

This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Erwin Deutscher, conducted by Gail Schwartz on November 9, 1997 at the Museum. This is tape number one, side A. Could you give me your full name?

My name is Erwin Deutscher, E-R-W-I-N. And the Hebrew name is Reuven. And I live in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Do you have a middle name?

No.

And your last name is Deutscher.

Deutscher. D-E-U-T-S-C-H-E-R.

Is that the name you were born with?

From the first day on.

And where were you born, and when were you born?

I was born in Vienna on-- it was a Sunday like today, on January 28, 1923.

Let's talk now a little bit about your family. How long had your family been in Vienna? How many generations?

Well, my father was in Austria all the time, but that Austria was the emperors Austria, Franz Joseph. So that was more North than today's Austria, yeah? And then later on it belonged to Poland. Finally, it belonged to Soviet Union. And now it's a part of the Ukraine. But the main reason he was in Austria, because he served in the Austrian army for eight years. And at the end, he was a prisoner of war in Italy, and he ran back to Vienna. Actually, he was never released. He just ran away from the Italian camp.

And my mother was almost from the same area, but she studied in Prague for one year, in one of the universities then. And they met in Vienna and got married. So did her sister, who married my father's friend. And that's the way we lived there.

What are your parents' names?

Well, in Austria, they had to have a German name, too. So his name was Friedrich, but the Hebrew name was Ephraim. Ephraim Fischl, rather. And my mother's name was Ida all the time.

And her maiden name?

Her maiden name was [? Bachrach. ?]

Did you have or do you have any siblings, any brothers or sisters?

Yeah, we were four. 3 boys and 1 girl. And only one brother is still alive. Yeah, the others are deceased.

And what are their names?

OK, my sister's name who followed-- I'm the first born. After this is my sister, Rosie. And she lived in Italy. And this is another story, we might have to talk about it later. She was married to [? Marcello ?] [? Compagnano, ?] a Jewish family in Florence, Italy. The other one is Edmund. He was an American soldier during World War II in the Japanese theater. And later on, he was even fighting in Korea. He deceased.

And the one who lives now in Denver, his name is Sigmund. And he's married there and has three children and two grandchildren.

How religious was your family?

OK, my father definitely was considered very rel-- Orthodox. Although it is not the same orthodoxy that probably people were in Poland or that areas, yeah? It was a liberal orthodoxy in Vienna. The main reason I want to point out here is, we went to school on Saturdays. We were instructed not to write, yeah, just to sit there. But he never objected. For he couldn't even object to it, yeah? And in Vienna, we walked around like any other child. There was no special appearance that we were Jewish or very religious. We were integrated with whatever was going on there.

So what kind of religious training did you get?

Oh, well, at school, because at my time, at least since 1934, '33, you had to have a religion in Austria. Before, when the Social Democrats were in power, you could be areligious, not religious at all. And then they forced you to go back to your religion. So at school, the Catholic children had their religious instruction in the class. But the non-Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and a few others had to meet twice a week in another center, where we were instructed. It means they took them together from many schools, and we were instructed Hebrew.

Well, basically, but it was very limited. So then of course in my case, I had to go to a Talmud Torah in addition to learn the Bible and so many other things. And more than this, I even had a private tutor at home to learn more Hebrew. Because I was the oldest, and most was concentrated on me. The other brothers didn't get as much Hebrew instructions as I got.

And so obviously you observed holidays and so forth at home.

Yeah.

And did you go to synagogue?

Well, because Saturdays we went to school, so the synagogue didn't exist. But in Vienna, at least it was a part of the youth at 3 o'clock, in all those synagogues in Vienna, they had youth services. Children came together for, let's say, 45 minutes, and the rabbi gave a speech, and there was a choir and so on, almost in all of those Viennese synagogues. So they were conducted on a Jewish basis.

You can call it Orthodox, but it's not the heavy Orthodox. Kids came in and that's it.

What kind of work did your father do?

OK, we had a dairy factory. That means we pasteurized milk. The milk came in from the farm sections and produced butter and cheeses. And we had little wagons. They were still horse drawn at this time, and they delivered it in 20 or 25 liter cans to the stores. And that's the way it was.

Did you live right in the city of Vienna or on the outskirts?

OK, we had a beautiful apartment in the 3rd District. It was so beautiful that many of our neighbors envied us. And then probably I was already 12-years-old, yeah? They got key money to free this apartment, because some rich people wanted it. And with this money, they were able to buy a villa house on the other side of the Danube. And that's where we lived then.

What street was your first house on?

The first was Kardinal-Nagl-Platz--

[COUGHING]

Excuse me. And there I went to grade school. And later on-- over there, grade school is only four years, from one to-- from the first to the fourth grade. And then the fifth grade was already the Gymnasium. And there on Shabbat I did have to walk to that school. It was quite a walk, but I don't think that I ever revolted or objected, even, yeah? I walked, and that's it. Probably close to an hour, no problem.

So the schools that you went to had Jewish and non-Jewish children. Did you experience any anti-Semitism when you were quite young?

So in the grade school, sometimes there was one or two Jews in that section where we lived. In the Gymnasium, it was almost the opposite. We were probably 85% of the students, the Jewish children. And the non-Jews were 15. In school itself, there was never an occurrence that anyone would have offended me at all-- period. Yeah. We had a certain habit in Vienna, they eat those rolls in the morning. And my mother gave me always a few rolls for the poorer ones. Not real poor, but those that didn't get rolls.

I had always friends around me, and I never experienced this. Even the priest-- they called him a [? Katecheti-- ?] that's a little-- that's a lower name as priest. He was not a full priest yet, but he was dressed like a priest. Always hugged me, gave me pictures and so on, yeah? With the teachers I had very good relationships. Yeah.

So in the neighborhood that your first house was in, that was a mixed neighborhood of Jews and non-Jews?

No, very few Jews in the first one. In the second one, there were even less. Yeah, where we had the house, the villa, there were less Jews. There were a few Jews. Later on, in Hitler's time, of course, we found out that there are more Jews than we thought. Yeah, we didn't know there were Jews. Yeah, so we found it out.

I just want to remark on the first one. It was good, but I met years later in Paris a school colleague, who went with me to grade school. And we talked about the whole thing. And so apropos, he remarked, said you were lucky that you were not in our neighborhood during Hitler's time. Apparently there the situation was bad, yeah?

We in the northern part of the city, where we had our house, we could handle it, at least to a time. Then of course, certain things developed.

We'll talk about that. What language did you speak at home?

Only German. No Yiddish, nothing at all. Only German-- period. That's it.

And you were taking Hebrew in Hebrew school?

Yeah. In Hebrew school, but there were other occurrences, too. If you want, I can go into details. It's up to you, yeah? We had a relative from my mother's side. He was a baker. And that was the only kosher bakery in Vienna, because the Viennese Jews, even the Orthodox, didn't pay attention of bread being kosher or not kosher. It was no problem. But anyway, they had one kosher bakery.

And he came every Friday afternoon and stood over Shabbat with us. He was a single man, and he brought the challah for Shabbat. And after the Friday night dinner, he was reading or chanting rather the Torah, the portion of the week. And because he was a baker, he was very tired all the time, yeah? So he started chanting and falling asleep. And as soon as he slumbered at least to a point, then his nose touched that book, and he woke up.

And that was going on for two or three or four years. I don't even remember. I was sitting across him and always watching if he continues to read from the same spot where he fell asleep. And so I was able to read the Torah endless, yeah? He probably thought I'm studying with him. And in actuality, I was just watching how he reacts when his nose touches the book, yeah?

How political was your father?

Not too much, no. He was Jewish-minded. Yeah, so that means most Jews belonged to Social Democrats, because the other one were called Christian Democrats, yeah? In politics, not. He was very proud of having been a soldier in the Austrian army. And that's another story, but I'm just saying this was-- and he loved Vienna. And the same happened to me. When we left, we left with a feeling not of hatred to the city, rather that this man Hitler had no right to tell me to stay here or not to stay. He had the power to do it, but the right he didn't.

And so that's the reason when I sometimes to go back to Vienna, I don't have feelings like other people, who sometimes say I'm not going back to this place. In my case, it's almost the opposite. I have the same right for this. I was born there. I got the culture. The good thing, I accept it. The not so good thing or the bad thing I reject it, yeah?

But I never felt that anyone else has more right to that city. And the same was even with my father. He was a good soldier during the-- not that he really wanted it, but finally they had to-- he had to join the army. Maybe we'll talk about this later. And his feeling for Vienna was positive rather than negative, yeah?

And a Zionistic believe?

Zionist, yeah. OK, I have to tell you the story about Zionism. I was about 10 years old, and I got a tutor to come to my home. His name was Horowitz. Yeah, the main reason we picked up those tutors was this. After World War I, because Austria was the capital, Austria was the capital of-- Vienna was the capital of the whole of Austria, yeah? So those people at least felt de facto to have a right to study at the University of Vienna. And the story was this. They came. They were very learned people. They had bright people in the full meaning of the word. But on the other hand, they were poor, like a church mouse. No, like a synagogue mouse. Like synagogue mice.

So they came. And for a very nominal amount of money, they were teaching children. And usually, I would say for families who had fit it-- yeah, some people didn't pay this much attention. But not only that they were teaching, they were eating lunch with us, yeah?

And in my section, there was another Jewish family, actually, the butcher, the kosher butcher. And his son was a little bit older. So we combined those things. That means he went to one house first and ate. Then he went to the other house and taught. And vice versa, and come back. And I learned a lot from him.

So when I was 10-years-old, he somehow got very close to me and said, a nice young fellow like this should be active in a Zionist organization. And he connected me with the Hashomer Hadati, the religious Zionist organization, which is Bnei Akiva here now.

And from then I was active. And first of all, we had a good meeting system. We learned a lot about Zionism. And we traveled a little bit in the Vienna woods and so on. But the other thing that made me even maybe a little bit more connected to that whole Zionistic activity was the Jewish National Fund, Keren Kayemeth Israel.

In the afternoons, let's say twice a month, we got a certain section to collect the money from the boxes, yeah? And so we got in contact with people. And of course, they admired us that we did all this, we young fellas. What really happened is, you count the money in front of them. And then you say, if you had a few pennies, it makes a Schilling. And then if you really come out with four Schillings, they said, why don't we add a little bit? We have an odd number. And so I got one a golden pin from them. And I was a little bit outstanding in this movement.

And so years later, when Hitler came, apropos I will jump from one to the other, because it cannot be told in a different-- so Josef Burg, who later on was in Israel the Minister of Interior, yeah, took 25 children from Vienna and 25 from the old Germany. So we were 50 children. We went into Israel, but this will be a different section.

But I just want to say how that Zionism moved me. And I was actually the real Zionist in the family, because I was older, and the other ones were little children. So they just looked up to me.

All right, well, let's move along. Did you have any other hobbies or sports?

Yeah, soccer. Here I can tell you again with the relationship the non-Jews. I was a captain of three teams. Because we had a tournament system in Vienna. It was only one year, because they discontinued later because it disrupted the studies. But anyway, at that particular year, I was very young. I would say 12. I organized-- I organized three teams. And maybe I was the only one who organized three teams.

Because I always thought if one team wins, I still want to have a chance. And what really happened, the first two teams lost the first games. But one team I was able to get over the third victory. And that let me then march on the victory march in that particular stadium. I enjoyed it. It was good.

So what I want to say, all the other children were all Gentles. I don't remember a single Jew there. Many were better players than I was, but they let me lead them, yeah? So it was so smooth. I will use the same basis of talk later on, because the question is really, why didn't we leave Vienna before this, yeah, if it was so bad? It was bad maybe on one side, but it was good on the other side. So it's very hard to say why nobody left even a day before Hitler moved in, in March 1938, yeah?

Let's back up a little bit back to 1933, when Hitler came into power. You were 10-years-old.

I hadn't--

You were 10-years-old. And did-- I want to talk before the Anschluss in '38. What did Hitler mean to you? What did you know? Were there any changes in your life? Granted, you were young. You were 10, 11, 12, 13.

Well, I do agree that I was young, but because in the Jewish tradition, it was almost like the one who has to inherit the kingdom, yeah? I was number one in the family. So first of all, for errand walks, yeah, I was the one. And there was no question. Whatever was demanded from me, I was doing, even at that young age.

On streetcars, riding even much before that, I just bought a ticket and I was riding streetcars. And we had a few lawyers who had to handle our business, yeah? I was the coordinator between the lawyers. So I was very involved. So I would say whatever my family thought about politics, even then, I was at least alert. And those friends who came in, especially Jewish friends, I overheard almost all the conversations.

I have to say it. First of all, we thought in Germany it's bad, but we didn't dream that it would even be close to this. Because we heard sometimes about anti-Semites in Poland. And then we heard it in Romania. Yeah, which Goga was known. At the end, he gave up and said "Israel, you were the victor." Yeah, he had even to praise the Jews at the end.

We knew there was Mussolini. He was a fascist, and he had generals in his army, Jewish generals in his army. So we know it's no good, but we didn't see it in the form of a disaster. Yeah, because just a few decades before, you know what was in Russia, and in Poland, and so on. Jews always were used to those things.

And I want to tell you, at school we got a monthly magazine. I forgot the name of it, but I read it all the time. And it told us about the present time, but it went back to the Spanish Inquisition, to the Middle Age. When I read this, it was clear in my mind, whatever happened then will never happen again. Yeah, it didn't even go in my mind. Even with that Hitler. he hates Jews, yeah. That's all. It didn't mean--

We didn't see him in this manner, yeah? Then there was something-- and that's the reason why I would say the Viennese Jews were even not prepared. Even not 1% would leave, or even not a handful, they didn't leave. The main thing is, this particular generation was so impressed by the Allies, especially England and France, they would never permit something like this. We're in the 20th century. There's humanity here.

And really, when we had a factory there came a relative actually from my mother's side from Berlin. He came and probably told-- first of all, when he appeared, he looked charming. Beautiful, yeah? So we knew that when he came from Germany, he probably doesn't like Germany anymore. Yeah, but not that he-- he was driven out. And he really

wasn't driven out.

And for some reason, a position in our business did not develop for him. And after he was there maybe a year with us, he just went back.

What year was this?

Let's say it was-- let's make it '34. '33-'34. '34. Maximum '35. Yeah, but I think it was '34, 1934.

Do you remember him talking about any restrictions against Jews in Germany at that time?

Not very-- not intensively. He just mentioned it here and there. But what I want to say, he took me always along, because I knew the city very well. So he wanted to see the city. When he went to a movie, at least I remember one movie, *The Good Earth* by--

Pearl Buck.

By Pearl Buck. And it was played by-- well, I know by whom it was played. It was an American movie. He took me around. Then we found another relative or acquaintance of him. So we went visiting. Those people even asked him how he feels in Deutschers' house. And he said, listen, I knew that Erwin is here. And I don't mind to say it, I don't like it at all. Yeah, he couldn't fit himself in. And then he went back. And I'm really sorry that we never discussed what's going to happen.

At that time, I would say even before '38, as much as Germany was miserable, I don't think a destruction like this was even considered, yeah? We know that individuals went to concentration camps. That's a different story. But I am telling, this was not accept-- we didn't even dream about something like that.

What were your thoughts about the 1936 Olympics? You were 13-years-old.

I saw it in the movies. I liked the movie. Like anyone else, it was beautiful. By the way, there were a few Jewish performers, too, in the 1936, yeah? I didn't-- well, later on, I will tell you how people accepted Hitler, what they were thinking about him, yeah?

But what did Hitler mean to you as a 13-year-old boy?

Nothing. Yeah, nothing. As a 13-year-old. We had a-- maybe even before I was 13, yeah? I saw they had illegal-- illegal announcement on the wall sometimes. I read it and came back, and I mentioned it to our housekeeper. And for some reason, instead of Hitler said "Hilter." And she corrected me, his name is "Hitler," yeah. And they smiled.

And there was even one friend, I think his family was Nazi from years ago. But I was his friend. I went to his home. He went to my home. It was very unique. Even when he made an anti-Jewish remark, he talked more about those Polish Jews who talked funny or something like this, but never a full attack.

Uh-huh.

And--

Did you respond to any of those remarks?

It wasn't needed. But on the other hand, if one would be against me, I would be strong enough to tell him. You know, it was just-- it was the slight jokes. They were they can be told-- it wasn't fully offensive, yeah? The slang was sometimes used. Yes, I remember in the Talmud Torah when I went, there was a young fella. His name was Paul Muni. No, wait a minute. I mixed it up. Paul Muni was who played in *The Good Earth*.

That young fella, his name was [? Bucksbaum, ?] a Jewish boy. But he did not-- he was not a good student. He came, and sometimes he didn't come. Where I came to every lesson, yeah? That guy, that little kid had fun to be on the other side of the street and call across the street "Jew boy, Jew boy." He was a Jew himself, yeah?

So those things-- kids do many things, yeah? On the other hand, I said that Nazi-- from the Nazi family, his grandmother, oh, did she like when I came in, and she said, why don't you do like Erwin and so and so. You know, those jokes were not very offensive, but you could realize that there was a difference between Jews and non-Jews. And we lived like this.

We didn't even feel bad, because I never felt inferior to be a Jew. I didn't even feel-- even in the most miserable times of Hitler, yeah, I never wanted to be one of them, where they got everything that they'd never had before. I just said, leave me alone. That's all.

Would you describe yourself when you were that age as very daring, very strong, independent?

Yeah. I definitely was independent. Even from my parents. They just let me do-- even in the synagogue. They wouldn't never say go. If I went, it's OK. If I didn't go, it was OK, too. On Shabbat, my father sometimes-- most of the times, rather, he would want me to tell him what I learned during this week, during the past week on my Hebrew studies. Yeah, he wanted to have-- and sometimes he remarked a few things, but never aggressively.

Did you have a close relationship with your parents?

Very, yeah. We did everything together. Yeah, actually, I wrote about this a lot, because that's what really started it.

Did they talk to you about Hitler?

No. I have to say that until Hitler came in, they didn't dream about it. That's far away.

Well, let's get to that point. You're talking about the Anschluss. OK. What are your first recollections?

OK, I want to tell you, on February 28--

1938.

1938. There we realized that Schuschnigg, the chancellor of Vienna-- of Austria, had to go to Berchtesgaden to have a discussion with Hitler. And he forced him to take two Nazis into the government, and I think to let the Nazi movement be more open.

And we accepted this as a compromise, because the newspapers brought it in a way that Schuschnigg knew how to handle that case. And in reality, the very next elections were scheduled for March the 13th, yeah? And of course, Hitler came in on March the 11th in the evening to disturb this thing. And we thought after those elections, nobody can do something.

But I have to go back here a minute. In 1934, the Nazis killed the chancellor of Austria, Dolfuss. And of course, afterwards, right away after Schuschnigg got the position. And we did know that Mussolini didn't like Hitler as his neighbor, yeah? They did something together. And of course, we considered for some reason that Mussolini is stronger than Hitler. For some-- in '34, he could tell him get off. And for some reason, he gave in. And really Hitler later on thanked him officially, that he helped him on this, yeah?

But when Mussolini said no, we thought that will be it, yeah? He will let him go so far, just hang up. And even with this, at least in my circles, we did not think more than either he doesn't want the-- Hitler doesn't want the Jews, or we'll give him restrictions. To this point, we didn't accept. We just didn't. Because in this particular week, between February the 28th to March the 11th, we had a friend, Etinger, I met him later on in New York.

He somehow mentioned that people say that development in Germany shall be considered, yeah? And of course I played-- I went to the Gymnasium, fifth grade gymnasium. It's like here ninth grade. I thought I'm already-- I can analyze the whole world, yeah? I just brushed it off, let it go. And they all agreed with me, yeah?

I just want to make one more point on this particular March the 11th, when Hitler moved into Austria. He came from the West into-- at this-- as much as I know, maybe there were others, too, but Schuschnigg called one of the richest Jews in Vienna. His name was Krupnik. He told him right away get out. And he took a train to get out. And don't look back. Just get out, yeah?

He took a train to Italy, left everything behind him. We know only about this occurrence. It's not a scientific--

You knew about it at the time?

Yeah. We found it out almost the same day. Yeah, by the way, I want to tell you, when Schuschnigg had the meeting with Hitler, he had a radio appeal to the people, he talked to the people about Austria, about the achievement. Yeah, Hitler before this Schuschnigg start bragging about Germany, what it has done in those five years. And Schuschnigg on his radio speech, he said whatever Austria did, well, isn't it nice for a little country like this what we did?

And we were so proud of his expressions, yeah? And we were confident, yeah? And I have to tell you that I see that even Schuschnigg might have been surprised. Because he was jailed later on. They arrested him and so on. So he would have gone to the Vatican or somewhere else, just leave it alone. He just didn't leave. And you know, there were rumors that they might take him to the concentration camps or not. I don't know. Although I met Schuschnigg in St. Louis, but I never talked about this. I just want to say, there might be certain Austrian leaders who were not fully aware that it shall happen.

Today, when you go in Austria and you see the old timers, they say they smelled it would happen. So I cannot talk about this anymore more in details, because I don't know much more.

This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Erwin Deutscher. This is tape number one, side B. Before we go on about the Anschluss, I just wanted to ask you a little bit about your bar mitzvah, which would have been in 1936. Was there any difficulty with that, any problems?

No, my bar mitzvah was very charming. At that time, I had a special teacher. And here to my regret, I have to say that later on my father met him in Dachau, and he didn't make it.

What was his name?

Schnabel. His first name I forgot, but his name was Schnabel. Very religious. He ate a lot of garlic, but I smelled it. What's the difference? And he taught me that bar mitzvah. The bar mitzvah was in rather a shtiebel, not a real synagogue. And instead of having those big dinners, my mother just made cakes and strudels and so on, and they ate it. And that was actually all.

And that Schnabel, that teacher trained me to give a certain speech after the Haftorah and so on. And for some, reason I think the last few sentence I choked a little bit. And the whole congregation, especially women, everyone started to cry. So when I met later on one in Tel Aviv, he said, "oh, I remember your bar mitzvah. We call cried."

But it was charming. And you have to know, the bar mitzvah was-- also it was winter, and we crossed the Danube, walking, yeah. Didn't mean anything. I just did it. And it was the story of the Exodus from Egypt. It's the Beshalach. It's called Beshalach.

And so we have the song on the Red Sea. But the Haftorah is the song of the water. So that whole thing went together, and it was outstanding, yeah? And the Tuesday before that particular Shabbat was my birthday. So I took my bike just across the river, and I had to go put on my tvilum first. And the weather didn't mean a thing, yeah? It was in the winter, in January, yeah?



And to pass the Danube with the-- actually, the Danube bridge is about one kilometer. That includes the overflowing section of the river, yeah? And the wind was probably biting very strong. It didn't mean anything. I went everything-- every morning to the synagogue, and then right away to school later on. No problem. That was going on.

Did you invite any of your non-Jewish friends to your bar mitzvah?

No, no. It was not custom. At home, I got some gifts from them, but to the synagogue, it was a shtiebel. They wouldn't have fitted. I don't think so. They wouldn't have enjoyed it. But of course, we liked it, yeah. But yeah, no there was no non-Jewish friends. You are right.

OK, let's now move up to March 11th, night the night of March 11, 1938. What are your particular personal recollections?

In the afternoon, late afternoon, we heard the story, that Hitler moved in from the West side of Austria.

How did you hear?

Radio. On the radio, it was announced. I don't think we heard it. And just the neighbors came in. Yeah. Very friendly. And then, of course--

The non-Jewish neighbors?

Non-Jewish neighbors came in very friendly and said, "but you know, nothing will happen to Jews like you. You're the good Jews" and so on. So my father was very excited. My mother didn't take it so serious, yeah? And I remember when he made kiddush Friday night, I wouldn't say that he cried, but his eyes were wet, yeah? And we knew there's a new section. But good you asked me about that particular day.

Many came into us. Many, many Gentiles came in and soothed us. One said even, "don't worry. In my basement, I still have the Red flag, and we'll have to wave it again." this man's name was Frank. His family name was Frank. He was the son-in-law of Mrs. [? Hof, ?] who had some cows. The milk was not for us, but not far away she had some cows. And they were always good with us, good friends. He came and gave my father to understand not to worry.

Would you describe your family as upper class?

Pardon?

Would you describe your family as upper class?

No. A little. I would say a little bit above the average, but I wouldn't make it upper class. No, no. But average, good average, yeah? We always used common sense, and we did well. There were times where we did better than in Hitler-- than before Hitler. There was a very good time. I would say at that time, it was a little bit under not really rich side, but well-to-do side.

Then it was normal. Later on, it was normal. We never had problems financially. And I knew everything that was going on. I knew every time how much money we had in the bank and how it works around, yeah? So it was OK. It was normal.

So you are now 15-years-old. What were your thoughts when you heard that Hitler had come into Austria?

When Hitler was coming? That was very interesting. I knew that something else is supposed to happen, yeah? We are not going to stay there for good, yeah?

How did you know that?

Now, we wanted more from life than just to be tolerated, yeah? No, we definitely looked for something. Of course later on, we understood it's even worse than we expected, yeah? The main thing is still not the killing. We couldn't have contact with anything. We didn't know what the future is. The Jewish leaders couldn't see anything, yeah? So we were-- but we hoped that the other nations will give us a break. That was definitely discussed in our family, the other nations.

Let's go back now to March 12 and March 13.

I continued to go to school. I continued to go to school until the end of the-- at the end, I was the only Jew there. And I want to tell you--

Let's talk about March 12 and March 13.

March 12?

Or March 13th, when he came in.

Well, we knew that Schuschnigg's system is out. Hitler is in and will take over. I tell you--

Did you see Hitler when he came into Vienna?

Yeah, once. I was on the Ringstrasse. About this, I want to tell you a little bit more about how I saw Hitler and Hess and all this, yeah? But OK, the strongest impression from the 12th, 13th, and so on of March was that across-- we were on a lake. It was a lake in the City across the lake, there were large buildings. And the buildings had those Nazi flags from up down five, six, or even more. I don't remember. So every morning you got up, you had to see those flags, yeah?

What was your thoughts to see a flag? You're a teenager.

That's us-- that we are. That's not us-- actually, that's not us. That's a different world. We cannot be incorporated with them, and we don't even want to be. We have to get out.

How did you know that?

I saw the future. And I had a strong feeling, this is not for us. Yeah, that's what I want to say.

Was it frightening to see these spikes when you woke up in the morning?

In a certain way. In a certain way, I can't even say it was frightening. But I want to tell you, I was still a little bit foolish at that. Because I walked on the street, and I saw three young SA men walking in those goose steps. Because they were just trained to do it this way.

And I was standing on the side-- on the sidewalk, and just smiling, almost scoffing, yeah? "Stupid kids. You're walking." So you know, my whole reaction was different. They were stupid, yeah? So something was not accepted by me. I just didn't see the [INAUDIBLE].

At school, especially to those children I brought rolls and so on, they were still nice to me, but I remember one guy, his name was Haber. He came to me in a very friendly manner and said, "do you know? It's really better now." That's what he said. "It's better."

Yeah, and he already got the invitation to go-- to go to the Altreich. That means to Germany. Took a bunch of children to show them what's going on. And then he came back after two weeks. "Great. Everything is fine."

How did you feel when he said that to you?

What? No, I still wasn't afraid. No, no. Because he talked nice to me. Then-- well, you know like in any class, there are some children, they're a little bit outstanding in their scholastic level, yeah? Well, I was in that group, too. And there was another fellow. His name I forgot, but I see him always in front of my eyes.

We didn't do too much together in the past. Yeah, we were students, but I was not very close to him.

Was he Jewish?

No, not. I'm talking then there was only left one Jew. The others didn't come anymore.

When did the others leave?

Just almost immediately. I don't remember. There were not too many. But yeah, I want to tell you, when we moved from the apartment to the villa, then again we were one or two Jews. One or two Jews were there, yeah? You follow me? Others didn't come. I think in the whole school no Jew came. I just came. I didn't feel uncomfortable. Or I didn't lose my confidence. Let's have it that way.

You're saying the Jewish children left after the Anschluss, after Hitler came in?

I would say so, yeah, yeah. I didn't pay that much attention, but I didn't see them anymore. And the Jewish-- how would we say? The Jewish lectures we have, we had twice a week, they discontinued. Just didn't happen anymore.

Well, did you have any Jewish teachers?

No, no. Only the one who had to teach us religion was Jewish.

Did you notice any change in the way the non-Jewish teachers treated you once Hitler came in?

That's exactly what I want to say. First, yeah. In Vienna at that time, at the beginning of the morning school class started with a Paternoster. They had to say-- they had to say the prayer. In the middle of the wall, there was a crucifix. Yeah, like they have it in churches almost. Yeah.

And so I once came to the school. Next to the crucifix, they put Hitler's picture. Then they put that crucifix away, and Hitler's picture only was there. And after they said the prayer, they had to say "Heil Hitler" with their hands. Of course, I didn't say. Nobody bothered me, yeah? I just want to say how it was.

Then the son of a--

How did you know not to say "Heil Hitler"?

It wasn't for me. I don't know if I was instructed. I just didn't say. You're right. I wasn't instructed not to say it. But I know it wasn't for me. It's like I didn't say the Paternoster. I was just standing, and then I sat down. That's all, yeah? But anyway, I want to tell you about this particular case. In--

Doesn't that take a lot of inner strength to be the only child? You are 15-years-old only, and not to do something that everybody else is doing?

I was proud. I was proud. Nobody could say that he's better than I am. I think I even have a little bit left today. No, I could not be convinced that I am a secondary person at all. It didn't go in my head. But listen, I want to tell you what happened in that particular class at school.

I'm so sorry I forgot the teacher's name. In the inner city, there was a dentist who had a son, who got the parrot sickness. Do you know what I'm talking? I have-- I have the-- it was almost fatal. But the main thing, it was so contagious that he had to be separated entirely.

And it was already in Hitler's time. I asked our science teacher about the sickness. A few days later, he came and announced thanks to Erwin's inquiry, I started this case, and he gave us more than an hour a lecture on that sickness. So I felt good again. Yeah, we can say. The director of the school, which we call here the principal, called me in his class-- in his office, and talked to me very gently, that I don't have to be afraid. Nothing is going to happen to me.

A few days later, he wasn't there a principal. So that means another teacher. And his name was Schwede, and he was definitely a Nazi, even before. He always praised Mussolini. But what he meant was Hitler, yeah. Schwede, he took over. He took over. He didn't do-- he didn't pay-- he didn't pay any attention to me, like I wasn't there, yeah? And he knew me well. And that previous principal gave me, I think, a few little mementos as a gift, but they kicked him out immediately. I don't even know what his background was. Maybe he was partially Jewish or not. I wouldn't know it, but I'm just saying that.

So I personally went to the school until I left Austria. The same year, of course, in '38. My brothers, they walked across the river to a Jewish school. Didn't mind, either. They had a good time. That's it, yeah.

Did anything happen immediately with your father's business once Hitler came into Austria?

Stopped immediately. The business was gone. And immediately. Closed, end. Nothing.

How did you react to that?

We knew that we had to get out. And we didn't even object. We just wanted to get out. So it's not for us anymore. Let's get going. And if you want-- so the plans were this. First of all, my mother's father was the chief rabbi in Oklahoma City, the orthodox chief rabbi. Rabbi [? Bachrach. ?] Isaac Joseph [? Bachrach. ?] He was very well known, especially his sons, which were from the second marriage.

When did he come to the United States?

1898. My mother was a little baby. They never followed him. You know what happened there. And then he married here again. Everything went great. One son was a very famous surgeon. He even handled the Roosevelt family. And the other one was the head of the Penns-- Pittsburgh Utility Company. Yeah, bigshots. Then there was one son, he didn't develop that strong. But I did meet my grandfather later on, in 1951.

Anyway, we got papers, and we thought we had it made.

When did you get papers?

Immediately, a month later. Yeah.

This is April?

Yeah. But the American Consulate said, there's a quota waiting list. We didn't understand that whole thing. And we made a few mistakes, too. Because if we would have developed-- if we would have known more and delivered the papers to the consulate a few days earlier, we'd have a lower number. We didn't understand all those things. Yeah, we were just floating around there.

And then I would have to tell you how things develop. If you wanted to hear it even now, yeah? So once we were home, at home, and the SS-- SA men came in and picked up my father.

When was this?

I would say in April. Just about after Pesach. yeah, in April. And we didn't know where, what, yeah? And then later in the afternoon he came back a little bit depressed. So we asked what was going on. They collected a bunch of Jews--

[COUGHING] excuse me-- and made a fun march of them. Gave them all kind of hats and just a broom in their hands, and they had to march through the city. And he was very embarrassed, because he was an officer in the Austrian army. Why would they do this to him, yeah?

But he said, "you know, one thing I can at least comfort myself. I was in the middle, and nobody saw me." Anyway, after the end, my father went to that SS man-- to the SA man. Always the same mistake. He went to the SA man. He said, "how can you do this to me? I was a front fighter for the Austrian army, and you humiliate me this way?" And that SA man gave him a bunch of chocolate for the children and said, take it home and shut up. Because that chocolate was stolen from the Jewish stores, yeah? So he gave him a bunch, said take it home for your kids. That was--

What kind of hats did the men have to wear?

Pardon?

What kind of hats did the men have to wear?

Whatever they gave them. I didn't see it in person. He came home and told us they made fun of them, yeah? But I want to say-- to tell you something. That man who came in our house on the 11th of March, yeah, and told us he had-- Frank was his name. He had a red flag in his basement. So my father told me that that fun march, the fun march went through a factory, a beer factory and a yeast factory. Old factories. Was over 100 years old, [INAUDIBLE] factory.

And that Frank was in an SA uniform having a bunch of teenage Jewish girls cleaning those windows that were more than 100 years dirty. You know, it's the same Frank he told us when he came home. He was disappointed and depressed in a way. And interesting, a few hours later, this neighbor came again and said, "oh, wasn't that a shame they took you out?" My father thought nobody's seeing him. And they came. It was a unique relationship in our neighborhood. That can be told later.

Something else happened. bar mitzvah on, I had a beautiful bike. It was a [? puch-- ?] a half-runner. Yeah, that means for mountains and all this. It was a marvelous bike I had, yeah. And we bought it. My parents bought it from someplace. And I was always riding on it. And so during Hitler's time, I was riding, too.

Suddenly a man stopped me and said, "you know, that bike wasn't fully paid. You owe me some money on this." And he started fooling around with me. He wants some money. I didn't even know anything. And again, I was not so frightened as later on, yeah. Far away, my father saw that occurrence. He ran to him. He took him on his neck, and said "you leave him alone fast."

So meanwhile, people surrounded us, saw that whole thing happen. And we came to a conclusion, the best would be to go to the police station and let them handle it. So we went all there. And the head of the police station said, I guarantee for the Deutscher family. Yeah, they're great, and there's nothing to worry about. And if they say they paid you, they paid you.

Suddenly, an SA man came in Again and they gave that officer to understand, yeah, now we are here and not you. So that officer told my father, give him a few mark and let him go, and that's the way it was. Still probably a few months later, or after the Kristallnacht, it would have been a different result, yeah?

And yeah, the main thing that happened, as soon as our business just stopped, yeah, people owed us money. But we owed money to those that delivered the milk to us for pasteurizing. And again, I was the ambassador of the family. So they sent me to the courthouse with a bunch of notes to tell them, people owe us this, and we would like to pay our creditors.

And I came there, and a man was sitting in a beautiful office, all mahogany, and all kind of Nazi items hanging around, yeah. It looks like who knows what, something in Nuremberg. I sit there. But he let me sit down very comfortably. And he told me, look, there is a new regime in this country, but justice is still observed.

And I gave him all those to collect and to pay, all the notes we had. And I ran home immediately and told my parents, mission accomplished. Everything is fine. Yeah, I had so much confidence out of this. I thought this will be settled. And we still had a little bit money, and I withdrew it slowly from the bank, that they shouldn't see that it was drawn at once. And we had Austrian Schillings to change to German Marks. They cheated us once in a while a little bit, but we still could survive.

In the garden of our villa, we had a little-- I wouldn't call it shed. No, a little house. A wooden house. And we rented this house to a Gentile woman, an old woman. This woman paid until my parents left the same day. The Nazis told her she doesn't have to pay us. She said I'm going to pay them. For some reason, we were lucky. It's just unbelievable how this thing--

And yeah, my mother went-- during the same period, I would say April, or the end of April, yeah, to some of our debtors to collect money. Mrs. Fuchs what's her name. And again, she promised my mother pretty soon to give them some money. And mother was happy. Everything is fine. A few hours later, the Nazis came and picked her up. We didn't know a thing.

And for two or three days, we didn't know what happened to her. Finally, there was a Jewish lawyer, which we never knew that he was Jewish. At least he had some connections. He could find out where they were-- where my mother was. And he even composed a letter. He said, he--

Your mother was taken away?

Yeah, she was taken away.

From-- could you repeat that?

Because that woman probably said something against her, yeah.

Were you home when your mother was taken away?

We were all home.

And what was that like for you? Can you describe that--

Sad.

--situation when that happened?

It was shocking. But--

Who came to take her?

A Nazi uniformed man, a man came picking her up. She will be interrogated, something like this, they said. We still hoped she will be back in a couple hours or something.

Did she said anything special to you or did you say anything special to her?

She still hoped that everything would be OK. Especially with-- we had already papers to the United States. What are they going to do with us, yeah? They didn't let her go. So anyway, this man composed a letter, but he didn't want it on his stationery. He didn't want to be involved, this lawyer, yeah? We mailed it in. At least we found contact where she was. And I just want to tell you--

Where was she?

In the district magistrate-- no, the district Kommissariat, they called it. Where the police-- the head police quarter of the district. And we children, all four-- which children, all four, were able to get in there, yeah?

How?

OK, first of all, we said, our mother is in. We want to see her. So they let us in. Then when we went out, we saw a lady. She was Mrs. Bauer. And we pulled her in and said, why don't you go in and tell that we are a good family and doing everything right? And I was able to put her in. And she at least made more contact for us to see my mother.

But there was something--

Where was your father?

My father was at home.

He didn't come with you?

No. No, because he thought the children will have an easier time to get in there, four children, small, yeah? So yeah, and by the way, this Mrs. Bauer and her husband, they were good friends of ours, yeah? He looked like Schubert. And he liked when we called him Schubert, yeah? Very good friends. And she told us that he's now a Nazi, and he's divorcing her, yeah. So we felt sorry for her, and she helped us. Whatever it is.

And my sister-- I didn't know this. She's a year and a half younger than I am. She had candies in her pocket, because non-Jewish kids gave her some, because she's going to her mother. So we went in and right away, probably girls can do this much better. She jumped on my mother and cried and cried and stuffed in here those sweets in, yeah? I found it out much later. It was very dramatic.

And the policemen were standing on the side, just looked at us. Yeah, you cannot put two and two together how sometimes things were. And anyway, we couldn't get her out. We couldn't get my mother out. Then they moved her to a central jail. They called it Landesgericht. That was a real jail, in the full meaning of the word.

We still played around with the letters and sometimes, always children. Yeah, my father didn't even try. He wouldn't make any good. Nothing. Meanwhile, I got a notice from the Hashomer that I have been selected to go to Israel, and that Yosef Burg will take me.

So I told my father, "how can I go to Israel? My mother isn't here." He said, "you go ahead with the papers. We'll talk some other time." And then came a lady, a non-Jewish lady. She was with my mother in the concen-- in the jail. She said, don't worry about your mother. She's a strong woman. She will know how to get out of here.

And really a few days later, the door opened, and she came in. Yeah, she was there about two months, something, yeah? Like this, no explanation. There was a rumor that when she visited Mrs. Fuchs, Mrs. Fuchs right away called the Nazi Party and told them that my mother said that Hitler is not a problem. Will be here just a short time and will just fade away.

And that's why she was picked up?

Yeah, and she said, of course, she didn't say it, yeah? God knows whatever happened in those few minutes when they were together, because she pro-- that Mrs. Fuchs promised her some money, yeah? Who knows? So anyway, this was I would say July when she came back, yeah? Maybe a little--

So by that time, you had finished the school year by July. And so what were you doing in the summer?

The summer I had to prepare for my trip to Israel. All kinds of stuff. Yeah, papers endless. Yeah, and they sent me always-- yeah, you know the Nazis took over the Rothschild palace in Vienna. And that was the immigration office. So I

did almost everything myself. Yeah, but finally they demanded that my father shall come and sign papers that he doesn't owe any taxes. No tax.

I told him this. He was scared. He said, how can I sign a paper? What do I know? But I have money, yeah? They will figure out the taxes. Anyway, I pulled them always with me. And the guy who was in charge of this was Eichmann, Adolf Eichmann. And I pulled him like this after me. I already had my passport.

And he saw that my father didn't move, and he starts screaming. Don't you want him to leave? Sign that lousy paper and let him go. And the odd thing, I don't want to defend Eichmann, but I want just to say what the stage at that time was. There were Jewish girls handling the paperwork, a lot of Jewish girls, yeah?

I don't know if he told them jokes or not, they smiled once a while when he talked to them. So I cannot explain the whole thing, yeah? But he was there, and he handled the end stage of my case.

This is at the central office for Jewish immigration.

That was in the Rothschild palace, yeah?

How did you know it was Eichmann?

Pardon? Oh.

How did you know that it was Eichmann.

They said it's Eichmann. Yeah, he wasn't that great at that time, but they call him Eichmann, yeah? And then later on when I saw the picture, I saw it's him, yeah? But at the same-- at that time, I didn't expect that they are killers. You understand? That didn't go in my head, yeah?

But do you know when I was in this Rothschild palace, it was beautiful like a museum? You think I didn't walk around and look on all the pictures? Yes, well, if I'm already there, why shouldn't I have the fun?

So the staff was-- the working staff were Jewish?

Some, some, some. Some of the girls were Jewish, but there were a lot of uniforms there, yeah? I don't understand why I had so much energy just to see-- I think I went to all the floors and looked around.

What did Eichmann look like to you? He was young. He was only 32.

I didn't make a big fuss. One like the others, yeah? The only thing, I want to get out. And I know to continue in Vienna didn't make sense, anyway. So that was that. But then I had to go to the city hall. I don't know. It's a beautiful building, the city hall in Vienna, a special building called the Rathaus. And I had to get papers settled. Whatever it is, I forgot even the exact papers.

And there was an elevator. Actually, it was an entirely different elevator. They still have some in Vienna at the university. They call them Paternoster. You have to crawl in, and it goes by itself, always around. I don't think you ever saw something like this in the United States. You go in, and then you get off. If you missed the floor, you had to go all around.

Anyway, there was a big sign, "Jews are forbidden to use it." I think I used that elevator for 20 minutes, easy. I just crawled in and out, in and out, yeah? I just wanted it this way.

What do you attribute this--

Pardon?



What do you attribute your daring to?

I was-- first of all, wherever I was, that was mine, yeah? The city was mine, everything. He's pulling me out. That's it. And then I found out that Hitler was coming on the Ringstrasse. I was standing there. I was watching like all the others. And of course they were saying "Heil Hitler, Heil Hitler."

I just was standing. Nobody bothered me. You know, we didn't have any signs at that time, yeah? Then one guy came to me and said, "why don't you say Heil Hitler?" That guy was not a Nazi. He was a homosexual. He started fooling around.

I said, you get out of here fast. Yeah, I even told him to get out of my eyesight, yeah? Didn't say a word. Just didn't. And then I was once on the same Ringstrasse just see Hess when he passed. And it was the same. I just was there, yeah, a kid.

When you saw Hitler, what were your impressions?

Nothing. I just think everybody's crazy to scream so loud to one man, yeah? It doesn't make sense. It didn't go in my head. And there was one of our neighbors, he got a black uniform, but it was not an SS. I think he had to do with the artillery. They had black uniforms, too. And they said when he died, he was killed in the field. When he died, he said "I'm dying in the name of Hitler" and just said "Heil Hitler." And I just had to laugh, yeah? How can a person die for one man, yeah?

So my reaction was always that I'm ahead of them. That's all, yeah? I had maybe a supreme feeling. It's hard to say exactly what it is.