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SCHINDLER

Julius Madritsch

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1.

Interview

JULIUS MADRITSCH

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q. Perhaps you could tell us why...

a. Please, louder.

q. ...you went with the Army to Poland, how did it...?

a. Yes...please understand this...war... the word 'war' is a terrible word. Personally I was always an opponent of war, in every way. My brother had been in the First World War, first as an ordinary soldier and then as a lieutenant...dragged away from his studies... I also had to give up my studies. On this occasion, I found myself in the Wehrmacht (German Army), whether I wanted to be or not; I had to go. The summons for conscription arrived and I had to register for military service. Yet, at the same time, there appeared to be a possibility that I might be able to take advantage of, of becoming a purchasing agent for the new organisation that was being developed and was already known as the General Government. I felt that, at all events, it was better than having to fire a gun, having to shoot at people... No...we were four brothers and, by this time, we were only two, two others had already gone; so I said to myself, 'It'll be better, if it is possible, to go into the civilian economy since it is the only way to avoid being a soldier and that I don't want to be...I'll be a tradesman, as I have always been.' So, as a result, when I registered, I chose to go to Poland (as it was then called) so that I could manage industry, build up factories, employ people there. Poland had been an Austrian province originally, under the Monarchy (Austro-Hungarian Monarchy - translator). It was then part of a single people under the Kaiser, Franz-Joseph, a wonderful place. There was just one man who ran so many provinces, all from Vienna. And the old Monarchy had been torn down...So I had now become someone who just felt he wanted to stay in civilian life, not become a soldier, just someone ready to go somewhere and work - it didn't matter where! I saved my life by doing that. Three brothers were still in uniform and we must thank God

that three of us...all four of us came home after the war. That was the great victory, for there were families where many family members vanished. I also experienced what being bombed was like, but, by great good luck, nothing happened to me. I remember sitting out a bomb attack with my wife in the cellar...that was in 1944, at the end of the war. All I could say was, 'Lord, save me and mine.' That's what happened and, having been saved, I can sit before you...and I hope that you won't expect much more of me than just to talk about my work, which was mixed with the tragedy of saving people and soothing their wounds - and they were also Austrians... What can we do today? We must thank God that we still live in a land that is blessed. Isn't that true? We must say...

(JB That was a fairly complete answer, wasn't it?...as far as I understood it. That's fine. Could you ask him now, when he was in Krakow, running his business, did the officials there, the police, the SS and so forth, did they make life easy for businessmen there, or was life very difficult because of the actions of these people?)

q. When you were in Poland, what were conditions like? Did official bodies, the police, the SS, make life difficult for businessmen?

a. Yes...Well, in fact, they were happy that qualified people had applied to take over the factories - to manage them, organise them - because, in Austria and Germany at the time there were many factories that were not working, because of the bombing and so on. Poland, in comparison, was a quiet place still. It was occupied...and that's where I worked...it was my profession and I was happy to be able to work and, in addition, help people who were also Austrian - the Poles were Austrians; under the Monarchy, under Franz-Joseph, it was a province, a large province. I took advantage of the opportunity to make contacts with the people there...it (my work) involved liquidating companies, taking over the stock, estimating its worth, setting its value and I also did this for the sake of...for the sake of Poland. And they were amazed that a Viennese...I was just thirty years old, thirty four years old then. I lived, one could say, in a world when the true Austria still existed and had seen... my father had been in the War and had been one of those people who had to travel to Poland

on business - he was with the railways - and had had the opportunity of meeting Kaiser, King, counts and so on...and I remembered what my father had told me when I was young about Poland. I was a little 'soft', so to say, then and felt a responsibility for people, because I saw how scared they were. Scared...of what? Of death!

(JB When he's going off the point, if you can tell me. I get the impression he goes off the point fairly quickly. Is that right? O.K.? Well, then you must tell me because I'll stop at that point. If you can ask him to say how the workers were paid and that's the question where I want him to say about the SS having to be paid and not the workers and from the say rate - see if he remembers the figures and, if he doesn't, then we'll stop him and do the figures, O.K.?)

q. The next question is, how were things arranged over the workers, over payment, how did they get it?

a. Now, then, I'll get back to that, to that particular item. As I said in the little book I wrote concerning who wanted to work in Poland...one can only get work done if there are people, a workforce, and this comes from trade and industry. Because of this, an employment exchange system was set up, with proper labour exchanges were Jews and Poles registered all together and were give tools and machines to work. Naturally they included lawyers and doctors. Those who had never had anything to do with industry registered just the same, just to save their lives, since everyone knew that if they could find employment, through the work they would have a chance of surviving through the war. And that's how it was. So, as the years went by, I was able to get more than two thousand men into my factory, housed in huts; first of all outside the K.Z. - the concentration camps; then the concentration camps became cemeteries in which everything was flattened...the tombstones became roadfill so that lorries could travel more easily and bring goods in...and so I built up the factory. Today it is difficult to remember all the smallest details of how all this was actually possible...

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q. How did you get to know Herr Schindler...

a. Schindler!

q. ...and what sort of man was he?

a. My God, it was all such a mess! We all had the same aim... to get through the war and give people work so that they could survive too. People who were in work could be saved. We had a motto, 'Work and you'll survive!' And that's how it was. And so Schindler was there and he also came from Vienna! There were several Viennese who had gone out with me. There was Heinz Bayer, who is still alive today, but almost blind, and then there was his brother-in-law, Raimund Titsch, who, regrettably, has since died; a good friend. But everything was organised and managed with such care and security - how could you know what was at the back of peoples' minds? In politics there are sometimes people who play fast and loose with you; you think you are dealing with someone who is honest and that's how it was with Schindler - he had his way of doing things and I had mine ... in manufacturing clothes.

(JB I'd like to ask him how sixty of his workers came to be saved by Schindler and sent to Brummlitz)

q. How is it that sixty of your workers were saved and went with Schindler to Czechoslovakia?

a. That's very easy; I got commissions for work - ten thousand, ten thousand, ten thousand items, uniforms and coats and so on, but I had gone to Oranienburg, to Germany, where the Economic Organisation headquarters were, to get people, and they said, 'We don't need any more uniforms, we really need weapons.' Schindler had somehow organised war material manufacture - in other words production dealing with weapons - and he could therefore save more people than I could. However, I can only say that many, many hundreds of people visited me after the war... 'Madritsch, I thank you'... and even today I still get letters from as far away as Australia or Canada for Christmas or New Year... 'We thank you, dear Madritsch'... '...because you were the angel, the angel in Plashow.' I was inside Plashow and Schindler was outside. He had his factory outside and I was in the lion's den. And I often dealt with the camp commander and he often said to me - he was a Viennese, regrettably - 'Now, look at this, he (Amos Geth - translator)

no sooner drops in for breakfast and he's off again, having let out a lot of hot air, he's raving mad.'..Apart from that, he came from a good family (Göth - translator) and his father was always asking me, 'Madritsch, tell me, what is my son doing?', and I would reply, 'Nothing other than his duty calls on him to do.' I didn't tell the father, 'Your son has gone far beyond the bounds of what he was expected to do'...My God, he would have killed me, Amon Göth would...'Madritsch, you ...you only have a place here as a businessman, everything for you depends on that...' Of course, I was only really concerned with surviving...

(JB What I would like to know is why his assistant, Raimund Titsch, went to Brunnlitz five times after Schindler went to Brunnlitz ...What were the reasons why Titsch kept going to Brunnlitz?)

q. What were the reasons why Herr Titsch went five times to Brunnlitz when Schindler was already there?

a. Herr Schindler? For what reason?

q. Herr Titsch!

a. Yes, yes...Raimund Titsch. I sent him to Brinnlitz, or whatever it is called - I used to know it exactly - because I could do that. I had made workcloths for Schindler, for his workers. I had made workclothes and Schindler wanted several hundreds for his workers, I don't remember exactly how many now. So I finished the clothes off and sent them to Schindler's factory with my best wishes... One couldn't say any more, of course - the best wishes were just to show that we all hoped that all had gone well - and Raimund Titsch did this for me. He was also Viennese and we got on well and had similar ideas.

(JB How easy was it to arrange to put the sixty Madritsch workers in with Schindler's workers?)

q. Was it easy to arrange for your sixty workers to travel with Schindler's workers?

a. That they went along? I just talked to Titsch about it and to Schindler. I said, 'Schindler, old man, why don't you arrange with Göth that at least part of my people go with you as part of your workforce, so that they at least would have a greater chance of being saved?' And that is what happened! After all, clothes manufacture, in itself, was longer

necessary...it wasn't needed any more...in fact all we really needed by then were weapons and food. Food, for example...for the peasants, it was really necessary to organise an effective collection system...we thought that's what we need, food, we have nothing in Austria, there's nothing to eat in Germany and the people, the peasants, no longer want to work for money - the peasants, that is, not the people in the K.Z. So I made clothes for the peasants and these people, the peasants got clothes, coats so that, in one way or the other... I aided the Greater German Reich by letting these people be clothed.

(JB Both he and Schindler were businessmen operating in Krakow at this time. How would Herr Madritsch have seen the difference between himself as a businessman and Schindler as a businessman.?)

q. If you would be good enough - both you and Herr Schindler were both businessmen - how would you describe it...what were the differences between you and Herr Schindler?

a. Yes...Schindler...yes...well...I don't want to make accusations against anyone, nor say to anyone...in any case, he had his way of doing things as I had mine. Undeniably, it was possible for him to save people, just as it was for me...and I still have some degree of contact with people who were saved. Even today, they are still extremely grateful to me and some books have been published in which I appear and my contribution is recognised - by Professor Weintsiedel of Salzburg university, that is a book...

(JB That point I know about, tell him, so that's O.K. Um...does he think he could have got more of his workers to go with Schindler would that have been possible?)

q. Would it have been possible, in any way, for more of your workers, more than the sixty...

a. What was that about sixty?

q. ...would it have been possible in any way for more than sixty of your workers to have gone with Schindler?

a. It did seem to have been possible, and the matter was entirely in Schindler's hands. He could calculate whether he could have sixty or a hundred more workers in his factory. In fact, he actually took sixty and I was grateful that he had taken these sixty on. The others survived through the period running up to the end of the war and were saved. Many moved on, via Austria, to another country...there they continued with their lives and found other Madritsches.

(JB Could we try that question again about paying the SS for the workers. If you could explain that we're interested just in hearing that little bit about how he had to pay the SS, not the workers, and if he remembers the figures, that would be nice, if he can remember that...)

q. Can you state, very briefly, what you had to pay the SS? What the agreement was... what you had to pay the SS for untrained and trained workers? What the sums were?

a. Yes...yes...My God...it was all laid down from the start. For untrained, unskilled workers five zloty, for skilled, trained workers, seven, eight or ten zloty ... I really don't remember any more today - it was all thirty five years ago! I put it all down in the pamphlet.

q. Many thanks.

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(JB Could you just ask him to give us that question about...that answer about paying the SS for the workers?)

q. So...once again the same question...what did you have to pay the SS?

a. Yes...there were specific conditions which in themselves...

(JB Could we start that again? A moment, Herr Madritsch.)

q. He (JB) said, I have not finished my question, could you start that again, please?

a. Of course.

q. Thanks.

a. It was all laid down for me, for each man and woman. Whole families were with me and the factory had workers who were both skilled and unskilled...most were unskilled and they included lawyers and doctors who had to be covertly introduced into the workforce. A sum was set aside for unskilled and skilled workers...actually one cannot talk of skilled workers...for untrained workers... five, six, seven zloty. Trained and skilled workers, tailors, were worth nine or ten zloty. They got food and housing - housing... huts! And that was what people were really aware of...they had come to the end of the road and, then, they were saved.

(JB Good. Can you ask whether it was easy for a businessman to make profits in Krakow in the early part of the war?)

q. At the beginning of the war, was it easy for a businessman to make a profit?

a. Profit?

q. Yes.

a. It was not a question of profits. The profit...the main thing...the real aim, was to save lives and sooth the pain and injury. That was the slogan (motto) for an Austrian... for me! I could not be inside Schindler's skin, to see how he felt about it. Naturally, we were different, but he was a good man and worked towards the same end. This was the way in which it was possible for me to save many

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many hundreds of lives, of people who today live in America and Israel...

(JB Good, good. Can you tell us again, or can he answer...his own impressions of the kind of man that Schindler...and just Schindler...was?)

q. Could you once again...and this time in brief ...talk about Schindler, just about him, and tell us what your personal impressions of him were.?

a. Schindler was a little quarrelsome, but this did not alter the fact that he was a good man, because he, just like me, protected so many people by getting them into his labourforce and thus made it possible for them to survive. And this was his main goal too. If it had not been, people would not have been saved. Apart from that he had some oddities and strang features...but that cannot really be discussed, one shouldn't talk about such things. Everyone has their own peculiarities - I have them. I had no special qualities, though, not I, and that was one of my main advantages. I was a sportsman when I was young, you know.

(JB Could he give us his impressions of Amon Gõth. How as a businessman he had to deal with Gõth and his impressions of Gõth.)

q. Could you describe Amon Gõth?

a. Amon Gõth? It was a stain on the honour of Austria that such a man could have been one of her citizens...an Austrian who did nothing else than work out his own grievances and sense of power at the expense of others, the poor and the blameless. That's what everyone said.... It didn't require any special ability or cleverness to protect and save innocent people. It's part of your body, your personality...His father used to ask me, whenever I took something to him at the request of his son, 'What does my son Amon do?' I used to tell him, because he was, after all, his father, 'Dear Amon, he's just doing his duty for the German Reich.'

(JB What was that answer?

q. That was very important. He said that when his father...

JB Was it a good answer?

q. No...well...it was...

JB Could we cut for a second?

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(JB Could you ask Herr Madritsch as a businessman who was reliant on the prisoners of Amon Göth, was it very easy to deal with Göth and how, as a businessman, did he handle Göth?)

q. How difficult or how easy was it to deal with Amon Göth, for you as a businessman?

a. One had to talk to him as a businessman. Whenever you talked to him, it was in terms like, 'Hey, I need some of the workers you've got!' No, it wasn't so easy, but I didn't mind. When you spoke to him in private, it was a matter of using the correct tactics to avoid getting into the same chaos and mess, like the others, the Poles and the Jews. My friend Raimund Titch and I, the two of us, developed the necessary tactics. When he was in a good mood, we played chess or listened to some music played by 'Rosenzweig', or whatever he was called - a wonderful musician. He was a real virtuoso with the violin. He played fantastically well and that was a pleasure for me and, I think, for Göth...he also had Viennese blood and to have Viennese blood means, we say, that one loves music...and then sometimes he would sing Viennese songs...I recall one from Kunze... or a song, 'Meine Mütter war ein Vernärren'. Then he would relax. He was someone capable of just ...that was a rare feature...of just simply sweeping people away...as a after-breakfast treat, almost. There's no more point in talking about it. It was not pleasant...That man was stain on the honour of Austria.

(JB How does he explain the difference that from Vienna there can be two Catholics - Göth and Madritsch - and from the Suddetenland another Catholic - Schindler - and yet on the one hand there is Göth and on the other there is Schindler and Madritsch. What makes the difference between them?)

q. Have you an explanation for the difference there was between you and Schindler from Vienna and Göth, also a Catholic from Vienna?

a. There is one thing I must say about that... He couldn't help it, nor could I. I was educated as a catholic from when I was young, in my parents house...and he, I didn't know his parents (Schindler? - translator)...I only got to know the father. He was always successful with money, even then. He had whatever he wanted... one or two cars...I don't know what he had... he came from a welloff household...not I, though.

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I was only a good son of my parents and he was a little paragon for his...Its all due to a difference of temperament...each temperament is different. Everyone has their own characteristics according to...One person thinks one thing is good, the other says that what he is doing is quite impossible. That is how things were between Schindler and I. He said, 'You, Julius, you don't need anything. Carry on with the Jews then...' and I replied, 'Leave it, leave it be, they're workers first and foremost.' He let himself be persuaded by me - a Viennese - that this was the best approach for him. He had the example of a Viennese before him, and that is what counted...

(JB Very good.)

a. ...for someone from home had spoken to him.

(JB O.K. let's cut. That was a fairly complete answer, I think, wasn't it? It went off and then came back again, didn't it? Good, O.K.)