

1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:02,760

2
00:00:02,760 --> 00:00:06,360
This is a continuation of an
interview with Ernest Fontheim

3
00:00:06,360 --> 00:00:09,310
on June 4th, 1997.

4
00:00:09,310 --> 00:00:13,980
This is tape one, side
A. For the record,

5
00:00:13,980 --> 00:00:16,900
why don't we begin again
with your stating your name,

6
00:00:16,900 --> 00:00:19,290
date of birth, and city of
birth, if you don't mind.

7
00:00:19,290 --> 00:00:22,260

8
00:00:22,260 --> 00:00:27,120
My name is-- my full name
is Ernest Gunter Fontheim.

9
00:00:27,120 --> 00:00:34,560
I was born on October 23,
1922 in Berlin, Germany.

10
00:00:34,560 --> 00:00:38,760
I might add that my
father was a lawyer.

11
00:00:38,760 --> 00:00:41,300
He was born in 1881.

12
00:00:41,300 --> 00:00:44,900

So he was already over 40
years old when I was born.

13
00:00:44,900 --> 00:00:49,730
And he was one of the best
known lawyers in Berlin.

14
00:00:49,730 --> 00:00:53,780
And I grew up in
a very comfortably

15
00:00:53,780 --> 00:00:58,940
and in a very assimilated home,
assimilated to German culture

16
00:00:58,940 --> 00:01:05,189
and with very little
awareness of my Judaism.

17
00:01:05,189 --> 00:01:07,145
OK.

18
00:01:07,145 --> 00:01:10,568
Do you want to pick up
where we left off before?

19
00:01:10,568 --> 00:01:12,320
Yeah.

20
00:01:12,320 --> 00:01:21,890
I would-- I would like to say
that the transition from--

21
00:01:21,890 --> 00:01:25,340
to the life underground,
undergone meaning simply

22
00:01:25,340 --> 00:01:29,090
with forged papers and
under a different identity,

23
00:01:29,090 --> 00:01:34,550
meant, of course, for me also

a radical transition in family.

24

00:01:34,550 --> 00:01:38,360

My parents had just been
arrested and deported.

25

00:01:38,360 --> 00:01:39,500

And now I am living--

26

00:01:39,500 --> 00:01:42,740

I was living with a
completely different family.

27

00:01:42,740 --> 00:01:47,570

And the family atmosphere
was totally different.

28

00:01:47,570 --> 00:01:52,850

Where my parents were both
actually highly educated

29

00:01:52,850 --> 00:01:58,390

and very intellectual,
the family

30

00:01:58,390 --> 00:02:00,980

of Margaret and
her parents, family

31

00:02:00,980 --> 00:02:05,220

Haas, were, on the other hand--

32

00:02:05,220 --> 00:02:11,510

I mean, Mr. Haas was a tailor
and designer of women's clothes

33

00:02:11,510 --> 00:02:15,230

and actually had
owned a factory,

34

00:02:15,230 --> 00:02:18,620

until the Nazis took
it away from him.

35

00:02:18,620 --> 00:02:24,370

He was a man who was much more folksy than my parents,

36

00:02:24,370 --> 00:02:29,990

had a tremendous sense of humor, and was a very warm person.

37

00:02:29,990 --> 00:02:36,110

And of course, there were frictions now and then.

38

00:02:36,110 --> 00:02:38,300

I guess, that is always unavoidable.

39

00:02:38,300 --> 00:02:42,860

But in general, I felt comfortable and, of course,

40

00:02:42,860 --> 00:02:47,000

also grateful that I was accepted practically

41

00:02:47,000 --> 00:02:50,015

as a family member by this new family.

42

00:02:50,015 --> 00:02:53,030

43

00:02:53,030 --> 00:02:56,630

Also another big difference was the age difference.

44

00:02:56,630 --> 00:03:01,520

As I said, my father was actually quite old.

45

00:03:01,520 --> 00:03:06,170

And for a boy of my age, I mean, my mother

46
00:03:06,170 --> 00:03:08,300
was 10 years younger than he.

47
00:03:08,300 --> 00:03:13,520
But Margaret's parents were--

48
00:03:13,520 --> 00:03:17,900
they were both of the same age,
20 years younger than my father

49
00:03:17,900 --> 00:03:19,980
and 10 years younger
than my mother.

50
00:03:19,980 --> 00:03:24,984
And I think that also made a
difference in the relationship.

51
00:03:24,984 --> 00:03:27,485
What kind of difference are
we talking about in terms

52
00:03:27,485 --> 00:03:31,310
of your rapport with them?

53
00:03:31,310 --> 00:03:34,970
To some extent in terms of
rapport and then also in terms

54
00:03:34,970 --> 00:03:36,770
of how they took life.

55
00:03:36,770 --> 00:03:40,580
I mean also, I have to
say that my parents had

56
00:03:40,580 --> 00:03:45,920
gone through unbelievable
agony, I mean, starting in 1933.

57
00:03:45,920 --> 00:03:49,430

Probably, to some extent,
they took it much harder.

58
00:03:49,430 --> 00:03:53,000
They surely lost much more
because they had more to lose.

59
00:03:53,000 --> 00:03:56,720
They were, in those 10
years, starting in 1933,

60
00:03:56,720 --> 00:03:59,840
they were robbed of all of
their possessions, everything

61
00:03:59,840 --> 00:04:01,940
that my father had worked for.

62
00:04:01,940 --> 00:04:05,540
And also their social
standing and everything

63
00:04:05,540 --> 00:04:07,080
had been taken away from them.

64
00:04:07,080 --> 00:04:10,040
And by the time that the
deportations started,

65
00:04:10,040 --> 00:04:13,160
they were totally devastated.

66
00:04:13,160 --> 00:04:20,459
And the atmosphere therefore
at home also was always--

67
00:04:20,459 --> 00:04:22,160
oh, how can I describe it?

68
00:04:22,160 --> 00:04:30,830
I mean, morbid maybe and
just extremely negative.

69

00:04:30,830 --> 00:04:34,520

While in spite of all the hardships, Margaret's parents,

70

00:04:34,520 --> 00:04:36,200

first of all because they were younger

71

00:04:36,200 --> 00:04:39,680

and, secondly, because, I guess, they

72

00:04:39,680 --> 00:04:42,140

didn't go quite through the same amount

73

00:04:42,140 --> 00:04:47,420

of tremendous radical turmoil and change

74

00:04:47,420 --> 00:04:50,120

had retained their sense of humor

75

00:04:50,120 --> 00:04:57,510

and also their sort of some sense of adventurism and so on.

76

00:04:57,510 --> 00:05:04,160

And I think, to that extent, I felt comfortable there,

77

00:05:04,160 --> 00:05:06,350

in spite of the fact that the loss

78

00:05:06,350 --> 00:05:09,890

of my parents and my sister continued

79

00:05:09,890 --> 00:05:11,870

to be a tremendous weight.

80

00:05:11,870 --> 00:05:14,690

I mean, by that time,
of course, I always

81

00:05:14,690 --> 00:05:18,860

hoped that they would be in some
camp which will be liberated

82

00:05:18,860 --> 00:05:22,435

at some point in the future.

83

00:05:22,435 --> 00:05:27,390

So you have-- it was
a more fun atmosphere.

84

00:05:27,390 --> 00:05:30,860

Well, fun-- yeah, I mean, to
some extent, that is also true.

85

00:05:30,860 --> 00:05:35,500

We, for example, we had brought
along a phonograph player.

86

00:05:35,500 --> 00:05:38,590

We played records, both
classical as well as

87

00:05:38,590 --> 00:05:39,460

dance music.

88

00:05:39,460 --> 00:05:41,470

I didn't know how to dance.

89

00:05:41,470 --> 00:05:44,890

And so Margaret,
who was an excellent

90

00:05:44,890 --> 00:05:48,940

or still is an excellent
dancer, taught me how to dance.

91

00:05:48,940 --> 00:05:58,060

And yeah, as I said, there
was a certain amount of humor

92
00:05:58,060 --> 00:06:01,960
and also lightheartedness.

93
00:06:01,960 --> 00:06:04,480
And, of course, that went
together with the fact

94
00:06:04,480 --> 00:06:08,080
that I and none of
us, in fact, was

95
00:06:08,080 --> 00:06:12,850
wearing the yellow star
anymore, which made us outcasts.

96
00:06:12,850 --> 00:06:16,330
We felt sort of, at least
I felt, liberated by that.

97
00:06:16,330 --> 00:06:23,470
And I mean, all of that
contributed to a more

98
00:06:23,470 --> 00:06:25,150
positive mental outlook.

99
00:06:25,150 --> 00:06:27,910
In addition, I
want to say that we

100
00:06:27,910 --> 00:06:32,380
tried to keep, as much as
possible, the Jewish holidays.

101
00:06:32,380 --> 00:06:35,710
I don't remember anymore
how we even knew the dates.

102
00:06:35,710 --> 00:06:38,080
We surely didn't have

any Jewish calendars.

103
00:06:38,080 --> 00:06:40,720
There were none
printed in Germany.

104
00:06:40,720 --> 00:06:43,660
But we did know, for
example, when Yom Kippur was.

105
00:06:43,660 --> 00:06:45,130
And we fasted on it.

106
00:06:45,130 --> 00:06:49,210
We did know when
Pesach the date was.

107
00:06:49,210 --> 00:06:52,690
And we even kept
ornamental Seder.

108
00:06:52,690 --> 00:06:56,650
Margaret's father, who was
in general an excellent cook

109
00:06:56,650 --> 00:06:59,680
and baker, baked
some approximation

110
00:06:59,680 --> 00:07:02,170
of a matzo, which we ate.

111
00:07:02,170 --> 00:07:05,860
And, of course, we didn't
even have a Haggadah.

112
00:07:05,860 --> 00:07:09,160
But we talked about
the exodus from Egypt

113
00:07:09,160 --> 00:07:12,940
just from out of our memory.

114

00:07:12,940 --> 00:07:16,510

I did have a handwritten
copy of the Kiddush.

115

00:07:16,510 --> 00:07:21,040

And so every Friday evening, we
lit candles and made Kiddush.

116

00:07:21,040 --> 00:07:23,770

If we didn't have wine,
we used some other liquid,

117

00:07:23,770 --> 00:07:26,770

whatever came handy even
if it had to be water.

118

00:07:26,770 --> 00:07:29,980

And if we didn't
have two candles,

119

00:07:29,980 --> 00:07:33,100

we could cut one
candle into two.

120

00:07:33,100 --> 00:07:41,590

And I derived a lot of strength,
I think, from the fact, I mean,

121

00:07:41,590 --> 00:07:43,390

of the Jewish religion.

122

00:07:43,390 --> 00:07:48,630

And that was actually one
important pillar of strength.

123

00:07:48,630 --> 00:07:52,300

I had looking back sort of
three pillars of strength.

124

00:07:52,300 --> 00:07:54,940

One was my Judaism.

125

00:07:54,940 --> 00:08:01,840
The second was my unshakable
trust in the future.

126
00:08:01,840 --> 00:08:06,220
I had almost
certainty that Germany

127
00:08:06,220 --> 00:08:10,630
would lose the war, even at
a time when Germany was still

128
00:08:10,630 --> 00:08:12,160
seemed to be winning.

129
00:08:12,160 --> 00:08:16,090
And in fact, I had
taken along some books.

130
00:08:16,090 --> 00:08:19,640
I had already decided
to study physics later.

131
00:08:19,640 --> 00:08:24,460
I took a book for self
teaching of calculus along,

132
00:08:24,460 --> 00:08:29,770
which I worked through from
cover to cover in those years.

133
00:08:29,770 --> 00:08:33,770
And I had a physics book,
which I studied every week.

134
00:08:33,770 --> 00:08:36,340
I located some time to do that.

135
00:08:36,340 --> 00:08:39,440
And in addition to
that, by the way,

136
00:08:39,440 --> 00:08:41,659

there was-- in a
local bigger town,

137
00:08:41,659 --> 00:08:44,500
there was a public library,
which we joined, of course,

138
00:08:44,500 --> 00:08:46,490
under our assumed names.

139
00:08:46,490 --> 00:08:49,890
And so we checked books out,
novels and other things.

140
00:08:49,890 --> 00:08:53,560
And I already said
that we played music.

141
00:08:53,560 --> 00:08:58,690
So we tried to maintain
as normal an atmosphere as

142
00:08:58,690 --> 00:08:59,590
possible.

143
00:08:59,590 --> 00:09:06,520
So and incidentally, I and, in
fact, none of the four of us

144
00:09:06,520 --> 00:09:09,100
ever had the intention
after the end

145
00:09:09,100 --> 00:09:12,600
of the war to stay one
day longer in Germany

146
00:09:12,600 --> 00:09:14,370
than absolutely necessary.

147
00:09:14,370 --> 00:09:15,880
And we had, at
that time already,

148
00:09:15,880 --> 00:09:18,300
always dreamt about
coming to America.

149
00:09:18,300 --> 00:09:21,610
That was sort of a
dream, like almost

150
00:09:21,610 --> 00:09:23,740
like a castle in the sky.

151
00:09:23,740 --> 00:09:33,010
And so it was the Judaism and
my trust in the future, the two.

152
00:09:33,010 --> 00:09:36,310
The third pillar of strength
was actually Margaret.

153
00:09:36,310 --> 00:09:42,330
As I had indicated
earlier, I had at one time,

154
00:09:42,330 --> 00:09:47,350
while we were still working
at the factory at Siemens,

155
00:09:47,350 --> 00:09:49,330
started to fall in
love with Margot

156
00:09:49,330 --> 00:09:55,370
only to hear that she
had a steady boyfriend.

157
00:09:55,370 --> 00:09:58,240
Well, by that time, I forgot
what happened to the boyfriend.

158
00:09:58,240 --> 00:10:00,700
I think he also went
underground actually.

159
00:10:00,700 --> 00:10:04,180
And anyway, he
was not available.

160
00:10:04,180 --> 00:10:05,830
And there was no contact.

161
00:10:05,830 --> 00:10:10,660
And so my interest in Margot
was of course rekindled.

162
00:10:10,660 --> 00:10:15,400
And at that time, finally,
it was reciprocated.

163
00:10:15,400 --> 00:10:21,130
And actually she was the
person really closest to me

164
00:10:21,130 --> 00:10:24,250
and who gave me much
of the inner strength.

165
00:10:24,250 --> 00:10:27,370
Also she was sort
of the third leg

166
00:10:27,370 --> 00:10:31,480
in that, what kept me
going emotionally, I mean,

167
00:10:31,480 --> 00:10:34,270
mentally going.

168
00:10:34,270 --> 00:10:36,760
I should also say that
one thing that I was not

169
00:10:36,760 --> 00:10:40,740
aware of at the time but that,
with the arrest of my friend

170

00:10:40,740 --> 00:10:44,230

Hans which I had mentioned
earlier, all people

171

00:10:44,230 --> 00:10:48,280

that I had known in my
earlier life were gone.

172

00:10:48,280 --> 00:10:50,380

Some of them of
course had emigrated.

173

00:10:50,380 --> 00:10:53,500

The rest had been deported.

174

00:10:53,500 --> 00:10:55,900

There was nobody from
my immediate family,

175

00:10:55,900 --> 00:11:00,400

my first girlfriend, school
friends, factory friends,

176

00:11:00,400 --> 00:11:02,650

you name it, relatives.

177

00:11:02,650 --> 00:11:05,200

There was nobody.

178

00:11:05,200 --> 00:11:07,060

I was totally
alone in the world.

179

00:11:07,060 --> 00:11:09,130

And the funny thing is
or the strange thing

180

00:11:09,130 --> 00:11:12,970

is that I was totally
unaware of it at that time.

181

00:11:12,970 --> 00:11:16,210

It occurred only years
after the end of the war

182
00:11:16,210 --> 00:11:19,360
when I sort of went
through my memory.

183
00:11:19,360 --> 00:11:22,450
It occurred to me that's
what actually was the case.

184
00:11:22,450 --> 00:11:28,420
And and she was the only one
who was close to me and who,

185
00:11:28,420 --> 00:11:29,890
as I said, who sustained me.

186
00:11:29,890 --> 00:11:37,920

187
00:11:37,920 --> 00:11:41,910
Then I had talked about
the primitive nature

188
00:11:41,910 --> 00:11:43,140
of the house we lived in.

189
00:11:43,140 --> 00:11:46,980
That house is probably a
euphemism, maybe a cottage

190
00:11:46,980 --> 00:11:48,150
or a hut.

191
00:11:48,150 --> 00:11:50,160
I had mentioned the
pump in the garden.

192
00:11:50,160 --> 00:11:52,170
What I didn't say
is people might

193

00:11:52,170 --> 00:11:53,590
assume it was an electric pump.

194

00:11:53,590 --> 00:11:54,090
It wasn't.

195

00:11:54,090 --> 00:11:55,380
It was a hand pump.

196

00:11:55,380 --> 00:11:59,510
And you had to work really hard
to get water up, pumping it.

197

00:11:59,510 --> 00:12:02,960
And as I also mentioned, in
winter, sometimes it froze.

198

00:12:02,960 --> 00:12:05,880
The hut itself was
built of wooden boards

199

00:12:05,880 --> 00:12:12,220
with fairly wide slits of what I
would say 1/8 of an inch or so.

200

00:12:12,220 --> 00:12:16,020
And that made it obviously
very uncomfortable in winter.

201

00:12:16,020 --> 00:12:21,940
Through our Nazi friend, whom
I had also mentioned before,

202

00:12:21,940 --> 00:12:23,310
we had--

203

00:12:23,310 --> 00:12:26,280
we made contact to
people where one

204

00:12:26,280 --> 00:12:27,690
could get building material.

205
00:12:27,690 --> 00:12:30,700
Building material, of course,
were severely rationed

206
00:12:30,700 --> 00:12:32,880
and practically
impossible to get.

207
00:12:32,880 --> 00:12:36,600
And we got sort of
insulation plates.

208
00:12:36,600 --> 00:12:39,270
And even nails were hard to get.

209
00:12:39,270 --> 00:12:43,170
And so we could completely
insulated the house

210
00:12:43,170 --> 00:12:50,050
from the inside with sort of
some plastic type material.

211
00:12:50,050 --> 00:12:52,780
I don't know what it is anymore.

212
00:12:52,780 --> 00:12:57,300
And we got all that material
really through his connections.

213
00:12:57,300 --> 00:12:59,880

214
00:12:59,880 --> 00:13:02,740
Then one day during
our city there,

215
00:13:02,740 --> 00:13:05,610
Sundays, the local
village policeman

216

00:13:05,610 --> 00:13:11,760
came and fortunately while
I was out of the house.

217
00:13:11,760 --> 00:13:13,530
I was probably in Berlin.

218
00:13:13,530 --> 00:13:19,930
And he said he wanted to
find out who was living there

219
00:13:19,930 --> 00:13:23,220
and asked Margaret's
father all kinds

220
00:13:23,220 --> 00:13:24,780
of questions, where he worked.

221
00:13:24,780 --> 00:13:28,020
And he wanted to see the
ID, which he showed him,

222
00:13:28,020 --> 00:13:34,260
and where everybody else worked
and whatever other questions.

223
00:13:34,260 --> 00:13:37,440
And then-- and he was fairly--

224
00:13:37,440 --> 00:13:41,130
he wasn't outright unfriendly
but very businesslike,

225
00:13:41,130 --> 00:13:43,830
which is in a rural
setting, in that village,

226
00:13:43,830 --> 00:13:44,730
is really unusual.

227
00:13:44,730 --> 00:13:47,940
People were more
like a family there.

228
00:13:47,940 --> 00:13:53,550
And at the end, he said,
well, I hear there's

229
00:13:53,550 --> 00:13:55,110
a young men living here also.

230
00:13:55,110 --> 00:14:00,780
And then Mr Haas said,
yes, that's my nephew.

231
00:14:00,780 --> 00:14:03,600
And his name is
so-and-so, Gunter Hessem,

232
00:14:03,600 --> 00:14:06,810
and, of course, my
assumed false name.

233
00:14:06,810 --> 00:14:09,210
And the policeman
then said, well,

234
00:14:09,210 --> 00:14:11,550
I want to ask him
some questions.

235
00:14:11,550 --> 00:14:14,910
When-- and he was also told
that I'm working in a factory.

236
00:14:14,910 --> 00:14:16,530
And then he asked
when I am home.

237
00:14:16,530 --> 00:14:19,990
And he was told I'll
be back on the weekend.

238
00:14:19,990 --> 00:14:23,070
And he said then, well, tell
him I'll be here next Saturday.

239
00:14:23,070 --> 00:14:25,830
I forgot probably 10 or
whatever in the morning.

240
00:14:25,830 --> 00:14:28,790
And I want to ask
him some questions.

241
00:14:28,790 --> 00:14:31,650
And then he left.

242
00:14:31,650 --> 00:14:35,540
And we felt very
threatened by that.

243
00:14:35,540 --> 00:14:37,980
And, of course, I was
the most vulnerable

244
00:14:37,980 --> 00:14:40,980
because I was of military age.

245
00:14:40,980 --> 00:14:43,950
And I did not have, as
I explained earlier,

246
00:14:43,950 --> 00:14:46,770
the complete set
of required papers.

247
00:14:46,770 --> 00:14:52,290
So Margaret's father
went immediately

248
00:14:52,290 --> 00:14:56,490
to our Nazi district
leader friend

249
00:14:56,490 --> 00:14:58,660
and complained
bitterly about it there

250

00:14:58,660 --> 00:15:00,150

that the village policeman--

251

00:15:00,150 --> 00:15:01,680

I remember his name even.

252

00:15:01,680 --> 00:15:05,400

His name was Mueller,
good German name,

253

00:15:05,400 --> 00:15:09,000

had come and interrogated
him almost like a criminal.

254

00:15:09,000 --> 00:15:10,740

And he felt very indignant.

255

00:15:10,740 --> 00:15:15,020

After all, he is an honest,
honorable citizen and so on.

256

00:15:15,020 --> 00:15:20,820

And Harry, the Nazi's name,
said, ah, don't worry about it

257

00:15:20,820 --> 00:15:22,830

Herman.

258

00:15:22,830 --> 00:15:24,060

He's a good friend of mine.

259

00:15:24,060 --> 00:15:25,320

I'll take care of it.

260

00:15:25,320 --> 00:15:29,250

And a few days later, Harry
came, paid us a visit,

261

00:15:29,250 --> 00:15:33,580

and said, Mueller isn't
going to come anymore.

262

00:15:33,580 --> 00:15:36,840

I had a beer with him
yesterday at the village pub.

263

00:15:36,840 --> 00:15:41,230

And I told him that you guys
are good friends of mine.

264

00:15:41,230 --> 00:15:42,930

And I have known you for years.

265

00:15:42,930 --> 00:15:46,170

And you're honest,
honorable people.

266

00:15:46,170 --> 00:15:48,240

And there was no reason to--

267

00:15:48,240 --> 00:15:51,090

and we never saw Mueller again.

268

00:15:51,090 --> 00:15:56,270

So unwittingly, the guy possibly
might have saved our lives.

269

00:15:56,270 --> 00:15:59,040

270

00:15:59,040 --> 00:16:04,740

I had once a close brush
with arrest in Berlin.

271

00:16:04,740 --> 00:16:08,640

As I mentioned also
earlier, trips to Berlin

272

00:16:08,640 --> 00:16:13,410

were necessary to keep up
with our black market contacts

273

00:16:13,410 --> 00:16:14,970

and to get food.

274

00:16:14,970 --> 00:16:18,660

And I should say also, by the way, that most of the food

275

00:16:18,660 --> 00:16:22,560

was obtained by Margaret's father and his wife.

276

00:16:22,560 --> 00:16:25,050

They had, of course, many more contacts.

277

00:16:25,050 --> 00:16:26,040

They had lived longer.

278

00:16:26,040 --> 00:16:27,630

They knew more people.

279

00:16:27,630 --> 00:16:32,340

And but I had a number of people also that I visited usually

280

00:16:32,340 --> 00:16:34,720

once a week, sometimes twice a week.

281

00:16:34,720 --> 00:16:38,630

So and I was always extremely careful.

282

00:16:38,630 --> 00:16:40,620

I think I mentioned some of the strategies

283

00:16:40,620 --> 00:16:43,680

already that I used to avoid detection.

284

00:16:43,680 --> 00:16:47,940

And when I was riding in the subway, I always rode--

285

00:16:47,940 --> 00:16:51,810
sat on the bench, sort of
midway between the doors which

286

00:16:51,810 --> 00:16:56,520
were on either end and watching
the people who would enter.

287

00:16:56,520 --> 00:17:00,390
And if somebody would enter
whom I suspected or even knew,

288

00:17:00,390 --> 00:17:02,520
on the door to
the right, I would

289

00:17:02,520 --> 00:17:05,069
get up and leave to the
left, not that it ever came.

290

00:17:05,069 --> 00:17:08,640
But at least that
was my strategy.

291

00:17:08,640 --> 00:17:12,510
Well, on that particular
day, it was rush hour.

292

00:17:12,510 --> 00:17:19,920
And I entered the train at
the Wittenburg Platz station

293

00:17:19,920 --> 00:17:25,200
in Witten, in the part of the
busiest part of western Berlin

294

00:17:25,200 --> 00:17:26,670
business district.

295

00:17:26,670 --> 00:17:28,950
And since it was
rush hour, the train

296

00:17:28,950 --> 00:17:30,960

was packed with
people, of course.

297

00:17:30,960 --> 00:17:32,940

And I never got to the center.

298

00:17:32,940 --> 00:17:36,300

I just was sort of next
to the entrance door

299

00:17:36,300 --> 00:17:42,120

where I entered, sort of
squeezed in between people.

300

00:17:42,120 --> 00:17:45,000

And as I stood there, as the
train rumbled and rumbled

301

00:17:45,000 --> 00:17:47,990

along, incidentally,
after Wittenburg Platz,

302

00:17:47,990 --> 00:17:50,940

the train emerged
from the tunnel

303

00:17:50,940 --> 00:17:53,790

and became then
an elevated train.

304

00:17:53,790 --> 00:17:58,500

I saw a chubby
short man next to me

305

00:17:58,500 --> 00:18:01,980

say thank you to a soldier,
who was also standing next

306

00:18:01,980 --> 00:18:04,950

to him, handing back his ID.

307

00:18:04,950 --> 00:18:08,430
And I immediately knew
that was a some sort

308
00:18:08,430 --> 00:18:10,410
of a secret policeman.

309
00:18:10,410 --> 00:18:13,127
And by that time, it was--
obviously, first of all,

310
00:18:13,127 --> 00:18:14,460
I couldn't get out of the train.

311
00:18:14,460 --> 00:18:18,100
And if I would have made one
move, that would have even

312
00:18:18,100 --> 00:18:20,220
arranged-- aroused suspicion.

313
00:18:20,220 --> 00:18:22,440
So I just looked
into the air, trying

314
00:18:22,440 --> 00:18:25,770
to look as harmless and
innocent as I could.

315
00:18:25,770 --> 00:18:32,010
But the guy sort of swung around
and fixated me with his eyes

316
00:18:32,010 --> 00:18:35,340
and said, your papers please.

317
00:18:35,340 --> 00:18:38,560
And he made me very nervous.

318
00:18:38,560 --> 00:18:42,930
I had been controlled, I must
say, several times before.

319

00:18:42,930 --> 00:18:45,240

And usually, it went very--

320

00:18:45,240 --> 00:18:47,310

people looked at my ID.

321

00:18:47,310 --> 00:18:50,460

And I greeted them with
a snappy Heil, Hitler,

322

00:18:50,460 --> 00:18:52,090

and that did the job.

323

00:18:52,090 --> 00:18:54,840

Well, he looked at my ID.

324

00:18:54,840 --> 00:18:56,760

And I-- the more
he looked, the more

325

00:18:56,760 --> 00:18:59,490

he noticed he must have
been a real professional.

326

00:18:59,490 --> 00:19:03,470

He looked back between
me and the picture.

327

00:19:03,470 --> 00:19:05,400

And it was, of
course, my picture.

328

00:19:05,400 --> 00:19:07,620

Then he tried to
lift the picture up

329

00:19:07,620 --> 00:19:13,470

to see how it was fastened
to the material of the ID

330

00:19:13,470 --> 00:19:17,040

and asked me one

or two questions.

331
00:19:17,040 --> 00:19:20,430
And I got so
unbelievably nervous

332
00:19:20,430 --> 00:19:25,680
that I noticed that
my artery in my neck

333
00:19:25,680 --> 00:19:27,810
started really to
pump very hard.

334
00:19:27,810 --> 00:19:30,390
And that was something
that I couldn't control.

335
00:19:30,390 --> 00:19:33,680
But he must have noticed it.

336
00:19:33,680 --> 00:19:36,740
Because he constantly
gave me sharp looks.

337
00:19:36,740 --> 00:19:39,510
And then I was
already expected to be

338
00:19:39,510 --> 00:19:42,870
arrested or at least taken
along for further interrogation.

339
00:19:42,870 --> 00:19:47,550
Instead, he handed me the
paper back and said thank you.

340
00:19:47,550 --> 00:19:52,560
And I had the distinct feeling
that guy wasn't satisfied.

341
00:19:52,560 --> 00:19:55,290
And the reason why he

didn't arrest me is he

342

00:19:55,290 --> 00:19:58,590
had decided it might be
smarter to follow me,

343

00:19:58,590 --> 00:20:01,650
because that might
lead him somewhere

344

00:20:01,650 --> 00:20:04,770
where he could get maybe a
bigger catch or something.

345

00:20:04,770 --> 00:20:09,690
So at the next stop
which then, as I said,

346

00:20:09,690 --> 00:20:15,900
was an elevated stop, Nolendorf
Platz, he left the train.

347

00:20:15,900 --> 00:20:17,190
He left the car.

348

00:20:17,190 --> 00:20:20,160
And I decided immediately
that guy didn't leave.

349

00:20:20,160 --> 00:20:22,030
There are two possibilities.

350

00:20:22,030 --> 00:20:25,390
Either he had
another man with him,

351

00:20:25,390 --> 00:20:27,930
whom I didn't know who it
was, whom we might give him--

352

00:20:27,930 --> 00:20:31,230
have given some
wink to follow me.

353
00:20:31,230 --> 00:20:34,500
Or he would just have
gone to the next car

354
00:20:34,500 --> 00:20:37,530
and wait where I would leave.

355
00:20:37,530 --> 00:20:45,030
So I quickly, in my
mind, made a plan

356
00:20:45,030 --> 00:20:48,150
of how to shake off
either him or somebody

357
00:20:48,150 --> 00:20:50,040
whom I may not even know.

358
00:20:50,040 --> 00:20:53,210
And the next stop
was Buellerstrasser.

359
00:20:53,210 --> 00:20:55,250
It was one of the
busiest intersections

360
00:20:55,250 --> 00:20:59,530
in Berlin, Buellerstrasser
corner Putstamastrasser.

361
00:20:59,530 --> 00:21:04,710
And I left the car
then and walked down.

362
00:21:04,710 --> 00:21:09,730
And the stairs from the
elevated ended in a median strip

363
00:21:09,730 --> 00:21:12,100
between the two lanes
of traffic, you know,

364

00:21:12,100 --> 00:21:14,680

going one way on one
side and the opposite way

365

00:21:14,680 --> 00:21:16,220

in the other side.

366

00:21:16,220 --> 00:21:19,600

And at the bottom of the
stairs, I knew the area

367

00:21:19,600 --> 00:21:22,000

like my own pockets.

368

00:21:22,000 --> 00:21:25,150

At the bottom of the stairs
was a newspaper kiosk.

369

00:21:25,150 --> 00:21:27,400

So my plan was, and
that's what I did.

370

00:21:27,400 --> 00:21:30,420

I stopped at the newspaper
kiosk and pretended

371

00:21:30,420 --> 00:21:34,090

to read newspapers and
headlines and so on,

372

00:21:34,090 --> 00:21:37,090

while out of my-- the
corner of my right eye

373

00:21:37,090 --> 00:21:40,220

I peered up who was
coming down the stairs.

374

00:21:40,220 --> 00:21:45,580

And I figured that if
somebody whom I didn't know

375

00:21:45,580 --> 00:21:47,560
was going to follow
me, that person

376
00:21:47,560 --> 00:21:49,390
would sort of linger around.

377
00:21:49,390 --> 00:21:51,722
And I could sort of
make out who it was.

378
00:21:51,722 --> 00:21:53,680
Well, the guy himself,
of course, I would know.

379
00:21:53,680 --> 00:21:58,570
And lo and behold, I had
hardly stopped and started

380
00:21:58,570 --> 00:22:02,140
looking at the newspaper when
I saw that guy come down.

381
00:22:02,140 --> 00:22:06,220
So he obviously did
what I had suspected.

382
00:22:06,220 --> 00:22:09,850
He was in another car and
waited for me to leave.

383
00:22:09,850 --> 00:22:12,970
So I ignored him and just
kept reading the newspapers.

384
00:22:12,970 --> 00:22:16,480
And that was probably
not part of his plan,

385
00:22:16,480 --> 00:22:19,240
because he had to follow
me surreptitiously.

386

00:22:19,240 --> 00:22:21,810
And if he had
lingered around there,

387
00:22:21,810 --> 00:22:23,570
I would have been aware of it.

388
00:22:23,570 --> 00:22:27,070
So he didn't-- he stayed,
I don't know, maybe 10,

389
00:22:27,070 --> 00:22:29,060
20 seconds or so.

390
00:22:29,060 --> 00:22:32,620
And then he crossed
over to one side.

391
00:22:32,620 --> 00:22:36,370
And that was exactly
what I had anticipated.

392
00:22:36,370 --> 00:22:37,990
I should say also
there was a traffic

393
00:22:37,990 --> 00:22:40,340
light at that corner
of Buellerstrasser

394
00:22:40,340 --> 00:22:42,010
and Putstamastrasser.

395
00:22:42,010 --> 00:22:48,190
So once he crossed over to one
side, I waited for the light

396
00:22:48,190 --> 00:22:50,960
to be such that
traffic was going.

397
00:22:50,960 --> 00:22:55,240
And then I made my way,

sprinted between cars,

398
00:22:55,240 --> 00:22:57,250
to the opposite side
so that there were now

399
00:22:57,250 --> 00:23:00,880
two lanes of moving
traffic between him and me.

400
00:23:00,880 --> 00:23:06,370
And then I walked along,
not to the busy street

401
00:23:06,370 --> 00:23:09,730
which was Putstamastrasser
but to the next block, which

402
00:23:09,730 --> 00:23:14,170
was a sort of a residential
street with very few people

403
00:23:14,170 --> 00:23:15,880
only walking there.

404
00:23:15,880 --> 00:23:19,830
And but I, in order not to
arouse suspicion, I didn't run.

405
00:23:19,830 --> 00:23:22,030
I just walked
briskly, the way one

406
00:23:22,030 --> 00:23:26,770
walks purposefully in a city if
one goes after some appointment

407
00:23:26,770 --> 00:23:27,610
or so.

408
00:23:27,610 --> 00:23:30,460
And as soon as I had
turned the corner,

409
00:23:30,460 --> 00:23:33,280
I raced as fast as I could.

410
00:23:33,280 --> 00:23:38,410
And it was about a 100 meter
dash to the next corner.

411
00:23:38,410 --> 00:23:40,160
And there I looked around.

412
00:23:40,160 --> 00:23:45,520
And I saw that guy come
around also, following me.

413
00:23:45,520 --> 00:23:46,660
Then I walked.

414
00:23:46,660 --> 00:23:49,660
I turned again the
corner and came back

415
00:23:49,660 --> 00:23:52,010
at a different block
of Putstamastrasser,

416
00:23:52,010 --> 00:23:56,220
to that busy street, jumped
on a moving trolley car.

417
00:23:56,220 --> 00:24:01,000
In those days, trolley cars had
rear platforms without a door.

418
00:24:01,000 --> 00:24:06,790
So you could, just by grabbing
the handlebars and jumping on,

419
00:24:06,790 --> 00:24:11,800
you could even jump on
a car while it was--

420

00:24:11,800 --> 00:24:13,600
they didn't go
very fast, while it

421
00:24:13,600 --> 00:24:17,390
was in the middle of
riding or driving.

422
00:24:17,390 --> 00:24:21,840
And in this way, I
shook that guy off.

423
00:24:21,840 --> 00:24:25,960
I am still convinced that
he had some suspicion

424
00:24:25,960 --> 00:24:28,350
that he was not-- my paper
was not that perfect.

425
00:24:28,350 --> 00:24:31,880

426
00:24:31,880 --> 00:24:34,920
I should also say that
over the, by that time now,

427
00:24:34,920 --> 00:24:36,960
we are into 1944.

428
00:24:36,960 --> 00:24:40,230
And many of my friends
and acquaintances

429
00:24:40,230 --> 00:24:43,680
who had gone underground
or had-- one after another

430
00:24:43,680 --> 00:24:45,630
had been caught by the Gestapo.

431
00:24:45,630 --> 00:24:48,600
I mentioned that

cousin of mine who

432
00:24:48,600 --> 00:24:51,340
had gone to Bavaria
and his girlfriend.

433
00:24:51,340 --> 00:24:54,660
There were various schoolmates
from my high school class

434
00:24:54,660 --> 00:24:55,860
who got caught.

435
00:24:55,860 --> 00:24:59,280
Then that other friend,
Galcoun, who wasn't caught

436
00:24:59,280 --> 00:25:02,220
but who was murdered.

437
00:25:02,220 --> 00:25:05,940
And of course, that--

438
00:25:05,940 --> 00:25:12,510
that had an effect on our
mental outlook, obviously.

439
00:25:12,510 --> 00:25:16,890
But I guess, there's
a German saying,

440
00:25:16,890 --> 00:25:20,010
which sounds really
cool, but it was really

441
00:25:20,010 --> 00:25:21,830
the case in our case.

442
00:25:21,830 --> 00:25:23,820
It's [GERMAN].

443
00:25:23,820 --> 00:25:27,060

It means, you walk
forward over graves.

444
00:25:27,060 --> 00:25:31,500
And that was all the
time what happened to us.

445
00:25:31,500 --> 00:25:34,410
We lost a tremendous
number of friends.

446
00:25:34,410 --> 00:25:38,100
Some of them came
back but most did not.

447
00:25:38,100 --> 00:25:40,140
During that period
of time, of course,

448
00:25:40,140 --> 00:25:44,190
also the military situation
changed more and more

449
00:25:44,190 --> 00:25:45,540
against Germany.

450
00:25:45,540 --> 00:25:48,420
And that gave us a
tremendous morale boost.

451
00:25:48,420 --> 00:25:51,000
I mean, by that time, in 1943.

452
00:25:51,000 --> 00:25:53,600
Italy had already capitulated.

453
00:25:53,600 --> 00:26:00,990
And and then in early '44,
there were continuous rumors

454
00:26:00,990 --> 00:26:06,660
of a landing of the Allied
forces somewhere in France.

455
00:26:06,660 --> 00:26:10,770
And that happened
finally on June 6, 1944.

456
00:26:10,770 --> 00:26:13,770
I still remember
the day distinctly.

457
00:26:13,770 --> 00:26:17,530
Of course, we didn't have
any radio in our hut,

458
00:26:17,530 --> 00:26:19,050
so we didn't know anything.

459
00:26:19,050 --> 00:26:22,140
But Margaret's parents
were in the city,

460
00:26:22,140 --> 00:26:25,770
in Berlin, on that day,
on their various errands

461
00:26:25,770 --> 00:26:28,380
to contact black market sources.

462
00:26:28,380 --> 00:26:31,590
And they had bought extra
editions of newspapers.

463
00:26:31,590 --> 00:26:36,445
So when they arrived
out in our house,

464
00:26:36,445 --> 00:26:40,380
in our cottage in the evening,
they came with the news

465
00:26:40,380 --> 00:26:43,380
that the Allied had
landed in the Normandy.

466

00:26:43,380 --> 00:26:49,020

And for Margaret, that
was such a shock of joy

467

00:26:49,020 --> 00:26:52,030

that she broke out into tears.

468

00:26:52,030 --> 00:26:53,850

I never forget that.

469

00:26:53,850 --> 00:26:58,380

And we were just
unbelievably happy.

470

00:26:58,380 --> 00:27:01,050

471

00:27:01,050 --> 00:27:07,830

Of course, as the Allies then
continued to make progress,

472

00:27:07,830 --> 00:27:09,990

and I should say
also, incidentally,

473

00:27:09,990 --> 00:27:14,790

on the eastern front, the
successes were tremendous.

474

00:27:14,790 --> 00:27:18,180

Even before that,
in 1943, I think

475

00:27:18,180 --> 00:27:21,060

the biggest tank
battle of all time

476

00:27:21,060 --> 00:27:25,140

took place in the area
of Kossk and Owell

477

00:27:25,140 --> 00:27:28,350

in the Western Soviet
Union and where Germany

478
00:27:28,350 --> 00:27:31,260
suffered a decisive defeat.

479
00:27:31,260 --> 00:27:36,390
And by that time, by 1944,
when the Allies landed--

480
00:27:36,390 --> 00:27:39,000
the western Allies
landed in the Normandy,

481
00:27:39,000 --> 00:27:42,870
the Russians had
already taken Warsaw.

482
00:27:42,870 --> 00:27:48,690
And from both sides, the Allies
were approaching, finally,

483
00:27:48,690 --> 00:27:50,620
German territory.

484
00:27:50,620 --> 00:27:54,300
And so one response
of the Nazis was

485
00:27:54,300 --> 00:28:00,300
to create a new unit called
Volkssturm, best translated

486
00:28:00,300 --> 00:28:01,650
as militia.

487
00:28:01,650 --> 00:28:07,350
And all Germans who were not--

488
00:28:07,350 --> 00:28:11,490
all German males, I should
say, between 16 and 60

489

00:28:11,490 --> 00:28:17,550
who were not in the armed forces
were immediately conscripted

490

00:28:17,550 --> 00:28:19,080
into that Volkssturm.

491

00:28:19,080 --> 00:28:20,790
And the conscription,
since they didn't

492

00:28:20,790 --> 00:28:23,460
want to create a
new bureaucracy,

493

00:28:23,460 --> 00:28:27,930
was the task of conscription
was given to the Nazi party

494

00:28:27,930 --> 00:28:31,590
organization, which was already
an existing organization

495

00:28:31,590 --> 00:28:33,840
with officers and so on.

496

00:28:33,840 --> 00:28:37,080
But now it became
necessary to have IDs.

497

00:28:37,080 --> 00:28:39,550
Because if you're
not in the Wehrmacht,

498

00:28:39,550 --> 00:28:42,480
in the armed forces,
or any of its branches,

499

00:28:42,480 --> 00:28:44,130
you had to be in the Volkssturm.

500

00:28:44,130 --> 00:28:46,360

It was either one or the other.

501

00:28:46,360 --> 00:28:49,680

So fortunately,
Margaret's father

502

00:28:49,680 --> 00:28:54,180

had a colleague from
earlier days, also--

503

00:28:54,180 --> 00:28:57,330

a Jewish colleague, I
mean, from the garment line

504

00:28:57,330 --> 00:28:58,740

who was underground.

505

00:28:58,740 --> 00:29:05,330

And he had access to blank
IDs for the Volkssturm.

506

00:29:05,330 --> 00:29:11,360

And but what he couldn't
supply was the rubber stamp.

507

00:29:11,360 --> 00:29:14,880

It was stamped by the
Nazi party district

508

00:29:14,880 --> 00:29:18,120

in which one was mustered in--

509

00:29:18,120 --> 00:29:20,850

into the Volkssturm.

510

00:29:20,850 --> 00:29:25,860

And then I remembered
that I knew a stamp maker.

511

00:29:25,860 --> 00:29:28,890

So I went to-- and
he moved me only also

512

00:29:28,890 --> 00:29:34,040

under my forged and assumed
name, not who I really was.

513

00:29:34,040 --> 00:29:36,080

And of course, for
stamp makers, it

514

00:29:36,080 --> 00:29:39,440

was strictly forbidden
to make official stamps.

515

00:29:39,440 --> 00:29:43,190

Because they can be used
for all kinds of purposes,

516

00:29:43,190 --> 00:29:45,060

illegal purposes.

517

00:29:45,060 --> 00:29:48,180

So I went to him and
told him a long story.

518

00:29:48,180 --> 00:29:50,720

The story basically
was that my uncle

519

00:29:50,720 --> 00:29:54,140

was working in a
local party district,

520

00:29:54,140 --> 00:29:56,990

registering Volkssturm members.

521

00:29:56,990 --> 00:30:03,230

And that in the crush and
the busy work there, somehow

522

00:30:03,230 --> 00:30:05,570

the stamp got lost.

523

00:30:05,570 --> 00:30:09,590

He thinks it may have fallen
off the table into a wastebasket

524
00:30:09,590 --> 00:30:10,580
and then emptied out.

525
00:30:10,580 --> 00:30:13,560
But he simply didn't
know what happened to it.

526
00:30:13,560 --> 00:30:16,760
And he reported it
immediately to the local,

527
00:30:16,760 --> 00:30:18,950
to his boss, the
district leader.

528
00:30:18,950 --> 00:30:22,820
And the district leader was very
unhappy about that and said,

529
00:30:22,820 --> 00:30:24,770
if it got into the
wrong hands, you know,

530
00:30:24,770 --> 00:30:28,310
anything can be
done with forgeries.

531
00:30:28,310 --> 00:30:31,940
And he holds him
personally responsible.

532
00:30:31,940 --> 00:30:35,480
He better look within
two days, if he doesn't--

533
00:30:35,480 --> 00:30:38,240
if he has not found
the stamp, then he

534
00:30:38,240 --> 00:30:40,740

has to face consequences.

535

00:30:40,740 --> 00:30:44,300

So and, of course, the
consequences in those days

536

00:30:44,300 --> 00:30:47,270

usually were that the
party would fire him.

537

00:30:47,270 --> 00:30:51,290

And then he would be immediately
subject to military induction

538

00:30:51,290 --> 00:30:53,750

and be shipped to
the eastern front.

539

00:30:53,750 --> 00:30:59,190

And so I told that stamp
maker, then finally said,

540

00:30:59,190 --> 00:31:01,890

I would like to have
that stamp within a day.

541

00:31:01,890 --> 00:31:06,020

I can give him, first of all,
the actual cost, whatever

542

00:31:06,020 --> 00:31:11,630

it is, in addition to that,
300 cigarettes, 100 immediately

543

00:31:11,630 --> 00:31:14,420

and 200 when I get the stamp.

544

00:31:14,420 --> 00:31:18,800

And in those days,
cigarettes were almost worth

545

00:31:18,800 --> 00:31:20,330

their weight in gold.

546
00:31:20,330 --> 00:31:23,210
And so the guy agreed.

547
00:31:23,210 --> 00:31:27,620
I had the stamp within
less than two days.

548
00:31:27,620 --> 00:31:31,610
And then Margaret's father
went back to his friend.

549
00:31:31,610 --> 00:31:36,110
And they made a deal
that he would give us,

550
00:31:36,110 --> 00:31:41,930
free of charge, two
Volkssturm membership blanks.

551
00:31:41,930 --> 00:31:44,930
And we, in turn,
would stamp his own

552
00:31:44,930 --> 00:31:47,840
with a party stamp
that we had, also

553
00:31:47,840 --> 00:31:50,950
free of charge [INAUDIBLE].

554
00:31:50,950 --> 00:31:52,580
So that's what happened.

555
00:31:52,580 --> 00:31:55,820
And, of course, women didn't
need an ID, as I said,

556
00:31:55,820 --> 00:32:00,890
because only males were inducted
into the Volksstrum militia.

557

00:32:00,890 --> 00:32:06,900
So we had-- in fact, I
still have my Volkssturm ID.

558
00:32:06,900 --> 00:32:11,750
And to have that ID
was actually terrific

559
00:32:11,750 --> 00:32:16,520
because that obviated the
need for any military papers.

560
00:32:16,520 --> 00:32:19,520
Because only people who
were not in the armed

561
00:32:19,520 --> 00:32:22,820
forces were inducted
into the Volkssturm.

562
00:32:22,820 --> 00:32:25,760
And since-- and the
party, of course,

563
00:32:25,760 --> 00:32:29,060
had all of that
background material.

564
00:32:29,060 --> 00:32:32,360
So by being in the
Volkssturm, that automatically

565
00:32:32,360 --> 00:32:35,630
implied that the military
status of that person

566
00:32:35,630 --> 00:32:37,980
was OK, whatever it was.

567
00:32:37,980 --> 00:32:42,770
And also, of course, as the
situation became more desperate

568

00:32:42,770 --> 00:32:47,960
for the Nazis, there were
more and more ID checks

569
00:32:47,960 --> 00:32:48,710
on the streets.

570
00:32:48,710 --> 00:32:52,280
I mean they were looking, first
of all, for German deserters.

571
00:32:52,280 --> 00:32:54,930
They were looking
for Allied spies.

572
00:32:54,930 --> 00:32:56,370
They were looking for--

573
00:32:56,370 --> 00:32:59,780
they had millions of foreign
workers in Germany also

574
00:32:59,780 --> 00:33:01,940
that had been forcibly
deported to work

575
00:33:01,940 --> 00:33:03,620
in the armaments industry.

576
00:33:03,620 --> 00:33:05,410
And many of those
were on the loose.

577
00:33:05,410 --> 00:33:06,710
They just ran away.

578
00:33:06,710 --> 00:33:14,150
So anyway the thing was that
having that paper I'm sure

579
00:33:14,150 --> 00:33:15,080
saved my life.

580

00:33:15,080 --> 00:33:17,600

Because I was then
frequently controlled,

581

00:33:17,600 --> 00:33:21,290

particularly by military police.

582

00:33:21,290 --> 00:33:24,650

Now, on the other hand,
as the situation worsened,

583

00:33:24,650 --> 00:33:29,180

it also became more and
more difficult to get food.

584

00:33:29,180 --> 00:33:32,720

I should say, whether we had
black market food prices,

585

00:33:32,720 --> 00:33:36,890

I believe I mistakenly said
in an earlier interview

586

00:33:36,890 --> 00:33:40,040

here that the black
market prices where

587

00:33:40,040 --> 00:33:43,640

10 times regular prices.

588

00:33:43,640 --> 00:33:46,550

That-- I have to take that back.

589

00:33:46,550 --> 00:33:48,380

It's closer to 100 times.

590

00:33:48,380 --> 00:33:52,310

In other words,
any, say, a pound

591

00:33:52,310 --> 00:33:55,520

of meat or whatever

which price may

592

00:33:55,520 --> 00:34:00,320

have been one mark
regularly bought in a store,

593

00:34:00,320 --> 00:34:04,920

with food ration stamps would
be 100 mark on the black market.

594

00:34:04,920 --> 00:34:08,330

But because of
increasing shortages,

595

00:34:08,330 --> 00:34:11,540

because Germany, of course,
used to get a lot of its food

596

00:34:11,540 --> 00:34:15,409

from the occupied areas, and
they were no longer occupying

597

00:34:15,409 --> 00:34:20,400

them, obviously, the
scarcity grew higher.

598

00:34:20,400 --> 00:34:23,989

And as the supply
dwindled and the demand

599

00:34:23,989 --> 00:34:26,239

either stayed the
same or increased,

600

00:34:26,239 --> 00:34:28,699

obviously, the price increased.

601

00:34:28,699 --> 00:34:33,020

So just at that point, that
problem was solved for us.

602

00:34:33,020 --> 00:34:37,310

603

00:34:37,310 --> 00:34:40,400

What happened was is
that on a-- on one day,

604

00:34:40,400 --> 00:34:47,610

I was also in Berlin
using the subway.

605

00:34:47,610 --> 00:34:54,290

And as I sat there a girl, I
mean, young woman actually,

606

00:34:54,290 --> 00:34:56,570

a year or two older
than I, whom I

607

00:34:56,570 --> 00:34:58,670

had known from
before, in fact, she

608

00:34:58,670 --> 00:35:01,880

was a counselor
in a vacation camp

609

00:35:01,880 --> 00:35:06,440

that I went to in the
1930s, in the mid '30s.

610

00:35:06,440 --> 00:35:09,320

And then later I met her
again at Siemens, where

611

00:35:09,320 --> 00:35:11,480

she was also forced labor.

612

00:35:11,480 --> 00:35:16,180

And she approached me and
said, hi, how are you?

613

00:35:16,180 --> 00:35:18,290

And I'm so happy to see you.

614

00:35:18,290 --> 00:35:20,270

But since one
didn't trust anyone

615

00:35:20,270 --> 00:35:24,260

whom one hadn't seen
continuously, I said,

616

00:35:24,260 --> 00:35:26,090

my name isn't Fontheim.

617

00:35:26,090 --> 00:35:29,580

And then she said, well, don't
you have a smaller sister?

618

00:35:29,580 --> 00:35:32,900

I said, no and gave her
some fictitious name.

619

00:35:32,900 --> 00:35:36,440

Say like my name is [? Erich ?]
[? Bueller ?] and I only have

620

00:35:36,440 --> 00:35:38,030

an older brother.

621

00:35:38,030 --> 00:35:41,670

And she sort of left
the train puzzled.

622

00:35:41,670 --> 00:35:45,860

And at that point, I
decided she is obviously not

623

00:35:45,860 --> 00:35:47,150

working for the Gestapo.

624

00:35:47,150 --> 00:35:53,580

Because she wouldn't be put
off by such a rude, crude lie.

625

00:35:53,580 --> 00:35:54,080

OK.

626

00:35:54,080 --> 00:36:00,000

But anyway, about a
week or two later,

627

00:36:00,000 --> 00:36:05,240

I ran into her again on the
same sort of line of the subway

628

00:36:05,240 --> 00:36:07,100

where I met her the first time.

629

00:36:07,100 --> 00:36:11,760

And then I admitted that her
memory was really correct.

630

00:36:11,760 --> 00:36:13,995

And then she said,
oh, that's marvelous.

631

00:36:13,995 --> 00:36:18,800

And let's sit down at a
cafe and have a little talk.

632

00:36:18,800 --> 00:36:21,320

And I said, that's a
great idea, but I don't

633

00:36:21,320 --> 00:36:23,040

have any food ration coupons.

634

00:36:23,040 --> 00:36:25,700

And in restaurants
and cafes, you also

635

00:36:25,700 --> 00:36:29,450

had to pay, obviously,
the price and mark,

636

00:36:29,450 --> 00:36:31,940

but, in addition, what
was much more important,

637
00:36:31,940 --> 00:36:36,530
give the food coupons
equivalent for whatever

638
00:36:36,530 --> 00:36:40,290
you were ordering, even if
it was just a piece of cake.

639
00:36:40,290 --> 00:36:46,100
And she said, don't
bother, I invite you.

640
00:36:46,100 --> 00:36:49,380
So OK, so since I
was always hungry,

641
00:36:49,380 --> 00:36:50,825
I accepted the invitation.

642
00:36:50,825 --> 00:36:53,720
So we sat down in
a cafe and talked.

643
00:36:53,720 --> 00:36:59,240
Of course, I have to say that I
didn't tell her a thing, where

644
00:36:59,240 --> 00:37:00,410
I was actually living.

645
00:37:00,410 --> 00:37:03,080
We were just talking
sort of in general terms.

646
00:37:03,080 --> 00:37:07,790
And then she said,
yeah, I mean, I

647
00:37:07,790 --> 00:37:11,030
asked her whether I couldn't
pay for the stamps, coupons

648

00:37:11,030 --> 00:37:12,590

that she used on me.

649

00:37:12,590 --> 00:37:13,250

She said no.

650

00:37:13,250 --> 00:37:15,260

She didn't pay for hers either.

651

00:37:15,260 --> 00:37:19,280

And in fact, she'll show me
how to get them free of charge.

652

00:37:19,280 --> 00:37:25,390

And all one had to do is find
out where the last air raid--

653

00:37:25,390 --> 00:37:27,320

and there were daily
air raids now--

654

00:37:27,320 --> 00:37:31,040

where the last air
raid was centered at.

655

00:37:31,040 --> 00:37:35,570

And that was easy that spread
through Berlin like fire,

656

00:37:35,570 --> 00:37:38,960

the news, you know,
last night this district

657

00:37:38,960 --> 00:37:40,580

was hit or that district.

658

00:37:40,580 --> 00:37:46,208

So we went to where last night--

659

00:37:46,208 --> 00:37:48,060

Finish your sentence.

660

00:37:48,060 --> 00:37:54,000

--where last night the Allies
had bombed and looked up

661

00:37:54,000 --> 00:37:55,854

a house that was destroyed.

662

00:37:55,854 --> 00:38:03,450

663

00:38:03,450 --> 00:38:08,120

This is tape one, side B of a
continued interview with Ernest

664

00:38:08,120 --> 00:38:15,530

Fontheim on June 4th, 1997.

665

00:38:15,530 --> 00:38:19,070

So we arrived at
the part of town

666

00:38:19,070 --> 00:38:23,750

where last night's air raid
had done most of the damage.

667

00:38:23,750 --> 00:38:31,070

And then my friend, her
name, by the way, is Ursula.

668

00:38:31,070 --> 00:38:34,980

She said, what we need
to do is, first of all,

669

00:38:34,980 --> 00:38:37,970

write down the address of
a house that's completely

670

00:38:37,970 --> 00:38:42,210

destroyed or at least
remember and note it down.

671

00:38:42,210 --> 00:38:44,330

So that's what we did.

672

00:38:44,330 --> 00:38:52,580

And then the German sort
of air raid support system

673

00:38:52,580 --> 00:38:59,780

was by years of experience, of
course, very well organized.

674

00:38:59,780 --> 00:39:06,410

Each house had, I mean, the
people who lived in each house

675

00:39:06,410 --> 00:39:12,950

knew exactly where to go if
that house became destroyed.

676

00:39:12,950 --> 00:39:14,510

It was usually a public--

677

00:39:14,510 --> 00:39:16,730

usually a school
nearby, sometimes

678

00:39:16,730 --> 00:39:20,840

a church or some
such public building.

679

00:39:20,840 --> 00:39:25,340

So and that was posted also
in and near the building.

680

00:39:25,340 --> 00:39:31,280

So after noting the address
of the place of the house that

681

00:39:31,280 --> 00:39:35,930

was destroyed, of course, that
was just one of many houses,

682

00:39:35,930 --> 00:39:42,200

and also discovering where

to go for further support,

683
00:39:42,200 --> 00:39:42,860
we went there.

684
00:39:42,860 --> 00:39:45,860
And, of course, it was
a school I remember.

685
00:39:45,860 --> 00:39:48,320
And it was in the
main auditorium.

686
00:39:48,320 --> 00:39:51,590
And the place was
mobbed with people

687
00:39:51,590 --> 00:39:54,750
who had been bombed
out the previous night.

688
00:39:54,750 --> 00:39:56,720
Some with some of
their belongings

689
00:39:56,720 --> 00:39:59,840
still saved and
others with nothing.

690
00:39:59,840 --> 00:40:04,400
And they were-- and the
place was run, again,

691
00:40:04,400 --> 00:40:09,590
by a subsidiary of the
Nazi party organization.

692
00:40:09,590 --> 00:40:11,660
And then I stuck with her.

693
00:40:11,660 --> 00:40:16,100
And we, first of all,
registered at a desk,

694
00:40:16,100 --> 00:40:20,060
where a man in full Nazi
party regalia was sitting.

695
00:40:20,060 --> 00:40:23,300
And she would give
some fictitious name

696
00:40:23,300 --> 00:40:29,430
and that address and saying that
she lost all of her belongings,

697
00:40:29,430 --> 00:40:31,730
including even her papers.

698
00:40:31,730 --> 00:40:35,150
And so they immediately
did two things.

699
00:40:35,150 --> 00:40:39,020
They gave a person
a temporary ID,

700
00:40:39,020 --> 00:40:42,290
identifying that person
as a bombed out person

701
00:40:42,290 --> 00:40:46,730
and also asking then all
agencies of the government

702
00:40:46,730 --> 00:40:51,050
to sort of give any
support possible.

703
00:40:51,050 --> 00:41:00,300
And for people who had lost
their food ration cards, they--

704
00:41:00,300 --> 00:41:02,330
Oh no, wait a minute, I'm sorry.

705

00:41:02,330 --> 00:41:03,710

I take that back.

706

00:41:03,710 --> 00:41:06,410

They did not hand
out any food ration.

707

00:41:06,410 --> 00:41:09,460

They simply noted down the--

708

00:41:09,460 --> 00:41:12,440

listed the person as
totally bombed out.

709

00:41:12,440 --> 00:41:19,400

And then they supplied people
with sandwiches and cigarettes.

710

00:41:19,400 --> 00:41:24,260

And if they needed also an
overnight, a simple cot,

711

00:41:24,260 --> 00:41:27,200

although people were urged,
if possible, to move in

712

00:41:27,200 --> 00:41:28,760

with friends or relatives.

713

00:41:28,760 --> 00:41:31,130

But those who didn't
have either could also

714

00:41:31,130 --> 00:41:33,050

stay overnight there.

715

00:41:33,050 --> 00:41:36,860

So, of course, I followed her
example, gave a different--

716

00:41:36,860 --> 00:41:42,980

I did not give my name that

I had adopted on my papers.

717

00:41:42,980 --> 00:41:44,870

I didn't want it
to appear there.

718

00:41:44,870 --> 00:41:48,680

So I chose just
some arbitrary name

719

00:41:48,680 --> 00:41:52,250

that came to mind
but the same address.

720

00:41:52,250 --> 00:41:58,670

And I also got an ID
identifying me as bombed out.

721

00:41:58,670 --> 00:42:02,600

Now the point was,
with that ID, one

722

00:42:02,600 --> 00:42:06,890

could go then to any
food rationing office

723

00:42:06,890 --> 00:42:10,940

and get a set of
food ration cards.

724

00:42:10,940 --> 00:42:14,090

And the idea, of course,
was you couldn't do it

725

00:42:14,090 --> 00:42:17,390

in the same district as
the building was located.

726

00:42:17,390 --> 00:42:20,300

Because they had, of
course, a complete card

727

00:42:20,300 --> 00:42:24,530

catalog of people who were
living in that district.

728
00:42:24,530 --> 00:42:29,190
And of course, neither one
of these people even existed.

729
00:42:29,190 --> 00:42:33,410
But with the bombed
out ID, one--

730
00:42:33,410 --> 00:42:37,100
any other food ration
office, suppose

731
00:42:37,100 --> 00:42:39,560
one moved to a
different part of Berlin

732
00:42:39,560 --> 00:42:44,960
than was required to hand out
a set of food ration cards.

733
00:42:44,960 --> 00:42:47,060
And of course in
another district,

734
00:42:47,060 --> 00:42:54,170
they wouldn't have the set
of registered people living

735
00:42:54,170 --> 00:42:55,880
in that district.

736
00:42:55,880 --> 00:42:58,900
Comes to my mind, I'm
glad that the tech--

737
00:42:58,900 --> 00:43:02,510
that today's technology
didn't exist in those days.

738
00:43:02,510 --> 00:43:09,770

Because today, all they would
have to do is, on a computer,

739
00:43:09,770 --> 00:43:15,380
access a database and look up
anyone from any other district.

740
00:43:15,380 --> 00:43:18,840
But fortunately, the Nazis
didn't have that capability

741
00:43:18,840 --> 00:43:19,760
yet.

742
00:43:19,760 --> 00:43:21,810
Otherwise, they
would have used it.

743
00:43:21,810 --> 00:43:25,460
So what we did is
we took the subway

744
00:43:25,460 --> 00:43:27,640
to a different part of Berlin.

745
00:43:27,640 --> 00:43:31,220
Went there, got our set
of food ration cards,

746
00:43:31,220 --> 00:43:34,430
and then took off.

747
00:43:34,430 --> 00:43:38,950
And that was now the first
set, and I enjoyed that game

748
00:43:38,950 --> 00:43:39,450
so much.

749
00:43:39,450 --> 00:43:42,530
I should add also, by the
way, that the sandwiches

750

00:43:42,530 --> 00:43:44,540
they handed out were terrific.

751

00:43:44,540 --> 00:43:50,030
I had not had such good salami
sandwiches in years, in fact.

752

00:43:50,030 --> 00:43:52,880
And that alone
was even worth it.

753

00:43:52,880 --> 00:43:57,230
So I start practically every
time when I was in Berlin,

754

00:43:57,230 --> 00:44:01,520
since there were daily air
raids, there were-- every day,

755

00:44:01,520 --> 00:44:05,270
there were houses destroyed
the preceding night.

756

00:44:05,270 --> 00:44:08,120
So all one had to
do was sort of ask

757

00:44:08,120 --> 00:44:11,750
and find out in what part
of the city to go there,

758

00:44:11,750 --> 00:44:14,990
look up an address of
a destroyed, I mean,

759

00:44:14,990 --> 00:44:21,822
house from last night, and then
go to the local sort of air

760

00:44:21,822 --> 00:44:26,360
raid support
facility where people

761
00:44:26,360 --> 00:44:31,290
were helped with
their first needs

762
00:44:31,290 --> 00:44:34,020
and so on, get another ID.

763
00:44:34,020 --> 00:44:35,840
And so I kept doing that.

764
00:44:35,840 --> 00:44:39,140
And finally, at the height
of the thing, I got--

765
00:44:39,140 --> 00:44:43,610
I got food ration
stamps for 16 people

766
00:44:43,610 --> 00:44:45,890
without paying a penny for it.

767
00:44:45,890 --> 00:44:49,610
So we could just go
into stores and buy food

768
00:44:49,610 --> 00:44:54,080
at the regular price, controlled
prices, which was peanuts.

769
00:44:54,080 --> 00:45:00,048
And that, obviously, was a
tremendous help also in our,

770
00:45:00,048 --> 00:45:02,270
you know, for our budget.

771
00:45:02,270 --> 00:45:05,090
Wasn't there any chance
that there was going to be

772
00:45:05,090 --> 00:45:07,050
duplication?

773
00:45:07,050 --> 00:45:14,150
Yeah, I mean, I am sure that
these card officers, food

774
00:45:14,150 --> 00:45:18,920
coupon officers, where I
went under an assumed name

775
00:45:18,920 --> 00:45:27,500
then would forward my name and
address that I gave to the food

776
00:45:27,500 --> 00:45:29,780
office in that district.

777
00:45:29,780 --> 00:45:33,830
And then within days, they
would find out that person never

778
00:45:33,830 --> 00:45:35,360
existed there.

779
00:45:35,360 --> 00:45:37,220
But by that time, I was gone.

780
00:45:37,220 --> 00:45:41,300
And when you are-- the
food ration coupons

781
00:45:41,300 --> 00:45:44,510
themselves didn't have a
name of a person on it.

782
00:45:44,510 --> 00:45:49,280
So you didn't have to be
afraid that they knew already

783
00:45:49,280 --> 00:45:51,650
that this was-- the
whole thing was a fake.

784

00:45:51,650 --> 00:45:54,830

I mean, I could use the stamps without being

785

00:45:54,830 --> 00:45:58,400

afraid to be identified.

786

00:45:58,400 --> 00:46:00,380

It was a marvelous thing.

787

00:46:00,380 --> 00:46:07,250

And yeah, also, of course the continuous air

788

00:46:07,250 --> 00:46:09,260

raid, by the way, the air raids started,

789

00:46:09,260 --> 00:46:14,360

I should say, really to become severe shortly

790

00:46:14,360 --> 00:46:15,830

after we moved there.

791

00:46:15,830 --> 00:46:17,840

I think I discussed that even, that

792

00:46:17,840 --> 00:46:22,760

helped us in our fictitious story that we told people.

793

00:46:22,760 --> 00:46:25,730

And of course, it got worse as the war went on.

794

00:46:25,730 --> 00:46:29,330

And usually it was a British bomber fleet

795

00:46:29,330 --> 00:46:32,720

coming at night and the

Americans during daytime.

796

00:46:32,720 --> 00:46:35,030

And it was sometimes an awful--

797

00:46:35,030 --> 00:46:39,350

awesome not awful, an
awesome sight during daytime.

798

00:46:39,350 --> 00:46:47,300

The Americans were
flying in like on a sort

799

00:46:47,300 --> 00:46:51,620

of military exercise,
in close formation.

800

00:46:51,620 --> 00:46:55,670

And the roar of the bombers,
there were hundreds usually,

801

00:46:55,670 --> 00:46:57,675

filled the heavens.

802

00:46:57,675 --> 00:47:02,690

It was, for us, almost
a shout of liberation.

803

00:47:02,690 --> 00:47:04,880

And they were just coming.

804

00:47:04,880 --> 00:47:08,200

And we could see the
anti-aircraft guns

805

00:47:08,200 --> 00:47:14,170

of German flock firing at
them without much effect.

806

00:47:14,170 --> 00:47:18,830

And then when they start
dropping their bombs,

807

00:47:18,830 --> 00:47:22,880

the bombs sort of had
made a whistle sound

808

00:47:22,880 --> 00:47:26,930

as they fell down
with tremendous speed.

809

00:47:26,930 --> 00:47:31,430

And the whistle sound
then was followed

810

00:47:31,430 --> 00:47:36,230

by seconds of silence and
then a tremendous explosion.

811

00:47:36,230 --> 00:47:39,290

And, of course, there
were hundreds of them.

812

00:47:39,290 --> 00:47:44,070

It was an unbelievable
experience.

813

00:47:44,070 --> 00:47:48,230

And at night, of course,
one couldn't see the bombers

814

00:47:48,230 --> 00:47:49,130

anymore.

815

00:47:49,130 --> 00:47:52,060

But the noise was the same.

816

00:47:52,060 --> 00:47:56,600

And then, of course,
the flames that

817

00:47:56,600 --> 00:48:03,770

engulfed large parts of the
city would always be a--

818

00:48:03,770 --> 00:48:08,870
present a ghostly scene
of fire and destruction.

819
00:48:08,870 --> 00:48:12,560
And obviously, that had
also a tremendous effect

820
00:48:12,560 --> 00:48:13,970
on the population.

821
00:48:13,970 --> 00:48:16,190
And people reacted differently.

822
00:48:16,190 --> 00:48:19,970
But, by that time,
it was obvious,

823
00:48:19,970 --> 00:48:25,010
I think, to most sane people
at least that the war was lost.

824
00:48:25,010 --> 00:48:28,520
And if the war was lost,
then all that destruction

825
00:48:28,520 --> 00:48:31,400
and all of the German
soldiers who were still

826
00:48:31,400 --> 00:48:38,870
falling on all fronts were just
a total waste, a wasted loss,

827
00:48:38,870 --> 00:48:44,780
which wouldn't really
do anything for Germany.

828
00:48:44,780 --> 00:48:50,960
And so many-- there was
a lot of dissatisfaction

829
00:48:50,960 --> 00:48:52,280

expressed with the government.

830

00:48:52,280 --> 00:48:55,760

But it was all sort
of below the surface.

831

00:48:55,760 --> 00:49:00,080

And the reason was, there was
a tremendous government terror.

832

00:49:00,080 --> 00:49:01,610

And it increased.

833

00:49:01,610 --> 00:49:04,160

There wasn't just the
Gestapo, but, I mean,

834

00:49:04,160 --> 00:49:07,670

the employed agents
of the Gestapo.

835

00:49:07,670 --> 00:49:12,200

But there was a much larger
army of either paid or unpaid

836

00:49:12,200 --> 00:49:16,840

informers, or people who are
sometimes just out of spite

837

00:49:16,840 --> 00:49:20,010

were informing on others.

838

00:49:20,010 --> 00:49:23,030

And obviously, that
kept people in line.

839

00:49:23,030 --> 00:49:28,490

And they would often grumble
only between their four walls

840

00:49:28,490 --> 00:49:29,630

or to--

841

00:49:29,630 --> 00:49:32,180

only to people whom
they definitely

842

00:49:32,180 --> 00:49:35,960

knew to be OK and safe.

843

00:49:35,960 --> 00:49:39,920

But there was increasing
dissatisfaction

844

00:49:39,920 --> 00:49:42,920

as the war came closer
to the German borders.

845

00:49:42,920 --> 00:49:47,990

And the German government and
particularly the propaganda

846

00:49:47,990 --> 00:49:54,140

machine of Goebbels had
another weapon given to them,

847

00:49:54,140 --> 00:49:58,280

and that was actually
by the Russians.

848

00:49:58,280 --> 00:50:01,040

While it is understandable
that the Russians who

849

00:50:01,040 --> 00:50:05,390

had suffered unbelievably
under German occupation

850

00:50:05,390 --> 00:50:10,640

were not very kindly
disposed towards the Germans,

851

00:50:10,640 --> 00:50:15,230

but the atrocities
committed by the Russians

852
00:50:15,230 --> 00:50:22,610
and the totally
wanton destruction

853
00:50:22,610 --> 00:50:26,510
in the wake of the
Soviet army was such

854
00:50:26,510 --> 00:50:30,770
that Goebbels was able
to whip up enthusiasm

855
00:50:30,770 --> 00:50:34,400
for continuing the fight
by basically threatening

856
00:50:34,400 --> 00:50:36,290
the Germans with the Russians.

857
00:50:36,290 --> 00:50:38,570
And of course, the
worst part of the terror

858
00:50:38,570 --> 00:50:42,170
probably were the
unbelievable rapes.

859
00:50:42,170 --> 00:50:47,570
I must admit that I did not
believe the stories at first

860
00:50:47,570 --> 00:50:51,410
and thought they were just
an outgrowth of Goebbels

861
00:50:51,410 --> 00:50:53,660
propaganda, I mean,
in the same way

862
00:50:53,660 --> 00:50:57,170
how the anti-Semitic
press for years

863

00:50:57,170 --> 00:51:03,140

had smeared the Jews with
all kinds of sexual innuendos

864

00:51:03,140 --> 00:51:05,780

and so on, which
were just inventions.

865

00:51:05,780 --> 00:51:09,920

But it turns out, I mean,
the Russians-- incidentally,

866

00:51:09,920 --> 00:51:12,860

the Russians did not
only do that in Germany.

867

00:51:12,860 --> 00:51:16,550

I mean even in areas that
they liberated, countries

868

00:51:16,550 --> 00:51:22,240

that were supposed to be allies,
like Czechoslovakia, Poland,

869

00:51:22,240 --> 00:51:26,760

there were unbelievable
rapes in those countries.

870

00:51:26,760 --> 00:51:30,710

And so it can't be just
explained by the fact

871

00:51:30,710 --> 00:51:34,830

that there was an accumulated
hatred against the Germans.

872

00:51:34,830 --> 00:51:37,440

But, of course, that
contributed to it.

873

00:51:37,440 --> 00:51:41,720

But, be that as it may,
they handed the Germans

874
00:51:41,720 --> 00:51:44,390
a tremendous propaganda weapon.

875
00:51:44,390 --> 00:51:47,630
And occasionally,
it would happen

876
00:51:47,630 --> 00:51:53,330
that the German army would make
a counter-offensive and sort

877
00:51:53,330 --> 00:51:57,760
of reoccupy some locality
which the Russians had already

878
00:51:57,760 --> 00:51:59,170
taken before.

879
00:51:59,170 --> 00:52:03,100
And then they would immediately
send in the entire press

880
00:52:03,100 --> 00:52:08,170
corps and interview people.

881
00:52:08,170 --> 00:52:12,280
And they would get then sort
of firsthand horror stories

882
00:52:12,280 --> 00:52:15,640
of how the Russians behaved.

883
00:52:15,640 --> 00:52:23,620
And I'm sure that was part
of why the Germans put up

884
00:52:23,620 --> 00:52:25,870
resistance to the very end.

885
00:52:25,870 --> 00:52:35,020
But the fact is that

resistance didn't give them

886
00:52:35,020 --> 00:52:37,450
any better results anyway.

887
00:52:37,450 --> 00:52:41,920
And I would say that any
building that was destroyed

888
00:52:41,920 --> 00:52:47,140
and any German that
was killed fighting

889
00:52:47,140 --> 00:52:51,730
in the latter part of '44
and '45 was just a waste.

890
00:52:51,730 --> 00:52:55,090
Of course, not to forget
that during that time also,

891
00:52:55,090 --> 00:52:58,240
hundreds of thousands, if
not millions of Russians,

892
00:52:58,240 --> 00:52:59,770
still were killed.

893
00:52:59,770 --> 00:53:03,100
And also Jews were
killed in the Holocaust,

894
00:53:03,100 --> 00:53:05,140
which continued unabated.

895
00:53:05,140 --> 00:53:08,380
I should say on that
subject incidentally,

896
00:53:08,380 --> 00:53:10,960
the fact that a
Holocaust was going on

897

00:53:10,960 --> 00:53:13,060
was totally unknown to us.

898

00:53:13,060 --> 00:53:18,040
We did-- occasionally we
had opportunity to listen

899

00:53:18,040 --> 00:53:20,110
to foreign broadcasts.

900

00:53:20,110 --> 00:53:23,470
And incidentally, that
was strictly forbidden.

901

00:53:23,470 --> 00:53:27,970
And it was under death penalty
that if anyone listened

902

00:53:27,970 --> 00:53:30,340
to foreign radio broadcasts.

903

00:53:30,340 --> 00:53:32,970
But sometimes we
had the chance to.

904

00:53:32,970 --> 00:53:37,870
And there were reports
finally, mainly

905

00:53:37,870 --> 00:53:44,590
from BBC, the British radio,
that the Nazis were killing,

906

00:53:44,590 --> 00:53:47,860
at that time it was said,
hundreds of thousands of Jews.

907

00:53:47,860 --> 00:53:51,030
And that while it
filled us with fear

908

00:53:51,030 --> 00:53:53,680

at the number,
hundreds of thousands,

909
00:53:53,680 --> 00:53:59,640
was so huge that it
staggered our imagination.

910
00:53:59,640 --> 00:54:02,820
And that was not even
10% of the truth,

911
00:54:02,820 --> 00:54:05,304
but we didn't know
it then at the time.

912
00:54:05,304 --> 00:54:08,850
Had you heard of some of
these notorious extermination

913
00:54:08,850 --> 00:54:10,210
centers?

914
00:54:10,210 --> 00:54:13,050
Well, we definitely
had heard of Auschwitz.

915
00:54:13,050 --> 00:54:16,660
And because that was the--

916
00:54:16,660 --> 00:54:22,950
that was the camp that most Jews
from Berlin were deported to.

917
00:54:22,950 --> 00:54:27,150
And at least in the later
stages, in the beginning,

918
00:54:27,150 --> 00:54:31,800
there were also deportations
to Riga and other ghettos.

919
00:54:31,800 --> 00:54:38,850
But starting, I think,

about in the middle of 1942,

920

00:54:38,850 --> 00:54:44,220
maybe early fall of 1942, all
deportations went to Auschwitz.

921

00:54:44,220 --> 00:54:46,470
Even that was not really
officially announced,

922

00:54:46,470 --> 00:54:48,780
but it somehow became known.

923

00:54:48,780 --> 00:54:51,840
So Auschwitz became
known as a destination

924

00:54:51,840 --> 00:54:53,490
for the deportations.

925

00:54:53,490 --> 00:54:58,200
But the term extermination
camp was not known.

926

00:54:58,200 --> 00:55:01,070
I mean, what was
believed in general,

927

00:55:01,070 --> 00:55:05,160
that Jews were worked extremely
hard under inhuman conditions.

928

00:55:05,160 --> 00:55:08,280
And of course, people die
under such conditions also.

929

00:55:08,280 --> 00:55:15,240
But that they were sort of
murdered in a mass production

930

00:55:15,240 --> 00:55:19,350
style, the way it was actually
done, was not known to us.

931
00:55:19,350 --> 00:55:23,130
It may have-- now
that I have to add

932
00:55:23,130 --> 00:55:28,060
that German soldiers,
hundreds of thousands,

933
00:55:28,060 --> 00:55:32,160
if not millions of them, were
in one way or another witnesses

934
00:55:32,160 --> 00:55:36,150
of all of these extermination.

935
00:55:36,150 --> 00:55:40,140
And of course,
they, in most cases,

936
00:55:40,140 --> 00:55:44,130
were too fearful to
even report or tell.

937
00:55:44,130 --> 00:55:47,490
They were even told
to keep that silent.

938
00:55:47,490 --> 00:55:52,230
But we were, I mean, in a
certain amount of isolation

939
00:55:52,230 --> 00:55:52,730
there.

940
00:55:52,730 --> 00:55:56,520
And to some extent,
I have to say,

941
00:55:56,520 --> 00:55:59,160
that it may also
have been simply

942

00:55:59,160 --> 00:56:03,120

that we, or at least I
myself, I can really only

943

00:56:03,120 --> 00:56:04,020

talk of myself--

944

00:56:04,020 --> 00:56:08,160

about myself, simply
refused to believe

945

00:56:08,160 --> 00:56:11,160

that, that it was so horrible.

946

00:56:11,160 --> 00:56:13,590

And all the people
who were close to me

947

00:56:13,590 --> 00:56:17,150

were involved in
these deportations.

948

00:56:17,150 --> 00:56:24,930

And maybe, to some extent,
it was wishful thinking

949

00:56:24,930 --> 00:56:32,610

that I did not believe in what
really happened in those camps.

950

00:56:32,610 --> 00:56:37,950

But all I can say is that
I hoped till the victory

951

00:56:37,950 --> 00:56:43,190

and even after that to
see my family again.

952

00:56:43,190 --> 00:56:45,308

Was there-- was
there, I mean, you

953

00:56:45,308 --> 00:56:47,350
said people were fearful
to even talk about them.

954
00:56:47,350 --> 00:56:51,270
So was there much conversation
at all about these places?

955
00:56:51,270 --> 00:56:51,770
No.

956
00:56:51,770 --> 00:56:54,860
I mean, even in earlier
times, in Siemens

957
00:56:54,860 --> 00:56:58,420
I mentioned, for example,
that after the Kristallnacht,

958
00:56:58,420 --> 00:57:00,290
Jewish males were arrested.

959
00:57:00,290 --> 00:57:05,090
They were all told that, unless
they wanted to come back there,

960
00:57:05,090 --> 00:57:07,010
to keep their mouth shut.

961
00:57:07,010 --> 00:57:09,920
And so people only
whispered about it.

962
00:57:09,920 --> 00:57:12,830
Some didn't talk at
all about it and some

963
00:57:12,830 --> 00:57:16,190
only to their closest
friends or family members

964
00:57:16,190 --> 00:57:17,140
what really happened.

965

00:57:17,140 --> 00:57:19,340

And these were not
extermination camps.

966

00:57:19,340 --> 00:57:23,000

They were just sort of,
quote, everyday brutalities

967

00:57:23,000 --> 00:57:25,520

committed by the SS.

968

00:57:25,520 --> 00:57:27,860

What I'm try-- what I'm
trying to get a sense of is,

969

00:57:27,860 --> 00:57:31,620

since you were amongst German
people, not Jews at this point

970

00:57:31,620 --> 00:57:33,800

and for quite a
long time, did there

971

00:57:33,800 --> 00:57:40,650

seem to be any horror expressed
or any remorse of what

972

00:57:40,650 --> 00:57:42,240

was going on,
other than the fact

973

00:57:42,240 --> 00:57:45,630

that the war had
inconvenienced them terribly?

974

00:57:45,630 --> 00:57:47,010

No, it was terrible.

975

00:57:47,010 --> 00:57:51,450

The horror was only at the
impending loss of the war

976

00:57:51,450 --> 00:57:55,980
and what might become of
Germany and of them personally.

977

00:57:55,980 --> 00:57:59,940
I didn't, of course, as I
said, people had to be careful.

978

00:57:59,940 --> 00:58:02,130
But the people that
we associated with,

979

00:58:02,130 --> 00:58:06,840
and we had a certain social life
there, as I had said earlier.

980

00:58:06,840 --> 00:58:14,340
They-- the cruelties against
the Jews never even came up.

981

00:58:14,340 --> 00:58:16,650
Now that's actually
there's one exception.

982

00:58:16,650 --> 00:58:19,800
There was one family,
an elderly couple

983

00:58:19,800 --> 00:58:24,056
with a son who was about
six, seven years older than I

984

00:58:24,056 --> 00:58:26,580
and was an officer
in the Wehrmacht.

985

00:58:26,580 --> 00:58:29,450
They were politically 100%.

986

00:58:29,450 --> 00:58:32,130
They often even talked to us.

987

00:58:32,130 --> 00:58:33,270
And that surprised us.

988
00:58:33,270 --> 00:58:37,380
Because they should have
been somewhat mistrustful.

989
00:58:37,380 --> 00:58:42,600
But they openly expressed their
opposition and their hatred

990
00:58:42,600 --> 00:58:44,490
of the Nazis and Hitler.

991
00:58:44,490 --> 00:58:49,530
They were-- one thing, they were
a very devout Catholic family.

992
00:58:49,530 --> 00:58:52,500
And in northern Germany,
where Berlin was located,

993
00:58:52,500 --> 00:58:57,260
the vast majority of people,
of course, are Protestant.

994
00:58:57,260 --> 00:58:59,100
But I don't know
whether that was--

995
00:58:59,100 --> 00:59:02,910
but they were, these
people actually then played

996
00:59:02,910 --> 00:59:08,670
a role in our final survival.

997
00:59:08,670 --> 00:59:11,150
And that's the story
I'm coming to now.

998
00:59:11,150 --> 00:59:16,500
In March, in March

1945, about six weeks

999

00:59:16,500 --> 00:59:20,370
before the end of
the war, we heard

1000

00:59:20,370 --> 00:59:24,660
through one of our friends that
we sort of were socializing

1001

00:59:24,660 --> 00:59:27,150
a really strange story.

1002

00:59:27,150 --> 00:59:30,840
He met Mr Haas,
Margaret's father,

1003

00:59:30,840 --> 00:59:35,590
and said he has to tell
him something very funny.

1004

00:59:35,590 --> 00:59:39,750
A pensioner, who
lived in our area

1005

00:59:39,750 --> 00:59:42,360
and who earned himself
some additional money

1006

00:59:42,360 --> 00:59:46,570
by working on people's property,
and he worked also often

1007

00:59:46,570 --> 00:59:48,780
on a property of
our neighbor, and he

1008

00:59:48,780 --> 00:59:52,590
was known as a fanatical Nazi.

1009

00:59:52,590 --> 00:59:58,680
And that pensioner had told
him to be careful with us

1010
00:59:58,680 --> 01:00:05,970
and stay away from us, because
there is something not OK.

1011
01:00:05,970 --> 01:00:11,810
We-- he is convinced that we are
either foreign spies or Jews.

1012
01:00:11,810 --> 01:00:16,300
And and then when that
man said, you know,

1013
01:00:16,300 --> 01:00:18,700
what makes you think so?

1014
01:00:18,700 --> 01:00:25,090
The man said, well, they
have a Berlin address,

1015
01:00:25,090 --> 01:00:27,480
where Herman Hesser lives.

1016
01:00:27,480 --> 01:00:30,660
And there is actually
a Herman Hesser living.

1017
01:00:30,660 --> 01:00:32,220
He checked the phonebook.

1018
01:00:32,220 --> 01:00:36,700
But he decided to really
look into it himself.

1019
01:00:36,700 --> 01:00:40,140
And so he-- and being
a pensioner, you know,

1020
01:00:40,140 --> 01:00:42,100
he had nothing better to do.

1021
01:00:42,100 --> 01:00:45,810

He took the subway and
went to that address

1022
01:00:45,810 --> 01:00:47,610
and actually rang the bell.

1023
01:00:47,610 --> 01:00:50,730
And there's indeed a Herman
Hesser living at that place,

1024
01:00:50,730 --> 01:00:53,160
but it's a completely
different person.

1025
01:00:53,160 --> 01:00:59,740
And we simply used that person's
name to legitimize ourselves.

1026
01:00:59,740 --> 01:01:05,370
And he told that
fellow to be careful

1027
01:01:05,370 --> 01:01:08,640
and not to say
anything to us of stay.

1028
01:01:08,640 --> 01:01:11,130
And that guy,
again, he was also,

1029
01:01:11,130 --> 01:01:15,690
by the way, secretly very
much against the Nazis

1030
01:01:15,690 --> 01:01:17,070
and made comments.

1031
01:01:17,070 --> 01:01:19,530
And he interpreted
it as saying that now

1032
01:01:19,530 --> 01:01:23,330
that the way is obviously

lost, that fanatical Nazi is

1033
01:01:23,330 --> 01:01:24,960
sort of becoming--

1034
01:01:24,960 --> 01:01:27,630

1035
01:01:27,630 --> 01:01:30,090
going out of his
mind, losing his mind,

1036
01:01:30,090 --> 01:01:34,350
and didn't take it seriously,
in fact, found it really funny.

1037
01:01:34,350 --> 01:01:38,460
And when Margaret's
father came back to us,

1038
01:01:38,460 --> 01:01:41,910
he didn't find it funny
at all, nor did we.

1039
01:01:41,910 --> 01:01:44,360
And we were thinking
about what to do now.

1040
01:01:44,360 --> 01:01:47,030
Now, we knew that
that guy probably

1041
01:01:47,030 --> 01:01:49,800
would, within a day or
two, notify the police

1042
01:01:49,800 --> 01:01:51,930
if he hadn't already done so.

1043
01:01:51,930 --> 01:01:54,570
And that we had to
get out of there.

1044

01:01:54,570 --> 01:02:00,230

And in fact, we had to
get out sort of seemingly

1045

01:02:00,230 --> 01:02:02,640

just as if we go into
the city, in other words,

1046

01:02:02,640 --> 01:02:06,060

without luggage in order
not to allow suspicion.

1047

01:02:06,060 --> 01:02:09,270

But we had all of our
personal belongings there.

1048

01:02:09,270 --> 01:02:12,480

And many of them were also
necessary for survival.

1049

01:02:12,480 --> 01:02:15,300

I mean, we-- in those
days, it was practically

1050

01:02:15,300 --> 01:02:18,630

impossible to buy anything,
clothes, gloves, clothing,

1051

01:02:18,630 --> 01:02:22,380

anything you need,
shoes, and so on.

1052

01:02:22,380 --> 01:02:26,800

So we-- and, of course also, we
didn't really know where to go.

1053

01:02:26,800 --> 01:02:32,610

So our first reaction was to
talk to that elderly couple

1054

01:02:32,610 --> 01:02:34,560

that I just mentioned.

1055

01:02:34,560 --> 01:02:39,930

And their son, he was a first lieutenant in the German army,

1056

01:02:39,930 --> 01:02:43,800

was actually home during that week on furlough.

1057

01:02:43,800 --> 01:02:45,640

I think he had some sort of a sick leave.

1058

01:02:45,640 --> 01:02:47,160

He had a slight injury.

1059

01:02:47,160 --> 01:02:51,510

And we knew that all of them are totally OK.

1060

01:02:51,510 --> 01:02:57,000

So the plan was that I-- but we wanted to talk to the son alone

1061

01:02:57,000 --> 01:02:57,930

first.

1062

01:02:57,930 --> 01:03:03,550

So I went over and asked the son,

1063

01:03:03,550 --> 01:03:05,260

we'd like to have a card game with him.

1064

01:03:05,260 --> 01:03:07,330

We sometimes played cards.

1065

01:03:07,330 --> 01:03:11,530

And he said, yeah, gladly, he'll be over in a few minutes.

1066

01:03:11,530 --> 01:03:13,500

So in a few minutes, he came.

1067
01:03:13,500 --> 01:03:17,280
And we both decided,
among the four of us,

1068
01:03:17,280 --> 01:03:20,670
that the two women would
stay in the back room.

1069
01:03:20,670 --> 01:03:28,330
And Margaret's father and I and
he would sort of play the game.

1070
01:03:28,330 --> 01:03:31,710
So Margaret's father
started out, [INAUDIBLE],,

1071
01:03:31,710 --> 01:03:38,910
to mix the cards, to distribute
the cards to play the game when

1072
01:03:38,910 --> 01:03:42,300
he suddenly put down the
cards on the table and said,

1073
01:03:42,300 --> 01:03:47,850
actually, we invited
him not to play cards

1074
01:03:47,850 --> 01:03:50,460
but to discuss some
serious business with him.

1075
01:03:50,460 --> 01:03:53,760
And then he told him
right [INAUDIBLE]

1076
01:03:53,760 --> 01:03:56,970
that our name isn't
actually Hesser.

1077
01:03:56,970 --> 01:03:59,340

We are Jews who
live here in hiding.

1078
01:03:59,340 --> 01:04:01,410
And our name is so-and-so.

1079
01:04:01,410 --> 01:04:04,800
And we-- and then
he told them what

1080
01:04:04,800 --> 01:04:07,770
happened with that
pensioner, and that we

1081
01:04:07,770 --> 01:04:10,950
have to get out immediately
or within a day at least,

1082
01:04:10,950 --> 01:04:15,240
and also possibly save
some of our belongings.

1083
01:04:15,240 --> 01:04:20,670
And the officer was
in full uniform.

1084
01:04:20,670 --> 01:04:24,060
His name, incidentally,
his first name is Heinz.

1085
01:04:24,060 --> 01:04:28,380
He listened in stony silence.

1086
01:04:28,380 --> 01:04:31,980
Then he got up and said
he'll discuss everything

1087
01:04:31,980 --> 01:04:33,150
with his parents.

1088
01:04:33,150 --> 01:04:35,790
And we'll be back
as soon as possible.

1089
01:04:35,790 --> 01:04:38,700
After some time that, to
us, seemed like an eternity,

1090
01:04:38,700 --> 01:04:42,630
it was probably not more than
15, 20 minutes, I don't know.

1091
01:04:42,630 --> 01:04:45,690
They lived just one
block over from us.

1092
01:04:45,690 --> 01:04:48,480
He came back not alone
but with his mother.

1093
01:04:48,480 --> 01:04:50,730
His mother was a
gray-haired, sort

1094
01:04:50,730 --> 01:04:56,160
of gray-haired, dignified lady,
came with a huge basket of food

1095
01:04:56,160 --> 01:05:01,470
which she plunked on the table
with a thump and an angry face

1096
01:05:01,470 --> 01:05:08,040
and said, listen, you have known
our politics for years now.

1097
01:05:08,040 --> 01:05:10,080
We have known each
other close enough.

1098
01:05:10,080 --> 01:05:12,180
We could have helped
you all that time.

1099
01:05:12,180 --> 01:05:13,860
How come you didn't

have confidence

1100
01:05:13,860 --> 01:05:16,290
in us to tell us that before?

1101
01:05:16,290 --> 01:05:19,050
And the food basket
contained things

1102
01:05:19,050 --> 01:05:22,530
which were worth a fortune
on the black market, sausage,

1103
01:05:22,530 --> 01:05:25,230
eggs, and all kinds of things.

1104
01:05:25,230 --> 01:05:29,620
And their behavior
was just incredible.

1105
01:05:29,620 --> 01:05:34,180
So then they, right,
they said, OK,

1106
01:05:34,180 --> 01:05:40,200
what they would like
to, first of all,

1107
01:05:40,200 --> 01:05:45,090
support us in hiding
some of our belongings.

1108
01:05:45,090 --> 01:05:48,930
And after some discussion, we
made the following decision.

1109
01:05:48,930 --> 01:05:50,940
As I had mentioned
earlier, every night

1110
01:05:50,940 --> 01:05:55,350
the British Air Force, the Royal
Air Force, bombarded Berlin.

1111
01:05:55,350 --> 01:05:59,500
And of course all surrounding
areas had airplane alert

1112
01:05:59,500 --> 01:06:01,570
and so people would be up.

1113
01:06:01,570 --> 01:06:05,910
And then after the all
clear siren, people,

1114
01:06:05,910 --> 01:06:07,710
obviously, would go
immediately to sleep.

1115
01:06:07,710 --> 01:06:10,980
Because they had to get up early
in the morning to go to work.

1116
01:06:10,980 --> 01:06:14,460
So the decision was to
wait about half an hour

1117
01:06:14,460 --> 01:06:19,180
after the all clear, hoping
by that time everybody will

1118
01:06:19,180 --> 01:06:22,210
be sound asleep and,
in the meantime,

1119
01:06:22,210 --> 01:06:26,640
have suitcases with
certain necessities packed.

1120
01:06:26,640 --> 01:06:31,620
And Heinz said he would help us
carry them over to their place.

1121
01:06:31,620 --> 01:06:35,210
And they have a shed
behind the house where

1122
01:06:35,210 --> 01:06:39,150
they could lock them up,
and it would be safe there.

1123
01:06:39,150 --> 01:06:46,410
And then Heinz said he had a
room in the southern borough

1124
01:06:46,410 --> 01:06:48,980
of Berlin, Tempelhof.

1125
01:06:48,980 --> 01:06:53,880
It became known later on during
the air lift of '48, '50,

1126
01:06:53,880 --> 01:06:56,040
because there was
also an airport that

1127
01:06:56,040 --> 01:06:58,440
played an important
role in the air lift.

1128
01:06:58,440 --> 01:07:06,420
But anyway in Tempelhof he
had a room where he could--

1129
01:07:06,420 --> 01:07:11,610
all four of us could at least
temporarily stay but or some

1130
01:07:11,610 --> 01:07:12,570
of us.

1131
01:07:12,570 --> 01:07:14,830
And Margaret's mother knew--

1132
01:07:14,830 --> 01:07:17,790
had a girlfriend, I
mean, a woman friend

1133

01:07:17,790 --> 01:07:19,500
who was also underground.

1134
01:07:19,500 --> 01:07:26,380
Now she had succeeded in totally
legalizing herself with police

1135
01:07:26,380 --> 01:07:28,220
registration and so on.

1136
01:07:28,220 --> 01:07:32,320
And she said that the
next day she and Margaret

1137
01:07:32,320 --> 01:07:34,510
would try to go there.

1138
01:07:34,510 --> 01:07:41,030
And Margaret's father and
I would go to the room

1139
01:07:41,030 --> 01:07:42,490
that Heinz had.

1140
01:07:42,490 --> 01:07:46,270
And then before leaving,
Heinz turned around,

1141
01:07:46,270 --> 01:07:50,740
pulled out his service revolver,
gave it to Margaret's father,

1142
01:07:50,740 --> 01:07:53,650
and said, here's my
service revolver.

1143
01:07:53,650 --> 01:07:57,520
If they should come
tonight, just finish them

1144
01:07:57,520 --> 01:08:00,040
off in self-defense.

1145

01:08:00,040 --> 01:08:02,560

The war is over soon anyway.

1146

01:08:02,560 --> 01:08:04,750

And then they left.

1147

01:08:04,750 --> 01:08:08,040

That was an incredible
thing that he did.

1148

01:08:08,040 --> 01:08:13,490

And and then the next day, I
mean, then at at night, right,

1149

01:08:13,490 --> 01:08:15,790

everything worked out
the way it was planned.

1150

01:08:15,790 --> 01:08:18,290

We carried the luggage over.

1151

01:08:18,290 --> 01:08:21,450

And I don't know whether we
got any sleep done or not.

1152

01:08:21,450 --> 01:08:22,910

We probably didn't feel like it.

1153

01:08:22,910 --> 01:08:24,979

The next morning,
we left, you know,

1154

01:08:24,979 --> 01:08:29,189

as if going to work with
no particular luggage on us

1155

01:08:29,189 --> 01:08:30,990

and never came back.

1156

01:08:30,990 --> 01:08:33,830

And I just want to
say that, after--

1157
01:08:33,830 --> 01:08:36,290
the few weeks after
the Battle of Berlin,

1158
01:08:36,290 --> 01:08:38,689
I came back to visit the place.

1159
01:08:38,689 --> 01:08:43,069
And neighbors told us that
the following day the Gestapo

1160
01:08:43,069 --> 01:08:45,140
came looking for us.

1161
01:08:45,140 --> 01:08:49,250
So that really saved our lives.

1162
01:08:49,250 --> 01:08:53,810
So I-- yeah, and then in
that room where we stayed,

1163
01:08:53,810 --> 01:08:59,330
incidentally, Heinz knew
that the superintendent

1164
01:08:59,330 --> 01:09:02,760
of the house, the janitor,
was a secret Communist.

1165
01:09:02,760 --> 01:09:04,670
I never knew how he
actually knew that.

1166
01:09:04,670 --> 01:09:09,740
Because that was itself
subject to execution.

1167
01:09:09,740 --> 01:09:11,750
But anyway, he knew.

1168
01:09:11,750 --> 01:09:14,750

And he said he will
talk to him about us.

1169
01:09:14,750 --> 01:09:19,370
Because he would-- in the
city, apartment house janitors

1170
01:09:19,370 --> 01:09:23,359
were responsible to have
every new person who appears

1171
01:09:23,359 --> 01:09:24,649
registered with the police.

1172
01:09:24,649 --> 01:09:26,160
I discussed that earlier.

1173
01:09:26,160 --> 01:09:29,630
So-- but he said,
if-- he would not

1174
01:09:29,630 --> 01:09:33,710
tell him that we are Jews,
that doesn't fly well

1175
01:09:33,710 --> 01:09:35,540
with Communists.

1176
01:09:35,540 --> 01:09:38,779
We are-- he'll just
tell him, tell him

1177
01:09:38,779 --> 01:09:43,830
that we are some Socialist
activists and have to hide out.

1178
01:09:43,830 --> 01:09:46,160
And so that's what he did.

1179
01:09:46,160 --> 01:09:47,600
And we were introduced.

1180

01:09:47,600 --> 01:09:49,460

In fact, I remember
the janitor's name,

1181

01:09:49,460 --> 01:09:52,550

[? Kochinski, ?] sort
of a Polish name.

1182

01:09:52,550 --> 01:09:55,840

And but I mean, he was a German.

1183

01:09:55,840 --> 01:09:59,530

And but [? Kochinski ?]
himself had

1184

01:09:59,530 --> 01:10:03,940

access to black market pistols.

1185

01:10:03,940 --> 01:10:07,120

And so I bought
a pistol from him

1186

01:10:07,120 --> 01:10:10,460

and for my own self-protection.

1187

01:10:10,460 --> 01:10:14,690

And I had never had a gun
in my hand in my life.

1188

01:10:14,690 --> 01:10:20,320

And I decided if I ever have
to use it in an emergency,

1189

01:10:20,320 --> 01:10:21,360

I don't even--

1190

01:10:21,360 --> 01:10:23,740

I barely knew where to
pull the trigger but not

1191

01:10:23,740 --> 01:10:25,450

how to aim and so on.

1192
01:10:25,450 --> 01:10:27,420
So I bought
additional ammunition,

1193
01:10:27,420 --> 01:10:28,660
and that was also expensive.

1194
01:10:28,660 --> 01:10:33,340
Each bullet cost, I forgot, a
substantial amount of money.

1195
01:10:33,340 --> 01:10:38,680
And from a piece of
paper, I made myself

1196
01:10:38,680 --> 01:10:43,300
sort of a goal to aim at
with concentric circles.

1197
01:10:43,300 --> 01:10:47,170
And then I traveled out
into a forest near Berlin

1198
01:10:47,170 --> 01:10:50,260
and nailed it to
a tree, of course,

1199
01:10:50,260 --> 01:10:54,340
in a solitary place where
no people were around.

1200
01:10:54,340 --> 01:10:57,100
And then I sort
of practiced shot.

1201
01:10:57,100 --> 01:11:00,760
And I-- and, you
know, in those days,

1202
01:11:00,760 --> 01:11:02,230
these are more
old-fashioned guns.

1203

01:11:02,230 --> 01:11:06,730

I think today-- they had a
tremendous sort of a backlash.

1204

01:11:06,730 --> 01:11:10,480

And all I remember
is I never even

1205

01:11:10,480 --> 01:11:13,480

hit the outer circle, not to
speak of the inner circle.

1206

01:11:13,480 --> 01:11:18,340

But at least I knew a little
bit of how to handle the thing.

1207

01:11:18,340 --> 01:11:20,650

And actually, I
never had to use it.

1208

01:11:20,650 --> 01:11:24,550

But at least it gave me also
some self-confidence just

1209

01:11:24,550 --> 01:11:26,560

to carry it with me.

1210

01:11:26,560 --> 01:11:30,040

In the meantime, as I said,
Margaret's mother and she

1211

01:11:30,040 --> 01:11:36,050

herself were with that
woman friend of Mrs. Haas.

1212

01:11:36,050 --> 01:11:41,200

And in the meantime, they
knew some other people

1213

01:11:41,200 --> 01:11:45,560

through whom they finally
found a place in Potsdam.

1214

01:11:45,560 --> 01:11:48,940

Now Potsdam is a suburb
and used to be the summer

1215

01:11:48,940 --> 01:11:51,190

residence of Prussian kings.

1216

01:11:51,190 --> 01:11:55,360

And there's particularly
one famous castle,

1217

01:11:55,360 --> 01:11:57,980

the one of Frederick
the Great, called

1218

01:11:57,980 --> 01:12:01,150

Sanssouci, which is
French, of course,

1219

01:12:01,150 --> 01:12:04,690

means without worries
or no worries.

1220

01:12:04,690 --> 01:12:09,130

And that summer, he was
actually a great Francophile

1221

01:12:09,130 --> 01:12:16,030

and basically even talked mainly
French and had his castle,

1222

01:12:16,030 --> 01:12:20,860

and also his garden surrounding
the castle, designed

1223

01:12:20,860 --> 01:12:25,310

in imitation of Versailles, on
a much smaller scale, of course.

1224

01:12:25,310 --> 01:12:28,630

And it also contained
an orangery,

1225

01:12:28,630 --> 01:12:31,050

like the park in
Versailles does.

1226

01:12:31,050 --> 01:12:35,530

The orangery basically
served to keep plants

1227

01:12:35,530 --> 01:12:41,650

in winter, which were-- which
were not durable during winter

1228

01:12:41,650 --> 01:12:45,520

and also as servants'
quarters for their gardeners.

1229

01:12:45,520 --> 01:12:52,180

And that orangery had been
turned into a huge sort of camp

1230

01:12:52,180 --> 01:12:57,750

for people who were bombed
out and also for refugees.

1231

01:12:57,750 --> 01:13:00,530

I forgot to say that actually.

1232

01:13:00,530 --> 01:13:04,120

As the Soviet army
moved westward and came

1233

01:13:04,120 --> 01:13:09,490

into areas which were
inhabited by Germans,

1234

01:13:09,490 --> 01:13:14,230

the Germans were systematically
evicted from everywhere.

1235

01:13:14,230 --> 01:13:17,230

And even that was
started already before,

1236

01:13:17,230 --> 01:13:21,370

I am now talking about
March and early April '45.

1237

01:13:21,370 --> 01:13:25,420

Even in midwinter, the
Germans were evicted.

1238

01:13:25,420 --> 01:13:30,940

And day and night, you could
hear on the country road that

1239

01:13:30,940 --> 01:13:33,790

passed by near
that cottage where

1240

01:13:33,790 --> 01:13:39,750

we lived horse-drawn
carriages with German refugees

1241

01:13:39,750 --> 01:13:40,870

under them.

1242

01:13:40,870 --> 01:13:44,290

And although that obviously
was tremendous personal misery

1243

01:13:44,290 --> 01:13:48,100

for these people, it filled
me with a tremendous joy

1244

01:13:48,100 --> 01:13:53,350

to see finally the hardships
of the war hitting back

1245

01:13:53,350 --> 01:13:57,340

at those who had caused
all the misery to us

1246

01:13:57,340 --> 01:14:00,370

but also to other peoples.

1247

01:14:00,370 --> 01:14:03,400
And so there were
millions and millions

1248
01:14:03,400 --> 01:14:07,930
of German refugees who
were streaming westward

1249
01:14:07,930 --> 01:14:12,040
into the still unoccupied areas
of Germany, including Berlin.

1250
01:14:12,040 --> 01:14:15,640
And so that orangery,
as I said, was

1251
01:14:15,640 --> 01:14:17,290
a huge camp for such people.

1252
01:14:17,290 --> 01:14:21,550
And so people whom the Haas'
knew, who were themselves

1253
01:14:21,550 --> 01:14:25,060
out bombed and lived there,
they were introduced simply

1254
01:14:25,060 --> 01:14:27,430
as a family that was bombed out.

1255
01:14:27,430 --> 01:14:30,670
But they said also they
knew of my existence.

1256
01:14:30,670 --> 01:14:33,190
That it is too unsafe
to have me there.

1257
01:14:33,190 --> 01:14:39,190
Because why would a young
20, 22-year-old or so man

1258
01:14:39,190 --> 01:14:40,210

be living there.

1259

01:14:40,210 --> 01:14:43,930

I mean, he would be normally
in the Wehrmacht fighting.

1260

01:14:43,930 --> 01:14:48,790

So I stayed then alone in that
room of Heinz in the city,

1261

01:14:48,790 --> 01:14:50,980

in the district of Tempelhof.

1262

01:14:50,980 --> 01:14:52,740

And they were our there.

1263

01:14:52,740 --> 01:14:54,310

Of course, I had a bicycle.

1264

01:14:54,310 --> 01:14:58,450

And I commuted, I forgot, what,
once or twice a week out there.

1265

01:14:58,450 --> 01:15:01,870

One reason also is I had all
these food coupons that I

1266

01:15:01,870 --> 01:15:03,910

collected and kept collecting.

1267

01:15:03,910 --> 01:15:09,140

And so I also bought
food out there,

1268

01:15:09,140 --> 01:15:16,690

as the war slowly sort
of wound down to an end.

1269

01:15:16,690 --> 01:15:20,300

Now the Battle of Berlin--

1270

01:15:20,300 --> 01:15:23,730

oh, I should say one other
thing before the battle.

1271
01:15:23,730 --> 01:15:25,780
That the Germans made--

1272
01:15:25,780 --> 01:15:28,377

1273
01:15:28,377 --> 01:15:30,210
Why don't you finish
that thought and then--

1274
01:15:30,210 --> 01:15:31,830
No, but that's a
totally new subject.

1275
01:15:31,830 --> 01:15:32,330
OK.

1276
01:15:32,330 --> 01:15:35,080
Then why don't we stop here.

1277
01:15:35,080 --> 01:15:39,000