

HOLOCAUST ARCHIVE PROJECT

Name of Interviewee	DAN PAVLOVITCH		
Name of Interviewer	Donna Chernin	Date	8/28/84
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NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Dan Pavlovitch was the oldest of three children in a fairly unconventional family in Ploesti, Rumania. His parents were very strong people, and although his grandfather was a rabbi, their attitude toward Judaism was one of respect for tradition rather than of religious belief. It was an enlightened household, which valued music and literature and open discussion with the children.

Dan's father worked as an engineer for an American oil company and his mother owned a dress shop. The family was financially comfortable, especially in comparison to other Jews in the area.

In the late 1930s the Iron Guard, a fascist organization, became powerful and Jews began to suffer. Dan's father was forced to resign from his job and the family was forced to go to Yugoslavia. They lived there safely, in much-reduced circumstances, until the Germans took over.

Dan's father, along with 1,500-2,000 other Jewish men, was sent to a labor camp, and the family never heard from him again.

In December 1941 Dan, his mother and two sisters, were put in a camp across the river from Belgrade. When people began to be taken out of the camp and killed, his mother devised an escape plan. She told the SS she wasn't Jewish - she had only been married to a Jew. They allowed her to write to friends in Rumania, who supplied them with false identity papers. With these papers the family was released.

After living in Belgrade, they went to Bulgaria and then to Turkey, which was neutral territory. They lived as Christians in Turkey from 1943 until 1948. At that point, Dan decided to return to school and came to the U.S. to attend Roosevelt College in Chicago. His mother and sisters also eventually settled in the U.S.

Dan came to the Cleveland area with his wife and two sons in 1963. He presently lives in Cleveland Heights and works as a paint distributor and with wood and stained glass.

ABSTRACT

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PRESENT LIFE

Married 32 years, has two sons. Works as paint distributor. Also works with wood and stained glass. Older son lives in San Francisco, younger son lives in Cleveland - both musicians. Family has lived in Cleveland since 1963.

LIFE BEFORE THE WAR

Born in 1928 in Ploesti, Rumania. Father was engineer for a U.S. oil company. Had two sisters (still living).

FAMILY IS FAIRLY UNCONVENTIONAL

Grandfather was rabbi. Disliked by Jewish Community because he tried to organize clergy of all religions together - considered very radical. His wife didn't believe in dietary laws - thought what came out of your mouth was more important than what went in. The family observed the holidays more as "tradition" than as religion. Household was enlightened - exposed to music and literature. Never told children they were too young to know anything.

DAN'S PERSONAL VIEW OF RELIGION

One man in synagogue was a jeweler - known as a "thief." Dan remembers on Yom Kippur, seeing him ask forgiveness, knowing he'd go back to old ways in a few days. After that, he lost respect for organized religion. Felt he could observe in his own way.

PARENTS' HISTORIES

Both very strong people. Father more reserved, probably because his father died and he took on responsibility for family at age 20. Still, he was caring and loving. Mother second of seven children. Very take-charge personality. Business-minded. When children old enough she opened dress shop.

DAN HAS TWO SISTERS - ONE THREE YEARS YOUNGER, ONE 12 YEARS YOUNGER.

RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRISTIANS AND ANTI-SEMITISM

Had some close Christian friends, but never thought of people as Jews or non-Jews. Noticed some anti-Semitism, but didn't attribute it to all gentiles in general.

PAVLOVITCH HOME IS CENTER OF ACTIVITY FOR DAN'S FRIENDS

WAR BEGINS

Began to notice war around mid-1930s - hard not to see that something was happening. Vividly remembers in September 1939, walking home for lunch, seeing notice that Germany had invaded Poland. So upset he couldn't eat.

FAMILY OFFERS TO HOUSE POLISH REFUGEE

Since family didn't speak Polish, they spoke German with him. He asked if they were Jewish. When they said yes, he refused to stay. 12-year-old Dan found this very strange.

IRON GUARD IS ACTIVE AS POLITICAL PARTY

Fascist. Had newspaper masthead slogan asking for donations: "If you give a penny a Jew dies. If you give a dollar a kike dies." A clergyman was editor of the paper.

FALL 1939 - GERMANS COME IN TO TRAIN RUMANIAN ARMY

DAN IS THROWN OUT OF SCHOOL

Was in sixth grade at private school - only three Jews there. Had been to Jewish-sponsored school for first four years. When Iron Guard became more influential all Jews were thrown out of school. Jewish community quickly organized a school.

ANTI-SEMITIC VANDALISM

Some stores vandalized - "Jude" or Star of David written on windows. Dan thinks it was done by Rumanians rather than Germans, but overall they were sympathetic and decent.

FATHER IS FORCED TO RESIGN HIS JOB

A man working for father had brother-in-law in Iron Guard. In Spring 1940 Iron Guard took father in middle of the night. Forced him to resign in favor of the other man. If he didn't, they said they'd kill the family. Father was Yugoslavian subject. Asked to call Yugoslavian consulate, but Iron Guard refused.

FAMILY IS FORCED TO LEAVE RUMANIA

The next day, family was put on train with one suitcase each and \$5.00. Sent to Yugoslavia. Ended up in Belgrade.

FAMILY LIVES IN STUDIO APARTMENT ABOVE A BANK

Bank was owned by father's friend from school.

GRANDMOTHER COMES TO YUGOSLAVIA SIX WEEKS LATER

MOTHER'S PARENTS

Her mother died in 1935. Father remained in Rumania when others sent to Yugoslavia.

MOTHER RESCUES HER FATHER FROM RAID ON SYNAGOGUE

A few months before family was deported, synagogue had been raided. Members held incommunicado. Mother used connections to free him.

DAN DOESN'T WORRY ABOUT FAMILY BECAUSE HE KNOWS HOW STRONG PARENTS ARE

GERMANS TAKE OVER YUGOSLAVIA

Italians were having military problems in Greece - Germans wanted to send troops to assist through neutral Yugoslavia. Preliminary agreement reached, but then government changed, agreement revoked. Germans attacked Yugoslavia April 6, defeated it in ten days.

LIFE BECAME DIFFICULT FOR EVERYONE

Not enough water - wells shared by many people.

FATHER IS SENT TO A LABOR CAMP THAT SUMMER

They never heard from him again - never found out what happened to him.

DAN DESCRIBES HOW COMMON COMPULSORY REGISTRATION WITH POLICE WAS ALL OVER EUROPE - EVEN AFTER WAR

YUGOSLAVIAN JEWS WEAR YELLOW STARS ON FRONT AND BACK OF CLOTHING

MORE ON DEPORTATION OF FATHER

In June/July all adult Jewish males had to report to labor camp. Lived there, went out to work. Within two to three weeks all sent away. No one ever found out where - 1,500-2,000 men unaccounted for.

ONE DAY MOTHER IS NOT HOME BY CURFEW

Dan very worried and afraid. She returned very late - had been looking for news of father.

DAN, MOTHER AND SISTERS PUT IN CONCENTRATION CAMP - DECEMBER 1941

Day before Pearl Harbor. All women and children reported to a gathering place with one suitcase.

DAN RECALLS DIFFERENT ATTITUDES ON JEWISHNESS IN RUMANIA AND YUGOSLAVIA

In Rumania they were Jews first, Rumanians second. In Yugoslavia they were Serbs first, Jews second.

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MORE ON MOTHER'S HISTORY

Born in U.S. Parents had come to Chicago. Father owned dry goods store. After making a substantial amount of money, he decided to go back. Mother married Dan's father in 1925.

MOTHER SUPPORTS FAMILY IN BELGRADE

She had brought some of the nicer dresses from the shop - sold them to cabaret singers. Also sold family jewelry.

CONCENTRATION CAMP IS ACROSS RIVER FROM BELGRADE

Three large, high-ceilinged buildings left over from a fair. Inside were wooden barracks - three tiers, three feet between each tier. Top was most desirable - more air circulation. Toilets outside. At night had to use buckets in the blocks.

FOOD SUPPLY IN CAMP

Mother deliberately continued to breast feed Dan's two-year-old sister. In morning they got tea, some corn bread. Cooked flour with grease, mixed with water for children. At midday ate cabbage soup. Perhaps potato soup for dinner.

DAN GOES OUT TO WORK EVERY DAY

Carried things or chopped wood ten hours a day. Women did not work.

DAN TRADES FOR FOOD - TWO BOYS ARE KILLED FOR TRADING

One day all residents called outside. SS guards told them two boys had been caught trading for food. They were forced to dig graves, then shot. To this day Dan finds it so incomprehensible that he can't react to it.

GERMAN SOLDIER GIVES DAN AN EGG

Dan spoke a little German. Told soldier about his two-year-old sister. He gave Dan an egg for her. Dan cooked it in ash-water so no one would see it.

ATTITUDES OF PEOPLE IN CAMP

Some had "everyone-for-himself" attitude - others helped their fellow prisoners. Some people did things for extra food they'd never otherwise do - for example, tattling to the SS.

MOTHER DEVISES PLAN TO GET THEM OUT OF CAMP

She told SS she wasn't Jewish - had only been married to a Jew. Asked to write to Rumania for papers. SS agreed. She knew they'd read the letter, so she wrote "they don't believe I am so-and-so...etc." secretly signifying to friends in Rumania what to write on the papers. Rumanian friends bought false papers, sent them to the camp.

PEOPLE ARE BEING DEPORTED FROM CAMP

Twice a day, 150-200 were taken away in trucks, gassed. No one ever found the bodies.

GRANDMOTHER IS AMONG THOSE KILLED, BUT DAN, MOTHER AND SISTERS ARE SPARED BECAUSE THEY ARE WAITING FOR PAPERS

JULY 1942 THEY ARE RELEASED FROM CAMP WITH FALSE PAPERS

THEY LIVE IN A ROOM ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BELGRADE

Still had some family jewelry to sell. Dan became an entrepreneur. He bought vegetables in the villages, sold them in town.

MOTHER DECIDED THEY NEEDED TO GO TO NEUTRAL TERRITORY. GETS PERMISSION TO RIDE MILITARY TRAINS TO BULGARIA

Carried their remaining jewelry in a jar of preserves in youngest sister's pocket.

WENT TO SWISS CONSULATE IN BULGARIA

Confessed that she wanted to go to a neutral country, but not that she was Jewish. He placed them under Swiss protection.

SPRING 1940 - THEY GO BY TRAIN TO TURKEY. AT TURKISH BORDER THEY ARE DETAINED BY GERMANS

SS had found mother's address book with many English names. Told them to wait, took book away. While they were waiting, train was ready to cross border. Mother decided to get on. The moments until they saw Turkish flag were worst time of war for Dan.

DAN RECALLS HIS JOBS IN TURKEY

FAMILY GETS VERY CLOSE DURING THIS PERIOD

THEY LIVE AS NON-JEWS IN TURKEY

Although Turkey was technically neutral, it was tied economically to Germany. Turkey declared war on Germany 24 hours before war ended so they could be on winning side.

DOLLY (YOUNGEST SISTER) DIDN'T KNOW SHE WAS JEWISH UNTIL 1950

One day she asked what Jews were. Mother answered that they were very nice people.

THEY DIDN'T FEEL BADLY ABOUT DENYING THEIR JUDAISM - LIFE WAS MORE IMPORTANT

Mother posed as Catholic in Yugoslavia after release from camp because most Germans were Catholic. Once, she crossed herself the Greek Orthodox way - opposite from Catholic way - in front of a priest. He probably suspected, but he gently corrected her.

IN TURKEY MOTHER WORKS FOR U.S. CONSULATE AS TRANSLATOR

She spoke Rumanian, English, German and French.

DAN WORKS AT YMCA, AT A HOSPITAL AND AS TRANSLATOR FOR U.S. WAR INFORMATION OFFICE

IN TURKEY FOR FIVE YEARS, BUT NEVER LEARNED TURKISH

NEVER HAD DESIRE TO GO TO ISRAEL - STILL DOESN'T

BEST FRIEND IN TURKEY NOW LIVES IN PARIS. FRIENDS IN TURKEY WERE OF UNUSUALLY MIXED BACKGROUNDS ECONOMICALLY AND RELIGIOUSLY

VIDEO 3 OF 3

LIFE IS GOOD IN TURKEY

DAN RECALLS WORKING FOR GERMAN FILM COMPANY IN YUGOSLAVIA

DAN MAKING GOOD MONEY, HAD HIS OWN APARTMENT

Finished work too late to take public transportation home to mother's apartment.

FAMILY DECIDES TO LEAVE TURKEY - DAN WANTS TO RETURN TO SCHOOL

He applied to many schools - only a military school in Indiana and Roosevelt College in Chicago accepted him - he chose Roosevelt.

DAN COMES TO U.S. IN 1940

He was alone, age 20.

OLDEST SISTER COMES A YEAR LATER

Attended Grenell College

MOTHER AND YOUNGEST SISTER COME IN 1952

During those years they were in Australia, Germany, Israel and Canada.

DAN AND SISTERS ALL MARRIED JEWS

Not by design, however.

MORE ON DAN'S MOTHER

In her mid-20s, she had a white stripe in her hair. Looked like Ingrid Bergman. Never remarried because was never absolutely convinced Dan's father was dead. Came to Chicago, moved to Florida in 1960s.

DAN'S FEELINGS ABOUT JUDAISM

Ritualistic aspect of religion not important to him. Feels Judaism is more an ethical way of life. Belonged to a temple, but left.

DOESN'T FEEL THE SAME NEED FOR SUPPORT FROM OTHER SURVIVORS THAT MANY SURVIVORS FEEL.

DOESN'T HATE GERMANS

Can't lump people together - everyone is an individual.

FEELS NO AFFINITY WITH ISRAEL

Sees many problems there, i.e. classism.

DAN AND FAMILY MOVE TO CLEVELAND

Had quit job in Chicago to be free-lance photographer. Didn't work out, so took a job in Cleveland.

HAS NO DESIRE TO RETURN TO RUMANIA

DAN ATTRIBUTES HIS SURVIVAL TO HIS MOTHER

Because he was so young it was really her efforts that saved him.

DAN DOESN'T FEEL A LOT OF PAIN OVER HIS EXPERIENCES

May be a defense mechanism, but focuses on his good life since then.

DAN WANTS TO SHARE HIS EXPERIENCES TO ADD TO THE PICTURE OF HUMANITY

FEELS IT IS IMPORTANT TO COMMEMORATE THE HOLOCAUST - ESPECIALLY IN THE FACE OF ASSERTIONS THAT IT WAS A HOAX.

HIS MOTHER ACCEPTED WHAT HAPPENED TO HER

She couldn't change it. Was a natural worrier - always needed to help people - especially those who couldn't ask for help.