 --> 00:10:45,950

That we did not
try to meet people,

186

00:10:45,950 --> 00:10:48,230

when you passed in
the street, you just

187

00:10:48,230 --> 00:10:50,330

did not look for the hello, yes?

188

00:10:50,330 --> 00:10:51,410

You looked away.

189

00:10:51,410 --> 00:10:54,650

Because you knew that, anyway,
those people will not see you.

190

00:10:54,650 --> 00:10:56,930

So you did not want
to be insulted.

191

00:10:56,930 --> 00:11:00,410

So you also avoided
to look at them.

192

00:11:00,410 --> 00:11:05,450

My husband is telling me that
best friend of his crossed

193

00:11:05,450 --> 00:11:08,090

the street not to meet him.

194

00:11:08,090 --> 00:11:10,460

This was his traumatic
experience, yes,

195

00:11:10,460 --> 00:11:12,920

somebody who was so friendly.

196

00:11:12,920 --> 00:11:15,900

How old were you
when this happened?

197

00:11:15,900 --> 00:11:18,050

Well, I am born in '26.

198

00:11:18,050 --> 00:11:23,810

So in 1940, I was 14.

199

00:11:23,810 --> 00:11:25,970

Was there any attempt
by the Jewish community

200

00:11:25,970 --> 00:11:30,165

to do something about
what was happening?

201
00:11:30,165 --> 00:11:32,100
The Jewish community
did nothing.

202
00:11:32,100 --> 00:11:34,310
We are already stripped
of civil rights.

203
00:11:34,310 --> 00:11:38,080
The Jewish community did
not have any power and any--

204
00:11:38,080 --> 00:11:41,013

205
00:11:41,013 --> 00:11:42,680
there was not attempt,
but there was not

206
00:11:42,680 --> 00:11:44,090
possibility to do anything.

207
00:11:44,090 --> 00:11:47,650

208
00:11:47,650 --> 00:11:50,140
These were laws
against the Jews,

209
00:11:50,140 --> 00:11:51,820
which everybody had to accept.

210
00:11:51,820 --> 00:11:52,930
There was not fight.

211
00:11:52,930 --> 00:11:56,990

212
00:11:56,990 --> 00:12:01,730

Even when things are happening
and we could not respond,

213
00:12:01,730 --> 00:12:09,080
we could only try to
deal the best we could.

214
00:12:09,080 --> 00:12:13,330
In our case, we were running
and hiding and escaping.

215
00:12:13,330 --> 00:12:16,420

216
00:12:16,420 --> 00:12:19,110
Were there any Jewish
leaders or rabbis

217
00:12:19,110 --> 00:12:22,170
that you looked towards
for comfort or--

218
00:12:22,170 --> 00:12:24,150
It was a small community, no.

219
00:12:24,150 --> 00:12:29,190
No, everybody was very
capable and very independent.

220
00:12:29,190 --> 00:12:34,590
And somehow families helped,
yes, when there was need,

221
00:12:34,590 --> 00:12:37,030
but they were in
the same situation.

222
00:12:37,030 --> 00:12:39,740

223
00:12:39,740 --> 00:12:46,960
Did you witness any acts of
courage or defiance of the laws

224
00:12:46,960 --> 00:12:50,930
on the part of the
indigenous population there,

225
00:12:50,930 --> 00:12:52,400
the Slovaksians?

226
00:12:52,400 --> 00:12:54,080
Yes, I did.

227
00:12:54,080 --> 00:12:55,190
They were hiding Jews.

228
00:12:55,190 --> 00:13:02,180

229
00:13:02,180 --> 00:13:04,160
They had to take great courage.

230
00:13:04,160 --> 00:13:07,850
And I witnessed
many very good acts.

231
00:13:07,850 --> 00:13:09,740
My mother stayed in hiding.

232
00:13:09,740 --> 00:13:13,340
She came to somebody
unannounced on Christmas Eve.

233
00:13:13,340 --> 00:13:15,650
I don't know why everything
happened on Christmas Eve

234
00:13:15,650 --> 00:13:16,850
to us.

235
00:13:16,850 --> 00:13:23,330
And it was in the town in a
village where she grew up.

236

00:13:23,330 --> 00:13:25,950

She was 20 years
away from this place,

237

00:13:25,950 --> 00:13:29,030

but the woman was friendly
with my grandfather.

238

00:13:29,030 --> 00:13:31,100

So mother knew about her.

239

00:13:31,100 --> 00:13:33,410

She used to be a
friend in school.

240

00:13:33,410 --> 00:13:39,470

So 20 years later, she
appears on her doorstep

241

00:13:39,470 --> 00:13:40,790

on a December night.

242

00:13:40,790 --> 00:13:43,160

This lady took
her into her house

243

00:13:43,160 --> 00:13:49,370

and kept her in a room, not
in a cellar, for five months.

244

00:13:49,370 --> 00:13:52,850

Her son was in the army.

245

00:13:52,850 --> 00:13:56,250

Her daughter-in-law
had two young children.

246

00:13:56,250 --> 00:13:59,950

The two young children, this was
very dangerous for the family.

247

00:13:59,950 --> 00:14:02,220

The young children can speak.

248

00:14:02,220 --> 00:14:05,120

The young children were
taught to call my mother

249

00:14:05,120 --> 00:14:08,980

aunt without a name.

250

00:14:08,980 --> 00:14:10,600

But the neighbors
could have asked,

251

00:14:10,600 --> 00:14:14,530

why is an aunt here
whom nobody ever sees?

252

00:14:14,530 --> 00:14:18,050

This was tremendous courage.

253

00:14:18,050 --> 00:14:21,670

Very little money the woman
was getting from my mother.

254

00:14:21,670 --> 00:14:25,060

She kept her.

255

00:14:25,060 --> 00:14:30,500

That was in 1944.

256

00:14:30,500 --> 00:14:33,100

Well, now, it's the
beginning of 1942.

257

00:14:33,100 --> 00:14:37,840

Rumors were going that young
men and women from 16 upwards

258

00:14:37,840 --> 00:14:42,370

will be deported
for work to Poland.

259

00:14:42,370 --> 00:14:48,040
In March 1942, the rumors
became a reality and the storm

260
00:14:48,040 --> 00:14:49,836
was here.

261
00:14:49,836 --> 00:14:53,590
The last week in March,
young and the very young boys

262
00:14:53,590 --> 00:14:59,480
and girls were ordered and taken
out of homes for deportation.

263
00:14:59,480 --> 00:15:01,500
So was Ruth's aunt.

264
00:15:01,500 --> 00:15:05,610
At the same time, Jews labeled
as political prisoners were

265
00:15:05,610 --> 00:15:08,250
also taking for deportation.

266
00:15:08,250 --> 00:15:13,260
My father was imprisoned
one year earlier, ostensibly

267
00:15:13,260 --> 00:15:16,230
as a part of the
Jewish persecution.

268
00:15:16,230 --> 00:15:19,140
So he was marked as political.

269
00:15:19,140 --> 00:15:21,900
He was taken and deported
in the first transport

270
00:15:21,900 --> 00:15:26,790
to leave Slovakia to
Poland, early, unexpectedly,

271
00:15:26,790 --> 00:15:31,750
and having no time to
realize what was happening.

272
00:15:31,750 --> 00:15:33,630
I was not at home.

273
00:15:33,630 --> 00:15:36,420
As the rumors about
deportation got started,

274
00:15:36,420 --> 00:15:40,590
I went to another town
to stay with my aunt.

275
00:15:40,590 --> 00:15:45,690
She had no grown children,
and her home was seen as safe.

276
00:15:45,690 --> 00:15:48,840
But when the
deportation in her town

277
00:15:48,840 --> 00:15:54,990
became reality few days later,
I was shipped to another place.

278
00:15:54,990 --> 00:15:59,190
At night, in a taxi
covered with blankets,

279
00:15:59,190 --> 00:16:05,070
I was sent to my uncle
with some preliminary plans

280
00:16:05,070 --> 00:16:09,180
to cross the border
into Hungary.

281
00:16:09,180 --> 00:16:13,040
The plans were preliminary
and many questions

282
00:16:13,040 --> 00:16:16,410
were in our hearts
and in our minds.

283
00:16:16,410 --> 00:16:21,690
My uncle stayed, at that
time, with his in-laws,

284
00:16:21,690 --> 00:16:23,940
who were the landowners.

285
00:16:23,940 --> 00:16:28,500
Their fields extended
near the Hungarian border.

286
00:16:28,500 --> 00:16:30,870
The next night, two
other teenage girls

287
00:16:30,870 --> 00:16:33,630
arrived at their
home to hide them

288
00:16:33,630 --> 00:16:35,200
and to help them
cross the border.

289
00:16:35,200 --> 00:16:38,130

290
00:16:38,130 --> 00:16:42,580
My uncle's brother-in-law, the
son of the house, Gabi Arei,

291
00:16:42,580 --> 00:16:46,770
knew the right people who could
guide us at night to cross

292
00:16:46,770 --> 00:16:47,805
the border into Hungary.

293

00:16:47,805 --> 00:16:50,430

294

00:16:50,430 --> 00:16:54,260

But the plan did not
work out without trouble.

295

00:16:54,260 --> 00:16:59,550

The next day, apparently
we were seen and denounced.

296

00:16:59,550 --> 00:17:02,330

On the second Seder
night, the police

297

00:17:02,330 --> 00:17:04,430

came to search the house.

298

00:17:04,430 --> 00:17:08,380

And we were put to
hide in the barn.

299

00:17:08,380 --> 00:17:14,599

When the police left, we came
out at night and, led by Gabi,

300

00:17:14,599 --> 00:17:18,140

we were running through
fields, jumping over fences,

301

00:17:18,140 --> 00:17:21,950

but at night, for
about two hours.

302

00:17:21,950 --> 00:17:26,930

We were hidden in their
farm laborer's house,

303

00:17:26,930 --> 00:17:30,590

which was two hours away.

304

00:17:30,590 --> 00:17:35,390

Here we stayed for three days,

three girls together awaiting

305

00:17:35,390 --> 00:17:39,050

as preparation for the
border crossing were made.

306

00:17:39,050 --> 00:17:42,320

It had to be a dark
moonless night.

307

00:17:42,320 --> 00:17:45,500

And other safety
measures had to be met.

308

00:17:45,500 --> 00:17:50,180

And a reliable guide
had to be found.

309

00:17:50,180 --> 00:17:54,590

Three days later, we crossed
the border with our guide

310

00:17:54,590 --> 00:17:59,060

and planned to take
a train to Budapest.

311

00:17:59,060 --> 00:18:01,700

I don't know why.

312

00:18:01,700 --> 00:18:06,200

In the border village, as we
crossed the border in Hungary,

313

00:18:06,200 --> 00:18:08,410

we mounted the train.

314

00:18:08,410 --> 00:18:13,930

And upon arrival
in a nearby town,

315

00:18:13,930 --> 00:18:18,410

we looked for a transfer
train to Budapest.

316
00:18:18,410 --> 00:18:22,700
Soiled from mud, sleepless and
exhausted after the crossing,

317
00:18:22,700 --> 00:18:25,110
we were caught at
the railroad station

318
00:18:25,110 --> 00:18:27,770
by the police who
were, by this time,

319
00:18:27,770 --> 00:18:33,610
aware about illegal
border crossings.

320
00:18:33,610 --> 00:18:38,020
Apparently, our arrest
was seen by somebody,

321
00:18:38,020 --> 00:18:42,030
by a man at the
railroad station.

322
00:18:42,030 --> 00:18:46,380
Few hours later, we were
released by the police.

323
00:18:46,380 --> 00:18:49,860
And our quote
"unknown benefactor"

324
00:18:49,860 --> 00:18:55,440
unquote was there to take
us to somebody's house.

325
00:18:55,440 --> 00:19:00,390
At this time, was it four
of you, your parents,

326
00:19:00,390 --> 00:19:01,930
your brother, and yourself?

327
00:19:01,930 --> 00:19:03,150
No, three girls.

328
00:19:03,150 --> 00:19:06,070

329
00:19:06,070 --> 00:19:10,930
When I came to my uncle,
who stayed with his in-laws,

330
00:19:10,930 --> 00:19:13,690
my father went with
the first transplant.

331
00:19:13,690 --> 00:19:16,960
He was so-called
political because he

332
00:19:16,960 --> 00:19:22,210
was imprisoned as part of the
persecution a year before.

333
00:19:22,210 --> 00:19:24,100
So because he was
marked as political,

334
00:19:24,100 --> 00:19:26,410
he went in the first transport.

335
00:19:26,410 --> 00:19:30,730
I was, from this on, bumped
from place to place, yes?

336
00:19:30,730 --> 00:19:36,130
I ended up-- they wanting
wanted to get rid of me.

337
00:19:36,130 --> 00:19:40,330
For my salvation, I ended
up with my uncle who

338

00:19:40,330 --> 00:19:43,150
stayed with his parents-in-law.

339
00:19:43,150 --> 00:19:46,880
Why did he stay with
his parents-in-law?

340
00:19:46,880 --> 00:19:51,370
He lost his job because he was
working for a company which

341
00:19:51,370 --> 00:19:54,910
was in the Western part
of Czechoslovakia, which

342
00:19:54,910 --> 00:19:56,980
was separated.

343
00:19:56,980 --> 00:19:58,870
So he was jobless.

344
00:19:58,870 --> 00:20:07,690
He had to go to work on a road
or some kind of labor squad.

345
00:20:07,690 --> 00:20:10,570
To avoid this, he went
to his father-in-law

346
00:20:10,570 --> 00:20:14,440
because his father-in-law
was a landowner still that he

347
00:20:14,440 --> 00:20:16,100
is working in the fields.

348
00:20:16,100 --> 00:20:20,410
That was as if he
is employed there.

349
00:20:20,410 --> 00:20:24,490
So my aunt shipped to
me to my father-in-law

350
00:20:24,490 --> 00:20:30,470
and because the location
was on Hungarian border.

351
00:20:30,470 --> 00:20:32,740
So it was a perfect
location to cross.

352
00:20:32,740 --> 00:20:35,770

353
00:20:35,770 --> 00:20:39,160
Somehow, it was felt, if you
cross the border, we were safe.

354
00:20:39,160 --> 00:20:41,020
We did not know
where we are going.

355
00:20:41,020 --> 00:20:42,640
I didn't not know the language.

356
00:20:42,640 --> 00:20:43,450
We are three girls.

357
00:20:43,450 --> 00:20:48,230
Two other girls came
because they hoped to cross.

358
00:20:48,230 --> 00:20:51,840
It was very distant family, so
there were some relationship.

359
00:20:51,840 --> 00:20:53,903
So they used this
family to help.

360
00:20:53,903 --> 00:20:56,070
Where were your mother and
your brother at the time?

361

00:20:56,070 --> 00:20:59,090

362

00:20:59,090 --> 00:21:00,490

My mother was still at home.

363

00:21:00,490 --> 00:21:02,570

They still did not
take the families.

364

00:21:02,570 --> 00:21:07,270

And my brother was on the
go, like I. It was better

365

00:21:07,270 --> 00:21:08,020

not to be at home.

366

00:21:08,020 --> 00:21:14,130

367

00:21:14,130 --> 00:21:18,360

OK, so this gentleman got there
when the police released us.

368

00:21:18,360 --> 00:21:22,110

He made the arrangement
in Hungary not knowing us,

369

00:21:22,110 --> 00:21:25,380

a man who saw the girls were
caught at the railroad station.

370

00:21:25,380 --> 00:21:29,420

371

00:21:29,420 --> 00:21:32,540

He was there and took
us to somebody's house.

372

00:21:32,540 --> 00:21:35,030

Here, in great haste,
two men negotiated

373

00:21:35,030 --> 00:21:38,570

how to help us in
further trip to Budapest.

374

00:21:38,570 --> 00:21:39,970

I spoke no Hungarian.

375

00:21:39,970 --> 00:21:42,740

And during these
encounters, I could only

376

00:21:42,740 --> 00:21:45,830

guess what is happening
around me and to me.

377

00:21:45,830 --> 00:21:50,210

My new friends, the two
sisters, could speak Hungarian,

378

00:21:50,210 --> 00:21:52,100

but apparently were
scared to death

379

00:21:52,100 --> 00:21:56,240

and seemingly did not know or
understand what's happening.

380

00:21:56,240 --> 00:21:59,090

When I learned the
geographical location

381

00:21:59,090 --> 00:22:02,480

of the town we were
in, I remembered

382

00:22:02,480 --> 00:22:06,260

that my uncle's
relative lives nearby.

383

00:22:06,260 --> 00:22:09,260

This was his wife's relative
really, his wife's sister.

384

00:22:09,260 --> 00:22:12,230

385

00:22:12,230 --> 00:22:14,510

The two sisters, since
they spoke Hungarian,

386

00:22:14,510 --> 00:22:16,640

were put on a train to Budapest.

387

00:22:16,640 --> 00:22:20,480

I was accompanied
by my unknown friend

388

00:22:20,480 --> 00:22:26,150

to this newly acquired relative
and was delivered at her home.

389

00:22:26,150 --> 00:22:31,580

When I rang the bell and Edith's
husband opened the door--

390

00:22:31,580 --> 00:22:32,990

he never saw me--

391

00:22:32,990 --> 00:22:38,270

and looked at me in my mother's
shoes and clothing, the color

392

00:22:38,270 --> 00:22:40,910

drained from his face.

393

00:22:40,910 --> 00:22:46,020

And clutching his stomach,
he rushed to the bathroom

394

00:22:46,020 --> 00:22:48,798

leaving me at the door.

395

00:22:48,798 --> 00:22:52,980

As Edith entered and
I introduced myself,

396
00:22:52,980 --> 00:22:57,210
she responded positively
with some humor

397
00:22:57,210 --> 00:23:01,440
asking dear God to assist
her with this new breed

398
00:23:01,440 --> 00:23:01,950
of refugees.

399
00:23:01,950 --> 00:23:04,570

400
00:23:04,570 --> 00:23:06,970
Another cousin of
hers arrived the day

401
00:23:06,970 --> 00:23:10,690
before crossing the border.

402
00:23:10,690 --> 00:23:14,440
So now, again, we were two.

403
00:23:14,440 --> 00:23:17,890
Saturday was chosen for
the trip to Budapest.

404
00:23:17,890 --> 00:23:24,030
She accompanied us because on
Saturday more people travel.

405
00:23:24,030 --> 00:23:27,610
And in a crowded train, it is
easier to mingle and disappear

406
00:23:27,610 --> 00:23:29,860
in the crowd.

407
00:23:29,860 --> 00:23:33,200
Our shoes and outfits

from crossing the border

408
00:23:33,200 --> 00:23:34,540
were packed.

409
00:23:34,540 --> 00:23:37,320
And we were dressed
up like young ladies

410
00:23:37,320 --> 00:23:40,075
with high heels taking
a trip to the capital.

411
00:23:40,075 --> 00:23:43,820

412
00:23:43,820 --> 00:23:47,650
These four, five
days, leaving home,

413
00:23:47,650 --> 00:23:52,230
travel at night, hiding and
fleeing, crossing the state

414
00:23:52,230 --> 00:23:57,180
border, finding myself
illegal in another country,

415
00:23:57,180 --> 00:24:01,590
not speaking the language,
being shipped like a hot potato

416
00:24:01,590 --> 00:24:04,830
while being helped by
strangers and family

417
00:24:04,830 --> 00:24:10,080
completed a maturation
process of about 10 years.

418
00:24:10,080 --> 00:24:12,190
All of this happened
within five days.

419
00:24:12,190 --> 00:24:19,120

420
00:24:19,120 --> 00:24:23,350
In Budapest, while really not
comprehending my situation,

421
00:24:23,350 --> 00:24:28,900
I first learned to handle
circumstances and situations

422
00:24:28,900 --> 00:24:31,420
as they occurred day by day.

423
00:24:31,420 --> 00:24:34,270
I was now 10 years older.

424
00:24:34,270 --> 00:24:39,700
I soon became independent
and responsible for myself.

425
00:24:39,700 --> 00:24:43,850
My uncle and my aunt
arrived four weeks later,

426
00:24:43,850 --> 00:24:49,290
after a terrible ordeal
being caught at the border.

427
00:24:49,290 --> 00:24:53,660
A few weeks later, my mother
and my brother also came.

428
00:24:53,660 --> 00:24:58,600
The rule was to
establish false identity,

429
00:24:58,600 --> 00:25:04,150
to have minimal contact with
each other, to live separately.

430

00:25:04,150 --> 00:25:09,120

If one is caught, others
should not be included.

431

00:25:09,120 --> 00:25:13,480

As I better learned to pay the
role of my changed identity,

432

00:25:13,480 --> 00:25:19,430

I worked full-time in the
quiet rented room in Budapest.

433

00:25:19,430 --> 00:25:23,150

Sometimes I receive subsidy,
as my family occasionally

434

00:25:23,150 --> 00:25:25,910

received some of our
funds through friends

435

00:25:25,910 --> 00:25:27,230

and clandestine channels.

436

00:25:27,230 --> 00:25:32,100

437

00:25:32,100 --> 00:25:34,590

And I made friends
with other young people

438

00:25:34,590 --> 00:25:38,160

in the streets of Budapest
who lived there illegally

439

00:25:38,160 --> 00:25:41,040

in similar circumstances.

440

00:25:41,040 --> 00:25:44,130

From time to time, people
were caught by the police

441

00:25:44,130 --> 00:25:49,920

and were returned to the Slovak

border or were incarcerated.

442

00:25:49,920 --> 00:25:52,570

The first six months
when the deportation

443

00:25:52,570 --> 00:25:55,830

was between March and
September from Slovakia.

444

00:25:55,830 --> 00:26:01,320

So if we were caught, we
were put back on some border.

445

00:26:01,320 --> 00:26:04,310

After the six months, the
deportation was stopped.

446

00:26:04,310 --> 00:26:07,480

So we were incarcerated
in Budapest.

447

00:26:07,480 --> 00:26:11,040

And some of my
friends really were.

448

00:26:11,040 --> 00:26:15,080

We lived all the time in fear.

449

00:26:15,080 --> 00:26:18,320

My mother did not do well
in this so suddenly changed

450

00:26:18,320 --> 00:26:19,700

situation.

451

00:26:19,700 --> 00:26:23,870

She could not master the
energy and the will needed.

452

00:26:23,870 --> 00:26:26,660

She became depressed
and very dependent

453

00:26:26,660 --> 00:26:30,530

on whoever was available,
mostly on my brother who

454

00:26:30,530 --> 00:26:31,430

was 19 years old.

455

00:26:31,430 --> 00:26:35,540

456

00:26:35,540 --> 00:26:37,490

The two years in Hungary passed.

457

00:26:37,490 --> 00:26:40,400

458

00:26:40,400 --> 00:26:47,170

In March 1944, the German
army marched into Hungary.

459

00:26:47,170 --> 00:26:51,290

And the SS made the
deportation of Jews

460

00:26:51,290 --> 00:26:56,690

from Hungary their
high priority.

461

00:26:56,690 --> 00:26:59,660

Concentration of the Jews
throughout the provincial towns

462

00:26:59,660 --> 00:27:02,050

and villages
started immediately.

463

00:27:02,050 --> 00:27:05,480

And three months
later, by June '44,

464

00:27:05,480 --> 00:27:08,360

about 500,000 Jews
were deported.

465
00:27:08,360 --> 00:27:11,030

466
00:27:11,030 --> 00:27:15,050
Meanwhile, Budapest was
excluded for deportation.

467
00:27:15,050 --> 00:27:18,290
Immediately, when the Germans--

468
00:27:18,290 --> 00:27:21,230
we had papers as Hungarian Jews.

469
00:27:21,230 --> 00:27:23,630
Immediately, when
the Germans entered,

470
00:27:23,630 --> 00:27:27,740
we had papers as
Hungarian non-Jews.

471
00:27:27,740 --> 00:27:31,280
Because we had some
experience by now.

472
00:27:31,280 --> 00:27:33,230
Our family and our
illegal friends

473
00:27:33,230 --> 00:27:36,530
decided to move
on since it became

474
00:27:36,530 --> 00:27:41,180
dangerous to remain in
Hungary while search for Jews,

475
00:27:41,180 --> 00:27:44,900
legal and illegal, intensified.

476

00:27:44,900 --> 00:27:49,435

We knew that we have to act
before the deportation will

477

00:27:49,435 --> 00:27:50,060

reach Budapest.

478

00:27:50,060 --> 00:27:53,210

479

00:27:53,210 --> 00:28:00,230

End of May 1944, we crossed
in the dark of night

480

00:28:00,230 --> 00:28:03,300

the Hungarian state
border back to Slovakia.

481

00:28:03,300 --> 00:28:05,660

Ruth's father crossed
with me together.

482

00:28:05,660 --> 00:28:08,280

483

00:28:08,280 --> 00:28:10,670

By this time,
Slovakia was almost

484

00:28:10,670 --> 00:28:15,740

Judenrein, which means
the Germans called it

485

00:28:15,740 --> 00:28:18,380

that they want to make
all Europe Judenrein,

486

00:28:18,380 --> 00:28:21,830

clean of Jews.

487

00:28:21,830 --> 00:28:24,110

As a result of

deportation, Slovakia

488

00:28:24,110 --> 00:28:29,300
was almost Judenreined as a
result of deportation in 1942.

489

00:28:29,300 --> 00:28:34,370
Some Jews who considered to
be economically indispensable

490

00:28:34,370 --> 00:28:38,690
were given special exemption
from deportation in '42.

491

00:28:38,690 --> 00:28:41,870
So still, they went there.

492

00:28:41,870 --> 00:28:46,430
We learned through friends
that, in three provincial towns,

493

00:28:46,430 --> 00:28:51,070
the authorities were somewhat
benevolent toward Jews.

494

00:28:51,070 --> 00:28:54,440
And these were
the towns to stay.

495

00:28:54,440 --> 00:28:58,280
I lived in a rented room and
spent a relatively calm summer

496

00:28:58,280 --> 00:29:00,680
in 1944.

497

00:29:00,680 --> 00:29:03,440
My dark hair and
complexion were considered

498

00:29:03,440 --> 00:29:05,570
Jewish characteristic.

499

00:29:05,570 --> 00:29:08,480

So to improve on my
illegal existence,

500

00:29:08,480 --> 00:29:13,220

I colored my hair platinum blond
before crossing the border back

501

00:29:13,220 --> 00:29:13,990

to Slovakia.

502

00:29:13,990 --> 00:29:16,010

Did you maintain
the same identity

503

00:29:16,010 --> 00:29:18,088

you had when you
were in Hungary?

504

00:29:18,088 --> 00:29:18,880

You got new papers?

505

00:29:18,880 --> 00:29:25,350

No, we were Slovaks,
Slovaks Gentile immediately.

506

00:29:25,350 --> 00:29:30,710

You see, somehow we had a
clandestine connections, yes?

507

00:29:30,710 --> 00:29:33,560

Like, I met people in
the street of Budapest.

508

00:29:33,560 --> 00:29:35,400

When we returned
to Slovakia again,

509

00:29:35,400 --> 00:29:38,480

my brother returned earlier.

510

00:29:38,480 --> 00:29:44,870

So when I came back, he
already had papers for me.

511
00:29:44,870 --> 00:29:49,340
And he already told me
that I can be in this town.

512
00:29:49,340 --> 00:29:52,310
We had a very distant
relative whom we never

513
00:29:52,310 --> 00:29:58,460
knew who lived on the
Slovakian side of the border,

514
00:29:58,460 --> 00:30:00,160
but people were very helpful.

515
00:30:00,160 --> 00:30:03,350

516
00:30:03,350 --> 00:30:06,710
She was one of those who were
economically indispensable.

517
00:30:06,710 --> 00:30:08,670
And they stayed
over the two years.

518
00:30:08,670 --> 00:30:10,280
Was there an
underground in Slovakia

519
00:30:10,280 --> 00:30:12,200
that was furnishing
these papers?

520
00:30:12,200 --> 00:30:16,310
Yes, there was.

521
00:30:16,310 --> 00:30:19,020
That would be another story.

522

00:30:19,020 --> 00:30:20,865

I have a book, but
it's in Hebrew.

523

00:30:20,865 --> 00:30:23,780

524

00:30:23,780 --> 00:30:26,320

Gizi Fleischman, did
you hear the name?

525

00:30:26,320 --> 00:30:27,240

Yeah, OK.

526

00:30:27,240 --> 00:30:32,030

She was one of the prominent
and Rabbi Weismendl.

527

00:30:32,030 --> 00:30:33,630

There was a group
of three people

528

00:30:33,630 --> 00:30:36,990

who were very active
and very, very helpful.

529

00:30:36,990 --> 00:30:40,750

And when I am saying that
there were three towns where

530

00:30:40,750 --> 00:30:44,130

the authorities were
somewhat benevolent,

531

00:30:44,130 --> 00:30:47,970

so these were the
connections that they

532

00:30:47,970 --> 00:30:50,940

made the authorities
benevolent, these people

533

00:30:50,940 --> 00:30:52,440
in the underground.

534
00:30:52,440 --> 00:30:55,860
So when we came, it was
easier to establish ourselves

535
00:30:55,860 --> 00:30:57,660
in those towns.

536
00:30:57,660 --> 00:31:00,200
There was better
probability that we will not

537
00:31:00,200 --> 00:31:03,030
be caught with the blond hair.

538
00:31:03,030 --> 00:31:07,150
Because later, I realized that
there were many ladies as smart

539
00:31:07,150 --> 00:31:07,650
as me.

540
00:31:07,650 --> 00:31:12,270
And it was not something which
the police, if they would have

541
00:31:12,270 --> 00:31:16,410
looked, found that
18-year-old girls have

542
00:31:16,410 --> 00:31:18,780
colored platinum blonde hair.

543
00:31:18,780 --> 00:31:21,250
Yes, it was strange.

544
00:31:21,250 --> 00:31:24,840
So we always said that
the papers are good

545

00:31:24,840 --> 00:31:27,090
as long as nobody needs them.

546
00:31:27,090 --> 00:31:30,210
When we were caught,
we were caught.

547
00:31:30,210 --> 00:31:33,007
Probably it was good
for the landlady

548
00:31:33,007 --> 00:31:34,090
when we looked for a room.

549
00:31:34,090 --> 00:31:39,730

550
00:31:39,730 --> 00:31:41,610
OK, now, I am platinum blonde.

551
00:31:41,610 --> 00:31:44,570

552
00:31:44,570 --> 00:31:47,380
So this was a calm summer.

553
00:31:47,380 --> 00:31:51,430
In September 1944, the army
of the Slovak puppet state

554
00:31:51,430 --> 00:31:54,190
staged an uprising
against the Germans

555
00:31:54,190 --> 00:31:57,820
and declared a new independent
Czechoslovak Republic

556
00:31:57,820 --> 00:31:58,720
in Center Slovakia.

557
00:31:58,720 --> 00:32:01,480

558

00:32:01,480 --> 00:32:05,020

Immediately, the German
army marched into Slovakia

559

00:32:05,020 --> 00:32:08,710

to fight the uprising and,
with overwhelming forces,

560

00:32:08,710 --> 00:32:13,275

quelled the uprising
within two months.

561

00:32:13,275 --> 00:32:16,600

With the German
forces came the SS.

562

00:32:16,600 --> 00:32:19,970

And deportation of Jews was
renewed after two years.

563

00:32:19,970 --> 00:32:22,740

564

00:32:22,740 --> 00:32:27,270

By this time and even before,
the legal as well as illegal

565

00:32:27,270 --> 00:32:31,370

Jews gained more expertise
in survival methods.

566

00:32:31,370 --> 00:32:36,390

And they also learned by that
time the deportation to Poland

567

00:32:36,390 --> 00:32:37,560

means death.

568

00:32:37,560 --> 00:32:39,300

We did not know it in '42.

569

00:32:39,300 --> 00:32:41,910

We knew it in '44.

570

00:32:41,910 --> 00:32:46,530

So people pursued every
available way of rescue.

571

00:32:46,530 --> 00:32:50,490

Those in the partisan territory
tried to hide in the forests.

572

00:32:50,490 --> 00:32:53,330

In other places,
people went into hiding

573

00:32:53,330 --> 00:32:55,350

with non-Jewish friends.

574

00:32:55,350 --> 00:32:58,140

Others obtained papers
to change their identity

575

00:32:58,140 --> 00:33:00,900

and moved away from hometowns.

576

00:33:00,900 --> 00:33:04,590

Of course, at this
time, in fall 1944,

577

00:33:04,590 --> 00:33:10,340

we are speaking about a very
small group of Slovakian Jews.

578

00:33:10,340 --> 00:33:12,920

Carrying my false papers
and my blond hair,

579

00:33:12,920 --> 00:33:17,600

I was caught in the street by
an SS man assisted by a Slovak

580

00:33:17,600 --> 00:33:21,050

fascist militia man.

581

00:33:21,050 --> 00:33:24,800

I was brought to a transit
concentration camp--

582

00:33:24,800 --> 00:33:29,240

the name is Sered in
Slovakia-- and witnessed

583

00:33:29,240 --> 00:33:34,040

the gruesome anxiety of Jews
hunted down in the streets

584

00:33:34,040 --> 00:33:37,550

and pulled out from hiding
who were brought here

585

00:33:37,550 --> 00:33:40,460

for deportation.

586

00:33:40,460 --> 00:33:44,910

So now, again, after a short
period of unusual calm,

587

00:33:44,910 --> 00:33:46,400

Jews were assembled.

588

00:33:46,400 --> 00:33:50,340

And the renewed
deportation began.

589

00:33:50,340 --> 00:33:53,930

How did the German soldiers
know that you were Jewish?

590

00:33:53,930 --> 00:33:57,670

They asked for papers.

591

00:33:57,670 --> 00:33:59,600

And they did not.

592

00:33:59,600 --> 00:34:02,410
The Slovak militia
man helped him.

593
00:34:02,410 --> 00:34:04,480
It was my blond hair.

594
00:34:04,480 --> 00:34:09,300
I did not look real with
dark complexion and platinum

595
00:34:09,300 --> 00:34:11,409
blond hair.

596
00:34:11,409 --> 00:34:13,250
It was unnatural.

597
00:34:13,250 --> 00:34:17,360
That's A. B, I had
in my pocket book

598
00:34:17,360 --> 00:34:20,800
a picture, a childhood
picture which I did not

599
00:34:20,800 --> 00:34:27,210
want to lose, always this me
when I was a dark Jewish child.

600
00:34:27,210 --> 00:34:30,409

601
00:34:30,409 --> 00:34:31,190
It was easy.

602
00:34:31,190 --> 00:34:33,290
So most of the time,
the identifications

603
00:34:33,290 --> 00:34:38,000
were made on intuition
rather than on actual proof?

604

00:34:38,000 --> 00:34:39,380

I also was in a wrong place.

605

00:34:39,380 --> 00:34:41,840

I should have been
sitting at home.

606

00:34:41,840 --> 00:34:44,090

I went where I
should not have gone.

607

00:34:44,090 --> 00:34:48,110

I went downtown at a time
where Jews would be caught.

608

00:34:48,110 --> 00:34:51,920

609

00:34:51,920 --> 00:34:53,860

The concentration
camp was organized

610

00:34:53,860 --> 00:34:55,760

when I was brought in Sered.

611

00:34:55,760 --> 00:34:57,390

And the deportation started.

612

00:34:57,390 --> 00:35:00,490

The concentration camp
was organized and managed

613

00:35:00,490 --> 00:35:01,720

by the SS.

614

00:35:01,720 --> 00:35:05,830

And their methods of cruelty
and intimidation prevailed.

615

00:35:05,830 --> 00:35:08,500

But even at this
late date of the war,

616
00:35:08,500 --> 00:35:12,550
the Germans continued to
lie about work in Poland

617
00:35:12,550 --> 00:35:14,500
as a place of deportation.

618
00:35:14,500 --> 00:35:19,030
Meanwhile, the Jews in
the concentration camp

619
00:35:19,030 --> 00:35:21,220
knew that deportation
means death.

620
00:35:21,220 --> 00:35:25,550

621
00:35:25,550 --> 00:35:29,640
The name of the kommandant,
I have to remember.

622
00:35:29,640 --> 00:35:33,030
He's living in Syria now.

623
00:35:33,030 --> 00:35:34,200
Maybe you know.

624
00:35:34,200 --> 00:35:35,710
I will remember the name.

625
00:35:35,710 --> 00:35:37,360
He's still alive.

626
00:35:37,360 --> 00:35:39,480
Of Theresienstadt
or of the camp?

627
00:35:39,480 --> 00:35:42,870
No, of Sered.

628

00:35:42,870 --> 00:35:44,260

I will remember his names.

629

00:35:44,260 --> 00:35:44,760

I'm sorry.

630

00:35:44,760 --> 00:35:47,950

631

00:35:47,950 --> 00:35:50,520

Were your mother and
father aware of what

632

00:35:50,520 --> 00:35:51,460

had happened to you?

633

00:35:51,460 --> 00:35:52,680

No.

634

00:35:52,680 --> 00:35:56,230

You see, this was always
that we had been separated.

635

00:35:56,230 --> 00:35:57,750

No, they did not know.

636

00:35:57,750 --> 00:36:01,980

But they apparently sensed it
because there was no contact.

637

00:36:01,980 --> 00:36:04,830

And the knew-- they
were in hiding--

638

00:36:04,830 --> 00:36:09,560

that I did not have
a hiding place.

639

00:36:09,560 --> 00:36:11,050

I was just illegal.

640

00:36:11,050 --> 00:36:13,370

They were in hiding by that
time when this started.

641

00:36:13,370 --> 00:36:18,800

642

00:36:18,800 --> 00:36:21,750

My remaining family,
my grandfather,

643

00:36:21,750 --> 00:36:25,610

who stayed with my
aunt, my mother's sister

644

00:36:25,610 --> 00:36:29,860

with her husband and the
child, my mother's brother,

645

00:36:29,860 --> 00:36:32,960

the uncle who was with us
in Hungary and his wife

646

00:36:32,960 --> 00:36:36,440

were caught and
brought to be deported.

647

00:36:36,440 --> 00:36:41,090

These people were informed
and realistic what to expect.

648

00:36:41,090 --> 00:36:44,060

Still, there was some hope
because the Allied four

649

00:36:44,060 --> 00:36:48,390

armies were advancing
to the German border,

650

00:36:48,390 --> 00:36:52,700

so September, October '44.

651

00:36:52,700 --> 00:36:56,730

But they were not rescued
and Germany did not collapse.

652
00:36:56,730 --> 00:36:59,300
The assembled Jews had to
face a terrible reality

653
00:36:59,300 --> 00:37:04,760
of deportation, of separation,
of suffering, and of death.

654
00:37:04,760 --> 00:37:08,270
When I attempted to
help my grandfather

655
00:37:08,270 --> 00:37:11,660
in packing his
backpack, he said to me

656
00:37:11,660 --> 00:37:16,040
that he does not need my
assistance because he is old.

657
00:37:16,040 --> 00:37:18,200
And he's going to die.

658
00:37:18,200 --> 00:37:22,170
But I am young, and I will live.

659
00:37:22,170 --> 00:37:27,470
I will never forget the
scene in his barrack.

660
00:37:27,470 --> 00:37:33,500
My uncle repeated to me
his advice from before.

661
00:37:33,500 --> 00:37:37,880
He said that I have to
jump out from the train,

662
00:37:37,880 --> 00:37:41,780
that I have to run, that

I can break my legs,

663

00:37:41,780 --> 00:37:44,540

but I have to make
every rescue attempt

664

00:37:44,540 --> 00:37:49,540

and not to be
brought to Auschwitz.

665

00:37:49,540 --> 00:37:52,450

And so six people of
my immediate family

666

00:37:52,450 --> 00:37:57,410

were deported from
Sered in October 1944.

667

00:37:57,410 --> 00:37:59,540

Five never came back.

668

00:37:59,540 --> 00:38:03,320

My aunt is here,
my uncle's wife.

669

00:38:03,320 --> 00:38:05,090

Was your brother
among those deported?

670

00:38:05,090 --> 00:38:08,690

No, he was in hiding.

671

00:38:08,690 --> 00:38:11,900

After every transport
in Sered, there

672

00:38:11,900 --> 00:38:15,350

was a terrible
quiet in the camp.

673

00:38:15,350 --> 00:38:16,505

You could hear the quiet.

674

00:38:16,505 --> 00:38:26,050

675

00:38:26,050 --> 00:38:29,870

This was September,
December 1944.

676

00:38:29,870 --> 00:38:33,740

Before transports
were assembled,

677

00:38:33,740 --> 00:38:37,280

we had to stand for
hours to be reviewed

678

00:38:37,280 --> 00:38:40,550

by the SS kommandant
for selection

679

00:38:40,550 --> 00:38:44,360

to go into the transport
or to stay here

680

00:38:44,360 --> 00:38:46,130

until the next shipping.

681

00:38:46,130 --> 00:38:50,160

682

00:38:50,160 --> 00:38:56,820

Standing for hours in the
courtyard for selection,

683

00:38:56,820 --> 00:39:02,220

I could hear the uncontrollable
clatter of my teeth.

684

00:39:02,220 --> 00:39:04,470

I could hear it.

685

00:39:04,470 --> 00:39:06,900

It was uncontrollable.

686
00:39:06,900 --> 00:39:09,930
In December 1944,
knowledgeable people

687
00:39:09,930 --> 00:39:13,870
said that, in the
quiet of the night,

688
00:39:13,870 --> 00:39:18,210
the advancing Russian artillery
can be heard from Hungary.

689
00:39:18,210 --> 00:39:21,680

690
00:39:21,680 --> 00:39:26,590
Were you given any food or
clothing during this time?

691
00:39:26,590 --> 00:39:27,240
Not clothing.

692
00:39:27,240 --> 00:39:33,550
Clothing I brought with me
because I had some money

693
00:39:33,550 --> 00:39:34,990
with me when I was caught.

694
00:39:34,990 --> 00:39:36,350
I was caught in September.

695
00:39:36,350 --> 00:39:39,580
I remember I was
caught in a raincoat

696
00:39:39,580 --> 00:39:41,770
in the street in between.

697
00:39:41,770 --> 00:39:46,510
It was December-- and

summer shoes, sandals.

698

00:39:46,510 --> 00:39:47,950

I had some money with me.

699

00:39:47,950 --> 00:39:52,300

And there were people
who were working outside.

700

00:39:52,300 --> 00:39:56,860

And with this money,
they brought me

701

00:39:56,860 --> 00:40:01,236

I think a pullover and a pair of
shoes because I was in sandals.

702

00:40:01,236 --> 00:40:03,850

And so some food was provided?

703

00:40:03,850 --> 00:40:06,760

And this is also
interesting-- yes, food

704

00:40:06,760 --> 00:40:08,350

was provided in Sered.

705

00:40:08,350 --> 00:40:09,690

It was not too bad.

706

00:40:09,690 --> 00:40:12,070

It was in Slovakia still.

707

00:40:12,070 --> 00:40:18,340

I remember I had to
sleep in a girls barrack.

708

00:40:18,340 --> 00:40:19,820

I was 18.

709

00:40:19,820 --> 00:40:24,420

But it was known that the

SS come to the girls barrack

710
00:40:24,420 --> 00:40:26,240
and the girls have to undress.

711
00:40:26,240 --> 00:40:28,570
And they come at midnight.

712
00:40:28,570 --> 00:40:30,670
And they make fun and so on.

713
00:40:30,670 --> 00:40:34,360
So because I had my
aunt in this place,

714
00:40:34,360 --> 00:40:37,480
my aunt took me
into her barrack.

715
00:40:37,480 --> 00:40:43,240
And I was sleeping
on four stools

716
00:40:43,240 --> 00:40:48,430
in my raincoat with my hands
because it was so narrow.

717
00:40:48,430 --> 00:40:54,280
And in my raincoat,
that was my blanket.

718
00:40:54,280 --> 00:40:57,910
I slept well apparently, at
that time, better than now.

719
00:40:57,910 --> 00:41:02,860
It sounds strange to say that
I was fortunate to find myself

720
00:41:02,860 --> 00:41:08,530
on December 19, 1944 in a
railroad cattle car destined

721
00:41:08,530 --> 00:41:11,270
to Theresienstadt.

722
00:41:11,270 --> 00:41:17,420
Auschwitz was being
dismantled as of November '44.

723
00:41:17,420 --> 00:41:22,510
In transport, we were reroute
to Bergen-Belsen in Germany.

724
00:41:22,510 --> 00:41:25,570
My train was the first one
to go to Theresienstadt

725
00:41:25,570 --> 00:41:27,820
from Slovakia.

726
00:41:27,820 --> 00:41:31,870
On the train, the distance
of about 400 kilometers,

727
00:41:31,870 --> 00:41:34,620
which usually could
take eight hours,

728
00:41:34,620 --> 00:41:40,270
with detours and waiting for
hours had lasted five days.

729
00:41:40,270 --> 00:41:44,560
I do not know how it worked
out, but these five days I

730
00:41:44,560 --> 00:41:47,860
blocked out almost completely.

731
00:41:47,860 --> 00:41:51,760
I realize that I do not
remember the hours and the days

732
00:41:51,760 --> 00:41:53,680

in the railroad car.

733

00:41:53,680 --> 00:41:58,930
I do not remember the physical
discomfort, the dirt, the cold,

734

00:41:58,930 --> 00:42:03,320
the thirst, the crowding,
the crying of babies,

735

00:42:03,320 --> 00:42:07,220
the elimination of human
waste inside the car.

736

00:42:07,220 --> 00:42:10,480
I know, but I don't remember.

737

00:42:10,480 --> 00:42:12,910
What I remember
is that the train

738

00:42:12,910 --> 00:42:16,060
went north instead of west.

739

00:42:16,060 --> 00:42:18,120
So we thought we are
going to Auschwitz

740

00:42:18,120 --> 00:42:21,060
and not Theresienstadt.

741

00:42:21,060 --> 00:42:26,990
And during the long standing in
a coal mine region on the way,

742

00:42:26,990 --> 00:42:31,850
as the December morning was
dawning, we smelled smoke.

743

00:42:31,850 --> 00:42:34,120
This was coal mine region.

744

00:42:34,120 --> 00:42:39,670
We knew that we could be in
the vicinity of Auschwitz.

745
00:42:39,670 --> 00:42:43,390
Everybody was very
tired, very quiet,

746
00:42:43,390 --> 00:42:46,990
thinking the last thoughts.

747
00:42:46,990 --> 00:42:50,550
I felt that it is not
fair to die in Auschwitz

748
00:42:50,550 --> 00:42:52,000
at the age of 18 years.

749
00:42:52,000 --> 00:42:56,170

750
00:42:56,170 --> 00:43:01,120
Then the train started to
move into the daylight.

751
00:43:01,120 --> 00:43:03,830
And we saw through the
holes in the railroad car

752
00:43:03,830 --> 00:43:08,530
signpost and inscriptions
in the Czech language.

753
00:43:08,530 --> 00:43:12,300
And we realized that we
are not in Poland anymore,

754
00:43:12,300 --> 00:43:16,360
but we detoured back into the
former Czechoslovak territory.

755
00:43:16,360 --> 00:43:21,830
And, thus, we passed Auschwitz

somewhere in the distance.

756

00:43:21,830 --> 00:43:26,240

On December 24,
Christmas Eve, the train

757

00:43:26,240 --> 00:43:32,860

came to a halt at the rail's
end in Theresienstadt.

758

00:43:32,860 --> 00:43:36,280

My repression had
been my great ally.

759

00:43:36,280 --> 00:43:39,450

I did not remember
the terrifying parts

760

00:43:39,450 --> 00:43:43,030

and repeatedly gathered
mental strength to go on.

761

00:43:43,030 --> 00:43:45,710

762

00:43:45,710 --> 00:43:48,920

In Theresienstadt, we saw
people in civilian clothing

763

00:43:48,920 --> 00:43:50,210

coming and going.

764

00:43:50,210 --> 00:43:54,500

And we felt reassured
by their looks.

765

00:43:54,500 --> 00:43:56,450

During administrative
processing,

766

00:43:56,450 --> 00:44:01,440

we met Czech Jews who were
the old-timers in the ghetto.

767

00:44:01,440 --> 00:44:05,270

As strange as it may
sound, they welcomed us

768

00:44:05,270 --> 00:44:09,710

because Jews from Slovakia
reminded them of the old times

769

00:44:09,710 --> 00:44:18,740

before 1938 when the country
was free and independent.

770

00:44:18,740 --> 00:44:23,360

They told us that we are very
lucky because mass deportation

771

00:44:23,360 --> 00:44:27,980

from Theresienstadt was
completed two months ago.

772

00:44:27,980 --> 00:44:30,100

And the camp is now empty.

773

00:44:30,100 --> 00:44:34,250

Empty, that means
20,000 people less.

774

00:44:34,250 --> 00:44:36,080

So it will take
a long time again

775

00:44:36,080 --> 00:44:40,140

before a new
deportation will start.

776

00:44:40,140 --> 00:44:42,700

We were stationed in
an old military barrack

777

00:44:42,700 --> 00:44:46,080

and stayed a group
of 10 girls together.

778
00:44:46,080 --> 00:44:49,530
We shared bread and
bed with a buddy,

779
00:44:49,530 --> 00:44:55,080
so we could have two blankets
together and some human warmth.

780
00:44:55,080 --> 00:44:58,970
We saved a portion of
our bread for bad times.

781
00:44:58,970 --> 00:45:03,420
And as a result, the bread we
ate was always hard as a rock.

782
00:45:03,420 --> 00:45:07,435
I do not remember
the taste of it.

783
00:45:07,435 --> 00:45:10,270
A doctor friend who
came with our transport

784
00:45:10,270 --> 00:45:14,980
told us that 40 out of 400
people from the transport,

785
00:45:14,980 --> 00:45:18,620
mostly elderly, died
within the first two weeks

786
00:45:18,620 --> 00:45:20,530
in Theresienstadt.

787
00:45:20,530 --> 00:45:23,260
He also made an
estimated calorie count

788
00:45:23,260 --> 00:45:26,430
of our daily rations
and predicted

789

00:45:26,430 --> 00:45:28,660

that, on this calorie
amount, we will

790

00:45:28,660 --> 00:45:31,570

last for three to six months.

791

00:45:31,570 --> 00:45:35,800

We did not mind his calculation
because, in January '45,

792

00:45:35,800 --> 00:45:43,480

we quote "knew" unquote that the
war will be over before we die.

793

00:45:43,480 --> 00:45:47,080

Our work assignment was
heavy labor for young women.

794

00:45:47,080 --> 00:45:49,630

It was called [NON-ENGLISH].

795

00:45:49,630 --> 00:45:52,060

When transports came--
luggage carrying.

796

00:45:52,060 --> 00:45:55,330

Otherwise-- just make work.

797

00:45:55,330 --> 00:45:58,480

It means to wake up people
at 12:00 or a 2:00 at night,

798

00:45:58,480 --> 00:46:02,450

send them into the snowy
night to work on barrack

799

00:46:02,450 --> 00:46:05,230

construction or similar.

800

00:46:05,230 --> 00:46:09,220

We had to carry lumber
and building materials

801
00:46:09,220 --> 00:46:13,260
to work under
strong humiliation,

802
00:46:13,260 --> 00:46:15,520
carrying things from
here to there just

803
00:46:15,520 --> 00:46:21,320
for the exercise,
guarded by the SS.

804
00:46:21,320 --> 00:46:25,380
The best time was when we
were waking up for work,

805
00:46:25,380 --> 00:46:29,440
and the SS cancelled
the assignment.

806
00:46:29,440 --> 00:46:32,170
We felt that this is
the best experience

807
00:46:32,170 --> 00:46:34,580
we can get in Theresienstadt.

808
00:46:34,580 --> 00:46:37,870
It meant going back to sleep
and be inside the barrack.

809
00:46:37,870 --> 00:46:40,510

810
00:46:40,510 --> 00:46:43,930
Looking back, we turned
the negative into positive

811
00:46:43,930 --> 00:46:45,175
and, thus, kept our morals.

812
00:46:45,175 --> 00:46:47,880

813
00:46:47,880 --> 00:46:54,130
My great wish was to have
one time again a real bed

814
00:46:54,130 --> 00:46:57,400
and a warm, clean blanket.

815
00:46:57,400 --> 00:47:01,360
I did not think about the
past or about the future.

816
00:47:01,360 --> 00:47:05,360
I focused my ambition to a
limited goal in life, to have,

817
00:47:05,360 --> 00:47:11,350
again, a warm and clean
blanket, hopefully camel hair.

818
00:47:11,350 --> 00:47:15,250
I still use this as
my sleeping pill.

819
00:47:15,250 --> 00:47:16,675
I always think,
I have a blanket.

820
00:47:16,675 --> 00:47:19,190

821
00:47:19,190 --> 00:47:23,670
In March, April 1945
with spring in the air,

822
00:47:23,670 --> 00:47:26,710
as we were entering the
ghetto upon return from work,

823

00:47:26,710 --> 00:47:31,060
the Czech policemen who guarded
on the outside of the ghetto

824
00:47:31,060 --> 00:47:35,350
dropped words to us,
[NON-ENGLISH],, girls,

825
00:47:35,350 --> 00:47:37,270
heads up again.

826
00:47:37,270 --> 00:47:39,640
The spring is here.

827
00:47:39,640 --> 00:47:43,150
The end is very near.

828
00:47:43,150 --> 00:47:45,910
At the same time in
March, April '45,

829
00:47:45,910 --> 00:47:49,780
rumors spread about
Red Cross visitors.

830
00:47:49,780 --> 00:47:52,770
All the workforce was
mobilized to clean up

831
00:47:52,770 --> 00:47:56,740
the barracks, streets, to
repair the hospital, schools,

832
00:47:56,740 --> 00:48:02,380
to restore and beautify the
children's corner on the Plaza.

833
00:48:02,380 --> 00:48:04,170
The Red Cross arrived.

834
00:48:04,170 --> 00:48:06,910
And in our daily food
rations, a triangle

835
00:48:06,910 --> 00:48:10,570
of Swiss cheese and
a roll was included.

836
00:48:10,570 --> 00:48:12,085
This lasted for three days.

837
00:48:12,085 --> 00:48:14,610

838
00:48:14,610 --> 00:48:17,530
End of April, the
most exciting thing

839
00:48:17,530 --> 00:48:19,810
happened in Theresienstadt.

840
00:48:19,810 --> 00:48:24,430
A colony of the most beautiful
white busses with a Red Cross

841
00:48:24,430 --> 00:48:28,960
on arrived to take
out and repatriate

842
00:48:28,960 --> 00:48:32,650
a group of 420 Danish Jews.

843
00:48:32,650 --> 00:48:37,220
I will never forget those
buses departing the next day

844
00:48:37,220 --> 00:48:40,720
with Jewish internees
leaving the ghetto.

845
00:48:40,720 --> 00:48:43,110
Had all the Germans
gone by then?

846
00:48:43,110 --> 00:48:44,103

No.

847
00:48:44,103 --> 00:48:44,770
They were there.

848
00:48:44,770 --> 00:48:48,040
This was Red Cross.

849
00:48:48,040 --> 00:48:50,040
It was like a dream.

850
00:48:50,040 --> 00:48:55,160
And it didn't seem real
that here are the Germans.

851
00:48:55,160 --> 00:49:02,890
And the Danish driver takes
out a colony of busses.

852
00:49:02,890 --> 00:49:06,050
At the same time, end
of April, long trains

853
00:49:06,050 --> 00:49:09,380
of railroad cars
with human cargo

854
00:49:09,380 --> 00:49:12,760
were coming into the ghetto.

855
00:49:12,760 --> 00:49:16,990
Other groups coming
were starved Jews

856
00:49:16,990 --> 00:49:20,620
who marched through
Germany during the winter

857
00:49:20,620 --> 00:49:24,805
and ended up in Theresienstadt.

858
00:49:24,805 --> 00:49:32,370

These were cars and cars,
train loads, and the colonies

859
00:49:32,370 --> 00:49:35,130
of marching people.

860
00:49:35,130 --> 00:49:37,840
Opening the railroad
cars, human bodies

861
00:49:37,840 --> 00:49:41,980
dead and those barely alive were
tumbling out through the door.

862
00:49:41,980 --> 00:49:45,030
We had to open
the railroad cars.

863
00:49:45,030 --> 00:49:48,440
The work force was in
place sorting out the dead

864
00:49:48,440 --> 00:49:49,400
from the living.

865
00:49:49,400 --> 00:49:52,136

866
00:49:52,136 --> 00:49:55,720
This time, those alive were
taken to a real shower.

867
00:49:55,720 --> 00:49:57,960
And some were taken
into a field hospital.

868
00:49:57,960 --> 00:50:01,250

869
00:50:01,250 --> 00:50:04,080
The last week of the
German rule, the SS

870

00:50:04,080 --> 00:50:08,250
have been transferring prisoners
from the adjacent little

871

00:50:08,250 --> 00:50:11,370
fortress into the ghetto.

872

00:50:11,370 --> 00:50:14,370
These were people marked as
political prisoners, Jews

873

00:50:14,370 --> 00:50:16,190
and non-Jews.

874

00:50:16,190 --> 00:50:19,120
The conditions and treatment
at the little fortress

875

00:50:19,120 --> 00:50:22,410
were more horrible and more
cruel than of the ghetto.

876

00:50:22,410 --> 00:50:26,750

877

00:50:26,750 --> 00:50:28,770
The people who were
brought into the ghetto

878

00:50:28,770 --> 00:50:34,800
looked like matchsticks, who
could break if they moved.

879

00:50:34,800 --> 00:50:39,560
Their complexion was
white like chalk.

880

00:50:39,560 --> 00:50:42,720
They looked like unreal people.

881

00:50:42,720 --> 00:50:45,360
With these people, also

carloads of documents

882
00:50:45,360 --> 00:50:48,120
were brought for disposal.

883
00:50:48,120 --> 00:50:53,220
Now, the SS archives containing
information of SS activity

884
00:50:53,220 --> 00:51:00,960
were burned in ditches made
along the ghetto walls.

885
00:51:00,960 --> 00:51:02,730
So they brought people.

886
00:51:02,730 --> 00:51:06,900
They apparently wanted to
close this little fortress.

887
00:51:06,900 --> 00:51:11,340
So they brought the
people into the ghetto.

888
00:51:11,340 --> 00:51:14,400
There was a difference
between the prisoners

889
00:51:14,400 --> 00:51:18,120
from the little fortress
who looked like matchsticks.

890
00:51:18,120 --> 00:51:21,510
And they're dirty,
emaciated, hungry,

891
00:51:21,510 --> 00:51:25,650
and dressed in rags people
from the marching colonies.

892
00:51:25,650 --> 00:51:29,130
These had an expression,
expression of suffering,

893
00:51:29,130 --> 00:51:32,820
of pain, of fear, and death.

894
00:51:32,820 --> 00:51:34,950
The people from
the little fortress

895
00:51:34,950 --> 00:51:43,960
were washed and dressed and had
these white masks like faces

896
00:51:43,960 --> 00:51:45,970
with motionless empty eyes.

897
00:51:45,970 --> 00:51:49,570

898
00:51:49,570 --> 00:51:54,240
About May 4 and 5th, four
days before the liberation,

899
00:51:54,240 --> 00:51:57,370
the Prague uprising started.

900
00:51:57,370 --> 00:52:01,030
Theresienstadt is only 60
kilometers from Prague.

901
00:52:01,030 --> 00:52:05,280
Rumors spread, again, that
the SS left the ghetto.

902
00:52:05,280 --> 00:52:08,890
You had always rumors
because nothing was told--

903
00:52:08,890 --> 00:52:12,580
so what people anticipated,
what people saw,

904
00:52:12,580 --> 00:52:14,620

what people
constructed themselves.

905
00:52:14,620 --> 00:52:15,820
It was always rumors.

906
00:52:15,820 --> 00:52:18,970

907
00:52:18,970 --> 00:52:22,410
Rumors spread that the
SS left the ghetto.

908
00:52:22,410 --> 00:52:24,030
The next day, some
cars and trucks

909
00:52:24,030 --> 00:52:28,080
came from Prague and
from other cities

910
00:52:28,080 --> 00:52:31,830
to pick up Jewish friends,
relatives, or mixed marriage

911
00:52:31,830 --> 00:52:34,620
partners and children.

912
00:52:34,620 --> 00:52:40,110
This was done in haste and
fear and subdued jubilation.

913
00:52:40,110 --> 00:52:43,050
The war was not yet over.

914
00:52:43,050 --> 00:52:49,350
Two days later, the SS were back
in command and in the street.

915
00:52:49,350 --> 00:52:53,910
We woke up at night, the
SS yelling and screaming.

916

00:52:53,910 --> 00:52:58,400

From our window, we saw
about 100 ghetto inmates

917

00:52:58,400 --> 00:53:04,080

standing with heads up facing
the wall of their barrack.

918

00:53:04,080 --> 00:53:07,280

Reflectors
illuminated the scene.

919

00:53:07,280 --> 00:53:12,870

The SS were commanding and
screaming, apparently working

920

00:53:12,870 --> 00:53:16,500

on their final heroic action.

921

00:53:16,500 --> 00:53:19,690

Thanks, God, the night passed
and the men were not shot.

922

00:53:19,690 --> 00:53:24,620

923

00:53:24,620 --> 00:53:28,870

The next day, the SS
apparently departed for good.

924

00:53:28,870 --> 00:53:30,160

It was in May.

925

00:53:30,160 --> 00:53:34,000

The day was gorgeous,
bright and warm.

926

00:53:34,000 --> 00:53:38,530

And it looked like everybody
was in the ghetto square.

927

00:53:38,530 --> 00:53:42,210

That evening, just
as dusk was falling,

928
00:53:42,210 --> 00:53:46,620
a Soviet Army Jeep
entered the ghetto.

929
00:53:46,620 --> 00:53:50,440
The Russian officers asked
for the [NON-ENGLISH]..

930
00:53:50,440 --> 00:53:53,360
And they were carried
there on people's arms.

931
00:53:53,360 --> 00:53:55,970

932
00:53:55,970 --> 00:54:00,470
We did not sleep that night,
but we also did not celebrate.

933
00:54:00,470 --> 00:54:03,560
We did not yet realize
fully that we are free.

934
00:54:03,560 --> 00:54:08,410
We did not make
plans or take steps.

935
00:54:08,410 --> 00:54:13,410
The mood still was downcast,
cautious, mistrustful.

936
00:54:13,410 --> 00:54:18,070
No excitement or
celebration were visible.

937
00:54:18,070 --> 00:54:20,940
A day or two later,
in this situation

938
00:54:20,940 --> 00:54:25,060

of loss and uncertainty,
people started to move.

939
00:54:25,060 --> 00:54:29,090
Again, rumors came that
medical authorities from Prague

940
00:54:29,090 --> 00:54:34,110
are coming into the ghetto
and will erect a quarantine

941
00:54:34,110 --> 00:54:37,500
since we had typhoid cases here.

942
00:54:37,500 --> 00:54:41,160
My friends and I were offered
to join a group of young people

943
00:54:41,160 --> 00:54:46,350
and take a horse and buggy
ride back to Slovakia.

944
00:54:46,350 --> 00:54:48,615
So this is the story
of my late teens.

945
00:54:48,615 --> 00:54:52,080

946
00:54:52,080 --> 00:54:55,520
I returned to my
hometown and found out

947
00:54:55,520 --> 00:54:58,290
that my mother and
my brother are alive.

948
00:54:58,290 --> 00:55:00,440
They were liberated
one month earlier

949
00:55:00,440 --> 00:55:05,180
and were still staying with

Gentile families who were

950

00:55:05,180 --> 00:55:08,110

hiding them from deportation.

951

00:55:08,110 --> 00:55:11,840

The reunion was

subdued as we started

952

00:55:11,840 --> 00:55:18,290

to realize that my father and so
many others will never return.

953

00:55:18,290 --> 00:55:20,480

Our own house, which
was confiscated

954

00:55:20,480 --> 00:55:24,460

three years earlier, had
to be restituted to us.

955

00:55:24,460 --> 00:55:25,640

And this takes time.

956

00:55:25,640 --> 00:55:30,380

957

00:55:30,380 --> 00:55:34,760

Well, my life now following
this period, my life

958

00:55:34,760 --> 00:55:38,510

was good, but sure not easy.

959

00:55:38,510 --> 00:55:42,640

Therefore, I ended up
with life philosophy

960

00:55:42,640 --> 00:55:45,820

that only difficult
life is real life.

961

00:55:45,820 --> 00:55:48,830
And this worse was life.

962
00:55:48,830 --> 00:55:53,210
Whenever I have it easy,
I feel uncomfortable.

963
00:55:53,210 --> 00:55:56,660
I do not take good things
or a warm room for granted.

964
00:55:56,660 --> 00:55:59,210

965
00:55:59,210 --> 00:56:02,560
I was never sorry for myself
and seldom complain about

966
00:56:02,560 --> 00:56:04,720
life's difficulties.

967
00:56:04,720 --> 00:56:09,760
I always knew that many and many
went through worse than I did.

968
00:56:09,760 --> 00:56:11,770
My childhood
friends and my peers

969
00:56:11,770 --> 00:56:14,810
were taken from homes
and from parents

970
00:56:14,810 --> 00:56:22,410
at 15 or 16 years of age
to go to the death chambers

971
00:56:22,410 --> 00:56:25,900
of [INAUDIBLE].

972
00:56:25,900 --> 00:56:28,870
Only when I came to
the United States

973
00:56:28,870 --> 00:56:32,080
I realized that,
when women my age

974
00:56:32,080 --> 00:56:37,360
spoke about their
sweet 16 parties,

975
00:56:37,360 --> 00:56:41,290
I in preparation
for my 16th birthday

976
00:56:41,290 --> 00:56:44,820
was crossing borders at
night to escape deportation.

977
00:56:44,820 --> 00:56:48,090

978
00:56:48,090 --> 00:56:49,830
We're going to pause
for a few minutes,

979
00:56:49,830 --> 00:56:54,070
and then I'd like to ask
you a couple of questions.

980
00:56:54,070 --> 00:56:56,860
We not might or both want to
ask you some questions about--

981
00:56:56,860 --> 00:56:57,360
Yes.

982
00:56:57,360 --> 00:57:00,000
--your experiences
and to elaborate.

983
00:57:00,000 --> 00:57:01,550
OK.

984

00:57:01,550 --> 00:57:04,000