

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:00,600

2

00:00:00,600 --> 00:00:04,019

This is a United States
Holocaust Memorial Museum

3

00:00:04,019 --> 00:00:07,560

interview with Hermann
Kosak, conducted

4

00:00:07,560 --> 00:00:14,040

by Margaret Garrett on June 18,
1997 in Garrett Park, Maryland.

5

00:00:14,040 --> 00:00:17,580

Tape two, side one.

6

00:00:17,580 --> 00:00:20,910

When the tape cut
you off, you were

7

00:00:20,910 --> 00:00:23,880

saying that you and your
mother had crossed the river

8

00:00:23,880 --> 00:00:27,390

and you took your coats
off and you wrung them out.

9

00:00:27,390 --> 00:00:29,040

Yes.

10

00:00:29,040 --> 00:00:32,400

Of course, it was very
cold, and we were freezing.

11

00:00:32,400 --> 00:00:37,680

So all we knew how to
do was to get going.

12

00:00:37,680 --> 00:00:40,320
And of course, I had it
all mapped out in my mind.

13
00:00:40,320 --> 00:00:43,770
I knew we had to turn
right to go to Maastricht.

14
00:00:43,770 --> 00:00:46,320
And I knew in my mind
that before we got there,

15
00:00:46,320 --> 00:00:48,510
it would have to
cross a railway,

16
00:00:48,510 --> 00:00:53,910
and I would follow that railway
to the nearest village--

17
00:00:53,910 --> 00:00:56,850
and then take a
ticket to Brussels.

18
00:00:56,850 --> 00:00:59,190
So we started doing this.

19
00:00:59,190 --> 00:01:02,560
And my mother had not as
much confidence in my mind

20
00:01:02,560 --> 00:01:03,760
than I did.

21
00:01:03,760 --> 00:01:05,190
And she kept saying
to me, are you

22
00:01:05,190 --> 00:01:06,780
sure you're going the right way?

23
00:01:06,780 --> 00:01:08,480
Are you sure you're

going the right way?

24

00:01:08,480 --> 00:01:10,200

It was a Sunday morning.

25

00:01:10,200 --> 00:01:13,950

And I believe it was Sunday,
because there were people

26

00:01:13,950 --> 00:01:17,070

all dressed up going to church.

27

00:01:17,070 --> 00:01:21,540

And there was a nice
elderly couple coming by.

28

00:01:21,540 --> 00:01:24,540

And Mother insisted
that we should ask them,

29

00:01:24,540 --> 00:01:27,390

to make sure we were
going the right way.

30

00:01:27,390 --> 00:01:30,060

So she stopped those
people and she asked them.

31

00:01:30,060 --> 00:01:31,360

Of course, we were wet.

32

00:01:31,360 --> 00:01:33,850

They could see where we had
been-- and not too clean,

33

00:01:33,850 --> 00:01:35,310

either.

34

00:01:35,310 --> 00:01:37,830

And they were very
friendly, however.

35

00:01:37,830 --> 00:01:40,387

And they told us
no, we were going

36

00:01:40,387 --> 00:01:43,830

the wrong way-- we should turn
around and go down this way.

37

00:01:43,830 --> 00:01:45,140

They were turning us south.

38

00:01:45,140 --> 00:01:48,030

39

00:01:48,030 --> 00:01:51,300

And we thanked them and
started walking south.

40

00:01:51,300 --> 00:01:53,400

And we were walking
and walking, and I

41

00:01:53,400 --> 00:01:54,720

didn't feel right about this.

42

00:01:54,720 --> 00:01:56,330

I knew this was wrong.

43

00:01:56,330 --> 00:01:58,090

This was wrong.

44

00:01:58,090 --> 00:02:00,540

We had to work north, not south.

45

00:02:00,540 --> 00:02:01,870

I just knew this was wrong.

46

00:02:01,870 --> 00:02:03,900

And I said, Mother--

47

00:02:03,900 --> 00:02:05,010

we stopped.

48
00:02:05,010 --> 00:02:06,150
We stopped.

49
00:02:06,150 --> 00:02:09,419
And we were now not so--
we were still moist.

50
00:02:09,419 --> 00:02:11,650
We were not that wet anymore.

51
00:02:11,650 --> 00:02:15,180
We were not shivering
so badly anymore.

52
00:02:15,180 --> 00:02:19,740
We had brought some
chocolate bars.

53
00:02:19,740 --> 00:02:23,370
And we were stopped
and ate a chocolate bar

54
00:02:23,370 --> 00:02:26,162
And I said to
Mother, I was sorry.

55
00:02:26,162 --> 00:02:27,870
I'm sorry, but we're
going the wrong way.

56
00:02:27,870 --> 00:02:28,930
This is not right.

57
00:02:28,930 --> 00:02:31,890
They were nice people,
but this is not right.

58
00:02:31,890 --> 00:02:33,360
We got to go the other way.

59
00:02:33,360 --> 00:02:35,430

We got to go north.

60

00:02:35,430 --> 00:02:37,830

And she asked me
if I was certain.

61

00:02:37,830 --> 00:02:39,150

And said, yes, I was certain.

62

00:02:39,150 --> 00:02:42,390

I had studied the map and
studied it and studied it,

63

00:02:42,390 --> 00:02:44,550

and I was certain
we had to go north.

64

00:02:44,550 --> 00:02:46,620

She says, OK, we go north.

65

00:02:46,620 --> 00:02:49,050

So we turned around
and we walked north.

66

00:02:49,050 --> 00:02:51,750

And we walked and
walked, and eventually we

67

00:02:51,750 --> 00:02:55,170

came on top of a
rise in the highway.

68

00:02:55,170 --> 00:02:57,150

And there was
Maastricht below us.

69

00:02:57,150 --> 00:03:00,210

You could see the city of
Maastricht ahead of us.

70

00:03:00,210 --> 00:03:02,940

And I was so relieved
to know that we

71
00:03:02,940 --> 00:03:04,980
were going the right way.

72
00:03:04,980 --> 00:03:07,050
And my mother, of course,
was relieved, too.

73
00:03:07,050 --> 00:03:09,720
And we came around a large
curve in the highway,

74
00:03:09,720 --> 00:03:12,900
and there was the railway tracks
that I'd been looking for.

75
00:03:12,900 --> 00:03:16,410
And they got off the road and
they followed railway tracks.

76
00:03:16,410 --> 00:03:18,420
And they got to the
village just as it

77
00:03:18,420 --> 00:03:21,090
was starting to get dark--

78
00:03:21,090 --> 00:03:22,590
just before nightfall.

79
00:03:22,590 --> 00:03:26,400
And this was a very
small railway station--

80
00:03:26,400 --> 00:03:27,870
not much bigger
than the room we're

81
00:03:27,870 --> 00:03:31,770
sitting in now-- maybe 15
by 12 feet, or something.

82

00:03:31,770 --> 00:03:36,480
There was one counter there
with a person behind it.

83
00:03:36,480 --> 00:03:38,870
And I walked up to
him and asked him--

84
00:03:38,870 --> 00:03:40,905
and there was one other
person in that station.

85
00:03:40,905 --> 00:03:42,330
It was a student--

86
00:03:42,330 --> 00:03:44,880
a young student sitting there.

87
00:03:44,880 --> 00:03:47,730
And I just had my
mother sit down

88
00:03:47,730 --> 00:03:49,990
and walked up to the
station, before we'd

89
00:03:49,990 --> 00:03:53,940
gone in, to sort of brush
ourselves off and try

90
00:03:53,940 --> 00:03:55,080
to look halfway decent.

91
00:03:55,080 --> 00:03:57,180
We walked in there,
and I said to the man,

92
00:03:57,180 --> 00:03:59,310
I need two tickets to Brussels--

93
00:03:59,310 --> 00:04:00,790
talked to him in German.

94

00:04:00,790 --> 00:04:04,050

We were in an area that at one time had belonged to Germany,

95

00:04:04,050 --> 00:04:07,210

and I was counting on him understanding German.

96

00:04:07,210 --> 00:04:09,230

And he did.

97

00:04:09,230 --> 00:04:13,400

And I gave him the money I had, which was marks.

98

00:04:13,400 --> 00:04:16,860

And he picked up the phone.

99

00:04:16,860 --> 00:04:19,709

And I could see my mother go pale.

100

00:04:19,709 --> 00:04:25,170

And I say, oh my god, he's calling police, or something.

101

00:04:25,170 --> 00:04:27,180

But I know this time I wasn't going to go back.

102

00:04:27,180 --> 00:04:29,770

They'd have to carry me.

103

00:04:29,770 --> 00:04:31,900

So I heard him talk on the phone.

104

00:04:31,900 --> 00:04:34,660

He was talking French.

105

00:04:34,660 --> 00:04:37,330

And he was nodding

as he was talking.

106

00:04:37,330 --> 00:04:41,260

And he hung up, and he just took
my money and gave me tickets

107

00:04:41,260 --> 00:04:42,700

and gave me change.

108

00:04:42,700 --> 00:04:44,980

And I realized the man
was calling and asking

109

00:04:44,980 --> 00:04:48,370

if he could take German money.

110

00:04:48,370 --> 00:04:52,840

And the train came, and
we went on the train,

111

00:04:52,840 --> 00:04:55,630

till we got to Liege.

112

00:04:55,630 --> 00:04:57,640

Then, he had to change trains.

113

00:04:57,640 --> 00:04:59,830

And we changed to an express.

114

00:04:59,830 --> 00:05:02,440

And I was very upset, because
in Austria, you can't do that.

115

00:05:02,440 --> 00:05:05,230

When your start on a local,
you can't change to an express.

116

00:05:05,230 --> 00:05:06,988

And there was a ticket.

117

00:05:06,988 --> 00:05:08,530

So I was a little

worried-- you know,

118
00:05:08,530 --> 00:05:11,020
they're going to
catch us right now.

119
00:05:11,020 --> 00:05:12,640
But we got in the right train.

120
00:05:12,640 --> 00:05:15,110
And the conductor came by.

121
00:05:15,110 --> 00:05:16,750
And though my heart
was stopped, he

122
00:05:16,750 --> 00:05:19,750
was punching our cards--
didn't say a word,

123
00:05:19,750 --> 00:05:22,990
The train was packed
with people, by my way.

124
00:05:22,990 --> 00:05:25,510
And it went on.

125
00:05:25,510 --> 00:05:28,870
We arrived in Brussels,
and we got off in Brussels.

126
00:05:28,870 --> 00:05:32,385
And it was like stopping
in into paradise--

127
00:05:32,385 --> 00:05:33,280
the lights.

128
00:05:33,280 --> 00:05:35,230
This was a city of lights.

129
00:05:35,230 --> 00:05:39,460

We come from a place that
was dark and gray and grim,

130
00:05:39,460 --> 00:05:41,230
and people are sour.

131
00:05:41,230 --> 00:05:44,830
And here this was lights and
people, they are laughing.

132
00:05:44,830 --> 00:05:46,090
And they are talking.

133
00:05:46,090 --> 00:05:48,400
And they sounded happy.

134
00:05:48,400 --> 00:05:49,980
You could see the contrast.

135
00:05:49,980 --> 00:05:53,420
It was just mind boggling.

136
00:05:53,420 --> 00:05:56,490
And of course, Christmas
season was coming.

137
00:05:56,490 --> 00:06:00,130
It was decorated beautifully.

138
00:06:00,130 --> 00:06:02,210
And they got off the
train, and I looked over

139
00:06:02,210 --> 00:06:04,160
this big entrance--
there was a clock.

140
00:06:04,160 --> 00:06:09,320
It was eight minutes after
8:00 on December 8, 1938.

141
00:06:09,320 --> 00:06:12,160

And we arrived in Brussels.

142
00:06:12,160 --> 00:06:15,280
And we stood there mouths
open for a few minutes,

143
00:06:15,280 --> 00:06:19,800
before we carefully
walked to the exit

144
00:06:19,800 --> 00:06:21,630
and watched for policemen.

145
00:06:21,630 --> 00:06:22,860
And you can't tell them.

146
00:06:22,860 --> 00:06:25,090
The Belgian police
have white helmets on,

147
00:06:25,090 --> 00:06:28,200
so they're easily
seen riding the horse.

148
00:06:28,200 --> 00:06:29,710
And they walked into the city.

149
00:06:29,710 --> 00:06:30,420
And it was just--

150
00:06:30,420 --> 00:06:31,320
I can't describe it.

151
00:06:31,320 --> 00:06:34,390
It was one of the most
beautiful evenings in my life--

152
00:06:34,390 --> 00:06:38,500
all those lights and
those happy people around.

153
00:06:38,500 --> 00:06:41,800

And in the
excitement, perhaps, I

154
00:06:41,800 --> 00:06:43,360
knew after a while
we were walking,

155
00:06:43,360 --> 00:06:46,390
I had taken a wrong turn.

156
00:06:46,390 --> 00:06:49,060
We were walking in a different
direction than I had--

157
00:06:49,060 --> 00:06:52,420
than I had figured
out for short.

158
00:06:52,420 --> 00:06:56,250
And I was afraid
of asking anybody.

159
00:06:56,250 --> 00:06:59,855
And they walked out and
walked up the street.

160
00:06:59,855 --> 00:07:01,730
And mother said, no what
are you going to do?

161
00:07:01,730 --> 00:07:02,772
Now we're going to do it.

162
00:07:02,772 --> 00:07:07,010
There was a taxi stand
on top of the door.

163
00:07:07,010 --> 00:07:09,960
There was a taxi stand.

164
00:07:09,960 --> 00:07:14,970
And I had my father's,
stepfather's address written

165
00:07:14,970 --> 00:07:15,515
down.

166
00:07:15,515 --> 00:07:20,420
And I showed it to the taxi man
and showed him the money I had.

167
00:07:20,420 --> 00:07:21,800
And he said, oh, yeah, OK.

168
00:07:21,800 --> 00:07:22,550
And he was French.

169
00:07:22,550 --> 00:07:24,030
He said OK, get in, get in.

170
00:07:24,030 --> 00:07:26,510
And we got in, and they took us.

171
00:07:26,510 --> 00:07:29,960
10 minutes later, where we were
reunited with my step father

172
00:07:29,960 --> 00:07:32,950
and my sister in Brussels.

173
00:07:32,950 --> 00:07:35,730
Well, shall we take a break?

174
00:07:35,730 --> 00:07:39,300
That's a good point to start.

175
00:07:39,300 --> 00:07:44,280
When we stopped, you were
talking about your arrival

176
00:07:44,280 --> 00:07:47,760
at your stepfather's
apartment in Brussels,

177

00:07:47,760 --> 00:07:54,000
in December of 1938.

178
00:07:54,000 --> 00:07:54,540
OK.

179
00:07:54,540 --> 00:08:01,650
And so what happened between
then and the invasion?

180
00:08:01,650 --> 00:08:08,610
Eventually, we
rented an apartment,

181
00:08:08,610 --> 00:08:13,460
which was right next to
the railway station, where

182
00:08:13,460 --> 00:08:16,730
we arrived, not very
often from that.

183
00:08:16,730 --> 00:08:25,010
And we started waiting for
Lisa to immigrate to the United

184
00:08:25,010 --> 00:08:31,550
States, where the family
of my mother was residing--

185
00:08:31,550 --> 00:08:37,159
and even my stepfather had
a sister in New York City.

186
00:08:37,159 --> 00:08:39,770
In the meantime,
of course, we were

187
00:08:39,770 --> 00:08:42,240
youngsters and supposed
to be in school,

188
00:08:42,240 --> 00:08:44,045

so we were enrolled in school.

189

00:08:44,045 --> 00:08:46,670

190

00:08:46,670 --> 00:08:50,450

My sister and I went
to public school, which

191

00:08:50,450 --> 00:08:52,160

was a little bit
on the funny side,

192

00:08:52,160 --> 00:08:55,430

because we didn't speak French--
and couldn't understand a word

193

00:08:55,430 --> 00:08:56,555

and just sat in class.

194

00:08:56,555 --> 00:08:59,240

195

00:08:59,240 --> 00:09:02,170

Essentially, I didn't feel
the need of studying French,

196

00:09:02,170 --> 00:09:04,540

because we had this
crazy idea, we're

197

00:09:04,540 --> 00:09:08,120

going to leave for the
United States any day now.

198

00:09:08,120 --> 00:09:10,480

And this any day
now never came--

199

00:09:10,480 --> 00:09:12,790

didn't seem to come.

200

00:09:12,790 --> 00:09:18,400
So then I learned Flemish.

201
00:09:18,400 --> 00:09:20,710
In Brussels, they
also speak Flemish.

202
00:09:20,710 --> 00:09:23,980
And Flemish is easy when you
speak German, because it's

203
00:09:23,980 --> 00:09:26,230
like a German dialect.

204
00:09:26,230 --> 00:09:28,900
So I was satisfied with
that for a long time.

205
00:09:28,900 --> 00:09:31,790

206
00:09:31,790 --> 00:09:36,380
And I decided-- no,
my parents decided

207
00:09:36,380 --> 00:09:43,980
that I should learn some
sort of trade, or profession.

208
00:09:43,980 --> 00:09:46,470
There wasn't a chance that
I would go to college.

209
00:09:46,470 --> 00:09:47,910
Of course, that was out.

210
00:09:47,910 --> 00:09:49,170
I haven't even gotten--

211
00:09:49,170 --> 00:09:51,240
I wouldn't even get the
high-school certificate,

212

00:09:51,240 --> 00:09:54,000

because I couldn't
speak the language.

213

00:09:54,000 --> 00:09:58,800

So I was fortunate, because
it was a small school.

214

00:09:58,800 --> 00:10:04,530

I was fortunate to be enlisted
in a trade school, called

215

00:10:04,530 --> 00:10:06,920

the [INAUDIBLE].

216

00:10:06,920 --> 00:10:10,070

It was a school that was
sponsored by the Jewish

217

00:10:10,070 --> 00:10:17,510

community, and was made up
of a number of instructors,

218

00:10:17,510 --> 00:10:20,900

who were mostly professional
engineers-- mostly German,

219

00:10:20,900 --> 00:10:24,200

Jewish, engineers, refugees--

220

00:10:24,200 --> 00:10:27,620

who were teaching
youngsters to be

221

00:10:27,620 --> 00:10:32,690

locksmiths, auto mechanics,
and electricians, and things

222

00:10:32,690 --> 00:10:33,350

like that.

223

00:10:33,350 --> 00:10:35,825

Now, were the students Jewish?

224

00:10:35,825 --> 00:10:38,180

Oh yeah, All immigrants.

225

00:10:38,180 --> 00:10:39,260

All Jewish immigrants.

226

00:10:39,260 --> 00:10:41,225

All Jewish immigrants--
they had to be.

227

00:10:41,225 --> 00:10:42,395

They had to speak German.

228

00:10:42,395 --> 00:10:45,800

Some instructors
spoke Germans, mostly.

229

00:10:45,800 --> 00:10:48,690

It was a very small
outfit that did.

230

00:10:48,690 --> 00:10:50,780

The total of the
student body could not

231

00:10:50,780 --> 00:10:55,430

have been more than maybe 45
or 50 students all together--

232

00:10:55,430 --> 00:10:57,130

very small groups of students.

233

00:10:57,130 --> 00:11:02,390

And the first year
was all identical.

234

00:11:02,390 --> 00:11:04,690

We all learned the same things.

235

00:11:04,690 --> 00:11:08,180

We learned and
some advanced math.

236
00:11:08,180 --> 00:11:12,350
And we learned how
to file a diagram

237
00:11:12,350 --> 00:11:17,370
and work with science
and work on machines--

238
00:11:17,370 --> 00:11:19,110
different kinds of machines.

239
00:11:19,110 --> 00:11:23,231
So in the second year,
then, you had a choice

240
00:11:23,231 --> 00:11:27,780
of asking for a specialization,
like automotive repair

241
00:11:27,780 --> 00:11:30,560
or electrical repairing.

242
00:11:30,560 --> 00:11:32,760
And it was at the end
of the first unit,

243
00:11:32,760 --> 00:11:38,540
it was hear that the Germans
attacked Belgium, you see.

244
00:11:38,540 --> 00:11:44,810
And on the May 10, when the
Germans attacked Belgium,

245
00:11:44,810 --> 00:11:47,950
I happen to be stainless steel.

246
00:11:47,950 --> 00:11:52,780
And what was your life
like outside of school?

247
00:11:52,780 --> 00:11:56,600
Outside of school, it was
wonderful compared to the life.

248
00:11:56,600 --> 00:11:58,540
I had in Vienna.

249
00:11:58,540 --> 00:12:02,080
Because Belgium was
a very rich country,

250
00:12:02,080 --> 00:12:04,900
but compared to Austria.

251
00:12:04,900 --> 00:12:11,800
There was an abundance
there of food and goods,

252
00:12:11,800 --> 00:12:16,360
that I have never seen
before and never seen since.

253
00:12:16,360 --> 00:12:21,420
Just about every
housewife had a fur coat.

254
00:12:21,420 --> 00:12:24,210
Stealing was unheard of.

255
00:12:24,210 --> 00:12:27,180
People didn't lock the doors.

256
00:12:27,180 --> 00:12:30,930
You couldn't buy
one chocolate bar,

257
00:12:30,930 --> 00:12:33,720
because they were
three for a penny.

258
00:12:33,720 --> 00:12:36,930

And what was it like
as a Jew, for you?

259
00:12:36,930 --> 00:12:40,020
It was absolutely paradise.

260
00:12:40,020 --> 00:12:43,410
The Belgian people--
didn't so, here, they're

261
00:12:43,410 --> 00:12:47,500
in a solidly Catholic country.

262
00:12:47,500 --> 00:12:51,930
The Belgian people have
deviated from the Austrian

263
00:12:51,930 --> 00:12:57,160
in that particular way,
that I had absolutely

264
00:12:57,160 --> 00:13:01,430
find no anti-Semitism at all.

265
00:13:01,430 --> 00:13:04,580
That was absolutely amazing.

266
00:13:04,580 --> 00:13:10,200
They might have some objections
to all those immigrants.

267
00:13:10,200 --> 00:13:13,180
There are a lot of
immigrants coming.

268
00:13:13,180 --> 00:13:16,420
There might be some people
who were unhappy with that,

269
00:13:16,420 --> 00:13:20,404
but not because those people
were Jewish, in particular,

270

00:13:20,404 --> 00:13:23,430

but for other reasons.

271

00:13:23,430 --> 00:13:26,280

My gosh, why are
people unhappy now?

272

00:13:26,280 --> 00:13:29,240

Because of all those
immigrants, you see.

273

00:13:29,240 --> 00:13:30,710

So there were lots of them.

274

00:13:30,710 --> 00:13:34,714

Did your family have a
religious life in Brussels?

275

00:13:34,714 --> 00:13:38,420

Ah, private religious
life, which Judaism

276

00:13:38,420 --> 00:13:40,430

lends itself very well.

277

00:13:40,430 --> 00:13:43,250

It is the kind of
religion that you

278

00:13:43,250 --> 00:13:50,180

can exercise without having
to go to the synagogue--

279

00:13:50,180 --> 00:13:51,020

the Sabbath.

280

00:13:51,020 --> 00:13:53,960

My mother always
kept the Sabbath.

281

00:13:53,960 --> 00:13:56,840

Friday night, she would

lit candles and say

282

00:13:56,840 --> 00:13:59,240

the blessing over the candles.

283

00:13:59,240 --> 00:14:03,260

And Saturday there were

Nazi posters [INAUDIBLE],,

284

00:14:03,260 --> 00:14:07,670

but read and educate ourselves

and be kind to each other,

285

00:14:07,670 --> 00:14:08,390

and that was it.

286

00:14:08,390 --> 00:14:10,350

So you continued to

do that in Brussels?

287

00:14:10,350 --> 00:14:12,740

Yes, [? pure ?] off.

288

00:14:12,740 --> 00:14:16,100

On the high holidays, we

would go to the synagogue.

289

00:14:16,100 --> 00:14:19,100

There was one large

synagogue in Brussels,

290

00:14:19,100 --> 00:14:23,540

and we would go there.

291

00:14:23,540 --> 00:14:26,120

Were you part of a Jewish

community in Brussels?

292

00:14:26,120 --> 00:14:28,730

No, not part of the

Belgian Jewish community.

293

00:14:28,730 --> 00:14:31,980

The Jewish community,
the relationships

294

00:14:31,980 --> 00:14:34,640

we had with other
Jews were immigrants.

295

00:14:34,640 --> 00:14:38,100

There was an
immigrant community.

296

00:14:38,100 --> 00:14:42,900

And we would have
immigrant friends--

297

00:14:42,900 --> 00:14:44,570

people we already
known in Vienna.

298

00:14:44,570 --> 00:14:47,354

299

00:14:47,354 --> 00:14:51,750

They were very
nice to each other.

300

00:14:51,750 --> 00:14:54,140

They all were
waiting to get out.

301

00:14:54,140 --> 00:15:00,780

Most wanted to go to America.
and then some to South America.

302

00:15:00,780 --> 00:15:03,860

And they were all
waiting for visas--

303

00:15:03,860 --> 00:15:05,640

waiting to get out.

304

00:15:05,640 --> 00:15:07,400

Very few did.

305

00:15:07,400 --> 00:15:12,050

Some were satisfied to
go into France and Spain.

306

00:15:12,050 --> 00:15:14,630

And some were able to
do that, but not many.

307

00:15:14,630 --> 00:15:17,090

It was very, very
difficult to get out.

308

00:15:17,090 --> 00:15:20,270

People today have no idea
how difficult it was.

309

00:15:20,270 --> 00:15:21,820

The borders were closed, period.

310

00:15:21,820 --> 00:15:23,750

They didn't want
any Jews anymore.

311

00:15:23,750 --> 00:15:24,950

That's what it amounted to.

312

00:15:24,950 --> 00:15:30,820

It took us a while to realize
that, before it sank in.

313

00:15:30,820 --> 00:15:32,600

When did that happen?

314

00:15:32,600 --> 00:15:34,060

Well, while we were in Brussels.

315

00:15:34,060 --> 00:15:39,910

But already in Austria, we knew
that this is why a lot of Jews

316

00:15:39,910 --> 00:15:43,640
were anxious to get out of
Austria, to Belgium, France,

317
00:15:43,640 --> 00:15:45,160
Switzerland-- wherever--

318
00:15:45,160 --> 00:15:51,800
because the American consul
in Austria was not friendly.

319
00:15:51,800 --> 00:15:53,860
He was very brusque.

320
00:15:53,860 --> 00:15:56,650
And then we found out
that he was being--

321
00:15:56,650 --> 00:16:00,580

322
00:16:00,580 --> 00:16:03,730
I can't say this
from experience.

323
00:16:03,730 --> 00:16:06,340
But there was talk about
him taking money out

324
00:16:06,340 --> 00:16:08,320
under the table for the visas.

325
00:16:08,320 --> 00:16:12,070
And visas were
restricted to a quota.

326
00:16:12,070 --> 00:16:13,720
The quota was very small.

327
00:16:13,720 --> 00:16:17,690
It was one a day, 365 a year.

328

00:16:17,690 --> 00:16:19,900

I may be wrong, but
that was what I knew.

329

00:16:19,900 --> 00:16:21,700

And when you were
in Brussels, you

330

00:16:21,700 --> 00:16:25,300

would have had to emigrate
under an Austrian--

331

00:16:25,300 --> 00:16:29,560

No, no, no, we are
already stateless.

332

00:16:29,560 --> 00:16:31,930

See, we lost our citizenship--

333

00:16:31,930 --> 00:16:33,940

civic rights, citizenship.

334

00:16:33,940 --> 00:16:38,230

And they came to Austria
on a German passport.

335

00:16:38,230 --> 00:16:40,070

That was when it was expired.

336

00:16:40,070 --> 00:16:44,590

It was leave us
without a nationality.

337

00:16:44,590 --> 00:16:48,860

We were stateless,
in other words.

338

00:16:48,860 --> 00:16:51,940

So when they applied--

339

00:16:51,940 --> 00:16:57,340

when we finally applied for
identity cards in Brussels--

340
00:16:57,340 --> 00:17:01,610
because there, like in all
European countries at the time,

341
00:17:01,610 --> 00:17:03,970
you could not live
anywhere for longer than

342
00:17:03,970 --> 00:17:05,829
three days without
being declared

343
00:17:05,829 --> 00:17:07,900
at your local precinct.

344
00:17:07,900 --> 00:17:12,040
You had to go down and
declare your address.

345
00:17:12,040 --> 00:17:14,920
If not, and they found out
that you lived someplace,

346
00:17:14,920 --> 00:17:18,369
you were living illegally.

347
00:17:18,369 --> 00:17:22,660
And they had your landlord
declare you, also.

348
00:17:22,660 --> 00:17:24,170
It was a double sanctions.

349
00:17:24,170 --> 00:17:25,753
They made sure that
you were declared.

350
00:17:25,753 --> 00:17:29,500

351
00:17:29,500 --> 00:17:32,080

So this was a way of keeping.

352

00:17:32,080 --> 00:17:33,750

Everybody knew
where everybody was.

353

00:17:33,750 --> 00:17:35,470

They knew where you were.

354

00:17:35,470 --> 00:17:37,330

And we got our identity cards.

355

00:17:37,330 --> 00:17:40,630

On the identity cards, we
were immigrants from Austria.

356

00:17:40,630 --> 00:17:44,620

We were German from Austria.

357

00:17:44,620 --> 00:17:48,530

So when the war started, when
the Germans invaded Belgium,

358

00:17:48,530 --> 00:17:52,960

we suddenly were German aliens,
who had to be interned--

359

00:17:52,960 --> 00:17:55,420

because we were enemy agents.

360

00:17:55,420 --> 00:17:57,600

Mm-hmm.

361

00:17:57,600 --> 00:18:00,915

And I think that's about the
time that your diary starts.

362

00:18:00,915 --> 00:18:03,300

This is when this thing begins.

363

00:18:03,300 --> 00:18:05,010

On May 9.

364
00:18:05,010 --> 00:18:06,070
May 9--

365
00:18:06,070 --> 00:18:06,570
19--

366
00:18:06,570 --> 00:18:09,360
Yes, yes.

367
00:18:09,360 --> 00:18:15,090
And your diary is really
a very detailed account

368
00:18:15,090 --> 00:18:23,070
of your day-to-day life
during the period of the war.

369
00:18:23,070 --> 00:18:25,350
It's not a day-to-day
account, but it's--

370
00:18:25,350 --> 00:18:28,860
Well, a daily-- it
describes daily life.

371
00:18:28,860 --> 00:18:32,910
I didn't leave out anything that
happened of any significance

372
00:18:32,910 --> 00:18:34,950
to my life at that point.

373
00:18:34,950 --> 00:18:37,830
So I think in this
interview we won't

374
00:18:37,830 --> 00:18:41,220
have to go into that
period in any detail,

375
00:18:41,220 --> 00:18:44,100

because it's so well
covered in your diary.

376
00:18:44,100 --> 00:18:47,640
But maybe we could just
summarize very briefly

377
00:18:47,640 --> 00:18:49,800
what the diary covers.

378
00:18:49,800 --> 00:18:54,180
After the invasion of Belgium,
you stayed with your family

379
00:18:54,180 --> 00:18:55,050
for a while.

380
00:18:55,050 --> 00:18:55,710
Yes.

381
00:18:55,710 --> 00:18:57,770
And then you left your--

382
00:18:57,770 --> 00:18:59,930
Let me summarize the
important things--

383
00:18:59,930 --> 00:19:04,230
and I think the highlights
of my survival in Belgium.

384
00:19:04,230 --> 00:19:07,180
I think the highlights-- the
most important thing I did,

385
00:19:07,180 --> 00:19:09,930
that I didn't know
at a time, was

386
00:19:09,930 --> 00:19:15,410
that I enrolled in art school.

387

00:19:15,410 --> 00:19:20,600
It was done on a whim,
because my cousin Ernst always

388
00:19:20,600 --> 00:19:21,410
wanted to draw.

389
00:19:21,410 --> 00:19:24,260
He was an artist.

390
00:19:24,260 --> 00:19:25,100
He always drew.

391
00:19:25,100 --> 00:19:28,460
And art school was free.

392
00:19:28,460 --> 00:19:29,740
It didn't cost anything.

393
00:19:29,740 --> 00:19:33,170
And we had nothing
else to do at the time.

394
00:19:33,170 --> 00:19:35,540
At that point, we were
not going to school.

395
00:19:35,540 --> 00:19:39,050
The Germans had
invaded the country.

396
00:19:39,050 --> 00:19:40,527
Ernest wanted to
go to art school.

397
00:19:40,527 --> 00:19:42,110
He didn't want to
go alone, because he

398
00:19:42,110 --> 00:19:43,790
couldn't speak French.

399

00:19:43,790 --> 00:19:45,980

He said, Harry,
please come with me.

400

00:19:45,980 --> 00:19:48,380

My family always called
me Harry, by the way,

401

00:19:48,380 --> 00:19:54,260

because Hermann was German,
and they didn't like that name.

402

00:19:54,260 --> 00:19:57,830

And in Belgium dogs were
called Hermann sometimes,

403

00:19:57,830 --> 00:19:59,120

and it wasn't a popular name.

404

00:19:59,120 --> 00:20:01,780

So they all called me Harry.

405

00:20:01,780 --> 00:20:05,300

Could you please come with me?

406

00:20:05,300 --> 00:20:07,610

Would you please come with me?

407

00:20:07,610 --> 00:20:08,837

And eventually I gave in.

408

00:20:08,837 --> 00:20:09,920

We enrolled in art school.

409

00:20:09,920 --> 00:20:13,100

And this was one of the
important things I did.

410

00:20:13,100 --> 00:20:17,690

Because subsequently
the assistance

411

00:20:17,690 --> 00:20:21,710
and the help I got from
friends were the friends

412
00:20:21,710 --> 00:20:23,720
I had made in art school.

413
00:20:23,720 --> 00:20:25,100
A professor I had--

414
00:20:25,100 --> 00:20:31,190
Mr. [PERSONAL NAME]---- my best
friend [? Amon Rausch ?]..

415
00:20:31,190 --> 00:20:35,840
And it was true that being
connected through those people

416
00:20:35,840 --> 00:20:38,780
through the Belgium population--

417
00:20:38,780 --> 00:20:41,420
which immigrants, we had no
connection to the Belgians,

418
00:20:41,420 --> 00:20:42,930
you see?

419
00:20:42,930 --> 00:20:46,290
That was the tragic thing.

420
00:20:46,290 --> 00:20:48,030
I also had to speak
French, of course,

421
00:20:48,030 --> 00:20:51,710
when I realized stuck there.

422
00:20:51,710 --> 00:20:53,300
And I did well.

423
00:20:53,300 --> 00:20:56,320

I didn't look Jewish.

424

00:20:56,320 --> 00:20:58,180

My sister didn't look Jewish.

425

00:20:58,180 --> 00:21:00,610

That's another thing.

426

00:21:00,610 --> 00:21:04,120

Some people may not
give this any thought.

427

00:21:04,120 --> 00:21:08,140

But essentially, if you look
Jewish, you couldn't be saved--

428

00:21:08,140 --> 00:21:10,800

out of the question.

429

00:21:10,800 --> 00:21:14,460

We would have to be so
well and solidly hidden.

430

00:21:14,460 --> 00:21:16,695

Maybe some people
managed to do this.

431

00:21:16,695 --> 00:21:20,080

432

00:21:20,080 --> 00:21:27,070

Now in 1940, at age 16, did
you look like a little boy,

433

00:21:27,070 --> 00:21:28,270

or were you pretty tall?

434

00:21:28,270 --> 00:21:30,450

No, I was pretty tall.

435

00:21:30,450 --> 00:21:32,590

I was taller than my parents.

436
00:21:32,590 --> 00:21:35,150
I was just about as
tall as I am now.

437
00:21:35,150 --> 00:21:37,906
I was five-foot-eight,
five-foot-nine.

438
00:21:37,906 --> 00:21:39,150
I had shot up.

439
00:21:39,150 --> 00:21:43,900
I had grown real
fast at that time.

440
00:21:43,900 --> 00:21:46,510
But I was very young
looking for a while,

441
00:21:46,510 --> 00:21:48,680
till I started growing a beard.

442
00:21:48,680 --> 00:21:51,010
And then I started
looking older.

443
00:21:51,010 --> 00:21:53,860
And I became to be
in a dangerous age.

444
00:21:53,860 --> 00:21:56,710
Because as the war
progressed, the Germans

445
00:21:56,710 --> 00:22:00,000
did not only arrest
Jews, but they also

446
00:22:00,000 --> 00:22:02,680
arrested non Jews
of military age.

447

00:22:02,680 --> 00:22:06,130

So you had to be extra--

448

00:22:06,130 --> 00:22:07,130

You had to be careful.

449

00:22:07,130 --> 00:22:08,620

--aware and alert.

450

00:22:08,620 --> 00:22:13,750

Because otherwise it was easier
to be a girl, to be hidden.

451

00:22:13,750 --> 00:22:15,950

Because you couldn't
be proven Jewish,

452

00:22:15,950 --> 00:22:18,430

if you learned your catechism.

453

00:22:18,430 --> 00:22:20,110

But a boy could
be proven Jewish.

454

00:22:20,110 --> 00:22:23,950

Because, in Europe, only
Jews were circumcised,

455

00:22:23,950 --> 00:22:26,380

except in rare circumstances.

456

00:22:26,380 --> 00:22:29,890

For medical reasons, somebody
might have been circumcised.

457

00:22:29,890 --> 00:22:33,035

But this was a dead giveaway.

458

00:22:33,035 --> 00:22:35,570

459

00:22:35,570 --> 00:22:39,812

And the Germans were not beyond
having you pull your pants down

460

00:22:39,812 --> 00:22:42,395

in the middle of the street, to
see if you were Jewish or not.

461

00:22:42,395 --> 00:22:42,895

Mm-hmm.

462

00:22:42,895 --> 00:22:47,730

So you were very
alert and very aware--

463

00:22:47,730 --> 00:22:48,230

Absolutely.

464

00:22:48,230 --> 00:22:50,450

--and trying very
hard to avoid--

465

00:22:50,450 --> 00:22:54,980

I can tell you that one of
the interesting experiences

466

00:22:54,980 --> 00:22:58,490

of that time, at
least for me, when

467

00:22:58,490 --> 00:23:02,840

you live in a state
of anxiety and fear,

468

00:23:02,840 --> 00:23:05,345

that you develop sort
of a sixth sense.

469

00:23:05,345 --> 00:23:09,010

470

00:23:09,010 --> 00:23:11,410

It's very interesting.

471
00:23:11,410 --> 00:23:13,810
It's unreal.

472
00:23:13,810 --> 00:23:18,250
For example, I could walk
down the street at night

473
00:23:18,250 --> 00:23:21,860
and know whether or not
there was someone behind me.

474
00:23:21,860 --> 00:23:23,230
I just knew it.

475
00:23:23,230 --> 00:23:27,640
Now do you think that
experiences from your earlier

476
00:23:27,640 --> 00:23:34,600
life were of some help
in developing that?

477
00:23:34,600 --> 00:23:36,340
There's no doubt about it.

478
00:23:36,340 --> 00:23:38,530
Sure.

479
00:23:38,530 --> 00:23:43,240
I don't know how much of this
is genetic, how much of this

480
00:23:43,240 --> 00:23:48,380
is learned, but, sure.

481
00:23:48,380 --> 00:23:53,040
What experiences do
you think helped you

482
00:23:53,040 --> 00:23:57,240
learn how to be on the alert?

483

00:23:57,240 --> 00:24:01,350

I had to be self-reliant
very early in life.

484

00:24:01,350 --> 00:24:03,240

I had no older
brothers and sisters,

485

00:24:03,240 --> 00:24:06,240

for example, who
would look after me.

486

00:24:06,240 --> 00:24:10,180

And if there's a
stepfather, who had

487

00:24:10,180 --> 00:24:13,080

no particular interest in the.

488

00:24:13,080 --> 00:24:19,230

So he may have been around, but
he was not involved with me.

489

00:24:19,230 --> 00:24:21,720

There was no bonding
taking place.

490

00:24:21,720 --> 00:24:23,880

So you took care
of yourself more

491

00:24:23,880 --> 00:24:25,590

than another child might have?

492

00:24:25,590 --> 00:24:27,660

I had to.

493

00:24:27,660 --> 00:24:32,040

Occasionally, I had to
look after my sister.

494

00:24:32,040 --> 00:24:39,630
And I was a little bit, sorry to
say, estranged from my mother,

495
00:24:39,630 --> 00:24:43,650
because I have to be responsible
for having a stepfather.

496
00:24:43,650 --> 00:24:48,190
But that was childish,
but it was true.

497
00:24:48,190 --> 00:24:53,050
So early in life, I had to make
a lot of decisions for myself.

498
00:24:53,050 --> 00:24:54,910
So you were used to
making some decisions.

499
00:24:54,910 --> 00:24:56,260
Yes.

500
00:24:56,260 --> 00:24:58,510
When I was on my
own, then it was not

501
00:24:58,510 --> 00:25:02,380
big blow to be on my own.

502
00:25:02,380 --> 00:25:03,650
It's not a problem.

503
00:25:03,650 --> 00:25:04,470
It was a relief.

504
00:25:04,470 --> 00:25:07,000

505
00:25:07,000 --> 00:25:09,610
I felt free, in some ways.

506

00:25:09,610 --> 00:25:11,350
I didn't have to answer.

507
00:25:11,350 --> 00:25:15,850
At home, I came from
old-fashioned surroundings.

508
00:25:15,850 --> 00:25:17,980
Whenever you went out,
you told your mother

509
00:25:17,980 --> 00:25:21,790
where you were going, and
then you're going to be back.

510
00:25:21,790 --> 00:25:24,730
I had to be in bed
every night at 8:00,

511
00:25:24,730 --> 00:25:27,230
even when I was 16 years old.

512
00:25:27,230 --> 00:25:30,490
It was a routine I
had to get up at 7:00.

513
00:25:30,490 --> 00:25:33,300
I went to bed at 8:00.

514
00:25:33,300 --> 00:25:34,000
You understand?

515
00:25:34,000 --> 00:25:34,500
Mm-hmm.

516
00:25:34,500 --> 00:25:38,470
If I wanted to see my friends,
I had to ask for permission.

517
00:25:38,470 --> 00:25:39,750
If she said no, it was no.

518

00:25:39,750 --> 00:25:42,000
We didn't argue.

519
00:25:42,000 --> 00:25:43,960
You didn't give an argument.

520
00:25:43,960 --> 00:25:47,580
So when you left home, you
had a very different kind of--

521
00:25:47,580 --> 00:25:51,090
My gosh, that was no problem.

522
00:25:51,090 --> 00:25:54,600
And I think that, earlier
in this interview,

523
00:25:54,600 --> 00:25:57,630
you said that you used to
read detective stories--

524
00:25:57,630 --> 00:25:58,140
Yes.

525
00:25:58,140 --> 00:26:01,603
--and that maybe that
contributed to your life.

526
00:26:01,603 --> 00:26:02,430
Yes.

527
00:26:02,430 --> 00:26:04,890
I had a great fantasy--

528
00:26:04,890 --> 00:26:06,930
great imagination.

529
00:26:06,930 --> 00:26:09,740
As a child, I had
an invisible friend.

530
00:26:09,740 --> 00:26:13,698

He would walk with me when
I went home from school.

531
00:26:13,698 --> 00:26:14,980
Yeah.

532
00:26:14,980 --> 00:26:20,340
I would talk to animals I
talked to horses on my way home.

533
00:26:20,340 --> 00:26:21,930
And they nodded
their head, and I

534
00:26:21,930 --> 00:26:24,766
thought they understood
what I was saying.

535
00:26:24,766 --> 00:26:26,220
It was ridiculous.

536
00:26:26,220 --> 00:26:30,450
But yeah, I was
oriented in that way.

537
00:26:30,450 --> 00:26:36,690
So back to the
Holocaust period when

538
00:26:36,690 --> 00:26:42,060
in the diary, as I
remember, when things

539
00:26:42,060 --> 00:26:47,160
got tighter and tighter
in Brussels-- at one point

540
00:26:47,160 --> 00:26:51,870
you left living with your
family and got a false identity.

541
00:26:51,870 --> 00:26:54,840
Yeah, it was in 19--

542
00:26:54,840 --> 00:26:56,255
well-- I

543
00:26:56,255 --> 00:26:58,625
Or I guess you left your
family and then later on got

544
00:26:58,625 --> 00:26:59,430
a false identity.

545
00:26:59,430 --> 00:27:04,410
Well, I think the
breaking point was the day

546
00:27:04,410 --> 00:27:11,400
that my uncle and his
family were arrested.

547
00:27:11,400 --> 00:27:17,948
The Gestapo came to Aunt Rose,
and took her and the baby

548
00:27:17,948 --> 00:27:23,580
and Cousin Herta,
while Ernest and Simone

549
00:27:23,580 --> 00:27:27,930
hid in a false ceiling
they had in the closet.

550
00:27:27,930 --> 00:27:33,580
That was 21st of July, 1943.

551
00:27:33,580 --> 00:27:36,535
The date is easy to remember,
because that's the equivalent

552
00:27:36,535 --> 00:27:38,320
in Belgium of the 4th of July.

553
00:27:38,320 --> 00:27:43,900

It's Belgian Independence
Day, is the 21st of July.

554
00:27:43,900 --> 00:27:48,940
And Germans were particularly
vicious on holidays--

555
00:27:48,940 --> 00:27:53,420
not their holidays,
other people's holidays--

556
00:27:53,420 --> 00:27:56,720
Jewish holidays,
Belgian holidays,

557
00:27:56,720 --> 00:28:02,810
they're out en masse making
the holidays unpleasant.

558
00:28:02,810 --> 00:28:08,110
It was on that day that my
sister, and I were found.

559
00:28:08,110 --> 00:28:11,560
The big drive to do
this-- the big impetus

560
00:28:11,560 --> 00:28:20,080
was that we were afraid
Aunt Rose may tell about we.

561
00:28:20,080 --> 00:28:23,530
We suspected, rightfully,
that the people

562
00:28:23,530 --> 00:28:29,270
who were arrested by the
Germans would be questioned--

563
00:28:29,270 --> 00:28:30,890
interrogated.

564
00:28:30,890 --> 00:28:33,826

Do you have a relative?

565

00:28:33,826 --> 00:28:35,720

And we lived right
down the street.

566

00:28:35,720 --> 00:28:37,160

We lived one block
down the street

567

00:28:37,160 --> 00:28:39,120

from where they had lived.

568

00:28:39,120 --> 00:28:42,440

And my mother decided,
yes, if you can,

569

00:28:42,440 --> 00:28:47,260

get out of here, because there's
a good possibility that they'll

570

00:28:47,260 --> 00:28:48,490

give us away.

571

00:28:48,490 --> 00:28:51,197

As it turned out,
this was not the case.

572

00:28:51,197 --> 00:28:52,030

But you didn't know?

573

00:28:52,030 --> 00:28:53,230

They didn't know.

574

00:28:53,230 --> 00:28:55,240

But my sister and I took off.

575

00:28:55,240 --> 00:29:00,290

And I took my sister to the
Belgian friends that we had--

576

00:29:00,290 --> 00:29:02,560

Professor Dirks.

577

00:29:02,560 --> 00:29:05,410

And it was no problem
putting up Margaret.

578

00:29:05,410 --> 00:29:06,460

Because she was a girl.

579

00:29:06,460 --> 00:29:07,105

She was a girl.

580

00:29:07,105 --> 00:29:08,230

She was four years younger.

581

00:29:08,230 --> 00:29:13,510

She was 12 years old,
or 13, I'm not sure.

582

00:29:13,510 --> 00:29:16,690

She did not look Jewish at all.

583

00:29:16,690 --> 00:29:19,870

She had light sandy
hair and blue eyes.

584

00:29:19,870 --> 00:29:23,110

Her features were
not Jewish at all.

585

00:29:23,110 --> 00:29:26,800

So they had no
problems with her.

586

00:29:26,800 --> 00:29:30,220

I had a big problem, because
I was military age, or getting

587

00:29:30,220 --> 00:29:31,880

close to it.

588

00:29:31,880 --> 00:29:39,130

And after all, being caught
helping a Jew was suicide.

589
00:29:39,130 --> 00:29:43,090
I have to say that
I have an undying

590
00:29:43,090 --> 00:29:47,680
gratitude and admiration--

591
00:29:47,680 --> 00:29:53,820
great admiration-- for the
things that people did to help

592
00:29:53,820 --> 00:29:55,650
Jewish people--

593
00:29:55,650 --> 00:29:59,790
not just me, but
what I've seen--

594
00:29:59,790 --> 00:30:02,385
because they literally took
their hands in their lives.

595
00:30:02,385 --> 00:30:05,040

596
00:30:05,040 --> 00:30:10,140
The Germans were absolutely
cruel about this--

597
00:30:10,140 --> 00:30:13,470
unbending.

598
00:30:13,470 --> 00:30:16,080
If you as much as gave
cigarette to a Jew,

599
00:30:16,080 --> 00:30:18,840
it was a death sentence for you.

600

00:30:18,840 --> 00:30:20,490
It was unbelievable.

601
00:30:20,490 --> 00:30:23,100
This is to think,
it's so unbelievable,

602
00:30:23,100 --> 00:30:25,360
about the whole thing.

603
00:30:25,360 --> 00:30:27,840
The think that's unbelievable
about the whole thing

604
00:30:27,840 --> 00:30:32,710
is the cruelty of
a civilized nation.

605
00:30:32,710 --> 00:30:35,050
I mean, I'm not accusing
the whole nation, of course.

606
00:30:35,050 --> 00:30:40,360
There are German, certainly,
who were upset about this.

607
00:30:40,360 --> 00:30:44,950
But that a civilized
nation can produce

608
00:30:44,950 --> 00:30:52,700
a good number of its people to
be so cruel and so uncivilized

609
00:30:52,700 --> 00:30:56,050
is the most frightening
thing about this thing.

610
00:30:56,050 --> 00:30:58,400
And the most
astonishing thing is

611
00:30:58,400 --> 00:31:05,820

that you find people who have
no good reason to help them.

612
00:31:05,820 --> 00:31:09,060
Because, on the contrary,
if they only smiled

613
00:31:09,060 --> 00:31:12,540
at the Germans, and only
took a job from them--

614
00:31:12,540 --> 00:31:17,160
the Germans were constantly
offering jobs to the Belgians--

615
00:31:17,160 --> 00:31:19,608
they could have a good life.

616
00:31:19,608 --> 00:31:22,680
Their rations were
increased considerably.

617
00:31:22,680 --> 00:31:26,800
Their income has
increased considerably.

618
00:31:26,800 --> 00:31:28,990
They could travel in Europe.

619
00:31:28,990 --> 00:31:30,510
My goodness.

620
00:31:30,510 --> 00:31:35,530
And there was a majority of
people refused to do that.

621
00:31:35,530 --> 00:31:38,110
And there was a good
percentage of people--

622
00:31:38,110 --> 00:31:41,170
I would say, at least 10% of
the Belgian population-- who

623
00:31:41,170 --> 00:31:47,120
were actively involved in
helping people in distress

624
00:31:47,120 --> 00:31:48,760
even so.

625
00:31:48,760 --> 00:31:52,990
Now Mr. Dirks had a daughter,
who was Margaret's age--

626
00:31:52,990 --> 00:31:59,830
12 years old-- because he had a
wife and a brother and family.

627
00:31:59,830 --> 00:32:04,030
And just having us-- having me
for dinner there every Sunday,

628
00:32:04,030 --> 00:32:09,456
like he did for many
months, was suicidal.

629
00:32:09,456 --> 00:32:12,600
It was suicidal.

630
00:32:12,600 --> 00:32:20,210
In spite of this, the man with
no compunction [INAUDIBLE]..

631
00:32:20,210 --> 00:32:23,120
This [INAUDIBLE] there was--

632
00:32:23,120 --> 00:32:25,350
this makes you believe
in something good,

633
00:32:25,350 --> 00:32:28,100
I think-- that there's
something good, I think.

634

00:32:28,100 --> 00:32:32,510
So you were able to find people
who were able to help you.

635
00:32:32,510 --> 00:32:35,820
And you eventually
set yourself up--

636
00:32:35,820 --> 00:32:39,600
Some people just helped you
on the spur of the moment.

637
00:32:39,600 --> 00:32:42,320
Like, I was walking
down the street.

638
00:32:42,320 --> 00:32:44,990
And some young
woman came up to me

639
00:32:44,990 --> 00:32:49,580
and told the star off--
the Star of Mogen David

640
00:32:49,580 --> 00:32:52,400
that you have to
wear-- the yellow star.

641
00:32:52,400 --> 00:32:55,710
And she says, you can
take this thing off.

642
00:32:55,710 --> 00:32:59,750
I said, Errr-- and
she tore it off.

643
00:32:59,750 --> 00:33:01,583
I think you wrote about
that in your diary--

644
00:33:01,583 --> 00:33:02,583
Yes, I wrote about that.

645

00:33:02,583 --> 00:33:03,880
--and many other incidents.

646
00:33:03,880 --> 00:33:06,200
Yes, and other
incidents like this.

647
00:33:06,200 --> 00:33:09,368
The people went
out of their way.

648
00:33:09,368 --> 00:33:11,510
Mm-hmm.

649
00:33:11,510 --> 00:33:14,900
So you were able to
establish yourself

650
00:33:14,900 --> 00:33:18,980
in a room in Brussels--

651
00:33:18,980 --> 00:33:19,640
Yes.

652
00:33:19,640 --> 00:33:23,900
--and get some little jobs that
helped you support yourself.

653
00:33:23,900 --> 00:33:24,880
Yes, yes.

654
00:33:24,880 --> 00:33:27,752
And you got a false identity.

655
00:33:27,752 --> 00:33:29,360
Mm-hmm.

656
00:33:29,360 --> 00:33:31,800
And you stayed in
that room for a while.

657
00:33:31,800 --> 00:33:35,450

And then you decided to try
to get out into the country.

658
00:33:35,450 --> 00:33:39,710
Yes, it's gotten real
hot and dangerous,

659
00:33:39,710 --> 00:33:41,930
because there were
more and more raids.

660
00:33:41,930 --> 00:33:44,960
The Germans were having
troubles in France.

661
00:33:44,960 --> 00:33:47,750
The Allies have landed already.

662
00:33:47,750 --> 00:33:50,940
So you thought the country
might be safer than Brussels.

663
00:33:50,940 --> 00:33:51,440
Yes.

664
00:33:51,440 --> 00:33:54,000
My sister was in the country.

665
00:33:54,000 --> 00:33:56,850
And so you got
down to a little--

666
00:33:56,850 --> 00:34:03,060
And then she came and visited
me on my 20th birthday,

667
00:34:03,060 --> 00:34:03,980
which I described.

668
00:34:03,980 --> 00:34:07,530

669

00:34:07,530 --> 00:34:09,690

Just for no reason,
I said, well,

670

00:34:09,690 --> 00:34:13,260

how about-- do you think I
can come out there and stay

671

00:34:13,260 --> 00:34:14,850

in the country?

672

00:34:14,850 --> 00:34:18,020

And she said she would ask.

673

00:34:18,020 --> 00:34:20,929

And the next day she
came and told me I could.

674

00:34:20,929 --> 00:34:22,340

And so you?

675

00:34:22,340 --> 00:34:24,150

So I went to near them.

676

00:34:24,150 --> 00:34:24,650

Mm-hmm.

677

00:34:24,650 --> 00:34:25,595

And first you stayed--

678

00:34:25,595 --> 00:34:26,900

We stayed with the colonel--

679

00:34:26,900 --> 00:34:30,358

680

00:34:30,358 --> 00:34:33,540

Colonel Henry-- Charles Henry.

681

00:34:33,540 --> 00:34:36,134

So you were there for a while?

682

00:34:36,134 --> 00:34:39,060

We stayed close to a month.

683

00:34:39,060 --> 00:34:42,230

And that's carefully
described in your diary.

684

00:34:42,230 --> 00:34:43,560

Three weeks, yes.

685

00:34:43,560 --> 00:34:47,610

And then you went with the
farmer to work on the farm.

686

00:34:47,610 --> 00:34:48,330

Yes.

687

00:34:48,330 --> 00:34:49,969

Again, this was [INAUDIBLE].

688

00:34:49,969 --> 00:34:53,340

689

00:34:53,340 --> 00:34:54,850

I believe in interference.

690

00:34:54,850 --> 00:34:57,580

691

00:34:57,580 --> 00:35:02,280

I mean, if you have a
free choice in life.

692

00:35:02,280 --> 00:35:07,160

But eventually sometimes,
on some occasions,

693

00:35:07,160 --> 00:35:13,230

for better or for worse,
there's interference.

694

00:35:13,230 --> 00:35:15,520

And it was because--

695

00:35:15,520 --> 00:35:17,790

and I didn't recognize
this until years

696

00:35:17,790 --> 00:35:20,190

later-- this occurred to me.

697

00:35:20,190 --> 00:35:23,970

The colonel had
pointed to the one girl

698

00:35:23,970 --> 00:35:25,790

and told me she was Jewish.

699

00:35:25,790 --> 00:35:29,080

700

00:35:29,080 --> 00:35:31,190

And I talked to her about it.

701

00:35:31,190 --> 00:35:32,910

And she was not.

702

00:35:32,910 --> 00:35:36,820

And she was-- some reason I
don't understand-- because she

703

00:35:36,820 --> 00:35:38,340

was a very nice girl.

704

00:35:38,340 --> 00:35:42,850

And she told the colonel,
that had asked her.

705

00:35:42,850 --> 00:35:45,570

And he was totally upset
about it, and got rid of me.

706

00:35:45,570 --> 00:35:47,230

He sent me out to the farm.

707

00:35:47,230 --> 00:35:49,330

And because he had
sent me to the farm,

708

00:35:49,330 --> 00:35:52,870

I was not with him
the day he was killed.

709

00:35:52,870 --> 00:35:54,730

When you say you
believe in interference,

710

00:35:54,730 --> 00:35:57,880

do you mean divine interference?

711

00:35:57,880 --> 00:35:59,080

You could say that.

712

00:35:59,080 --> 00:36:01,345

I didn't know what you
meant by interference.

713

00:36:01,345 --> 00:36:03,385

I mean, there are forces--

714

00:36:03,385 --> 00:36:06,880

715

00:36:06,880 --> 00:36:10,750

yes, you could say
divine, unless you

716

00:36:10,750 --> 00:36:11,830

have another word for it.

717

00:36:11,830 --> 00:36:14,340

718

00:36:14,340 --> 00:36:15,580

It could be divine.

719
00:36:15,580 --> 00:36:19,510
Anyway, your life was saved
by having gone to the farm.

720
00:36:19,510 --> 00:36:21,760
Yes.

721
00:36:21,760 --> 00:36:25,210
My life was saved by
my stepfather, when

722
00:36:25,210 --> 00:36:32,640
I received the order to report
for transfer to concentration

723
00:36:32,640 --> 00:36:34,320
camp.

724
00:36:34,320 --> 00:36:41,250
There is a man, who had
given me an awful childhood--

725
00:36:41,250 --> 00:36:45,160
terrible upbringing-- in
the end, who saved my life.

726
00:36:45,160 --> 00:36:47,220
I didn't realize this
till years later.

727
00:36:47,220 --> 00:36:51,150
And my God, if he hadn't gone
out to that Jewish committee--

728
00:36:51,150 --> 00:36:55,020
because the Germans had
the Jews do all this--

729
00:36:55,020 --> 00:37:00,760
and had put on his act--

730

00:37:00,760 --> 00:37:05,350
he had a temper, a fit, during
which he stuttered, of course.

731
00:37:05,350 --> 00:37:07,450
And he was a very,
very strong man.

732
00:37:07,450 --> 00:37:13,480
He was a wrestler, who had
gone to the 1928 Olympics.

733
00:37:13,480 --> 00:37:16,300
He was no pushover.

734
00:37:16,300 --> 00:37:20,170
He could easily grab
me and throw me around.

735
00:37:20,170 --> 00:37:23,480
And they were scared
of him up there.

736
00:37:23,480 --> 00:37:25,880
So they were able to
give him revocations,

737
00:37:25,880 --> 00:37:28,250
which was so unusual--

738
00:37:28,250 --> 00:37:34,650
a revocation to a deportation
order was very, very unusual.

739
00:37:34,650 --> 00:37:36,390
Let's stop here and
turn over the tape.

740
00:37:36,390 --> 00:37:43,348

741
00:37:43,348 --> 00:37:47,780
Hermann Kosak,

take two, side two.

742

00:37:47,780 --> 00:37:49,490

When we turned
over the tape, you

743

00:37:49,490 --> 00:37:54,320

were saying that you had
just gone to the farm.

744

00:37:54,320 --> 00:37:58,040

But in the break, you
said that you wanted

745

00:37:58,040 --> 00:38:01,280

to talk about all the things--

746

00:38:01,280 --> 00:38:01,950

The coincidence.

747

00:38:01,950 --> 00:38:02,450

Yes.

748

00:38:02,450 --> 00:38:05,780

Because the reason I had
worked with the colonel

749

00:38:05,780 --> 00:38:07,790

for about three weeks--

750

00:38:07,790 --> 00:38:12,680

and my job was to carry
the suitcase for him,

751

00:38:12,680 --> 00:38:14,690

because he was an invalid.

752

00:38:14,690 --> 00:38:15,740

He'd lost a leg.

753

00:38:15,740 --> 00:38:18,120

He had a wooden leg.

754
00:38:18,120 --> 00:38:24,140
And I was taking
care of his things.

755
00:38:24,140 --> 00:38:26,090
At the time, I wasn't
sure what I was doing,

756
00:38:26,090 --> 00:38:30,340
but in actuality, I was
carrying dynamite, mostly,

757
00:38:30,340 --> 00:38:31,827
back to the mountains.

758
00:38:31,827 --> 00:38:34,160
And this was the reason, every
time he got on the train,

759
00:38:34,160 --> 00:38:35,990
they put the suitcase
down on one hand

760
00:38:35,990 --> 00:38:37,700
and we tried to sit
on the other hand--

761
00:38:37,700 --> 00:38:41,750
so he wouldn't be
associated with this thing.

762
00:38:41,750 --> 00:38:45,980
But when I got to the farm,
because of an incident

763
00:38:45,980 --> 00:38:47,330
that seemed to be minor--

764
00:38:47,330 --> 00:38:52,800
because I talked to a girl and
told her that I was Jewish,

765

00:38:52,800 --> 00:38:53,705
as a matter of fact.

766

00:38:53,705 --> 00:38:56,570
[INAUDIBLE] the
colonel, and he figured

767

00:38:56,570 --> 00:39:01,340
he had to get rid of me, and put
me on the farm out of the way.

768

00:39:01,340 --> 00:39:06,150
Because of that, I was not
with him when he was killed.

769

00:39:06,150 --> 00:39:08,812
He had picked another
boy to go with him

770

00:39:08,812 --> 00:39:09,770
and carry the suitcase.

771

00:39:09,770 --> 00:39:12,570

772

00:39:12,570 --> 00:39:15,020
The boy lived, however.

773

00:39:15,020 --> 00:39:18,110
What happened is the
other Underground

774

00:39:18,110 --> 00:39:20,240
was blowing up bridges--

775

00:39:20,240 --> 00:39:23,420
blowing up a bridge,
that was on one side

776

00:39:23,420 --> 00:39:25,910
of the village, that
was on the main railway

777

00:39:25,910 --> 00:39:29,780
line between Germany and Paris.

778

00:39:29,780 --> 00:39:33,680
No train could go through there,
unless the bridge was fixed.

779

00:39:33,680 --> 00:39:35,240
And the Underground
would blow it up.

780

00:39:35,240 --> 00:39:36,800
The Germans would
come in and fix it,

781

00:39:36,800 --> 00:39:38,550
and then the Underground
would blow it up.

782

00:39:38,550 --> 00:39:41,040
It would go on and
on and on and on.

783

00:39:41,040 --> 00:39:46,520
And this underground was made
up of military personnel.

784

00:39:46,520 --> 00:39:48,800
The people who were in
it were former soldiers

785

00:39:48,800 --> 00:39:52,070
in the Belgian Army, so they
knew what they were doing.

786

00:39:52,070 --> 00:39:53,930
And that's how it
happened that they were

787

00:39:53,930 --> 00:39:58,010
able to do all this damage.

788

00:39:58,010 --> 00:40:01,880

And the dynamite that I was
schlepping from Brussels

789

00:40:01,880 --> 00:40:04,310

to the mountains, and to
what other people were

790

00:40:04,310 --> 00:40:07,550

doing, [INAUDIBLE] used
for these purposes.

791

00:40:07,550 --> 00:40:10,880

And on that day that
the colonel was killed,

792

00:40:10,880 --> 00:40:17,510

he had a boy with him, who
was carrying his suitcase.

793

00:40:17,510 --> 00:40:22,520

And what happened is he had
been detained in Brussels.

794

00:40:22,520 --> 00:40:25,550

And the people who
were working with him

795

00:40:25,550 --> 00:40:27,650

didn't know what
had happened to him.

796

00:40:27,650 --> 00:40:30,860

And the Germans had
to build the bridge,

797

00:40:30,860 --> 00:40:34,310

and they were going
to blow it up again.

798

00:40:34,310 --> 00:40:38,660

So they went ahead
without him, just as he

799
00:40:38,660 --> 00:40:40,160
was coming in on the train.

800
00:40:40,160 --> 00:40:44,590

801
00:40:44,590 --> 00:40:47,335
And the explosives
were set in such a way

802
00:40:47,335 --> 00:40:51,980
that a train passing a
bridge would blow it up.

803
00:40:51,980 --> 00:40:53,843
And the train that
did that was the train

804
00:40:53,843 --> 00:40:55,010
that took the colonel in it.

805
00:40:55,010 --> 00:40:58,020

806
00:40:58,020 --> 00:40:58,950
And he was killed.

807
00:40:58,950 --> 00:41:01,930
The boy that was with
him had his legs broken.

808
00:41:01,930 --> 00:41:03,630
So if you hadn't
been on the farm,

809
00:41:03,630 --> 00:41:04,840
you would have been that boy.

810
00:41:04,840 --> 00:41:05,680
I would have been the same.

811

00:41:05,680 --> 00:41:07,347

I would have been the
same on the train.

812

00:41:07,347 --> 00:41:08,220

Mm-hmm.

813

00:41:08,220 --> 00:41:12,180

So you were on the farm, which
in the diary, you talk about--

814

00:41:12,180 --> 00:41:15,480

and which was a very
difficult time for you.

815

00:41:15,480 --> 00:41:18,000

You were there
about three weeks.

816

00:41:18,000 --> 00:41:18,570

Yes.

817

00:41:18,570 --> 00:41:22,560

Then, you decided that you'd
be better off somewhere else?

818

00:41:22,560 --> 00:41:23,060

Yes.

819

00:41:23,060 --> 00:41:25,980

Because, by that time, I found
that the Germans were also

820

00:41:25,980 --> 00:41:28,080

raiding villages--

821

00:41:28,080 --> 00:41:32,070

and not just looking for Jews,
but for looking for young men--

822

00:41:32,070 --> 00:41:35,060

because they needed

manpower in Germany.

823

00:41:35,060 --> 00:41:37,170

They were taking Belgians--

824

00:41:37,170 --> 00:41:41,730

put them into German
factories, or on German farms,

825

00:41:41,730 --> 00:41:44,670

and have them work
there as slave labor.

826

00:41:44,670 --> 00:41:46,530

And coincidentally,
they would pick up all

827

00:41:46,530 --> 00:41:48,300

the Jews they ran across.

828

00:41:48,300 --> 00:41:50,345

So you decided to
leave the farm?

829

00:41:50,345 --> 00:41:51,720

So I said, my God,
I'm not better

830

00:41:51,720 --> 00:41:55,440

off here than I was in Brussels,
and I'm working like a dog.

831

00:41:55,440 --> 00:41:58,930

And don't forget, I
was undernourished.

832

00:41:58,930 --> 00:42:00,990

I was weak.

833

00:42:00,990 --> 00:42:02,345

And I looked like a dog.

834

00:42:02,345 --> 00:42:05,520

I worked from the crack
of dawn to nightfall.

835

00:42:05,520 --> 00:42:07,620

Those people make me work.

836

00:42:07,620 --> 00:42:09,180

So I'd never been on a farm.

837

00:42:09,180 --> 00:42:11,220

I was a city boy

838

00:42:11,220 --> 00:42:12,870

So you left the farm.

839

00:42:12,870 --> 00:42:17,250

And on the way back to Brussels,
you stopped at the monastery,

840

00:42:17,250 --> 00:42:19,710

that you describe in your diary.

841

00:42:19,710 --> 00:42:22,750

Trappist monastery
in [PLACE NAME]..

842

00:42:22,750 --> 00:42:24,390

So you were there two weeks.

843

00:42:24,390 --> 00:42:28,800

Yes, just about-- on a
retreat, which was legal.

844

00:42:28,800 --> 00:42:31,780

See, they wouldn't
keep you over.

845

00:42:31,780 --> 00:42:33,840

They wouldn't hide anybody.

846

00:42:33,840 --> 00:42:36,480

So that was a very different
and interesting experience

847
00:42:36,480 --> 00:42:38,340
for you, with the monastery?

848
00:42:38,340 --> 00:42:39,660
Yes.

849
00:42:39,660 --> 00:42:42,000
I was fortunate enough, again.

850
00:42:42,000 --> 00:42:45,720
I had my girlfriend,
who was Catholic--

851
00:42:45,720 --> 00:42:50,610
very religious young girl,
who wanted me to convert.

852
00:42:50,610 --> 00:42:56,490
And for that purpose, I was
being exposed to instructions.

853
00:42:56,490 --> 00:43:02,160
So I know my Catholic
prayers and all the holidays,

854
00:43:02,160 --> 00:43:06,750
and I could parade
myself as a Catholic,

855
00:43:06,750 --> 00:43:10,150
as long as nobody pulled
my pants down, right?

856
00:43:10,150 --> 00:43:11,710
So that's what I did.

857
00:43:11,710 --> 00:43:12,420
I went up there.

858

00:43:12,420 --> 00:43:17,370

And I said I had some
difficult experiences in life,

859

00:43:17,370 --> 00:43:22,050

and had been turned away from
my faith for a long time--

860

00:43:22,050 --> 00:43:27,480

and now I want to retreat
and collect myself.

861

00:43:27,480 --> 00:43:31,050

And they welcomed
me with open arms.

862

00:43:31,050 --> 00:43:34,740

So after the two weeks there,
that you describe in the diary,

863

00:43:34,740 --> 00:43:36,810

you left and went
back to Brussels.

864

00:43:36,810 --> 00:43:37,500

Yep.

865

00:43:37,500 --> 00:43:41,610

Oh, this was really a most
desperate time for me,

866

00:43:41,610 --> 00:43:44,280

because I didn't know what
happened to the colonel.

867

00:43:44,280 --> 00:43:46,990

He was supposed to
get in touch with me.

868

00:43:46,990 --> 00:43:49,260

I hadn't heard from him.

869

00:43:49,260 --> 00:43:51,060

His wife was not very receptive.

870

00:43:51,060 --> 00:43:54,420

Matter of fact, she didn't
know what happened to him.

871

00:43:54,420 --> 00:43:55,530

It was a bad time.

872

00:43:55,530 --> 00:43:56,850

I didn't know where to turn.

873

00:43:56,850 --> 00:43:59,970

874

00:43:59,970 --> 00:44:06,840

Again, it was the
father superior who,

875

00:44:06,840 --> 00:44:11,260

when I was leaving,
gave me 50 francs.

876

00:44:11,260 --> 00:44:14,050

Without that, I wouldn't
have had a penny.

877

00:44:14,050 --> 00:44:17,095

And those 50 francs
allowed me to buy a ticket

878

00:44:17,095 --> 00:44:19,780

to get back to Brussels.

879

00:44:19,780 --> 00:44:23,500

And I tried to get some--

880

00:44:23,500 --> 00:44:27,260

seek some work at farm,
but nobody wanted the boys.

881

00:44:27,260 --> 00:44:28,480

They didn't want any boys.

882

00:44:28,480 --> 00:44:33,040

It's too dangerous to
have a teenager around.

883

00:44:33,040 --> 00:44:36,970

So I had this room in Brussels.

884

00:44:36,970 --> 00:44:39,850

Were you paying rent on the room
the whole time you were away?

885

00:44:39,850 --> 00:44:41,500

Yes.

886

00:44:41,500 --> 00:44:42,440

It was minimal.

887

00:44:42,440 --> 00:44:43,330

It was ridiculous.

888

00:44:43,330 --> 00:44:46,080

This was, like, \$2.50 a month.

889

00:44:46,080 --> 00:44:47,830

But you kept the room,
because you thought

890

00:44:47,830 --> 00:44:49,100

you might to go back there?

891

00:44:49,100 --> 00:44:50,830

Yes, I kept the room.

892

00:44:50,830 --> 00:44:53,470

And I had my friends
there in the country.

893

00:44:53,470 --> 00:44:54,760

And nobody knew me.

894

00:44:54,760 --> 00:44:56,200

The colonel gone.

895

00:44:56,200 --> 00:44:58,060

In the Underground,
they wouldn't let

896

00:44:58,060 --> 00:45:01,710

you know more than two people.

897

00:45:01,710 --> 00:45:03,870

You're not allowed
to know anybody.

898

00:45:03,870 --> 00:45:07,410

Because they know, if you
got caught, you'd talk.

899

00:45:07,410 --> 00:45:09,600

And I only know the colonel.

900

00:45:09,600 --> 00:45:13,380

And I know two other
guys by sight only--

901

00:45:13,380 --> 00:45:16,220

never their names, or anything.

902

00:45:16,220 --> 00:45:17,750

It's very interesting.

903

00:45:17,750 --> 00:45:22,760

They operated under
great stress and duress,

904

00:45:22,760 --> 00:45:24,270

and knew how to do it.

905

00:45:24,270 --> 00:45:28,220

And they knew that the
survival time was six weeks.

906

00:45:28,220 --> 00:45:29,462

The survival time?

907

00:45:29,462 --> 00:45:30,920

What does that

mean, survival time?

908

00:45:30,920 --> 00:45:32,270

Six weeks in the Underground.

909

00:45:32,270 --> 00:45:32,870

And then?

910

00:45:32,870 --> 00:45:36,750

911

00:45:36,750 --> 00:45:40,203

Nobody could last

longer than six weeks.

912

00:45:40,203 --> 00:45:41,120

You could last longer.

913

00:45:41,120 --> 00:45:42,570

That was the average.

914

00:45:42,570 --> 00:45:47,065

So if somebody lasted six weeks,

they would put you on a farm.

915

00:45:47,065 --> 00:45:48,815

That's why they had

these different farms.

916

00:45:48,815 --> 00:45:51,560

917

00:45:51,560 --> 00:45:55,560

People had arrangements,

which somebody

918

00:45:55,560 --> 00:45:58,430
would put-- they would put you
down to cool off a few weeks,

919
00:45:58,430 --> 00:46:01,860
and then you could come back.

920
00:46:01,860 --> 00:46:03,945
That's what happened there.

921
00:46:03,945 --> 00:46:05,320
So I have to go
back to Brussels.

922
00:46:05,320 --> 00:46:06,810
I didn't have
anywhere else to go.

923
00:46:06,810 --> 00:46:08,190
I didn't have any--.

924
00:46:08,190 --> 00:46:12,330
I didn't know any people that I
could contact in the mountains.

925
00:46:12,330 --> 00:46:15,240
So you got back to Brussels--

926
00:46:15,240 --> 00:46:16,650
about what was the date?

927
00:46:16,650 --> 00:46:19,230

928
00:46:19,230 --> 00:46:20,610
Now August.

929
00:46:20,610 --> 00:46:21,685
August.

930
00:46:21,685 --> 00:46:25,960
Mm-hmm, in August.

931
00:46:25,960 --> 00:46:28,000
And it was how long
until liberation.

932
00:46:28,000 --> 00:46:30,160
It was three-weeks
deliberations.

933
00:46:30,160 --> 00:46:31,730
Three weeks.

934
00:46:31,730 --> 00:46:37,060
The Allied had broken through
in France, in the [? Marais ?]----

935
00:46:37,060 --> 00:46:41,210
good old General Patton,
I guess, just behind us.

936
00:46:41,210 --> 00:46:45,220
And they're racing
around like mad.

937
00:46:45,220 --> 00:46:50,740
And it was so interesting,
and should be of interest now,

938
00:46:50,740 --> 00:46:57,070
that the Germans defeated
evacuating Belgium.

939
00:46:57,070 --> 00:46:58,990
You could see that
they're leaving--

940
00:46:58,990 --> 00:47:02,020
trucks full of furniture
leaving, soldiers

941
00:47:02,020 --> 00:47:05,050
leaving in droves.

942

00:47:05,050 --> 00:47:07,690

To the last minute, they
were looking for Jews--

943

00:47:07,690 --> 00:47:12,490

raiding, looking for young
people, to the very last day.

944

00:47:12,490 --> 00:47:14,590

Unbelievable.

945

00:47:14,590 --> 00:47:15,890

The army was gone.

946

00:47:15,890 --> 00:47:20,010

The Gestapo was still
there looking for people.

947

00:47:20,010 --> 00:47:23,010

It was sickness.

948

00:47:23,010 --> 00:47:24,510

And when they left--

949

00:47:24,510 --> 00:47:26,860

and they left--

950

00:47:26,860 --> 00:47:29,280

I said they were gone
1st of September.

951

00:47:29,280 --> 00:47:33,035

When they left, they
left in garbage trucks.

952

00:47:33,035 --> 00:47:35,840

That was the only
vehicles left anymore.

953

00:47:35,840 --> 00:47:38,030

All the vehicles had
been confiscated.

954
00:47:38,030 --> 00:47:40,790
All of the bicycles were gone.

955
00:47:40,790 --> 00:47:42,890
They are leaving
on garbage trucks.

956
00:47:42,890 --> 00:47:46,340
And of course, it was to the
amusement of the bystanders.

957
00:47:46,340 --> 00:47:48,080
People saw them go.

958
00:47:48,080 --> 00:47:51,680
So they would suddenly shoot
at people with machine pistols.

959
00:47:51,680 --> 00:47:54,630
They got so mad, people
standing there grinning.

960
00:47:54,630 --> 00:47:57,320
I saw them leave.

961
00:47:57,320 --> 00:48:02,390
So the Allies actually
came to Brussels two days

962
00:48:02,390 --> 00:48:04,610
after it was evacuated.

963
00:48:04,610 --> 00:48:07,834
There were still a couple
of points in Brussels

964
00:48:07,834 --> 00:48:12,920
that the Germans held,
to slow down the Allies.

965
00:48:12,920 --> 00:48:15,347

The airports were still
occupied by Germans.

966
00:48:15,347 --> 00:48:17,180
And there were a couple
of buildings in town

967
00:48:17,180 --> 00:48:18,860
that they occupied.

968
00:48:18,860 --> 00:48:21,141
But the city was
evacuated-- nobody there.

969
00:48:21,141 --> 00:48:23,850

970
00:48:23,850 --> 00:48:27,600
I was liberated by
the First [INAUDIBLE]..

971
00:48:27,600 --> 00:48:30,630
I have to give them credit--
they were the first soldiers I

972
00:48:30,630 --> 00:48:33,800
saw in Brussels.

973
00:48:33,800 --> 00:48:36,290
So that's about where
your diary ends.

974
00:48:36,290 --> 00:48:37,880
Yes.

975
00:48:37,880 --> 00:48:43,580
And how did you get from
Brussels, at that time,

976
00:48:43,580 --> 00:48:45,065
to the United States?

977

00:48:45,065 --> 00:48:47,870

978

00:48:47,870 --> 00:48:50,900

This from 1944.

979

00:48:50,900 --> 00:48:53,540

Sit down.

980

00:48:53,540 --> 00:48:56,345

My sister and I-- my
sister survived the war

981

00:48:56,345 --> 00:48:59,680

in the mountains.

982

00:48:59,680 --> 00:49:01,780

She has a story of her
own to tell, of course.

983

00:49:01,780 --> 00:49:05,260

And then we got together.

984

00:49:05,260 --> 00:49:10,280

She was in an orphan home
in Brussels after the war.

985

00:49:10,280 --> 00:49:15,170

And I was working as a freelance
artist, in commercial art.

986

00:49:15,170 --> 00:49:17,240

And I went back to school--

987

00:49:17,240 --> 00:49:20,480

waiting for the American visa.

988

00:49:20,480 --> 00:49:24,860

And we waited one year, and
two year, and three years.

989

00:49:24,860 --> 00:49:26,390

I had somewhat recuperated.

990
00:49:26,390 --> 00:49:28,800
I'd been very ill.

991
00:49:28,800 --> 00:49:33,480
And I was almost a
skeleton, I was so thin.

992
00:49:33,480 --> 00:49:37,920
I slowly recuperated,
so I got better.

993
00:49:37,920 --> 00:49:42,420
And my family in
the United States

994
00:49:42,420 --> 00:49:46,680
kept sending me
affidavits, that had to do

995
00:49:46,680 --> 00:49:47,820
moved every so often--

996
00:49:47,820 --> 00:49:49,380
every year.

997
00:49:49,380 --> 00:49:51,060
It meant that those
people had to go

998
00:49:51,060 --> 00:49:53,820
through lawyers every year and
get the whole story starting

999
00:49:53,820 --> 00:49:54,450
again--

1000
00:49:54,450 --> 00:49:56,340
and prove again
what moneys you have

1001

00:49:56,340 --> 00:49:58,470
and prove again you
could support us

1002
00:49:58,470 --> 00:50:00,840
and prove again they
would pay for our trip--

1003
00:50:00,840 --> 00:50:03,480
and on and on and on.

1004
00:50:03,480 --> 00:50:04,890
And it was tiresome.

1005
00:50:04,890 --> 00:50:06,480
And I was ready to give up.

1006
00:50:06,480 --> 00:50:10,680
A lot of people gave up
some went back to Vienna.

1007
00:50:10,680 --> 00:50:13,020
Did you ever think of
going back to Vienna?

1008
00:50:13,020 --> 00:50:16,380
No, I couldn't.

1009
00:50:16,380 --> 00:50:18,330
In that time,
also, I was waiting

1010
00:50:18,330 --> 00:50:20,730
for the possibility of
somebody to come back

1011
00:50:20,730 --> 00:50:23,310
from a concentration camp.

1012
00:50:23,310 --> 00:50:27,600
43 people of my family have
been deported to concentration

1013

00:50:27,600 --> 00:50:29,880

camps, out of 50.

1014

00:50:29,880 --> 00:50:32,950

Nobody came back from my family.

1015

00:50:32,950 --> 00:50:37,350

My mother had been on a
transport of 3,000 women--

1016

00:50:37,350 --> 00:50:44,730

had left in January of 1944,
from Maleme in Brussels.

1017

00:50:44,730 --> 00:50:50,760

Out of those 3,000 women,
29 came back to Brussels.

1018

00:50:50,760 --> 00:50:53,345

1019

00:50:53,345 --> 00:50:56,980

And I spoke to most of them.

1020

00:50:56,980 --> 00:51:02,470

I found one who has shown
pictures of my mother.

1021

00:51:02,470 --> 00:51:03,970

Actually, the one
who was showing

1022

00:51:03,970 --> 00:51:06,610

that she knew my mother--
and she thinks my mother

1023

00:51:06,610 --> 00:51:11,050

worked in a brickmaking
in Auschwitz.

1024

00:51:11,050 --> 00:51:14,400

That's all she could tell.

1025
00:51:14,400 --> 00:51:15,960
And then the Russians came.

1026
00:51:15,960 --> 00:51:19,560
They started with
something of a dead march.

1027
00:51:19,560 --> 00:51:23,940
The march of the prisoners,
the survivors back to Germany.

1028
00:51:23,940 --> 00:51:27,210
And most of them didn't make it.

1029
00:51:27,210 --> 00:51:30,730
I don't know whether my
mother perished before that,

1030
00:51:30,730 --> 00:51:31,875
during this.

1031
00:51:31,875 --> 00:51:33,780
And I just don't know.

1032
00:51:33,780 --> 00:51:36,430
So much to think about.

1033
00:51:36,430 --> 00:51:41,560
But anyway, everyone-- as I
said, I was getting antsy.

1034
00:51:41,560 --> 00:51:43,570
And I couldn't take
a permanent job.

1035
00:51:43,570 --> 00:51:45,200
Nobody would hire you.

1036
00:51:45,200 --> 00:51:47,170
They know you're going to leave.

1037

00:51:47,170 --> 00:51:50,530

I was a youngster, I worked
in an advertising agency.

1038

00:51:50,530 --> 00:51:54,370

And so you know, it takes
us a year to train you,

1039

00:51:54,370 --> 00:51:57,200

and you're going to leave.

1040

00:51:57,200 --> 00:51:58,960

We've been losing money on you.

1041

00:51:58,960 --> 00:52:00,475

The only reason we
could work there

1042

00:52:00,475 --> 00:52:02,770

is because, again,
the friend was

1043

00:52:02,770 --> 00:52:05,980

a good friend of the person
who owned agency, and made

1044

00:52:05,980 --> 00:52:12,250

an exception and they asked
to have me work there.

1045

00:52:12,250 --> 00:52:17,140

And then one day, I come home.

1046

00:52:17,140 --> 00:52:21,640

I lived in a rooming house next
to a lady, who was a bit older

1047

00:52:21,640 --> 00:52:24,550

than I, she was--

1048

00:52:24,550 --> 00:52:27,070

had a two, three-year-old child.

1049
00:52:27,070 --> 00:52:30,400

1050
00:52:30,400 --> 00:52:32,335
And I come home
and I hear her cry.

1051
00:52:32,335 --> 00:52:35,100

1052
00:52:35,100 --> 00:52:37,290
So I knock on the door.

1053
00:52:37,290 --> 00:52:42,570
And I asked if there
was anything I could do.

1054
00:52:42,570 --> 00:52:44,630
And she says to me,
this is terrible.

1055
00:52:44,630 --> 00:52:46,380
She was at the
American Consulate.

1056
00:52:46,380 --> 00:52:51,370
And the consul had offered
a visa to her daughter,

1057
00:52:51,370 --> 00:52:54,680
but not to her.

1058
00:52:54,680 --> 00:52:58,820
And she couldn't possibly send
a two-year child to the States

1059
00:52:58,820 --> 00:52:59,720
without the money.

1060
00:52:59,720 --> 00:53:02,450
So she had to refuse it.

1061
00:53:02,450 --> 00:53:03,830
She couldn't accept that.

1062
00:53:03,830 --> 00:53:12,380
And the rule was, say, that if
you do that, that's it, Yeah.

1063
00:53:12,380 --> 00:53:16,220
You get kicked off the
waiting list, so to speak.

1064
00:53:16,220 --> 00:53:18,810
That's what she was
very upset about.

1065
00:53:18,810 --> 00:53:23,010
So that very same day,
I picked up a newspaper.

1066
00:53:23,010 --> 00:53:25,850
I was in the heaven reading
that in a newspapers.

1067
00:53:25,850 --> 00:53:28,580
There was a headline
on it in the newspaper,

1068
00:53:28,580 --> 00:53:31,130
that the Belgian
authorities had been looking

1069
00:53:31,130 --> 00:53:35,600
for one of the
great collaborators

1070
00:53:35,600 --> 00:53:39,820
and black marketeers during the
war, who worked with Germans,

1071
00:53:39,820 --> 00:53:41,150
you see?

1072

00:53:41,150 --> 00:53:44,030

And since the liberation
had disappeared,

1073

00:53:44,030 --> 00:53:45,350

they couldn't find him.

1074

00:53:45,350 --> 00:53:50,910

And they have discovered
him and arrested him.

1075

00:53:50,910 --> 00:53:52,100

OK.

1076

00:53:52,100 --> 00:53:54,395

The next day the headline
was the [? guy ?]

1077

00:53:54,395 --> 00:53:56,930

was leaving for
the United States.

1078

00:53:56,930 --> 00:53:59,720

He received an American visa.

1079

00:53:59,720 --> 00:54:00,690

He was on his way.

1080

00:54:00,690 --> 00:54:03,550

1081

00:54:03,550 --> 00:54:07,000

Well, that only
confirmed what many of us

1082

00:54:07,000 --> 00:54:11,620

suspected, that a rumor
has been that if you

1083

00:54:11,620 --> 00:54:15,720

go to the American
consulate with money,

1084
00:54:15,720 --> 00:54:17,860
you will get a visa.

1085
00:54:17,860 --> 00:54:21,360
And the rest of us
will never get it.

1086
00:54:21,360 --> 00:54:24,370
And, matter of fact,
it had gotten so bad

1087
00:54:24,370 --> 00:54:26,770
that you could not go to
the American consulate

1088
00:54:26,770 --> 00:54:28,870
without an appointment.

1089
00:54:28,870 --> 00:54:31,420
And what it would do
to discourage you--

1090
00:54:31,420 --> 00:54:33,190
and it happened to
me several times--

1091
00:54:33,190 --> 00:54:38,140
you get an appointment to
get at 8:00 in the morning.

1092
00:54:38,140 --> 00:54:41,710
You sit there all day, till
5 o'clock in the afternoon.

1093
00:54:41,710 --> 00:54:45,700
You can watch the secretaries
playing cards and drinking

1094
00:54:45,700 --> 00:54:48,580
Coke, having nothing to do.

1095

00:54:48,580 --> 00:54:50,710
And there are people
sitting in the waiting.

1096
00:54:50,710 --> 00:54:52,600
And then they come out
at 5 o'clock and say,

1097
00:54:52,600 --> 00:54:54,100
sorry, we're closing.

1098
00:54:54,100 --> 00:54:57,560
You have to come
back some other time.

1099
00:54:57,560 --> 00:55:01,390
And of course, it was a
train trip to the consulate.

1100
00:55:01,390 --> 00:55:03,325
It was in Antwerp, not Brussels.

1101
00:55:03,325 --> 00:55:05,200
And every time you had
to go and get a train,

1102
00:55:05,200 --> 00:55:06,370
you dressed up and all this.

1103
00:55:06,370 --> 00:55:08,950
I took papers to get
and all this stuff.

1104
00:55:08,950 --> 00:55:12,340
So they tried to discourage me.

1105
00:55:12,340 --> 00:55:15,670
And you couldn't get in
without an appointment.

1106
00:55:15,670 --> 00:55:20,260
So when I saw this,
I said to myself,

1107
00:55:20,260 --> 00:55:22,510
I'm going to settle this
America bit once and for all.

1108
00:55:22,510 --> 00:55:24,940
I've been waiting three years.

1109
00:55:24,940 --> 00:55:27,190
In the meantime, I graduated
from the Royal Academy

1110
00:55:27,190 --> 00:55:27,820
in Brussels.

1111
00:55:27,820 --> 00:55:33,010
I had a degree I was a bona fide
artist I could find employment

1112
00:55:33,010 --> 00:55:37,570
at the advertising agencies--
so as a photographer.

1113
00:55:37,570 --> 00:55:38,950
I had a girlfriend.

1114
00:55:38,950 --> 00:55:42,280
I had good friends.

1115
00:55:42,280 --> 00:55:43,510
Amy was like a brother to me.

1116
00:55:43,510 --> 00:55:45,490
Mr. Dirks was like
a father to me.

1117
00:55:45,490 --> 00:55:48,340

1118
00:55:48,340 --> 00:55:51,430
I'd just assume stay.

1119

00:55:51,430 --> 00:55:54,790

But all my family-- the family
I had left-- was in America.

1120

00:55:54,790 --> 00:55:56,800

So that's what's the thing.

1121

00:55:56,800 --> 00:55:59,350

The only family I
had was in New York.

1122

00:55:59,350 --> 00:56:04,070

They had no family in
Europe, except for my sister,

1123

00:56:04,070 --> 00:56:05,890

of course.

1124

00:56:05,890 --> 00:56:08,350

My sister was in an orphan home.

1125

00:56:08,350 --> 00:56:12,460

I saw her frequently,
but that's where she was.

1126

00:56:12,460 --> 00:56:15,070

So at the time, I'm going to
settle this once and for all.

1127

00:56:15,070 --> 00:56:16,690

I want it settled.

1128

00:56:16,690 --> 00:56:22,330

The indecision was the painful
thing and at that point.

1129

00:56:22,330 --> 00:56:27,010

I took the train to
Antwerp the next morning.

1130

00:56:27,010 --> 00:56:28,160

I went up.

1131
00:56:28,160 --> 00:56:32,000
I got to the embassy
at exactly noon.

1132
00:56:32,000 --> 00:56:34,790
The reason I remember this is
because the office-- this isn't

1133
00:56:34,790 --> 00:56:36,800
a business district,
and the office

1134
00:56:36,800 --> 00:56:40,250
is where the secretaries
all go out lunch.

1135
00:56:40,250 --> 00:56:42,500
And people go out to lunch.

1136
00:56:42,500 --> 00:56:45,950
There was a lot of foot
traffic by the embassy.

1137
00:56:45,950 --> 00:56:47,450
And they got there.

1138
00:56:47,450 --> 00:56:50,960
And there's this big
Marine standing at the door

1139
00:56:50,960 --> 00:56:54,670
and he asked me what
can I do for you.

1140
00:56:54,670 --> 00:56:56,930
I say, I came to see a council.

1141
00:56:56,930 --> 00:56:59,300
He's like, oh yeah, so
you have an appointment.

1142

00:56:59,300 --> 00:57:01,190
I said no.

1143
00:57:01,190 --> 00:57:03,245
He said, sorry you have
to have an appointment.

1144
00:57:03,245 --> 00:57:05,120
Sorry to see the counsel.

1145
00:57:05,120 --> 00:57:07,610
I said, OK, I'll tell you what.

1146
00:57:07,610 --> 00:57:10,940
I have a feeling I
will see the council.

1147
00:57:10,940 --> 00:57:14,420
And if I can't see him, you see
all those people walking by?

1148
00:57:14,420 --> 00:57:17,600
I don't want to stop those
people and tell them,

1149
00:57:17,600 --> 00:57:20,760
what do you know about this man?

1150
00:57:20,760 --> 00:57:23,240
And I said One minute.

1151
00:57:23,240 --> 00:57:26,440
If you don't believe me, try it.

1152
00:57:26,440 --> 00:57:29,890
He said, well, that's no
reason-- don't get excited.

1153
00:57:29,890 --> 00:57:32,620
He goes inside, comes
back a minute later--

1154

00:57:32,620 --> 00:57:34,398
the consul will see you now.

1155
00:57:34,398 --> 00:57:37,660

1156
00:57:37,660 --> 00:57:41,180
So right then I thought, you
know, that must be right.

1157
00:57:41,180 --> 00:57:44,170
There's something
wrong with this guy.

1158
00:57:44,170 --> 00:57:47,410
He should have had me
arrested for what I was doing.

1159
00:57:47,410 --> 00:57:49,030
Instead, he was
going to see now.

1160
00:57:49,030 --> 00:57:51,760
So I've have never seen him.

1161
00:57:51,760 --> 00:57:54,490
He has never received me--

1162
00:57:54,490 --> 00:57:56,770
I've been to the
consulate several times.

1163
00:57:56,770 --> 00:57:58,030
And I was able to see him.

1164
00:57:58,030 --> 00:58:00,280
He always was busy.

1165
00:58:00,280 --> 00:58:02,350
I come in his office,
he offers me a cigar.

1166

00:58:02,350 --> 00:58:05,880

1167

00:58:05,880 --> 00:58:07,770

Sit down, Mr. Kosak.

1168

00:58:07,770 --> 00:58:09,600

How do you spell your name?

1169

00:58:09,600 --> 00:58:12,210

I understand you have some
sort of grievance against it.

1170

00:58:12,210 --> 00:58:13,050

What's the matter?

1171

00:58:13,050 --> 00:58:14,550

What's going on?

1172

00:58:14,550 --> 00:58:17,100

I said, well my
sister and I have

1173

00:58:17,100 --> 00:58:26,850

been trying to immigrate to
the United States since 1938.

1174

00:58:26,850 --> 00:58:28,670

This, is 1947.

1175

00:58:28,670 --> 00:58:30,150

You're still here.

1176

00:58:30,150 --> 00:58:32,060

Oh, our papers aren't perfect.

1177

00:58:32,060 --> 00:58:34,190

Well--

1178

00:58:34,190 --> 00:58:36,830

There's nothing wrong
with our affidavits.

1179
00:58:36,830 --> 00:58:37,510
He looked at me.

1180
00:58:37,510 --> 00:58:40,880
He says, hmm, I don't
understand this--

1181
00:58:40,880 --> 00:58:41,750
rings bells and all.

1182
00:58:41,750 --> 00:58:44,300
Secretaries come running.

1183
00:58:44,300 --> 00:58:47,810
Says, I want to see
the files on Mr. Kosak.

1184
00:58:47,810 --> 00:58:49,430
They bring in a file.

1185
00:58:49,430 --> 00:58:50,360
He looks at the file.

1186
00:58:50,360 --> 00:58:52,160
He says, oh my god,
this is terrible.

1187
00:58:52,160 --> 00:58:55,350
You should have gone
a long time ago.

1188
00:58:55,350 --> 00:58:56,910
I said, good.

1189
00:58:56,910 --> 00:58:58,800
I said, we can go now?

1190
00:58:58,800 --> 00:59:02,580
He says, the next visa
that comes in is for you.

1191

00:59:02,580 --> 00:59:06,520

I say, excuse me, I'm not
going without my sister.

1192

00:59:06,520 --> 00:59:09,040

He says, well, I
cannot promise you.

1193

00:59:09,040 --> 00:59:12,160

I said, I'm not going
without my sister.

1194

00:59:12,160 --> 00:59:14,890

And if I'm not going,
I'm going to get

1195

00:59:14,890 --> 00:59:19,960

in touch with Harry
Truman personally and let

1196

00:59:19,960 --> 00:59:23,188

him know what's going on here.

1197

00:59:23,188 --> 00:59:25,020

I told him that.

1198

00:59:25,020 --> 00:59:28,870

And he says, Mr. Kosak,
you're absolutely wrong.

1199

00:59:28,870 --> 00:59:29,550

You're wrong.

1200

00:59:29,550 --> 00:59:31,170

There's nothing going on.

1201

00:59:31,170 --> 00:59:33,060

You go home, and I'll
see what I can do.

1202

00:59:33,060 --> 00:59:34,230

I say, fine.

1203
00:59:34,230 --> 00:59:36,300
I expect to hear from you.

1204
00:59:36,300 --> 00:59:40,960
A week later, we got the visas
in the mail-- my sister and I--

1205
00:59:40,960 --> 00:59:44,890
special delivery.

1206
00:59:44,890 --> 00:59:47,950
That's how I got here.

1207
00:59:47,950 --> 00:59:52,060
Now when I left, I
was fully intended to,

1208
00:59:52,060 --> 00:59:55,750
actually, let Harry
Truman know about this.

1209
00:59:55,750 --> 00:59:57,730
And I talked to
my aunts about it.

1210
00:59:57,730 --> 01:00:03,810
And they said, oh my god,
what proof do you have?

1211
01:00:03,810 --> 01:00:05,325
You don't even
speak the language

1212
01:00:05,325 --> 01:00:07,150
So you came to where,
when you came to--

1213
01:00:07,150 --> 01:00:07,733
New York City.

1214
01:00:07,733 --> 01:00:09,180

You came to New York City.

1215
01:00:09,180 --> 01:00:11,340
And is that where you stayed?

1216
01:00:11,340 --> 01:00:12,300
Yes.

1217
01:00:12,300 --> 01:00:13,780
You had family in New York City?

1218
01:00:13,780 --> 01:00:14,280
Yes.

1219
01:00:14,280 --> 01:00:17,940
Yes, I stayed with my uncle
Victor, in the same house,

1220
01:00:17,940 --> 01:00:19,440
had hid a room for me upstairs.

1221
01:00:19,440 --> 01:00:21,300
So this is 1947.

1222
01:00:21,300 --> 01:00:22,060
1947.

1223
01:00:22,060 --> 01:00:25,590
And you are-- you're 23--

1224
01:00:25,590 --> 01:00:26,240
22, 23.

1225
01:00:26,240 --> 01:00:26,740
Yes.

1226
01:00:26,740 --> 01:00:29,190
And I don't speak
English very well.

1227
01:00:29,190 --> 01:00:32,220

I can say, how do you do?

1228
01:00:32,220 --> 01:00:35,950
And now I need to find a job.

1229
01:00:35,950 --> 01:00:42,220
And so I study English, I get
a dictionary and I go around

1230
01:00:42,220 --> 01:00:45,100
looking for jobs .

1231
01:00:45,100 --> 01:00:48,820
And I was an artist-painter.

1232
01:00:48,820 --> 01:00:51,442
I brought some
paintings with me,

1233
01:00:51,442 --> 01:00:56,270
and somebody arranged
an exhibit for me.

1234
01:00:56,270 --> 01:01:02,240
And at that exhibit, a man
came in and introduced himself

1235
01:01:02,240 --> 01:01:04,800
as director of an art school
in Mount Vernon, New York.

1236
01:01:04,800 --> 01:01:06,940
And he said to me, how
would you like to teach me?

1237
01:01:06,940 --> 01:01:09,550

1238
01:01:09,550 --> 01:01:13,100
I said, I love it, but
my English is just so so.

1239

01:01:13,100 --> 01:01:15,170
I don't speak it very well.

1240
01:01:15,170 --> 01:01:16,610
He says, ah, you speak--

1241
01:01:16,610 --> 01:01:19,940
You just have to show
other students what to do.

1242
01:01:19,940 --> 01:01:22,880
I say it could be perfect,
what I had in mind.

1243
01:01:22,880 --> 01:01:26,090
Why don't you come
visit me [MUMBLING]??

1244
01:01:26,090 --> 01:01:29,630
And he hired me
to teach painting,

1245
01:01:29,630 --> 01:01:33,550
in the Mount Vernon Art School.

1246
01:01:33,550 --> 01:01:38,330
And I was there-- it
was eight months or so.

1247
01:01:38,330 --> 01:01:41,240
I was drafted in the US Army.

1248
01:01:41,240 --> 01:01:45,620
My English was still bad enough,
so when I received greetings,

1249
01:01:45,620 --> 01:01:47,960
it was Christmas time.

1250
01:01:47,960 --> 01:01:52,480
I received a letter from the
White House and the president.

1251

01:01:52,480 --> 01:01:56,510

It says, greetings,
welcome, you know?

1252

01:01:56,510 --> 01:01:57,530

I was so excited.

1253

01:01:57,530 --> 01:02:00,980

I was about to leave to go to
a party we had at the school--

1254

01:02:00,980 --> 01:02:02,330

at the art school--

1255

01:02:02,330 --> 01:02:04,150

for the holidays.

1256

01:02:04,150 --> 01:02:06,380

I took that letter along.

1257

01:02:06,380 --> 01:02:07,630

The letter.

1258

01:02:07,630 --> 01:02:10,730

I said, is this a
great country or what?

1259

01:02:10,730 --> 01:02:13,540

I got a letter
from the president.

1260

01:02:13,540 --> 01:02:15,140

And I looked at the letters.

1261

01:02:15,140 --> 01:02:17,650

It said, Hermann,
you're in the Army now.

1262

01:02:17,650 --> 01:02:19,910

I was drafted.

1263

01:02:19,910 --> 01:02:22,850

And how was that
experience for you?

1264

01:02:22,850 --> 01:02:25,670

It was, in the end, a very
good experience for me,

1265

01:02:25,670 --> 01:02:28,830

because I told them
I spoke French--

1266

01:02:28,830 --> 01:02:30,410

and fluently-- and German.

1267

01:02:30,410 --> 01:02:32,390

And I knew my way
around in Austria,

1268

01:02:32,390 --> 01:02:34,940

and I knew my way
around in Belgium.

1269

01:02:34,940 --> 01:02:36,650

And I would like
to go to Europe.

1270

01:02:36,650 --> 01:02:40,220

And they promptly
sent me to Japan.

1271

01:02:40,220 --> 01:02:47,180

So I wound up in Tokyo, as
an MP in GHQ, Tokyo, which

1272

01:02:47,180 --> 01:02:48,440

was a wonderful experience.

1273

01:02:48,440 --> 01:02:51,260

But all of a sudden,
I was a powerful man.

1274

01:02:51,260 --> 01:02:57,050

Can you believe what happened
to my psychic makeup?

1275

01:02:57,050 --> 01:03:01,040

I had been a downtrodden,
beaten, immigrant refugee

1276

01:03:01,040 --> 01:03:05,300

for years and years and years,
and suddenly I was a king.

1277

01:03:05,300 --> 01:03:08,840

There were 10 million
people in Tokyo.

1278

01:03:08,840 --> 01:03:11,330

At any one time, there
are not more than 30

1279

01:03:11,330 --> 01:03:14,570

or 35 MPs on patrol.

1280

01:03:14,570 --> 01:03:17,945

And they were the kings.

1281

01:03:17,945 --> 01:03:21,920

And on my very first
experience as an MP,

1282

01:03:21,920 --> 01:03:25,640

I had to cut the electricity
off in all of Tokyo--

1283

01:03:25,640 --> 01:03:29,780

because somebody meant to move
a building across a railway

1284

01:03:29,780 --> 01:03:32,660

crossing, that was electrified.

1285

01:03:32,660 --> 01:03:35,480

And we had to cut
the electricity off.

1286
01:03:35,480 --> 01:03:37,670
What power.

1287
01:03:37,670 --> 01:03:41,620
And at my say so they turned
it off, and at my say so,

1288
01:03:41,620 --> 01:03:42,620
they turned it on again.

1289
01:03:42,620 --> 01:03:45,290
So that was a different
kind of experience.

1290
01:03:45,290 --> 01:03:47,330
It was a healing period.

1291
01:03:47,330 --> 01:03:50,330
I was there a year.

1292
01:03:50,330 --> 01:03:59,450
And I believe we
did a lot to heal.

1293
01:03:59,450 --> 01:04:02,480
We did a lot to restore
self-confidence.

1294
01:04:02,480 --> 01:04:06,640

1295
01:04:06,640 --> 01:04:07,840
It was very, very helpful.

1296
01:04:07,840 --> 01:04:11,050
So all in all, it was,
again, a lucky break for me.

1297
01:04:11,050 --> 01:04:13,920
Then when you got out of
the Army, what happened?

1298
01:04:13,920 --> 01:04:19,040
Oh, I was discharged.

1299
01:04:19,040 --> 01:04:21,735
Actually, I had to sign
up for the reserves,

1300
01:04:21,735 --> 01:04:22,860
or they wouldn't let me go.

1301
01:04:22,860 --> 01:04:26,460
I'd been in it 18 months.

1302
01:04:26,460 --> 01:04:33,630
And I got out six months
early because I signed up

1303
01:04:33,630 --> 01:04:35,400
for four years in the reserves--

1304
01:04:35,400 --> 01:04:36,330
active reserves.

1305
01:04:36,330 --> 01:04:39,000

1306
01:04:39,000 --> 01:04:41,475
The reason I did this is
because I was getting worried.

1307
01:04:41,475 --> 01:04:44,480

1308
01:04:44,480 --> 01:04:45,800
I felt I was getting old.

1309
01:04:45,800 --> 01:04:49,250
I didn't have a high-school
certificate yet.

1310

01:04:49,250 --> 01:04:52,870

Yeah, I never
finished high school.

1311

01:04:52,870 --> 01:04:54,940

I didn't have a good profession.

1312

01:04:54,940 --> 01:04:56,530

I was an artist.

1313

01:04:56,530 --> 01:04:59,980

By that time, I
realized as a painter,

1314

01:04:59,980 --> 01:05:04,750

you never will make a living
unless you're exceptionally

1315

01:05:04,750 --> 01:05:06,310

successfully lucky.

1316

01:05:06,310 --> 01:05:08,700

So you must be about
25 by this time.

1317

01:05:08,700 --> 01:05:16,060

Yeah, yeah, what
is it, 1949, 1950.

1318

01:05:16,060 --> 01:05:18,400

I was getting antsy.

1319

01:05:18,400 --> 01:05:19,540

I spoke the language.

1320

01:05:19,540 --> 01:05:23,440

But you know, I had learned
English in the Army now.

1321

01:05:23,440 --> 01:05:27,280

You can't imagine what
English I spoke, can you?

1322

01:05:27,280 --> 01:05:30,860
Some people blanched and turned
red when I spoke to them.

1323

01:05:30,860 --> 01:05:32,770
I realized there's
something wrong.

1324

01:05:32,770 --> 01:05:35,680
I had to do something
about my language.

1325

01:05:35,680 --> 01:05:36,940
I was going back.

1326

01:05:36,940 --> 01:05:39,460
And again, I made
a friend in Tokyo--

1327

01:05:39,460 --> 01:05:43,390
a young man, my
age, who was Jewish.

1328

01:05:43,390 --> 01:05:46,060
And I took him to JHQ.

1329

01:05:46,060 --> 01:05:47,650
And he was adopted.

1330

01:05:47,650 --> 01:05:49,970
He was a survivor of
a concentration camp.

1331

01:05:49,970 --> 01:05:52,930
He was a little boy when he
got in a concentration camp.

1332

01:05:52,930 --> 01:05:56,800
And some Americans brought
him over from Kansas City,

1333

01:05:56,800 --> 01:05:58,160

and he was keen. [?

1334

01:05:58,160 --> 01:06:00,070

Bob and Opal ?] [] came.

1335

01:06:00,070 --> 01:06:03,070

They had no children,
and they adopted him.

1336

01:06:03,070 --> 01:06:05,530

And he kept telling me how
I had to go see them-- how

1337

01:06:05,530 --> 01:06:07,900

wonderful they were and so on.

1338

01:06:07,900 --> 01:06:10,270

Now, they had promised him
I would visit him on my way

1339

01:06:10,270 --> 01:06:12,970

back-- so when I was on
the way back to New York,

1340

01:06:12,970 --> 01:06:14,480

I stopped in Kansas
City and became

1341

01:06:14,480 --> 01:06:16,690

acquainted with those people.

1342

01:06:16,690 --> 01:06:18,860

And they were so loving
and wonderful people.

1343

01:06:18,860 --> 01:06:21,010

They wanted me to
come live with them.

1344

01:06:21,010 --> 01:06:29,020

When I came back to New York,
I got a job designing ties.

1345

01:06:29,020 --> 01:06:33,200

That paid \$0.83 a tie.

1346

01:06:33,200 --> 01:06:34,750

You had to work like a dog.

1347

01:06:34,750 --> 01:06:39,380

It was a piece work, so you
really had to work like a dog

1348

01:06:39,380 --> 01:06:40,880

to make a living--

1349

01:06:40,880 --> 01:06:44,630

to make \$25 a week [INAUDIBLE]
it was a lot of work.

1350

01:06:44,630 --> 01:06:50,840

And the owners had a control
over how much you made.

1351

01:06:50,840 --> 01:06:53,060

Because they could say,
oh, this is no good.

1352

01:06:53,060 --> 01:06:54,770

And this design-- how could you?

1353

01:06:54,770 --> 01:06:58,850

And they threw them out, so they
didn't have to pay you for it.

1354

01:06:58,850 --> 01:07:01,310

So they kept your wages
on a pretty even keel.

1355

01:07:01,310 --> 01:07:04,550

That means you
couldn't make a living.

1356

01:07:04,550 --> 01:07:07,160

And on top of this, you

had to belong to the union

1357

01:07:07,160 --> 01:07:07,880
to be there.

1358

01:07:07,880 --> 01:07:09,080
And it was all ridiculous.

1359

01:07:09,080 --> 01:07:13,360
So one night, I called
those people in Kansas City.

1360

01:07:13,360 --> 01:07:14,860
I said, were you
serious when they

1361

01:07:14,860 --> 01:07:17,080
said that I should
come to Kansas City

1362

01:07:17,080 --> 01:07:20,850
and you would help
me find a job there?

1363

01:07:20,850 --> 01:07:23,220
They said, you
better believe it.

1364

01:07:23,220 --> 01:07:25,410
You come out here, and
you can stay with us

1365

01:07:25,410 --> 01:07:28,470
till you're settled.

1366

01:07:28,470 --> 01:07:30,900
So I said, if you really mean
that, expect me tomorrow.

1367

01:07:30,900 --> 01:07:33,880

1368

01:07:33,880 --> 01:07:35,530
I packed my suitcase and left.

1369
01:07:35,530 --> 01:07:40,690
Because this thing was I had
my aunts there and my uncles.

1370
01:07:40,690 --> 01:07:43,700
They were all working.

1371
01:07:43,700 --> 01:07:47,650
I didn't see them anyway,
except maybe for an hour

1372
01:07:47,650 --> 01:07:50,330
or so on the weekend.

1373
01:07:50,330 --> 01:07:51,010
You understand?

1374
01:07:51,010 --> 01:07:53,110
We had nothing in common.

1375
01:07:53,110 --> 01:07:55,990
I realized-- I got together
that we were talking

1376
01:07:55,990 --> 01:07:59,920
about so and so who died.

1377
01:07:59,920 --> 01:08:03,310
We were talking about,
what are you going to do?

1378
01:08:03,310 --> 01:08:04,060
You know?

1379
01:08:04,060 --> 01:08:05,800
So you wanted to
start a new life.

1380
01:08:05,800 --> 01:08:06,460

Yeah.

1381
01:08:06,460 --> 01:08:09,550
It has become a trap.

1382
01:08:09,550 --> 01:08:12,160
It was something depressing.

1383
01:08:12,160 --> 01:08:12,790
It was bad.

1384
01:08:12,790 --> 01:08:14,670
Now that I came back
from the service,

1385
01:08:14,670 --> 01:08:17,430
I was a different person.

1386
01:08:17,430 --> 01:08:18,600
I had gained weight.

1387
01:08:18,600 --> 01:08:20,189
I was healthy again.

1388
01:08:20,189 --> 01:08:23,819
And I wouldn't put
up with that, see?

1389
01:08:23,819 --> 01:08:26,340
I wanted a life.

1390
01:08:26,340 --> 01:08:29,399
So I packed my suitcase, got
off my my hands and said,

1391
01:08:29,399 --> 01:08:31,229
I'm leaving for Kansas City.

1392
01:08:31,229 --> 01:08:32,910
They knew already
that I had started.

1393

01:08:32,910 --> 01:08:34,260

And I said, I'll write to you.

1394

01:08:34,260 --> 01:08:35,700

I'll let you know.

1395

01:08:35,700 --> 01:08:39,560

I was on the next
train to Kansas City.

1396

01:08:39,560 --> 01:08:42,859

And I went to work in
a department store--

1397

01:08:42,859 --> 01:08:46,180

a shoe department, as a clerk.

1398

01:08:46,180 --> 01:08:48,251

Very nice-- I had a lot of fun.

1399

01:08:48,251 --> 01:08:49,209

It was a female store--

1400

01:08:49,209 --> 01:08:51,859

1401

01:08:51,859 --> 01:08:57,290

[? Heartsfells-- ?] an exclusive
female store, for women.

1402

01:08:57,290 --> 01:08:58,640

And Mrs. Truman shopped there.

1403

01:08:58,640 --> 01:09:00,770

That's how exclusive it was.

1404

01:09:00,770 --> 01:09:03,200

And I was one of the
very few males there,

1405

01:09:03,200 --> 01:09:09,680

and almost exclusively the
only eligible 26-year-old.

1406
01:09:09,680 --> 01:09:12,290
So I had a lot of fun with
girls flirting with me--

1407
01:09:12,290 --> 01:09:16,380
no experience for me, you see?

1408
01:09:16,380 --> 01:09:18,149
I could date.

1409
01:09:18,149 --> 01:09:21,000
But I was there a
very short time,

1410
01:09:21,000 --> 01:09:22,422
and I was called
back in the Army.

1411
01:09:22,422 --> 01:09:26,930
The Korean War broke out,
and I got 24-hour notice

1412
01:09:26,930 --> 01:09:29,350
to report back, to
Fort Leonard Wood.

1413
01:09:29,350 --> 01:09:31,779
And I was back in the service.

1414
01:09:31,779 --> 01:09:32,830
And it was 18 months.

1415
01:09:32,830 --> 01:09:35,583

1416
01:09:35,583 --> 01:09:37,000
To make a long
story short, that's

1417

01:09:37,000 --> 01:09:38,470
how I came up to Battle Creek.

1418
01:09:38,470 --> 01:09:41,609
I was discharged in Battle
Creek the second time, where

1419
01:09:41,609 --> 01:09:42,324
I met my wife.

1420
01:09:42,324 --> 01:09:46,439

1421
01:09:46,439 --> 01:09:47,830
That's how it goes.

1422
01:09:47,830 --> 01:09:48,330
OK.

1423
01:09:48,330 --> 01:09:50,130
And you married.

1424
01:09:50,130 --> 01:09:52,560
At that time, yes, I'd
been married to her.

1425
01:09:52,560 --> 01:09:56,340
I still was not a citizen.

1426
01:09:56,340 --> 01:10:00,240
And I had applied
for citizenship.

1427
01:10:00,240 --> 01:10:04,832
And I got a job as a
commercial artist--

1428
01:10:04,832 --> 01:10:07,290
matter of fact, that's how we
get to know each other, well,

1429
01:10:07,290 --> 01:10:09,700

because I got a job.

1430
01:10:09,700 --> 01:10:11,340
When I got discharged,
I got a job

1431
01:10:11,340 --> 01:10:13,330
with Boeing aircraft
in Battle Creek.

1432
01:10:13,330 --> 01:10:17,790
They were making the
B-52, believe it or not.

1433
01:10:17,790 --> 01:10:21,270
They were making the
midsection of the B-52,

1434
01:10:21,270 --> 01:10:22,740
in Battle Creek, Michigan.

1435
01:10:22,740 --> 01:10:28,905
It was a big plant, and
I became a draftsman--

1436
01:10:28,905 --> 01:10:32,610
an illustrator--
three-dimensional Illustrator.

1437
01:10:32,610 --> 01:10:35,090
And what we did is
we looked-- there

1438
01:10:35,090 --> 01:10:40,320
was about 26 or 28 people,
and my wife was one of them.

1439
01:10:40,320 --> 01:10:42,450
And what we had to do
is take blueprints--

1440
01:10:42,450 --> 01:10:44,940
assembly blueprints--

1441
01:10:44,940 --> 01:10:46,845
and make
three-dimensional drawings

1442
01:10:46,845 --> 01:10:48,860
from two-dimensional blueprints.

1443
01:10:48,860 --> 01:10:50,928
So the people on
the line, or queue,

1444
01:10:50,928 --> 01:10:52,845
couldn't read the
blueprint-- could check with

1445
01:10:52,845 --> 01:10:56,190
the three-dimensional drawings
and knew where the wire goes--

1446
01:10:56,190 --> 01:10:59,250
and where they had to put
the bolts and all this.

1447
01:10:59,250 --> 01:11:00,750
Let's stop that
tape for a moment.

1448
01:11:00,750 --> 01:11:05,650

1449
01:11:05,650 --> 01:11:08,470
Before we conclude
the interview,

1450
01:11:08,470 --> 01:11:11,830
is there anything else
that you would like to say?

1451
01:11:11,830 --> 01:11:14,020
Yes.

1452

01:11:14,020 --> 01:11:16,570

The one important
thing that needs

1453

01:11:16,570 --> 01:11:21,790

to be said-- the one important
thing that I'm impressed with

1454

01:11:21,790 --> 01:11:25,510

is that despite what has
happened during the Hitler

1455

01:11:25,510 --> 01:11:30,280

period, humanity
seemed to have learned,

1456

01:11:30,280 --> 01:11:34,400

or benefited very
little from the tragedy.

1457

01:11:34,400 --> 01:11:36,820

There are still
people in this world

1458

01:11:36,820 --> 01:11:39,460

who have been murdered
because their religion is

1459

01:11:39,460 --> 01:11:42,010

different from other religions.

1460

01:11:42,010 --> 01:11:45,010

There are still people who have
been persecuted and murdered

1461

01:11:45,010 --> 01:11:47,830

because their skin
color is different,

1462

01:11:47,830 --> 01:11:51,140

or because they have
different ideas about life.

1463

01:11:51,140 --> 01:11:55,960
And I think that this is really
the great tragedy of our time.

1464
01:11:55,960 --> 01:11:58,840
This is really something
that we have to live with

1465
01:11:58,840 --> 01:12:02,730
and something that we
have to try to improve.

1466
01:12:02,730 --> 01:12:05,680

1467
01:12:05,680 --> 01:12:08,960
This is how we have to
change life in this world.

1468
01:12:08,960 --> 01:12:12,830
All the other inventions
that we have mean nothing.

1469
01:12:12,830 --> 01:12:16,320
We just learn to push buttons.

1470
01:12:16,320 --> 01:12:24,500
But the inner life, the spirit
of humanity has to change, too.

1471
01:12:24,500 --> 01:12:31,680
We has to get a new insight
in what life is all about.

1472
01:12:31,680 --> 01:12:35,390
It's not a rat race
for the almighty dollar

1473
01:12:35,390 --> 01:12:38,915
and who is who in America and
who is who in this and that

1474
01:12:38,915 --> 01:12:43,460

and who is hip-- who has more
money and who lives better.

1475
01:12:43,460 --> 01:12:45,990
That's not what it's all about.

1476
01:12:45,990 --> 01:12:49,430
We got sidetracked somehow.

1477
01:12:49,430 --> 01:12:52,665
And maybe humans have
always been that way,

1478
01:12:52,665 --> 01:12:58,800
but we'll have to see the light
someday and make life better

1479
01:12:58,800 --> 01:13:04,580
for human beings, not just
faster and more electric,

1480
01:13:04,580 --> 01:13:06,700
more outerspace.

1481
01:13:06,700 --> 01:13:10,250
Now it has to become
something else.

1482
01:13:10,250 --> 01:13:14,290
Man has to be able to
benefit from the work of man,

1483
01:13:14,290 --> 01:13:16,247
in the end.

1484
01:13:16,247 --> 01:13:17,330
That's what we have to do.

1485
01:13:17,330 --> 01:13:20,210

1486
01:13:20,210 --> 01:13:24,000

Thank you very much for
giving us your testimony.

1487
01:13:24,000 --> 01:13:26,250
Thank you for listening to me.

1488
01:13:26,250 --> 01:13:29,750
This concludes the United
States Holocaust Memorial Museum

1489
01:13:29,750 --> 01:13:32,500
interview with Hermann Kosak.

1490
01:13:32,500 --> 01:13:35,354