

This is tape two, side A. And you were talking about that you didn't have shoes. You had the wooden clogs, and there was this man sitting there.

No, it was a woman.

A woman.

With a big stick, with which she beat sometimes people. And would be giving from a pile shoes and some dress, because we were supposed to be shipped to Germany for work, but that we didn't know what for but she--

And I got shoes into which I couldn't get. And I have a small foot, but that's-- and this friend of ours, this Eva said, you go back and ask for normal shoes. And I said, no, I'm too scared. Because she's sitting there like a frog with that stick with which-- she said, I don't care. If you don't, I beat you up. So I did. I said, I can't get into these shoes.

So I think that she beat me once, but gave me shoes into which I could get in. That probably saved me because one of the first thing which freezes are your toes. You can't go without. So then we were-- I have no idea how long, whether we were given food or whatever, but put us again in these cattle wagons and dragged us through Germany.

Let's back up a little bit, and then we'll come to that. If we can go back just to your journey to Auschwitz from Terezin. And you were with your-- the four of you were still together in the car, in the cattle car.

Not four, three.

Oh, when you left to go to Auschwitz, it was just the three girls?

Yeah.

Oh, what about your parents?

They stayed behind.

They stayed behind?

Yeah.

Were you able to say goodbye to them?

Oh, yes. They only thought that we went to gas. I don't know. Somebody-- there came a garbled message or whatever. But that's everything when we found out when we came back. But--

What was it like to have to say goodbye to them?

Look, that was not pleasant. It was not.

Did they say anything special to you?

No, no, no. Because apparently my father said that he knew about the gas. There were very few people who knew that it was. But he didn't tell us, because he didn't want us to be scared. Now, for instance what people didn't know how and what, because both of us, my sister and I, were always nearsighted.

So the normal thing would be to put our glasses on when we got out of the train, because that you don't lose them. Yeah. But we were fortunately both too vain. We never wore the glasses. Had we had them on our nose, we would have automatically gone to gas. Because that's how that-- you know. So there were thousands of things which worked this

way or that way. And--

The three of you were together in the car?

Yeah.

What was that like? What were the conditions like?

Oh, they were terrible. I think that-- I think that that was-- it was closed cattle Wagon They were not open, because the open one, we went from Germany. So it didn't rain or snow into it. But I'm sure that some people died there even because it went for days. There was no food distributed. There was-- It was-- I don't know how it's possible to survive, but you survived.

And the three of you stayed close together in a car?

Yeah. But you couldn't move. So once you get together, you cannot move.

And how did you sleep?

Well, that's [INAUDIBLE]. Sitting up, whatever. We were not standing. I think we sat on our-- at that time, we were still having kind of a bundle with us, which we were taking, which they took away, of course, immediately. But on that I think we sat.

And did they pass on any food or water to you?

No, I don't think so. I have no memory of it.

And again the sani--

I don't know. When you think about it, I have no idea. No memory.

And when you arrived, was it morning or evening?

It was dark. There were some reflectors. They looked 6 foot 2. And it's right-- because the dirt, they had these white sleeves on uniforms, and with a dog. There was a German shepherd always. And they looked tall, blonde, and clean. And they were probably small and dark.

Because I went-- when Eichmann-- we saw him in Auschwitz. When he was on trial--

Is this Eichmann or Mengele?

Mengele was the one who was doing this, but Eichmann was also in Auschwitz. He was looking always. But whatever, I went when he was on trial. I was living in Los Angeles at that time, Beverly Hills. And I went to Israel to see him, to end the war.

And I couldn't believe, that this is a little guy, was dark, balding. I mean, it was unbelievable. I would have sworn that I know how he looks. So--

So how did you know what to do when you got out of the car.

We didn't know. They told us. They screamed. You know, [MUMBLING] So we marched where they told us.

And again, you three girls together were able to stay together.

Well, they sent us-- I told you that they stripped us as we went--

I meant just getting off the car and the initial telling you where to go, you three of you were able to stay together the whole time.

Mm-hmm.

Now, did you get a number in Auschwitz?

No, we didn't. There was-- I think that when we came, they didn't anymore give numbers, because I don't know. I mean, [INAUDIBLE].

What is it like, for again, for a 19-year-old girl? You said you had your hair--

Shaved? That was terrible. Because at that time, on top of it, we were all so short. They shaved it completely.

Other women did this? And your body hair also?

I don't think so.

Just your hair.

I think.

Other women did this?

No, I think they-- I don't know. The men were there. The women-- they were the kapos. I mean, those were not Germans I mean, they were horrible. I mean, that's-- they were not nice people.

In what way?

In every way. They were like the Germans. I don't know. I don't want to-- look, Israel has the law, if you were a kapo Nazi, you-- I mean, I think that is a capital punishment for a kapo. I mean, that's not a joke. Kapo, even if they are Jewish, I mean, there was a case in Israel about a kapo. I forget what happened and how it happened, but--

What was it like when you saw your sister after she had no hair?

I don't think that we even-- I mean, that was the last you would think. I mean, it was-- you didn't know what happened. I mean, you are standing in a place where are showers, which could be gas or water. They shave you. There are men who are raping the women or whatever, and they are--

Were you-- were you assaulted?

No. But that's the last thing which I mean-- you are stripped of your identity, of everything. So it's not that I would look and say, look, you look well or what.

What were the barracks like? Where did you sleep in Auschwitz?

I have only a memory of it. Because in Theresienstadt, most of them were stone, old barracks for soldiers. But at least it has-- it was not so cold or whatever. This was one-- three beds, or I don't know how many, whether three or four. And I think they were wooden barracks probably put up there. And mud everywhere.

Did you have a blanket?

I think there was or wasn't. I don't know. I don't know. But I went-- that must be now like 10 years. We were in Munich with my husband, and I went to see Dachau. And it looked so clean. You know, which is untrue. I mean, that's the whole thing, that it doesn't-- it doesn't look so bad.

Did you work in Auschwitz?

No, no. Because we read the whole time standing somewhere, Zahlappell or whatever.

Just standing and standing and standing.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I think we were by that time marked either for extinction or for work in Germany.

What did you talk about with your sister?

We didn't talk. I mean, you can't. Even if we talk, I have no memory anymore. But we came 2 and 1/2 thousand, and only like 200 of that went to the right side. So that's a little bit, you know, concentrates your mind. And the smell of the burning flesh? I mean, you can't. You can't start to do soul searching or whatever. I think that we were in absolute shock.

So then you were there for a few weeks.

I think, but I cannot-- that I cannot vouch for how long.

And then how-- you said you got these new clogs or these new shoes, because you were told you were going to be sent somewhere else.

Well, that was part of it, that they were processing us for that. And we were sent then to a place which at that time the Germans were kind of very good about it, that every factory in Germany had slave labor. Therefore it's such a nonsense to say we didn't know. There wasn't a place which didn't have a factory. And there wasn't a factory which didn't have slave labor.

And we were sent to a munition factory, to a small place near Sachsen, Chemnitz, which is in East Germany.

If you don't mind, I just want to back up a little bit. Do you know which barrack you were in, in Auschwitz, the number?

No, I don't know.

And also, were you getting your period then?

No, I was having it. I remember when we went to the first Zahlappell, and stopped and never got it till I got back to Prague. Neither of us. I think that was one of the things which-- just never the whole eight months or whatever.

When you were in Auschwitz, did you see the men, or was it strictly women that you were with?

Well, in the barracks were women, but there were these kapos everywhere. There were men somehow. I don't know.

Other men prisoners?

No, I don't think so. No, I don't think that we saw them. I don't know, but I don't think so.

Did you? I know you said you didn't have really a chance to talk too much, but were the older women helpful to the younger women? Was there any kind of support that--

There were no older women. They were dead. If you are older, you are gassed.

Well, when I meant older I meant 26, 27-year-olds. You know, were they of support to the 18 and 19-Year-olds?

I don't think so.

What about sharing of food and--

No. There was nothing to share.

All right, then as you said, you left. And you were at this first labor camp.

Yeah.

Then what?

That was like probably the building. I don't know what it was once. And--

You said this was near where?

Sachsen Chemnitz.

How far from Auschwitz? How long?

Oh, that's in East Germany.

In East Germany.

Yeah. I now remember that the train went through Dresden. We didn't see, but somebody who was near the window--

Was this another cattle car?

Yeah. That Dresden is in ruins. Because when we were going to Auschwitz, Dresden was standing. And this was after the bombing. And later today it was such a pleasure. Till today, the Americans have a terrible conscience about it, and I still don't know what they are so sorry about. I mean, after all, the Germans bombed Coventry first. But it is in East Germany. That I know, because I couldn't go there after the war, because it was under communistic domain.

Again, the three of you, your friend is still with you?

Yeah.

So you arrived there?

Yeah, and we had an SS woman who was a commander. I don't know whether she was there from the beginning.

You mean coming with you from Auschwitz?

No, no.

She was at the camp.

Perhaps she was coming with us, but I don't know. That I don't know. She was I think the sister of Elsa Koch. And she took two girls to be her special kind of maids-in-waiting. And we were getting-- unfortunately, that was bad for me, because my sister and-- they were putting two people always in one bunker. They were three kind of one above the other.

And I was in a different than [? Elena ?] was. And she got with [? Sarah. ?] And I was got it with somebody else, that another Czech girl. And we were then working in a factory which was nearby, making anti-aircraft kind of ammunition. And there were already some of the other prisoners.

I know that there were some Polish women. Then there were very few who were really there because they were really criminals. And they had the best life. They had much better-- got more food and everything. Because they were only criminals.

And one thing which was-- that we had always a German civilian master at the factory or whatever, who had to show you what to do and to see whether you do it right, because it had-- it was working with machinery.

And he was nearly-- to everybody always they would whisper to all of us always, you know, I used to be a Social Democrat, and tell perhaps even knew what the BBC is saying. But I remember that he was saying my last son, I had three sons, and two are already dead, died at Stalingrad and at this one. And this one is joining. He's 16, joining the army.

And one of our girls said, Oh, I'm sorry. And he said, what are you sorry about? He's fighting for Hitler. So I mean, you know, what they today say, how they didn't know and everything? They liked him as long as he was winning the war.

And only the funny religious sects, they were kind of-- there was one who-- the girl who worked on his machine was a Dutch girl. And she had TB before already. And he said that he belongs to some-- I don't know which sect it was. It was I think Christian sect, but not the normal Protestant or whatever or perhaps.

And he said, "look, I don't believe in Hitler. I don't believe in this, that, whatever, and I will bring you some more food. I bring you some." and she said, "I wouldn't take anything from a German." And she didn't. He begged her. She didn't.

But there we were really hungry, also. Because that was already-- we got twice a day soup. The soup for lunch was only water. And if there was one piece of potato floating, we were lucky. In the evening, it had like two or three. Not potatoes, pieces of potato, or Kurbis, or something like that floating there. And one piece of bread. No salt. And that was a terrible thing.

They didn't have German salt. And they had for themselves, but by that time, they lost Romania, and they didn't-- And that was really [? starving. ?] We decided that-- I think we didn't work one day a week. We had to stand at Zahlappells. But then I think we work either half a day or not the whole day.

And we decided, which was absolutely against all the rules and you could be shot for that, that we somewhere stole a piece of Brot. And we saved the last three days this one piece of bread. And on that day when we worked less or we were allowed to get together-- I don't anymore remember whether it was that we did-- we ate it like ladies, not fast.

So that was our revenge on the Germans. And I remember there was one woman who was pregnant. And they sent her, of course, to another camp to be gassed. We never saw her again. I mean, and I got once sick. And that was one of the Polish women who came. They put me in a--

There was a room, but they had no nothing. They had nothing, but you could go to that place if you were sick. And I had high temperature, but I probably wanted just to give up or whatever. And she came, this Polish woman. And she was singing to me Yiddish songs.

I didn't know Yiddish, but if you know German, so it's not that far. It was-- and the only thing that was "get up, get up, and get out of here," which again probably saved my life. Because they didn't keep you there long. They sent you to-- I think it was Flossenburg, which we belonged to, which had the gas or whatever, shooting or whatever.

I mean, we were too small. We were like-- I don't know whether we were 500, but it was a small, small camp. It was really--

Of women only?

Yeah, yeah. Only women. I don't know this Polish women. I think they were-- the Russian women were in-- they were for years, and gypsies in Auschwitz. They were not Jews. They were the prisoners of war or whatever.

How was it to see dead bodies? For you?

I don't know whether I saw them.

Either in Auschwitz or?

I don't know. I don't think I saw them. No, in this camp they sent that that execute whatever was done somewhere else, in a proper so to say. We were the labor. We were the spin off of that.

Like a satellite camp?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

So you went to work?

Yes, we worked long hours. There was always one SS or two-- I don't remember-- sitting in that place where we worked. You know, watching. I don't know what they were watching, really. But that was only because they didn't trust even each other, because there were only otherwise a German supervisor, who had to be there if something went bad with the machinery. And I can't tell you whether the machinery was modern or old, because I wouldn't know till today.

And also what was the relationship between the women, different aged women?

I don't know why you are-- at this point, there was not really such a difference in age. Because the older, they were dead. They were not there.

Well, as I said, when I mean older, I mean maybe late 20s. I'm not talking about older, older but like a 10 year difference in age.

Yeah, but you don't-- if you are reduced to-- I mean, those, I think-- you don't-- I don't know why would be there any kind. I mean, talking about what? Nobody talked too much. We had no opportunity, also. We worked and went to sleep and got up at 6:00 or five. I don't know when it was. And I think it was--

Did they give you anything to eat in the morning?

I think there was kind of so-called coffee. Not coffee but whatever. I don't have a memory of that. But we worked like 12 hours a day. So that is not--

Were you allowed to talk while you were working?

No, you were not working with somebody.

Next to someone else.

Yeah. And you also had where you asked to go to the bathroom, you had to ask a German sitting there, which were in the same kind of environment of toilets. So it was not that you went somewhere else, but even that was like, you could go once in the morning and once in the afternoon, whatever.

Had you lost a lot of weight?

Yes. I'm sure, because when we came back, we were skeletons. But I didn't have the clothes to find out.

When you would look at your sister, would you look and feel like you were looking at yourself, and this is why I must look?

No, I have no memory that I would be thinking "I look terrible" or "I look well." Because that wasn't in your making anymore. That was-- I think that everything else shuts off. And it was not that on Sunday we were going to visit somebody, so therefore I should look decent.

And then how long did you stay there?

It must have been-- first of all, we had no calendar, so we don't know. We had no watches. We had no calendar. We had nothing. But I know that we were during Hitler's birthday, on 20th of April '45, in one of those-- being dragged from nowhere to nowhere. Because the Russian--

You had left this place by then?

It slowly started to peter even into the camp that English occupied Bergen-Belsen The Americans are I don't know where, and the Russians were nearing. This was East Germany. And they were suddenly-- even the SS started to look very funny, because the Russians, I think, were nearing the Sachsen-- Sachsen Chemnitz. And to be SS women in the camp wasn't the best profession for them.

And they tried to get rid of us, which is not that easy as it sounds if you don't have the gas chambers or whatever. And somehow this Elsa Koch's sister, I mean, because she had clout and everything--

This is tape two, side B, and you were talking about--

Yeah, she somehow got out of them that they will try to get the train for evacuating us. So that were this time open cattle wagons. And first they wanted us to get us to one camp, which then was occupied by some already. I think that was like Bergen-Belsen and the English were there. And so they decided on something else, and the Americans were there.

And I remember that at one-- the American Air Force must have been which did the strafing. You know, when the Germans flat and left us there to stay, and one of our people was clever enough and said bend over that they can see the [? KZ ?] big on [? that. ?]

Whether they really could or not, I don't know. But they did not strafe us.

This is here in these open cars?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And you know, those were the planes which get very--

Come down low.

Yeah. And so the Germans came back. And then in the end, they wanted-- because the German SS wanted to run for their life, they had a dream they would go to Italy. Because they told to one of the girls who worked for them that they want to go to Italy. And so they wanted to get rid of us. They couldn't find the camp, because they were--

And again, I don't know how long we were there. For days.

In this open cattle car?

Yeah.



Any food?

They once gave us something. I remember a piece of bread or whatever. That I remember. And they at least wanted to get us to Theresienstadt. Theresienstadt head of the Germans didn't want that, because he said I have the Red Cross sitting here around the corner, waiting to walk in. And I'm telling them that nothing ever happened. And now you are sending me people with everything. We had typhoid, and the other typhoid, and this one, and that one, and without hair, and with lice and fleas.

Because-- but in the end, he gave in. And we were the second transport who went back. And that was-- I remember that we who knew what Theresienstadt, what it is about, were very happy about it, and kind of, let's hold together, because we were really on a point of--

And so the Germans being Germans, very nicely, came and said, "do you see the smoke there? That's from the people you thought you left behind." Now, the Germans were burning their files, which we didn't know. Because apparently they put the files to Theresien, which was clever. Nobody of the Allies would bomb it.

So that's what they were burning. They had no gas chamber, but they told us, oh, they built the gas chambers. And so when we staggered out-- and we were both quite sick. We had diphtheria and everything. I mean, it was kind of a-- probably another day or whatever, and--

And I saw somebody whom I knew. And I said, where are my parents? And this man said, in a very whispery voice, "they will be here soon." And I thought that that's true, then they are dead. They were sent-- because the Germans said there was a transport after you.

We somehow were surviving with that, that my parents are safe, and we will go back home, home. And they were saying, I mean, there was another transporter. There is another gas chamber or whatever.

And what happened was that apparently this man was greeting everybody, lost voice. Couldn't talk anymore. And anyhow, I saw then mother and father was hiding somewhere, because he was so scared that it's not true that we are in that transport or whatever. So and--

So you had this reunion with them?

Yeah. And that's why actually I have no [INAUDIBLE] because the first thing came somebody who was a doctor, who my parents knew and said you know, you look at-- and he said first they burned everything. Which was true, because that's where typhoid gets around, is by lice and fleas, and that was everywhere.

Did you yourself have lice?

Oh, yeah. But that's why I don't-- you know, everybody said, didn't you keep the uniform or whatever? You know, what we had. And for us, it was like the end of the war. It wasn't, but it was, though. And it was the beginning of May, though.

And came, I think, the first of [INAUDIBLE]. In every of those country it came a little bit different, but the Red Cross was really mixed up.

So your parents stayed in--

They--

The whole time?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Do you remember that, seeing them for the first time?

Oh, it was incredible, incredible. And I must say that Theresienstadt again, I mean, you know that's why, for me, for instance, it's so difficult to comprehend how this country treats refugees or whatever. Because when the transports started to come back to Theresienstadt, Theresienstadt as such decided they have to get double portion of food. We don't need to eat. We were here. I mean, in everything, that somehow people acted like human beings and not like pigs.

What condition were your parents in?

Well, better than we were. I mean, that's true. But I don't think we even-- we were so glad to-- and the war was nearly over. I mean, it was-- I mean, you felt that the Red Cross was--

Your parents recognized you, even though you must have looked very different than when you were--

Oh, come on. That's not--

[LAUGHTER]

That was never a question.

Even though you said you looked very different.

No, I didn't say I looked different. I don't know how I looked.

You said you had lost a lot of weight.

Yeah, but I don't know how I looked. But still, I mean, I didn't get blue eyes. I didn't get--

So then did you stay with them once you saw them?

Yes, yes.

You were able to live with them?

Yeah.

And then what were those days like? What did you--

I don't remember. I mean, it's--

You stayed with them until when?

I think-- our luck actually was that because a lot of people died of this, if they were liberated then immediately in a normal place, where they get the food which they wanted here was not enough food, so that they could start to feed the food which they had, which was again not-- no fat, no butter, no real meat or whatever. So that probably saved us.

And then we were liberated. Then the Russians were marching around Theresienstadt. So my sister and I decided that we will take the Russians and go to Prague. Told that to parents, you wait here. We are going. And there was already [? cows, ?] I mean in the German line, so that we could get to the Russians. And they were--

And there came a Czech teams were coming from Bohemia to Theresienstadt with medical help. You know, so that one of them was a young man whose mother was originally White Russian or whatever. He spoke Russian, so we said to him, look, you help us to explain to the Russians that they should take us to Prague. So he did.

They were kind of horse-driven carriages with old men. They were opening tins, which were American tins, to give us to eat. And after, I think, two hours sitting in hay, we came to a town which was like five miles away. So we went to a nice young, good-looking kind of officer, who spoke some language. I think he spoke German or I don't know what he spoke.

Because we didn't speak Russian. And explained that we want to go to Prague on something faster. So he said OK. And he put us each on a lorry, and told his people-- he was a commanding officer-- that they must give us enough room. And that was fighting army still-- to lie down, because we are coming from a concentration camp. But they mustn't touch us.

And we didn't know that the Russian-- we thought these are our saviors. Yeah. And we were very lucky. I mean, quite frankly. And he would from every half an hour or whatever, every hour, stop the whole column of the lorries. And those were trucks which were, I'm sure, American. Nothing was Russian at that time in the Russian Army.

And he would stop them to ask us, whether we are doing all right. And we didn't know what's [? better. ?] We said yeah. And when we came to a certain point near Prague, he again stopped and said now, look, we are going to Vienna, because we are still a fighting army, Austria. And don't you want to come with us? Otherwise, you have to get off.

And we said, no, we are going home. But he said, have you ever been to Vienna? We said, no. He said, so Prague will be there. That's a Russian attitude to life. I mean, that had nothing to do with communism. I mean, that kind of "what is a few years between friends?"

And so we said no. So he gave to everybody a carton of cigarettes. And we said, look, we don't smoke. And he said, that's gold. That's money. Take it. So we took it. I think he gave us two cartons.

Well, we were standing on the road, and everything was going by. The Russians then came with some, again, horse carriage with a big Italian flag, Italian former prisoners of war going from Germany home. So we said, are you going through Prague? Yes. Will you give us a lift? Yes, but you give us cigarettes.

I mean, that was so Italian. They took it away immediately. And they got us up to Prague. They were-- then Prague was just after their uprising, so that nothing worked. No trams, no nothing, because they made barricades out of them.

So we had to walk through the whole Prague. But by that time, we walked on air and went-- in the house where we used to live, my parents' best friends who were not Jewish were living. So that we went there, because we didn't know who else from the relatives is alive and who is not. And--

You said you felt like you were walking on air.

Yeah, we were.

What did that mean to you?

Well, nothing can happen. I mean, you know, this is a-- that's real life, and nothing can happen to us. And it was that because we must have been-- we were certainly weak. We must have been certainly tired, but we walked through today-- I mean, you know, Prague is not that small.

But if somebody leaves you over in the airport and we go to the other side. But I have a feeling that it was two seconds. You know, you flew over. In probably in a month they said to me, go around the corner. How? I have no car! There is no tram! And so--

So you're back at your house, your family home.

No, my family was not home.

No, you went back to your family home, you said.

It was an apartment.

Oh, it was an apartment. OK.

Apartment house, and in the same house the best friends of my parents lived.

Right.

Who stayed there the whole-- I mean, we hope that they stayed there, but they did the whole-- they were non-Jewish, and they were saving, which my mother gave them to save a few things. Like not the gold or not the silver. Not, not the pictures. No. A dress for a debutante party for [? Elena ?] and me.

That's some sh--

[LAUGHTER]

I don't know. You know, the thing is that-- today, it's absolutely ridiculous, but probably when it happened, it's very important. What about what will they wear when they go to a debutante--

So there was a great homecoming after. The first thing this lady-- that first thing you think about, then I started to call whoever is still here. I mean, which was very few. And I remember that there in the tub, which was my first tub in two years, I got back my period.

And then she came, a cousin, who was only half-Jewish. So she said nothing happened to my aunt who was not Jewish at all, another aunt who was not Jewish. I mean, you know that they were coming, and everybody was crying, and everybody was [INAUDIBLE].

I think that's by now enough. Not? I go back a bit.

So how long did you stay there?

Where?

In Prague, at your apartment.

Till 1949.

OK, your parents then came?

Yes.

You and your sister had come back to the apartment, and then--

Well, we were together. When I say "I."

Right. No, right. But then your parents--

My parents came and officially was I think in a week time or whatever.

OK.

And we got then our old apartment back, of course with German furniture. Horrible. Because some German lived there.

And the worst part was then looking for the people who didn't come back and never will come back. Except there was one great thing. I was walking--

Prague had no transportation for quite some time, because at the end of the war, when they had the uprising, they made barricades out of the stone streets and so on. And I was walking somewhere, and I met somebody whom I knew in Theresienstadt.

So that's what we were all of us basically doing, walking around, looking kind of who's coming back, and where were you, and did you see this one and so on. So after greeting I said, well, where were you? And he said, well, after Auschwitz I was in Majdanek.

And I said, oh, yes, my uncle was there, and he died there. And he said, which one? And so I told him. And he said, no, he's alive. And I said, that's nonsense, because he wrote to his wife a smuggled letter-- and the wife was in Prague. I mean, she was not Jewish-- that he got sepsis, and you know, that there were no antibiotics or no nothing, and that he's dying, and goodbye.

And he said, yes, except what you don't know is that the next day we were liberated by the Russians, and they put him in the hospital, and gave him whatever it was necessary, and he is very much alive.

I said, so where he is? Said, with the Czech [? army ?] in Slovakia. And he honestly couldn't get-- he was trying to call, and trying to mail a letter, and nothing worked. I mean, it was another-- I don't know-- a week that I ran home. I said to mother, you now sit down and I will tell you good news. So I told her, and she cried, and then she called that aunt, because it was her brother.

And out of her-- all the relatives, she had one other sister or two other sister who died in Auschwitz. One brother was in England during the war. So he was OK. And this one and the third one, again died. So that except-- and her parents died in Auschwitz. So that's the-- and their children. [? These ?] are everybody, so--

And so that was a great news. You know, so she went over to the aunt. But otherwise, they were not too many. We were sitting at that time mostly at the radio, and they would interrupt programs saying that in that concentration camp was liberated in Austria or in Germany, and those and those of Czech origin are there.

Because there was no other way how to find out who is alive. And we-- I remember that we came really nothing. I was wearing a pair of father's shoes. Somebody gave me some pair of pants. And I mean, we had-- we came as-- we had absolutely nothing. And in Prague, the shops were empty.

And so that you had to go to some authority and ask for a permit to get somewhere a pair of shoes, and a pair of this one, or a pair of that one. So I went and they said, well, we don't have shoes. I would give you a pair, but--

And I said but look, I am wearing man's shoes, which are two or three sizes too big for me. And he said, no, if you wear it until now, you will survive another month. So then-- because there was nothing in the [? country. ?] I mean, there were peasants who would take some of the bourgeoisie things for some food or whatever. I mean, the things which my mother saved and the friend of ours came for, there was nothing. I mean, especially for people who didn't for now for a long time had the connection with the black market.

Did you go back to school or?

We could-- they put through a law that you can try for the class where you belong, but you have to take the exams. And that they will have cramming sessions through the whole summer. And if you pass, you pass. If not, you go, you repeat the class. And we would have, my sister and I, being at the end of the high school.

So we had to cram four years into the three months, which we did. I think what I today don't know about physics would fill the Smithsonian. I mean, because there were certain which started when we already were not in school, about chemistry, physics. I mean, really, they really tried their best.

I remember this. I had really to promise I will never go to study, that I will go to study law or some literature, or whatever it is, but not chemistry. Which we did. Because it started that in October. Because the university was closed by the Germans anyhow.

And so that we were able to finish, I remember, that my parents sent us first thing to a doctor. The doctor said, look, they should go SOMEWHERE to some place. Because otherwise they will get mental breakdowns. They said we have no time. I mean, you know that's--

And so we did the schooling in whatever time it was then and however. And were able to go to the University

And what did you study in the university?

I started with law, and which-- it bored me. And then opposite the philosophical faculty was a marvelous professor who was lecturing on the French literature, whatever. So I changed. Both of us. I changed for comparative literature.

And then you completed-- did you complete your university?

No, because then the communists came and threw me out because I was of bourgeois origin.

What did you do?

Well, before we got out, because then I landed in a communistic jail. And--

Why did they put you in jail?

Because I was one of the-- I was a secretary of the Social Democratic Student Association. And we prepared the demonstration against-- the student demonstration, which was the only demonstration, which the Czech were able to put together. And we were firstly thrown out of the-- they came in-- of the university. We were four of us. Because of-- and I remember that a professor of Soviet-- sorry, of Russian literature, who was an elderly gentleman and always a communist. I mean, not a new one, one of those intellectual, but always was-- went to plead with me-- with them, with the communistic kind of.

And they said, comrade, that's our business, not yours. And they said I'm of bourgeois origin and out. And that was bad, because it was like with the Germans a little bit, that if you didn't have the piece of paper what you do, they could send you to wash the windows, which is a very kind of what they liked very much-- window washing from elements like us.

I mean, today, when Havel took power there and all the great painters there and the writers were window washers under communists. I don't know, but I went once also window washing.

After all you had been through before that--

Any--

No, no, no. But after all you had been through, being in jail, was that a very difficult?

Yes, because you cannot repeat the experience twice. You know what can happen. That's a frightening thing. Because somehow it was not they will get me out and this is nonsense, and you know, I'm [? no ?] German. It's more that you know what can happen. When the first time you don't, your whole kind of whatever it is, it's revolting that this cannot be happening and something. It won't last or whatever. But twice you can't go through that.

So when I got out, which was like-- they caught somebody who was running over the border, and he had the names of us, so that we were all taken in more like two weeks, three weeks in the prison in Prague. But they did some interrogations, the 10 people sitting interrogating you. And--

What was that like for you?

That was frightening, because they knew a lot. You didn't look-- in a non-free regime, everybody is guilty of something. But you want to pretend that you are not, but you don't know what they know. I mean, it's not that you know-- I didn't steal a piece of bread. I probably whispered to somebody that I don't like communist or whatever it is. And so that you know that they know something about you, but you don't know what.