Imperial War Museum
Department of Sound Records

SCHINDLER

Henry Rosner

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'SCHINDLER'

SLATE 14 TAKE 1

INTERVIEW HENRY ROSNER

JON BLAIR: Henry, going back to when you were in the camp at PAZOW

HENRY: Yeah.

JON: Did you used to play in prison clothes, or what?

HENRY: No, no, I got special permission to have a special luggage which opens. I got full dress, I got tuxedo, I got STREET suit. So whenever I played to the Commandant I use one of those three, never prisoners ...

And just called the police, and they told me - - ROSNER - - come down, that's it. Usually after killings, to clear his conscience ... MOST OF THE TIME HE call us, for not long, but parties we'd play for very long.

JON: What kind of man was the Commandant?

HENRY: He was a man very CHAMELEON IS THE RIGHT WORD? A character - CHAMELEON IS THE RIGHT WORD? Unbalanced. I suspect he used some drugs. I suspect. 'Anyway, he never knew what was, because some - sometimes he called me and he was pretty drunk. He wear the jacket just here - the belt with the gun, and here he carried another gun in his right pocket. Sometime without expecting - someone, he said, why don't you look at me? Boom. Why don't - don't - - I do look at me. So he got the dog, this big doberman, called Rolph. The prisoner had to say, here Rolph - Mr Rolph. So once I come to him, he was drunk (NOT CLEAR) .... I come with my brother Leo, and he says, Rolph - bite him - get him - get him! And then (GROWLS) ... I felt my hair - I NOT CLEAR ....
SCHINDLER

SLATE 14 TAKE 1 - INTERVIEW HENRY ROSNER CONT'D

...Are you afraid? No.

HENRY: CONT'D

That's my boy. Take me and give me a drink (NOT CLEAR)... Can you imagine how I play? I told my brother (WATCH ME)... And I played, you know, the violin, usually it's a vibration, very quickly, but it was very slowly, but I did it and was happy to be alive after I left. But my - my (MY WORST CONTRACT IN my life).

JON: What kind of people used to go to the parties at the villa?

HENRY: Mostly officers.

JON: Can you just say that again after I've finished. .......

HENRY: Mostly officers went to the party. Sometime some big-shot civilians and sometime German woman. Sometimes Polish girls and er that was it.

JON: Did you see Oscar Schindler there often?

HENRY: Very often.

JON: Just - if you could say.... OSCAR SCHINDLER WAS AT THE PARTIES VERY OFTEN and then tell me that story about one of those occasions.

HENRY: Oscar Schindler was very often.

JON: HOLD ON —
SCHINDLER
Slate 14 Take 1 - Interview Henry Rosner Contd

Jon and Henry talk for a bit -

Henry: And yeah, and she liked very much my music...

Jon: Okay

Henry: Oscar Schindler was very often at the parties. He liked very much my music, he was very musical - very musical, and whatever he asked I knew, and especially he liked the song 'under...

Jon: Don't worry about the song, tell me about Oscar being at the party.

Henry: And he sympathised very much - sympathised very much with me. And once there was a - how you call it - a police concert and they looks for Radzia - in English - the Radzia. And why they went to the camp, they took (not clear) ... whatever dollars diamonds, gold, anything that was valuable, they took away. And I played this night for Commandant, and Schindler was - he knew what was going on. He would keep one big five hundred for (not clear) that was fortunate. I was the richest one in the Lager fortunate for us, (not clear) ... so and then he tried to get me to say to him - so he wouldn't. So he asked the Commandant. The Commandant - (not clear) ... But what happened - (name) Schindler. He put me on the list and I got out. It's my wife and my brother and his wife, he got out and he came to Gross Rosen first, then Brinnlitz.
SCHINDLER
SLATE 14 TAKE 1 - INTERVIEW HENRY ROSNER CONTD

JON: I'll come to that in a minute, but tell me a little bit - there was the party one night where you were being - you were having to play "GLOOMY SUNDAY"

HENRY: Oh yes. THAT was on his birthday, it was on his birthday, so - and it was his birthday - and his birthday was - I got the permission from ... GATHER ... to (not clear) ... with one (not clear) ... S.S which was a baritone, beautiful singer. And he was driving in the car, the chauffeur, and he was WITH A GUN, naturally; we came to Schindler party. He was a little bit high. He look and er - Fuhrer's picture - and look at me, takes the chair and look at the - the picture - lift the chair - my heart (not clear) ... gonna kill him! Then he turn - he broke that chair like that - matchbox - you know. But he said what he meant, you know - wanted to show me that he's not sympathising with him. I was enchanted.

JON: What about the time when you were at (not clear) ... and you were playing at the party and the officer wanted you to play 'Gloomy Sunday' more and more times?

HENRY: So there was ONE officer - I could see that he was very unhappy. I suspected some love affair. Anyway he asked me to play, once more - once more, maybe 15 times, and er I knew that - I liked it very much, but he got enough, he showed to me - he CHRIST ... was scratched. And I was - I played so much - so many times, the melody, I tried to get the point why so many people commit suicide, and I start to suggest when so many people commit suicide, why don't this guy commit suicide? And a few minutes later he goes to the balcony and I hear a shot. The Commandant comes out. OUT - OUT! Now go with the NAME ... And the name was known - if somebody went to the NAME ... usually he got shot,

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SLATE 14 TAKE 1 - INTERVIEW HENRY ROSNER CONTD

HE WAS A BLACK UNIFORM

HENRY: (CONT'D)...
So I went out and I prepared myself - myself - get
maybe outside the camp ... (NOT CLEAR) ... I
nothing about (NOT CLEAR) ... Five minutes and
this officer said nothing happened. I started to run
up the cinders to the - to the barracks, and the first
thing I went to my wife to say that I'm alive, and
that was it. The next day some Polish fellow came to
the (NAME) ... and he got a - a German newspaper
and I knew his name - of this officer - and I saw his
name. He fall for the Fatherland.

JON: 
You'd played this man to
death, hadn't you?

HENRY: 
(LAUGHING) (NOT CLEAR)
he kill me for it.

JON: 
Now when you were on the list
to go to - to
and you were lining up to go
to
something happened to you, didn't it?

HENRY: 
Er that was one
(NOT CLEAR) recognised I play for the Commandant
didn't want to let me out. So later I came again once
more time with a different guy. He didn't recognise me.
And I put my violin under the coat, you see. And er
there was another prisoner, I got another violin, cheap
one, who put also the violin under the coat. And er
my son came with - with er with the
(NOT CLEAR)
Nobody said nothing. And then we came luckily to - to
(AFTER THE WAR YOU GET IT BACK).
Anyway I came and I got a bright idea, I said that
the violin and the ... belongs to Mr. Schindler.
Then - and I came to - to (BRINNFLTZ) Then Schindler
saw me, WE was shaved here about 2 inches, you know,
SCHINDLER
SLATE 14 TAKE 1 - INTERVIEW HENRY ROSNER CONT'D

HENRY: (CONT'D) . . . to make it difficult to escape, and on the coat you've got painted cross - a red cross. HAT DU GESACHT - you should have said that the violin belongs - belongs to me. I did so. Good. Meantime, they send me to Auschwitz, they were sure that I am no more alive. So he said to my wife they would have the violin. Some other guy played the violin, once for the party there - and he said to my wife, it's the same violin but different tone. And then after the war when she met him in Prague - Czechoslovakia . . .

UT - JUST HOLD ON A SEC -

CUT
SCHINDLER
SLATE 15 TAKE 1
INTERVIEW HENRY ROSNER CONTD

JON: Henry, taking you back to a little bit from what we were talking about, tell me what happened in Gross Rosen. You lost your violin, didn't you?

HENRY: So yes, I lost the violin, because I said it belongs to the Schindler. When I ... he said to me, what - where is violin? And I said I left it in ... He said, why didn't you say the violin belongs to me? I did so. Good. Meantime I was sent - my son - to Auschwitz. After a few months he was no more alive. There was some party over there and there was somebody who played the violin, he lend him the violin. And then he said to my wife it's the same violin but different tone. And then after the war, when my wife found out that I'm alive in Dachau ... she couldn't go normal by train, you know, she had ... a train, carriages with the - with the cars. She met some American couple then (name) you know, spoke Polish and she went to Prague, Czechoslovakia, and there she met Schindler and said I have something for you from your late husband. He gave her the violin and ... from my brother Leo and from my son (name) ... Then somebody told my wife ....

JON: Let me stop you for a second. Oscar got your violin back from ... didn't he?

HENRY: JA - JA Yeah, yeah.

JON: Could you say that...

"WHEN I WENT TO AUSCHWITZ, OSKAR SCHINDLER TOOK THE TROUBLE TO GET MY VIOLIN -"
SCHINDLER
SLATE 15 TAKE 1 - INTERVIEW ROSNER CONT'D

HENRY: WHEN I went to - no. I went to
- While I was in Auschwitz... Can I start now?

When I was in Auschwitz Oscar tried to get the violin
AND ACCORDION
... called his back. And later I found out he got it
back. But I was - I wasn't any more in
time.

So he said to my wife here's the instrument, and he
let play someone else on the violin.

JON: That's fine. How come you
got sent back to Auschwitz? Why did you get sent to
Auschwitz?

HENRY: Because of the - as part of
the boys.

JON: Tell me the story from the
start, because now we're filming ...

HENRY: Yeah. So one of these DAYS
WAS AN APPETI-A MORNING
NOT CLEAN... and er Liepod the Commandant,
his name was Liepod... Commandant of the S.S. -
he said all fathers with sons come out. And nine of
us came - maybe ten or twelve SS soldiers with guns,
ready to shoot. They took us this way to the railway
station. They put us in a train, third class, you know,
and people around - they were looking - What's that?

What's that? He said - he said (NAME) ... that
means rebels. So one lady asked, and the little one?
It was my nephew, he was at the time six years old, a
child. She said - he was very embarrassed, he didn't
give her any answer. Now, that action was very interest-
ing, because some woman - they move - and some were
GIVEN an apple - a piece of PRETZ... You could see
all human REACH - all kinds. Everybody was so bad,
And while we were driving - the train - not driving -
I was in the train, my son said to me, daddy, you know,

I am so sorry that you have to die because of me,

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HENRY: (CONT'D)... because I am a child.

And when he said that, I noticed that er (NAME)

Christ, he has come down. - He said do you understand?

He said, yes, I understand. I'm from (LOCATION) and I

know you. I independently, from (NAME)....

And he starts to quiet me down. Don't

worry, you will survive the war. He said - so

sympathetic - so my brother-in-law (NAME) of

father Richard. Ask him would you be so kind.

because he mentioned that he - he

was taking us to Auschwitz and taking the woman to

Auschwitz and knowing our wives are going to be there. He took a letter -

so I wrote a letter to my wife too and I wrote it er

we already got the numbers should end and the war. I very soon.

he survives he meets - meet each other

in Krakow and (NAME) three - 32. So now my - my son

noticed in Auschwitz that some movements under the

trains could - he laid his legs - he got some

feeling and he starts to whistle. (WHISTLES) is our

signal. My sister had a not clear - she looked

at a crack in the - in the wall of the train - it was

a train for horses, and she noticed my son and her son,

so she calls my wife and my wife saw my son - she

became hysterical. She start to knock on the door,

so the General said to me (NOT CLEAR). What's

happened? He said, listen. I see this - my son -

maybe I see him the last time in my life - please let me out. He said, alright, go down under the train,

make believe you're doing something - you know. So he

said - my son - look mum we've got the numbers, we're

going be alive. And daddys by work, in a few minutes

he's coming back. He run to the entrance and I came,

he said, daddy, daddy, mummy's here. And I saw my wife,

with the hands I got kisses. All I could see that er

she's alive. And then they went. That was it.
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SLATE 15 TAKE 1 INTERVIEW ROSNER CONTD

JON: She was saved by Schindler?

HENRY: Yes. She - I know that she went to Schindler. JR.

JON: Tell me what kind of man you think Oscar Schindler was.

HENRY: He was a charmer. Charmer and he could do anything with people, like that. After the war I was in Vienna, in a nightclub and sit on the bar. I got the money - he got the money - you'd think that the barman took the money from him? No. He's got something, I don't know - some - born millionaire. The money was flowing through his fingers. The way he did it, I could never - never - never do THAT.

JON: Why do you think Oscar saved you and your wife?

HENRY: He told me once the story. I believed that was the main reason. There was a time - there was the time - not the concentration camp - when the first labour came, but short - about time that they supposed to liquidate the ghetto, some two years escaped from PLASZOW [17 years old]. So the Commandant gave the order to the Jews - how you call this police? [CDA] - he had to find those two years. [CDA] - naturally they found them. He took - not again - gone - which - things from the pocket. And this moment came the Schindler and he saw this with his own eyes. And he told me the story that heomit, and he said to himself that he - now
HENRY: (CONT'D)... he will work against the Germans. He did that.

JON: When he was at the parties at (NAME) house, how was Oscar?

HENRY: Jovial, laughing, singing.

JON: Can you start that again..... by saying "When Oscar was at the parties"

HENRY: When Oscar was at the parties he was very jovial, happy, laughing and always conducting the parties, always. And he was like a sunshine when you saw him, like a sunshine.

JON: When you saw Oscar for the first time, what did you think?

HENRY: I thought he was a charmer. I didn't know that or he's bluffing or not. He was so - so different than the other people, you know. He got so much soul and when he had music, his action was so good and he was very witty. I liked him very much. He was absolute a charmer. But wonderful artist.

JON: Very good. Lovely.

HENRY: Can't forget him - this guy -

JON: Shellacking from

HENRY: After the war when he was in Frankfurt, they got you the Germans, they told him he shouldn't help them at all. But later on he got er very big er .. praise from (NAME) Pope.

JON: That's lovely. Very good.
SCHINDLER
SLATE 15 TAKE 1 INTERVIEW ROSNER CONTD

HENRY: He got (NOT CLEAR) ...

NAPOLTON and er later - after the war - he got some money from the joint in Paris. He'd been (NOT CLEAR). He went to Argentina. He bought a farm, mink farm. But there was some sickness, the mink died, he lost all the money. He left his wife over there, but he came back to Munich. Munich - was a poor guy. He... took him...

CUT