

We welcome Karola Dorfberger back. And we will continue with the interview about her Holocaust experiences. Karola, you were telling us about life in the ghetto, which was called Litzmannstadt by the Germans. And you were talking about working on the bridge, the connecting bridge. You mentioned that this was a closed ghetto, which was different from the Warsaw ghetto. Describe that again. What did closed ghetto mean? Weren't you able ever-- wasn't anyone able ever to leave the ghetto?

Nobody ever did. If somebody tried to get out of the ghetto, they just killed. Because by every gate-- there was several gates built, like connecting streets. There were built gates. And there were, on the other side, German soldiers always ready with the guns. Whoever tried, nobody ever got out alive if somebody tried to get out. Nobody came in, nobody got out.

We had-- 5 o'clock, there was a curfew. You could only be in the street till 5 o'clock. After 5 o'clock, all the gates were closed from the buildings-- I mean, the doors. Because most people in the ghetto lived in buildings, not in houses like here. So the buildings were closed. Nobody could get out or nobody could get in. We had only so much electric bulb. You could only have 25 volt. That's all you could use. And after dark, you had to close the windows and cover them with dark blankets so no light would come out of the windows.

What was the reason for that?

The reason was if airplanes were around, they said that if there is a light showing through a window, it might be sabotage. So all the lights had to be-- all the windows had to be covered with dark blankets, no nothing. I don't think I ever mentioned about the Stars of David we had to wear on the front and in the back, one in the front and one on the back.

Where did you get those Stars of David?

Oh, people made them and sold them on the street. And on the--

Were they a special color?

Yellow. And on the star was with black written Jude. And we had to wear this. Without this, if somebody-- if a German soldier saw you without the star, they just looked for a reason to kill. They didn't have to have a reason, a real reason. They just killed. And when-- sometime, they just came in to the ghetto, they opened the gates.

I used-- I worked in a shop first. It was for the uniforms, for German uniforms for the army. But later on, I worked in a-- they call it a Handstrickerei-- knitting. And it was the first house from the street where it was this gate. And my sister-- once I took to it-- because they started-- the deportation, when they start, they started with the shops. This shop was closed down. Everybody had to go. They took away the people.

And my shop, for some reason, was longer. So I took my sister with me to work-- and her little boy. When we left the house-- the shop at 5 o'clock, all of a sudden, the gate opened. And German soldiers on horses came in with guns. And they were chasing the people.

So we ran, me and my sister. We ran. And we ran into a little street, into a house. When we came into this house, we saw a ladder to the attic. So we went upstairs to this. And then a lot of people were there already. And we're sitting there, not saying a word. But all of a sudden, we remembered, we didn't take the ladder up. So we-- quick, we took the ladder up. And we closed this thing to the attic. It was just an attic. It wasn't--

A special hiding place.

No, nothing, just an attic. And all of a sudden, we heard them come in. When they came into the house, they just used their boots to knock the doors open. They knocked all the doors open. And they said, nobody's here. And they left. But we were still sitting there because they were in the whole neighborhood.

These were strangers to you?

Yeah.

You didn't you didn't know these people?

No. So we were sitting there. And we heard they took people and-- to the trucks to take away from the houses, out of the houses. They took children. They threw them through the windows to the truck. And all people, everybody was screaming and crying. And we're sitting there until dark. When we came out, we came up to the house, to our house, where we lived. And the whole building was empty, only us were left. The whole-- they took away the whole building.

You and your sister?

Before that, they used to come to the yard of the building. And they started to shout, [GERMAN]. Everybody has to come down. And we knew what it meant. It only depended on their-- if they said here, you knew, you're going back to the house. If they said here, you knew, you're dead already. So at the last minute, we couldn't run away because they were in the backyard already. So my two brothers hid under the beds. And there was no place for me and my sister under the beds to hide with her little boy.

So as I told you, the house was empty. So we went to an empty apartment, a room-- one very large room was there. And it was just-- we took a chance. Because there was no other way, there was no place where to hide. The door was open. So we left the door open. And we hid under the door-- behind the door. Behind the door, we hid-- me, and my sister, and the little boy. He knew already what to do.

And we standing there. And they came up. And as the door was open, they just looked around. We're standing over there, behind the door. They looked around. And they left. And that's how we lived in ghetto, always with fear, always. There was no one day that there wasn't fear.

What did your brothers do? What kind of work did they do while they were in the ghetto?

My two brothers worked in a tailor shop, two. And the other two worked by a-- they called it a straw resort. It was just like-- they made something out of straw, things like doormats and things like that. And my sister was working. Wherever I worked, I took her with me to work there.

And your little nephew managed to survive with you?

Until Auschwitz.

Until Auschwitz. May I ask, Karola, did you have any kind of communication with the outside world? Did anybody have a shortwave radio? Was there any secret newsletter? Did you ever hear anything?

Nothing, no radio, no papers, nothing. We only-- every day, we looked at the sky. And we saw, oh, this airplane must be American, or Russian, or something. It sounds different. It is different. It won't last much longer. It won't last much longer. That's how we lived through the days. Because some people just were walking in the streets, and just collapsing, and died because they had no hope.

Was there any attempt by the people in the ghetto to do anything with religion or culture? Do you know of any attempt to have prayers or get together for holiday or Sabbath?

No. On-- there was no synagogues or anything like that. On holidays, we had-- my oldest brother had a very good voice. He was just like a hazzan.

Which is the cantor.

A cantor, yes. So they said-- they had for New Year's, for the Jewish New Year's and for Yom Kippur, they had people coming to pray. And I was there. It was just like pouring out to God all his feelings. It was just something that nobody who ever lived through this could ever forget how he prayed and how he sang. And it was-- everybody was just melted away with this because they couldn't-- just couldn't take it. But there was-- and this was the place where they could cry, and beg, and pray to God that this should end.

Where was this held? Where were these services taking place?

In my brother's house.

In the house. Was there any fear that they would be discovered or something would happen?

No, no. Because I think-- we never saw inside. There were no Germans in the ghetto. Only Jews were in the ghetto.

You didn't have any Nazi police?

No, outside, not inside unless they came in. I was once-- once, they said-- when they took away one of the shops where my brother work, so he-- we decided that he's not going to go. Because they said-- there was a certain place it was called Czarnieckiego. It was a suburb, a suburb of Łódź. And all the people who were sent away to Auschwitz gathered in this place. So he had to go there. But we decided that we were going to hide him. And we're not going to let him go. Because this is-- we knew this is the end.

There was a time-- people got a little treat and worked in a bakery. So once I had this opportunity to work in a bakery for seven days-- not that I got paid or took something home, it's just that you could-- while there, you could eat bread, as much as you wanted. That was the reward for the-- and it was very, very important. So I was-- at that time, I was working at night in the bakery.

But while I was in the morning walking home, they took me into a place. And there were a lot of people. And I didn't know what's going on. Why was I taken here? And then they explained that unless my brother comes to this place, they're going to send me away. But by that time, my brother was already there. So we're sitting all day long in this place until they checked if he is already there. Then they let me out in the evening.

Where did he die, in the ghetto?

No.

Or he had been taken away, deported?

Yeah.

Karola, I'd like for you to recall now some experience that you may have had with the Judenrat leader, Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski. How were you aware of some of the rulings that he made or some of the orders? Did you ever see Rumkowski? Would you describe how the people reacted when they saw him?

Before the war, Rumkowski was a leader of an orphanage. And he was a very, very known man in Łódź. Everybody knew him. He was a philanthropist. He was a very, very nice man. When they made him the leader of the ghetto, somehow, he changed.

One day, he had an order that all the children of the ghetto-- they have-- everybody has to bring the children to a place to be taken away because nobody wanted to come. So he called the people of the ghetto to an open place. And he was talking to the people. And he said, he is only following his orders. And everybody has to do it. Otherwise, the whole-- everybody in the ghetto will be killed if they don't do it. Because nobody did it.

Anyway, since then, nobody even could hear his name. They made up all kinds of songs about him, how he changed, how cruel he became. And they just went with the trucks all over, wherever they saw a child in the street. They just grabbed them, threw them on the truck. And about-- and he was the one that made those rations. He made it up what people should get this week or next week. Sometimes, they gave us things that it was nothing. It was just nothing. There was nothing you could do about-- with it.

Could you recall some of the specific rations that you had? What type of food did you get?

A little flour, we never got sugar, and a lot, a lot, a lot of coffee, those ersatz coffee. It wasn't really a coffee. It was like-

The chicory?

--it was like a corn burned to be black or something. It wasn't. So from this coffee, we made cakes-- not in the oven. We cooked it in a double pot. We just put it together. And if we had a ration of a little jelly, we bake-- we made this cake. And then when it was cold, we cut it into pieces. And I put jelly on top. And sometimes, even now, I always say, I would like to try to bake a cake like that, and put jelly on it, and see if I would like it. Because it was so good then. So I think it was-- I would like it even now.

And then what we did, we got the little sugar. So we just ate as a snack, just coffee, dry, mixed with a pestle with a little sugar in it. In a box, we took it to work. And whenever you got hungry, you took it out and just ate it with a spoon, coffee with a little sugar mixed in. We got one soup in the shop.

What kind of soup was it?

And the piece-- just almost nothing. And the pieces of potatoes were counted when the girl was working there, when she put in the soup. She counted three, four pieces of potatoes. That was the soup. My brother once-- he got very sick. His lungs gave up-- my oldest brother. So he was in the hospital, very far away from the way we lived. It was in ghetto. But it was to walk an hour, maybe more than an hour.

Sometimes, I didn't eat the soup, I took it over, took it to my brother. You couldn't get out of the shop where you worked. But I had a friend there. And she checked in and out. So she let me go. At lunch hour, I took her-- I took the soup. I went there. And I brought it to my brother so he could have a little more to eat.

So your family members were still very, very close.

Very, very close, very close.

How many, at this time, were still alive of the children?

At this time--

And what was the year by this time in the ghetto?

It was 1942, 1943 because we left the ghetto 1945-- '44.

How many were still alive by 1943?

Only two were away, only two-- one, only one. He left, as I told you, one brother. He registered to go away, the youngest brother. He was the only young-- younger than from me because he was the 11th. He registered to go away because he thought the money might help.

And they said, he's going to work. And it-- everything was-- would be OK. At that time we still believed them because it was in the beginning. So he went away. And he sent home postcards that he's working. And the money that he was

supposed to get, it was sent to me. It was just a little money. And once, this money stopped, it didn't come anymore.

So my friends--

You had referred to that.

--told me that I should complain. But I didn't complain. And everybody who complained that-- why they don't get the money, they were sent away to Auschwitz.

I would like to know if you were aware during this ghetto period, the years, perhaps, '42, '43, was there any underground activity, people who were talking about escaping, or rebellion, or going against the Nazis? Do you recall hearing anything of this?

No. As I told you, we couldn't do that because we had nothing. We didn't have guns, or ammunition, or anything. We didn't have. We just-- the bare hands because we didn't never-- we couldn't get out. And nobody came in to bring something.

Was there any other attempt to live a normal life? Do you recall of hearing of any weddings in the ghetto?

Yeah, people got married.

Do you recall?

Yeah, I was there a wedding.

You were? Would you describe it? And who performed that wedding?

Anybody. Just anybody, just a man, just performed the ceremony. A couple, they got married.

Right. It's not necessary in Jewish religion--

To be a rabbi.

--to have a rabbi to perform a wedding.

No, no. Anybody who knows how to-- the laws. That's all you have to know is the laws about the ceremony. So somebody came. And he performed the ceremony. And they got married.

Where was this wedding held?

In the house where they lived. And it was the same food, the coffee cake, and all those things, and water. And that's all, whatever they could have. They saved up a little whatever they could before they got married. So of course, there weren't a lot of people, maybe 10 people. They got married. There was-- yeah, not many, but very, very seldom. There were weddings. And people had children.

How was it possible to have a baby and nurture a baby in the ghetto?

My sister-in-law had a baby. My sister--

Was was-- where did she deliver this baby?

In the house, with the-- how do you call this woman?

A midwife?

Yeah. She had a mother and a father. And she had a baby. The midwife delivered the baby. But he didn't last long. The baby died, didn't last long because she was pregnant before-- right before the war, she got pregnant. So she had the baby. But it didn't last long.

Because of the lack of nourishment for the mother. Do you recall anything about the Judenrat that touched you specifically? You had mentioned special ghetto money.

Yeah, we had the money.

Did Rumkowski put out this money?

Yeah, we called it Rumkis.

Rumkis?

Yeah, because-- after his name.

How much was that money worth? What could you do with that money?

Just to pay for the ration. We just paid for the ration with this money because where you worked, you didn't get anything. You just worked. You were lucky that you can work. Because if you wouldn't work, you wouldn't have the soup. That's the only reason you had to go to work, because of the soup.

Do you recall many of the shops that were in existence in the Łódź ghetto? What kind of different shops had Rumkowski established?

I was working in a knitting-- knitting, when we made for the Germans-- not just knitting, knitting and crocheting. We made those doilies for the Germans, just for export, probably. And we-- I, with the two other girls, we made the-- this was not for Rumkowski, it was for the big people-- his wife and the other big people in the-- even Germans, we made the-- were knitting dresses, beautiful, beautiful dresses. They bought the yarn.

They brought it to you?

Yeah. And we made beautiful dresses for them.

Did they come in for fittings? Did you know who it was for?

There was one lady. And she took all the measurements. And she went to them with the fitting. And she finished it. We just made the parts of it.

You had talked about these different shops being emptied, and little by little, the deportations from the ghetto. Could you describe what it was like at the beginning of 1944? You said that was the time.

The deportation.

The deportations. How did you feel at that time?

It was a very, very big panic. Every day, you heard, this shop is closed down. And they take away the people in this shop and this shop, every day. But I was still working. And then I came home from work.

And the middle of the night, my married brother came up. And he said, you know what? You better take right now something, whatever you can. Because we have to leave this side of the ghetto, go over the bridge. There was a different side. You have-- everybody has to be on the other side of the ghetto because this part of the ghetto will be empty-- must

be empty by tomorrow.

So in the middle of the night, we had no place where to go. We didn't know nobody on the other side. But we have to go. So we just left everything. A day before, when the building-- our building was empty, so we took from all the other rooms the wood and things that people left-- food and whatever it was in the apartment.

So my sister's little boy said, oh, Mommy, why do you take these things? Tomorrow, you'll have to leave him here. What for? He said. We have to go too. So tomorrow, you're going to leave all these things here. So we had to go middle of the night. We took whatever we could, just what can you take if you don't have where to go? We just left.

What type of things did you take with you?

An extra pair of shoes if you had. And the food that was in the house. That's all. What could you take? So we took everything what we could. And we went the middle of the night over the bridge to the other side. And the other side was just like daytime. Everybody was in the street. Nobody was inside. We didn't have where to go. So we just went into a house. People lived there. But they didn't care. Everybody could come in. They knew that sooner or later, they have to leave too. So a lot of strangers were in this house.

How did you talk to each other? What was the type of conversation that you said?

Nothing. Nothing. We didn't have to say anything. They just-- everybody was so confused and so scared. And so we came to this house. And a lot of people were there. Nobody told us even to leave. We just-- door was open, and so we walked in. And they said it better to hide because they are running around. The Nazis are running around like crazy, taking people, just taking them away.

So there was a-- it was like a-- on the other side, on the-- behind this closet they had, it was another room. It belonged to these people. So everybody went there. And one put a cover, the door with this closet, the clothes closet. And everybody-- and they were with children too. And everybody has to keep so quiet. Nobody could talk or even whisper.

At night, two people went down. It was a bakery downstairs. And they-- if they could, they brought some bread upstairs. We were sitting there maybe for two, three days, hidden over there until they came in into the room. And they knew what to expect. They took it away.

The closet door?

Yeah. And they found us all. So we just went.

Was this the deportation, then, from the ghetto for you?

Yeah. So we just went.

Where were you taken?

To Auschwitz. We-- there was no way where to hide anymore because we were the last transport.

From the Łódź ghetto?

The last. Yeah.

So what month was this?

It was September.

September 1944.

'44, September.

Where did they take you from this apartment, Karola?

We just went to this place on Czarnieckiego. And from there, they took us to the train. Everybody got a bread, a two-kilo one bread. And they took us just to the train.

Who were the they? Were they--

The Germans.

--the Germans?

They took us to the train.

Did they give you any idea of where they were taking you? Did you know?

Yeah, they said they said that-- no, we didn't know anything. They said that we are-- we go to places where we will work. And the kids will be taken care of. And the older people will be taken care of. And it took us, I think, two nights and a day to get there by train.

Would you describe what that experience was like in that train? Who were you with, you, particularly?

The train? My-- I was with two-- one brother and his wife, and one single brother, my sister, and my-- and this little boy. Because my sister's-- her husband died in ghetto. So we came to this train. It was packed. It was a train like for cattle, big, empty wagons with nothing in it, just floors.

There were many people with you going to the trains?

It was packed. It was packed. It was hardly a place where to sit on the floor.

What were the people doing outside of the trains? Were they-- what was their reaction? Do you recall that?

It was just Germans, German soldiers.

No, the residents.

They were all--

The victims from Łódź, was there noise? Was it quiet?

No, it was quiet because we didn't know where we going. We didn't know. We didn't-- at that time, we didn't even know that they gas people. We didn't believe it.

Did you have any idea where you would be going?

They said they taking us to places where we will be taken care of, and we'll work, and just to wait there until the war is over. So nobody-- but everybody was depressed, very, very depressed. All those years, we waited. And we always wished we could have a whole bread. Here, everybody had a whole bread, but nobody ate it. Nobody was--

Why didn't they eat it?

Nobody was in the mood. Everybody was scared, and tired, and two days and a night, and sit on the floor.

What happened inside those cars once you were traveling?

Did people talk to each other? Did you express your feelings?

Yeah. Just everybody was wondering, where do they take us? How long will it take? It was no even a windows that you could look out, only through a little thing between the doors. But we didn't see anything.

Did anyone try to escape? Or did they talk about escaping?

No.

Do you know why?

Probably-- how could you escape? There was no windows, only the doors, one door, one very large door, and locked who knows with how many locks. Nobody tried to escape. When they opened these doors, it was then we saw where we are.

Where were you?

We didn't know it was Auschwitz. But we didn't know what's going on there. Everybody was so fast, they screaming, and they were--

Who was screaming at you?

The people that worked there.

Can you describe how they looked? What did it look like when the doors were open?

Everybody was just rushing out, out, out, out, out. And the people said that some people were working there. And they said, you could leave the bread here. You don't need it here. You don't need it. We left it. Because who cared about bread? We saw what's going on now.

What did these people look like? Who worked there? Can you describe what they looked like to you?

It were women and men.

How were they dressed?

They-- just regular. And a lot of them were German women soldiers. But some of them, we just were just working there, the men were with the stripes.

Striped uniforms.

Uniforms. And the women were just dressed-- most of them were German soldiers, women, men and women.

Did they help you down from the cars?

No, oh, they just-- like you take down animals, not like men or children. They just rushed you. And they just wanted to confuse the people right away so they wouldn't know what's going on here. So they separated the men from the women. And it didn't take long. We just went through. They took away whatever you had-- earrings, they just grabbed it. Whoever had the gold teeth, they took it out.

Right there?

Right there. And they shaved your head.

Who did this? Who did this, the Nazis, the Germans?

The Germans, yeah, they shaved the heads.

Right there? Or did they take you first?

No, they took to a place, men separate and women separate.

And could you recall?

And then at that time, the crying from the people was just unbearable. I didn't-- when they shaved the heads, I didn't even recognize my sister. First of all, they said, we have to undress. And put everything in a big pile, all of it, everybody. And they just gave us a schmatta skirt and a pajama top-- no shoes, no stockings, nothing-- shaved, and barefoot, and only this what we had.

Underwear?

Nothing, not at all, nothing, only a schmatta skirt and a pajama top.

Schmatta is like a rag?

A rag, yeah, skirt and a pajama top. That's all they gave. And all our things were in a pile-- no food, no drink.

What were you thinking about then? Do you recall what might have gone through your mind?

And we just looking, where did they take the men? And the men were same thing. I remember, my-- I was-- my sister-in-law was also with us. And my brother managed to come over. And he asked us to please stay together with his wife. And we did till the end. We even came back to L³dz after all the time. And we came back to L³dz.

What happened to the little boy, the 10-year-old nephew?

The little boy? There was a man. And my sister knew him. So she asked him, what shall I do with my little boy? And shall I give him to-- with the men, maybe, with my brother? Because he couldn't go with the women. He was 10 years old. So he said, OK, give him with your brother. Like somebody says, what's the different? When they were taking away, and then they put us in a block, in a room, a very large place, and there were 1,000 girls in this place. They had--

Where were they from, all of them? Do you know? Did you recognize the languages?

No-- yeah, Hungarian, some, and Polish.

Did you recognize any other people there whom you knew?

It was heartbreaking because when I knew this person, let's say, he was the principal from our school. You know how children are-- look up to a principal. When I saw him there, I just-- my heart just broke. I was always-- I didn't care about-- so much about the hunger. But the humiliation killed me. I just couldn't take the humiliation.

What were some of the ways they humiliated you?

First of all, you're naked.

In front of everybody there?

Oh, sure. German soldiers took us to take a shower. We're naked. And they were in there. One-- on Sunday, only on Sunday, you were allowed to go out just to walk outside this, where was. Inside, there were the bunk beds, no, three on top of each other. And was nothing on the beds, only the wood. 14 girls slept on one thing, seven this way and seven this way. When they brought in the soup, so-called soup, they brought in one big pot, no spoon, and no plates for nobody, only everybody took five sips or six. And we just--

From the same pot?

From the same pot, no dishes, nothing-- no spoons, nothing. Only now, you take five sips. Now, you take five. Now, you take five. And that's how we had the soup. But we never argued, you had more, you had less.

They didn't argue?

No. Everybody was so-- nobody cared anymore. So some women said-- my sister complained, who knows? Where's my little boy? Maybe I should go with him. And there was-- from the next bunk, she said, believe me, you better forget about your little boy because here are ovens. And they gas people. Can't you smell? And I said, what are you talking about? That's not true. How can you say things like that? And she said, you'll learn. I'm here longer than you are. You just came in. You don't know. I couldn't believe it.

How did you find out that what she said was true?

My other sister-in-law. My older sister-in-law was also in Auschwitz. And she was in a place where they take the sick people. So she didn't last long. On Sunday, they left out just to walk, maybe for two hours, just outside to walk back and forth. So while walking, I saw my husband's two sisters. He wasn't then my husband. But they are my cousins, I told you. And I saw them coming towards us. They didn't recognize us. We didn't recognize them because they were-- looked different. If you don't have no hair, you just look entirely different.

Had the hunger affected you? Did you look thinner than you were?

I-- of course, I did. But my-- while I was in the ghetto, we managed somehow with this rations. But then in the camps was nothing to eat. So my sister was just like-- you could see through her the bones. That's how skinny she got. When we saw these two sisters, my cousins, our cousins, we spoke. And they told us about my sister-in-law, that she was here in a hospital. But she's not here anymore. So we made a date, next week, to meet again because there's thousands of women walking around. You couldn't just--

How many people? Can you judge? Can you estimate about how many were in the camp?

In our place was 1,000. I don't know how many blocks were there. I was in Block 11. So we made a date for the next week. But next week, we were already in Bergen-Belsen. They sent away.

You had been sent away.

Yeah.

Could you tell us something more about Auschwitz? What was it like during the day?

Yeah. I have a important thing to tell you about Auschwitz. Once they came in, people weren't called by name. You were just a number.

Where did you have your number?

When we came to Auschwitz, they didn't give you the numbers because we were the last transport. And it was discontinued.

1944?

Yeah. So we had a number here. We were only a number. You weren't a person, only a number. So they called numbers. And we had to go down. They counted us. It was early in the morning-- not the whole block, but so many, so many people. So they took us away to Birkenau. We didn't know what Birkenau is. We didn't know. They said, they're taking us to shower. So they took us to Birkenau. And we came there.

Which is about how far from Auschwitz?

We walked. I don't know. I don't know how far it is.

About three kilometers, right.

I don't know. But we walked there. We came there. And they said, everybody should get undressed and put everything in one pile. So we did. And everybody-- they gave everyone a piece of soap. And they said, we're going in there to take showers. We came in there. And the people, the Jewish men were working outside. And they told us what this is, what the place this is, that this is gas. This is not a shower. But we still, we didn't believe him. We were sitting there all day long.

Outside the shower place?

No, inside. But the shower, something was wrong with the shower, with the gas.

You were actually sitting in the gas chamber?

Yeah. So we're sitting on the floor all day long. They didn't bring nothing to drink, nothing to eat. And the people-- the men outside kept on through the-- there was windows. And they kept on just telling us, you're not going to get out of here. Don't think you will. Because this is the place where the gas comes out.

What did you think in your-- at that time?

What could we think? We just prayed that it isn't. It was getting dark already. And they came in, the soldiers. They said to get dressed again. When the pile was up, you didn't know. You couldn't pick yours. So you just took a skirt and a pajama top. You just put it on. When we came back to our place, to the Lager C--

Camp C.

--when the girls opened the doors for us, we said, it's just impossible. How did you get back? We thought you're long, long, long gone. This was the gas chamber.

So you actually sat in that?

All day long.

Do you recall what you said to each other? Was there any realization of what that was?

We just didn't believe it. And we try not to believe it. We just kept telling each other, it's not true. How do you know? Maybe they don't know. It's just not true. But when we came back, those girls that opened the gate, they told us. You know where you were? How come you're back? I can't believe it.

To what do you attribute this saving bit, this miracle?

It was a very, very, very big miracle. And probably, God heard our prayers and our crying. And that's what--

Did the Germans or Nazis give any excuse of what had happened?

Nothing. Nothing.

You didn't know any reason why that didn't work?

It was broken. They said that it was-- something was wrong. And was sitting there-- just they were waiting for further instructions what to do with us.

How many girls do you think were sitting there together about that time?

Maybe 100.

Were any of those girls subsequently taken to the gas chambers?

Or do you know if most of these survived?

I know of one of those girls. But in Auschwitz, They had these electric wires around the camp. And a lot of people went to these wires and they got killed.

Voluntarily?

Just yeah, they gave up. They didn't want to take it anymore. So sometimes, you heard, oh, you know what happened this girl or this girl, this girl, she is-- she went to the wires and just got electrocuted.

Did thoughts of that ever enter your mind?

No, never. I always said, it must end. It must end. The whole four years, I was always telling my sister, you'll see. It will end. It must end tomorrow, next week. That's why you survive. Because if you hope and pray to God, he gave you this-- gives you the strength to go on from day to day.

So you feel that it was a good measure of your religion that helped you?

Right, right, right, right. In all those troubles, there wasn't one day in the morning that I didn't say my prayers before I left to work. And my brothers, when they came home, you have-- they didn't go to synagogue because there was no synagogue. But in the house, they did their prayers in the morning and the evening.

Karola, we're going to pause for a few moments. And then we'll come back to you to resume our interview. So we're just briefly going to stop now.

OK.

Thank you.