

Mikulas Judikovic

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Summary

Mikulas Judikovic was born October 26, 1919 in the village of Cecehov, on the outskirts of Michalovce, Czechoslovakia. There were two large synagogues with 3,000 Jews in the city with a population of 15,000. Of the 3,000 Jews, 120 survived the Holocaust. Mikulas' family was strictly religious and kosher. He spoke Yiddish with his grandfather and Hungarian and Slovak with his parents and siblings. He had two older sisters (one died in a concentration camp), a brother born 1921 (died in 1925) and a brother born in 1924 (died in a concentration camp). His sister, Haide, was born in 1927 and his sister, Lola, born in 1929, was able to get to US on the last boat as his father had siblings in the US. His father was Mark and his mother, Malvina, whose siblings died in a concentration camp. Mikulas' father was a broker for cattle and lamb which he slaughtered and weekly sent by train to Prague where he sold them to commissioners. On Sundays, his father would pay the cattle owners. Mikulas attended Cheder (Hebrew School) for eight years studying aleph bais (A, B, Cs) at first and how to read and pray and then more advanced studies including Torah, Sidra, Rasha, Gomorrah and Tanach and public school every day. He started to taken an interest in soccer at age ten and joined the Jewish Soccer Club in Michalevce when he was fifteen. He experienced no antisemitism except for a mention of his being Jewish until he attended Gymnasium which he did not finish as the principal believed his father was not behaving. Mikulas obtained an apprentice position in a hardware store where he hoped to become a partner later. The Nuremberg Laws were enforced at that time. The family was concerned about Hitler and Mikulas' father went to the American Embassy to obtain visas but there was a quota and they could not get one. In March 1939 Hitler occupied Czechoslovakia and the Nazis screamed against the Jews so the family had to hide. In September 1939, Mikulas heard that the Germans had started the war. He joined the Zionist groups, Hashomer and Mizrachi. In 1940 the Jews were forced to wear yellow stars, had a curfew from 6 PM to 6 AM and Mikulas was forced to go to Labor Camp. While he was away, all Jews had to register, including his brother, who was taken to a concentration camp (he died in Majdanek). Mikulas realized that being in the forced Labor Camp saved his life. In June 1941 the Germans started fighting the Russians and rationing started. Mikulas was released from the Labor Camp in 1942 and came home and hid with his father and sister in basements and attics. At that time the Germans started deporting families so his father sent his mother and younger sister, Lola, to Uzsura, 30 miles away, in Hungary which was thought to be safer. Mikulas was caught while following his mother to Hungary and was put into jail when he got an infection and was placed in a hospital. Soon he ran away. In April 1944 the Russian front was coming so Slovaks had to go west and his father got an apartment in Bratislava. Mikulas, his father and sister obtained Christian birth certificates and while in hiding with the Partisans using these false papers, he was caught by the Germans twice and escaped. The members of Mikulas' Partisan group disappeared every time they fought the Germans and he had to search for new Partisans and was helped by

Protestants. The first time, Mikulas had to shoot the enemy was very difficult. Many of the partisans were antisemitic, especially the Russians. He often was starving when he was with the Partisans and did not know if he would live the next day. In June 1944 he saw Hershkovitz, a former neighbor, get shot and died. Mikulas' mother and sister went to Auschwitz and then to Dresden. His sister survived in a concentration camp with the help of her cousins. Mikulas hid for two years until he went to Banya Bistrica for the Bankebisatran uprising August 29, 1944 which he thought would end the war but the Germans had heavy equipment and succeeded. His sister disappeared and his father was caught in October 1944 and killed in Auschwitz. Mikulas found the Partisans in the forest which consisted of Russians, Slovaks and Czechs. The Russian Army liberated Czechoslovakia. He returned to Michalovce after the war and found his sister, Haide, and learned that his younger sister was alive. Haide and her husband escaped to Berlin, in '48 and then to Canada and to Detroit. Mikulas learned that he had an uncle in Liborec, 65 miles north of Prague, and there was an opening in his Hardware and Plumbing store. He was hired in January '46. Soon he met his sister Vera, a year younger than him, in Prague who had survived. He kept contacting the Red Cross and Jewish organizations to search for family members. On February 25, 1948 the Communists took over the government. Listening o VOA (Voice of America) opened Mikulas' eyes as life under the Russians was the same as life under the Germans. You were afraid to say your opinion. If reported to the Secret Police, you were taken away and never heard from again. His sister came to Liborec to work in a glass and china store and married a cousin's brother in '48. Mikulas married Bozena in October 1949. In 1948 his sister, Lola, and her husband escaped so the SS questioned Mikulas as to how they escaped and he was in custody several times but gave no information about his sister's escape. He was let go because his wife's boss had contacts with the SS. In '50 another sister got married and escaped to Germany to Canada and then to US. The SS wanted to send Mikulas to a uranium mine where most of the prisoners died or returned sick with cancer. The secret police kept checking his apartment. In 1968 Mikulas' relatives sent him airline tickets to attend a wedding and a Bar Mitzvah in the US so SS let him go in July but not his wife. He remained 6 weeks in the US and then had to return to join his wife so flew to Yugoslavia and took a train to Prague. On May 30, 1969 he and his wife escaped illegally and were sentenced in absentia to two years in prison. He told the SS that he was vacationing in Yugoslavia but went to Austria where he felt free. Mikulas sold his car and HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) sent them by train to Rome where he learned Italian. He remained there for a year and worked as a translator for HIAS and then immigrated to the US. He thought the west would get rid of Communism and they could return to Czechoslovakia. One sister who had been in hiding did not want to talk about her experiences. After the war, Mikulas had nightmares of his experiences and they continue. In 1991 he went to Liberec where he prayed for the first time in 22 years and plans to return in September, his 4th free trip to Europe. A synagogue in Michalovce was destroyed on Kristallnacht and a library with a synagogue is planned to be built with a plaque dedicated to the Jews killed in concentration camps. Four years ago Mikulas read in a Czech newspaper from NY that Jews who had been in camps could apply for compensation so he and his wife helped others as he could

translate Polish, English, German and Czech. Many survivors succeeded in getting compensation. Now Mikulas speaks about his experiences to two synagogues. He and his wife have no children but speak to many nieces and nephews about the Holocaust. Mikulas believes this is the best country in the world and is thankful that he is alive.