

**Yehuda Adam**

**Tape 1, Side A**

**April 4, 1997**

**RG-50.106\*0062.01.02**

### **Abstract**

Yehuda Adam was born as George Stern in Budapest on July 7, 1929. His family was not particularly religious but he was sent to a Jewish school and his friends were Jewish. Hungary became Nazi and his father was put in a work unit. In July 1943 the Jews had to wear the Jewish star, all Jewish employees were fired, professionals lost their licenses, Jewish stores were marked, deportations started and the ghetto started. Yehuda was ordered to go to work in a brick factory with his schoolmates where he swept the floors 10 hours a day. He escaped from the factory when there was a rebellion in Budapest. October 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> was a proclamation that the government declared the end of war and he went to a Jewish star home. Yehuda saw trucks of Hungarian Nazis in full regalia and SS arrive. Through Yehuda's uncle's adopted daughter, the family received a shutzpass (visa) and were permitted to live in a Swedish safe house. Though over 700,000 Hungarian Jews were killed in Auschwitz at the time, they had no knowledge of it at the time. On January 15<sup>th</sup> at 10:15 Yehuda looked out the window and saw the first Soviet soldiers on the street and knew he was liberated. He saw Nazis hanging but did not see any collaborators beaten or witness beatings by the Germans or by the gendarmes.

Yehuda Adam explains that he believes the Judenrat policy was put through so quickly in Hungary because the Hungarians cooperated and participated in carrying it out. His parents survived but other relatives perished in Auschwitz. Yehuda gives his history after liberation. After completing high school, he moved to Israel in 1949 where he served in the army, and then obtained his medical degree in 1956 from Hebrew University. He had an internship, two residencies and was Chief of Surgery for ten years in Tel Aviv. After that he held several positions in the US and expects to retire shortly from Georgetown University. His wife is also a survivor.

### **Summary**

00:00 Yehuda Adam was born as George Stern in Budapest on July 7, 1929 and now is known as Yehuda George Adam. His parents were middle-class Jews. His father had a motorcycle store and had no financial problems. Yehuda attended Jewish elementary school. In 1939 he entered high school or gymnasium. Only a small percentage of Jews were admitted so it was fortunate to be admitted. There were four Jewish students in a class of 50. The school was anti-Semitic. His father's name was Anton and his mother, Valga (?).

- 05:00 The family was not religious. They were Reform Jews and attended synagogue twice a year. He had a big Bar Mitzvah with a big crowd and a lavish reception. Life was financially and socially fine and exclusively Jewish. The family observed Yom Kippur. They did not keep kosher. Kindergarten was in the same school. His parents thought that he should have some Jewish tradition so sent him to a Jewish school. Out of a population of a million people, Budapest had 120,000 to 130,000 Jews. Hungarian was spoken in his house and the parents also spoke German. He learned German in high school. He had mostly Jewish friends to play with. When they were older, he went to the movies and participated in sports including swimming, gymnastics, skiing and ice skating. His grandparents spoke German, not Yiddish.
- 10:00 His maternal grandfather was born in a small town close to the Hungarian border and his paternal grandfather was born in Moravia near the Hungarian/German border of Bratislava. Yehuda had no idea of the political situation when he was in school as he lived in an assimilated community. The anti-Jewish laws started and horrendous happenings took place nearby around 1941 to 1942. His father went to the Russian front and his parents' friends were in the paramilitary where Hungarian anti-Semitism flourished. They knew what was going on along the Hungarian border. Communism started in the Winter of 1941 and the few who survived returned and told unbelievable stories. In 1941 the Jewish professionals lost their jobs and had many restrictions but there was no personal danger. This was a foolish delusion. They did not believe what was happening across the border could happen in cultural Hungary.
- 15:00 In 1940 and 1941 there were sporadic, not organized actions. After 1941 in Belorussia problems began. Policy was according to Hitler and the Nazi Party. The family tried to stay away from reality but it was difficult with relatives, his father and friends in the paramilitary. They were separated from reality and had delusions and defense mechanisms. In 1943 he had the first contact with a non-Hungarian, a friend. The parents were massacred but still they were in denial.
- 20:00 In 1942 Yehuda had his Bar Mitzvah and he was happy and got presents. They no longer saw American movies. In 1943 there were many changes with mostly potatoes to eat. The Germans had victories; this was before Stalingrad and North Africa. Hungary became Nazi but life went on. His father was in a work unit and his mother took care of things. He realized there was serious danger on a Saturday when he noticed his first German soldier in a long black raincoat with a plaque indicating he was in the military police. The Germans invaded Hungary. Everyone had to go to the railway station. His father was in forced labor.
- 25:00 They had to wear a yellow star on their chest. Three or four weeks later there was a Nazi airplane bombardment and it destroyed part of the city. Jewish apartments were evacuated for the casualties. A few thousand families were kicked out. The Jews were required to move to certain houses with a Jewish star on the outside. All Jewish

employees were fired and professionals lost their licenses. In June, Jewish stores were marked. Deportations started in the northeast part of the city. There were new Jewish laws, food restrictions, housing restrictions and forced labor for women.

- 30:00 The ghettos started. They did not know about Auschwitz. People were taken away to the East with their belongings. Tension increased but they did not want to realize that their life was in danger. He was in a Jewish house in June with women in juvenile units. There was the paramilitary and forced labor. Yehuda was ordered to go to a brick factory to work on the outskirts of the city with his schoolmates. They remained at night as it was too far to go home. Food was not too bad. The only hardship was wearing a yellow armband. He worked 10 hours and got an hour for lunch. They slept in a large barracks and were woken up at 6 A.M. It was a big factory on the rails as bricks were transported by rail. The huge railway wagons were under the Hungarian General Army.
- 35:00 Sometimes they were friendly but were told that their turn would come soon. Seeing the wagons made them think of deportation. **Tape 1, Side B.** Yehuda's duties were to clean the floor with a broom which he performed with another person. The brick needed to be dried so there was a hot stove for that. They had wooden beds and covers. Families lived together in the ghetto so it was not atrocious but it was crowded. They left their belongings behind and their life achievements. Each family had one room and the facilities were shared. Hours were restricted to buy food with their food card but they had sufficient food. They lived in a friend's home with a large grocery chain so had no problem to obtain food.
- 40:00 Until they lived in the yellow-starred houses, they were pretty well-off in the Jewish community. In the second part of July was an unsuccessful putsch (?) (fight?) against the regime, the Hungarian Nazi party. The streets of Budapest were filled with soldiers. He got through the partitions and escaped and got home. There was so much confusion so he was not stopped during the four hour walk home from the factory. His mother was happy to see him. After that it was politically tense. Most of the camp from the brick factory escaped like him. It was fortunate that he knew his address.
- 45:00 Yehuda felt that the Italians could not do what they did. Schools were now closed. It was now July. His uncle's adopted daughter spoke Swedish and worked for Wallenberg. His father was away and his mother worked as a messenger. In September business started up. October 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> was a proclamation that the government declared the end of war and Yehuda went to a Jewish star home to live. The British Embassy left the country and trucks of Hungarian Nazis in full regalia and SS arrived. Though 700,000 Hungarian Jews were killed in Auschwitz at the time, he did not know about it. All the civilians were ordered to march. There was no escape for the Budapest Jews.
- 50:00 They could not run away as the army was on the roads. Two weeks later, on November 1<sup>st</sup>, there was a government proclamation that Budapest was an international capital. Yehuda moved into a Swedish protective safe house. Through his uncle's wife who lived

in Stockholm, they acquired a shutzpass (visa) to move to the protective house. There were about 8 to 10 houses near each other. They had half a room and some protection. His father was in a forced labor camp in Salmon (?) about 80 miles away. His father was told that he was going on a transport to Germany as he was head of the household so went to the railway station. The train arrived a few days later and Wallenberg appeared and gave his father a shutzpass and he got off the train. Tension was high at that time. Yehuda was in the ghetto for three months. 130,000 people were pushed into an area less than a square mile.

55:00 He was better off than others as was in a protected house with a telephone. It was Christmas morning when the first Russian shell hit. Budapest was already surrounded. The front moved closer and more airplanes came. One member of a Swedish house was taken out to the Danube and shot. About one or two of 350 people were taken. On December 28<sup>th</sup> all the doors of the houses were broken down. A lawyer was responsible for the entire house, like a supervisor. They called the consulate and Wallenberg. Everyone went to the central courtyard and started to move out when Wallenberg, the savior, appeared and the Nazis disappeared.

60:00 Yehuda lived in the house with his father, mother, uncle, aunt, grandfather and grandmother. He did not know the other people from before but they were Jews. People were randomly selected for the shutzpass. Wermacht soldiers stood in front of his house for three days and food was supplied. The front moved in on January 15<sup>th</sup> at 10:15 when he looked through the window and saw the first Soviet soldiers on the street. There was a fierce fight from the Opera House to house to house. His mother got upset and he went down to the cellar. He saw a Russian Jewish Major who spoke Yiddish but Yehuda did not. There was constant bombardment.

65:00 The Germans did not move to the Buda side of the Danube until three days later. They took care of the bridges. Yehuda went outside on January 20<sup>th</sup> and felt free. He looked around and saw two Nazis hanging on the lamp post. One was a Gendarme, a Lieutenant Colonel who killed Jews in forced labor in Yugoslavia and the other one massacred Jews in Yugoslavia. Yehuda's apartment was bombed out. He started a new life. He did not witness beatings by the Germans or by the gendarmes. He saw corpses but did not see any collaborators beaten.

70:00 Yehuda was euphoric as he was still alive which he felt was a miracle. He felt very sad about what happened to the Jews who were deported. He could not believe the atrocities. A week after liberation, he learned about Auschwitz where the Hungarians were sent. The first train was May 15<sup>th</sup> and the last train was July 10<sup>th</sup>. 750,000 Hungarians were exterminated as there was no selections in Auschwitz.

73:00

**Yehuda Adam**

**Tape 2, Side A**

**April 4, 1997**

**RG-50.106\*0062.02.02**

### **Summary**

00:00 Yehuda Adam believes that the Judenrat policy took four years to accomplish in both Western Europe (France, Belgium, Holland) and Eastern Europe (Czechoslovakia, Poland, Russia) but it took only four months to complete in Hungary. About 80% of the Jews of Hungary were murdered. The reasoning some assert that by the time Eichmann reached Hungary, he was experienced. Yehuda believes that Hungary not only cooperated but the Hungarians caused the Holocaust there as they actively participated. Yehuda's relatives including his uncle, the uncle's father and the uncle's brothers died in labor camps. Fortunately his parents remained alive. He believes that all Hungarian Jewish families had losses. After liberation, Yehuda completed high school and in 1949 went to Israel where he entered the Army. He served during the War of Liberation and then went to Jerusalem to study medicine at Hebrew University and finished his studies in 1956. Then he had an internship and then one year of government service in Jerusalem. This was followed by a year in the Negev and then his residency in London. Next he worked at a large hospital in Haifa and afterwards had a second residency in surgery in New York.

05:00 Then Yehuda got a fellowship at the Sloan-Kettering Memorial Center and in 1969 went to Hamburg's surgical staff. In 1972 he went to Tel Aviv where he was chief of surgery for 10 years. In 1982 he had a Sabbatical year in Baltimore followed by serving as Associate Professor at the University of California at San Diego. His mother got ill and died and they returned to Israel. Then he went back to Hamburg and afterwards became a professor at Georgetown University. He expects to retire next year and return home to Tel Aviv. His wife is also a survivor but of a younger generation. She was liberated two days after him. Her immediate family stayed together and the rest were deported to Auschwitz. He was happy to give this interview.

07:00