United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Emanuel Tanay
February 24, 1992
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PREFACE

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EMANUEL TANAY
February 24, 1992

Beep.

We're starting now. Can you talk about how things changed with the coming of the Nazis, and talk about the suddenness and the gradualness sort of mixed together, and how people were, didn't realize what was going on.

We immediately at the end of the hostilities, uh, there was a return to relatively normal life in the little town of Meyerhof, where I lived in, in Poland, but then, gradually there was a, an increase in the persecution by, by the Germans. First the military left and the SS came and then with the SS came the uh the Ukrainians and the Lithuanians, who really were rather cruel towards the Jews. So there was an ever-increasing intensity of persecution. Then, establishment of the ghetto, uh, and ultimately the uh deportations or whatever are the term one wants to use. I think the term deportation is a bit misleading.

Let's cut because is that the answer you think?

Yes.

Wait till he gets slated.

Beep.

At the end of the hostilities, that is when Poland was defeated, life came to relatively uh normal type of situation in the little town of Veerhoff where I lived. Uh, but then there was a ever-increasing intensity of persecution. First of all, the, the military left. The Wehrmacht, the, who were relatively uh non- uh punitive towards Jews or for that matter anyone. Uh, then comes the civil administration, the German administration, the SS, and with them come the uh, they hire the guns so to say the, uh, the Lithuanians and the Ukrainians, who were really very vicious and cruel towards the Jews particularly. Uh, then ghetto is formed, and once and first the ghetto, there are very inhuman conditions uh through enough, but one can still go back and forth. But, the main point is that there is a slow increase in the, uh, in the nature of persecution, that there is a kind of a, uh, things are not all that bad. It's quite possible to survive. Uh, and after all, all along, we hope that those big powers, France, England, United States, any moment, they're going to come uh, into real war, and quickly defeat Germany. So, all along, there is the notion, we can somehow make it, and when the uh, you know, when the deportations, or as we called them, Ausedlung, or Actions, Action in German, uh come, uh then generally it is really too late to do anything.

Were people, once those things started, tell me what those things were, and once things started, did people know what was going on in the ghetto.

No, we uh, my, was a shock to me that when I looked into it, once I was in United States, that a

reader of the New York Times knew a great deal more, and I have copies of those, uhhhh, newspapers, than we did, who were there! Because we had no way of communicating with each other. Uh, in fact, in our little town, the community hired a Pole to follow the trains, so that we know where the trains are going, because we didn't. And he lost track. You know, he couldn't follow it, and we didn't know. That's a absolute fact that we did not know what was going on uh, until it, until after the war really. Now, somebody got the, you know, there are some people I have uh examined a lot of uh survivors who didn't know when they arrived in Auschwitz what was going on. So, there was a general lack of knowledge.

Can you talk about different conditions in Eastern and Western Europe, and also how readily recognizable Jews were.

For a Jew in Poland to hide was generally, virtually impossible, to hide by I mean, I mean, to adopt a non-Jewish identity, I don't mean hiding in some closet. Uh, to be on false papers, because Jews talked differently, they had clear cut accent, Jewish accent, they looked differently, Poland is a homogeneous society uh where uh there are no outsiders. Americans uh are used to Italians and Spaniards and uh Norwegians. You don't have that in Poland. It's a homogeneous society. Uh, Jews were the only, generally, the only outsiders. They spoke differently, they behaved differently, and they looked differently. And last not least, if they were males, they were circumcised. The only men who were circumcised were Jews. So, if you had any doubts about a male's identity, all you had to do is drop his pants and you knew he was a Jew.

And how was that different from other parts of Europe?

In other parts of Europe, the Jews were different because the Jews were assimilated. In Poland, they assimilated group of Jews with uh a min--tiny minority. Uh, in Germany, majority of Jews were indistinguishable from the Germans. It took all kind of research to determine that somebody was a Jew. There were lots of uh German Jews who just found out thanks to Hitler that they were Jews. You didn't have that kind of quote unquote "problem" in Poland. You knew you were a Jew. Poles around you made it clear to you that you were a Jew, so there was no doubt about it. So Jews were assimilated in, in other parts of, of Europe. The other, the level of antisemitism was entirely different. Even in Germany. The Germans who, after all are responsible for the genocide of the Jews, were certainly not as antisemitic as Poles. I don't think anyone would argue that. So, that's another factor. But the Germans behaved differently. I challenge anyone to say that the Germans were the same in Poland as they were in France. The same troops, I don't mean that they were physically different. You take a SS unit, and you station the SS unit in Krakow, and you transfer it them to Par-to Paris or Amsterdam, and they are different, because they are among humans. In Poland, they were not among humans, but a-among barbarians. Their contempt for Poles was just a little bit less than for Jews. I mean, Jews were non-human, poles were sub-human. And, so they could behave without any kind of restraint, towards the Jews and towards the Poles. In Denmark, a Danish citizen, annoyed with how the Germans behave, spit into the face of an SS man, and got a 30 day suspended sentence. In Poland you get a bullet between your eyes on the spot. It was a different world. The Germans behaved differently in Poland than in Western Europe.

What were deportations, and what did people think they were. It was announced from time to time

that there would be a deportation, that people would go to work in the east. Now remember, the east was someplace out in Russia, uh, it was as far removed as if somebody told you that you're going to travel to outer space. Well, you'd probably know more about outer space now than we did know what's out there in, in Russia. And, the assumption, at least they said, you go there to work. And they directed to bring certain implements with you, and food and whatever. It would vary from locality to locality. So, there was a kind of a feeling of anxiety and they unknown, there's something terrible happening, but it was not clear, there was no clear cut knowledge as to what was the purpose of it, and after all, as all human beings, uh, the Jews of Poland did engage in some denial. I mean, one wanted to be hopeful, and again, it's very difficult to conceptualize, to think of something that is unthinkable. How do you imagine the unthinkable. Now we know, but then we didn't. It was just inconceivable to us, that something that terrible could be happening. It was true in my family. My father who was educated in Vienna, and who spoke fluently German um was much more reluctant to...

We have to stop, we just ran out. We have to reload.

Beep.

Okay, you were talking about how difficult it was to realize what was going on, and you had just started about your father, so why don't you pick it up there.

My father was educated, at least in part, in Vienna, spoke fluently German, and was really sort of familiar with the German culture, and that in a way, was his downfall because he just could not believe uh that Germans would engage in something so barbaric, whereas my mother was responding more to uh to sort of clues that came from the environment, became very anxious, bordering on sort of almost irrational in her anxiety. She was just roaming around asking uh, uh even strangers could they somehow help, you know in terms of doing something for uh, like for me, and my mother was indeed the one who was responsible for securing for me the place in the monastery through a woman that she barely knew, uh was a woman who was selling sweets uh in our town and my mother spoke to her and somehow through that uh established on a very short notice uh my ability to, to leave and go to the monastery.

Okay, I want to back up and ask you to define for me again as though I don't, I don't know what a ghetto is. I don't know about the formation of the ghetto.

Well, one day, there came an announcement that there would be a Jewish quarters, which has come to be known as the ghetto, but they, the Germans call it the Jewish quarters essentially in in German, and uh it gave you a perimeters where Jews could live, which was a tiny portion of the town, and I'm speaking of the town where I lived, but it was similarly true in other towns, and uh, the Poles who lived in that area had to evacuate, but that wasn't a problem because there was the area that the Jews left was a much wider one so who, whatever a Pole was displaced from the Jewish designated area for Jews, they got much better quarters anyway, but not the other way around, uh, in terms of the, the Jews moved in few families into one room, two families. Maybe one family in one room in the beginning, because the ghetto, they have the Jewish area, the Jewish part of town, would become smaller and smaller and smaller, but at first it was open, so you could get in and out in certain hours. For example, there were uh a Jew could not be in the street after 7

o'clock. But at other times, you could get out and mingle, be outside. One day there was an announcement, the ghetto is closed, and there were gates, there were walls ---------- and you couldn't get out, so you see there was this ever-increasing uh level of persecution. I think that is the critical issue both in terms of ghetto, in terms of what, what happens in the ghetto, even when they closed the ghetto there was still enough food somehow brought in, but then suddenly there is less food. Suddenly the ghetto is being made smaller instead of there being forced blocks. Now there are only 2 blocks.

You talked about what things were punishable by death in the ghetto. What kinds of things were-- what were the punishments? What was against the law?

Virtually everything that was contrary to the, uh, not the law, because there was no law, but contrary to a kind of an order given by the local German uh administration, was punishable by death. So, for example, uh, going after the time that was forbidden for Jews, let's say after 8 o clock, or after 7 o clock at one point, was punishable by death. Not wearing your armband was punishable by death. Getting outside of ghetto was punishable by death. Having white bread, I mean that is a fact, where that I know of someone who got shot on the spot, and I hope I can tell it without reacting as I often do, uh, that that person got shot. (Crying, long pause). That always gives me trouble.

Tell me what it was like to live on areas ----------, and tell me why you were able to do that. What special things made it so you were able to?

(Long pause) Well, my parents, unlike virtually um all of the Jews in our, in our town, that varied from town to town were assimilated, that is they spoke very well polish, and were generally indistinguishable from the rest of the population, and certainly that applied to me as a, as a youngster, so I could pretend that I was not a Jew, uh with some difficulty. Obviously at first when I came to the monastery, my familiarity with prayers, my familiarity with uh catholic uh liturgy, and so was limited but I had some so I could, I could uh, uh pretend. Most Jews, or most boys my age would not be able to do that uh, in Poland that is. So, that accounts for my uh ability to live on false papers, but that was the only, that was the beginning. Uh, I would, one also had to have great deal, I can say it now in retrospect without having to be falsely modest, it required resourcefulness, courage, and an ability to sort of adapt to circumstances and perceive, you know, you looked at another person, and you knew that that person had a look in his or her eyes, is he a Jew? And then you had to take some action. Say something. I would, for example, if I was on a street car, and, and, and a person had a look like, ah, that kid might be a Jew, I would go to that person, and ask something, or maybe make some kind of a comment, and a fairly aggressive comment, and maybe, like you know in a train I would say, "Would you move your suitcase," or something like that, and that would right away dispel that person's suspicion, because first of all my language would be clear, so that most likely he's not a Jew, and my behavior would be then different, so you see it wasn't only the language, the appearance, but also the behavior. There was in Poland a kind of a expression that they could recognize a Jew by sadness in his or her eyes or false papers. Now remember that there was generally fear of having a Jew live somewhere nearby because you could get punished for it, and great many people also were antisemitic, and approved of the persecution of Jews. That is quite inconceivable to many Poles nowadays, the new Polish uh generation, young people find this offensive when one mentions that it was perfectly acceptable in Poland during

World War Two to see Jews tormented because it is not acceptable now.

I only have a little bit left, I'm trying to think of something short. Tell me what were liquidations in the ghetto?

Liquidation was a term that we used, meaning that the ghetto would be closed, that there would be not, see one never knew, is this the final type of uh deportation or would they permit or some people remain. See as, as a ghetto was being, as the deportation would start, people would have certain papers that allowed them to stay, there were certain, there was a hierarchy, okay? You worked in this place, you worked in that place, those papers were good, these ones were not, and one never knew for sure, well, is this the final liquidation of that particular ghetto in this locality or not? So, you could only for sure tell in retrospect. There were small, see they, the procedure that they followed that we didn't know about, they always concentrated, they closed the smaller ghettos. Then they made the bigger ghettos. Ultimately there was, for example in the, in the county where I lived, there were number of Jewish communities...

We just ran out. We have to reload.

Well, just do whatever--

Beep.

Sometime in 1942, probably early in summer of 42 it became pretty apparent that there would be a final liquidation of the ghetto, and my mother became very anxious and just talked to anyone she could to create some type of a setting where she and my sister, and I, I was 14 years old at the time, not quite 14, uh, and my mother did, through an acquaintance, arrange for a man named Godumsky, to come, she lived in Chanstohova?? to come to Mierhow, and take me to the monastery of Mogilla. Now you have to keep in mind that there was no way of communicating, and one couldn't trust, there were some phones, but one couldn't really communicate. This, this lady contacted Mr. Godumsky, who didn't quite know what she wanted from him, so he came, and because we anticipated that the ghetto would be liquidated the next day, my mother left me with this lady, and I stayed there. The many came and he did agree to take me to the monastery, but obviously he didn't know if the monastery would accept me. And it so happened that that very day indeed, as he and I were going to the train station, there was the final liquidation of the ghetto, and as I walked with him, Jews were being driven in the streets to the trains, and I bought a ticket, uh, I had uh a false document, but he didn't, I didn’t have to show it, and he and I didn't go together. Mr. Godumsky and I didn't go together, because if they caught me, he would be also uh punished. So, we got on a train, and we took the train to Krakow, which was what uh, maybe just 40 miles I think it's 60 - 70 kilometers from Mierhoff and then from the train station, we had to walk to the monastery, which was quite a distance at the time, and while I waited outside, he went and talked to the prior, whom he told a lie, mainly that I was a converted Jew, that my family was not really Jews, but converted Jews, and the prior agreed to accept me into the seminary, into the novitiate, and I at that point became a student so to say, for priesthood, and I uh lived there, again, I can't be certain for how long, uh because when I start add up all various experiences, and add the amount of time they lasted, I end up with ten years, and the war was 5 years, so but I, I assume I was there more than a year, and I remained in a monastery until the day that I perceived one day that a priest

who was my teacher of catechism who I knew quite well somehow suspected that I was a Jew, and the way he tipped me off that I was at first not even aware of it, was that he corrected my Polish pronunciation, and when, and I knew that was a mistake, and he did it with a certain smirk on his face, and that night I was so anxious about it, and Mr. Godumsky, who was a , who used to be a monk, but now was in a monastery as a worker, he did uh, I told him what my feelings were, and I did hide in the organ that night. And that night, the Gestapo came and broke into my, we call them cells, but they were nice little rooms, the monastery was beautiful and rich and uh really beautiful place, they broke in, broke the door down, and didn't find me, and then Mr. Godumsky came where I was hidden, and we sneaked out, and went to another uh place where he had a friend, uh, whose names was Yagoginsky, with whom I communicated great deal to the present time, uh, who has then taken over and helped me afterwards.

Tell me about some of your experiences that, in your time at the monastery.

The monastery was really a, an experience where, where there were good things too, you know, uh, believe it or not, (laughs), my first sexual experience occurred in the monastery, not in the monastery grounds, but in the, just outside, because there were girls there from nearby who were quite interested in the boys from the monastery, uh, there were constant fear, however, of being recognized as a Jew. Uh, one day I, because I was nearsighted, um, I went to Krakow, and acquired glasses. As soon as I came in, one of my fellow seminarians looked at me and said, "Yanuk," that was my, my name, which was sort of a diminutive of John, uh said, "Oh, you look like a Jew!" And there was the last time I wore those glasses. Uh, there were many experiences that were close calls. For example one time I'm, one of my functions was to pick up the mail from the post office, and so I was known to everyone and they, at that time it was a village, today it's that part, that village is part of the town of Krakow, but at that time it was the village of Mogilla, and everybody knew me, and they were marching a group of Jews through the village to work at the nearby uhhhh military, German military establishment, and one of the fellows was somebody who knew me, and yelled out my name, and you know, I, I mean just unthinkingly he just yelled out and other people looked like what, what is it. So, you know, there were situation like that. Uh, Mogilla wasn't all that far from our town, uh and sometimes I encountered people who knew me from Promiehov. Uh, so there were many, many situations, which were quite dangerous and uh quite action...

Tell me about the time when the head of the monastery sprinkled you incessantly with holy water.

The Father Kuhar, who was the Prior, was a really a, a wonderful person, he was, uh, at least to my recollection, he uh maybe was six foot or six foot three, and very heavy set. He was not uh from Poland, he was from Yugoslavia, and he was a, a very benevolent person. I remember one time I was serving mass, you know, uh, I mean, I was, you know the , uh the boy who, I can't even describe it in English even though my English is relatively well, but those, the Catholic terminology is still Polish in my mind, and uh, he sprinkled me excessively uh with the holy water, and later on, I, I and I could see a twinkle in his eye, and uh later I ask him about it, and he said,with a smile, uh, in German, he said, "Zieher, zieher," which means, "Certain is certain," which was his way of now, of telling me "I know it was a lie that you are baptized, but it doesn't matter."

We have time for one more little short story in the monastery. Have you got anything--

You know, Father Kuvar was a benevolent person, who helped me, who helped my mother. Well, my mother had black hair, black hair meant you were a Jew, my mother was on false papers, and we had to make sure that her hair was changed to sort of more blondish look, and that required transporting her from a hiding place in Krakow, and you know, bleaching your hair was not as simple as nowadays, and uh, I spoke to him about it, and what he arranged, now he had a big carriage with 2 horses, and so on, he arranged for it, he picked up my mother, I mean with a driver you know, and took her to this place in Krakow where her hair was changed.
----------Camera roll 4 just went up; Sync take 5 is up.

When we do this, but wait till he---------

Yes...this is not going to be a commercial for Perrier?

Beep.

Okay, go ahead.

I, this particular priest, who recognized at least claimed that he recognized some kind of a speech uh impediment or accent that was Jewish I believed, I was very sensitive, uh suspicious of him because I have on more than one occasion during a sermon heard him make antisemitic uh comments. Uh, for example, one time he was ---------- the congregation for the fact that they were doing business on Sunday, which was forbidden in Poland, anyway Poland was a strictly Catholic country, but people were doing it, selling, buying things, and he was saying "At one time, Jews were doing that, but thank God we got rid of them." Now, there was part of a sermon, so I uh, I knew how antisemitic he was.

Tell me now in general about this monastery, and all kinds of, all the kinds of things they were involved in from resistance to uh...

They

And what happened to the head of the monastery too.

The Mogilla Monastery is uh is ---------- Monastery. It was a, a very, it was established in uh the beginning of the 13th Century. It was beautiful. It was rich. It was a place of great scholarship. It also was a place where number of people who were in the resistance, in the Polish underground resistance, were uh, hiding under number of uh of pretexts, as workers, as priests, etc. and uh when I escaped there after they came to get me, uh later on I didn't know that Father Kuhar, the Prior, a number of others, were taken to Auschwitz, and in fact, for a long time, I thought that it was because of me. It turned it didn't have nothing to do with me. Uh, the uh, the Germans came and took the Prior and every tenth priest, and took them to Auschwitz, and then uh uh, Father Kuhar was transferred to another uh concentration camp. He did survive, uh after the war, and uh, in fact, I visited the monastery, uh, there is a, I brought a, a plaque, uh commemorating him. Uh, that is uh affixed in a very sort of a prominent place in the monastery, it's in Polish and in English, and I did

establish an organization uh that uh, it's called the American Friends of Mogilla Monastery to express my gratitude.

When you lived there, what was your rela--what were your duties, and what was your relationship with him?

I was sort of like you would call a, an adjutant or whatever, you know, or his personal assistant. He trusted me particularly, uh, more than others. For example, he would give me the key to empty the collection boxes. And the was a big large church, and people would put money into the collection boxes, and in fact, to my best recollection, I was the only one that he trusted to just go in there and empty them and bring the money uh from it. Uh, he, mmm, I would, in fact, uh he, he was at least to me he was an older man, I remember I, I would uh cover him up at night, and I would shine his shoes too. Uh, he was very, very kind to me, and he, as I say, he was helpful not only to me, but he was willing to take great risks to help my mother and sister.

People like him and others who helped in rescues, what were the risks?

In Poland, to assist a Jew was very risky. That is, if you got apprehended, uh generally the Jew was killed, maybe taken to a camp in some situation and uhh maybe later killed. The Poles who were guilty of assisting Jews, uh, were often, not always, but on many occasions killed or sent to to a camp. In some villages, uh, the house was burned down. I know, for example, uh of a man who did assist my family, but that didn't have to do with our family, uh, and Mr. Kubinsky, uh whose farm was burned and his family was killed. It was not always the case, but there were quite a few uh, Poles who were killed. (Fire engine siren in background).

Let's stop. We've got to stop because of the siren.

Take 6 is up.

I have a 2 hour interview and there's never a break.

Uh, how difficult was your survival from the standpoint of age. Can you talk about what it was like to be a teenager running under false papers.

Well, being a teenager had certain benefits. Uh, you know, as a teenager, you, you feel that you are invulnerable, and you can do almost anything, and in reality, you know, so was, one was more agile. I could jump from a train. Uh, I could jump from a running streetcar or because somebody uh, made some move, whereas if I couldn't, if I was much older, I could, there were a number of situations where I have outrun police, and have outrun Germans who were shooting after me, and even with dogs. Now that was not, you couldn't do it unless you were 15 or 16 year old. So, that was an asset. Obviously you might uh have less of a judgment in dangerous situations because you were a teenager, but by and large, I think being teenager, considering the situation, was an asset, I believe. But obviously what I didn't have an adolescence, uh in in any normal sense of the term.

Can you talk about choices that Jews would have had based on age. Like you have more choices maybe than a 30 year old father with 2 little children.

Someone interviewed me once, and asked uh a very simple question: Uh, when you left the ghetto um, hmmm, uh did you say goodbye to your mother? (Long silence) Uh, you know, this is problem that a teenager will have, or a youngster, uh, no doubt a parent would put a child into a relative safety situation, but would not do it for himself or herself. Uh, you know, my mother could not, or my father leave, and say, uh, whatever will happen to the children will happen, but the other way around they did it. You know, one of the reasons that my father didn't leave the camp uh later on where he was because he felt uh, we needed a place where there was some sort of headquarters, maybe that wasn't the entire reason, so you know, parents had bigger responsibilities, whereas, as a youngster, you did what your parents told you, and somehow you assumed that parents in their omnipotence are going to make it, whereas parents didn't have that illusion.

And what were the parents' chances versus the kids?

Well, it had great deal to do I believe with who the parents were, adults, uh, if you talk in terms of chances, surviving, where? Uh, are we talking on false papers, or are we talking in hiding? Are we talking in a camp? Uh, at all phases, uh, there were accidental factors and there were factors that had to do with the personality. Certainly, if you were a man, you had less chances to survive out on false papers because you would be so readily identified as a Jew by the fact that you were circumcised, whereas you couldn't absolutely prove it uh to a to a woman. And that uh again, that had to do also, at what point. You see, time is a tremendous factor here. It was so different in 19 uh late in 1942, than it was in 43 and when you get to 44 becomes impossible.

We have to reload. That's a good point.

Beep.

Let's finish talking about that. How different were conditions in during different years over the course of the war?

The chances for survival depended upon at what point in time, uh, a Jew found himself, and, and various situation, be it on false papers, be it in hiding, uh, be it in, in a camp. First of all, uh, personal resources were exhausted. For example, in, in our case, my mother and sister and I, even though separate, we were on false papers. Our resources were exhausted in terms of money even, having some, uh, in terms of having people that we could rely upon. Now, you have some contacts. Those get exhausted. So that the longer it lasted, the less chances that that one have for survival. The same thing was true in camp. Uh, you know, a, a, if a camp was liberated a week sooner, many more people would have survived. Uh, if the war ended six months earlier, a great many more would have survived. Remember that the Germans were so dedicated to the uh Final Solution of the Jewish question, that to the last minute, they were diligently working on this project. So there, the more time, it was really fighting for time. Every day, every hour, mattered.

Can you give me a general picture of how you survived from when you left the monastery until the

end of the war. The kinds of things you did.

After I escaped the monastery, I lived with this young man, who was on false papers himself. He was not a Jew, but he was a underground fighter. His name, his real name was Stefan Yagoginski, and he lives to this day. Uh, he and I lived together, he pretended that I was his uh nephew, and uh, he worked, he was repairing an organ in a large village. There was nothing wrong with the organ, but that was the cover, he was working on repairing the church organ because his father owned a factory of organs and there was the connection, and he and I, and I was assisting him in it. But then also, we had no funds, I had no funds anymore, no money, and we smuggled, we smuggled food from the villages surrounding Krakow to uh you know, to Krakow, and then we smuggled uh food to Warsaw, which was dangerous, and we smuggled from Warsaw, a, a Vodka, but not the real Vodka, but called, it was called Bimber, which was like Moonshine. That certainly was punishable by death. Uh, in fact, I was in Warsaw smuggling Bimber when uh when the Warsaw ghetto uprising started. I remember like today I, we were there, Stefan and I, uh, and then, it became increasingly too dangerous and through some contacts, we found out that one could uh, escape to Hungary. And Hungary at that time from what I was told, was really like paradise to us, and we did manage to escape to Hungary, and that's a long story, it was, it had, we had to cross a border, we got uh apprehended, escape, it was a complicated situation, and we did uh arrive in Hungary in 1943, sometimes in fall. My mother, sister, and, and I, and a childhood girlfriend of mine, whose father was killed in a camp. My father knew where he was, where she, where the girl was, her name was Gina, and we arrived in Hungary, and we were there as Poles on false papers, but in March of 44, the Germans occupied Hungary also. So the whole same situation started again. I attempted to escape with a Jewish underground group to Rumania, because there was a connection to Palestine at that time, but got apprehended on the border between Hungary and Romania. Hungary was occupied. Rumania was not. And I was taken to a camp in Yugoslavia, and then from that camp, I was transported to a prison in Budapest. In fact it was the prison where the famous Hanna Schenish was, she was on the same floor where I was, and I managed to escape from there with help of, of, of friends.

Tell me about the escape.

The escape really occurred through assistance of a , a Gestapo man, who was of, who was sort of half German, uh and half Yugoslavian, and I was in a, uh, and I do take credit for that, I established the contact with him, and I trusted him. Uh, uh, and uh, which was risk, because I gave him my mother's address, and my mother was still in Budapest on false papers. And I, I established, you know, contact with him while we were in this prison, uh, he could have been just playing me for a sucker, you know, uh, but I trusted him and it turned out he really engineered the escape. I mean, it's a long story, but it was his doing, and he engineered the escape.

What was, when you said you were there at the beginning of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising...

Oh no, I was only that day. I was that one day when the Warsaw ghetto uprising started, it so happened that Stefan and I were just making one of our periodic trips to pick up the, the moonshine. And it was, suddenly there was tremendous amount of activity, uh shooting and so on. There was something going on, and we heard that there was a an uprising in Warsaw ghetto.

So you just left?

Oh, we just left, we left in a in a great hurry.

Can you talk about what you think survival is a matter of?

Of, what made difference in survival were the personal uh qualities of the individuals. There were many other factors, but everything else being equal, unless you were a person who had a tremendous will to survive, who had courage, resourcefulness, and uh, uh all the other factors wouldn't help. Now, sure you needed luck. And you needed uh assistance of other people, but your personal qualities determined, and I am saying it not only on false papers, uh, people who survived in camps didn't survive by accident. Uh, every one, I believe, every survivor, uh in my view, and that is maybe is sort of an over--no I don't think it is, is really a hero. And survivors hate that kind of a term. They avoid it because they don't want to take responsibility for their survival, and it took my great many years in, in analysis to recognize that I survived uh thanks not only to the help of others, but thanks to my own activities, which makes me responsible for my survival.

You once talked about being accused of being a survivor, an accusation that you're a survivor.

Survivors have been greeted with a great deal of ambivalence from the very beginning, uh, and in particular, uh, by fellow Jews, who , because survivors, in the eyes of Jews, were suspect. How did you survive? That was the question. You know, what kind of evil deeds did you commit in order to survive. You were sort of contaminated uh, you know the Nazis, the only good Jew is a dead Jew, and in a way, after the war immediately I believe, that was also a view of others. The, the dead people, they were the victims, the survivors were somehow suspect. And you know, to this day, there are all kind of memorials for everybody, Warsaw ghetto fighters, they, you have a kibbutz honoring the fighters of Warsaw ghetto, but you, you have streets named after fighters of Warsaw ghetto, but who talks about survivors? You know, what kind of, what avenue or what monument has been, and yet survivors accomplished a great deal more than the fighters of Warsaw ghetto, you know. So they killed a few Germans. So what. That doesn't impress me at all. I am much more impressed with a group of young men and women in Budapest who assisted people in surviving, who risked, the Jews who risked their lives to help other Jews survive. They are much bigger heroes to me than the figh--fighters of Warsaw ghetto.

Okay, we have to reload.

Beep.

We ran out before you finished that last thought, so I just want you to do something that sort of answers the question who you feel are the real heroes who really risked their lives. People who helped.

During this whole terrible period, there were Jews, in addition to others, who risked their lives to help other Jews. In my own situation in, in Budapest, for example, or in, in Krakow, but in Budapest particularly, there was a group of young men and women, who risked their lives day in and day out to assist other Jews, who worked on false papers, who smuggled money, and all they,

they did this all to have others survive, and I am alive thanks to them. They're not celebrated as heroes, uh, but the group in Warsaw Ghetto, who decided to commit a collective suicide and succeeded in the process of killing a few Germans, are, are celebrated, and, and I wonder why, why that is, why don't we celebrate survivors, why don't we help those, why don't we celebrate those who have assisted other Jews to survive. I think in part, at least that's my own answer to this question, is that we have sort of identified with this militaristic age, where it really matters uh not if you preserve life, but if you destroy the enemy. When I first went to Yad Vashem many years ago, and as I walked in there, which isn't true anymore, the first thing you saw was a bigger than life picture of some Jews with guns, with, you know, as if this was the big deal. That didn't matter. It didn't ever impress me that some Jew during the war years managed to get a gun. That didn't accomplish anything. So you got, you killed one German or two or three, so what! I'm much more impressed with the fact that someone had the strength, the courage to survive, the courage to endure, the courage to endure, that really is what matters.

Do you think there are close calls that you had, that you can think of that we should talk about?

Oh, I had great many close calls, and you know, one of the sort of funny part of it is, that in Europe, there was great deal of literature on Indian lore written by a German called Karl May, who never was in America, who never saw an Indian, who, in fact, wrote his books in prison. But we lived on those books as kids, and I knew them and read them, and let me tell you, reading those books helped me a number of times to survive. When we were crossing the border from um, uh, Poland into Slovakia, we suddenly, when it was pitch dark and we had uh guides, and suddenly there were lights, dogs, and shots, and we uh, I first ran, you know, I was with my mother's sister and this girl, Gina, and obviously I could run the fastest, I had, but then I realized my mother and sister would be caught, and I could hear from a distance that there were also dogs there, and you know, my, what I have read about Indian lore and all that, I shoved my mother, there was a river nearby, as she approached, and my sister and Gina had then jumped after them, and walked against the stream, forced them, my mother was terrified, and that really saved our lives, at that particular time, and then we did hide, and the guides who escaped, they were mountain people uh from Poland, they came and found us, you know. Now, these are strange things, and there were many other similar situations where, they're just in a way bizarre in nature. But...one relied upon uh one's resourcefulness, really, I have to come back to the same term. One could not survive without uh wanting to live no matter what and also being resourceful.

You told a story of the Gestapo asking for volunteers for execution.

Yes, I I was in----------, and they told us, it was a makeshift prison, a Gestapo prison, uh, and three of our group escaped, and they came in. In fact, I see it like before my eyes today, the the chief of Gestapo came in with his white gloves and stood there hitting with the white gloves on the bars asking, we were beaten before quite a bit, but we were lined up and standing, asking for volunteers for execution. And, uh, a friend of mine, who, who I, his name I remember to this day, many names I don't remember, was Sonik, he volunteered first. He was depressed, and he really didn't want to live. I volunteered second, but I assure you it wasn't because I wanted to die. It was because I believed that they would not execute those who volunteered. It was too simple. They wouldn't do the (clears throat) the normal things you uh, who volunteered for execution would after all be the one who was not an escape risk, and I was right.

Tell me about the letter that man brought you from your father when he was in Treblinka.

When I was in monastery, one day I was told that somebody is at the gate, who was, uh asking for me, and as I approached there, I could see a young man who clearly looked Jewish, and he handed me a letter, and it was a letter from uh from my father, who was in the uh, which was uh the airport. This was the name of the camp really, but it was called the airport. Jews worked on that airport, and my father said, "You have to help this young man. He has to survive," and uh, they were trying to get some papers for him, and he was going to have a contact. Anyway, I did hide him in my cell, under, in my room, I brought him food, and I did keep him for a few days. Uh, I can't tell you exactly how uh long, but not very long. And, uh, he did tell me that he escaped from Treblinka, and described to me what he did see and how he escaped, and you know, for many years I forgot it. I remembered it in my analysis. And, incidentally, he did not survive. His, a, a relative of his did survive, and I did get in, in touch with her. I know about her. Her name is, she lives in Switzerland, but he did not survive.

Do you feel that people would do anything at all in order to survive?

No. No. I think that in terms, I think that people uh showed conscience, uh. (He may be crying here). No. What I did want to say is um, when I was arrested by Gestapo, and I was in in this camp, uh, my mother, who was in Budapest at the time (long pause) um, was approached that if she become an informer, they would rescue me, they would get me, which wasn't, incidentally, true, but it was a set-up, she was on false papers, and she, she uh refused. And I'm proud of it (crying).

Thanks. Thank you.

At least certain things without becoming overwhelmed.

----------for a while.

The following is 30 seconds of interview for previous interview with Emanuel Tanay.

Are you rolling?

Okay, let's, 30 seconds, all we need. Wait the fluorescents are on.

Rolling.

Thank you.

End room tone. End of Sound Roll.