

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:08,930

2

00:00:08,930 --> 00:00:12,750

Isaac, think when you went
to this special gymnasium

3

00:00:12,750 --> 00:00:14,610

or high school,
were you as happy

4

00:00:14,610 --> 00:00:17,820

to be going there as your
father was to send you?

5

00:00:17,820 --> 00:00:20,280

Were these the subjects
that you liked the most?

6

00:00:20,280 --> 00:00:21,060

I think yes.

7

00:00:21,060 --> 00:00:25,590

I think after, perhaps,
the age of six or seven,

8

00:00:25,590 --> 00:00:28,800

either by deed of
repetition from my father.

9

00:00:28,800 --> 00:00:34,890

And also, because I,
perhaps, began to like

10

00:00:34,890 --> 00:00:38,640

or had no difficulty
with mathematics.

11

00:00:38,640 --> 00:00:42,150

Then I didn't question it.

12

00:00:42,150 --> 00:00:44,760

I was going to private
schools, although I mentioned

13

00:00:44,760 --> 00:00:51,170

to you earlier, I was changing
because of this age phenomenon.

14

00:00:51,170 --> 00:00:54,780

And in order to transfer
from a private school

15

00:00:54,780 --> 00:00:58,620

to a public school in Greece,
at least at that time,

16

00:00:58,620 --> 00:01:04,690

I had to take a special exam
that I could make the grade.

17

00:01:04,690 --> 00:01:10,960

My last year in private school
was in a Catholic school.

18

00:01:10,960 --> 00:01:13,330

That's a different
story because my father

19

00:01:13,330 --> 00:01:15,640

had gone to that
school in Monastir

20

00:01:15,640 --> 00:01:18,340

when he was young because it
was the only school where you

21

00:01:18,340 --> 00:01:20,990

could learn foreign languages.

22

00:01:20,990 --> 00:01:22,900

So there was an equivalent
school in Athens,

23

00:01:22,900 --> 00:01:24,880
and I went to that.

24
00:01:24,880 --> 00:01:29,310
Then I had to take
a special exam.

25
00:01:29,310 --> 00:01:31,890
Not that I didn't question--
it was almost a natural thing

26
00:01:31,890 --> 00:01:32,390
to me.

27
00:01:32,390 --> 00:01:35,320
It was an unexpected thing.

28
00:01:35,320 --> 00:01:44,040
And I think that there was no
reason to even think about it.

29
00:01:44,040 --> 00:01:47,230
I Thought it was just
a natural progression.

30
00:01:47,230 --> 00:01:49,360
Did you have hobbies
when you were growing up?

31
00:01:49,360 --> 00:01:50,710
- Oh yes.

32
00:01:50,710 --> 00:01:51,490
Like?

33
00:01:51,490 --> 00:01:55,150
I think, in retrospect--
and I say that now

34
00:01:55,150 --> 00:01:59,740
because I can see how
this thing is traced.

35

00:01:59,740 --> 00:02:02,410

I like to build things.

36

00:02:02,410 --> 00:02:05,110

I build all kinds of kites.

37

00:02:05,110 --> 00:02:08,350

You have to remember that you
couldn't go, in those days,

38

00:02:08,350 --> 00:02:10,180

to a store and buy a kite.

39

00:02:10,180 --> 00:02:12,665

We only buy materials
from the skeleton, which

40

00:02:12,665 --> 00:02:16,300

were pieces of wood to paper.

41

00:02:16,300 --> 00:02:20,950

And then you had to construct
it, then assemble it,

42

00:02:20,950 --> 00:02:23,840

and eventually fly it.

43

00:02:23,840 --> 00:02:30,190

Then I would build
lots of shadow puppets.

44

00:02:30,190 --> 00:02:32,890

Do you know what
shadow puppets are?

45

00:02:32,890 --> 00:02:35,170

These are flat.

46

00:02:35,170 --> 00:02:38,380

If you take a figure
of an individual

47

00:02:38,380 --> 00:02:42,700

that's articulated at
the legs and at the arms,

48

00:02:42,700 --> 00:02:48,340

and if you hold this cardboard
piece behind a screen that

49

00:02:48,340 --> 00:02:52,240

is backlit, you hold
it against the screen.

50

00:02:52,240 --> 00:02:54,790

Then the audience
on the other side

51

00:02:54,790 --> 00:02:59,600

see the puppet, which is
essentially its outline.

52

00:02:59,600 --> 00:03:04,030

And although it can be colorful,
because the colors come

53

00:03:04,030 --> 00:03:05,530

through the screen.

54

00:03:05,530 --> 00:03:09,580

We usually use a sheet, white.

55

00:03:09,580 --> 00:03:10,750

So I used to make that.

56

00:03:10,750 --> 00:03:12,550

Now, you progress.

57

00:03:12,550 --> 00:03:14,590

In the beginning, of
course, you go to the store

58

00:03:14,590 --> 00:03:20,950

and buy the a book of the

outlines of the figures

59

00:03:20,950 --> 00:03:23,380

which you have to cut
very, very carefully.

60

00:03:23,380 --> 00:03:25,270

And in the beginning
as a child, I

61

00:03:25,270 --> 00:03:28,210

would do them out of cardboard.

62

00:03:28,210 --> 00:03:31,540

But to do it with cardboard,
which was rather thick,

63

00:03:31,540 --> 00:03:33,610

you had to have a chisel.

64

00:03:33,610 --> 00:03:36,380

Well, chisels were not
that readily available.

65

00:03:36,380 --> 00:03:39,190

So what we would do
is to eventually get

66

00:03:39,190 --> 00:03:42,610

a very large nail,
and take it and put it

67

00:03:42,610 --> 00:03:45,640

on the track of the streetcar.

68

00:03:45,640 --> 00:03:48,370

And when the streetcar
went over the nail,

69

00:03:48,370 --> 00:03:51,910

it would flatten the edge
and make it a chisel.

70

00:03:51,910 --> 00:03:54,880

So we would use
that to cut the--

71

00:03:54,880 --> 00:03:57,850

But after, if you become very
proficient and you continue,

72

00:03:57,850 --> 00:04:01,480

then you begin to make them
out of thin plywood, which,

73

00:04:01,480 --> 00:04:03,730

of course, required
different tools.

74

00:04:03,730 --> 00:04:06,220

The drill and of
course, a coping

75

00:04:06,220 --> 00:04:08,130

saw with a very thin blade.

76

00:04:08,130 --> 00:04:10,630

And you had to be very careful
because they break very, very

77

00:04:10,630 --> 00:04:11,660

frequently.

78

00:04:11,660 --> 00:04:13,930

And it's a very elaborate
thing because it's

79

00:04:13,930 --> 00:04:19,089

full of filigrees,
especially out on the hair.

80

00:04:19,089 --> 00:04:21,430

These are the kinds
of things I would do.

81

00:04:21,430 --> 00:04:26,770

Then I built a radio
out of crystal.

82

00:04:26,770 --> 00:04:31,540

I had to go and find
appropriate crystal

83

00:04:31,540 --> 00:04:36,760

and get the things,
wind the coil.

84

00:04:36,760 --> 00:04:39,460

Then we used to try
to build telephones.

85

00:04:39,460 --> 00:04:42,580

And they became the usual
telephone of two cans

86

00:04:42,580 --> 00:04:43,540

with a string.

87

00:04:43,540 --> 00:04:45,490

But then we got
a little bit more

88

00:04:45,490 --> 00:04:48,280

elaborate and starting
building things

89

00:04:48,280 --> 00:04:51,760

that would go a longer
distance with actual wires.

90

00:04:51,760 --> 00:04:56,980

So I think I trace my
interest in building things.

91

00:04:56,980 --> 00:04:59,200

When you were doing
these puppets,

92

00:04:59,200 --> 00:05:01,600
did you actually do
little shows for--

93
00:05:01,600 --> 00:05:03,310
Oh yes, of course.

94
00:05:03,310 --> 00:05:04,660
After all this.

95
00:05:04,660 --> 00:05:06,730
There were also books
because first of all,

96
00:05:06,730 --> 00:05:10,840
the main character
is called Karagoz.

97
00:05:10,840 --> 00:05:14,680
And it's a remnant
from the 400 years

98
00:05:14,680 --> 00:05:19,750
of Turkish occupation of Greece
because literally, Karagoz

99
00:05:19,750 --> 00:05:22,570
means "black eyes."

100
00:05:22,570 --> 00:05:27,250
He was, I don't know,
perhaps Punchinello

101
00:05:27,250 --> 00:05:31,750
in Italian Renaissance
plays or Till Eulenspiegel.

102
00:05:31,750 --> 00:05:36,280
It's a combination of a
character who was, perhaps,

103
00:05:36,280 --> 00:05:40,030
completely illiterate

but street smart,

104

00:05:40,030 --> 00:05:48,520
and who would always outwit
more serious officials

105

00:05:48,520 --> 00:05:52,790
in particular because the
opponents were always Turks,

106

00:05:52,790 --> 00:05:53,290
you see?

107

00:05:53,290 --> 00:06:01,000
And/or the police,
or some clerk.

108

00:06:01,000 --> 00:06:05,170
So always, the street smart boy.

109

00:06:05,170 --> 00:06:08,950
Well, actually manly though,
because he had children himself

110

00:06:08,950 --> 00:06:11,230
who outwit them all.

111

00:06:11,230 --> 00:06:13,750
Of course, we would
learn the parts.

112

00:06:13,750 --> 00:06:18,010
And then at that time, we
would try to invite anyone.

113

00:06:18,010 --> 00:06:21,140
We'd sometimes ask for a
fee for those who had come,

114

00:06:21,140 --> 00:06:22,920
and we would put on a show.

115

00:06:22,920 --> 00:06:24,170
That must have been great fun.

116
00:06:24,170 --> 00:06:27,300
Yes, yes.

117
00:06:27,300 --> 00:06:30,030
And I gather because you were
doing this with other people,

118
00:06:30,030 --> 00:06:32,910
that these were friends
of yours of like interest.

119
00:06:32,910 --> 00:06:33,420
Right.

120
00:06:33,420 --> 00:06:37,560
They were either people in
the immediate neighborhood

121
00:06:37,560 --> 00:06:41,490
or later on, for
more serious things

122
00:06:41,490 --> 00:06:43,410
that were much
more complex, they

123
00:06:43,410 --> 00:06:47,850
were, I'm sure, school
friends, schoolmates.

124
00:06:47,850 --> 00:06:52,810
So your memories of your
childhood are very pleasant?

125
00:06:52,810 --> 00:06:53,310
Yes.

126
00:06:53,310 --> 00:06:55,990

127

00:06:55,990 --> 00:06:56,490

Right.

128

00:06:56,490 --> 00:07:03,600

Because family life
was good, pleasant.

129

00:07:03,600 --> 00:07:08,790

The school was pleasant,
too, at times, difficult,

130

00:07:08,790 --> 00:07:14,250

which is something
that every child needs.

131

00:07:14,250 --> 00:07:22,210

But nothing dark until
'40, late '40 or '41.

132

00:07:22,210 --> 00:07:24,100

Are you hearing things--

133

00:07:24,100 --> 00:07:26,770

I mean, I know in 1933,
you're a little bit too

134

00:07:26,770 --> 00:07:29,410

young to have begun to
hear things about what's

135

00:07:29,410 --> 00:07:30,410

happening in Germany.

136

00:07:30,410 --> 00:07:31,368

Although, I don't know.

137

00:07:31,368 --> 00:07:34,858

I mean, did you have some
sense as you began to be six,

138

00:07:34,858 --> 00:07:36,400

seven, eight years

old that something

139

00:07:36,400 --> 00:07:37,707

was going on in Europe--

140

00:07:37,707 --> 00:07:38,207

Yes.

141

00:07:38,207 --> 00:07:41,230

--that was not so good?

142

00:07:41,230 --> 00:07:45,010

I have to speak for myself.

143

00:07:45,010 --> 00:07:47,620

I think my earliest
recollection, which

144

00:07:47,620 --> 00:07:52,000

I date my becoming
politically aware,

145

00:07:52,000 --> 00:08:00,370

is 1936 with the onset
of the Spanish Civil War.

146

00:08:00,370 --> 00:08:03,790

I think the reason
being primarily

147

00:08:03,790 --> 00:08:07,960

that it was written
up in the newspapers.

148

00:08:07,960 --> 00:08:11,620

My mother and father, in
particular my mother--

149

00:08:11,620 --> 00:08:13,600

and I really don't know why.

150

00:08:13,600 --> 00:08:17,110

I try sometimes to understand
why because obviously,

151
00:08:17,110 --> 00:08:20,830
I didn't have conversations
with her about things like that.

152
00:08:20,830 --> 00:08:24,400
But she was very
interested in politics.

153
00:08:24,400 --> 00:08:27,460
And I know she read and
she discussed things

154
00:08:27,460 --> 00:08:28,820
with my father.

155
00:08:28,820 --> 00:08:33,730
So I would then read
the articles also.

156
00:08:33,730 --> 00:08:36,280
So I began to become
very sensitive

157
00:08:36,280 --> 00:08:41,409
about the situation in Europe.

158
00:08:41,409 --> 00:08:48,610
Then in '37 '38, the
interest broadened

159
00:08:48,610 --> 00:08:55,060
primarily because in the
synagogue during, for instance,

160
00:08:55,060 --> 00:08:59,140
the break in the entire
day of Yom Kippur

161
00:08:59,140 --> 00:09:02,553
after the morning prayers,

we wouldn't even go home,

162

00:09:02,553 --> 00:09:03,970

although it was
around the corner.

163

00:09:03,970 --> 00:09:06,310

We would stay in the yard.

164

00:09:06,310 --> 00:09:10,070

And we began to see for
the first time people who

165

00:09:10,070 --> 00:09:11,290

we had never seen before.

166

00:09:11,290 --> 00:09:15,880

And these were Ashkenazi, Jewish
people from Czechoslovakia

167

00:09:15,880 --> 00:09:21,070

or Germany who had
found refuge in Greece

168

00:09:21,070 --> 00:09:22,570

in escaping the Nazis.

169

00:09:22,570 --> 00:09:28,220

So one couldn't help
be sensitive to this,

170

00:09:28,220 --> 00:09:33,490

primarily because my parents
talk about it even when

171

00:09:33,490 --> 00:09:35,740

friends came to
visit, and we could

172

00:09:35,740 --> 00:09:38,860

overhear their conversation.

173

00:09:38,860 --> 00:09:43,180

It went around,
things like this,

174

00:09:43,180 --> 00:09:48,940

so I can date my awareness.

175

00:09:48,940 --> 00:09:53,980

And also, I had become to be
very interested in history.

176

00:09:53,980 --> 00:09:55,120

I always loved history.

177

00:09:55,120 --> 00:10:01,330

I read history books for
children from an early age,

178

00:10:01,330 --> 00:10:03,160

including myths and mythology.

179

00:10:03,160 --> 00:10:06,640

180

00:10:06,640 --> 00:10:12,180

So I was aware from
the middle '30s.

181

00:10:12,180 --> 00:10:14,710

Did you talk about
this with your friends?

182

00:10:14,710 --> 00:10:18,700

Or did you just mainly
keep it to yourself?

183

00:10:18,700 --> 00:10:22,870

I think we would talk
a little bit primarily

184

00:10:22,870 --> 00:10:26,740

about following the headlines.

185

00:10:26,740 --> 00:10:29,200

Remember, there
were stories which,

186

00:10:29,200 --> 00:10:34,510

when in the Spanish
Civil War, I remember

187

00:10:34,510 --> 00:10:39,580

stories of bombardments
by German planes.

188

00:10:39,580 --> 00:10:44,285

And I would ask, what would
are the Germans doing in Spain?

189

00:10:44,285 --> 00:10:45,910

But of course, now
one knows that there

190

00:10:45,910 --> 00:10:49,810

was a contingent of--

191

00:10:49,810 --> 00:10:54,460

it became almost a proving
ground for many of the weapons.

192

00:10:54,460 --> 00:10:57,820

Or the Italians,
also the same thing.

193

00:10:57,820 --> 00:11:02,890

By contrast, although the
French and the British

194

00:11:02,890 --> 00:11:06,760

were neutral, and
in fact, at times,

195

00:11:06,760 --> 00:11:11,530

made terrible obstacles to
try to help the royalists.

196

00:11:11,530 --> 00:11:14,170

197

00:11:14,170 --> 00:11:20,610

You have to remember that
because of speaking French,

198

00:11:20,610 --> 00:11:25,980

I have to say that we were
a very Francophile family.

199

00:11:25,980 --> 00:11:30,060

So I had read French history.

200

00:11:30,060 --> 00:11:33,750

My father, after
the war, had bought

201

00:11:33,750 --> 00:11:36,030

a book about the
Second World War

202

00:11:36,030 --> 00:11:38,400

that was illustrated
with photographs.

203

00:11:38,400 --> 00:11:44,250

And I remember spending endless
hours leafing through the book,

204

00:11:44,250 --> 00:11:48,960

looking at photographs
of the French generals,

205

00:11:48,960 --> 00:11:54,060

French soldiers, battle scenes.

206

00:11:54,060 --> 00:11:56,910

Plus, also, the text.

207

00:11:56,910 --> 00:12:03,870

So before 1939 or 1940,

were you worried about what

208

00:12:03,870 --> 00:12:05,070
might happen to Greece?

209

00:12:05,070 --> 00:12:06,780
Do you remember as a child?

210

00:12:06,780 --> 00:12:09,960
No, no, no.

211

00:12:09,960 --> 00:12:17,260
And that's why in 1914,
when Italy declared war

212

00:12:17,260 --> 00:12:20,610
when we at least went
to war with Italy,

213

00:12:20,610 --> 00:12:27,780
I think it's fair to say that
it was a surprise to everyone.

214

00:12:27,780 --> 00:12:31,020
There may have been
understanding by much more

215

00:12:31,020 --> 00:12:36,690
politically savvy individuals
than a 13-year-old that perhaps

216

00:12:36,690 --> 00:12:38,550
Greece inevitably--

217

00:12:38,550 --> 00:12:41,250
or no part was
going to be spared

218

00:12:41,250 --> 00:12:43,290
and will always
get to be involved.

219

00:12:43,290 --> 00:12:46,470
But I don't think
anyone expected

220
00:12:46,470 --> 00:12:53,160
this sort of overt move
on the part of Mussolini

221
00:12:53,160 --> 00:12:56,670
to demand access
to Salonika, which

222
00:12:56,670 --> 00:12:59,460
of course, had to be refused.

223
00:12:59,460 --> 00:13:02,860
And the rest, as we
say, is history, right?

224
00:13:02,860 --> 00:13:05,010
Were you forced to
join a fascist group?

225
00:13:05,010 --> 00:13:06,360
Because I know that Samuel--

226
00:13:06,360 --> 00:13:07,440
Yes, yes.

227
00:13:07,440 --> 00:13:13,560
Not I because what happened
was the dissolution of the Boy

228
00:13:13,560 --> 00:13:15,750
Scouts-- and I still remember--

229
00:13:15,750 --> 00:13:20,580
you see, 25 March is the
national holiday in Greece

230
00:13:20,580 --> 00:13:24,690
because it's when the War
of Independence in 1821

231
00:13:24,690 --> 00:13:27,780
started against the Turks.

232
00:13:27,780 --> 00:13:30,810
So usually, there were parades.

233
00:13:30,810 --> 00:13:36,090
And we as Boy Scouts
participated in the parades.

234
00:13:36,090 --> 00:13:41,310
But in that year, in
1940, which was the order

235
00:13:41,310 --> 00:13:48,600
to dissolve the Boy Scouts,
it was our last day.

236
00:13:48,600 --> 00:13:51,910
We were all dressed in
our uniforms and so forth.

237
00:13:51,910 --> 00:13:55,890
But the fascist
youth began, I think,

238
00:13:55,890 --> 00:13:57,090
first year of high school.

239
00:13:57,090 --> 00:14:03,600
And they would gradually
proceed to the later grades.

240
00:14:03,600 --> 00:14:10,180
But by 1940 or '41, I was
in now, the fifth grade,

241
00:14:10,180 --> 00:14:15,290
which was the next to last
grade, so I didn't have to.

242

00:14:15,290 --> 00:14:16,870
That was one reason.

243
00:14:16,870 --> 00:14:26,730
The other reason is that if
we insisted as aliens, not

244
00:14:26,730 --> 00:14:30,960
being Greek citizens, we
didn't have to be part of it.

245
00:14:30,960 --> 00:14:34,320
But I think in some cases,
instead of making a fuss,

246
00:14:34,320 --> 00:14:37,920
we put this blue thing.

247
00:14:37,920 --> 00:14:39,990
So you were not citizens?

248
00:14:39,990 --> 00:14:43,020
No, we were not because I
came to the United States,

249
00:14:43,020 --> 00:14:46,140
as I mentioned to you
earlier in private,

250
00:14:46,140 --> 00:14:47,540
on a Yugoslav passport.

251
00:14:47,540 --> 00:14:48,954
Right, right.

252
00:14:48,954 --> 00:14:51,670
Hm.

253
00:14:51,670 --> 00:14:56,260
So when the occupation
happens, the invasion

254

00:14:56,260 --> 00:14:58,260
is 1940 and then the Italians--

255
00:14:58,260 --> 00:14:58,760
No.

256
00:14:58,760 --> 00:15:00,080
Excuse me.

257
00:15:00,080 --> 00:15:08,920
In October of 1940, Italy
essentially sent an ultimatum

258
00:15:08,920 --> 00:15:13,270
to Greece to essentially
let it come through,

259
00:15:13,270 --> 00:15:15,880
which was effectively saying
we want to occupy you.

260
00:15:15,880 --> 00:15:18,868

261
00:15:18,868 --> 00:15:22,210
But Axis even said no.

262
00:15:22,210 --> 00:15:28,300
And the war started between
Greece and Italy primarily

263
00:15:28,300 --> 00:15:31,570
taking place in Albania
because the Italians

264
00:15:31,570 --> 00:15:33,490
had already occupied Albania.

265
00:15:33,490 --> 00:15:37,390
So they tried to invade
that northwestern

266

00:15:37,390 --> 00:15:41,120
part of Greece known as Epirus
from the Albanian border.

267
00:15:41,120 --> 00:15:43,240
Well, they were
not only repulsed,

268
00:15:43,240 --> 00:15:46,540
but also, the Greeks
began to advance.

269
00:15:46,540 --> 00:15:56,410
So for the four of 40
in the spring of '41,

270
00:15:56,410 --> 00:16:01,690
the war in Greece was
only between the Italians

271
00:16:01,690 --> 00:16:02,710
and the Greeks.

272
00:16:02,710 --> 00:16:07,840
It was not until April
of '41 that Germany

273
00:16:07,840 --> 00:16:13,180
declared war and invaded.

274
00:16:13,180 --> 00:16:18,660
And the reason, principally,
is that in Yugoslavia,

275
00:16:18,660 --> 00:16:24,520
the then regent had not
necessarily allied himself

276
00:16:24,520 --> 00:16:28,120
with Germany, but had
signed a non-aggression pact

277
00:16:28,120 --> 00:16:29,890

with Germany.

278

00:16:29,890 --> 00:16:34,570

But then there was a
revolution or a coup

279

00:16:34,570 --> 00:16:39,190

by young officers in
the Yugoslavian army.

280

00:16:39,190 --> 00:16:45,610

And they expelled the regent
and elevated the young then

281

00:16:45,610 --> 00:16:49,150

King Peter, who was a
minor, to become king

282

00:16:49,150 --> 00:16:53,000

and overturned the
arrangement with Germany,

283

00:16:53,000 --> 00:16:54,880

which infuriated Hitler.

284

00:16:54,880 --> 00:17:01,920

And in a lightning campaign
that lasted, I think, about 3

285

00:17:01,920 --> 00:17:05,349

and 1/2 to four weeks, all
of Yugoslavia and Greece

286

00:17:05,349 --> 00:17:06,050

were overrun.

287

00:17:06,050 --> 00:17:06,550

Right.

288

00:17:06,550 --> 00:17:08,260

And that was in April of '41?

289

00:17:08,260 --> 00:17:08,859

Yes.

290

00:17:08,859 --> 00:17:14,260

The Germans entered Athens

April 30 of '41, the day

291

00:17:14,260 --> 00:17:17,440

after my birthday.

292

00:17:17,440 --> 00:17:20,168

And how was that in relationship
to your bar mitzvah?

293

00:17:20,168 --> 00:17:21,460

But was your bar mitzvah later?

294

00:17:21,460 --> 00:17:22,004

No, no, no.

295

00:17:22,004 --> 00:17:26,710

Bar mitzvah was earlier because
I had my bar mitzvah in 1939.

296

00:17:26,710 --> 00:17:31,529

And he was a very elaborate
affair, at least as I--

297

00:17:31,529 --> 00:17:32,196

As you remember?

298

00:17:32,196 --> 00:17:38,320

As I remember it where, first
of all, the preparation itself.

299

00:17:38,320 --> 00:17:42,400

Actually, when I
first went to school,

300

00:17:42,400 --> 00:17:47,900

first grade of primary school,
I went to a Jewish school.

301

00:17:47,900 --> 00:17:51,172

I would have continued, but
the school was bursting.

302

00:17:51,172 --> 00:17:52,630

They didn't have
enough facilities,

303

00:17:52,630 --> 00:17:55,090

so they had to close
it because they

304

00:17:55,090 --> 00:17:59,310

were going to build a
different, much larger facility.

305

00:17:59,310 --> 00:18:03,460

So I began to go
to Greek schools.

306

00:18:03,460 --> 00:18:07,480

So I had begun to
read the Hebrew

307

00:18:07,480 --> 00:18:12,160

and understand at least
a little bit of Hebrew.

308

00:18:12,160 --> 00:18:14,680

But that essentially did
not continue because then I

309

00:18:14,680 --> 00:18:18,370

started going to Greek schools.

310

00:18:18,370 --> 00:18:24,400

But I think about six to seven
months before my bar mitzvah,

311

00:18:24,400 --> 00:18:31,190

I began to take lessons with
the then rabbi of Athens.

312

00:18:31,190 --> 00:18:36,160

So I got well
prepared, and so I--

313

00:18:36,160 --> 00:18:38,100

Was in a big party?

314

00:18:38,100 --> 00:18:40,380

Yes.

315

00:18:40,380 --> 00:18:44,730

I remember it lasted almost
all day long because the people

316

00:18:44,730 --> 00:18:46,510

came in waves.

317

00:18:46,510 --> 00:18:49,050

318

00:18:49,050 --> 00:18:50,970

We received in our apartment.

319

00:18:50,970 --> 00:18:54,150

In those days, I
think nobody would

320

00:18:54,150 --> 00:18:59,910

go in and engage a wholesome
someplace for guests.

321

00:18:59,910 --> 00:19:03,420

So I think people knew
that they had to stagger.

322

00:19:03,420 --> 00:19:09,300

So they came after the
ceremony in the synagogue.

323

00:19:09,300 --> 00:19:13,240

They came in continuous waves
that lasted practically all day

324
00:19:13,240 --> 00:19:13,740
long.

325
00:19:13,740 --> 00:19:17,610
And these were children
and adults or only adults?

326
00:19:17,610 --> 00:19:18,110
Both.

327
00:19:18,110 --> 00:19:18,610
Or both?

328
00:19:18,610 --> 00:19:19,920
Both.

329
00:19:19,920 --> 00:19:22,860
Yeah, there were children
of comparable age.

330
00:19:22,860 --> 00:19:24,720
Right, not little.

331
00:19:24,720 --> 00:19:25,860
Right.

332
00:19:25,860 --> 00:19:27,840
So when the occupation
happened, do you

333
00:19:27,840 --> 00:19:29,640
remember seeing German troops?

334
00:19:29,640 --> 00:19:30,200
Absolutely.

335
00:19:30,200 --> 00:19:30,740
Yes.

336
00:19:30,740 --> 00:19:31,590

Yes.

337

00:19:31,590 --> 00:19:34,500

So that must have been
really frightening?

338

00:19:34,500 --> 00:19:39,520

Well, it was frightening because
for one thing, by that time,

339

00:19:39,520 --> 00:19:45,270

we knew what had happened
to Europe, what would

340

00:19:45,270 --> 00:19:47,370

happen to Jews in particular.

341

00:19:47,370 --> 00:19:51,966

So we knew it was not
a good thing for us.

342

00:19:51,966 --> 00:19:54,780

343

00:19:54,780 --> 00:19:59,700

But again, there
is another aspect

344

00:19:59,700 --> 00:20:03,180

which becomes important
for our story,

345

00:20:03,180 --> 00:20:07,560

that Athens was
occupied by Italians.

346

00:20:07,560 --> 00:20:11,850

I think Hitler, as
a sop to Mussolini,

347

00:20:11,850 --> 00:20:20,100

gave him Athens and a few other
largest cities and regions

348
00:20:20,100 --> 00:20:22,470
of Greece to occupy.

349
00:20:22,470 --> 00:20:25,180
Unfortunately-- well, I don't
know if it would have made a--

350
00:20:25,180 --> 00:20:26,820
it might have made a difference.

351
00:20:26,820 --> 00:20:31,400
Salonika was under
German occupation.

352
00:20:31,400 --> 00:20:34,340
And that means that the greatest
of Jews living in Greece

353
00:20:34,340 --> 00:20:35,940
were under German occupation?

354
00:20:35,940 --> 00:20:37,400
Right.

355
00:20:37,400 --> 00:20:40,460
So visibly, of
course, we could see

356
00:20:40,460 --> 00:20:43,280
Germans, the German soldiers.

357
00:20:43,280 --> 00:20:45,980
But Italians were
a lot more visible.

358
00:20:45,980 --> 00:20:51,270
And orders which were issued,
as any occupying authority

359
00:20:51,270 --> 00:20:54,650
does promulgating laws and

things like this, always.

360

00:20:54,650 --> 00:20:59,570

Although, they were coming
from the Quisling government,

361

00:20:59,570 --> 00:21:01,310

the collaborating government.

362

00:21:01,310 --> 00:21:06,230

But generally, it was
according to the orders of--

363

00:21:06,230 --> 00:21:10,010

and they would cite the
particular Italian thing.

364

00:21:10,010 --> 00:21:15,360

So in '41 and '42, does
your life change very much?

365

00:21:15,360 --> 00:21:18,890

Or once the occupation
starts, does it settle down?

366

00:21:18,890 --> 00:21:21,650

Well, it changed
in many respects.

367

00:21:21,650 --> 00:21:24,790

But I continued with school.

368

00:21:24,790 --> 00:21:29,060

I finished high school in '42.

369

00:21:29,060 --> 00:21:33,920

The winter of '41 to '42,
which was the first winter

370

00:21:33,920 --> 00:21:38,330

under occupation,
turned out to be

371

00:21:38,330 --> 00:21:42,110

the most terrible
winter of the occupation

372

00:21:42,110 --> 00:21:45,050

from a standpoint of famine.

373

00:21:45,050 --> 00:21:49,580

For the first time,
we began to see

374

00:21:49,580 --> 00:21:55,160

weak people who had fallen
in the middle of the street.

375

00:21:55,160 --> 00:21:59,210

And gradually, even some of
them who were left there,

376

00:21:59,210 --> 00:22:03,740

and some of them dead,
so it was a very, very--

377

00:22:03,740 --> 00:22:10,040

And coincidentally also, Athens
generally had mild winters.

378

00:22:10,040 --> 00:22:13,610

I remember only once
in my entire childhood

379

00:22:13,610 --> 00:22:15,320

remembering snow.

380

00:22:15,320 --> 00:22:18,620

Snow, it was only something
that you read in books.

381

00:22:18,620 --> 00:22:22,100

And we woke up one day, and
the roofs were a little white.

382

00:22:22,100 --> 00:22:27,230
And some of us went immediately
to try to make a snowman,

383
00:22:27,230 --> 00:22:31,070
but the moment we reached the
street, the snow had melted.

384
00:22:31,070 --> 00:22:32,930
There wasn't very much left.

385
00:22:32,930 --> 00:22:35,960
But that was a
very rough winter.

386
00:22:35,960 --> 00:22:37,730
It was very, very cold.

387
00:22:37,730 --> 00:22:39,790
There was no heating.

388
00:22:39,790 --> 00:22:42,620
Lack of food.

389
00:22:42,620 --> 00:22:44,450
I think that probably
what happened

390
00:22:44,450 --> 00:22:49,100
is that the black market
and other clandestine ways

391
00:22:49,100 --> 00:22:52,580
of getting food-- also,
people didn't know what

392
00:22:52,580 --> 00:22:57,440
the occupying powers were
going to do in grabbing hold

393
00:22:57,440 --> 00:23:02,960
of the agricultural produce that
naturally came out of Greece.

394
00:23:02,960 --> 00:23:06,890
But in short, it was
a terrible winter.

395
00:23:06,890 --> 00:23:11,020
But then things
began to be better.

396
00:23:11,020 --> 00:23:14,680
We did not suffer very
much in our family

397
00:23:14,680 --> 00:23:19,840
because although we didn't
get the kinds of foods

398
00:23:19,840 --> 00:23:23,770
that we were used
to, then I remember

399
00:23:23,770 --> 00:23:29,590
being sent by my mother to
stand in queues, in lines

400
00:23:29,590 --> 00:23:33,970
to buy a piece of feta,
a piece of cheese.

401
00:23:33,970 --> 00:23:37,570
And sometimes you would
stand in line for hours

402
00:23:37,570 --> 00:23:40,750
only to reach the
door practically,

403
00:23:40,750 --> 00:23:45,100
and then be told that
there was no more left,

404
00:23:45,100 --> 00:23:47,290
so we spent a great

deal of time like that.

405

00:23:47,290 --> 00:23:53,680

But I was not directly
affected with it in school.

406

00:23:53,680 --> 00:23:55,580

We had to be very careful.

407

00:23:55,580 --> 00:24:00,190

We were advised and
admonished by our teachers

408

00:24:00,190 --> 00:24:05,140

not to make any politically
overt statements in class,

409

00:24:05,140 --> 00:24:06,280

for obvious reasons.

410

00:24:06,280 --> 00:24:10,200

411

00:24:10,200 --> 00:24:16,270

But you knew that
you were not entirely

412

00:24:16,270 --> 00:24:18,010

free to say what you
wanted to, and you

413

00:24:18,010 --> 00:24:20,800

had to be very, very careful.

414

00:24:20,800 --> 00:24:23,740

There was no curfew in Athens
because at least at that time,

415

00:24:23,740 --> 00:24:27,535

it would been almost
impossible to enforce.

416

00:24:27,535 --> 00:24:31,870

417

00:24:31,870 --> 00:24:36,760

As soon as I finished high
school in '42, normally

418

00:24:36,760 --> 00:24:38,860

I would have been
taking the exams

419

00:24:38,860 --> 00:24:42,610

to get into the political
school, but it was closed.

420

00:24:42,610 --> 00:24:44,690

The university was closed.

421

00:24:44,690 --> 00:24:50,680

So I then, until the beginning
of the Jewish persecution

422

00:24:50,680 --> 00:24:59,410

in Athens, I worked for slightly
over a year for a man who was--

423

00:24:59,410 --> 00:25:06,430

and the occupation, there was
a clandestine stock exchange.

424

00:25:06,430 --> 00:25:08,650

We're not talking
about stocks or bonds.

425

00:25:08,650 --> 00:25:12,250

The only means of transaction,
the only thing that

426

00:25:12,250 --> 00:25:19,510

was transacted was gold, gold
coins, English sovereigns,

427

00:25:19,510 --> 00:25:25,480

French gold francs, Swiss francs, and occasionally bars

428
00:25:25,480 --> 00:25:28,750
and small bars of gold.

429
00:25:28,750 --> 00:25:33,760
And this market was obviously
entirely underground

430
00:25:33,760 --> 00:25:36,910
because it was under
penalty of death

431
00:25:36,910 --> 00:25:40,690
if you were caught with gold.

432
00:25:40,690 --> 00:25:43,540
The way the market was done was
strictly over the telephone.

433
00:25:43,540 --> 00:25:45,460
Somebody would
call in the morning

434
00:25:45,460 --> 00:25:51,790
and say, I have 10 liras, they
used to be called collectively,

435
00:25:51,790 --> 00:25:52,600
to sell.

436
00:25:52,600 --> 00:25:54,880
What is the asking price?

437
00:25:54,880 --> 00:25:59,350
And this market would
fluctuate entirely

438
00:25:59,350 --> 00:26:03,160
or what would happen in
the international news.

439

00:26:03,160 --> 00:26:11,320

If the Germans were winning,
then the Greek drachma

440

00:26:11,320 --> 00:26:16,070

would lose even
more of its value.

441

00:26:16,070 --> 00:26:18,870

We're talking
about, by that time,

442

00:26:18,870 --> 00:26:26,230

a million drachmas was
just to buy some candy.

443

00:26:26,230 --> 00:26:29,140

If the Allies were
winning in the country,

444

00:26:29,140 --> 00:26:33,580

then the drachma would rise
because naturally, people

445

00:26:33,580 --> 00:26:36,430

thought that with the
Allies' side winning,

446

00:26:36,430 --> 00:26:39,040

then the days of liberation
for Greece would come.

447

00:26:39,040 --> 00:26:42,590

And therefore, the
drachma would gain value.

448

00:26:42,590 --> 00:26:43,750

So that's what I did.

449

00:26:43,750 --> 00:26:46,600

I mean, I would then--

450

00:26:46,600 --> 00:26:50,590
the man I work for
would be the middle man.

451
00:26:50,590 --> 00:26:56,180
He would then sell, get
a buyer, get a seller.

452
00:26:56,180 --> 00:26:59,180
And then I would then have
to, from time to time,

453
00:26:59,180 --> 00:27:03,200
deliver the goods, which
were the rows, maybe,

454
00:27:03,200 --> 00:27:05,990
of 10 silver coins.

455
00:27:05,990 --> 00:27:10,790
And I would deliver them, go
pick him up, and deliver them.

456
00:27:10,790 --> 00:27:15,890
And it was a dangerous thing
because if I were found out,

457
00:27:15,890 --> 00:27:17,870
then it would have
been terrible,

458
00:27:17,870 --> 00:27:20,220
but I was not found out.

459
00:27:20,220 --> 00:27:23,020
Let me go back to the
school for a moment.

460
00:27:23,020 --> 00:27:25,010
Was there propaganda
in the school?

461
00:27:25,010 --> 00:27:29,920

Or were the classes really
pretty straightforward?

462
00:27:29,920 --> 00:27:35,950
There was no propaganda,
especially in that high school.

463
00:27:35,950 --> 00:27:38,620
I think it was too early.

464
00:27:38,620 --> 00:27:42,700
There was not enough time
for the occupying forces

465
00:27:42,700 --> 00:27:45,970
to begin something overt
that would trickle down

466
00:27:45,970 --> 00:27:49,070
into the lessons themselves.

467
00:27:49,070 --> 00:27:52,750
I mean, what we were, as I
said, admonished by our teachers

468
00:27:52,750 --> 00:27:56,620
not to do is not to
make overt statements

469
00:27:56,620 --> 00:28:00,820
against the occupying
powers, even in jest

470
00:28:00,820 --> 00:28:02,230
for obvious reasons.

471
00:28:02,230 --> 00:28:06,990
But there was no visible effect.

472
00:28:06,990 --> 00:28:10,990
So You didn't have
to do a heil--

473

00:28:10,990 --> 00:28:11,490

Oh, no.

474

00:28:11,490 --> 00:28:12,032

--to anybody?

475

00:28:12,032 --> 00:28:12,660

None of that.

476

00:28:12,660 --> 00:28:13,160

Nothing?

477

00:28:13,160 --> 00:28:13,380

No, no.

478

00:28:13,380 --> 00:28:14,710

So it was very straightforward?

479

00:28:14,710 --> 00:28:15,610

Right.

480

00:28:15,610 --> 00:28:16,210

OK.

481

00:28:16,210 --> 00:28:18,360

We're going to need
to change the tape.

482

00:28:18,360 --> 00:30:44,000