

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Giorgio Perlasca
August 5, 1990 and September 5, 1990
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with Giorgio Perlasca, conducted on August 5, 1990 and September 5, 1990 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

GIORGIO PERLASCA

August 5, 1990

- A: I was just a few months old when we left Koma, and we transferred to .
- Q: What did your father do and what was life like in ?
- A: My father had a law degree just as his father had a law degree. At the time he was a Municipal Secretary, which in...uh...Italian administrative life was a very important position.
- Q: When he was growing up...uh...when he was growing up, when he became a young man in the 30s...uh..., tell us about...uh...his involvement in the Spanish Civil War. How did that happen?
- A: I went as a volunteer.
- Q: How old were you?
- A: I think twenty-five.
- Q: And how long...how long were you there?
- A: Two and a half years.
- Q: When you come back from the Spanish Civil War, what did you do? What was your work? Do you go back to school? What did you do?
- A: I started working in a trade firm. This firm had its headquarters in Rome and I worked however in many Italian cities in Milan, Belluno, Genoa, and eventually traveled overseas. This firm dealt with...uh...with importing food stuff, especially...uh...livestock and process meat.
- Q: What happened to you and to your business as war approached?
- A: Well, the war started almost immediately. I started working for this company at the end of 1939, and the war started in September 39, so it started immediately. However, it didn't start for Italy. Italy entered the war on June 10th, 1940.
- Q: And when the war broke out, just tell us...take your time...tell us what happened to you and what you did in the early years of the war.
- A: Nothing happened. I continued to work. I didn't get involved in the war because I had an official function with

the Italian State because this company imported livestock and process meat from Central Europe.

Q: Did you come into contact with any Jews at that time or did you know anything about what was happening to Jews in Europe?

A: Uh...Well, in Italy...uh...nothing was happening at the time. I had some Jewish friends that I had gone to school with and I saw them until 1940. However, there were some laws in Italy, and because of these laws, Italians...Italians of Jewish faith preferred to immigrate to overseas, such as Central America and North America.

Q: When did it begin to change for you? Uh...When did you begin to need to move out of Italy and the business?

A: Things started changing immediately in December of 1940. No. Actually, that was June in 1940. I started traveling overseas places such as Croatia, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Turkey.

Q: Just tell us then what happened in your words as it happened.

A: If you're referring to the situation of the Italian Jews, nothing was happening in Italy except for those racial laws, which limited the professional in their trade activities, and therefore, they preferred to immigrate. However, everyone was free and you could go to restaurants and bars any time. However, we did have information and news that the situation in Germany as far as the persecution of Jews was concerned was very bad starting in 1939, and with the invasion of Poland the persecution escalated and it also escalated in Czechoslovakia. These, of course, things that we all heard, but I saw it with my own eyes in Poland and in Croatia, and Bulgaria. Of course, in Bulgaria, King Boris...until King Boris was alive he tried to limit the persecution against Jews. And in Rumania, of course, the persecution became extremely cruel in 1940...uh...and it was worse in Rumania than in Germany where in Rumania, the Rumanians can be very ferocious when they nurture political hate.

Q: At what point then did you...uh...go to Hungary? When and how did this happen? Tell us your story.

Q: Excuse me. I think I want to pause and stop a minute please. We are going to stop for a minute. Are we almost ready or are they still checking. Okay. 5 seconds to stand by. Okay.

A: Getting back to the Jewish question, this was a very situation for them. When I was in Croatia, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Poland I knew it was very serious then because of the German occupation because extremist Nazi government been...uh...placed because the Germans excentriated the fight against the Jews and so the situation was very critical. For example in Belgrade, where I lived for a year even though I...I traveled while living there, I saw that the beginning of 1942, the Jews completely were disappeared, were wiped out.

Uh...Immediately, however, the Jews were free to go to restaurants with their Christians friends although there were some restrictions there too. And so when I was in Hungary, I was surprised to see that the Hungarian Jews were free...uh...basically free. Uh...We had business dealings with them and we could go to bars restaurants with them, and of course, this is not true in other countries that I had mentioned...uh...where the persecution against Jews was very ugly.

Q: What was it like for you in Hungary of 1942?

A: Fine. We could eat. We could drink. We could take walks. We had a lot of fun. We could go to the movies a little bit. We danced a lot. Uh...We could bars, worked, and everything worked for everyone. There were no restrictions.

Q: When did things begin to change?

A: Things suddenly changed on the evening between the 18th and the 19th of March 1944.

Q: Tell us.

A: Uh...That day Admiral Hortee who was a region of the Prime Region of Hungary...in other words he was head of State, traveled to Germany to meet with Hitler. However, he was arrested and detained for a few days. During those days, the Hungarian Democratic government was struck down. At the time even though Hungary was in war, the government was a democratic government. It had a parliament, a senate, a constitution. Uh...So during Admiral Hortee's imprisonment...uh...they took advantage of this fact to install a Nazi government. He...the Admiral then returned but the government had...was already in place. And the first measures that were taken were anti-Jewish laws that were passed and the first...including the imposing... imposition of wearing the star, the David Star, on the front and on the back.

Q: What was life like for you? Did life change for you as well?

A: Uh...Yes, life did change for me because after the Italian Armistice on September 8th, 1943, I remained loyal to the Queen's government and so therefore I was among those...uh...who were to be arrested, who were supposed to be arrested by the Germans. Uh...But that morning I left my home and I never returned.

Q: Excuse me. We're going to have to stop. Excuse me. You tell him that an entire contract hinges on that man's stopping. Now!

A: Ready now?

Q: Almost. Just keep on going. Okay.

A: Okay.

A: Uh...After the Armistice on September 8th, 1943, I had remained loyal to the Italian government, and so I did not adhere to Mussolini's Social Republic. So therefore because of this and because I had had some trade disagreements with Germans in Hungary, I...uh...decided to hide when the Germans invaded Hungary...uh...on that morning, early morning of March 19th.

Q: What did you do?

A: Uh...Yes. Yes. I needed to find a situation...a solution to...uh...my situation and I found one when I asked the Spanish Legation for asylum. Uh...Because I had fought in the Spanish Civil War, I could take advantage of the fact that the Spanish government had said that anyone who had fought...any foreigner who fought in this war who should ever find himself in difficulties could turn to the Spanish Diplomatic authorities for help. And...uh...I ask therefore the Spanish government to give me a passport if...if I thought that I needed and temporary citizenship. I didn't actually get it right away. I didn't go and pick up my passport right away. Uh...in...in March 1944, and I hid for one week in the Spanish extraterritorial buildings. Then the Hungarian government notified me that I was to be interned and so I presented myself and I was interned from the beginning of April to October 13th, 1944. During that time I could not follow the situation closely because I wasn't in Budapest. We did hear...uh...about unpleasant...we did hear about unpleasant news. Uh...We...we could read papers, but there was censorship.

Q: What happened next?

A: Uh...The internment wasn't bad at all. We had three meals a day. We had tea...uh...with small cakes and cigarettes and soap and toothpaste, even some pocket money. And all of this was according to the Geneva Convention. Uh...And there was treatment afforded to Italian diplomatic members, and I fell within that category.

Q: Why was he then considered an Italian diplomat? At that point?

A: And because I was with the Italian Trade Commission.

Q: When did the internment stop? What happened to you?

A: It didn't stop. I escaped.

Q: Please tell us about it.

A: You want to know how he escaped?

Q: Yes.

A: Uh...On October 13th, 1943, I was very lucky. I had these fake papers which authorized me to go to Budapest for health reasons. They weren't...it wasn't really true but anyway I had the papers. Luckily, that morning a Swiss diplomatic car arrived with a Swiss diplomatic and an Hungarian diplomatic who came to visit the internees where we were and check on me. And that day I asked them to take me to Budapest. Of course, they inquired about my documents and they realized they were fake, but they took me to Budapest anyway and that was on the 13th. On the 15th, Admiral Horteé proclaimed Armistice and....uh...but...uh...he specified in August of 44...it specified in August 44, Admiral Horteé had fired. I must specific...I'm sorry, in August 1944, Admiral Horteé had fired the Nazi government, had eliminated the Nazi government and set up in its place a military government which is headed by General Lackatosh. Uh...This government first abolished the Star of David, the wearing the Star of David, and struck down the racial laws. So for about a month the Jewish community lived in relative peace. For example on October 14th, I lunched with a Jewish Hungarian in a big restaurant in Budapest. On the next day on the 15th, I lunched with Mrs. De Franco, who is also Jewish Hungarian married to a Italian diplomatic in a public restaurant. And during this lunch we heard that Admiral Horteé had proclaimed armistice to the Soviet Union and Anglo-Americans.

Q: Question: He had said he left internment in 1943. Did he mean 1944?

A: 44.

Q: Thank you. Okay. After you...what happened to you after this luncheon in October of 44 with Senora DeFranco. Where did you go and what did you do?

A: Uh...This lady was very fearful when she heard this news which was being repeated on the radio, broadcast over and over again. Anyhow, I...I didn't know what to do and so I decided to seek refuge in my Hungarian friend's house for a few days. But after a few days they asked me to leave because they said it was dangerous for them...uh...because the Germans and the Hungarians...the Nazi Hungarians had bombarded the Royal Palace, and Admiral Horteé was taken prisoner and...and taken to Germany. And immediately following these events, the real anti-Jewish terror began. At least that's what I saw. And the wearing of the star was imposed once again. But anyhow, I left my friend's house and went to a private hospital but even there after a few days the Director asked me to leave for...uh...same reasons. The next morning, therefore, I decided to ask...to go to the Spanish Legation to ask for the passport that the Spanish government had promised me in September 43 but which I didn't pick up because I didn't want to change nationality at the time. Uh...So...uh...we went...I went to the Legation and they had to write up a letter saying they had searched for me a few years and that they finally found me and so that we could proceed with the change of citizenship. So together with a...an attorney from the Spanish Legation, we went to the Hungarian Ministry of Interior where my Italian citizenship was abolished and I became a Spanish citizen. And I was asked to leave the country within 15 days. Naturally, I couldn't leave. Where...where could I go?

Q: Please. Continue.

BREAK IN TAPE

A: Un...When I returned from the Ministry to the Legation, there was a lot of confusion. There were a lot of people outside the Legation. Some of them were wearing the star. Some were not. There were about a hundred people. I asked the attorney what was happening and he responded that the Jews were seeking protection, but the Legation had a problem because the only one Christian who could handle all the workload because the...the attorney told me he was also Jewish, and that he was a war hero. He had been a war hero during World War I. And so anyway they had this problem because they had...didn't have enough people and they even had at one point 300 people who had been protected and who were taken away and they did not know anything about their whereabouts. So at that point I went to the and I told that what I had just learned myself and offered my help. He replied that...uh...he would be willing and happy to work...to have me work with him, but he couldn't pay me. And I said that I didn't need any money, that I had enough to live on in those days. So we had one more letter written up to the Ministry...to the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Hungary which we took over with...uh...Sanspritz which...uh... was an official statement that I was a member of the Spanish Legation and we had it...a stamp put on it, and I also got my diplomatic identify card...uh... Since Sanspritz therefore was dealing exclusively with the Foreign Affairs Ministry. That was his responsibility. Myk responsibility was to deal with the Jewish protection organization. I had the authorization, official authorization to do that. However, I didn't know how to start. Uh...And so I asked around and I asked Attorney Farkosh who unfortunately died the first day that the Russians arrived and that this tragedy and a new tragedy started.

Q: We are going to pause and change tapes.

End of Tape #1

TAPE #2

A: At the beginning...uh...my work consisted in trying to find the 300 people who were...who had been protected by the Spaniards and who were arrested...who had been arrested by the Nazis...uh...at the very...the very first few days of the new government. So a couple of times I went, I traveled to the Hungarian German border and eventually we found a few of these people who had better protection from the Spanish Legation. And we took them back to Budapest. Uh...Then we went to this train station where goods and merchandise are unloaded on the docks...on the platforms. I'm sorry. And...uh...these are the platforms where the Germans took away thousands of Jews to Germany. And there we found there more people. And out of the 300, we found about 150. We don't know what happened to rest. At the time...uh...that reminds me, I had a small...a little episode happened to me. I saw that there was a column of people who were being deported and...uh...among these people, there were two twins who were very attractive kids and very friendly looking kids who were about 11 years old. And...uh...so I thought to myself, what would happen to them and...uh...decided to tell them, "Look, kids. You see that car over there with the Spanish flag. Run to the car and the chauffeur will close the doors and you'll be safe." But at that moment a major of the Gestapo ran to the car because he wanted those kids back. I told them that the kids were in an extraterritorial car protected by the Spanish Legation. So he took out a gun and threatened me. But next to me was Mr. Wallenberg, who told the German that I was a representative of the Spanish Government and that the kids were in an extraterritorial car. And...uh...so the German responded, "Leave me alone. You're...you're impeding...you're disturbing my work." And so I responded, "You call this work?" So, of course, he got madder and madder and everyone was speaking very loudly at the same time and that includes Wallenberg; that includes a Vatican representative; the Swiss and the Portuguese representatives; all the neutrals. And at that point a Colonel approached and asked what was happening and he was told and he finally said, "Well, let it be. Their time will come too", meaning that the two kids would be taken away. So the kids...uh...stayed in the car and the two Germans left. And I asked Wallenberg who that man was, and he responded, "That was Eichmann." The...uh...two kids didn't have a letter, obviously, of protection....uh...so when we got back to the Legation...oh..and...and when we got to the Legation, I realized they were not two boys as I had thought, but it was a boy and a girl who looked identical but they were of a different sex and so I had to find a house for them but I don't remember the details. At the time if I remember, we only had one house.

Q: Keep going please. Please continue.

A: So the...uh...the org...the organization to protect...the Spanish organization to protect...uh...Jews started and this was an initiative...was not an initiative of the Legation. Uh...The Spanish government was trying...was not an initiative of the Legation. It was the Spanish Government was trying to save as many Jews as possible and I saw that this was happening in Croatia. Uh...and according to Spanish...uh...norms and regulations, they were trying to save as many Jews as possible. Uh...We had one house at the beginning and we slowly built up to six houses. But the protection consisted of much more than just writing the letters and of putting up a flag and a banner. That was not enough.

The...uh...much more attention had to be given to the aftermath and...and to the fact that the Nazis could take them away. And so we had to provide protect...that kind of protection too, not only to our Legation but to the others too, to Switzerland, Sweden...uh...to the Vatican and to the Portuguese. At the end of November, we had about 3,000 people who were being protected. Now on the...other...the last day of November or the first of December, Sanspritz left Hungary. Now, in a document that I have written previously...memorial that I have written previously, I wrote down the date as being December 7. I did that to cover Sanspritz. I did that because I wanted to protect him and he needed 10 days, about 10 days more than necessary so that I could protect him. But now I have chosen to tell the truth. However, I can't give you any more details now, because I first have to speak with the Spanish Ambassador. I will speak with him tomorrow evening because something happened which disturbed me very much. Something very sad happened. And it was sad because it revealed to me that this human soul has...uh...evil elements in it. But first before getting into this, I must speak to the Spanish Ambassador for reasons of loyalty. Anyway, that day...uh...either the last day of November or the first day of December and I don't remember exactly which one, Sanspritz, who is a diplomat, a career diplomat left. And so I was trying to decide what to do. I'd heard by the way that he'd left at about 6:00 AM...uh...through a phone call and I don't remember if it was him...if he personally who called me or someone else, a legal attaché or what. But anyway, I learned that he was...that he'd left. And so I took a walk around the international ghetto wondering what I could do and I found myself in Lagradi Corroli Street, and I saw that this building was being occupied by the police, so I entered the building and asked what was happening and saw that there were people with suitcases, a few suitcases and...uh...the people, the Jews in the house told me that the police want...wanted to take them away. So I decided to lock the door and...uh...I went to see the lieutenant and I asked him what was happening and I told him that he couldn't do this because the house is being protected...uh...by the Spaniards and he needed my permission, and I was surprised at his behavior since he was part of the regular police forces. He was not a parliamentary police force. So we came to an agreement. The police agreed to postpone everything for a few days and we went to a park where we met with these members who belonged to a committee which have representatives from police force, Ministry of Interior, Foreign Affairs, and I protested what was happening and someone told me that the...that they had heard that the Spanish representative had fled the city and so there was no more relations with the Spanish Government. I told him that he was wrong and that the Spanish had not fled but that he'd went to Germany to talk with his colleagues from Germany, France and Switzerland and at the meantime I was his legal substitute and I had documents to prove it. Uh...I demanded that the Hungarians...uh...uh...respect the agreement that...that existed between Spain and Hungary. So the foreign affairs representative agreed to postpone everything by 2 or 3 days which gave..uh...new time to go to the Foreign Affairs Ministry to solve the situation.

Q: Please continue.

A: During this conversation in the park, I saw a column of Jews who'd been deported from the international ghetto which was right there and...uh...I saw that these were people who

were once in the houses protected by the Spaniards and I think this was in the...Palina Street, but I'm not sure. Uh...So I made them give me these people back. There were about 300 of them. By the way in the hotel where I'm staying, Mr. Voni came to see me and he was staying in a house in the...the Gradi No. 25. He was 12 at the time and his memory is better than mine and he reminded me of some details of that incident. For example, he told me that there was a little 11 year old girl who came to see me when I went to that house and asked me, "Please Mr. Save my mother." So I said, "Yes. Yes. Be good and stay put." And she came back to me three times with the same request and the last time she came to me and she said, "Look, if you save my mother I'll go to bed with you." So I slapped her. And...uh...then her mother came to me and asked me why I'd slapped her and, of course, I explained to her and perhaps I didn't do the right thing to slap her but anyway that...that's what happened. Uh...Then there was another lady who...whose name I don't remember right now and who was in park who is living in the same street and same house as Eva Lang, that Eva Lang was living on the 4th floor, and this other lady...lady was living on the 5th floor with her husband. But, of course, I couldn't know everyone at the time. I didn't even know Eva Lang....uh...who now is famous. She is a famous artist and journalist. But anyway, I went back to the Legation and I found there a representative of...representative of the Swedish Legation, Mr. Danielson and he...uh...had told me that Mr. Sanspritz had given him the responsibility to protect the Spanish...uh...Legation. I was very much afraid and became very fearful because the relations...diplomatic relations between Sweden and...uh...Hungary were not good. So...he also told me that...uh...he was...uh...he took 17,000 Swiss Francs from the Spanish Legation, and that he would send his assistant to check on the situation...uh...regularly. And I became quite fearful, so I called the Swedish Legation, and I said, "Please don't send anyone. We don't need your protection because that will make matters worse." And he was happy to hear this because...uh..., of course, Swedish relations with Hungary were not good. And as matter of fact some serious events had occurred. The...uh...the Swedish...I'm sorry...the Spanish...uh...diplomatic legation had an influence on Hungary and we didn't understand it at the time why we had this favorable treatment. We under...only understood it later. Uh...But anyhow, the...uh...there was no more question of being protected by the Swedes.

Q: Alright. Continue.

Q: Okay. Can you give me the jest of it and then we'll go on and do the translation later?

A: Okay. Okay. Uh...The same day I started in my regular activities which included...included the continuous granting of letters of protection, which included finding houses because six were now eventually built up to eight. And...uh...this work intensified and I established relations with the various police forces, with the Hungarian Nazi Party, and I was looking for support, and it didn't matter where it came from. The important thing was that I got support...uh...because letters were not enough. These houses needed to be...needed to be protected 24 hours a day. Uh...If you talk to , she will tell you many more details. She was a young girl at the time and she lived through this tragedy with her family. But anyway, I was seeking contacts. It didn't matter where they came from. The important thing was that...that they were useful contacts. So I went to the

Foreign Affairs Ministry to clarify the situation. I said...clarify...uh...and I said...I told them what I...what I had to say. When I...when I use the clarify...when I knew this I said what I had to say. And...uh...the permanent, the foreign affairs permanent secretary just...uh...believed what I said and...uh...and I began to...I began to understand why Hungary had so much respect for the Spanish Legation. I only began to understand. It wasn't perfectly clear. And this was because...uh...in Madrid, the Hungarian...uh...Legation in Madrid had remained faithful, loyal to Hortee after October 15th. And, of course, all Hungarians still looked to Hortee. And the Nazi government didn't have a representative in the Spanish government and they wanted one, and I understood that they wanted one. Uh...Anyway, we came to an agreement and...uh...I get...I got the sensation that I was being...uh...that I was in a stronger position...uh...and I even saw the Foreign Affairs Minister for a few minutes...uh...Mr. Kennenee. And having understood this, we worked better. And it was lucky because...uh...I don't know if Sanspitz either forgot or left on purpose a...his signature pad. Uh...And which I used. The agreement were that no letters could be dated after November 8th, so I just dated all the letters before November 8th, and I used his signature although I signed about 50 myself after December and I also signed two or three passports which...which, of course, were false and had no legal bearing. Uh...Anyway, the weeks passed by and...uh...I understood that they wanted to send a representative to Madrid to...uh...forge peace treaty, to sign a treaty...uh...and they realized their mistake and...uh...uh...eliminating Hortee, so...uh...the other legations were...didn't count. The Swedish Legation had been destroyed. The embassy didn't count and...uh...had Swedish protection, but it didn't count and the Portuguese counted very little. There was a Vatican, but...uh...Fununchio was tired. He was old and he was sick and although he was in good faith, the Swiss were like fish in the water. You never knew what they were going to do. And...anyway, no one counted really, because they were all against Nazis. Uh...There was the International Red Cross that was headed by Mr. Weirman, who...uh...who I will talk about later...uh...diplomatic representatives need courage in tragic moment. I don't know if I had courage and I really wasn't think about it at the time. I wasn't thinking about the dangers. But I will say this. That the representative of the International Red Cross who had ambassadorial rank...uh...was a...uh...wicked man. Uh...I've...even if I've written differently at other times, now I can say that he is a wicked man.

Q: Ask him please why the representative from the Red Cross was a wicked man. Please explain.

A: I say that because he didn't have any courage. Uh...Perhaps I didn't have any courage either, but he locked himself in the basement of a hotel...uh...and didn't come out. I...to proceed with this story, I met with a...a German General who was the military representative in the city to protest...uh...the fact that...uh...Jews were being taken from the international ghetto to the common ghetto. So I went to...uh...see him. I would go to anyone who I thought could help me. And...uh...I said that I was disturbed by these movements because the enemy might think that actually they were troops that were being moved so...uh...I was fearful of that so I asked him if the Red Cross, International Red Cross, the Swedes...the Swiss had any...uh...contacts with the Soviet Union for...or could have any contacts with the Soviet Union for an honorable surrender of the capitol. And

the German replied that he had his orders, and he couldn't do anything about it. So I went to see Weirman, and I told him what the German General had said and that if he sought contacts with the Soviet Union, then an honorable surrender might be possible in order to avoid further fighting and deaths. And he told me that he just would not do it, and he could not do it. Uh...And I knew that he was living in this basement all the time...and reinforced basement, was reinforced so that he could be protected from bombs. And that's why I say that he was wicked. He didn't do anything. Uh...By the way, that reminds me that I have...I bought condensed milk for the kids on the black market with the Red Cross symbol.

Q: Okay. Let's pause. We need to pause and change tapes. Let's do this very fast.

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

A: I just want to clarify what I meant about Weirman. Uh...I said that he was wicked and but not everyone was like me who could...uh...they haphazardly and casually just get involved in...in the situations like I did. What I'm trying to say is that I think he was wicked because I would have done differently. Probably in his situation and his physical mental state of mind he had his reasons for doing that, but I would have done differently.

Q: Why...why do you think you did what you did?

Q: Thank you. Are we done? Did you finish.

A: Well, sort of.

Q: Don't translate it. We don't have time.

Q: Thank you. Tell him we're finished. We've got to finish.

A: We says he's not finished.

Q: Alright. Tell him. Alright, we'll keep going. We need to...for you to leave rapidly. Tell him to finish as he wants to finish. Go ahead and we will do it.

Q: Thank you. Okay. That's it.

End of Tape #3

September 7, 1990

Tape #4

Q: Would you tell me your name please?

A: My name is George Perlasca.

Q: And you were born where?

A: I was born in Komo (ph) on January 31st, 1910.

Q: ...

A: You're welcome.

Q: ...

A: It's too much for my personality.

Q: Can you tell us what happened to you when you were released from released from internment and you came back to Budapest in 1944?

A: I escaped on October 13th, 1944. It wasn't an internment camp. I had my own room. Each person had his own room. We ate three times a day and then we had tea in the afternoon and they even gave us cigarettes, soap and toothpaste and even money. And this was according to the Geneva Convention because I was aggregated to the Italian commercial delegation and therefore I had uh I was uh I could uh have diplomatic uh treatment. Uh the 13th I left. The 13th of October and I arrived in Budapest that evening and the next day I don't know what I did but on the 15th the armistice was proclaimed between Hungary, Russia, Great Britain and America. This was an announcement, a terrible announcement because no one was prepared for it except a few people who who knew questions of state and government. I was surprised. I was having lunch with an Italian lady who was of the Jewish faith and she was married to an Italian diplomat and we...she was speechless and I was surprised, and I didn't know what to do. So I hid because the TV was controlled by the Admiral _____ government and everything else fell in the hands of the Nazis and of the Germans, Hungarian Nazis and the German army and their...and then I went to hide in a house which belonged to a friend of mine, uh family friends in the _____ and from this house I went to a hospital to hide because I didn't know where to go because from the first evening I slept in a friend's house in _____ who gave me the keys to his apartment. The next day I discovered that the maid was a German, a _____, and she was pro-Nazi and therefore I didn't go back to that house because it seemed dangerous to me. After a couple of days in the hospital, I spent two more days in hiding. I was hidden by the land...by the landlady in the house where I used to live once upon a time, but then I realized that the Ugandian (ph) Hotel that I knew very well was being emptied because many German officers were leaving with their suitcases

and I went to the keeper of the building and I asked him if he could give me a room and he said give me a passport and I said I don't have any passport anymore. I don't have any more documents and he said OK, for two days I'll give you a room and then I...so I didn't know what to do. And so therefore the next morning I decided to go to the Spanish Legation. It was probably eight in the morning. I went there and on the way, on the road, and I was on foot, on ____ Street which is a big street, I saw that some Hungarian Nazis were chasing a child who was probably seven or eight years old. They reached him and one of them shot the child in the back of the head. I was quite struck by this naturally and I asked a passerby why, what did that child do? Who is he? And he said he's Jewish. From the roofs of the houses, however, there were some Jews who were shooting against the Nazis from the rooftop houses. But anyway I went to the Legation and I found ____ who gave me a passport and I...he said come tomorrow with two photos, and I had two in my pocket which I pulled out, and I gave them to him and then he gave me the passport. And he also gave me a letter from the Minister of Interior which said that the Spanish government two years earlier had granted me their citizenship because I had fought in the civil war and also, the letter also said...and that I had asked for a citizenship and the letter said that they were not able to locate me and that they now found me and I had to assume citizenship, Spanish citizenship.

TECHNICAL CONVERSATION - PAUSE

So we were...with this letter I went together with the legal attaché...we went to the Minister of Interior where I changed citizenship. I canceled the Italian one and I assumed Spanish citizenship. When I returned to the Legation that early morning, it was probably eight or nine a.m., and it's strange that that morning Sanspritz (ph) got up at eight a.m., but these were very difficult times and people didn't always go to sleep. I saw...thank you...that there was a lot of confusion around, surrounding the Legation at the entrance and in the courtyard, and that many of these people who were there had been wearing the David Star, Star of David, and I asked the legal attaché what was happening and he said that these were people who are asking for our protection, protection from the Spanish government but right now we're in difficulty because the only Christian legation is Sanspritz. And therefore it's impossible to organize an external protection and it's it doesn't make any sense to give them protection letters but I said if I can be of help, then I...maybe I can do something, so we went to Sanspritz and I told him I'm available if you need me, and he said yes. Sanspritz said yes but I can't pay you because we don't have any funds to pay you with and I said I'm not interested because I have enough money to survive on my own. And so I started immediately. I started working immediately. The first few hours I must tell the truth...I didn't know what to do and I didn't know where to start, but then after speaking with uh the attorney Fakash (ph) who was the attorney and also with the Chancellor and with other people who were there who were all Jews, Fakash, the Chancellor, her son and all of the refugees and so I realized what could be done. The first thing was to try to get back about three hundred people who had been protected by Spain. They had about three hundred, only three hundred at that time because the Hungarian government had said three hundred, and Sanspritz accepted this decision on behalf of the Spanish government and this is something that I didn't, didn't accept immediately at first so those first two or three days my job was to try to find those

who had been protected, of the three hundred protected. Of the three hundred I was able to get a hundred and fifty back and I found them at the uh Merchandise Depot, at the train station and also by going to the border between Hungary and say Austria and Germany, and those who had a Spanish ID we were able to bring them back. It seems to me we had rented two trucks but I don't remember now how many, or we brought them back with the train or we reserved a special car...I, I don't really remember how that happened. I was with the car. I had a car. So I started working. I saved uh...after...oh he wants to know if you're going to edit it, edit this tape..._____so the episode at the train station...you can take it from the other tape and put it together, piece it together. (Pause- Technical Conversation) The first episode that struck me very much and which opened my eyes to what was happening and to how things were actually really were, at the train station they were loading train cars with Jews who were being deported because the Hungarian government said that it had _____ an agreement publicly with the German government to give thirty million uh Jews who would go to work and then we understood that that wasn't true, that they were going to work. They were people who were being deported and then we didn't know what would happen to them in the end, so much so that Eva Long's (ph) husband had volunteered to be a laborer. He went on the train but on the trip between Budapest and the border he understood...I don't know how...but he understood that it was a trick and so he jumped from the train and he came back to Budapest. And he came back to Budapest to _____. I don't think that that building existed yet but anyway he came to one of the Spanish houses, so...this episode of the two twins...at a certain point there was a column which was going and we were looking to see if anybody was there with Spanish letters, and I saw two twins, two kids of eleven or twelve years old. They were very handsome kids, nice kids and they were identical and the more I saw the more I told myself how is it possible that I, I let them go, and so I told these kids, you see that car over there. Get in the car. Run to the car. Get into the car. Close the door and then the chauffeur will know what he has to do. Maybe you would like to hear from me how I could communicate with these people. At the time I spoke German, French, Spanish, but I could explain myself, I could express myself in Hungarian for a little bit and perhaps I spoke Hungarian with these children, but anyhow these kids went. One Gestapo major came to and he wanted the kids back, and I said no. They were in the car. It's a Spanish car and it had a Spanish uh flag and a license plate, diplomatic license plates and therefore the car was extra-territorial property. He insisted. He took out his gun and then so forth, and next, Wallenberg was next to me and Wallenberg said...told the major, the German major, look...this man represents Spain. You can't...you can't commit any violent acts. He said look. He's getting in the way of my work, and instinctively I replied that you call this work. That's what I asked him. And so he got even more angry. He wanted the kids back. And I...at that point I saw the situation getting really bad. I thought my God, this man is crazy. He could shoot us. He had a big gun, a Mauthauser (ph), a big big gun, but at that point...we were all yelling. I was screaming. Wallenberg, the Spaniard...sorry...the Portuguese, the Swiss, the Vatican...everyone intervened in the discussion. There were many loud voices at the same time and so this colonel, a colonel came, an SS colonel came...of the Gestapo...sorry...came to see what was happening and he asked the major what was happening and the major explained it to him, and so he said now let it be...their time will come too for the kids. And so they left. And then I brought these kids home. I brought them to the Legation and I was surprised to see that they were

really a boy and a girl who when they were fully dressed you couldn't tell and they...it was a boy and a girl and they were perfectly identical. The same height, the same face...everything, everything was identical. This is an episode that struck me which, which along with the other episode of the child who was killed on the street, these two episodes made me reflect very much. It's not that...at the time I really wasn't fully aware of the situation. From the end of March to October 13th, I was not...I had been interned away from Budapest in the countryside...I continued my work. I stopped looking for the three hundred people because I got one hundred and fifty back and it seemed have understood that there was nothing more that could be done and so I started to organize the protection network. We had a house. I don't remember where it was. (Technical conversation) I don't remember which one it was but we did have one house. Maybe two houses we had already. Maybe they were _____ wherever Long was...yes, it's perhaps...but anyway that's not important. I started organizing by issuing hundreds of letters immediately. Letters of protection and I would...I would let these people come in. We would go to the office and type up these letters. Sanspritz didn't know anything because we used his signature pad. He didn't know how many. His job was to keep relations with the Foreign Affairs Minister. So we issued I think more than two thousand five hundred protection...letters of protection in the month of...at the end of October and November. To be more specific...I couldn't be more specific than that. I think we maybe reached three thousand, more or less. It wasn't very easy. Not only...it wasn't sufficient to issue a letter of protection and to escort these people to their house because they had to be escorted to a building after all. I had some people who were willing to accompany these people with their cars uh as the letters of protection were issued. There were cars who were available and who shuttled back and forth between the Legation and the houses where they were going to live and they would go back and forth continuously and therefore and so we had to uh provide for everything. We had to get them settled. Normally these apartments that we would take, we had to pay the rent, but these are details that are of no importance and perhaps we didn't even pay the rent. We also had to feed these people and we had to be careful that the Nazis wouldn't go to take them because they did do that. They did especially they would try to attack those Swedish houses and Swiss houses because they had a a system of protection which was not correct. In other words, they had given, both of those countries had a mixed committee, Jewish and Christian committee which was responsible for issuing letters of protection. To sum it up these letters were being sold. The authorities and particularly the Nazis found out about this and so therefore every day they, they would come and take uh raid the Swiss and the Swedish houses. I think that as far as I know Sweden issued forty million letters of protection and in its houses it had maybe three or four thousand people because they would come in the afternoon and the next day there would be raids, and this is not something that I just heard. They weren't rumors. I saw them with my very own eyes and with Wallenberg I asked him why did you, why do you do that kind of stuff. That's not correct. These letters are being sold and everyone knows about it. The authorities know about it. Anyway, we had to protect to prevent that these people be taken. We had to protect them. With one excuse or the other the Nazi police...not the regular police...the regular police would intervene when they had orders but there was also various police forces, Nazi police forces in various neighborhoods of representing various factions which were ferocious. They killed. They uh they robbed and that was their goal, and we had to protect the those who were being

protected from themselves because these, these people sometimes lacked common sense. Sometimes it was useless. It wasn't enough to tell them don't go out of the houses because if you go out of the house they'll take, they take you away. They put you in the prisons and the Nazis may even kill you, and to...that will give us more work to do because we'll have to come and get you and find you and this happened many times. They would go and take a walk to go find their girlfriend, to go find their boyfriend...all these things. Or for whatever reasons, their own reasons. I even created the committees in each house with three members and their job was to be concerned about hygiene, discipline, order, and to prevent people from leaving the houses and going on the streets. They had to remain inside the houses because there they were safe. If they left the houses, they were no longer safe. They would take their stars off and they would go outside and there would be Nazis there who would ask them for their papers and what papers could they show. They didn't have any. If they did, it would be clear that they were Jews and therefore...yeah...you can understand what happened then. And so we had to find uh food for them and security besides watching. We were pretty lucky. It was a continuous job because we had to travel throughout the neighborhoods continuously to show the flag, to show that we were present and continuously...I went at least twice a day and daringly, I went daringly on the streets and little by little with the with the car...I would go with the car and so the people could see the, the uh flag, so the people could see that the car was guarding them, and therefore and so with time, with the passage of weeks, new houses were organized. We tried with a hospital too but it was but it failed. The...it was my idea but it was a bad idea. It didn't go well. So weeks went on. Months went by...sorry...weeks went on and at the end of November we were working continuously and the work with...the contacts with the authorities...I didn't, I didn't think that you didn't need to have contacts with the authorities. Quite the contrary. I made as many contacts as possible. I...one day for example I took _____...I don't know what that is...I took twenty-five thousand _____ to the secretary of the minister who was very..._____...oh, money. OK. This is money that he brought to the Hungarian uh refugees in Transylvania and Russia and Carpetia and the refugees...and this is money for the children and he was very thankful and every time, every time I was in the neighborhood where he...I went up to see him to say hello to him and this gave me the possibility to ask him information all the time, how it was going at the Foreign Affairs Ministry, for example. For example, since Fritz didn't want to go to the Ministry, since Fritz (ph) never left the Legation to visit a house...he never visited any of the houses. He didn't know anything. He wasn't interested even in how many signatures were used with his signature pad because he was a diplomat and he had uh limited vision. He was an old-timer diplomat. This is a very...what he did was very serious and uh correct but it would have been a good thing in times of peace and in normal times when the war was not ideological as it had become, when there was no persecution of the Jews. Not only of Jews but also the uh in Hungary there were many uh...uh they had orchestras. They played the violins and they had restaurants and they played the orchestras and with the violins and their famous people...in Hungary and in Serbia (ph)..._____. I'm sorry...I can't find the word...you know...these traveling homeless kind of people...oh...uh..._____ they, they dress in flashy costumes...(gypsies)...gypsies, gypsies....thank you. Gypsies. _____ Gypsies. Gypsies. I couldn't find the word...sorry...OK. (Pause) In Belgrade on...day and night I went to restaurants and I had meals and in the evenings they had orchestras. They were played by the gypsies. And

there was a beautiful restaurant in ____ in ____ Square, where there was a good orchestra and there were a couple of good violinists. One day they disappeared, in January of '42 I think it was. Yes. January of 1942 they disappeared. I asked the owner of the restaurant, what happened to the orchestra, the band. And he said well...at first he didn't really want to answer. He was reticent, and then he said the Germans took them off, because they are of an inferior race. So they persecuted uh Jews, gypsies, and in that area were many of them, and the Poles. Not only uh Jewish Poles but the citizens too, and this is something that I saw. This is not something that I just heard. I saw it. So, so we...this is how we worked, issuing these letters of protection and then Sanspritz left. I don't remember if he left the 30th of November or December 1st. Uh it seems...I think that the ambassador, Spanish ambassador told me November 30th. He told me November 30th, but I don't know if he's sure about this or not. Anyhow, he...Sanspritz left and that morning there was a reaction on behalf of the Nazis. I found myself that morning, early in the morning I was called...six in the morning...and I don't remember who called me but they called me from the Legation to tell me that Sanspritz had left and so I got up and I visited the international ghetto thinking what do I do now? What is the situation? And in a certain sense the Nazis helped because by...when I went in front of the house of _____ Street, Number 25, where the child _____ was in this house...he reminded me of some details the other day when I saw him for the first time. He recalled some details that I didn't remember. I saw besides...speaking of _____ he exaggerates when I say that I uh yelled to the Nazis and said get out of here. He exaggerates. As a child, he thought that that's what I did but it wasn't quite like that, but anyhow that's how he saw it. That's his mentality. More or less that's how it was, but I wasn't screaming. I wasn't yelling. So I saw...I entered this house and I said, what is happening here. They were...they told us oh they want to take us away. The police want to deport us. And sure enough the regular police was there. Not the Nazis, the regular police was there which was commanded by a lieutenant, and I asked this lieutenant, what do you want. I've got to take everyone away. And I closed the door in front of him. I locked it, and I said look, no one is leaving. The Spanish flag is here. The Spanish emblem is here. This...we consider this house extra-territorial property. It wasn't legal. It wasn't right, but what governs such governments, you could just say...you could make up things like that. It couldn't have been an extra-territorial house. You needed special permission from the government. The government had not given any special permission to do that, and so we discussed and we reached an agreement that he would postpone the...and together we would go to the park, in the center of the park, where there was a committee composed of various police forces, the Nazi party, the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the Interior Minister and I don't know who else...seven or eight people. And I went there to speak with these people and I spoke with energy and with boldness because if I went there with my hat in hand and I said hey, they would say hey, this guy doesn't know what he's doing. You had to assert yourself, especially with the Hungarians because these people are, are tough people and you had to be just as tough, and he said...I asked him what's happening, why do you want to take these uh people away. He said because Sanspritz fled. Who said that he fled? Sanspritz took a trip. He went to Bern where he is going to meet Spanish, Italian, French, German and Swiss diplomats to discuss the situation, but then he is coming back. But in the meantime I am his...the legal representative of the Spanish government and charge d'affaires and I showed him my passport and my diplomatic pass and so the Foreign

Affairs Minister representative said yes, this man is uh right what he said, so that's the way it was. The only thing is that uh Sanspritz really did leave. He did flee, and he didn't have any intentions of coming back. So much so that he didn't even tell me that he was leaving. He didn't tell me anything. Nothing at all. He left. And I learned about it when he was already at the border. He left at four or five in the morning. Anyway, but that's not important. Perhaps it was a good thing. It was a good thing, because the Nazis uh had invaded that house and it gave me the opportunity to present myself as the successor to the man who they thought had escaped, so the representative of the Foreign Affairs Ministry said OK. You're right. The situation is legal. Uh and I said look, there's a flag at the Legation. There's a flag at all the houses too, and he said...we had an agreement that after two or three days I would go to the Foreign Affairs Minister Ministry to clarify the Spanish position and in fact this is what happened, but when I went back to the Legation, I found that the Swedish Danielson (ph) Minister who was Wallenberg's boss had been to the Legation. Danielson wanted to get some money...some Swiss francs. They're about seventeen thousand Swiss francs which were in a Swiss uh Spanish Legation and I protested at...this is ____ who is the Chancellor, and I said what do we do now. We still had some ____, some money left and not very much. She didn't know what to do and she said that he said that he would send a secretary every morning, a Swedish secretary to see that everything was uh alright, and I said no, please, don't do that. I called Minister Danielson. I begged him not to send anyone and that and that I would go and see him later on to explain the situation and I'm I went probably the next day or so, because if Sweden uh protected the interest of the Spanish Legation, that meant that the interest of the Spanish Legation would no longer exist. So we continued to work. _____. The situation in the houses came back to normal and while I was there in the park I saw that there was a column of Jews that were being deported and I saw that someone was waving and so I went to see and I saw that these were some of the people protected from another houses of the same street, the _____ Street, of Number 33 which was very close, and so I made them give me back. The situation in the houses was probably, was pretty normal and peaceful. I don't know what those questions refer to. (He hasn't understood the question.) There were...you mean...are you referring to the quantity of people who were there, the sleeping conditions, the eating conditions...what are you referring to? _____. In during December, the first ten days of December, we took some other houses...the last two houses, it seems to me. But the...from a point of view of the living conditions it was a very difficult situation and the _____ house, there were five hundred people. ____ told me that they slept on the steps. I don't remember exactly even though there was a committee that held the list of all the people who arrived every day, but I don't remember how many there were exactly, because...I must step forward here. The morning that the Russians arrived, I burnt everything, even the lists of those who were protected because you never know. If they fall in the hands of the Russians or the GPU...you don't know how they could have interpreted this fact, so we destroyed everything. The Chancellor didn't want to. She wanted to save a few things, and I said no. Everything will be destroyed because nothing shall be left in the hands of the Russians because the Russians, the same day entered the Legation as I expected, had predicted. And then they uh then they burnt it...they damaged it but I left. The situation was difficult. As far as living conditions it was also difficult for the food. It was difficult for the hygienic conditions. It was difficult to find medicines. There was a difficult time, for

example, because they had tried to close the water supply in some of the houses. The Nazis had tried to do this and so I protested with vigor. I went to the police commander and I demanded that the water be returned. These things cannot be done because if there is a protection, then these people must have the necessary elements to survive. If there is no water, I don't know what would have happened. With five hundred people and and if it were sixty or seventy...I don't know how, what would have happened. And then there was the problem of food. We had to feed these people. At a certain point there was no more money left from the Legation...this was Hungarian money in the Legation. I spent some of my money that I had in my pockets but I didn't have that much and you had to buy on the black market, and so I went to the Jewish Council, _____, and they gave me some money and then they didn't have any left either. They, they were just in terrible conditions. They had nothing left to eat themselves. I must uh say that in the month of August, _____ had fired the Nazi government and one of the first measures that was taken was that the star be no longer worn and all the racial laws were being dismantled and brought down, and so many people went back to the villages where they had lived. Not everyone lived in Budapest. Some of them lived in villages. In Carpetia (ph) for example, in Buchovina (ph). They were farmers. The, the Jewish, the Jews of that area were farmers, and so what did the Germans and the Nazis do. They forced uh these Jews from the countryside to come back to Budapest and...those who had left Budapest...and they concentrated them in the old ghetto, which could support maybe two, three million people...not fifty or sixty...two or three thousand people, not fifty or sixty thousand people, and so there was this black, terrible hunger. There was...there were infections. There were diseases. They was cold. There was no electricity. There, there was nothing. They had nothing to eat. And so this uh Jewish Council also ran out of money and once it ran...once they ran out, I ran out too, and with what I had I could buy something from the black market and specifically I had to be careful with...watch the children because we had two orphanages which were really not ours but one belonged to the International Red Cross I think and one belonged to the Swedish Red Cross and the Spanish Legation had been begged to protect, protect and to take care of these two houses, and here I must open a parenthesis because the truth is the truth after all. On the black market I bought condensed milk with the symbol of the International Red Cross. And we had uh...it was very expensive. We had to pay for it dearly on the black market, but there were many children. There were children in the two orphanages and there were children in the houses, the protected houses. And since the Jewish Council which whose name was _____, _____, which means Jewish Council, since this uh Council didn't have any money left, wasn't giving any money any more, since I had nominated a committee for each house to maintain the discipline and hygiene and order and so forth, I gave...I charged these committees to spy uh financially, economically. They said...they would tell me which people could give money. And so I went to these people...not every day...and I said give me a thousand _____. You can give me five thousand, near five...according to their capabilities. And these people gave me money. But somebody would say, why. Why should I give you money? And I would say because you have the money. We need the money. I don't have any. The Legation doesn't have any. What...what will we use to buy food with. And then we discovered thanks to the spying activities that the committee undertook that there were some families that had reserves of food that were bountiful and there was a time when we just couldn't find anything on the black market anymore, and

so I had these reserves, food stocks, taken that these families had. And this food was distributed because I don't know what would have happened. There would have been fights because hunger is hunger. A mother who doesn't have milk or food for her child...uh she sees the child get weaker and weaker every day...she's capable of killing and she's right, don't you think? And so therefore with these stories...uh these stories occurred day after day, week after week, and we finally come to the day of Christmas Eve, which was a terrible day...because the Russians, Russia and Spain considered themselves in a state of war. Anyhow, I always kept quiet. Yes...yes... it's started. Uh Christmas Day I remember that I left. On Christmas Eve, on Christmas Eve I left. I spent uh...that evening and I went to the villa in Budapest. It was in late afternoon and I thought that I would eat there but when I arrived in the neighborhood I found that there were elements of the Hungarian army with machine guns and other arms and so forth, and they told me that it's not possible to pass through because the Russians are very close, three hundred, four hundred meters away, and I told them that I have to go. I'm, I'm a diplomat and I have to go to the, all the people of the Spanish Legation, which was very close, a hundred meters from here, and they said OK, we'll give you fifteen minutes and then you have to come back. Otherwise it's uh your business. I said OK. So I went and I found that everything was topsy-turvy. We had sixty refugees in the villa of the Legation and, and I understood that I didn't have time to have lunch there, that I had to go back to Budapest. They, they had made a big Christmas tree for me. It was big because they had...they cut it down from the park and it was six or seven meters high and you would enter the first floor and you would go down to the second...the living room and it was all...it was a Christmas tree that was, that took up two floors and was full of presents and I looked at the Christmas tree and I didn't even take my presents, because I said if I take my stuff, I am letting them know that the Russians are here, that there's going to be some fighting here and that we don't know what the Germans would have done and so forth and so I just said goodbye to everyone and I left. And I went back to Budapest. I was...didn't go back to the villa because the next day it was burnt by a German grenade. That evening, which was Christmas Eve, which is a holiday in Spain too...it's...there's a big supper on Christmas Eve and I had been invited to lunch at the ____ Hotel by the Secretary of the Nazi Party, the Hungarian Nazi Party, and I feared that with this invitation he wanted to ask me to pay for the Spanish passports. They say...the Hungarian newspapers said that I gave the Spanish passports to them. That's now true. It's not true. If they had asked it from me, I don't know what I would have done. I would have judged...assessed the situation at the time and I would have uh dealt and I would have...uh practically I would have sold the passports in exchange for guarantees for security for the protected people. So we lunched together and we spoke about everything except politics. We joked around, and at a certain point we had finished our lunch and a courier arrived which gave him, gave the minister something...just like in the movies. And I think that this...on this piece of paper there was written that he had to leave and in fact he told me...look, I'm sorry but I have to leave and so forth. So we left. And I was happy because he didn't ask me anything. He didn't...he didn't ask anything about the passport, which was a delicate question to hand over a passport. Yes, I did have passports to give, but if the question became known and the Spanish government found out that that the passport had been given to a Nazi minister, the Spanish government undoubtedly would have reacted, and they undoubtedly would have said no, we uh do not authorize this. He's not authorized to

give out passports, so I was glad that he didn't ask me anything. Even though there are Hungarian newspapers that say that I gave uh passports to Nazi ministers, that's not true. In fact, during the trials they didn't bring this up, so I was alone because I didn't even want an escort that evening. I said I was going to go to dinner that evening and he would...and I just need someone to take me to some...to the Legation or to my apartment and that's all, because I had many places where I could go and sleep. At a certain point, I was stopped by a group of Hungarian Nazis, Nazis, who asked me to see my passport and they said that this passport and diplomatic pass are no longer valid. And during this conversation I saw on the other side of the street a uh army elements, a pa...army patrol, and so I called them and the patrol came and it was commanded by a lieutenant who commanded thirty men or so, and I said look, these people want to arrest me and this is my name. These are my documents and papers and so they said no, no, no, no. You can't touch this man. He's a diplomat. He represents Spain and so he sent them away, and so they escorted me home. And I decided that I would go spend the night in an apartment in uh _____, in _____ Street, _____ Street. I invited this lieutenant to come and have a drink with me and he told me, declared to me that they were about to close...they were about to close the neighborhood and there was only one street open left, and that's why I understood that the minister who had been in such a hurry to leave. And so the next morning I tried to get in touch with the villa, because I had left two cars there and I needed those cars. One belonged to Sanspritz and another had been lent to me that morning by an Italian citizen because the only two cars that I had in the Legation were not working, and so he lent me this car and the next day the car was burnt in the village. The whole villa was destroyed. Nothing was left. Of my stuff, one girl saved five handkerchiefs that she had wanted to save me, but she didn't want to hang them on the tree. She didn't want to hang the handkerchiefs on the tree with everything else and this girl came to the house at the last minute before the house burnt and she uh got the box with the handkerchiefs and after three months, she came to Budapest to give me the handkerchiefs. That morning...that Christmas morning was a terrible morning. Spain...I don't know for what reasons...wanted uh cared for the Slovak minister. Bohemia had been annexed by Germany but Slovakia was independent and so they had a diplomatic representative in Budapest. This diplomatic representative who had contacts with the Spaniards...I don't know how...I don't remember...but anyhow with, together with the attorney Fakash went to look for him to bring him to the Legation. We found him. He was dead, in the garden before the gate of the Legation. The Nazis had killed him because they had discovered that he was anti-Nazi. When I returned they wanted to take attorney Fakash away from me. They wanted him to leave the car and if he left the car, that was the end. I was able to bring him back to the Legation and I told him you're not to leave this Legation again. I will go alone. I will be escorted by the police forces. I will go alone and you remain here because your life is in danger. So I...the days...that's how the days passed after Christmas. By New Year's Eve it was calm, especially in the evening. We even danced...sure...we danced in the basement of the Legation. We even brought out some bottles of Spanish wine. There were hundreds and hundreds of Spanish, precious Spanish wine from _____, bottles of _____ wine from these areas in Spain which is precious wine. I liked it anyhow and I used to drink it all the time in Spain. And they danced. They even danced. I was happy because these people who were in hiding...and they were all Jews except for one who said he was a priest, but I don't think he was a

priest. I think that he was a priest who was pretending...uh a Jew who was pretending to be a priest I think, but I never saw him again these are not details that really interested me since they did not come into the offices. They came only for...in the last moment when we were asleep in the basement together and that's when we had this party and that's when I saw them. I, I always thought...I'm actually glad that I didn't have any contact with them. You know, we'd just say hello and good evening and that's it. There was a Hungarian diplomat, _____, who had a wife and daughter...uh many people. There was sixty or so people, and they even danced. And then the situation began to get worse. So we still continued to issue those letters of protection because the Nazis, Hungarian Nazis...not Germans, Hungarian Nazis...when I speak of Nazis I always refer to the Hungarian Nazis, the Milash (ph)...so...what did I want to say...where was I...where was I...OK. The first few days of January we heard some rumors according to which it seemed that they wanted to take away all of the Jews from the international ghetto and take them to the old grand ghetto and deport them. I didn't believe in such a thing because they were saying that Minister _____ who was in charge of the civilians and military for the seized (ph) capital, they were saying that he was going to burn the ghetto and and kill all the Jews. This would have been the final Hungarian solution and I didn't believe in such a thing. In the meantime new letters were being issued, not very many but there was always someone who felt threatened because they had inspected the house next door or the apartment above...you know how it is. So one day uh fourth...on the fourth or fifth or the sixth of January...I don't remember exactly...probably the fifth or the sixth of January, I was crossing Mussolini Square to go to the orphanages which were very nearby and I saw a column of Jews passing by and so I asked, who are these Jews? And they say, these are Jews, uh Portuguese Jews. That night, during that during the night the Portuguese minister had sent an employee of his to ask me orally to assume the responsibility for the Portuguese Legation and I told him no, that if there is something, if there is something...if he can come and explain to me, then we can come to an agreement, but as it stands I I didn't...I couldn't assume any more responsibilities. I'd had enough of my own, and so I saw that they took away all those Portuguese Jews and so I understood that that had already, man had already abandoned everything or he was about to abandon everything because he was the Portuguese minister but he was a Hungarian citizen. He was the _____. _____ was his name, but he was a Hungarian citizen, but he was acting as Portuguese minister and therefore that man said he had abandoned everything, that he was stepping back and that he considered uh that he couldn't do anything more. So I wrote a letter to this minister and I...where I wrote that I had heard these rumors, that I didn't believe in them, that please to deny these rumors but he didn't respond and after two days I wrote him....actually no...I telephoned and I said that I was about to come to see him...that I would come see him the next day and I think that was January 8 or the 7th or the 8th of January. Probably the 8th. Perhaps even in the night. Who knows. Anyway, it's not that important. So he went there that day. I went because I had heard these rumors which were more and more prevalent and then I saw, when I saw the column of the Portuguese Jews I was struck and I went and I found in uh the chamber of the city hall Budapest, in the basement, I found Wallenberg, the Swede, and _____ who was Swiss. And I told them I'm going to go inside first because I have an appointment. My appointment...it hadn't really been conferred to me that I had an appointment but uh and when I return from the appointment then we can all talk together. The colonel uh who is

head of the gendarmerie, _____ accompanied me to the minister's office. It was a little office in the basement and this colonel three days later killed himself by the way. He saw that everything was lost. He'd been compromised because of the Jewish question and so he killed himself. Sada (ph) was his name. Colonel Sada and he was the head of the whole gendarmerie of Hungary at that time, so I went to this minister that I had seen, not known, but I had seen him in the past and very calmly he said yes. He wanted to solve the Jewish question by killing everyone. And so I started to say do you realize what's happening and do you realize what's going to happen, that the Hungarian people will have to suffer because you killed a hundred thousand people, and so finally I even...you know...I even talked about the Myian (ph) civilization and everything that came to mind, _____ people...anything to move him. I even cried. Uh but he was tough so I didn't know what to do anymore. I, I can't just leave the situation like this, I thought to myself, so I told him, look...if within forty-five hours the Spanish government does not receive from me a guarantee that all is calm and that the agreements between...the agreements with the Hungarian government have been respected because during the period between October, November and December we had come to an agreement with the Foreign Affairs Minister and the Hungarian government...we had reached an agreement and received guarantees. Not only that but the Hungarian government wanted to send a diplomatic representative to Madrid in order to, to tie diplomatic relations with the Anglo-Americans to see in, in, in view of the peace treaty, and logically the Spanish government who didn't wish to recognize the Nazi government, didn't want to hear anything about it. The, the uh credentials, the request for credentials...he's explaining uh this...what credentials are...logically I didn't transmit these letters of...this request for credentials to Madrid. It was for a certain Colonel _____. I didn't transmit them because if I did the Spanish government would probably say that that they that they didn't accept it because they didn't recognize the government while until then the government, the Spanish government kept quiet. They kept quiet. Also the Spanish uh Spanish ambassador last night told me that he saw in the archives many telegrams from the Hungarian government which asked the Spanish government if I was really the charge d'affaires. The Spanish government never answered. The Spanish ambassador told me that last night. They never...the Spanish government never responded to these telegrams. I understood naturally, slowly...I slowly understood why we had a preferential treatment with the Hungarian government and this was because they wanted to have diplomatic relations with Spain to contact the Anglo-Americans. We understood it late, but we understood it. If we understood it immediately, maybe two months earlier because we're already talking about the beginning of November...had we understood it earlier, two months ago, we would have behaved differently and perhaps something more could have been done I think but uh we're not...we weren't that intelligent after all. The Spanish ambassador told me not that...not everyone is intelligent. I wasn't intelligent. The other the other guy also wasn't intelligent so uh what do you want. So I told him that if within forty-five hours the Spanish government doesn't get any guarantees that everything is proceeding with order the three thousand Hungarian citizens which are, who are in, in Spain will be interned...actually there were really a hundred including the diplomats...and their goods will be seized and this, the Spanish government will...or ask the Brazilian government and the Paraguayan government to do the same with those Hungarian citizens who were in Brazil and Paraguay. So this minister said a friendly government like the Spanish

government would do such a thing? What friendly government? If you are against us, you're the ones who are against us. This is what we want. We want to protect these Jews. You don't want to do it, so you are coming against our interests and against our policy and against our interests and our wishes, so how can you say that we are friends. We're friends if you say, if you do what we want. To sum it up he said, OK. The Spaniards are, are excluded from the liquidation, will be excluded from the liquidation and so I said no, and I became uh demanding in that moment. I said no. All...everyone or nobody. All of those in the international ghetto must remain where they are or all those in the common ghetto must be, must have electricity and water, so forth again, because those people have to survive too because what would what would happen of the Hungarian people, so I repeated to him again and all the stories about vendettas, terrible vendettas and uh the Anglo-Americans uh who would come to bombard the city and so forth and so on. And so we agreed that everything would have uh occurred in that way. When I left the office I found Wallenberg and _____ were still there, and I explained the situation to them and I said I was able to obtain this and that. When you do inside I don't know what you can ask of this minister, but please don't uh do anything to undermine this agreement that we've just come to. Otherwise nothing more...so Wallenberg asked me for political asylum in the Spanish Legation and I said fine, I'll wait for you. You go to the Legation. I'll wait for you and I'm going to have to go find something in the neighborhood and then I'll I'll meet you there at the Legation. He said no. I will come with my car in the afternoon. I'll give you the car because I know you need a car, and I'll come. I never saw him again. Never saw him again. I know that on the 18th he...on the morning of the 18th he was on _____ Street. I know this for sure, and he had left the house at ten in the morning to go I don't know where. From then on he disappeared. Now since the since historians say that on the 16th he went to _____ at the Russian command and that he was taken prisoner there. I say that's not true because on the morning of the 18th he was in Budapest in the on the _____ Street. _____ means king. I don't know really...I saw him maybe a dozen times. I spoke to him specifically during the meetings with diplomats. I never saw him otherwise. From the beginning of December, all the diplomats, mutual diplomats, had disappeared. He couldn't find any of them. Wallenberg... when I saw Wallenberg at city hall in Budapest on the meeting, the day that I met _____, uh I'd seen him, besides that time, I'd seen him on December 22nd at the uh Papal Nuncio (ph) where he had signed a document uh to protest uh and this was in favor of women and I remember that he did not sign that document because he couldn't sign it because he was a secretary and Minister Danielson, his boss, was there. The ambassador. His, his boss wasn't there at that time. Uh that morning during the meeting I told the Archbishop Angelo _____ I would like to speak privately with you and so we went into another office and so I told him look...I started speaking to him in Italian. In the meetings we always spoke in French. Uh I started speaking in Italian. I said look, I'm not a Spaniard. I'm Italian and I'm close to you because I'm, I was born in Komo (ph) and he had also been born close to Komo. He said oh, you're...you're kidding. You're joking. I said no, no. I'm not kidding. This is the truth. I tell you this because if something would ever happen to me, you...I want you to know this so that you can uh tell my relatives. He told me, I remember, don't tell _____. _____ was his secretary because that guy is very picky. He can...he might become very angry, might cause trouble. I said no no. I won't tell _____. And this...practically this is where the story ends because after a few days...no, actually the next morning, Mr. _____, Mr.

_____ sent an employee to ask for telegrams to send to Madrid because we didn't have a radio. The capital was under siege and it wasn't...we couldn't communicate with Vienna. Normally you could telephone Vienna, Vienna telephoned Berlin, and Berlin via radio communicated to Madrid. But this...it was no longer possible to use the phone. And so I sent this employee to ask for a telegram which uh I asked him to send via radio radio because he had a radio. Uh Mr. Fakash, Attorney Fakash who was an attorney who was very picky, an old-timer, uh told me that I shouldn't send the telegram and I told him look, if I don't send the telegram as soon as this employee goes back to Minister _____, everything will fall apart. If we send the telegram we'll save four or five days. We'll gain four or five days because the Spanish government will of course have to reflect on this before responding. They're not going to respond immediately obviously. The telegram will be send today. I don't know if it'll arrive immediately in Madrid and who will receive it in Madrid. It has to be sent to Bern and this takes time. I wrote to Bern. I wrote to the embassy in Bern. After two or three or four days the...Madrid sent its response thanking uh thanks and it said that it was sure that the Hungarian government would have respected the agreements and so forth and so on. The employee came to deliver the telegram himself and he said that the minister was very satisfied with the telegram and so forth. And then one time something happened which is a little bit funny but at the same time it uh it's...I don't want to say fear but it gave me, made me a little bit anxious. I went to the Foreign Affairs Ministry. This was at the end of December. I think before Christmas I went to the Foreign Affairs Ministry and I entered the antechamber where the secre...permanent secretary had his office. He was like a Vice Minister with whom I'd had contact. His name was _____, and I saw that there were two men seated on a couch who were waiting and one of them I I recognized. He was the Chancellor of the Italian Legation, the Royal Italian Legation, and the other gentleman I didn't know who he was, so I very boldly...I had to very boldly salute them like this and instead of going to the secretary who sort of looked at me with surprise, I went to to the door. I pretended to knock. I went inside and to see this Vice Minister. I did what I had to do and after four...after fifteen minutes or so I left. I said goodbye to the young lady and I made a a vague signal with my hand like this and I left. But once I arrived in the in the hallway I really came back and I started to eaves...eavesdrop and I heard that these two people entered the office and entered the Vice Minister's office so I entered the area too, and I asked Mrs...the young lady...and I said, oh I think I recognize these two men and she said the big man is Minister Gratanzi (ph) of the Social Republic of Italy and the other is his secretary. He was the he was a fascist minister, the Social Republic...the Fascist Social Republic. On the 16th...in the meantime between the...on the 13th it wasn't possible to leave the Legation anymore. We still had telephone communications with which I could control or check on the various houses, not directly because there were no phones in the houses but there were Christians who lived uh in front of the houses or next to them, the houses, and they had agreed to telephone to us if there was danger and for example with Eva Long (ph) on the evening of January 3rd or 4th or 5th or whatever it was. I think she told me even...I think she even told me...anyway they, they remember more than I do. She called me and I went over there at three in the morning. Anyhow, _____, _____. There wasn't...no...it wasn't just that time. That happened many times, ten or fifteen times. Almost every evening I had to get up and go because the Nazis wanted to come and take them away, to take the Jews away from the houses. _____...speaking. I

told them that we had agreements with the Hungarian government and so forth and so on and in the meantime somebody well from my entourage...I always had an entourage. I always had four police officers and two employees of the security office and in reality I always traveled with two people but...two policemen and two public security people, and they never wanted to leave my side and when I left there were two policemen who left and the Legation too...I...I felt like I was a medieval cavalier with the flag and the banner whenever I traveled with them. But anyway this normally happened at night and I would go on foot because it was dangerous to go by car at night. There weren't very many lights. But anyhow that night, that last night that I went to Eva Long in let's say Eva Long's house...I didn't know Eva Long at the time. I met her only three years ago. I...I arrived five minutes after a man had thrown himself out of the window from the fifth floor and you asked me how I, how could I prevent them from taking them away and I would tell them that we had agreements and then at the same time one of my escorts would go to a telephone and telephone the police commando and the Colonel _____ would intervene. This is someone who had helped me, because I had contacts with everyone, with Nazis, non-Nazis. It doesn't matter that he was a Nazi who...he was a Nazi but he was useful so I had contacts with him and there was a Hungarian Nazi, a young guy with a beard. If I asked him for something, he would do it for me. You understand. Now I had contacts with him. I had contacts with everyone. Whoever happened to be there, I had contacts with because that's how you had to operate. Experience taught me that everyone can be useful. There's some who do big favors and some who do smaller favors. Some could intervene for this and some could intervene for that reason. The Foreign Affairs Minister could intervene for that and the Interior Minister could intervene for this and the Nazi Party for another reason and so the last three days I couldn't leave because on the street where the Legation was...at the very end of the street...the street was three hundred meters long, there was a Russian tank with the mouth of the cannon facing the street which would shoot any time it saw a person and so who dared to leave and go on the street. In order to cross the street from the Legation to the _____ Paraguayan Legation which was...you had to open the door and dash, make a dash to get to the other side. And as soon as you did the, the tank would shoot and so you couldn't leave, but I was in telephone contact with the houses because as I said there were always Christian friends who had telephones in the houses who were called. They saw something abnormal. For example, that night they called...I don't know who they called. After half an hour I arrived and I saw that they were about to take them away. I stopped everything but unfortunately I arrived five minutes after a man threw himself out of a window on the fifth floor. I thought it was a woman, but Eva Long told me that it was a man. When I arrived they had already covered the body. The police had covered the body. And I thought it was a woman but in...it was a man. And so on the 16th uh you arrived in my area, on my street and until the afternoon, in the afternoon, up until the afternoon they had respected extra-territory _____. We took the flag down. We put the Swedish flag up. We took the emblem, the Spanish emblem down and put the Swedish emblem because Sweden was supposed to protect Spain's interests. No...because that's the way it's done. When one nation cannot have relations with another nation, another nation which can have relations, it can intervene to protect the interests and in fact I think that Sweden was able to...after ten or twelve days of the Russian's arrival, to...was able to empty the building, the Spanish building. Of that I'm not really sure because I was in hiding. I

couldn't do anything more. As I was telling you about Wallenberg, on the morning of the 18th, the Russians took me and they put me to sweep the streets. _____ Street...I had to sweep _____ Street. At a certain point I saw in front of a building a man whose name was _____ who, who, had been my chauffeur and who had been wounded driving my car. I wasn't there at the time. Uh my...in my position where I was seated uh there was a policeman who was killed. He...and then the car was taken away and then the car was found again a few hours later but it was destroyed. This man has been my chauffeur to do me a favor and at the same time had, he had also, he had had ties with the International Red Cross because the delegate of the International Red Cross never showed his face. The human miseries. So I asked him, did you see Wallenberg. He said yes. He's here. Please, go, go fetch him. I can't move because there's this guy here with a machine gun, the GBU guy who, who is forcing me to sweep the street. After fifteen minutes or ten minutes though he came back. He say no, he's gone. He left a few minutes ago, and this is about eleven in the morning, but from then on nothing more was heard about Wallenberg, so I, therefore I think that he died or because he was hit by a sniper or because he was hit by a German grenade. Uh they resisted until the mid-February in the castle of Buda (ph), in the hills of Buda, I think, or perhaps he met a group of Nazis, Hungarian Nazis, who recognized him and who killed him on the spot. There were hundreds and hundreds of bodies buried in the snow in the area of the Spanish Legation, Mussolini Square. I think that he wanted to cross _____ Street to go to the international ghetto, I think. Or anyhow such...this...a similar declaration was...I made a similar declaration in 1962 I think after a request that was made to me by the Swedish Consulate in Milan. Last year Danielson's widow invited me to her house in the province of Trento (ph). I was at _____ and when we talked about this issue, she told me that her husband and the Foreign Affairs Minister never believed that Wallenberg was taken to the Soviet Union, Russia. Anyhow, some people were interested in blowing up the issue in good faith but then others kept saying things that were not true. As far as I was concerned that's what happened. I may be wrong but that's how it was for me. That's what I believe. I remained three or four months until April, May...five months in Budapest and then the Russians uh kicked every...all the foreign citizens out. I was trying to get back home but they could have sent us Italians home with the trains and in ten or twelve hours we would have been to Capezio (ph) or to or to the other place, what's it called..._____. Instead they sent us via Bucha_____, Istanbul and it took ten days of travel in latched up cars and with a hunger that I don't want to speak about because we didn't even have any money. There was nothing left. I didn't have anything. I had only... everything...I had only what I was wearing the day that the Russians arrived. Everything had been burnt at the Legation. No...yes...at the villa of the Spanish Legation in Budapest, at Buda, and everything else was stolen by the Russians. I didn't even have a shaver to shave. In those days they had...I had a Gillette shaver. Uh we...when we arrived...when I arrived in Istanbul, I found the...someone who had the suitcase that once...a suitcase that once had belonged to me and which had also my shaving kit and I said to him I need my shaving kit. Luckily this person had an extra shaving kit.

TECHNICAL CONVERSATION

End of Tape #4

Tape #5

TECHNICAL CONVERSATION

When I returned to Italy I found that my company had fired me and, and it was an ugly period and I had to even pay for the car that I had borrowed from an Italian and the car was then burnt and I had to pay for that car with my money, but anyway it was a bad period, but anyway I managed. It's difficult when you're forty to change jobs and in a bad situation as it was in Italy at the time, the War of the Mosques (ph) and so forth. It's hard to adapt and I once again went to start afresh and to find work. I adapted. Uh I had to...in order to put bread on the table, and sometimes I wasn't able to do that perfectly but after ten years I was successful. My son was born and we'll ____ for all the sacrifices. I was able to raise him and to settle, settle him and now I consider that I'm uh I'm all settled. I can't say that I am uh I'm rich, but I live, live. I live and I'm happy this way. Especially because all of those people who had been helped by me uh looked for me and they celebrated me. They made me come to Washington. You're welcomed. If in the future, if you need any explanations on anything, we can correspond, but you must write in Italian. _____. I don't know what happened. There's a lady here, Magdalena (ph), who knew him well. She asked me the same thing. What happened? And I say at the end of November, I believe, before Sanspritz left, he disappeared. Since he was trying to get to home in Spain, perhaps he was able with the passport that he had, perhaps he was able to go to Spain. It was difficult because he was a deserter of the Blue Division of Spain which was fighting with the Germans. He had fought in these Divisions next to, with the Germans. I don't...I can't...I've tried to find out because he was a very nice guy. He was young. He was probably twenty-two, maybe twenty-three. He was a very nice guy. He was very helpful. He, he gave me a hand in...several times for something. I remember that he came with, he accompanied me. But at the end of November he disappeared and that day we didn't see him again. Yes. _____, Italian. There are some people who helped me morally, who lives in Germany now and morally...gave me moral support. And then there was Attorney Fakash who unfortunately died the day that the Russians entered the city. That was so unlucky for him. He had a beautiful daughter who was ten years old. He was married. He was Jewish, but I think that he converted because he married a princess, _____ from Vienna. Not a royal princess. She had the title of a princess but it wasn't a royal title. I don't know exactly what...Mrs. _____. No, why. I told you that she helped me morally. Thanks to you. If in the future you need some explanations, I'd love to send, I'd love to send. You can correspond with me in Italy, but please write in Italian so that I don't need to have it translated and so forth. Let me guess. There were, there are many other things that I could tell. I keep saying that the day...I keep saying that the work did not involve just writing those letters of protection. Once those letters were written, the work to protect these people just got started because they had to be protected day and night. When I slept...Italian..

End of Tape #5

Conclusion of Interview

GIORGIO PERLASCA

September 5, 1990

Tape #1

Question: Would you tell me your name please?

Answer: My name is George Perlasca.

Question: And you were born where?

Answer: I was born in Komo (ph) on January 31st, 1910.

Question:...

Answer: You're welcome.

Question:...

Answer: It's too much for my personality.

Question: Can you tell us what happened to you when you were released from released from internment and you came back to Budapest in 1944?

Answer: I escaped on October 13th, 1944. It wasn't an internment camp. I had my own room. Each person had his own room. We ate three times a day and then we had tea in the afternoon and they even gave us cigarettes, soap and toothpaste and even money. And this was according to the Geneva Convention because I was aggregated to the Italian commercial delegation and therefore I had uh I was uh I could uh have diplomatic uh treatment. Uh the 13th I left. The 13th of October and I arrived in Budapest that evening and the next day I don't know what I did but on the 15th the armistice was proclaimed between Hungary, Russia, Great Britain and America. This was an announcement, a terrible announcement because no one was prepared for it except a few people who, who knew questions of state and government. I was surprised. I was having lunch with an Italian lady who was of the Jewish faith and she was married to an Italian diplomat and we...she was speechless and I was surprised, and I didn't know what to do. So I, I hid because the TV was controlled by the Admiral _____ government and everything else fell in the hands of the Nazis and of the Germans, Hungarian Nazis and the German army and their...and then I went to hide in a house which belonged to a friend of mine, uh family friends in the _____ and from this house I went to a hospital to hide because I didn't know where to go because from the first evening I slept in a friend's house in _____ who gave me the keys to his apartment. The next day I discovered that the maid was a German, a _____, and she was pro-Nazi and therefore I didn't go back to that house because it seemed dangerous to me. After a couple of days in the hospital, I spent two more days in hiding. I was hidden by the land...by the landlady in the house where I used to live once upon a time, but then I realized that the Ugandan Hotel that I knew very well was being emptied because many German officers were leaving with their suitcases and I went to the keeper of the building and I asked him if he could give me a

room and he said give me a passport and I said I don't have any passport anymore. I don't have any more documents and he said OK, for two days I'll give you a room and then I...so I didn't know what to do. And so therefore the next morning I decided to go to the Spanish Legation. It was probably eight in the morning. I went there and on the way, on the road, and I was on foot, on ____ Street which is a big street, I saw that some Hungarian Nazis were chasing a child who was probably seven or eight years old. They reached him and one of them shot the child in the back of the head. I was quite struck by this naturally and I asked a passerby why, what did that child do? Who is he? And he said he's Jewish. From the roofs of the houses, however, there were some Jews who were shooting against the Nazis from the rooftop houses. But anyway I went to the Legation and I found ____ who gave me a passport and I...he said come tomorrow with two photos, and I had two in my pocket which I pulled out, and I gave them to him and then he gave me the passport. And he also gave me a letter from the Minister of Interior which said that the Spanish government two years earlier had granted me their citizenship because I had fought in the civil war and also, the letter also said...and that I had asked for a citizenship and the letter said that they were not able to locate me and that they now found me and I had to assume citizenship, Spanish citizenship.

TECHNICAL CONVERSATION

So we were...with this letter I went together with the legal attaché..we went to the Minister of Interior where I changed citizenship. I canceled the Italian one and I assumed Spanish citizenship. When I returned to the Legation that early morning, it was probably eight or nine a.m., and it's strange that that morning Sanspritz (ph) got up at eight a.m., but these were very difficult times and people didn't always go to sleep. I saw...thank you...that there was a lot of confusion around, surrounding the Legation at the entrance and in the courtyard, and that many of these people who were there had were wearing the David Star, Star of David, and I asked the legal attaché what was happening and he said that these were people who are asking for our protection, protection from the Spanish government but right now we're in difficulty because the only Christian legation is Sanspritz. And therefore it's impossible to organize an external protection and it's it doesn't make any sense to give them protection letters but I said if I can be of help, then I...maybe I can do something, so we went to Sanspritz and I told him I'm available if you need me, and he said yes. Sanspritz said yes but I can't pay you because we don't have any funds to pay you with and I said I'm not interested because I have enough money to survive on my own. And so I started immediately. I started working immediately. The first few hours I must tell the truth....I didn't know what to do and I didn't know where to start, but then after speaking with uh the attorney Fakash (ph) who was the attorney and also with the Chancellor and with other people who were there who were all Jews, Fakash, the Chancellor, her son and all of the refugees and so I realized what could be done. The first thing was to try to get back about three hundred people who had been protected by Spain. They had about three hundred, only three hundred at that time because the Hungarian government had said three hundred, and Sanspritz accepted this decision on behalf of the Spanish government and this is something that I didn't, didn't accept immediately at first so those first two or three days my job was to try to find those who had been protected, of the three hundred protected. Of the three hundred I was able to get a hundred and fifty back and I found them at the uh Merchandise Depot, at the train station and also by going to the border between Hungary and say Austria and Germany, and those who had a Spanish ID we were able to bring them back. It seems to me we had rented two trucks but

I don't remember now how many, or we brought them back with the train or we reserved a special car...I I don't really remember how that happened. I was with the car. I had a car. So I started working. I saved uh...after...oh he wants to know if you're going to edit it, edit this tape..._____so the episode at the train station...you can take it from the other tape and put it together, piece it together...The first episode that struck me very much and which opened my eyes to what was happening and to how things were actually really were, at the train station they were loading train cars with Jews who were being deported because the Hungarian government said that it had _____ an agreement publicly with the German government to give thirty million uh Jews who would go to work and then we understood that that wasn't true, that they were going to work. They were people who were being deported and then we didn't know what would happen to them in the end, so much so that Eva Long's (ph) husband had volunteered to be a laborer. He went on the train but on the trip between Budapest and the border he understood...I don't know how...but he understood that it was a trick and so he jumped from the train and he came back to Budapest. And he came back to Budapest to _____. I don't think that that building existed yet but anyway he came to one of the Spanish houses, so...this episode of the two twins...at a certain point there was a column which was going and we were looking to see if anybody was there with Spanish letters, and I saw two twins, two kids of eleven or twelve years old. They were very handsome kids, nice kids and they were identical and the more I saw the more I told myself how is it possible that I, I let them go, and so I told these kids, you see that car over there. Get in the car. Run to the car. Get into the car. Close the door and then the chauffeur will know what he has to do. Maybe you would like to hear from me how I could communicate with these people. At the time I spoke German, French, Spanish, but I could explain myself, I could express myself in Hungarian for a little bit and perhaps I spoke Hungarian with these children, but anyhow these kids went. One Gestapo major came to and he wanted the kids back, and I said no. They were in the car. It's a Spanish car and it had a Spanish uh flag and a license plate, diplomatic license plates and therefore the car was extra(c)territorial property. He insisted. He took out his gun and then so forth, and next, Wallenberg was next to me and Wallenberg said...told the major, the German major, look...this man represents Spain. You can't...you can't commit any violent acts. He said look. He's getting in the way of my work, and instinctively I replied that you call this work. That's what I asked him. And so he got even more angry. He wanted the kids back. And I...at that point I saw the situation getting really bad. I thought my God, this man is crazy. He could shoot us. He had a big gun, a Mauthauser (ph), a big, big gun, but at that point...we were all yelling. I was screaming. Wallenberg, the Spaniard...sorry...the Portuguese, the Swiss, the Vatican...everyone intervened in the discussion. There were many loud voices at the same time and so this colonel, a colonel came, an SS colonel came...of the Gestapo...sorry...came to see what was happening and he asked the major what was happening and the major explained it to him, and so he said now let it be...their time will come too for the kids. And so they left. And then I brought these kids home. I brought them to the Legation and I was surprised to see that they were really a boy and a girl who when they were fully dressed you couldn't tell and they...it was a boy and a girl and they were perfectly identical. The same height, the same face...everything, everything was identical. This is an episode that struck me which, which along with the other episode of the child who was killed on the street, these two episodes made me reflect very much. It's not that...at the time I really wasn't fully aware of the situation. From the end of March to October 13th, I was not...I had been interned away from Budapest in the countryside...I continued my work. I stopped looking for the three hundred people because I got one hundred and fifty back and it seemed have understood that

there was nothing more that could be done and so I started to organize the protection network. We had a house. I don't remember where it was. (Technical conversation) I don't remember which one it was but we did have one house. Maybe two houses we had already. Maybe they were _____ wherever Long was...yes, it's perhaps...but anyway that's not important. I started organizing by issuing hundreds of letters immediately. Letters of protection and I would...I would let these people come in. We would go to the office and type up these letters. Sanspritz didn't know anything because we used his signature pad. He didn't know how many. His job was to keep relations with the Foreign Affairs Minister. So we issued I think more than two thousand five hundred protection...letters of protection in the month of...at the end of October and November. To be more specific...I couldn't be more specific than that. I think we maybe reached three thousand, more or less. It wasn't very easy. Not only...it wasn't sufficient to issue a letter of protection and to escort these people to their house because they had to be escorted to a building after all. I had some people who were willing to accompany these people with their cars uh as the letters of protection were issued. There were cars who were available and who shuttled back and forth between the Legation and the houses where they were going to live and they would go back and forth continuously and therefore and so we had to uh provide for everything. We had to get them settled. Normally these apartments that we would take, we had to pay the rent, but these are details that are of no importance and perhaps we didn't even pay the rent. We also had to feed these people and we had to be careful that the Nazis wouldn't go to take them because they did do that. They did especially they would try to attack those Swedish houses and Swiss houses because they had a, a system of protection which was not correct. In other words, they had given, both of those countries had a mixed committee, Jewish and Christian committee which was responsible for issuing letters of protection. To sum it up these letters were being sold. The authorities and particularly the Nazis found out about this and so therefore every day they, they would come and take uh raid the Swiss and the Swedish houses. I think that as far as I know Sweden issued forty million letters of protection and in its houses it had maybe three or four thousand people because they would come in the afternoon and the next day there would be raids, and this is not something that I just heard. They weren't rumors. I saw them with my very own eyes and with Wallenberg I asked him why did you, why do you do that kind of stuff. That's not correct. These letters are being sold and everyone knows about it. The authorities know about it. Anyway, we had to protect to prevent that these people be taken. We had to protect them. With one excuse or the other the Nazi police...not the regular police...the regular police would intervene when they had orders but there was also various police forces, Nazi police forces in various neighborhoods of representing various factions which were ferocious. They killed. They uh they robbed and that was their goal, and we had to protect the those who were being protected from themselves because these, these people sometimes lacked common sense. Sometimes it was useless. It wasn't enough to tell them don't go out of the houses because if you go out of the house they'll take, they take you away. They put you in the prisons and the Nazis may even kill you, and to...that will give us more work to do because we'll have to come and get you and find you and this happened many times. They would go and take a walk to go find their girlfriend, to go find their boyfriend...all these things. Or for whatever reasons, their own reasons. I even created the committees in each house with three members and their job was to be concerned about hygiene, discipline, order, and to prevent people from leaving the houses and going on the streets. They had to remain inside the houses because there they were safe. If they left the houses, they were no longer safe. They would take their stars off and they would go outside and there would be Nazis there who would ask them for their papers

and what papers could they show. They didn't have any. If they did, it would be clear that they were Jews and therefore...yeah...you can understand what happened then. And so we had to find uh food for them and security besides watching. We were pretty lucky. It was a continuous job because we had to travel throughout the neighborhoods continuously to show the flag, to show that we were present and continuously...I went at least twice a day and daringly, I went daringly on the streets and little by little with the with the car...I would go with the car and so the people could see the, the uh flag, so the people could see that the car was guarding them, and therefore and so with time, with the passage of weeks, new houses were organized. We tried with a hospital too but it was but it failed. The...it was my idea but it was a bad idea. It didn't go well. So weeks went on. Months went by...sorry...weeks went on and at the end of November we were working continuously and the work with...the contacts with the authorities...I didn't, I didn't think that you didn't need to have contacts with the authorities. Quite the contrary. I made as many contacts as possible. I...one day for example I took _____I don't know what that is...I took twenty-five thousand _____ to the secretary of the minister who was very..._____oh, money. OK. This is money that he brought to the Hungarian uh refugees in Transylvania and Russia and Carpetia and the refugees...and this is money for the children and he was very thankful and every time, every time I was in the neighborhood where he...I went up to see him to say hello to him and this gave me the possibility to ask him information all the time, how it was going at the Foreign Affairs Ministry, for example. For example, since Fritz didn't want to go to the Ministry, since Fritz (ph) never left the Legation to visit a house...he never visited any of the houses. He didn't know anything. He wasn't interested even in how many signatures were used with his signature pad because he was a diplomat and he had uh limited vision. He was an old-timer diplomat. This is a very...what he did was very serious and uh correct but it would have been a good thing in times of peace and in normal times when the war was not ideological as it had become, when there was no persecution of the Jews. Not only of Jews but also the uh in Hungary there were many uh...uh they had orchestras. They played the violins and they had restaurants and they played the orchestras and with the violins and their famous people...in Hungary and in Serbia (ph)..._____. I'm sorry...I can't find the word...you know...these traveling homeless kind of people...oh...uh..._____ they, they dress in flashy costumes...(gypsies)...gypsies, gypsies....thank you. Gypsies. _____ Gypsies. Gypsies. I couldn't find the word...sorry...OK. (Pause) In Belgrade on...day and night I went to restaurants and I had meals and in the evenings they had orchestras. They were played by the gypsies. And there was a beautiful restaurant in _____ in _____ Square, where there was a good orchestra and there were a couple of good violinists. One day they disappeared, in January of '42 I think it was. Yes. January of 1942 they disappeared. I asked the owner of the restaurant, what happened to the orchestra, the band. And he said well...at first he didn't really want to answer. He was reticent, and then he said the Germans took them off, because they are of an inferior race. So they persecuted uh Jews, gypsies, and in that area were many of them, and the Poles. Not only uh Jewish Poles but the citizens too, and this is something that I saw. This is not something that I just heard. I saw it. So, so we...this is how we worked, issuing these letters of protection and then Sanspritz left. I don't remember if he left the 30th of November or December 1st. Uh it seems...I think that the ambassador, Spanish ambassador told me November 30th. He told me November 30th, but I don't know if he's sure about this or not. Anyhow, he...Sanspritz left and that morning there was a reaction on behalf of the Nazis. I found myself that morning, early in the morning I was called...six in the morning...and I don't remember who called me but they called me from the Legation to tell me that Sanspritz had left and so I got up and I, I visited the

international ghetto thinking what do I do now? What is the situation? And in a certain sense the Nazis helped because by...when I went in front of the house of _____ Street, Number 25, where the child _____ was in this house...he reminded me of some details the other day when I saw him for the first time. He recalled some details that I didn't remember. I saw besides...speaking of _____ he exaggerates when I say that I uh yelled to the Nazis and said get out of here. He exaggerates. As a child, he thought that that's what I did but it wasn't quite like that, but anyhow that's how he saw it. That's his mentality. More or less that's how it was, but I wasn't screaming. I wasn't yelling. So I saw...I entered this house and I said, what is happening here. They were...they told us oh they want to take us away. The police want to deport us. And sure enough the regular police was there. Not the Nazis, the regular police was there which was commanded by a lieutenant, and I asked this lieutenant, what do you want. I've got to take everyone away. And I closed the door in front of him. I locked it, and I said look, no one is leaving. The Spanish flag is here. The Spanish emblem is here. This...we consider this house extra-territorial property. It wasn't legal. It wasn't right, but what governs such governments, you could just say...you could make up things like that. It couldn't have been an extra-territorial house. You needed special permission from the government. The government had not given any special permission to do that, and so we discussed and we reached an agreement that he would postpone the...and together we would go to the park, in the center of the park, where there was a committee composed of various police forces, the Nazi party, the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the Interior Minister and I don't know who else...seven or eight people. And I went there to speak with these people and I spoke with energy and with boldness because if I went there with my hat in hand and I said hey, they would say hey, this guy doesn't know what he's doing. You had to assert yourself, especially with the Hungarians because these people are, are tough people and you had to be just as tough, and he said...I asked him what's happening, why do you want to take these uh people away. He said because Sanspritz fled. Who said that he fled? Sanspritz took a trip. He went to Bern where he is going to meet Spanish, Italian, French, German and Swiss diplomats to discuss the situation, but then he is coming back. But in the meantime I am his...the legal representative of the Spanish government and charge d'affaires and I showed him my passport and my diplomatic pass and so the Foreign Affairs Minister representative said yes, this man is uh right what he said, so that's the way it was. The only thing is that uh Sanspritz really did leave. He did flee, and he didn't have any intentions of coming back. So much so that he didn't even tell me that he was leaving. He didn't tell me anything. Nothing at all. He left. And I learned about it when he was already at the border. He left at four or five in the morning. Anyway, but that's not important. Perhaps it was a good thing. It was a good thing, because the Nazis uh had invaded that house and it gave me the opportunity to present myself as the successor to the man who they thought had escaped, so the representative of the Foreign Affairs Ministry said OK. You're right. The situation is legal. Uh and I said look, there's a flag at the Legation. There's a flag at all the houses too, and he said...we had an agreement that after two or three days I would go to the Foreign Affairs Minister Ministry to clarify the Spanish position and in fact this is what happened, but when I went back to the Legation, I found that the Swedish Danielson (ph) Minister who was Wallenberg's boss had been to the Legation. Danielson wanted to get some money...some Swiss francs. They're about seventeen thousand Swiss francs which were in a Swiss uh Spanish Legation and I protested at...this is _____ who is the Chancellor, and I said what do we do now. We still had some _____, some money left and not very much. She didn't know what to do and she said that he said that he would send a secretary every morning, a Swedish secretary to see that everything was uh alright, and I said no, please, don't do that. I

called Minister Danielson. I begged him not to send anyone and that and that I would go and see him later on to explain the situation and I'm I went probably the next day or so, because if Sweden uh protected the interest of the Spanish Legation, that meant that the interest of the Spanish Legation would no longer exist. So we continued to work. _____. The situation in the houses came back to normal and while I was there in the park I saw that there was a column of Jews that were being deported and I saw that someone was waving and so I went to see and I saw that these were some of the people protected from another houses of the same street, the _____ Street, of Number 33 which was very close, and so I made them give me back. The situation in the houses was probably, was pretty normal and peaceful. I don't know what those questions refer to. (He hasn't understood the question.) There were...you mean...are you referring to the quantity of people who were there, the sleeping conditions, the eating conditions...what are you referring to? _____. In during December, the first ten days of December, we took some other houses...the last two houses, it seems to me. But the...from a point of view of the living conditions it was a very difficult situation and the _____ house, there were five hundred people. _____ told me that they slept on the steps. I don't remember exactly even though there was a committee that held the list of all the people who arrived every day, but I don't remember how many there were exactly, because...I must step forward here. The morning that the Russians arrived, I burnt everything, even the lists of those who were protected because you never know. If they fall in the hands of the Russians or the GPU...you don't know how they could have interpreted this fact, so we destroyed everything. The Chancellor didn't want to. She wanted to save a few things, and I said no. Everything will be destroyed because nothing shall be left in the hands of the Russians because the Russians, the same day entered the Legation as I expected, had predicted. And then they uh then they burnt it...they damaged it but I left. The situation was difficult. As far as living conditions it was also difficult for the food. It was difficult for the hygienic conditions. It was difficult to find medicines. There was a difficult time, for example, because they had tried to close the water supply in some of the houses. The Nazis had tried to do this and so I protested with vigor. I went to the police commander and I demanded that the water be returned. These things cannot be done because if there is a protection, then these people must have the necessary elements to survive. If there is no water, I don't know what would have happened. With five hundred people and, and if it were sixty or seventy...I don't know how, what would have happened. And then there was the problem of food. We had to feed these people. At a certain point there was no more money left from the Legation...this was Hungarian money in the Legation. I spent some of my money that I had in my pockets but I didn't have that much and you had to buy on the black market, and so I went to the Jewish Council, _____, and they gave me some money and then they didn't have any left either. They, they were just in terrible conditions. They had nothing left to eat themselves. I must uh say that in the month of August, _____ had fired the Nazi government and one of the first measures that was taken was that the star be no longer worn and all the racial laws were being dismantled and brought down, and so many people went back to the villages where they had lived. Not everyone lived in Budapest. Some of them lived in villages. In Carpetia (ph) for example, in Buchovina (ph). They were farmers. The, the Jewish, the Jews of that area were farmers, and so what did the Germans and the Nazis do. They forced uh these Jews from the countryside to come back to Budapest and...those who had left Budapest...and they concentrated them in the old ghetto, which could support maybe two, three million people...not fifty or sixty...two or three thousand people, not fifty or sixty thousand people, and so there was this black, terrible hunger. There was...there were infections. There were diseases. They was cold.

There was no electricity. There, there was nothing. They had nothing to eat. And so this uh Jewish Council also ran out of money and once it ran...once they ran out, I ran out too, and with what I had I could buy something from the black market and specifically I had to be careful with...watch the children because we had two orphanages which were really not ours but one belonged to the International Red Cross I think and one belonged to the Swedish Red Cross and the Spanish Legation had been begged to protect, protect and to take care of these two houses, and here I must open a parenthesis because the truth is the truth after all. On the black market I bought condensed milk with the symbol of the International Red Cross. And we had uh...it was very expensive. We had to pay for it dearly on the black market, but there were many children. There were children in the two orphanages and there were children in the houses, the protected houses. And since the Jewish Council which whose name was _____, _____, which means Jewish Council, since this uh Council didn't have any money left, wasn't giving any money any more, since I had nominated a committee for each house to maintain the discipline and hygiene and order and so forth, I gave...I charged these committees to spy uh financially, economically. They said...they would tell me which people could give money. And so I went to these people...not every day...and I said give me a thousand _____. You can give me five thousand, near five...according to their capabilities. And these people gave me money. But somebody would say, why. Why should I give you money? And I would say because you have the money. We need the money. I don't have any. The Legation doesn't have any. What...what will we use to buy food with. And then we discovered thanks to the spying activities that the committee undertook that there were some families that had reserves of food that were bountiful and there was a time when we just couldn't find anything on the black market anymore, and so I had these reserves, food stocks, taken that these families had. And this food was distributed because I don't know what would have happened. There would have been fights because hunger is hunger. A mother who doesn't have milk or food for her child...uh she sees the child get weaker and weaker every day...she's capable of killing and she's right, don't you think? And so therefore with these stories...uh these stories occurred day after day, week after week, and we finally come to the day of Christmas Eve, which was a terrible day.

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

...because the Russians, Russia and Spain considered themselves in a state of war. Anyhow, I always kept quiet. Yes...yes...it's started. Uh Christmas Day I remember that I left. On Christmas Eve, on Christmas Eve I left. I spent uh...that evening and I went to the villa in Budapest. It was in late afternoon and I thought that I would eat there but when I arrived in the neighborhood I found that there were elements of the Hungarian army with machine guns and other arms and so forth, and they told me that it's not possible to pass through because the Russians are very close, three hundred, four hundred meters away, and I told them that I have to go. I'm, I'm a diplomat and I have to go to the, all the people of the Spanish Legation, which was very close, a hundred meters from here, and they said OK, we'll give you fifteen minutes and then you have to come back. Otherwise it's uh your business. I said OK. So I went and I found that everything was topsy-turvy. We had sixty refugees in the villa of the Legation and, and I understood that I didn't have time to have lunch there, that I had to go back to Budapest. They, they had made a big Christmas tree for me. It was big because they had...they cut it down from the park and it was six or seven meters high and you would enter the first floor and you would go down to the second...the living room and it was all...it was a Christmas tree that was, that took up two floors and was full of presents and I looked at the Christmas tree and I didn't even take my presents, because I said if I take my stuff, I am letting them know that the Russians are here, that there's going to be some fighting here and that we don't know what the Germans would have done and so forth and so I just said goodbye to everyone and I left. And I went back to Budapest. I was...didn't go back to the villa because the next day it was burnt by a German grenade. That evening, which was Christmas Eve, which is a holiday in Spain too...it's...there's a big supper on Christmas Eve and I had been invited to lunch at the ____ Hotel by the Secretary of the Nazi Party, the Hungarian Nazi Party, and I feared that with this invitation he wanted to ask me to pay for the Spanish passports. They say...the Hungarian newspapers said that I gave the Spanish passports to them. That's now true. It's not true. If they had asked it from me, I don't know what I would have done. I would have judged...assessed the situation at the time and I would have uh dealt and I would have...uh practically I would have sold the passports in exchange for guarantees for security for the protected people. So we lunched together and we spoke about everything except politics. We joked around, and at a certain point we had finished our lunch and a courier arrived which gave him, gave the minister something...just like in the movies. And I think that this...on this piece of paper there was written that he had to leave and in fact he told me...look, I'm sorry but I have to leave and so forth. So we left. And I was happy because he didn't ask me anything. He didn't...he didn't ask anything about the passport, which was a delicate question to hand over a passport. Yes, I did have passports to give, but if, if the question became known and the Spanish government found out that that the passport had been given to a Nazi minister, the Spanish government undoubtedly would have reacted, and they undoubtedly would have said no, we uh do not authorize this. He's not authorized to give out passports, so I was glad that he didn't ask me anything. Even though there are Hungarian newspapers that say that I gave uh passports to Nazi ministers, that's not true. In fact, during the trials they didn't bring this up, so I was alone because I didn't even want an escort that evening. I said I was going to go to dinner that evening and he would...and I just need someone to take me to some...to the Legation or to my apartment and that's all, because I had many places where I could go and sleep. At a certain point, I was stopped by a group of Hungarian Nazis, Nazis, who asked me to see my passport and they said that this passport and diplomatic pass are no longer

valid. And during this conversation I saw on the other side of the street a uh army elements, a pa...army patrol, and so I called them and the patrol came and it was commanded by a lieutenant who commanded thirty men or so, and I said look, these people want to arrest me and this is my name. These are my documents and papers and so they said no, no, no, no. You can't touch this man. He's a diplomat. He represents Spain and so he sent them away, and so they escorted me home. And I decided that I would go spend the night in an apartment in uh _____, in _____ Street, _____ Street. I invited this lieutenant to come and have a drink with me and he told me, declared to me that they were about to close...they were about to close the neighborhood and there was only one street open left, and that's why I understood that the minister who had been in such a hurry to leave. And so the next morning I tried to get in touch with the villa, because I had left two cars there and I needed those cars. One belonged to Sanspritz and another had been lent to me that morning by an Italian citizen because the only two cars that I had in the Legation were not working, and so he lent me this car and the next day the car was burnt in the village. The whole villa was destroyed. Nothing was left. Of my stuff, one girl saved five handkerchiefs that she had wanted to save me, but she didn't want to hang them on the tree. She didn't want to hang the handkerchiefs on the tree with everything else and this girl came to the house at the last minute before the house burnt and she uh got the box with the handkerchiefs and after three months, she came to Budapest to give me the handkerchiefs. That morning...that Christmas morning was a terrible morning. Spain...I don't know for what reasons...wanted uh cared for the Slovak minister. Bohemia had been annexed by Germany but Slovakia was independent and so they had a diplomatic representative in Budapest. This diplomatic representative who had contacts with the Spaniards...I don't know how...I don't remember...but anyhow with, together with the attorney Fakash went to look for him to bring him to the Legation. We found him. He was dead, in the garden before the gate of the Legation. The Nazis had killed him because they had discovered that he was anti-Nazi. When I returned they wanted to take attorney Fakash away from me. They wanted him to leave the car and if he left the car, that was the end. I was able to bring him back to the Legation and I told him you're not to leave this Legation again. I will go alone. I will be escorted by the police forces. I will go alone and you remain here because your life is in danger. So I...the days...that's how the days passed after Christmas. By New Year's Eve it was calm, especially in the evening. We even danced...sure...we danced in the basement of the Legation. We even brought out some bottles of Spanish wine. There were hundreds and hundreds of Spanish, precious Spanish wine from _____, bottles of _____ wine from these areas in Spain which is precious wine. I liked it anyhow and I used to drink it all the time in Spain. And they danced. They even danced. I was happy because these people who were in hiding...and they were all Jews except for one who said he was a priest, but I don't think he was a priest. I think that he was a priest who was pretending...uh a Jew who was pretending to be a priest I think, but I never saw him again these are not details that really interested me since they did not come into the offices. They came only for...in the last moment when we were asleep in the basement together and that's when we had this party and that's when I saw them. I I always thought...I'm actually glad that I didn't have any contact with them. You know, we'd just say hello and good evening and that's it. There was a Hungarian diplomat, _____, who had a wife and daughter...uh many people. There was sixty or so people, and they even danced. And then the situation began to get worse. So we still continued to issue those letters of protection because the Nazis, Hungarian Nazis...not Germans, Hungarian Nazis...when I speak of Nazis I always refer to the Hungarian Nazis, the Milash (ph)...so...what did I want to say...where was I...where was I...OK. The first few days of January we heard some rumors according to which it

seemed that they wanted to take away all of the Jews from the international ghetto and take them to the old grand ghetto and deport them. I didn't believe in such a thing because they were saying that Minister _____ who was in charge of the civilians and military for the seized (ph) capital, they were saying that he was going to burn the ghetto and ,and kill all the Jews. This would have been the final Hungarian solution and I didn't believe in such a thing. In the meantime new letters were being issued, not very many but there was always someone who felt threatened because they had inspected the house next door or the apartment above...you know how it is. So one day uh fourth...on the fourth or fifth or the sixth of January...I don't remember exactly...probably the fifth or the sixth of January, I was crossing Mussolini Square to go to the orphanages which were very nearby and I saw a column of Jews passing by and so I asked, who are these Jews? And they say, these are Jews, uh Portuguese Jews. That night, during that during the night the Portuguese minister had sent an employee of his to ask me orally to assume the responsibility for the Portuguese Legation and I told him no, that if there is something, if there is something...if he can come and explain to me, then we can come to an agreement, but as it stands I, I didn't...I couldn't assume any more responsibilities. I'd had enough of my own, and so I saw that they took away all those Portuguese Jews and so I understood that that had already, man had already abandoned everything or he was about to abandon everything because he was the Portuguese minister but he was a Hungarian citizen. He was the _____.

_____ was his name, but he was a Hungarian citizen, but he was acting as Portuguese minister and therefore that man said he had abandoned everything, that he was stepping back and that he considered uh that he couldn't do anything more. So I wrote a letter to this minister and I...where I wrote that I had heard these rumors, that I didn't believe in them, that please to deny these rumors but he didn't respond and after two days I wrote him....actually no...I telephoned and I said that I was about to come to see him...that I would come see him the next day and I think that was January 8 or the 7th or the 8th of January. Probably the 8th. Perhaps even in the night. Who knows. Anyway, it's not that important. So he went there that day. I went because I had heard these rumors which were more and more prevalent and then I saw, when I saw the column of the Portuguese Jews I was struck and I went and I found in uh the chamber of the city hall Budapest, in the basement, I found Wallenberg, the Swede, and _____ who was Swiss. And I told them I'm going to go inside first because I have an appointment. My appointment...it hadn't really been conferred to me that I had an appointment but uh and when I return from the appointment then we can all talk together. The colonel uh who is head of the gendarmerie, _____ accompanied me to the minister's office. It was a little office in the basement and this colonel three days later killed himself by the way. He saw that everything was lost. He'd been compromised because of the Jewish question and so he killed himself. Sada (ph) was his name. Colonel Sada and he was the head of the whole gendarmerie of Hungary at that time, so I went to this minister that I had seen, not known, but I had seen him in the past and very calmly he said yes. He wanted to solve the Jewish question by killing everyone. And so I started to say do you realize what's happening and do you realize what's going to happen, that the Hungarian people will have to suffer because you killed a hundred thousand people, and so finally I even...you know...I even talked about the Myian (ph) civilization and everything that came to mind, _____ people...anything to move him. I even cried. Uh but he was tough so I didn't know what to do anymore. I I can't just leave the situation like this, I thought to myself, so I told him, look...if within forty-five hours the Spanish government does not receive from me a guarantee that all is calm and that the agreements between...the agreements with the Hungarian government have been respected because during the period between October, November and December we had

come to an agreement with the Foreign Affairs Minister and the Hungarian government...we had reached an agreement and received guarantees. Not only that but the Hungarian government wanted to send a diplomatic representative to Madrid in order to, to tie diplomatic relations with the Anglo-Americans to see in, in, in view of the peace treaty, and logically the Spanish government who didn't wish to recognize the Nazi government, didn't want to hear anything about it. The, the uh credentials, the request for credentials...he's explaining uh this...what credentials are...logically I didn't transmit these letters of...this request for credentials to Madrid. It was for a certain Colonel _____. I didn't transmit them because if I did the Spanish government would probably say that that they that they didn't accept it because they didn't recognize the government while until then the government, the Spanish government kept quiet. They kept quiet. Also the Spanish uh Spanish ambassador last night told me that he saw in the archives many telegrams from the Hungarian government which asked the Spanish government if I was really the charge d'affaires. The Spanish government never answered. The Spanish ambassador told me that last night. They never...the Spanish government never responded to these telegrams. I understood naturally, slowly...I slowly understood why we had a preferential treatment with the Hungarian government and this was because they wanted to have diplomatic relations with Spain to contact the Anglo-Americans. We understood it late, but we understood it. If we understood it immediately, maybe two months earlier because we're already talking about the beginning of November...had we understood it earlier, two months ago, we would have behaved differently and perhaps something more could have been done I think but uh we're not...we weren't that intelligent after all. The Spanish ambassador told me not that...not everyone is intelligent. I wasn't intelligent. The other the other guy also wasn't intelligent so uh what do you want. So I told him that if within forty-five hours the Spanish government doesn't get any guarantees that everything is proceeding with order the three thousand Hungarian citizens which are, who are in, in Spain will be interned...actually there were really a hundred including the diplomats...and their goods will be seized and this, the Spanish government will...or ask the Brazilian government and the Paraguayan government to do the same with those Hungarian citizens who were in Brazil and Paraguay. So this minister said a friendly government like the Spanish government would do such a thing? What friendly government? If you are against us, you're the ones who are against us. This is what we want. We want to protect these Jews. You don't want to do it, so you are coming against our interests and against our policy and against our interests and our wishes, so how can you say that we are friends. We're friends if you say, if you do what we want. To sum it up he said, OK. The Spaniards are, are excluded from the liquidation, will be excluded from the liquidation and so I said no, and I became uh demanding in that moment. I said no. All...everyone or nobody. All of those in the international ghetto must remain where they are or all those in the common ghetto must be, must have electricity and water, so forth again, because those people have to survive too because what would what would happen of the Hungarian people, so I repeated to him again and all the stories about vendettas, terrible vendettas and uh the Anglo(c)Americans uh who would come to bombard the city and so forth and so on. And so we agreed that everything would have uh occurred in that way. When I left the office I found Wallenberg and _____ were still there, and I explained the situation to them and I said I was able to obtain this and that. When you do inside I don't know what you can ask of this minister, but please don't uh do anything to undermine this agreement that we've just come to. Otherwise nothing more...so Wallenberg asked me for political asylum in the Spanish Legation and I said fine, I'll wait for you. You go to the Legation. I'll wait for you and I'm going to have to go find something in the neighborhood and

then I'll, I'll meet you there at the Legation. He said no. I will come with my car in the afternoon. I'll give you the car because I know you need a car, and I'll come. I never saw him again. Never saw him again. I know that on the 18th he...on the morning of the 18th he was on ____ Street. I know this for sure, and he had left the house at ten in the morning to go I don't know where. From then on he disappeared. Now since the since historians say that on the 16th he went to _____ at the Russian command and that he was taken prisoner there. I say that's not true because on the morning of the 18th he was in Budapest in the on the ____ Street. ____ means king. I don't know really...I saw him maybe a dozen times. I spoke to him specifically during the meetings with diplomats. I never saw him otherwise. From the beginning of December, all the diplomats, mutual diplomats, had disappeared. He couldn't find any of them. Wallenberg... when I saw Wallenberg at city hall in Budapest on the meeting, the day that I met _____, uh I'd seen him, besides that time, I'd seen him on December 22nd at the uh Papal Nuncio (ph) where he had signed a document uh to protest uh and this was in favor of women and I remember that he did not sign that document because he couldn't sign it because he was a secretary and Minister Danielson, his boss, was there. The ambassador. His, his boss wasn't there at that time. Uh that morning during the meeting I told the Archbishop Angelo _____ I would like to speak privately with you and so we went into another office and so I told him look...I started speaking to him in Italian. In the meetings we always spoke in French. Uh I started speaking in Italian. I said look, I'm not a Spaniard. I'm Italian and I'm close to you because I'm, I was born in Komo (ph) and he had also been born close to Komo. He said oh, you're...you're kidding. You're joking. I said no, no. I'm not kidding. This is the truth. I tell you this because if something would ever happen to me, you...I want you to know this so that you can uh tell my relatives. He told me, I remember, don't tell _____. _____ was his secretary because that guy is very picky. He can...he might become very angry, might cause trouble. I said no, no. I won't tell _____. And his...practically this is where the story ends because after a few days...no, actually the next morning, Mr. _____, Mr. _____ sent an employee to ask for telegrams to send to Madrid because we didn't have a radio. The capital was under siege and it wasn't...we couldn't communicate with Vienna. Normally you could telephone Vienna, Vienna telephoned Berlin, and Berlin via radio communicated to Madrid. But this...it was no longer possible to use the phone. And so I sent this employee to ask for a telegram which uh I asked him to send via radio radio because he had a radio. Uh Mr. Fakash, Attorney Fakash who was an attorney who was very picky, an old-timer, uh told me that I shouldn't send the telegram and I told him look, if I don't send the telegram as soon as this employee goes back to Minister _____, everything will fall apart. If we send the telegram we'll save four or five days. We'll gain four or five days because the Spanish government will of course have to reflect on this before responding. They're not going to respond immediately obviously. The telegram will be send today. I don't know if it'll arrive immediately in Madrid and who will receive it in Madrid. It has to be sent to Bern and this takes time. I wrote to Bern. I wrote to the embassy in Bern. After two or three or four days the...Madrid sent its response thanking uh thanks and it said that it was sure that the Hungarian government would have respected the agreements and so forth and so on. The employee came to deliver the telegram himself and he said that the minister was very satisfied with the telegram and so forth. And then one time something happened which is a little bit funny but at the same time it uh it's...I don't want to say fear but it gave me, made me a little bit anxious. I went to the Foreign Affairs Ministry. This was at the end of December. I think before Christmas I went to the Foreign Affairs Ministry and I entered the antechamber where the secre...permanent secretary had his office. He was like a Vice Minister with whom I'd had contact. His name was _____,

and I saw that there were two men seated on a couch who were waiting and one of them I, I recognized. He was the Chancellor of the Italian Legation, the Royal Italian Legation, and the other gentleman I didn't know who he was, so I very boldly...I had to very boldly salute them like this and instead of going to the secretary who sort of looked at me with surprise, I went to the door. I pretended to knock. I went inside and to see this Vice Minister. I did what I had to do and after four...after fifteen minutes or so I left. I said goodbye to the young lady and I made a, a vague signal with my hand like this and I left. But once I arrived in the in the hallway I really came back and I started to eaves...eavesdrop and I heard that these two people entered the office and entered the Vice Minister's office so I entered the area too, and I asked Mrs...the young lady...and I said, oh I think I recognize these two men and she said the big man is Minister Gratanzi (ph) of the Social Republic of Italy and the other is his secretary. He was the he was a fascist minister, the Social Republic...the Fascist Social Republic. On the 16th...in the meantime between the...on the 13th it wasn't possible to leave the Legation anymore. We still had telephone communications with which I could control or check on the various houses, not directly because there were no phones in the houses but there were Christians who lived uh in front of the houses or next to them, the houses, and they had agreed to telephone to us if there was danger and for example with Eva Long (ph) on the evening of January 3rd or 4th or 5th or whatever it was. I think she told me even...I think she even told me...anyway they, they remember more than I do. She called me and I went over there at three in the morning. Anyhow... There wasn't...no...it wasn't just that time. That happened many times, ten or fifteen times. Almost every evening I had to get up and go because the Nazis wanted to come and take them away, to take the Jews away from the houses. ...speaking. I told them that we had agreements with the

Hungarian government and so forth and so on and in the meantime somebody well from my entourage...I always had an entourage. I always had four police officers and two employees of the security office and in reality I always traveled with two people but...two policemen and two public security people, and they never wanted to leave my side and when I left there were two policemen who left and the Legation too...I...I felt like I was a medieval cavalier with the flag and the banner whenever I traveled with them. But anyway this normally happened at night and I would go on foot because it was dangerous to go by car at night. There weren't very many lights. But anyhow that night, that last night that I went to Eva Long in let's say Eva Long's house...I didn't know Eva Long at the time. I met her only three years ago. I...I arrived five minutes after a man had thrown himself out of the window from the fifth floor and you asked me how I, how could I prevent them from taking them away and I would tell them that we had agreements and then at the same time one of my escorts would go to a telephone and telephone the police commando and the Colonel _____ would intervene. This is someone who had helped me, because I had contacts with everyone, with Nazis, non-Nazis. It doesn't matter that he was a Nazi who...he was a Nazi but he was useful so I had contacts with him and there was a Hungarian Nazi, a young guy with a beard. If I asked him for something, he would do it for me. You understand. Now I had contacts with him. I had contacts with everyone. Whoever happened to be there, I had contacts with because that's how you had to operate. Experience taught me that everyone can be useful. There's some who do big favors and some who do smaller favors. Some could intervene for this and some could intervene for that reason. The Foreign Affairs Minister could intervene for that and the Interior Minister could intervene for this and the Nazi Party for another reason and so the last three days I couldn't leave because on the street where the Legation was...at the very end of the street...the street was three hundred

meters long, there was a Russian tank with the mouth of the cannon facing the street which would shoot any time it saw a person and so who dared to leave and go on the street. In order to cross the street from the Legation to the ____ Paraguayan Legation which was...you had to open the door and dash, make a dash to get to the other side. And as soon as you did the, the tank would shoot and so you couldn't leave, but I was in telephone contact with the houses because as I said there were always Christian friends who had telephones in the houses who were called. They saw something abnormal. For example, that night they called...I don't know who they called. After half an hour I arrived and I saw that they were about to take them away. I stopped everything but unfortunately I arrived five minutes after a man threw himself out of a window on the fifth floor. I thought it was a woman, but Eva Long told me that it was a man. When I arrived they had already covered the body. The police had covered the body. And I thought it was a woman but in...it was a man. And so on the 16th uh you arrived in my area, on my street and until the afternoon, in the afternoon, up until the afternoon they had respected extra-territory _____. We took the flag down. We put the Swedish flag up. We took the emblem, the Spanish emblem down and put the Swedish emblem because Sweden was supposed to protect Spain's interests. No...because that's the way it's done. When one nation cannot have relations with another nation, another nation which can have relations, it can intervene to protect the interests and in fact I think that Sweden was able to...after ten or twelve days of the Russian's arrival, to...was able to empty the building, the Spanish building. Of that I'm not really sure because I was in hiding. I couldn't do anything more. As I was telling you about Wallenberg, on the morning of the 18th, the Russians took me and they put me to sweep the streets. _____ Street...I had to sweep _____ Street. At a certain point I saw in front of a building a man whose name was _____ who, who had been my chauffeur and who had been wounded driving my car. I wasn't there at the time. Uh my...in my position where I was seated uh there was a policeman who was killed. He...and then the car was taken away and then the car was found again a few hours later but it was destroyed. This man has been my chauffeur to do me a favor and at the same time had, he had also, he had had ties with the International Red Cross because the delegate of the International Red Cross never showed his face. The human miseries. So I asked him, did you see Wallenberg. He said yes. He's here. Please, go, go fetch him. I can't move because there's this guy here with a machine gun, the GBU guy who, who is forcing me to sweep the street. After fifteen minutes or ten minutes though he came back. He said no, he's gone. He left a few minutes ago, and this is about eleven in the morning, but from then on nothing more was heard about Wallenberg, so I, therefore I think that he died or because he was hit by a sniper or because he was hit by a German grenade. Uh they resisted until the mid(c)February in the castle of Buda (ph), in the hills of Buda, I think, or perhaps he met a group of Nazis, Hungarians, Nazis, who recognized him and who killed him on the spot. There were hundreds and hundreds of bodies buried in the snow in the area of the Spanish Legation, Mussolini Square. I think that he wanted to cross _____ Street to go to the international ghetto, I think. Or anyhow such...this...a similar declaration was...I made a similar declaration in 1962 I think after a request that was made to me by the Swedish Consulate in Milan. Last year Danielson's widow invited me to her house in the province of Trento (ph). I was at _____ and when we talked about this issue, she told me that her husband and the Foreign Affairs Minister never believed that Wallenberg was taken to the Soviet Union, Russia. Anyhow, some people were interested in blowing up the issue in good faith but then others kept saying things that were not true. As far as I was concerned that's what happened. I may be wrong but that's how it was for me. That's what I believe. I remained three or four months until April, May...five months in Budapest and then

the Russians uh kicked every...all the foreign citizens out. I was trying to get back home but they could have sent us Italians home with the trains and in ten or twelve hours we would have been to Capezio (ph) or to or to the other place, what's it called..._____. Instead they sent us via Bucha_____, Istanbul and it took ten days of travel in latched up cars and with a hunger that I don't want to speak about because we didn't even have any money. There was nothing left. I didn't have anything. I had only... everything...I had only what I was wearing the day that the Russians arrived. Everything had been burnt at the Legation. No...yes...at the villa of the Spanish Legation in Budapest, at Buda, and everything else was stolen by the Russians. I didn't even have a shaver to shave. In those days they had...I had a Gillette shaver. Uh we...when we arrived...when I arrived in Istanbul, I found the...someone who had the suitcase that once...a suitcase that once had belonged to me and which had also my shaving kit and I said to him I need my shaving kit. Luckily this person had an extra shaving kit.

TECHNICAL CONVERSATION

End of Tape #2

Tape #3**TECHNICAL CONVERSATION**

...When I returned to Italy I found that my company had fired me and, and it was an ugly period and I had to even pay for the car that I had borrowed from an Italian and the car was then burnt and I had to pay for that car with my money, but anyway it was a bad period, but anyway I managed. It's difficult when you're forty to change jobs and in a bad situation as it was in Italy at the time, the War of the Mosques (ph) and so forth. It's hard to adapt and I once again went to start afresh and to find work. I, I adapted. Uh I had to...in order to put bread on the table, and sometimes I wasn't able to do that perfectly but after ten years I was successful. My son was born and we'll _____ for all the sacrifices. I was able to raise him and to settle, settle him and now I consider that I'm uh I'm all settled. I can't say that I am uh I'm rich, but I live, live. I live and I'm happy this way. Especially because all of those people who had been helped by me uh looked for me and they celebrated me. They made me come to Washington. You're welcomed. If in the future, if you need any explanations on anything, we can correspond, but you must write in Italian. _____. I don't know what happened. There's a lady here, Magadelena (ph), who knew him well. She asked me the same thing. What happened? And I say at the end of November, I believe, before Sanspritz left, he disappeared. Since he was trying to get to home in Spain, perhaps he was able with the passport that he had, perhaps he was able to go to Spain. It was difficult because he was a deserter of the Blue Division of Spain which was fighting with the Germans. He had fought in these Divisions next to, with the Germans. I don't...I can't...I've tried to find out because he was a very nice guy. He was young. He was probably twenty-two, maybe twenty-three. He was a very nice guy. He was very helpful. He, he gave me a hand in...several times for something. I remember that he came with, he accompanied me. But at the end of November he disappeared and that day we didn't see him again. Yes...Italian. There are some people who helped me morally, who lives in Germany now and morally...gave me moral support. And then there was Attorney Fakash who unfortunately died the day that the Russians entered the city. That was so unlucky for him. He had a beautiful daughter who was ten years old. He was married. He was Jewish, but I think that he converted because he married a princess, _____ from Vienna. Not a royal princess. She had the title of a princess but it wasn't a royal title. I don't know exactly what...Mrs. _____. No, why. I told you that she helped me morally. Thanks to you. If in the future you need some explanations, I'd love to send, I'd love to send. You can correspond with me in Italy, but please write in Italian so that I don't need to have it translated and so forth. Let me guess. There were, there are many other things that I could tell. I keep saying that the day...I keep saying that the work did not involve just writing those letters of protection. Once those letters were written, the work to protect these people just got started because they had to be protected day and night. When I slept...Italian...

END OF INTERVIEW