

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

## **Interview with Yehuda Adam April 4, 1997 RG-50.106\*0062**

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## PREFACE

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The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

Transcribed by Sharon Mashiach, CSR, RPR, CRR, CLR, National Court Reporters Association.

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**YEHUDA ADAM**  
**April 4, 1997**

Question: This is an interview for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. We are interviewing Yehuda Adam. My name is Esther Finder. Today is April 4th, 1997. This is Tape 1, Side A. Please tell me your name.

Answer: My name is Yehuda George Adam, A d a m.

Q: And was this your name at birth?

A: No. I was born as George Stern S t S t r n. Stern.

Q: When were you born?

A: In when or where?

Q: I actually need both.

A: I was born in Budapest in July the 3rd, 1929.

Q: Is that where you grew up?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell me what was it like growing up in in Budapest.

A: Well, basically, as the Budapest Jews, we were pretty bad luck, and tragedy or through stories start in March 19, 1944.

Q: I'd like to know a little bit about Budapest when you were a child growing up. Let me start by asking you about your family. Can you tell me what did your parents do for a living.

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A: I was born in a very middle class Jewish family. My father had a moderate sized department store in Budapest. He had truly no any financial problems. I went to the Jewish elementary school, and basically in 1939 I was a nice supposed to go to starting my gymnasium, which is high school, in Hungary and when the classes started. And numerous classes means that we have a relatively small percentage of Jewish students that are admitted to the high schools. I believe it was 4 percent of the total of student population. I'm really not sure about the percentage. But, yes, in May, I was between those fortunate ones that were admitted to high school and four of us four Jew in class of about 50 started our high school years. The school which I went to, it happened to be a rather revisionist national and rather anti Semitic school. And as far as discrimination, certainly it was, but nevertheless, it was tolerated. They didn't have any, shall I say, outstanding incidence during the years up to 1944.

Q: Can you tell me your parents' names.

A: My father's name is Anton, and my mother is Barbara.

Q: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

A: No. I am only child.

Q: You said that there were incidents that were tolerable, anti Semitic incidents that were tolerable. Can you be more specific. What kinds of things did you yourself experience or did you yourself see?

A: We were almost constantly in the central of of, I should say, remarks and anti Semitic passions. But those were kind of rather intelligently, if that is the right

expression, and no physical violence, maybe once or twice through the years that I've

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been in the high school. And this did not come from the faculty. It's mostly of peer pressure and anti Semitic peer pressure. But those incidents become a part of our life. So, as a matter of fact, we barely noticed them after a while.

Q: Did you come from a religious family?

A: No. No. We have always been on the on the reform, quote, unquote, side. They called us the Yom Kippur Jews, that my parents and myself went to at the Beit Knesset, maybe twice a year. Nevertheless, I had a very fabulous and big style bar mitzvah.

Q: Can you tell me about it.

A: Well, it was in the in the great Beit Knesset of this and a very large crowd, I would say. And of course, I knew the Sidra, and there were no any hitches. And subsequently, it was a rather large reception. And as a matter of fact, it was in 1942. And I had no idea that was practically the same time that the Russia ghetto, but sometime after. It was in Pesach 1942. And as a matter of fact, that it was after the Nazi conference, and the \_\_\_\_ was already a forced thing. They didn't know at least we did not realize it. So our life was relatively not even not even not relatively, but fine, financially, as well as any other area, even socially. Obviously, our social attachment was almost exclusively Jewish.

Q: So the only traditional observances that you have mentioned that you observed were the bar mitzvah and being a Yom Kippur Jew. Did you have a kosher home?

A: No, we did not.

Q: Did you observe any of the other holidays?

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A: Well, especially during the my years in Jewish elementary school, we did.

Nevertheless, our store was open, except in Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. And we were rather assimilated Hungarian Jews. But I have to emphasize, despite the fact that we were assimilated, we were Jews. It was unquestioned and had never been a question.

Q: You said your family was not very religious but they sent you to a Jewish school, religious school. Did they ever explain to you why they did that?

A: Well, it's probably fact of convenience. It was close, and there is children that they went to kindergarten together with at the same school. And I'm sure that my parents were aware of the importance to have some kind of Jewish tradition put in my head at the time.

Q: Do you have any idea of how large the Jewish population was in your town?

A: Of course. That is not difficult. Budapest, at that time, I believe, the population was about a million; and the Jewish population estimated at the time, if I'm not mistaken, 120 or 130,000. That's the capital of Hungary and obviously in the largest city in the country.

Q: When you were growing up, what language or languages did you speak in your home?

A: Well, we spoke at home exclusively Hungarian. My parents speak German, and very little of it. And then during high school, I learned English, but my parents did not.

Q: When you were growing up, what did you do for fun when you were not in school?

A: Well, as a -- what every young child does, we had a gang of mostly Jewish friends and played around and played around, obviously, and went to movies and sport activities.

We belonged to the a Jewish athletic club. So we did gymnastics. We went swimming and some ski, as well as some ice skating in the winter time. That is nothing the

exception. That was the exactly the same thing that a middle-class Jewish kid does in

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Europe. Oh, I had just to emphasize, no one in the family spoke Yiddish. I think it's an important point. As a matter of fact, my grandparents did not speak Yiddish. They spoke German fluently, but none of them spoke Yiddish.

Q: Did your family have a long history in Budapest?

A: Well, my recollection, my maternal grandfather was born in a small town close to the Czech Hungarian border, and my other my other grandfather was born in Moravia. And subsequently, the family then moved to began to a town which was close to the Czech Hungarian border. It's called Komárom, which is not far from from Bratislava.

Q: You were telling me that you were having your bar mitzvah and you were doing all these things like going to movies and sports. And you had no idea what was going on with Jewish communities in other parts of Europe?

A: Well, we were an assimilated Jewish family. I put it very very bluntly. We I suppose we did. Obviously the Jewish laws which the anti Jewish laws which started up in Hungary and we were (?absolutely?) and Italy, and up to that with regard to the state of the war and however, the obviously, the extent that horrendous happenings which were not far from us, we did not really realize, except that in the 1940s and 1941, 1942, obviously, first of all, our mere population had gone for paramilitary duties, including, obviously, my father and all the family. And they were taken most of the time to the Russian front. And the atrocities regarding the Jewish paramilitary personnel \_\_\_\_\_+ every day. And the parents, the friends, the friends of friends, everybody between the ages of 18 to at least at that time, I believe, 48, we have a in the

paramilitary units. And the Hungarian anti Semitism was flourishing. So it was clear to

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us what's going on at least within the Hungarian border. But as far as what's going on, the first realization through the what's happening was when the non Hungarian citizen Jews were deported to come in \_\_\_\_\_ which was I believe it was in '41, in I think it was in the winter of 1941. And a few who survived and came back at all had unbelievable stories which was very difficult to realize for us that they are true and they are really reliable information because our life was totally different and we didn't feel this tremendous pressure. We did feel pressure, but but as individuals, they let they let us at that time to be. It is true that the Hungarian the Jewish Hungarian professionals are slowly lose their jobs in 1941. There is a second Jewish law came out, said the practicing professionals lost their licenses, and there was a lot of restrictions. But as far as personal dangers, so to speak, it was far from us. In a sense, it was for these delusions, and they said to us that's what's happening across the border. It cannot happen in Hungary. After all, we are Hungarian Jews and Hungarians and that that maybe can happen on the east but not in a cultured country like Hungary and the usual hog wash that everyone is basically at least in Hungarian assimilated Jews felt.

Q: Do you recall any talk among the adults that you were rather young among the adults about what was writing and saying and doing vis à vis the Jews?

A: But of course. That's that's obvious. Again, you see, you have to at that time despite obviously it was clear to us and it was priority of the German not I wouldn't say general journalistic activity because it's a matter of fact that in the 1940 and 1941 it was still sporadic and not totally centrally organized. But we looked at it in a in a through a

pink eyeglasses, that we are out of it, that we cannot it is not the same. It is it is not

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and after, I mean, June 1941 when the Russian, the Barbarossa started up, they said, well, it could happen maybe in Russia, but it's never happen in Hungary. So we were aware of the fact and knew very well, and the the general policy lines were very clear of the Nazi party and Hitler and but but we felt that maybe in a bit we are somehow immune from this. And of course it's was kind of a of a trying to, so to speak, stay away from the reality. But it was very difficult later on, obviously, when you find that you your relatives, your father, your friends, in the in the paramilitary and it's and died from typhus or from from tremendous atrocities from the Hungarian \_\_\_\_\_ and Army personnel. Obviously we were aware of the fact. But still the the everyday bourgeois life, so to speak, it's on the we somehow -- I think that was very difficult to the Hungarian Jews that tried to kind of of separate themselves from the reality. It's really delusional. That that was the protection. That was the unseen defense mechanisms, so to speak.

Q: Did you personally have any contact with anybody who had left had fled from Nazi occupied territory or from Germany itself?

A: Not until 1943. 1943 I had a friend that they were foreign, not Hungarian citizens, and they were \_\_\_\_\_ and they succeeded to come back to parents of massacre and other family and they came back and back but the first time that that personally I heard that such things could happen. But it was an isolated incident. Really. Subsequently, after that as far as we discussed this problem, she said that it's probably there is a traumatic posttraumatic shock syndrome, the boy doesn't know what the hell he's talking about.

Again, they tried I mean, it's kind of a natural denial type of mannerism, I suppose.

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That was it. But it was the first time that I had personally had some contact with someone who went through hell and back.

Q: Tell me a little about what your days were like in the early '40s. What was the typical day for you in '41 and '42? How did things start to change?

A: Not much, really. Not much. '40, '41, '42, as I said I had my bar mitzvah in 1942.

A big tzimmes, everybody happy, a full presence. And my problems were that in mathematics I got a B instead of an A and that we didn't reach our group in the sport arena didn't do well and there are, you know, no more American films. Obviously, that was a fact a fact of life. The German, Italian films were shed, and I mean that was a fact, even naïve, and we lived all of us normal student and teenager life.

Q: When did you start you yourself start noticing that things were changing?

A: As I said, in 1943 and in the end of 1942 and '43, then they the close friends and the family started getting involved, and I don't know. I don't want to sound naïve. But that that's the way that I recollect my my memory. In any event, in 19 1942 and 1943, the tension began getting high. And the and the awareness that was living has become more and more obvious for us. Not talking about, obviously, reading the papers and the German victories and the unstoppable Reich. It was before Stalingrad, obviously, and before North Africa and Roma, and so forth. So the whole thing started a lot to be hopeless as far as as a Jewish individual that's in the axis of the \_\_\_\_\_ Nazi Hungary. But despite that, still with that, life went on, and no major economic hardships yet. My father was in the in the that's that's called the work units, but the shop went on, and

my life my mother sorry my mother took care of the things, and we still had hope

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that we had a home. So the major despite the awareness includes the awareness that everyday life and everyday problems are, no question, the major considerations.

Q: So when you look back, when was the moment that you began to realize that you were in very serious danger?

A: It was a Saturday, and the and myself and my very close friends at school met and walked around the major railway station in Budapest. That was the northern railway station. And we saw the first German soldier. That was a somewhat rainy day. I recollect that the guys there at the wore a long, black rain coat, and they had a kind of plaque that on their neck, and it turned to be the military German military police. And that was the day that the Germans had invaded Hungary. And when we stood by and we looked at this soldiers of police military police persons that are asking papers for everybody is coming out from the railway station and putting people aside in groups, that was really the first moment that it's it's hit home, that we are in real trouble.

Q: What were some of the things that happened next?

A: Well, we got home. And my father was away, of course, in the in the we called it "munkaszolgálat" in Hungarian, which is basically forced-labor unit. And my mother said, "So what do you say? Did you see them?" And he said, "Of course I did see them." "So?" "So same thing will happen here that we hear about it in other countries where the Nazis are." Okay. The things started to escalate very rapidly because the Germans came in in the 19 of March. And in the beginning of April I believe it was mid April, the 20th of April we already woke up with a yellow star in our chest. Okay? That was

basically the first decision of the new Hungarian government, that all the Jews have to

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wear a yellow star. Still, the schools were open. So we went to the school with the yellow star on us. But you know what? I truly recall that, despite of the heavy anti Semitic atmosphere in the school, nobody said a word, not not just as though nothing happened. I don't know why. Maybe it was some kind of a a how should I say? The consciousness? I really don't know what was the reason, but we didn't feel that this yellow star is makes any difference in the relationship. The relationship wasn't good. I'm not saying. But certainly it did not influence. So that was the that was the truly for a teenager the first true and the fact that the \_\_\_\_\_ that the future is \_\_\_\_\_+.

About I think about three or four weeks later, there were massive air bombardment in Budapest, and many buildings were destroyed. And that was the second thing that I recall that the government they required the Jewish apartments to be evacuated for the casualties, as a matter of fact, those Christians whose homes was destroyed. So about 2,000 families were kicked out very swiftly from their home. That was the first one. And subsequently I believe it was in May that the law came that Jews has to be has to move to certain houses. There is a clear distinction with the marked houses. And then, obviously, our life totally crumbled because we had a couple of hours to evacuate our home, which was just I mean, you know, it's very traumatic, obviously, not only for a teenager, but the whole family. So we practically left almost everything in and a couple of other families which house become a Jewish house were still outside. That happened in May. In the meantime, obviously, all the Jewish government employees were kicked out. All the professionals, they lost their licenses. And nevertheless, still, I believe until

June, the stores the Jews' stores were not nationalized. That was the time. I'm not sure

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about the date. And then started, shall I say, the news come in that there are ghettos in the country, especially in the northeast part at the beginning as it every day in the the new Jewish laws were printed, placards, and of course in newspapers and so forth. And the deportations started. And we were aware of the deportations, obviously.

Q: When you said new Jewish laws were being you know, were coming out, can you be specific. Can you give me a few examples of some of these laws that started to come out?

A: Sure. That's no different. Professional restrictions, subsequently food restrictions, subsequently housing restrictions. Then some forced labor, especially for women and and male. So those are they were basically escalating the restrictions which had become more and more and more severe, and you're and your life as an individual was totally and entirely interrupted from every point of view, and on the top of it obviously that you didn't feel yet but you you personally, but you started to notice the problematic the the territories in Hungaria, the countryside, there are ghettos formed. And the ghettos started to be deported, although they had no idea, as far as I know, not only myself but my family, about Auschwitz, or about the (?fenishtislagers?). We did not know. But certainly we did know that these people were taken away as if a packaged or together and all the belongings. They were rough, and they were violent, and they were in horrible condition. These people were taken away to the east. That's what we know. But we did know. And so a the tension grew constantly, although, again, we still hoped, at least, or we did not realize or we did not want to realize that the standard of our life is in danger as well.

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Q: What happened to you next?

A: Well, we moved in in a Jewish house. And then subsequently, I was taken it was in -- I believe it was in June. I was taken with we've been we've been in Jewish juvenile units. And that was kind of also kind of a paramilitary business. It's not paramilitary. Sorry. It was nothing to do with military. Forced-labor plant for business. So it we were all brought up to collectively go to a a brick factory to work. I think it was in June. But I really don't remember exactly. I think it was end of May, beginning of June. And we were taken in \_\_\_\_\_ just a it's basically the \_\_\_\_\_ the Danube, and it's an old part of outskirts of the city area and in a big factory. And we worked there, my schoolmates. We were basically together, and we we it was a 24 hour business. We didn't get home at all. So we stayed there around the clock. It's just like a truly, like a working, like, so to speak. The whole thing was like closed, and there was German armory around and, in fact, in the brick factory. The food wasn't too bad and the physically, we were not not insulted. We were not. We just had to work, basically. It was a no special hardship. Of course, we still had the yellow star. And as a matter of fact, that yellow star at that time we had to wear a patch, a yellow pass a yellow

Q: Armband?

A: armband thank you a yellow armband. And we worked and working about ten hours, with one hour dinner a lunch break, and then in a large barrack we slept. And in the morning at 6:00 o'clock, we started up again. So that was that was the thing. But I very, very rarely remember is that at the brick factory had its own rail station. It's not rail

the rail, because the bricks were transported by rail. And and they there were large,

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huge wagons brought in to the brick factory railway. And we looked at them and we found there are and the and the some have German \_\_\_\_\_+ in this car. And this car this railway branch was under the command of the German Hungarian German armory. And they were they were occasionally they rather friendly. And we asked them, "What's going on here?" And they said, "Oh, yours your turn will come very soon too." So I think that we didn't need too much imagination to know that probably those were the deportation wagons. That's what I remember very vividly.

Q: We're going to pause, and I'll change tape.

Q: This is Tape 1, Side B. We're interviewing Yehuda Adam. And you were telling me about working in the brick factory. I wanted to ask you what exactly was your job in the brick factory.

A: Oh, I cleaned the the place. That's basically what I did all day long. And it was a a I'm looking for the word. What do you use to clean the floor?

Q: A broom? A mop?

A: A broom. That's right. A broom. As a matter of fact, it's a coarse broom that I had to keep the whole place clean. We went two of us. We did cleaning jobs. That's what was my job.

Q: You mentioned that you were in a barrack. I would like to ask you what were the living conditions in the barrack and also in the yellow star houses. You didn't tell me what the conditions for living were.

A: Well, first, the in the brick factory, there was a huge the brick has to be dried, and there is large huts, and on these huts when there were perches, they the wood pads

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primitive wood pads, and that's basically it. We had to covers, and that's it. That was the situation of that. As far as the the recorded that the houses with the yellow star, it's depends. There have been families together, and in the most of them, the living conditions were not not atrocious. It was crowded, obviously, and cramped. But it was really what I mean is you left behind your belongings, your life achievements, everything else. It was obviously very difficult, mostly emotionally, but physically it wasn't too bad. A family had one room instead of four or five, six, or seven. And they shared facilities, obviously. But in most instances and I'm talking about people that I know and they were middle class people they had enough. The food was still although scarce, but certainly didn't it wasn't hunger. There were restricted hours that you can get out and buy food on your food cards, obviously, which provided you I don't remember as far as the calories or I think no. I don't want to think because I don't know, really, if it was 1,200 or 1,500. I have no idea. I really don't remember the details. But nevertheless, we had enough. It happened to be that we moved into a friend's house that had a large grocery chain. So, I mean, there was no no problem as far as we are concerned. And a crowded conditions but but livable at that time for us. So I can't talk about really how the population, Jewish population at large. Probably they were but I I believe the same thing happened with my vast family. Until they were in the in the yellow star houses, they were pretty well off. They were and in a Jewish community and you know how it is. I think one helps the other, especially in hard times. It was not too bad.

**Q: So you were working in the brick factory?**

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A: Right. Right. And if I remember correctly, in July, certain part of July I think it was on the 15th or 20th or 25th there was an unsuccessful putsch against party, against the regime at the at the Nazi party the Hungarian Nazi party, which is the Arrow Cross party started to do a putsch. And there have been a very strict military rules in the in the capital, in Budapest. And the streets were full with soldiers, and they dug in with heavy artillery and so forth and so on. And we were ourself and a friend of mine decided that's enough for us, we are going and taking off. And that's what we did. We we got through the the partitions and went home. And we said that's we had to know what's happened with our mothers and and so we escaped and to putting it very mildly, very simply. So we got home and, well okay.

Q: I'm going to ask you, when you walked out, nobody tried to stop you? Even on your way home, how did you make your way home? I'd like you to explain how you did this.

A: There was a great confusion because of the political situation. So everybody was busy, especially the the current local German army and so forth. So in the late evening hours, we took ourselves, and we climbed through the the partition and walked home. It was about a four hour walk or five and a half hour walk from the brick factory to the middle of the city. We left. And and we got home, period. And my mother was, obviously, extremely happy. And subsequently, she had the second thoughts of "What will happened? They will catch you." No matter nobody looked after me. That that's the the following week or two weeks, they were so tremendously tense politically that nobody gave a damn that a young Jewish boy escaped. As a matter of fact, I believe that the most of the of the came from the from the brick factory did the same thing,

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although I cannot be sure, but certainly we did. And and simply, we were rather fortunate. The fact is that they knew the addresses. If they wanted probably to go after us at that time, they were able to know no problem for them. But apparently nobody did. And at the question become whether or not Hungary is jumping out from the war, and there was big changes in the government. So this was a kind of a period that those who were at least in the capital city, they were a little bit freer to move around than obviously those who were in the forced battalions in the Russian front. They could not do that. But we did.

Q: So tell me what you did next.

A: Well, obviously, there were no school, as you know. That was finished. And and what happened next is that it was in July. And in July, a Swedish diplomat arrived to Budapest. His name, I think, is very well known. And his first name is Raoul. And what happened is that my uncle happened to be an in person in Hungary. He was a physician. And whoever was a physician, and his daughter as a matter of fact, his adopted daughter speaks Swedish and started to work for Wallenberg. And due to this family connection, my mother started to do a little work over over there, mostly started to kind of a a how should I put it? A messenger, taking messages and takes Schutz Pass because the Schutz Pass business started up in about September already, and she was busy then. She helped. And and the thing is did not change much. Nevertheless, I think I have a bit of a blank for the happening in August and part of September. I really do not recollect anything of significance. I did my mother my father was away,

obviously. My mother was busy. And I really don't recall exactly what happened. And

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## Interview with Yehuda Adam

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this is a    a kind of a blind spot in my memory. I do not remember what did I really do, if    if any. I helped my mother. I do remember that.

Q: What's the next thing you do remember?

A: Well, the next thing which I do remember, very vividly remember, it was the 15th of October. That's what happened. On the 14th of October, there was a proclamation in Hungarian radio in which the governor, Horthy, declared that that Hungary is jumping out of the war. So that was the tremendous jubilation, obviously. We were still on the same Jewish yellow star house that I already described. Though we were exceedingly happy that, my goodness, that's the end of the story, after all. The Russians got in the Hungarian border. They are progressing beautifully. And this is really    now that half after Romania    Romania wanted to jump out of the war and Italy, obviously. So that was in 1990    in 1944, October. So we thought that maybe we    we will be able to salvage ourselves in the meantime. The    the    they    through the Swedish embassy, we knew that the SS left the country, basically. There was special SS dealing with Jewish things. So we thought that's the end of the story. And then on the 15th, which there was next morning, we look out in the window, and we saw the trucks for this    the Hungarian Nazis with the Arrow Cross part in the automobiles with full regalia and the German    I don't really know the realm of the SS, but I know that the presence become very heavy in the area that we lived. And that    that was the turning point, obviously, which, as you know, for the Budapest Jews, because the Hungarian Jews    the rest of the Hungarian Jews crossed the 700,000 already was killed in Auschwitz. But still at that time we didn't

still, at that time we didn't know really about    about Auschwitz whatsoever. No. We

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## Interview with Yehuda Adam

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did know deportation, but Auschwitz, that there were rumors going around. But truly so that was in in October. And then the all the women and the all the males were ordered to one of the one of the large assembly places. And they then the march started. As you know, the fact being that there were no possibility already to deport from the from the capital. The fact is that the Russians already closed over all the roads to Auschwitz. So it was after October, there was no way that the deportation could be. The the Budapest Jews deportation couldn't be done because the roads are already fortunately not the Red Army that occupied them already. So that time I about two weeks later, a proclamation from the from the Arrow Cross party and the Parliament came that you have to move in the ghetto. They established a ghetto. I believe it was in in the first week of November, if I am not mistaken. But, nevertheless, we were very, very fortunate because we moved into international ghetto, which is basically the protected houses. We had Schutz Passes from the from the Swedish government, the fact being that probably decent connections I would think that, because as a matter of fact, my wife and uncle is in Stockholm, but I don't know how much would that affect us, because I didn't know my wife at the time. She was only ten years old. So anyway, at I made it too complicated. They had Schutz Passes. As a reason as a result of the Schutz Passes, we may have been protected in the house, the Swedish house, which was they were around the city. There were a couple of houses. I believe there were around eight or ten center houses where the Swedish Schutz Pass bearers could move in. And I mean, you have half a room, but nevertheless, you had some kind of protection. So my father was at the time in

in the forced arm forced camp in Szolnok, which is about, I would say, 80 miles from

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## Interview with Yehuda Adam

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Budapest. And somehow, through the grapevine, we heard that they are going to transfer them through, and supposed to taking them to Germany. So I, being the head of the the family at that time, obviously. So I I took off my yellow star, and I went out to the railway station that generally the transport is going through. I think it was about three or four days after my first visit there, indeed, they the train arrived. I didn't know at that time that my father was on this train or not. But suddenly, Wallenberg appeared, his people at least three other people. And suddenly, I saw my father coming out of the railway station. And said, "What's going on?" Said, "Well, had Schutz Pass, and they let me off the train." So we, without any major incidents, were protected in the Swedish house. All right. The things were more or less, besides the fact that obviously tension was tremendous and the ghetto had horrible problems, the \_\_\_\_\_+ the hunger or the or the only three months was the ghetto. But still, over 120 or 130,000 people were pushed in less than a square mile to a square area. The situation was horrible. And we were much better off because we lived in a protected house, and we had a half a room for ourselves, and water was running. And as a matter of fact, the telephone was working still in the building. And I do remember very, very, very clearly that it was Christmas morning that the first Russian show arrived to our neighborhood. That was a tremendous turn. Budapest was already surrounded. And they started, basically, the last stage of the of the Red Army. The front moved closer and closer and closer. And as the front moved closer and closer and closer, the the Arrow Cross people become more and more wide, and unbelievable atrocities happened. And as a matter of fact, one of the Swedish houses

it was, I believe, in December that tenants were taken out to the Danube, and they were

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shot and at the Danube, and nobody stayed alive and maybe they probably all maybe one or two persons out of the house which was over 350 people. So we knew that, of course, we were fine. Through the consulate \_\_\_\_\_. So we arrived on the 28th of December. On the 28th of December, suddenly broke the door of the house, and the Arrow Cross appeared, and everybody down from the apartments. And and it was the very similar procedure that happened in the other houses which were taken and executed. Okay? And it happened to be that my uncle was a lawyer, and as a lawyer, he had a big mouth, and the big mouth he was staying the responsible person for the whole bloody house. He was the he was the kind of supervisor of the house, if you want to. So this story, by the way, is written down very well in one of Wallenberg's book. It's by name, and it's it's very well documented. So I am just now quoting, as a matter of fact, from the book, telling of what happened. Basically what happened was there was a one working telephone, and my dear uncle called the consulate, which was in a different part of the city. And for some unbelievable luck, Wallenberg just happened to be in the consulate in this in a certain location. So we went down to the -- it's I'm not sure that you know how is the major European houses. They have a central kind of a a they have a square sorry. They have a square and in the middle there is a

Q: A courtyard?

A: a courtyard. Yeah, it's a closed courtyard. So we went there, and and we started to move out. And suddenly, there are our savior arrived Wallenberg and somehow I don't know exactly how the Nazis disappeared suddenly.

Q: Who else was with you in this long but protected house?

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A: Then my father, mother, and my uncle and aunt. That's it.

Q: Who are the other people?

A: The other people? They are random. I didn't really we didn't know them before.

Random Jews. As a matter of fact, I am terribly sorry. My grandfather and grandmother maternal grandmother and grandfather besides us too. Yeah, the rest, they were Jews. I really cannot give you any detailed information because I simply don't know. They were they were like us. All of us for some reason or another or because they did have some relatives in Sweden and those who were just randomly selected and happened to have a Schutz Pass. They were there. Nothing exceptional, really simple, mostly middle class Jewish families. So making the long story short, the Arrow Cross gone. And Wallenberg, as a matter of fact, arranged that the Wehrmacht soldiers stood in front of the house for the next three days.

Q: Did you have any other contact, you personally, with Wallenberg?

A: So twice. I had the two opportunity to see him in action. One was when my father was released, and the second when my skin was kind of a hot situation. Those are the two. I didn't my mother met him much more because of her her volunteer work on the on the it's not the consulate. It was physically a makeshift office that that they are manufactured the Schutz Passes. And that's that's it. And Wallenberg was always on the road and always moving, and death march, and just a historic fact that I don't have to tell you. It's he pulled out the people from the death marches, supplied food as much as possible. And he was an absolute marvel and and probably the heroes of hero, that

someone who lived this can understand that what this what did this guy did. But,

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anyway, subsequently, the front moved in and closer and closer. And at 10:15 on January 15, I saw the first Soviet soldier, you know, in the street. That's it.

Q: Can you tell me about the change in control of Budapest. Was there much fighting in your immediate area that you witnessed?

A: Oh, yes. Well, it was it was a fierce fight. Yes, it was in the middle of the it was not far from the opera house that our house was in, and I was \_\_\_\_\_+ living in, and it was through house to house, and fine. No question about that. And my mother almost got a heart attack when I didn't go down to the cellar and and witnessed really the this house to house, almost had come in, and it's a yes.

Q: Can you tell me about your moment of liberation when you realized you were free.

A: That's that's I cannot describe. That's true. It's such a moment that first Red soldier came in and I was just looking into the window, and I thought that that's that's basically it. The utmost pleasure in the world. As a matter of fact, the Red Army soldiers came into the building and then down to the cellar, and there were a couple of people to move. They got them in the hands and brought them up, and we found in between them a nice Jewish major. And he spoke Yiddish. I didn't. But there were a good many people in the buildings spoke Yiddish. And that's the end of the story. Yeah.

Q: What did you do in your first moments and days of freedom?

A: Well, that's it's a fact that our house was liberated, but the next house not yet liberated. I mean, they went house to house. And so the first 24 hours we were happy that alive, there was one part that constant bombardment. I mean, that was the front of clashes of two huge armies, and the red Army and still the Germans didn't move over to

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the other side to the border side of the Danube to the the left bank of the Danube. It happened only three days later that they they exploded and they they bombed took care of the bridges okay before they after they moved over. So it was a very fluid situation. We didn't know maybe that the front was moving back or forth. But 24 hours later, it become very clear that everything is. So I ventured outside and looked a bit around, and it was on the 20th of January that I really went free and looked around. And that is a one of the major squares of Budapest is called the Opera Square. We lived very close to that. I found two Nazis hanging on the lamp post, not much left from them, I must tell you, because everybody had moved around and spitted on them and so forth. It turned out to be that one was a German armory lieutenant colonel who killed the the forced labor Jewish forced-labor (?Simbor?) in Yugoslavia. The other one was called (?Zeldin?) that this guy did a massacre in the also in the Yugoslavia area, and they caught both of them, and they hanged him straight up from the lamp post. It's a beautiful sight. What else happened? Subsequently, we looked around and to see what happened with our apartment. Of course, needless to say, that there are department stores totally from the \_\_\_\_\_ that was the building is gone even. Everything. Zilch, zero, nothing. But our apartment is stand. So we moved back to the apartment and started a new life.

Q: During the time that things had already gotten really bad for the Jews and where you thought the war might pass you by and yet it didn't, during that time, did you witness any beatings or executions of Jews at the hands of either the (?gen dorns?) or the Germans?

A: No, not personally, no, I did not.

Q: Did you witness

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A: That some beating, yes. But it was not but nothing more than that. A slap in the face or a that's but those things were commonplace then. But I never saw anybody executed in front of me, no.

Q: And after the Soviets had gone through, did you see any beatings or any executions of people who had been collaborators?

A: I told you about the still no, I did not. Really not. A couple of of them again severe beatings, yes, but nothing more than that. And we looked around at the big synagogue and the Budapest, and the corpses were in like logs, one on the other. And and the ghetto situation was really incredible. Incredible. And they and and by and large, the euphoria after all this happening that you stayed alive were tremendous, that it blinded you completely. I mean I am alive. I am alive. This is this is just so happening which un-explaining, it's a miracle, and it did really. It's it it's just a by coincidence that you stayed alive and at least in the last four months of the war. So we looked everything in an optimistic eye, truly. And, hell, who cares? We are free. I mean, it's it's such an incredible feeling. It's such an undescrivable. That's it.

Q: When did you come to realize what had happened to the Jews that had been deported?

A: Very soon. Very soon. Basically, I believe, in the second week of the heavy we were liberated, that the news started to become clear. I mean, as a matter of fact, the first time our reaction been, naturally, not believing. I mean, it was such the I think that the secret of this happening that just so unbelievable that the Germans really couldn't these atrocities were such that they literally hid them. Imagination -- and can't cope with

it. So therefore they really were to do this. I mean, we truly it took us to digest this

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thing a long time. But about a week after we'd been liberated, we already started to hear about Auschwitz and Treblinka and Belzec, Majdanek, but mostly Auschwitz, and the reason being that the Hungarian Jews went to Auschwitz. Okay? So if you just think a minute and you say that the first trains left Hungary to Auschwitz in May the 15th, the last trains before Horthy stopped deportation and July the 10th, those are already the last two trains to take one. Roughly 750,000 Hungarian Jews were exterminated. The fact is that there were no selection for the Hungarian Jews back then. So it's it's such an incredible thing that I am I it's hard to hard to believe that I am I have difficulties really to digest it today, 50 years later, about that time. It's incredible. And then, obviously, that, you know, the press started up very soon, because the other part of Hungary was already liberated. So the press is moved with the Red Army until got the information. I mean I'm sure you know the (?Castner?) business and all these things that that it was clear to them from the very moment from the Hungarian Jews' fate.

Q: I'm going to pause now and change the tape.

End of File One

Beginning File Two

Q: This is Tape 2, Side A. We are interviewing Yehuda Adam. And I wanted to ask you if there is anything that has come to your mind that you would like to add that you haven't already told me about your time during the war, and then just reflect back. Is there anything you have forgotten to tell me?

A: One of the most amazing thing which, if I look back, is that every other country in

I'm talking about occupied countries, being France, being Belgium, being Holland, being

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in eastern countries, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Russia, they took about four years to accomplish the Judenrein policy of the like, and Hungary it took less than three months to annihilate about 85 percent of the Jewish population. They say that's because Eichmann had become very experienced and things ran very smoothly. Nevertheless, I think that that's a reflection to the Hungarians. I do believe that the Hungarians not only cooperated but basically they've been the ones that caused this Holocaust in Hungary. And I I I, personally, if I hear a Hungarian speak, I am taking a U turn. It's hard to avoid them. I think that they are absolutely a very high percentage of the population actively participated with pleasure in the annihilation of the Hungarian Jews.

Q: Did you lose any members of your family?

A: Well, of course. Is there anybody who didn't? Yes.

Q: Can you tell me how you found out about what happened to those relatives?

A: Well, my my people that died, they died in the in the forced labor camps. Okay? My uncles, my my father's brothers. And fortunately enough, the immediate family, meaning my parents and stayed alive, fortunately, and nothing happened to them. But but I think that our family may be an isolated incident. I don't believe that practically one Hungarian Jewish family had no losses. I do not.

Q: How long did you stay in Hungary after the war?

A: Well, we liberated. And I finished my high school in Hungary. And a year thereafter, we left illegally to Israel, and we arrived in Israel in early 1949. I immediately went to the Army. And those were the last years of the liberation. And then immediately went up to Jerusalem and started my studies in the Hebrew University, Hadassah medical school.

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## Interview with Yehuda Adam

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I worked through medical school, finished my studies in 1956. Then did my internship at the University Hospital in Jerusalem. Then I was a year in government service because this was the year of the big Aliyah in Israel that was mostly from the Arab countries.

There was an influx of Jewish population. Then I finished my year in the Negev Desert, started my residency in Rambam, which is a large government hospital in Haifa. In 1962 came to the States to finish my residency. I did my residency in New York City in surgery at Albert Einstein college of medicine, and I finished, and I got my fellowship at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. And in 1969 I went back to Albert Einstein on the staff as a young assistant professor doing surgical oncology. In 1972 I was invited as a chief of surgery one of the University Hospitals in Tel Aviv. So obviously I returned to Israel. And I served ten years as the chief of surgery. And in 1982, I came out of my sabbatical, spent a year of my sabbatical in Baltimore, and then I was offered a position as associate professor at UCSD, which is University of California, San Diego. My mother became ill and, unfortunately, passed away, and therefore, being their only son, I had to go to return to Israel, and then subsequently we came back. And I am working and developed a medical group cancer group and teaching at Georgetown University.

Hopefully, next year, retiring and going home.

Q: And home is?

A: Tel Aviv.

Q: You mentioned your wife. She's also a survivor?

A: Yes, she is. She is a younger generation, of course. I don't know when she was born,

of course. But she is also from Budapest. And she experienced the ghetto, and she was

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## **Interview with Yehuda Adam**

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liberated in about two days later, I believe, than we are. We and the family of her the immediate family is stay together. And nevertheless, the rest of the family who were outside of Budapest, they were practically all deported to Auschwitz and did not return.

Q: Is there anything you'd like to add before we conclude?

A: I am very happy to talk and do this interview, I tell you.

Q: Thank you very much. This concludes the interview today.

End of File Two

Conclusion of Interview

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