

1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:02,890

2
00:00:02,890 --> 00:00:06,070
The date is June
16, 1992, and we're

3
00:00:06,070 --> 00:00:09,580
speaking with Dr. Robert
Gruber in Potomac, Maryland.

4
00:00:09,580 --> 00:00:12,320
Dr. Gruber, could you
please tell me your name,

5
00:00:12,320 --> 00:00:14,380
your date of birth,
your place of birth,

6
00:00:14,380 --> 00:00:19,480
and anything you possibly
can about your childhood?

7
00:00:19,480 --> 00:00:24,280
My name is Robert Gruber,
and my date of birth

8
00:00:24,280 --> 00:00:27,580
is December 6, 1933.

9
00:00:27,580 --> 00:00:30,370
Place of birth,
Kosice, Czechoslovakia.

10
00:00:30,370 --> 00:00:36,160

11
00:00:36,160 --> 00:00:42,220
I remember very little from
before my age of about five

12

00:00:42,220 --> 00:00:44,650
when one of my
first vivid memories

13
00:00:44,650 --> 00:00:51,250
is, in fact, connected with
the events of the persecutions.

14
00:00:51,250 --> 00:00:56,380
I was born in a
relatively large,

15
00:00:56,380 --> 00:01:00,310
for that area of the world,
city in Eastern Czechoslovakia,

16
00:01:00,310 --> 00:01:01,960
Kosice.

17
00:01:01,960 --> 00:01:08,650
And in 1938, when Hitler
took over Czechoslovakia,

18
00:01:08,650 --> 00:01:13,150
Kosice was given over
to the Hungarians.

19
00:01:13,150 --> 00:01:18,670
And within a very short
time, the Hungarians came.

20
00:01:18,670 --> 00:01:20,920
And one of my first
memories is, in fact,

21
00:01:20,920 --> 00:01:23,680
being in the main
street in Kosice,

22
00:01:23,680 --> 00:01:26,590
and watching the
Hungarian victory parade

23

00:01:26,590 --> 00:01:31,180
with the leader of the
Hungarians, Admiral Horthy,

24
00:01:31,180 --> 00:01:35,560
on a white horse, leading a
column of Hungarian soldiers

25
00:01:35,560 --> 00:01:37,550
down the main street.

26
00:01:37,550 --> 00:01:39,370
This all looked pretty
glamorous to me,

27
00:01:39,370 --> 00:01:42,310
but within a couple
of days, the rule

28
00:01:42,310 --> 00:01:45,070
came down that all
Jews who were not

29
00:01:45,070 --> 00:01:48,670
Hungarian citizens,
which our family was not,

30
00:01:48,670 --> 00:01:51,800
had to leave that area.

31
00:01:51,800 --> 00:01:57,337
The Hungarians took
over within 48 hours.

32
00:01:57,337 --> 00:01:58,795
So that's one of
my first memories.

33
00:01:58,795 --> 00:02:01,660

34
00:02:01,660 --> 00:02:06,040
Now, one interesting thing

in terms of the background

35

00:02:06,040 --> 00:02:10,570

might be that this entire
section of Czechoslovakia

36

00:02:10,570 --> 00:02:13,135

did have a fair number of Jews.

37

00:02:13,135 --> 00:02:15,970

38

00:02:15,970 --> 00:02:21,580

And they were pretty much
all orthodox, although not--

39

00:02:21,580 --> 00:02:25,510

Hasidism was not very much--

40

00:02:25,510 --> 00:02:27,220

very popular in that area.

41

00:02:27,220 --> 00:02:32,140

It was more, I guess, the sort
of intellectually orthodox

42

00:02:32,140 --> 00:02:37,150

scholastic type of orthodoxy,
rather than the more emotional

43

00:02:37,150 --> 00:02:40,930

Hasidic orthodoxy.

44

00:02:40,930 --> 00:02:44,470

But things were
very much different

45

00:02:44,470 --> 00:02:46,030

than they are here now.

46

00:02:46,030 --> 00:02:51,280

And during that time,

arranged marriages were still

47

00:02:51,280 --> 00:02:56,710

very much in practice, so
that my parents were actually

48

00:02:56,710 --> 00:02:59,620

married as a result
of a get together

49

00:02:59,620 --> 00:03:05,920

that was arranged and paid for
by a professional matchmaker.

50

00:03:05,920 --> 00:03:09,460

And my mother--
my father received

51

00:03:09,460 --> 00:03:13,690

a dowry, which was still
traditional in those days.

52

00:03:13,690 --> 00:03:16,360

53

00:03:16,360 --> 00:03:19,510

But of course, I
wasn't alive then,

54

00:03:19,510 --> 00:03:20,890

so I didn't know much about it.

55

00:03:20,890 --> 00:03:23,920

But it's part of the
lore that I have learned.

56

00:03:23,920 --> 00:03:27,010

Were both of your
parents from that area?

57

00:03:27,010 --> 00:03:30,430

Not too far from that
area, probably about--

58

00:03:30,430 --> 00:03:35,590

actually, my mother
was from a town,

59

00:03:35,590 --> 00:03:39,790

somewhat smaller city
town, called Michalovce--

60

00:03:39,790 --> 00:03:44,260

and I'll refer to it again
later on in the story--

61

00:03:44,260 --> 00:03:49,660

which was probably about 40,
50, 60 miles from Kosice.

62

00:03:49,660 --> 00:03:53,200

My father has a much
more complicated history.

63

00:03:53,200 --> 00:04:00,020

He was born in Ruthenia--
actually, eastern Ruthenia,

64

00:04:00,020 --> 00:04:04,360

and became orphaned when he was
14 years old during the time

65

00:04:04,360 --> 00:04:08,350

of the First World War, spent
some very difficult years

66

00:04:08,350 --> 00:04:12,220

in Budapest, and then
eventually drifted over

67

00:04:12,220 --> 00:04:15,670

to Czechoslovakia as a result
of one of his older brothers

68

00:04:15,670 --> 00:04:19,089

having established

himself in that area.

69

00:04:19,089 --> 00:04:25,450

And he opened up a jewelry shop really in Kosice.

70

00:04:25,450 --> 00:04:28,720

But the-- my mother did not live in Kosice then,

71

00:04:28,720 --> 00:04:33,520

but this matchmaker knew of this person in Kosice

72

00:04:33,520 --> 00:04:37,780

looking for a prospective bride, and he hooked them up

73

00:04:37,780 --> 00:04:40,520

together that way.

74

00:04:40,520 --> 00:04:41,740

And so then they--

75

00:04:41,740 --> 00:04:45,220

after they married, they did settle in Kosice at that time.

76

00:04:45,220 --> 00:04:48,110

77

00:04:48,110 --> 00:04:51,820

But as I say, I remember very little of the years in Kosice.

78

00:04:51,820 --> 00:04:55,600

79

00:04:55,600 --> 00:05:00,790

The-- I guess I didn't say that my initial language that I

80

00:05:00,790 --> 00:05:04,040
learned was Hungarian.

81
00:05:04,040 --> 00:05:06,200
That was my mother
tongue, even though I

82
00:05:06,200 --> 00:05:08,990
was born in
Czechoslovakia, because I

83
00:05:08,990 --> 00:05:11,870
was a part of Czechoslovakia,
which was ethnically very

84
00:05:11,870 --> 00:05:12,620
Hungarian.

85
00:05:12,620 --> 00:05:16,490
Also, this area,
not too long before,

86
00:05:16,490 --> 00:05:20,270
had been part of the
Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

87
00:05:20,270 --> 00:05:23,000
And I think Jews, in
particular, tended

88
00:05:23,000 --> 00:05:28,220
to identify more with
the Hungarian people than

89
00:05:28,220 --> 00:05:30,860
with the Slovakian people.

90
00:05:30,860 --> 00:05:36,320
And so that my mother, who
had gone to, of course,

91
00:05:36,320 --> 00:05:41,330
school still under the

Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

92

00:05:41,330 --> 00:05:44,410

But that's what she spoke
fluently and perfectly.

93

00:05:44,410 --> 00:05:47,180

94

00:05:47,180 --> 00:05:49,490

So actually, as far
as I know, I didn't

95

00:05:49,490 --> 00:05:55,520

learn to speak Slovakian until I
began school at the age of six.

96

00:05:55,520 --> 00:05:58,940

But I don't remember having any
particular difficulty learning

97

00:05:58,940 --> 00:06:00,260

it.

98

00:06:00,260 --> 00:06:07,190

So let me kind of pick up
the story a little bit.

99

00:06:07,190 --> 00:06:10,670

After we got to
Michalovce, because when

100

00:06:10,670 --> 00:06:14,990

we were asked to
leave within 48 hours,

101

00:06:14,990 --> 00:06:16,850

the place that my
parents chose to go

102

00:06:16,850 --> 00:06:18,620

was to my mother's
hometown, which

103
00:06:18,620 --> 00:06:24,530
was Michalovce, which was still
part of Czechoslovakia that was

104
00:06:24,530 --> 00:06:27,390
on its last legs at that point.

105
00:06:27,390 --> 00:06:27,890
And--

106
00:06:27,890 --> 00:06:29,882
Can I stop you for one second?

107
00:06:29,882 --> 00:06:32,870

108
00:06:32,870 --> 00:06:34,364
Let's see.

109
00:06:34,364 --> 00:06:35,870
You got to Michalovce.

110
00:06:35,870 --> 00:06:37,800
We got to-- yeah, we
got to Michalovce,

111
00:06:37,800 --> 00:06:43,550
and that's where I began to
have my first memories that are

112
00:06:43,550 --> 00:06:47,690
fairly vivid and fairly clear.

113
00:06:47,690 --> 00:06:53,630
For-- initially for, I
guess, the first year or so,

114
00:06:53,630 --> 00:06:55,490
we couldn't find
a place to live,

115
00:06:55,490 --> 00:06:59,210
so we lived with
my mother's family,

116
00:06:59,210 --> 00:07:05,840
with her sister and
brother-in-law in fairly

117
00:07:05,840 --> 00:07:07,580
crowded circumstances.

118
00:07:07,580 --> 00:07:10,400

119
00:07:10,400 --> 00:07:12,890
As I remember, and
only very vaguely,

120
00:07:12,890 --> 00:07:18,020
I began to-- even before
I started regular school,

121
00:07:18,020 --> 00:07:22,550
I had already started theater,
which one usually began

122
00:07:22,550 --> 00:07:23,990
at the age of four or five.

123
00:07:23,990 --> 00:07:30,090

124
00:07:30,090 --> 00:07:34,450
Let's see, what else can I
remember about that time?

125
00:07:34,450 --> 00:07:36,640
Had your father
found work there?

126
00:07:36,640 --> 00:07:40,800
Well, that's part of the story.

127
00:07:40,800 --> 00:07:43,230
And then one thing
that will become clear

128
00:07:43,230 --> 00:07:48,330
as I tell this story is
that the way we survived

129
00:07:48,330 --> 00:07:53,790
was because of a great
deal of luck, really,

130
00:07:53,790 --> 00:07:58,110
and circumstances that
kind of came together

131
00:07:58,110 --> 00:07:59,460
in just the right way.

132
00:07:59,460 --> 00:08:05,100
For example, my father, who
was a jeweler, the man--

133
00:08:05,100 --> 00:08:11,700
jewelry manufacturer, rather
than a store owner, he--

134
00:08:11,700 --> 00:08:13,980
when we moved to
Slovakia, he could not--

135
00:08:13,980 --> 00:08:16,050
he wanted to open a
shop there, but he

136
00:08:16,050 --> 00:08:19,680
couldn't because by that time,
Czechoslovakia had broken up.

137
00:08:19,680 --> 00:08:24,870
Slovakia had become an
independent fascist Republic.

138
00:08:24,870 --> 00:08:28,060
And because he was
not a citizen--

139
00:08:28,060 --> 00:08:30,450
in fact, he had
always been stateless.

140
00:08:30,450 --> 00:08:35,799
My father had never had
citizenship in any country.

141
00:08:35,799 --> 00:08:37,919
Because he was not a
citizen, he was not

142
00:08:37,919 --> 00:08:42,990
able to get a license
to open a shop.

143
00:08:42,990 --> 00:08:46,440
So after a while, after
struggling around for a while,

144
00:08:46,440 --> 00:08:49,050
he came up with
the idea of getting

145
00:08:49,050 --> 00:08:54,510
a partner who was a citizen
with whom he would jointly

146
00:08:54,510 --> 00:08:56,520
open a shop.

147
00:08:56,520 --> 00:08:58,950
And he happened to
find a jeweler who

148
00:08:58,950 --> 00:09:05,460
was a Christian person, who was
alcoholic and not really that

149

00:09:05,460 --> 00:09:09,750

interested in running the
shop as long as he was fairly

150

00:09:09,750 --> 00:09:12,000

adequately provided for.

151

00:09:12,000 --> 00:09:14,100

So the shop that
my father opened

152

00:09:14,100 --> 00:09:19,110

was really under his name,
legally belonged to him.

153

00:09:19,110 --> 00:09:23,130

And what makes that important
is that because of that when

154

00:09:23,130 --> 00:09:29,340

later on all Jewish businesses
and stores were taken over,

155

00:09:29,340 --> 00:09:33,060

were aryanized, as it
was called at that time.

156

00:09:33,060 --> 00:09:35,190

And a very good
depiction of that

157

00:09:35,190 --> 00:09:39,930

is in the movie, The Shop on
Main Street, the Aryanization.

158

00:09:39,930 --> 00:09:42,520

When all the stores
were aryanized,

159

00:09:42,520 --> 00:09:45,090

this did not apply
to my father's shop,

160
00:09:45,090 --> 00:09:49,740
because it was not a
shop officially owned

161
00:09:49,740 --> 00:09:51,390
by a Jewish person.

162
00:09:51,390 --> 00:09:55,080
So my father was able during
some of these difficult years

163
00:09:55,080 --> 00:10:01,440
to continue to make money,
which as the story will unfold,

164
00:10:01,440 --> 00:10:06,430
became also very important
for our survival.

165
00:10:06,430 --> 00:10:12,000
But this was a totally sort of
combination of circumstances

166
00:10:12,000 --> 00:10:13,450
that he had not planned on.

167
00:10:13,450 --> 00:10:17,460
He planned-- he wanted to be
able to open his own shop.

168
00:10:17,460 --> 00:10:19,140
But because of
these circumstances,

169
00:10:19,140 --> 00:10:22,360
he wasn't able to do so.

170
00:10:22,360 --> 00:10:26,490
So then gradually, I guess,
he established himself

171

00:10:26,490 --> 00:10:29,580
with this new partner.

172
00:10:29,580 --> 00:10:35,700
And we started--
let's see, '39, '40--

173
00:10:35,700 --> 00:10:39,180
by that time, as soon as
I think Slovakia became--

174
00:10:39,180 --> 00:10:41,940
very shortly after they
became an independent fascist

175
00:10:41,940 --> 00:10:48,600
Republic, they started
passing some laws and--

176
00:10:48,600 --> 00:10:49,830
against the Jews.

177
00:10:49,830 --> 00:10:52,200
And I don't know exactly
the order of them,

178
00:10:52,200 --> 00:10:55,200
but it was laws like
one day, the law

179
00:10:55,200 --> 00:10:58,920
would be that no Jews
could go into parks.

180
00:10:58,920 --> 00:11:02,790
So as a kid, there
were parks around.

181
00:11:02,790 --> 00:11:08,010
I wasn't able to go
and play in the parks.

182
00:11:08,010 --> 00:11:12,840

No Jews would be allowed
to go to the movies.

183
00:11:12,840 --> 00:11:16,590
This town wasn't that
big, and we had one movie.

184
00:11:16,590 --> 00:11:21,540
But still, it seemed like a
very exciting, glamorous place

185
00:11:21,540 --> 00:11:26,120
to go to, but there was no
way that I could go to a movie

186
00:11:26,120 --> 00:11:29,400
during that time.

187
00:11:29,400 --> 00:11:34,530
The other rule was something
like no Jews in restaurants.

188
00:11:34,530 --> 00:11:39,330
And that didn't-- we hadn't
gone out in a restaurant,

189
00:11:39,330 --> 00:11:40,760
didn't seem like a depriva--

190
00:11:40,760 --> 00:11:44,280
they didn't have any
McDonald's that I

191
00:11:44,280 --> 00:11:45,630
would have been deprived of.

192
00:11:45,630 --> 00:11:50,310
But gives you some sense
of the gradually kind

193
00:11:50,310 --> 00:11:55,950
of eating away at
your freedoms that

194
00:11:55,950 --> 00:11:58,780
took place during that time.

195
00:11:58,780 --> 00:12:03,270
And I guess what I remember,
and then somewhat--

196
00:12:03,270 --> 00:12:05,100
somewhat vaguely,
but still pretty

197
00:12:05,100 --> 00:12:10,590
much so is the growing sense
of fear and anxiety and tension

198
00:12:10,590 --> 00:12:16,380
that all of my family, and
all the people around us

199
00:12:16,380 --> 00:12:18,610
about what was going to happen.

200
00:12:18,610 --> 00:12:25,420
I mean, clearly, no one expected
anything good to happen.

201
00:12:25,420 --> 00:12:28,050
But perhaps at this
point, no one quite

202
00:12:28,050 --> 00:12:31,085
anticipated how bad
things would be, either.

203
00:12:31,085 --> 00:12:34,040

204
00:12:34,040 --> 00:12:39,850
And then, I think by the
time I started first grade,

205

00:12:39,850 --> 00:12:44,020
no Jews were allowed in
regular public schools,

206
00:12:44,020 --> 00:12:48,460
so that essentially
under the sponsorship

207
00:12:48,460 --> 00:12:52,180
of the Jewish community,
there was a Jewish school

208
00:12:52,180 --> 00:12:55,390
with exclusively Jewish kids.

209
00:12:55,390 --> 00:13:00,970
And they-- I think it only
went up to sixth grade.

210
00:13:00,970 --> 00:13:06,220
And one-- after a while, that's
as far as the person could go

211
00:13:06,220 --> 00:13:06,730
in--

212
00:13:06,730 --> 00:13:10,150
the Jewish person could
go in their education

213
00:13:10,150 --> 00:13:11,290
was sixth grade.

214
00:13:11,290 --> 00:13:16,450

215
00:13:16,450 --> 00:13:19,330
So did you originally
attend the public school?

216
00:13:19,330 --> 00:13:22,240
I don't-- I think
by the time I was--

217
00:13:22,240 --> 00:13:23,890
I think-- let's see, I was--

218
00:13:23,890 --> 00:13:26,540
1940 I was six years old.

219
00:13:26,540 --> 00:13:29,230
By the time I would have
started first grade.

220
00:13:29,230 --> 00:13:31,900
I think by that time
already, there, the Jews

221
00:13:31,900 --> 00:13:35,350
were not allowed to
go to public school.

222
00:13:35,350 --> 00:13:38,110
And in fact, this picture--

223
00:13:38,110 --> 00:13:39,880
because this is
the second grade--

224
00:13:39,880 --> 00:13:42,880
I suppose I started in '39, '40.

225
00:13:42,880 --> 00:13:44,500
Now, I don't--

226
00:13:44,500 --> 00:13:46,133
I may have started
in public school,

227
00:13:46,133 --> 00:13:47,800
but I really don't
have any recollection

228
00:13:47,800 --> 00:13:49,030
of the first grade.

229
00:13:49,030 --> 00:13:52,900
But by the second grade, as you
can see, in the year in 1942,

230
00:13:52,900 --> 00:13:56,080
'41, I was in an all Jew--

231
00:13:56,080 --> 00:13:57,640
this is my picture--

232
00:13:57,640 --> 00:13:59,940
I was in all Jewish school.

233
00:13:59,940 --> 00:14:02,740
In fact, at that
point, they were

234
00:14:02,740 --> 00:14:07,405
segregated into boys and
girls in different classes.

235
00:14:07,405 --> 00:14:10,835

236
00:14:10,835 --> 00:14:12,335
You see that comment
on the picture?

237
00:14:12,335 --> 00:14:13,060
Yeah, yeah.

238
00:14:13,060 --> 00:14:15,220
As a matter-- I mean,
this obviously is--

239
00:14:15,220 --> 00:14:16,810
this picture is
of some interest,

240
00:14:16,810 --> 00:14:18,970
because it does have--

241
00:14:18,970 --> 00:14:22,900
shows at least the
teacher and the principal

242
00:14:22,900 --> 00:14:27,580
who are pictured along
with the students.

243
00:14:27,580 --> 00:14:30,640
They wore yellow bands,
which were at that time

244
00:14:30,640 --> 00:14:36,620
required for Jews to wear
to identify themselves.

245
00:14:36,620 --> 00:14:41,560
I don't really remember
most of the children

246
00:14:41,560 --> 00:14:43,450
here in this picture.

247
00:14:43,450 --> 00:14:48,010
But-- and I-- so I can't
tell you who survived

248
00:14:48,010 --> 00:14:50,230
and who didn't, for sure.

249
00:14:50,230 --> 00:14:53,850
But I would guess that
since about 60% to 70%

250
00:14:53,850 --> 00:14:58,660
of Slovakian Jews were
killed in the Holocaust,

251
00:14:58,660 --> 00:15:00,610
it-- probably the
same percentage

252

00:15:00,610 --> 00:15:05,410
is true here that about 60%
or 70% of these boys that

253

00:15:05,410 --> 00:15:09,520
were killed in the Holocaust.

254

00:15:09,520 --> 00:15:11,860
Interesting--
ironically enough were

255

00:15:11,860 --> 00:15:16,705
the teacher and the principal
both survived, actually.

256

00:15:16,705 --> 00:15:20,080

257

00:15:20,080 --> 00:15:23,020
While I'm on the
pictures, I might just

258

00:15:23,020 --> 00:15:26,560
mention the earliest
picture here is

259

00:15:26,560 --> 00:15:31,490
one taken at my aunt's wedding.

260

00:15:31,490 --> 00:15:34,520
And this is my father.

261

00:15:34,520 --> 00:15:36,170
This is my mother.

262

00:15:36,170 --> 00:15:38,780
This is me, and
this is my sister.

263

00:15:38,780 --> 00:15:41,980
This is my mother's sister,
who was getting married.

264

00:15:41,980 --> 00:15:45,040

This is her husband,
[PERSONAL NAME] husband.

265

00:15:45,040 --> 00:15:51,010

And these are two other
aunts, sisters of my mother.

266

00:15:51,010 --> 00:15:53,800

All of these people
were killed--

267

00:15:53,800 --> 00:15:59,986

all except our immediate family
were killed in the Holocaust.

268

00:15:59,986 --> 00:16:02,780

Do you know what-- so you would
have been around four years old

269

00:16:02,780 --> 00:16:03,280

there?

270

00:16:03,280 --> 00:16:06,580

In there, I'm probably a
little younger than that.

271

00:16:06,580 --> 00:16:08,830

I think I'm probably
about three years old,

272

00:16:08,830 --> 00:16:11,170

and my sister is
about four years old.

273

00:16:11,170 --> 00:16:14,120

And I think the wedding,
which took place

274

00:16:14,120 --> 00:16:19,603

in Kosice, although, my
aunt was from Michalovce.

275
00:16:19,603 --> 00:16:23,054

276
00:16:23,054 --> 00:16:24,250
It's interesting.

277
00:16:24,250 --> 00:16:26,430
Yeah.

278
00:16:26,430 --> 00:16:31,140
So-- and it was with
this aunt and uncle

279
00:16:31,140 --> 00:16:33,660
that we lived for
some period of time

280
00:16:33,660 --> 00:16:36,654
when we first moved
to Michalovce.

281
00:16:36,654 --> 00:16:41,640

282
00:16:41,640 --> 00:16:46,610
Now, maybe you can ask me
some questions specifically

283
00:16:46,610 --> 00:16:50,220
about life there
before I get into the--

284
00:16:50,220 --> 00:16:52,260
more directly into this story.

285
00:16:52,260 --> 00:16:52,950
OK.

286
00:16:52,950 --> 00:16:56,153
Did-- well, after you moved
out from living with your aunt

287

00:16:56,153 --> 00:16:58,570
and uncle, did you-- you got
your own place, is that how--

288

00:16:58,570 --> 00:17:03,120
Yeah, we got an apartment,
a reasonable one

289

00:17:03,120 --> 00:17:06,000
by the standards of that place.

290

00:17:06,000 --> 00:17:09,660
In many ways, this whole area
was really fairly primitive,

291

00:17:09,660 --> 00:17:12,089
certainly by--

292

00:17:12,089 --> 00:17:15,190
even by today's standards there.

293

00:17:15,190 --> 00:17:17,790
But certainly by
American standards,

294

00:17:17,790 --> 00:17:20,550
it would have been
very primitive.

295

00:17:20,550 --> 00:17:23,859
There were very few
cars in that area.

296

00:17:23,859 --> 00:17:27,240
There was lots of
horse drawn traffic--

297

00:17:27,240 --> 00:17:30,780
wagons and so on.

298

00:17:30,780 --> 00:17:34,530

There was even a
vestige from the past

299
00:17:34,530 --> 00:17:38,910
in that there was a
castle at the edge of town

300
00:17:38,910 --> 00:17:41,700
where the count--

301
00:17:41,700 --> 00:17:43,980
the local count lived.

302
00:17:43,980 --> 00:17:47,610
And when they would
go by in the street,

303
00:17:47,610 --> 00:17:50,430
they would be in a
horse drawn coach

304
00:17:50,430 --> 00:17:55,620
with their emblem,
their insignia

305
00:17:55,620 --> 00:18:00,060
on the side of the coach.

306
00:18:00,060 --> 00:18:06,250
So there was-- it's a
very agricultural area--

307
00:18:06,250 --> 00:18:09,060
there was-- at
least at that time.

308
00:18:09,060 --> 00:18:12,580
Now, I've been on a return trip
there a couple of years ago,

309
00:18:12,580 --> 00:18:15,810
and many of these small towns
during the Communist era,

310
00:18:15,810 --> 00:18:19,560
they built a lot of polluting
industries and terrible

311
00:18:19,560 --> 00:18:27,010
looking modern cinder
block housing projects.

312
00:18:27,010 --> 00:18:30,930
But in those days, it
was very agricultural.

313
00:18:30,930 --> 00:18:33,090
Do you remember what the
town looked like at all?

314
00:18:33,090 --> 00:18:33,600
Yeah.

315
00:18:33,600 --> 00:18:36,360
There was really
mostly consisted

316
00:18:36,360 --> 00:18:40,880
of one very long
main street that

317
00:18:40,880 --> 00:18:47,130
stretched from the railroad
station on one end,

318
00:18:47,130 --> 00:18:53,220
probably two or three miles
long, to the other end where

319
00:18:53,220 --> 00:18:54,510
there was a creek.

320
00:18:54,510 --> 00:18:57,960
And beside the creek
was the count's castle.

321

00:18:57,960 --> 00:19:01,380

And then there were a
couple of streets parallel

322

00:19:01,380 --> 00:19:05,850

to this main street,
but none nearly as

323

00:19:05,850 --> 00:19:07,650

big or prominent
as the main street.

324

00:19:07,650 --> 00:19:10,110

Really, all the
stores, essentially,

325

00:19:10,110 --> 00:19:12,780

were on that main street.

326

00:19:12,780 --> 00:19:15,660

On that main street, you also
had the Jewish synagogue,

327

00:19:15,660 --> 00:19:18,570

which for a town
of that size, which

328

00:19:18,570 --> 00:19:24,960

is about 15,000 population, was
a fairly magnificent synagogue

329

00:19:24,960 --> 00:19:27,570

both inside and outside.

330

00:19:27,570 --> 00:19:31,050

But on that main street
were-- it was a town hall,

331

00:19:31,050 --> 00:19:32,460

the post office--

332

00:19:32,460 --> 00:19:36,300

main post office,
and all the streets,

333
00:19:36,300 --> 00:19:37,790
and a number of the street.

334
00:19:37,790 --> 00:19:39,780
And then all the
stores, a number

335
00:19:39,780 --> 00:19:42,210
of the stores, probably
a majority of the stores,

336
00:19:42,210 --> 00:19:44,540
were owned by Jews.

337
00:19:44,540 --> 00:19:47,820
That was typical in that area.

338
00:19:47,820 --> 00:19:51,180
Because with the exception
of very few Jews,

339
00:19:51,180 --> 00:19:58,840
most Jews were not part of
the landed type of work,

340
00:19:58,840 --> 00:20:05,430
so that owning businesses
and professions

341
00:20:05,430 --> 00:20:07,980
were what they were engaged in.

342
00:20:07,980 --> 00:20:11,102

343
00:20:11,102 --> 00:20:15,060
You mentioned, also, that
the Jews from that area

344

00:20:15,060 --> 00:20:16,770
were prominently observant.

345
00:20:16,770 --> 00:20:19,060
Was your family-- did you
observe the sabbath and--

346
00:20:19,060 --> 00:20:19,920
Yes.

347
00:20:19,920 --> 00:20:24,160
I think with very
few exceptions,

348
00:20:24,160 --> 00:20:29,340
with the exception
of some rebels who

349
00:20:29,340 --> 00:20:33,420
didn't no longer observed,
most people did observe.

350
00:20:33,420 --> 00:20:38,880
I mean, there was certainly we
had kosher food and everything

351
00:20:38,880 --> 00:20:40,770
that was to be--

352
00:20:40,770 --> 00:20:43,770
that was standard
expectation, even

353
00:20:43,770 --> 00:20:46,710
though my parents by
the standards of some

354
00:20:46,710 --> 00:20:48,750
were actually fairly modern.

355
00:20:48,750 --> 00:20:54,930
Because in that area, many
women still wore wigs.

356
00:20:54,930 --> 00:20:57,420
Whereas, that was not
true for my mother.

357
00:20:57,420 --> 00:21:01,740
In many households,
the only language

358
00:21:01,740 --> 00:21:04,140
spoken within the
household was Yiddish.

359
00:21:04,140 --> 00:21:06,180
That was not true
in our household.

360
00:21:06,180 --> 00:21:08,550
Generally, we spoke Hungarian.

361
00:21:08,550 --> 00:21:11,490
Although, my parents did
speak Yiddish to each other

362
00:21:11,490 --> 00:21:14,220
when they wanted to keep
something secret from us.

363
00:21:14,220 --> 00:21:17,970
And we never-- my sister
and I never quite learned

364
00:21:17,970 --> 00:21:21,321
that-- learned it that well,
although, we picked it up some.

365
00:21:21,321 --> 00:21:24,150

366
00:21:24,150 --> 00:21:29,460
But-- so by the
standards of some part

367

00:21:29,460 --> 00:21:31,530
of the Jewish
community, our family

368

00:21:31,530 --> 00:21:35,850
would have been called
fairly modern, rather than

369

00:21:35,850 --> 00:21:36,760
traditional.

370

00:21:36,760 --> 00:21:39,870
But it certainly
was expected that we

371

00:21:39,870 --> 00:21:47,130
would keep kosher, and go
to Shul on Saturday morning,

372

00:21:47,130 --> 00:21:50,490
my father and I
as I became older,

373

00:21:50,490 --> 00:21:55,930
and observe, essentially,
all the holidays.

374

00:21:55,930 --> 00:22:00,930
Now, some of the more
religious people would go to--

375

00:22:00,930 --> 00:22:05,970
every morning
would go in at 6:00

376

00:22:05,970 --> 00:22:09,630
and do two or three
hours of studying

377

00:22:09,630 --> 00:22:13,230
the Torah or the Talmud
before going and starting

378

00:22:13,230 --> 00:22:15,815
their ordinary day.

379

00:22:15,815 --> 00:22:17,760
Was there yeshiva in the town?

380

00:22:17,760 --> 00:22:19,350
No, there was no
yeshiva in town.

381

00:22:19,350 --> 00:22:23,340
But in Slovakia--
so one of the--

382

00:22:23,340 --> 00:22:26,310
I forget exactly the name
of it, but in the capital

383

00:22:26,310 --> 00:22:29,680
of Slovakia, Bratislava
or Pressburg,

384

00:22:29,680 --> 00:22:33,485
I think there was a very
famous center, yeshiva center.

385

00:22:33,485 --> 00:22:36,150

386

00:22:36,150 --> 00:22:37,920
What about Zionist activity?

387

00:22:37,920 --> 00:22:40,260
Now, that's an
interesting question,

388

00:22:40,260 --> 00:22:45,480
because again, the community
was so traditional at that point

389

00:22:45,480 --> 00:22:48,870
that they really,

for the most part,

390
00:22:48,870 --> 00:22:51,990
had very little use
for Zionist activity.

391
00:22:51,990 --> 00:22:57,300
The belief was that the
day the Messiah came

392
00:22:57,300 --> 00:23:02,610
is when one would go back
to Palestine and not before,

393
00:23:02,610 --> 00:23:05,400
and that there was almost
something sacrilegious--

394
00:23:05,400 --> 00:23:06,240
Right.

395
00:23:06,240 --> 00:23:09,990
--about becoming a
Zionist and trying

396
00:23:09,990 --> 00:23:12,600
to re-establish
the State of Israel

397
00:23:12,600 --> 00:23:15,870
before the return-- before
the coming of the Messiah.

398
00:23:15,870 --> 00:23:22,050
And so-- but some of the younger
people did become Zionists,

399
00:23:22,050 --> 00:23:26,770
and they were looked at
somewhat askance by--

400
00:23:26,770 --> 00:23:27,270
Really?

401
00:23:27,270 --> 00:23:28,980
--by the more
traditional people.

402
00:23:28,980 --> 00:23:32,190
My cousin-- actually,
two of-- both my cousins

403
00:23:32,190 --> 00:23:35,790
who lived in Michalovce who were
somewhat-- about five or six

404
00:23:35,790 --> 00:23:38,610
years or-- actually, more
like eight and 10 years older

405
00:23:38,610 --> 00:23:43,590
than I, they had both
become involved in Zionism.

406
00:23:43,590 --> 00:23:48,910
And not only that, but to the
consternation of their parents,

407
00:23:48,910 --> 00:23:52,260
they became involved in
Hashomer Hatzair, which

408
00:23:52,260 --> 00:23:56,550
was not only
Zionistic, but leftist

409
00:23:56,550 --> 00:24:00,660
and atheistic in those days.

410
00:24:00,660 --> 00:24:06,270
But that was a source of great
distress and embarrassment

411
00:24:06,270 --> 00:24:10,410
to their parents that they were.

412

00:24:10,410 --> 00:24:15,150

But pretty generally,
as I say, the opinion

413

00:24:15,150 --> 00:24:19,080

was that Zionism was not
consonant with good Judaism

414

00:24:19,080 --> 00:24:20,740

in those days.

415

00:24:20,740 --> 00:24:23,115

I actually worked with a woman
who now lives in Australia

416

00:24:23,115 --> 00:24:24,730

who is from [HEBREW].

417

00:24:24,730 --> 00:24:25,410

Oh, really?

418

00:24:25,410 --> 00:24:28,620

Was very involved, I
know, in the Zionist.

419

00:24:28,620 --> 00:24:31,710

Her name was Magda Hellinger.

420

00:24:31,710 --> 00:24:35,380

For all I know, my mother
probably knows her.

421

00:24:35,380 --> 00:24:38,170

I know she's very-- and her
father taught in the school,

422

00:24:38,170 --> 00:24:38,670

in fact.

423

00:24:38,670 --> 00:24:42,300

My cousin taught in
the Jewish school.

424
00:24:42,300 --> 00:24:43,140
I believe so, yeah.

425
00:24:43,140 --> 00:24:45,140
The name seems familiar to me.

426
00:24:45,140 --> 00:24:47,280
I mean-- although,
these teachers, this one

427
00:24:47,280 --> 00:24:50,070
is Bernstein, and that's Brown.

428
00:24:50,070 --> 00:24:53,370
But it sounds like a
familiar name to me.

429
00:24:53,370 --> 00:24:55,325
She would be quite a
bit older than you.

430
00:24:55,325 --> 00:24:58,530
But she would
probably be about--

431
00:24:58,530 --> 00:25:00,660
well, probably younger
than my mother.

432
00:25:00,660 --> 00:25:03,300
But my mother would probably
have known her pretty well.

433
00:25:03,300 --> 00:25:05,760
[INAUDIBLE] just wondering.

434
00:25:05,760 --> 00:25:07,220
It sounds like a familiar name.

435
00:25:07,220 --> 00:25:07,720
Yeah.

436
00:25:07,720 --> 00:25:08,970
I mean, I--

437
00:25:08,970 --> 00:25:11,030
I haven't met anyone
else from that town so--

438
00:25:11,030 --> 00:25:13,810
Yeah, yeah, yeah.

439
00:25:13,810 --> 00:25:14,310
OK.

440
00:25:14,310 --> 00:25:17,550
Well, do you remember
any of the-- what

441
00:25:17,550 --> 00:25:18,910
it was like to go to school?

442
00:25:18,910 --> 00:25:19,410
Yeah.

443
00:25:19,410 --> 00:25:20,730
I mean, it was--

444
00:25:20,730 --> 00:25:23,640
I suppose I remember this--

445
00:25:23,640 --> 00:25:26,340
even though it was a
Jewish school, rather than

446
00:25:26,340 --> 00:25:30,480
a part of the regular
school, my memory of it

447
00:25:30,480 --> 00:25:33,210
didn't have so much to
do, at least initially,

448

00:25:33,210 --> 00:25:35,340

with the fact of its
being a Jewish school.

449

00:25:35,340 --> 00:25:41,190

I mean, the usual stuff of
looking forward to recess

450

00:25:41,190 --> 00:25:45,280

and playing soccer, doing
other games during recess.

451

00:25:45,280 --> 00:25:51,510

452

00:25:51,510 --> 00:25:56,520

Struggling with it to be a
good boy or a bad boy in class.

453

00:25:56,520 --> 00:26:00,300

And in those days--
and certainly,

454

00:26:00,300 --> 00:26:04,260

corporal punishment was
still very much part

455

00:26:04,260 --> 00:26:06,940

of education in those days.

456

00:26:06,940 --> 00:26:11,710

So the teachers would
have a bamboo stick,

457

00:26:11,710 --> 00:26:15,360

and if you misbehaved
in class, then you

458

00:26:15,360 --> 00:26:17,580

had to go and take
your punishment

459

00:26:17,580 --> 00:26:21,930
and extend out your
hand and wait for it

460
00:26:21,930 --> 00:26:29,370
to be switched and struck by
the teacher with a bamboo stick.

461
00:26:29,370 --> 00:26:30,450
And it stung.

462
00:26:30,450 --> 00:26:32,413
It stung pretty badly.

463
00:26:32,413 --> 00:26:33,330
So you experienced it.

464
00:26:33,330 --> 00:26:36,150
I experienced that, yeah.

465
00:26:36,150 --> 00:26:38,970
And when he really
got mad, then you'd

466
00:26:38,970 --> 00:26:44,610
have to bend over and then get
a few lashes on your behind.

467
00:26:44,610 --> 00:26:47,860
And that was perfectly
acceptable practice.

468
00:26:47,860 --> 00:26:52,770
There were no complaints from
parents about it in those days.

469
00:26:52,770 --> 00:26:54,780
And I suppose most of
them did think they

470
00:26:54,780 --> 00:26:57,510
were doing the right thing.

471
00:26:57,510 --> 00:26:59,100
But it didn't feel like it.

472
00:26:59,100 --> 00:27:00,270
I imagine.

473
00:27:00,270 --> 00:27:01,800
Was there a sense of it--

474
00:27:01,800 --> 00:27:05,890
that you knew you had
to be in this school?

475
00:27:05,890 --> 00:27:09,360
Well, some, but
again, I mean, it

476
00:27:09,360 --> 00:27:14,400
was part of the whole picture
of gradually being deprived

477
00:27:14,400 --> 00:27:17,160
of privileges and freedoms.

478
00:27:17,160 --> 00:27:23,070
And in the first two or
three years, my memory of it

479
00:27:23,070 --> 00:27:25,440
isn't clear enough to
really be able to answer

480
00:27:25,440 --> 00:27:26,640
that kind of question.

481
00:27:26,640 --> 00:27:29,910
But certainly, I
mean, one might say

482
00:27:29,910 --> 00:27:32,385
in some ways things were
getting worse and worse.

483
00:27:32,385 --> 00:27:35,040

484
00:27:35,040 --> 00:27:38,010
There was-- being in an
all Jewish environment

485
00:27:38,010 --> 00:27:40,620
in school probably had
its good side, too,

486
00:27:40,620 --> 00:27:44,880
in terms of being in a community
with other people going

487
00:27:44,880 --> 00:27:47,040
through the same thing.

488
00:27:47,040 --> 00:27:50,340
And so there was some sense,
I think, of mutual support

489
00:27:50,340 --> 00:27:52,560
from that, as well.

490
00:27:52,560 --> 00:27:57,750
But interestingly enough, and
this has always astounded me,

491
00:27:57,750 --> 00:28:03,630
that through all the
times during the war, even

492
00:28:03,630 --> 00:28:08,730
after there had been transports
and so on, and a fair number

493
00:28:08,730 --> 00:28:12,870
of people were
deported, that those

494

00:28:12,870 --> 00:28:16,950
who still remain as much
as they both worried

495
00:28:16,950 --> 00:28:20,880
about their friends and
relatives who had been taken,

496
00:28:20,880 --> 00:28:23,580
and as much as we all
worried about what

497
00:28:23,580 --> 00:28:27,970
would happen to all of us,
eventually, that we all--

498
00:28:27,970 --> 00:28:30,360
I think there was a
tendency to try and maintain

499
00:28:30,360 --> 00:28:34,360
a semblance of normality
as much as possible.

500
00:28:34,360 --> 00:28:39,090
And so that whether it--
whether it involved people

501
00:28:39,090 --> 00:28:45,060
getting together socially,
having card parties,

502
00:28:45,060 --> 00:28:48,870
kids worrying in school about
whether they got their homework

503
00:28:48,870 --> 00:28:51,120
right, whether the teacher
is going to get mad at them

504
00:28:51,120 --> 00:28:53,730
or not, whether their
parents are going to get

505

00:28:53,730 --> 00:28:57,180

upset with their grades, I
mean, to some extent that

506

00:28:57,180 --> 00:28:59,670

still remained part of life.

507

00:28:59,670 --> 00:29:02,760

And probably that
was a helpful part

508

00:29:02,760 --> 00:29:07,050

of life in creating
some balance for all

509

00:29:07,050 --> 00:29:10,590

the other worrisome things.

510

00:29:10,590 --> 00:29:14,920

So I remember
particularly as I, myself,

511

00:29:14,920 --> 00:29:19,650

I was sort of an average,
indifferent student

512

00:29:19,650 --> 00:29:23,250

the first three or four--

513

00:29:23,250 --> 00:29:25,290

the first three grades.

514

00:29:25,290 --> 00:29:29,160

And then suddenly, I became a
very, very outstanding student

515

00:29:29,160 --> 00:29:36,660

in the fourth grade and
got a lot of praise for it.

516

00:29:36,660 --> 00:29:42,090

And so I remember that

that meant a lot to me.

517
00:29:42,090 --> 00:29:47,190
And as-- at the
same time, vaguely

518
00:29:47,190 --> 00:29:52,350
remembering also worrying about
other kids being jealous of me

519
00:29:52,350 --> 00:29:57,100
and trying to put me down
by mocking me and so on.

520
00:29:57,100 --> 00:29:59,850
So these were all
part of life, even

521
00:29:59,850 --> 00:30:01,655
during those very
difficult times.

522
00:30:01,655 --> 00:30:04,990

523
00:30:04,990 --> 00:30:08,378
Well, would you like to
discuss the course of events

524
00:30:08,378 --> 00:30:08,920
then of how--

525
00:30:08,920 --> 00:30:12,610
Yeah, right, and
I'll be glad to.

526
00:30:12,610 --> 00:30:16,960
Well, I suppose I already
mentioned these laws that

527
00:30:16,960 --> 00:30:18,910
were being gradually passed.

528

00:30:18,910 --> 00:30:23,080

And then in the
beginning of 1942,

529

00:30:23,080 --> 00:30:26,590

the first transport began.

530

00:30:26,590 --> 00:30:31,510

And initially, the
people who were

531

00:30:31,510 --> 00:30:36,670

subject to being transported
were young people, really,

532

00:30:36,670 --> 00:30:40,510

late adolescence, and
kids in their early 20s,

533

00:30:40,510 --> 00:30:46,580

both male and female,
unattached, single, and so on.

534

00:30:46,580 --> 00:30:49,250

These were the first
population that

535

00:30:49,250 --> 00:30:52,000

were subject to deportation.

536

00:30:52,000 --> 00:30:56,350

And so that didn't
personally affect us.

537

00:30:56,350 --> 00:31:02,120

Although, one of my cousins
was in that category.

538

00:31:02,120 --> 00:31:05,770

And she for-- well,
not so fortunately,

539

00:31:05,770 --> 00:31:07,960
because eventually,
she was killed.

540
00:31:07,960 --> 00:31:09,940
But at least during
that period of time,

541
00:31:09,940 --> 00:31:16,220
she hid out and so was
not caught in that room.

542
00:31:16,220 --> 00:31:24,160
But-- and as I understand, maybe
my historical knowledge isn't

543
00:31:24,160 --> 00:31:29,260
totally accurate, but this group
that they got from Slovakia

544
00:31:29,260 --> 00:31:31,240
were really used,
these young people,

545
00:31:31,240 --> 00:31:33,950
to build some of the camps.

546
00:31:33,950 --> 00:31:37,360
And I think some of them really
were involved in building

547
00:31:37,360 --> 00:31:39,320
Auschwitz during that time.

548
00:31:39,320 --> 00:31:42,400
So a few of that group
actually survived

549
00:31:42,400 --> 00:31:49,300
on to the end of the war,
having become Kapos, and so on.

550
00:31:49,300 --> 00:31:52,300

But most of them were killed.

551

00:31:52,300 --> 00:31:57,490

In fact, probably about
95%, 98% of the kids that

552

00:31:57,490 --> 00:32:00,370

were caught at that time were.

553

00:32:00,370 --> 00:32:06,450

Now, the next law that
came out did affect us.

554

00:32:06,450 --> 00:32:11,740

The next group that was subject
to deportation were men--

555

00:32:11,740 --> 00:32:16,990

single or married-- within
a certain age range.

556

00:32:16,990 --> 00:32:21,730

And my father was
in that age range.

557

00:32:21,730 --> 00:32:27,550

And so there was-- this
was all on the up and up

558

00:32:27,550 --> 00:32:29,980

at that time, so to speak.

559

00:32:29,980 --> 00:32:32,690

So the announcements
were made publicly

560

00:32:32,690 --> 00:32:36,070

that at such and such
a time, these people

561

00:32:36,070 --> 00:32:43,360

would be expected to report
for relocation or deportation

562
00:32:43,360 --> 00:32:47,740
to labor camps in the
eastern territories.

563
00:32:47,740 --> 00:32:52,210
And this was all done by
the Slovakian authorities.

564
00:32:52,210 --> 00:32:55,300
This was not done by Germans.

565
00:32:55,300 --> 00:32:58,210
Was there any type of a Jewish
council in this community?

566
00:32:58,210 --> 00:33:01,930
Yes, there was a Jewish council,
and throughout this period

567
00:33:01,930 --> 00:33:03,430
of time, there was
a Jewish council,

568
00:33:03,430 --> 00:33:06,790
I think, both
locally and statewide

569
00:33:06,790 --> 00:33:12,190
in Slovakia that
tried to intervene

570
00:33:12,190 --> 00:33:14,170
on behalf of the community.

571
00:33:14,170 --> 00:33:15,940
And there will be a
couple of instances

572
00:33:15,940 --> 00:33:20,740
where I'll mention they actually
were effective in securing

573

00:33:20,740 --> 00:33:21,370
something.

574

00:33:21,370 --> 00:33:24,340
But I don't know
whether at that point

575

00:33:24,340 --> 00:33:26,490
they were particularly
effective.

576

00:33:26,490 --> 00:33:27,310
I'm not sure.

577

00:33:27,310 --> 00:33:31,270
I just don't know
enough about that.

578

00:33:31,270 --> 00:33:36,640
So then, I mean, again,
an excellent example

579

00:33:36,640 --> 00:33:44,630
of how chance played a
tremendous role in survival.

580

00:33:44,630 --> 00:33:50,080
The way my father
was going to avoid

581

00:33:50,080 --> 00:33:53,740
this particular
deportation was that he

582

00:33:53,740 --> 00:33:58,240
and the Jewish
journeymen of his were

583

00:33:58,240 --> 00:34:02,380
going to hide out in his shop.

584

00:34:02,380 --> 00:34:06,040

And presumably, since
this shop was legally

585
00:34:06,040 --> 00:34:11,170
a Christian establishment, they
would not come and look for him

586
00:34:11,170 --> 00:34:12,520
there.

587
00:34:12,520 --> 00:34:14,920
This shop actually
happened to be

588
00:34:14,920 --> 00:34:18,820
practically adjoining the
apartment where we lived.

589
00:34:18,820 --> 00:34:23,380
There was just a wall that
separated our apartment

590
00:34:23,380 --> 00:34:25,090
from the shop.

591
00:34:25,090 --> 00:34:29,020
And this I have a memory--

592
00:34:29,020 --> 00:34:30,880
not a very vivid
one, but a memory

593
00:34:30,880 --> 00:34:35,710
for it is that my father
and this journeyman of his

594
00:34:35,710 --> 00:34:41,080
were going to spend the evening
in our apartment playing cards.

595
00:34:41,080 --> 00:34:44,540
And with the plan that later
on for some reason or other,

596

00:34:44,540 --> 00:34:50,830

they didn't expect the raid
to begin until late at night.

597

00:34:50,830 --> 00:34:54,190

That later on they would
then move to the shop

598

00:34:54,190 --> 00:34:57,520

and hide out there.

599

00:34:57,520 --> 00:35:01,570

But my mother had a headache,
and after they played there

600

00:35:01,570 --> 00:35:04,110

for about half an hour,
she said, I want to go bed.

601

00:35:04,110 --> 00:35:07,320

Why don't you go
to the shop now?

602

00:35:07,320 --> 00:35:08,850

And so they did.

603

00:35:08,850 --> 00:35:14,460

And within about 15 minutes,
the police, the gendarmes,

604

00:35:14,460 --> 00:35:18,690

were at the door
looking for my father.

605

00:35:18,690 --> 00:35:22,360

And they looked all around
the apartment, under the beds,

606

00:35:22,360 --> 00:35:24,300

in the closets, and anywhere.

607

00:35:24,300 --> 00:35:25,830
And of course, they
didn't find him

608
00:35:25,830 --> 00:35:27,360
because he was
already in the shop.

609
00:35:27,360 --> 00:35:31,410
But had my mother
not had a headache,

610
00:35:31,410 --> 00:35:32,610
he would have been taken.

611
00:35:32,610 --> 00:35:34,290
And if he had been
taken, I doubt

612
00:35:34,290 --> 00:35:38,280
very much that any of the rest
of us would have survived.

613
00:35:38,280 --> 00:35:41,742
So there was a whole
series of things like that.

614
00:35:41,742 --> 00:35:44,200
They didn't assault the rest
of the family because he was--

615
00:35:44,200 --> 00:35:49,170
No, because they, themselves,
they grilled my mother, well,

616
00:35:49,170 --> 00:35:49,910
where is he?

617
00:35:49,910 --> 00:35:51,630
And my mother
said, I don't know.

618
00:35:51,630 --> 00:35:54,140

He just went off somewhere.

619

00:35:54,140 --> 00:35:58,243

And so I think it's
a little humid here.

620

00:35:58,243 --> 00:35:59,160

Can I-- I'm going to--

621

00:35:59,160 --> 00:36:03,750

The next thing, and this was,
I guess, around April, May.

622

00:36:03,750 --> 00:36:08,100

I guess, April,
early May of 1942,

623

00:36:08,100 --> 00:36:14,970

came the new law that all
families, unless exempted,

624

00:36:14,970 --> 00:36:18,090

would be subject to deportation.

625

00:36:18,090 --> 00:36:21,450

And the law was very
specific about--

626

00:36:21,450 --> 00:36:24,330

and it was presented
this for our own good

627

00:36:24,330 --> 00:36:28,740

to teach us the
virtues of labor.

628

00:36:28,740 --> 00:36:35,400

And the law was very
specific about luggage,

629

00:36:35,400 --> 00:36:42,610

how much per person,
and so on and so forth.

630

00:36:42,610 --> 00:36:44,340

And this was to be--

631

00:36:44,340 --> 00:36:48,480

everybody was to report
some time in advance.

632

00:36:48,480 --> 00:36:55,200

I think two weeks from the time
that the law was announced.

633

00:36:55,200 --> 00:37:01,200

And so that was a big thing
about what people-- how

634

00:37:01,200 --> 00:37:04,590

were going to people-- how were
people going to react to this.

635

00:37:04,590 --> 00:37:10,290

And most of them, I
would say, really saw

636

00:37:10,290 --> 00:37:14,450

no option but to comply.

637

00:37:14,450 --> 00:37:16,970

And you have to
remember that this

638

00:37:16,970 --> 00:37:23,990

was the time in the war when an
Allied victory seemed very far

639

00:37:23,990 --> 00:37:24,830

away.

640

00:37:24,830 --> 00:37:25,790

Right.

641

00:37:25,790 --> 00:37:31,280

So that there seemed
little prospect

642
00:37:31,280 --> 00:37:36,220
of finding any hiding place
that would last for years.

643
00:37:36,220 --> 00:37:39,350

644
00:37:39,350 --> 00:37:44,570
So most people resigned
themselves to just complying

645
00:37:44,570 --> 00:37:49,880
with the law, including a
number of my immediate relatives

646
00:37:49,880 --> 00:37:52,950
in the same town, including
the aunt and uncle

647
00:37:52,950 --> 00:37:54,450
that I mentioned before.

648
00:37:54,450 --> 00:37:57,170
And they had a little
daughter at that point

649
00:37:57,170 --> 00:37:58,610
that was about three years old.

650
00:37:58,610 --> 00:38:01,150

651
00:38:01,150 --> 00:38:04,800
Can I ask you, what did you
have any knowledge of the camps?

652
00:38:04,800 --> 00:38:09,500
At that point, we didn't
have any knowledge

653

00:38:09,500 --> 00:38:12,240
at all of the camps.

654

00:38:12,240 --> 00:38:20,720
But-- and I suppose people's
reactions to this challenge

655

00:38:20,720 --> 00:38:24,770
vary to some extent
according to their ideas

656

00:38:24,770 --> 00:38:31,430
and attitudes about people,
life, and their own character,

657

00:38:31,430 --> 00:38:32,510
really.

658

00:38:32,510 --> 00:38:35,780
So that for example, in
the case of my parents,

659

00:38:35,780 --> 00:38:38,960
my mother, in
particular, she tended

660

00:38:38,960 --> 00:38:42,500
to be mistrustful,
which turned out

661

00:38:42,500 --> 00:38:46,430
to be a very good thing--
very, very good way to be.

662

00:38:46,430 --> 00:38:50,780
So that although she
had no idea, certainly,

663

00:38:50,780 --> 00:38:55,460
at that point about any kind
of systematic extermination,

664

00:38:55,460 --> 00:39:00,350
but she was very clear
that these camps would

665
00:39:00,350 --> 00:39:04,100
at the very least pose
a tremendous danger

666
00:39:04,100 --> 00:39:05,780
to my sister and me.

667
00:39:05,780 --> 00:39:08,900
That at the very
least, we would be

668
00:39:08,900 --> 00:39:16,130
subject to either dying of
disease or of starvation.

669
00:39:16,130 --> 00:39:19,950
And she was determined,
therefore, that no matter what,

670
00:39:19,950 --> 00:39:28,030
no matter how, she wasn't going
to go along with this law.

671
00:39:28,030 --> 00:39:30,820
And that had something
to do with her character,

672
00:39:30,820 --> 00:39:34,060
with her ideas about things.

673
00:39:34,060 --> 00:39:38,140
Whereas, her sister
reacted different.

674
00:39:38,140 --> 00:39:43,250
There was, what else can one
do except to go along with it.

675
00:39:43,250 --> 00:39:47,110

Now, at that point,
there were a fair number

676
00:39:47,110 --> 00:39:50,890
of people who did
have exemptions,

677
00:39:50,890 --> 00:39:54,760
official exemptions, who were
not subject to deportation

678
00:39:54,760 --> 00:39:55,810
at that time.

679
00:39:55,810 --> 00:39:58,720
And the whole history
of this thing, you

680
00:39:58,720 --> 00:40:01,570
have to remember, again,
that we-- this area

681
00:40:01,570 --> 00:40:05,170
was not under direct
German control.

682
00:40:05,170 --> 00:40:07,630
And the areas that were under
direct German control, there

683
00:40:07,630 --> 00:40:11,200
were never any exemptions
with regard to Jews.

684
00:40:11,200 --> 00:40:14,500
But in this case,
there were, and there

685
00:40:14,500 --> 00:40:17,380
continued to be over time.

686
00:40:17,380 --> 00:40:23,200
Not necessarily-- I

don't know what dictated.

687
00:40:23,200 --> 00:40:26,470
Certainly, the more
influential you

688
00:40:26,470 --> 00:40:29,350
were, the wealthier you
were, the more likely

689
00:40:29,350 --> 00:40:31,360
you were to have an exemption.

690
00:40:31,360 --> 00:40:38,330
I'm sure bribing played a
role in that, and so on.

691
00:40:38,330 --> 00:40:42,280
Now, during this
time, my parents

692
00:40:42,280 --> 00:40:48,490
did not have any way
to secure an exemption.

693
00:40:48,490 --> 00:40:51,220
And there were different
orders of exemptions.

694
00:40:51,220 --> 00:40:53,110
There was a yellow
exemption, because it

695
00:40:53,110 --> 00:40:56,980
was on yellow paper, which is
kind of the plebeian exemption.

696
00:40:56,980 --> 00:40:58,450
That wasn't so great.

697
00:40:58,450 --> 00:41:03,490
And it went all the way on to
the presidential exemption,

698

00:41:03,490 --> 00:41:06,070

which only a relatively
few people had.

699

00:41:06,070 --> 00:41:09,880

And they were most
secure during that time.

700

00:41:09,880 --> 00:41:12,880

701

00:41:12,880 --> 00:41:18,550

And so the only option that
my parents had at that time

702

00:41:18,550 --> 00:41:24,490

was to try and cross
into Hungary illegally.

703

00:41:24,490 --> 00:41:30,040

And this became one avenue
that other people also

704

00:41:30,040 --> 00:41:32,260

tried to take advantage of.

705

00:41:32,260 --> 00:41:36,310

And very soon,
there was a traffic

706

00:41:36,310 --> 00:41:42,550

in illegal parties crossing
the border into Hungary.

707

00:41:42,550 --> 00:41:45,460

Because during that time,
even though the Hungarians

708

00:41:45,460 --> 00:41:48,880

when they had come in,
kicked us out officially,

709

00:41:48,880 --> 00:41:50,590

Jews were not being--

710

00:41:50,590 --> 00:41:55,060

Hungarian Jews were not
being deported in 1942.

711

00:41:55,060 --> 00:41:57,700

And they were not really
even that directly

712

00:41:57,700 --> 00:41:59,260

threatened during that time.

713

00:41:59,260 --> 00:42:03,340

714

00:42:03,340 --> 00:42:07,480

So my parents arranged
to join a group that

715

00:42:07,480 --> 00:42:12,030

had its guide as leader, and
it was a business proposition.

716

00:42:12,030 --> 00:42:18,970

This person got paid so much
per person in the party.

717

00:42:18,970 --> 00:42:22,930

And like our group, I
think, consisted of about 13

718

00:42:22,930 --> 00:42:26,830

people, two or three
different families.

719

00:42:26,830 --> 00:42:32,050

And the actual way we went
across was during the night,

720

00:42:32,050 --> 00:42:36,100

through open fields
and swamps, and so on.

721
00:42:36,100 --> 00:42:40,630
During the day after the first
night, we hid out and rested.

722
00:42:40,630 --> 00:42:44,530
And then the second night, we
completed our journey across

723
00:42:44,530 --> 00:42:51,670
the border to the outskirts of a
nearest Hungarian city or town,

724
00:42:51,670 --> 00:42:53,800
which was Ungvár.

725
00:42:53,800 --> 00:42:55,390
Now, it's part of Ukraine.

726
00:42:55,390 --> 00:42:57,580
It's called Uzhhorod.

727
00:42:57,580 --> 00:42:58,960
But at any rate--

728
00:42:58,960 --> 00:43:03,650
and by prearrangement, we were--

729
00:43:03,650 --> 00:43:08,230
when we got to the outskirts of
this town around 3:00 or 4:00

730
00:43:08,230 --> 00:43:11,140
in the morning after,
really, a long--

731
00:43:11,140 --> 00:43:16,840
and I certainly remember
very vividly that crossing

732

00:43:16,840 --> 00:43:18,490
into Hungary and going--

733
00:43:18,490 --> 00:43:20,830
the dark, through the fields.

734
00:43:20,830 --> 00:43:24,580
At one point, we ran
into a band of gypsies.

735
00:43:24,580 --> 00:43:28,180
And they-- we heard them saying,
there go the Jews running.

736
00:43:28,180 --> 00:43:31,150
And then there was a
panic that these gypsies

737
00:43:31,150 --> 00:43:36,760
would go into the next
town and tell on the group.

738
00:43:36,760 --> 00:43:38,240
But apparently,
that didn't happen.

739
00:43:38,240 --> 00:43:41,950

740
00:43:41,950 --> 00:43:43,100
So as I say, I remember--

741
00:43:43,100 --> 00:43:47,380
I mean, I remember, for example,
you walked on these fields

742
00:43:47,380 --> 00:43:51,220
on what seemed like
only long grass.

743
00:43:51,220 --> 00:43:53,560
And suddenly, you were
knee deep in water,

744
00:43:53,560 --> 00:43:56,590
because it was apparently
swampy ground underneath.

745
00:43:56,590 --> 00:43:59,660
And it was getting cold and
it seemed to go on forever.

746
00:43:59,660 --> 00:44:05,500
We finally got to this place,
which was a sort of farmhouse

747
00:44:05,500 --> 00:44:08,140
at the edge of town with a barn.

748
00:44:08,140 --> 00:44:11,140
And by prearrangement with
the owner of this farm

749
00:44:11,140 --> 00:44:13,570
house and barn, we were
put up for the rest

750
00:44:13,570 --> 00:44:21,520
of the night in the barn, sort
of on the straw in the barn

751
00:44:21,520 --> 00:44:23,890
and we fell asleep
because we were all

752
00:44:23,890 --> 00:44:26,120
very tired at that point.

753
00:44:26,120 --> 00:44:32,120
And the next thing we know is
we hear a Hungarian policeman

754
00:44:32,120 --> 00:44:35,060
saying, good morning,
ladies and gentlemen.

755

00:44:35,060 --> 00:44:39,320

Will you please accompany
me to the police station?

756

00:44:39,320 --> 00:44:47,120

And so he, in fact, herded us
through the streets of Ungváj.

757

00:44:47,120 --> 00:44:50,450

The men were all handcuffed.

758

00:44:50,450 --> 00:44:54,890

And took us into prison.

759

00:44:54,890 --> 00:45:01,140

And for the next week,
we remained there in jail

760

00:45:01,140 --> 00:45:02,660

in Ungváj.

761

00:45:02,660 --> 00:45:08,150

I personally was in a jail cell
with my father and another man.

762

00:45:08,150 --> 00:45:12,940

My sister was with my mother
and one or two other women.

763

00:45:12,940 --> 00:45:16,870

764

00:45:16,870 --> 00:45:19,840

Now, during that week--

765

00:45:19,840 --> 00:45:20,770

apparently--

766

00:45:20,770 --> 00:45:22,730

I have to flip the tape over.

767

00:45:22,730 --> 00:45:29,590

768

00:45:29,590 --> 00:45:31,540

During the week-- and
the reason, apparently,

769

00:45:31,540 --> 00:45:34,870

they kept us there for a
week rather than returning us

770

00:45:34,870 --> 00:45:41,050

immediately to Slovakia was--

771

00:45:41,050 --> 00:45:43,390

we learned later on--

772

00:45:43,390 --> 00:45:45,640

that they were actually
thinking seriously

773

00:45:45,640 --> 00:45:49,180

of shooting the whole party
as an example to others,

774

00:45:49,180 --> 00:45:53,080

because so many people were
making this illegal crossing

775

00:45:53,080 --> 00:45:56,110

during that time.

776

00:45:56,110 --> 00:46:03,910

And again, another example of
how chance worked in our favor,

777

00:46:03,910 --> 00:46:07,480

really, not
immediately apparent.

778

00:46:07,480 --> 00:46:10,900

But what happened was that
during the time we were there,

779
00:46:10,900 --> 00:46:14,140
my father got the idea
that since Ruthenia, where

780
00:46:14,140 --> 00:46:20,320
he had been born, had also
become part of Hungary

781
00:46:20,320 --> 00:46:25,900
by then, that he decided to come
forward to the police captain

782
00:46:25,900 --> 00:46:29,560
and show him his
birth certificate

783
00:46:29,560 --> 00:46:31,910
and claim the fact
that he is Hungarian

784
00:46:31,910 --> 00:46:34,810
and he should be allowed
to remain in Hungary.

785
00:46:34,810 --> 00:46:38,670
Well, the police captain
took his birth certificate,

786
00:46:38,670 --> 00:46:41,290
tore it into pieces,
slapped him on the face,

787
00:46:41,290 --> 00:46:43,270
and pushed him back
into the jail cell.

788
00:46:43,270 --> 00:46:48,360

789
00:46:48,360 --> 00:46:49,260
Where were we?

790

00:46:49,260 --> 00:46:54,390

So that-- and I'll
pick up that thread

791

00:46:54,390 --> 00:46:56,520

of the story a little later on.

792

00:46:56,520 --> 00:46:58,590

Honey, can you take--

793

00:46:58,590 --> 00:47:01,950

And so-- and they--
and the other thing

794

00:47:01,950 --> 00:47:05,760

that we learned, and I
don't know how true this

795

00:47:05,760 --> 00:47:08,700

is, that obviously,
somebody had turned us in,

796

00:47:08,700 --> 00:47:12,540

because the policemen knew
exactly where to come.

797

00:47:12,540 --> 00:47:17,670

And the best guess was
that we were actually

798

00:47:17,670 --> 00:47:23,040

turned in by the owner of
the farmhouse and barn,

799

00:47:23,040 --> 00:47:27,120

and that his
motivation probably was

800

00:47:27,120 --> 00:47:35,820

that he expected that everybody
would have valuables with them.

801

00:47:35,820 --> 00:47:38,730
Because you didn't undertake
that kind of a journey

802
00:47:38,730 --> 00:47:41,910
into a new life without
trying to convert all

803
00:47:41,910 --> 00:47:45,540
that you had into
negotiable valuables,

804
00:47:45,540 --> 00:47:50,740
like gold, diamonds,
dollars, and stuff like that.

805
00:47:50,740 --> 00:47:53,520
And that the minute the
policeman showed up,

806
00:47:53,520 --> 00:47:59,470
it would all be stashed in the
hay, which is exactly what,

807
00:47:59,470 --> 00:48:01,680
say for example,
my father did, who

808
00:48:01,680 --> 00:48:06,420
did have several pounds of
gold and diamonds, and so on,

809
00:48:06,420 --> 00:48:09,360
being a jeweler.

810
00:48:09,360 --> 00:48:13,560
And this man had the gall to
come and visit us in jail.

811
00:48:13,560 --> 00:48:18,870
And when my father said,
well, can you find that stuff

812

00:48:18,870 --> 00:48:21,420
and put it away somewhere
for safekeeping?

813
00:48:21,420 --> 00:48:23,610
He said he had looked,
he didn't see anything.

814
00:48:23,610 --> 00:48:27,810
And yet later on, he
was seen by others

815
00:48:27,810 --> 00:48:33,700
to be selling off their
stuff to jewelry stores.

816
00:48:33,700 --> 00:48:37,770
So at any rate, they
finally did decide

817
00:48:37,770 --> 00:48:40,500
to send us back to [INAUDIBLE].

818
00:48:40,500 --> 00:48:43,350
Can I-- do you remember what
it was like to be in this jail?

819
00:48:43,350 --> 00:48:44,370
Yeah, I remember.

820
00:48:44,370 --> 00:48:51,450
It was very, very
scary and strange.

821
00:48:51,450 --> 00:48:55,110
But one thing I think
that's important to remember

822
00:48:55,110 --> 00:49:00,510
that the fact that-- and that's
true for the entire story.

823
00:49:00,510 --> 00:49:05,190

The fact that I was
always with my parents,

824
00:49:05,190 --> 00:49:08,730
that gave me a
feeling of security

825
00:49:08,730 --> 00:49:12,990
and some kind of having
some kind of blind faith

826
00:49:12,990 --> 00:49:19,110
that somehow they'll find a
way to protect me or save me,

827
00:49:19,110 --> 00:49:22,440
probably kept me from
being as frightened

828
00:49:22,440 --> 00:49:26,790
and as overwhelmed as being
in these kinds of situations

829
00:49:26,790 --> 00:49:29,280
where I might have been.

830
00:49:29,280 --> 00:49:32,850
With a couple of
exceptions where I suddenly

831
00:49:32,850 --> 00:49:36,428
would sense that maybe they
don't know what the hell to do.

832
00:49:36,428 --> 00:49:37,720
What's going to happen with us.

833
00:49:37,720 --> 00:49:41,940

834
00:49:41,940 --> 00:49:46,740
So anyway, interestingly,
we were given a choice--

835
00:49:46,740 --> 00:49:51,960
the party was given the choice
whether to go back on foot,

836
00:49:51,960 --> 00:49:55,330
or be taken back by bus.

837
00:49:55,330 --> 00:49:58,940
And I remember as a kid,
I wanted a bus ride.

838
00:49:58,940 --> 00:50:00,660
I was a little kid
in those days and one

839
00:50:00,660 --> 00:50:04,320
didn't get to travel much, and I
had all these adventurous ideas

840
00:50:04,320 --> 00:50:05,370
about travel.

841
00:50:05,370 --> 00:50:08,400
And I felt very
disappointed, but the adults,

842
00:50:08,400 --> 00:50:13,950
without exception,
chose to walk back,

843
00:50:13,950 --> 00:50:15,960
rather than to take the bus.

844
00:50:15,960 --> 00:50:18,810
Because their thinking
was, the longer

845
00:50:18,810 --> 00:50:23,040
we take to get back to
the hell that is waiting

846

00:50:23,040 --> 00:50:26,470
for us, the better off we are.

847
00:50:26,470 --> 00:50:32,910
So we were kind of walk back
to the border, handed over

848
00:50:32,910 --> 00:50:38,430
to the Slovakian police,
who then shepherded us back,

849
00:50:38,430 --> 00:50:43,320
finally, to the town
where we started out from.

850
00:50:43,320 --> 00:50:48,720
And there, we were immediately,
of course, put in jail again.

851
00:50:48,720 --> 00:50:55,200
And this time, I was
put in a larger cell,

852
00:50:55,200 --> 00:51:01,260
but this time with about a
dozen women and their children,

853
00:51:01,260 --> 00:51:12,910
and all lying on a plank
alongside one end of the cell

854
00:51:12,910 --> 00:51:14,910
so that it was practically--
we were practically

855
00:51:14,910 --> 00:51:19,368
piled up on top of each other.

856
00:51:19,368 --> 00:51:20,800
Were these Jewish women?

857
00:51:20,800 --> 00:51:25,290
They were all Jewish

women and children.

858
00:51:25,290 --> 00:51:28,320
And those who perhaps
had also been caught,

859
00:51:28,320 --> 00:51:33,150
but most of them just
part of the continuing

860
00:51:33,150 --> 00:51:35,850
processing of the Jews
who were going to be

861
00:51:35,850 --> 00:51:39,030
deported to the camps.

862
00:51:39,030 --> 00:51:44,850
And the other thing I remember
is that the only toilet

863
00:51:44,850 --> 00:51:47,875
facility was-- it was
a room next to this

864
00:51:47,875 --> 00:51:51,220
so that you have to ask
the guard to let you go to.

865
00:51:51,220 --> 00:51:56,150
And essentially, you
urinated on the floor,

866
00:51:56,150 --> 00:51:58,680
which is where everything
was all piled up.

867
00:51:58,680 --> 00:52:02,782

868
00:52:02,782 --> 00:52:06,850
Now, a couple of days--

869

00:52:06,850 --> 00:52:12,460

and I guess the way
these things went,

870

00:52:12,460 --> 00:52:15,370

and I'm not sure who was
jailed before being taken.

871

00:52:15,370 --> 00:52:17,380

I think some people
were directly taken,

872

00:52:17,380 --> 00:52:19,240

and I think most people
who were in the jail

873

00:52:19,240 --> 00:52:22,930

were people who
either had been hiding

874

00:52:22,930 --> 00:52:26,350

and were caught and
put in jail before they

875

00:52:26,350 --> 00:52:28,300

were going to be transported.

876

00:52:28,300 --> 00:52:31,150

Because I remember we
were there for a few days.

877

00:52:31,150 --> 00:52:33,730

And the first day
we were visited

878

00:52:33,730 --> 00:52:38,830

by my aunt and her
three-year-old daughter.

879

00:52:38,830 --> 00:52:42,400

And they were about to
go directly, I guess,

880

00:52:42,400 --> 00:52:47,680

into the transports maybe
that day or the next day.

881

00:52:47,680 --> 00:52:50,080

And that I remember very
well, and I remember

882

00:52:50,080 --> 00:52:54,430

how, I guess, to
reassure their child, who

883

00:52:54,430 --> 00:52:56,950

was a very cute
little girl, they

884

00:52:56,950 --> 00:52:59,950

told her that they were
all going to Palestine.

885

00:52:59,950 --> 00:53:03,040

And she was talking
very enthusiastically

886

00:53:03,040 --> 00:53:05,460

about how they were
going to go to Palestine.

887

00:53:05,460 --> 00:53:09,250

888

00:53:09,250 --> 00:53:13,570

Anyway, after a few
days in that jail,

889

00:53:13,570 --> 00:53:18,730

our turn came to be
taken to the trains.

890

00:53:18,730 --> 00:53:25,060

And once again, we were
part of, essentially,

891

00:53:25,060 --> 00:53:30,400

a herd of people that were
shepherded by the gendarmes,

892

00:53:30,400 --> 00:53:38,170

or the sort of local
Slovakian SS guard.

893

00:53:38,170 --> 00:53:39,700

And we were taken--

894

00:53:39,700 --> 00:53:42,010

and this was one of
the times where I--

895

00:53:42,010 --> 00:53:45,520

yeah, one thing again from
a child's point of view,

896

00:53:45,520 --> 00:53:50,200

as that morning came when
this whole party in that cell

897

00:53:50,200 --> 00:54:01,240

were all to go on to the trains,
my mother went into hysterics

898

00:54:01,240 --> 00:54:08,590

and kept yelling and screaming
about how she can't stand

899

00:54:08,590 --> 00:54:12,910

the idea of having her
children starve or so,

900

00:54:12,910 --> 00:54:15,310

and she doesn't want to go.

901

00:54:15,310 --> 00:54:19,690

And I remember as a
child feeling mostly very

902

00:54:19,690 --> 00:54:24,310
self-conscious and embarrassed
that my mother was making

903
00:54:24,310 --> 00:54:27,160
such a big scene during that.

904
00:54:27,160 --> 00:54:30,850
And I was wishing like
she would be quiet.

905
00:54:30,850 --> 00:54:33,245
And the other women
said, it's all right,

906
00:54:33,245 --> 00:54:34,120
it will be all right.

907
00:54:34,120 --> 00:54:40,340

908
00:54:40,340 --> 00:54:44,250
The first place they took
us was actually to a school.

909
00:54:44,250 --> 00:54:46,520
You want to shut that off?

910
00:54:46,520 --> 00:54:50,545
And it was a very busy
place as new parties

911
00:54:50,545 --> 00:54:52,820
and Jews were being brought in.

912
00:54:52,820 --> 00:54:56,900
And this was the final act
before going on to the railroad

913
00:54:56,900 --> 00:54:59,180
station to get on the trains.

914

00:54:59,180 --> 00:55:03,020
You got your number,
and from that point

915
00:55:03,020 --> 00:55:05,450
on, you were no longer
a person with a name.

916
00:55:05,450 --> 00:55:08,810
You were a person with
a number and a tag

917
00:55:08,810 --> 00:55:10,460
that you had around your neck.

918
00:55:10,460 --> 00:55:13,020

919
00:55:13,020 --> 00:55:16,650
And just before our turn
came to get our numbers,

920
00:55:16,650 --> 00:55:21,000
an official came in
and said, anybody

921
00:55:21,000 --> 00:55:25,020
who can prove that they're
a foreign extraction,

922
00:55:25,020 --> 00:55:30,230
or foreign citizens,
please come and see me.

923
00:55:30,230 --> 00:55:32,850

924
00:55:32,850 --> 00:55:37,670
And at that point,
of course, the issue

925
00:55:37,670 --> 00:55:41,330
came up again that

my father was born

926

00:55:41,330 --> 00:55:44,465

in Ruthenia, which was at
that point part of Hungary.

927

00:55:44,465 --> 00:55:47,390

928

00:55:47,390 --> 00:55:51,860

Of course, he had had such a
bad experience the last time

929

00:55:51,860 --> 00:55:57,290

he tried to take
advantage of that fact

930

00:55:57,290 --> 00:56:00,650

that he was somewhat
hesitant to approach

931

00:56:00,650 --> 00:56:01,760

this official about it.

932

00:56:01,760 --> 00:56:06,410

But my mother said, what
do you have to lose now?

933

00:56:06,410 --> 00:56:10,800

And here is, again, where
chance comes into play.

934

00:56:10,800 --> 00:56:12,350

The reason he had a--

935

00:56:12,350 --> 00:56:16,070

he had the original was
torn up by the police

936

00:56:16,070 --> 00:56:19,550

captain in Hungary, but the
reason he had a duplicate

937

00:56:19,550 --> 00:56:21,710

was because he--
they had actually

938

00:56:21,710 --> 00:56:27,230

tried to get out of
Czechoslovakia as early as 1936

939

00:56:27,230 --> 00:56:29,590

when the time
started to get bad.

940

00:56:29,590 --> 00:56:32,270

It was very hard to get
out of Czechoslovakia,

941

00:56:32,270 --> 00:56:34,940

much harder than it was
to get out of Germany,

942

00:56:34,940 --> 00:56:36,620

particularly, to
the United States,

943

00:56:36,620 --> 00:56:39,470

which is where he wanted to
go because his brother had--

944

00:56:39,470 --> 00:56:40,580

was here.

945

00:56:40,580 --> 00:56:43,550

But even though he got
an affidavit in 1936,

946

00:56:43,550 --> 00:56:48,740

the quota was so discriminatory
against Slavic countries

947

00:56:48,740 --> 00:56:53,660

because of the great emigration
from the Slavic areas,

948

00:56:53,660 --> 00:56:55,670

so that it was
practically virtually

949

00:56:55,670 --> 00:57:00,080

impossible to come to
America for someone

950

00:57:00,080 --> 00:57:02,150

from Czechoslovakia,
where it was not

951

00:57:02,150 --> 00:57:03,770

discriminatory against Germans.

952

00:57:03,770 --> 00:57:07,010

That's why so many Germans who
elected to come to America.

953

00:57:07,010 --> 00:57:12,530

German Jews actually did
come as late as '38 or '39.

954

00:57:12,530 --> 00:57:17,970

So at any rate-- but in order
to go through the process,

955

00:57:17,970 --> 00:57:19,400

he had to get--

956

00:57:19,400 --> 00:57:21,450

have two copies of
his birth certificate.

957

00:57:21,450 --> 00:57:23,480

So he made a trip
to his hometown

958

00:57:23,480 --> 00:57:27,680

sometime in 1937
or '38, and he did

959

00:57:27,680 --> 00:57:32,000
have two copies of his birth
certificate at his disposal.

960
00:57:32,000 --> 00:57:37,050
And if he hadn't,
I wouldn't be here.

961
00:57:37,050 --> 00:57:39,680
And so anyway, he
showed this man

962
00:57:39,680 --> 00:57:43,100
his copy of the
birth certificate.

963
00:57:43,100 --> 00:57:45,800
And the man said, all
right, why don't you

964
00:57:45,800 --> 00:57:51,750
and your family wait along with
maybe one or two other people.

965
00:57:51,750 --> 00:57:53,690
And so we were
waiting there for,

966
00:57:53,690 --> 00:57:55,560
I think, an hour or two hours.

967
00:57:55,560 --> 00:57:59,840
In the meantime, people were
being just shepherded through.

968
00:57:59,840 --> 00:58:01,310
And looked out the
window and there

969
00:58:01,310 --> 00:58:04,940
was a whole convoy
of people being

970

00:58:04,940 --> 00:58:07,530
led in the direction of
the railroad station.

971
00:58:07,530 --> 00:58:10,740

972
00:58:10,740 --> 00:58:13,340
And then a couple of
hours later, he comes back

973
00:58:13,340 --> 00:58:16,385
and he says, all
those people that I

974
00:58:16,385 --> 00:58:20,330
had asked to stay
inside and wait,

975
00:58:20,330 --> 00:58:22,400
please come and follow me.

976
00:58:22,400 --> 00:58:25,290
And he went to the
front door and he said,

977
00:58:25,290 --> 00:58:27,710
you're free to go home.

978
00:58:27,710 --> 00:58:33,170
Now-- and here again,
the combination of chance

979
00:58:33,170 --> 00:58:37,580
and circumstance,
because apparently,

980
00:58:37,580 --> 00:58:43,310
that was the first day
when people who had--

981
00:58:43,310 --> 00:58:48,300
were not citizens of foreign

countries were exempt.

982
00:58:48,300 --> 00:58:50,090
Prior to that time,
only people who

983
00:58:50,090 --> 00:58:53,840
were citizens with a valid
passport from another country

984
00:58:53,840 --> 00:58:56,990
were exempt from deportation.

985
00:58:56,990 --> 00:59:00,830
So that probably
the fact that we did

986
00:59:00,830 --> 00:59:04,490
go to-- try to go to Hungary,
that we did go there,

987
00:59:04,490 --> 00:59:07,730
the fact, even, that they
kept us for a week in the jail

988
00:59:07,730 --> 00:59:11,900
there rather than
returning us immediately,

989
00:59:11,900 --> 00:59:17,000
and delayed the whole process,
saved our lives during that.

990
00:59:17,000 --> 00:59:19,520
Even, perhaps, if it was
true that they were thinking

991
00:59:19,520 --> 00:59:21,980
of shooting us in
Hungary, that helped

992
00:59:21,980 --> 00:59:25,370
to save us during that moment.

993

00:59:25,370 --> 00:59:29,750
So then we had to get-- we went
back to our apartment, which

994

00:59:29,750 --> 00:59:32,450
had all been officially
sealed, and then my father

995

00:59:32,450 --> 00:59:36,050
had to go to the
police station to have

996

00:59:36,050 --> 00:59:40,340
an official come and unseal
the apartment, and so on.

997

00:59:40,340 --> 00:59:44,330
And so we got back, and
for the next few weeks,

998

00:59:44,330 --> 00:59:45,950
I started going back to school.

999

00:59:45,950 --> 00:59:47,000
And of course, that was--

1000

00:59:47,000 --> 00:59:49,838

1001

00:59:49,838 --> 00:59:53,370
many fewer kids were in
that school at that point,

1002

00:59:53,370 --> 00:59:55,880
and had only been there
a few weeks before.

1003

00:59:55,880 --> 01:00:00,140
Because in this first
wave of deportation,

1004

01:00:00,140 --> 01:00:06,320
a great many of the Jews were
deported during that time,

1005
01:00:06,320 --> 01:00:11,360
and probably a very small
percentage survived.

1006
01:00:11,360 --> 01:00:15,620
Because most of them were taken
to the extermination camps

1007
01:00:15,620 --> 01:00:16,760
directly--

1008
01:00:16,760 --> 01:00:21,800
Sobibor, Treblinka, I
think, and Majdanek.

1009
01:00:21,800 --> 01:00:26,360
And we did get postcards.

1010
01:00:26,360 --> 01:00:28,850
And as I say, most
of my relatives

1011
01:00:28,850 --> 01:00:32,970
were taken during
those transports.

1012
01:00:32,970 --> 01:00:37,310
And in fact, between
relatives both in Slovakia,

1013
01:00:37,310 --> 01:00:41,450
an uncle in Germany,
an uncle in Poland,

1014
01:00:41,450 --> 01:00:47,250
and their respective families,
of about 25 relatives-- uncles,

1015
01:00:47,250 --> 01:00:49,250

aunts, cousins--

1016
01:00:49,250 --> 01:00:52,070
there was only one
person that survived

1017
01:00:52,070 --> 01:00:53,600
besides our immediate family.

1018
01:00:53,600 --> 01:01:00,670

1019
01:01:00,670 --> 01:01:06,610
So for a few weeks, as far
as we knew, things were OK.

1020
01:01:06,610 --> 01:01:12,190
Then one Saturday morning,
there is a knock on our door,

1021
01:01:12,190 --> 01:01:15,280
and the police are there.

1022
01:01:15,280 --> 01:01:17,440
And they name each of our names.

1023
01:01:17,440 --> 01:01:20,080
I don't know-- remember The
Garden of the Finzi-Continis

1024
01:01:20,080 --> 01:01:24,340
[INAUDIBLE] remember at the
end where the police comes in

1025
01:01:24,340 --> 01:01:27,110
and calls out everybody's name?

1026
01:01:27,110 --> 01:01:30,430
Yeah, that's exactly
the way it was.

1027
01:01:30,430 --> 01:01:32,110

The police called
each of our names,

1028
01:01:32,110 --> 01:01:37,750
including my sister's and
mine, and said, please pack up

1029
01:01:37,750 --> 01:01:43,120
and get ready to
come to [INAUDIBLE]..

1030
01:01:43,120 --> 01:01:46,990
And then what followed was
almost a comedy routine.

1031
01:01:46,990 --> 01:01:50,260

1032
01:01:50,260 --> 01:02:00,190
These were Slovakian fascist
Gardas, not very sophisticated.

1033
01:02:00,190 --> 01:02:02,960
My mother said she
can't go, she's sick.

1034
01:02:02,960 --> 01:02:04,070
She can't get out of bed.

1035
01:02:04,070 --> 01:02:07,480

1036
01:02:07,480 --> 01:02:12,730
My father says to them, look,
I'm a manager of this shop,

1037
01:02:12,730 --> 01:02:15,940
of this Christian
shop right next door.

1038
01:02:15,940 --> 01:02:20,350
If you take me, are you willing
to be responsible for all

1039
01:02:20,350 --> 01:02:22,030
the contents in that shop?

1040
01:02:22,030 --> 01:02:25,090

1041
01:02:25,090 --> 01:02:28,810
And besides which, my father--
this is all a mistake.

1042
01:02:28,810 --> 01:02:33,250
And I can go to the
officials right now

1043
01:02:33,250 --> 01:02:37,660
and have it fixed up right away.

1044
01:02:37,660 --> 01:02:42,970
So these policemen
decided the following--

1045
01:02:42,970 --> 01:02:44,980
they had other
business to transact,

1046
01:02:44,980 --> 01:02:47,410
other Jews to pick up.

1047
01:02:47,410 --> 01:02:49,960
They were going to--
if my father gave them

1048
01:02:49,960 --> 01:02:53,350
his word of honor,
they would let him--

1049
01:02:53,350 --> 01:02:58,390
that he wouldn't try to escape,
they would let him go and see

1050
01:02:58,390 --> 01:03:02,530

whether he could get some
official intervention

1051
01:03:02,530 --> 01:03:03,175
on his behalf.

1052
01:03:03,175 --> 01:03:05,890

1053
01:03:05,890 --> 01:03:08,980
But they would keep
coming back during the day

1054
01:03:08,980 --> 01:03:13,150
to make sure that my
mother and my sister and I

1055
01:03:13,150 --> 01:03:14,410
were not trying to escape.

1056
01:03:14,410 --> 01:03:17,340

1057
01:03:17,340 --> 01:03:23,180
And so the minute they walk out,
my mother turns to my father

1058
01:03:23,180 --> 01:03:26,940
and says, we've got to run.

1059
01:03:26,940 --> 01:03:33,170
And my father, I say
with a bit of shame,

1060
01:03:33,170 --> 01:03:35,270
but I gave my word of honor.

1061
01:03:35,270 --> 01:03:36,405
How can I escape?

1062
01:03:36,405 --> 01:03:39,230

1063
01:03:39,230 --> 01:03:42,830
And so he went off to
see what he could do,

1064
01:03:42,830 --> 01:03:48,440
whether he could get some
intervention from the officials

1065
01:03:48,440 --> 01:03:49,060
that he knew.

1066
01:03:49,060 --> 01:03:51,630

1067
01:03:51,630 --> 01:03:55,590
But my mother, regardless
of what he had said,

1068
01:03:55,590 --> 01:03:58,650
kept trying to see
if we could escape.

1069
01:03:58,650 --> 01:04:02,090
And-- but every time--
and she was still in bed.

1070
01:04:02,090 --> 01:04:06,690
She was officially sick,
you see, too sick to move.

1071
01:04:06,690 --> 01:04:10,050
Every time she
tried to get dressed

1072
01:04:10,050 --> 01:04:13,650
so that he and the two of
us, the two of us children

1073
01:04:13,650 --> 01:04:18,240
could take off together,
the police would be back

1074

01:04:18,240 --> 01:04:21,270
and so she immediately had to
take her-- all of her clothes

1075

01:04:21,270 --> 01:04:24,780
off and put her nightgown back
on and get under the covers.

1076

01:04:24,780 --> 01:04:28,140
And so that was the kind
of comedy routine aspect

1077

01:04:28,140 --> 01:04:29,970
of this day.

1078

01:04:29,970 --> 01:04:34,080
And in the meantime,
my father found

1079

01:04:34,080 --> 01:04:39,210
that he couldn't get any
help from any officials.

1080

01:04:39,210 --> 01:04:41,730
But he talked to some other
people and other Jewish people

1081

01:04:41,730 --> 01:04:46,830
on the street, told them his
situation, and they all talk--

1082

01:04:46,830 --> 01:04:50,250
told him he was crazy to
worry about word of honor.

1083

01:04:50,250 --> 01:04:52,920
And by then, he
got word back to us

1084

01:04:52,920 --> 01:04:56,130
that we should run if we can.

1085

01:04:56,130 --> 01:04:59,160
And then he was going to
meet us at some designated

1086
01:04:59,160 --> 01:05:01,680
place at the end of the day.

1087
01:05:01,680 --> 01:05:04,920
Eventually, what
happened was my mother

1088
01:05:04,920 --> 01:05:08,790
simply put a raincoat on
and ran across the street

1089
01:05:08,790 --> 01:05:11,760
to Jewish people who
were at that point

1090
01:05:11,760 --> 01:05:15,720
exempt where she stayed
for the rest of the day.

1091
01:05:15,720 --> 01:05:21,180
And one of, again, my
father's journeyman,

1092
01:05:21,180 --> 01:05:27,120
took my sister and me
across town to the place

1093
01:05:27,120 --> 01:05:28,830
where everybody was
supposed to converge

1094
01:05:28,830 --> 01:05:36,210
at the end of the day, which was
the home of the parents of one

1095
01:05:36,210 --> 01:05:38,466
of my father's apprentices.

1096
01:05:38,466 --> 01:05:40,170

And these are--

1097

01:05:40,170 --> 01:05:43,890

The journeyman was
Jewish but the apprentice

1098

01:05:43,890 --> 01:05:47,370

was a Christian
friend, Gentile friend.

1099

01:05:47,370 --> 01:05:49,200

So there were some
further adventures,

1100

01:05:49,200 --> 01:05:50,340

but I won't go into detail.

1101

01:05:50,340 --> 01:05:55,020

But we all finally did
get together that evening

1102

01:05:55,020 --> 01:05:58,920

in that place, in that home.

1103

01:05:58,920 --> 01:06:02,550

And as a little
Jewish kid, first time

1104

01:06:02,550 --> 01:06:04,170

really I was in
a Christian home,

1105

01:06:04,170 --> 01:06:06,180

there were crosses
all over the walls

1106

01:06:06,180 --> 01:06:09,580

and I didn't know quite
what to make of that.

1107

01:06:09,580 --> 01:06:16,560

But we were there for a day,
two days and pretty soon,

1108
01:06:16,560 --> 01:06:19,410
these people whose
house it was were

1109
01:06:19,410 --> 01:06:22,230
getting all nervous and uneasy.

1110
01:06:22,230 --> 01:06:26,220
And clearly, that wasn't
a place where we could--

1111
01:06:26,220 --> 01:06:27,780
there was no hiding
place, really.

1112
01:06:27,780 --> 01:06:29,238
There was no--
there wasn't a place

1113
01:06:29,238 --> 01:06:31,860
we could stay for very long.

1114
01:06:31,860 --> 01:06:35,340
Then what happened was the--

1115
01:06:35,340 --> 01:06:42,300
my parents got word through
the apprentice whose

1116
01:06:42,300 --> 01:06:45,810
parents' house we were at
that the chief of police

1117
01:06:45,810 --> 01:06:52,080
had come to my father's shop
and told my father's partner

1118
01:06:52,080 --> 01:06:56,550
that he would like to
speak to Gruber and him.

1119

01:06:56,550 --> 01:07:00,330
And that if my father's partner
knew where Gruber was to let

1120
01:07:00,330 --> 01:07:05,950
him know that he really
wants to talk to my father.

1121
01:07:05,950 --> 01:07:09,300
So my parents got
that message, and they

1122
01:07:09,300 --> 01:07:14,300
had to make a decision whether
to accept this invitation

1123
01:07:14,300 --> 01:07:16,860
or ignore it.

1124
01:07:16,860 --> 01:07:22,122
And I imagine they had a pretty
hard time making a decision.

1125
01:07:22,122 --> 01:07:23,580
But the alternative--
I mean, there

1126
01:07:23,580 --> 01:07:25,530
was an implied
promise that there

1127
01:07:25,530 --> 01:07:29,430
may be a deal in the making.

1128
01:07:29,430 --> 01:07:33,720
But-- and the alternative,
namely of trying to stay there,

1129
01:07:33,720 --> 01:07:38,130
was really impossible
for any length of time.

1130
01:07:38,130 --> 01:07:41,550

So then my parents decided,
yes, that my father

1131
01:07:41,550 --> 01:07:46,470
would go with his partner
and see the chief of police.

1132
01:07:46,470 --> 01:07:49,560
And I do remember that day
when my father left early

1133
01:07:49,560 --> 01:07:52,710
in the morning, and
it was hours and hours

1134
01:07:52,710 --> 01:07:57,120
and we heard nothing
about him or from him.

1135
01:07:57,120 --> 01:08:00,060
And obviously, we were
scared stiff about what

1136
01:08:00,060 --> 01:08:00,960
happened to him.

1137
01:08:00,960 --> 01:08:03,030
Finally, he showed up.

1138
01:08:03,030 --> 01:08:05,250
And what had happened was this--

1139
01:08:05,250 --> 01:08:08,940
that he got there with his--

1140
01:08:08,940 --> 01:08:09,900
with his partner.

1141
01:08:09,900 --> 01:08:11,610
He was made to wait
a couple of hours.

1142

01:08:11,610 --> 01:08:15,360
Finally, the chief of
police saw both of them.

1143
01:08:15,360 --> 01:08:19,170
And he asked my
father's partner,

1144
01:08:19,170 --> 01:08:23,370
do you need this Jew,
Gruber, for your shop?

1145
01:08:23,370 --> 01:08:28,170
And my father's
partner said, yes, it's

1146
01:08:28,170 --> 01:08:30,850
important to have somebody
who can manage these things,

1147
01:08:30,850 --> 01:08:32,710
and so on and so forth.

1148
01:08:32,710 --> 01:08:35,490
And then the police--

1149
01:08:35,490 --> 01:08:37,620
the police said,
but of course, you

1150
01:08:37,620 --> 01:08:41,340
can't have any objection
if I can find a Gentile who

1151
01:08:41,340 --> 01:08:43,920
can do the same job.

1152
01:08:43,920 --> 01:08:47,340
And my father's partner
said, I guess not.

1153
01:08:47,340 --> 01:08:52,010
And so, OK, let me call the

Ministry of Labor in Bratislava

1154
01:08:52,010 --> 01:08:55,729
to see if I can find you a
Gentile person to take over

1155
01:08:55,729 --> 01:08:57,920
the management of this shop.

1156
01:08:57,920 --> 01:08:59,930
And so while my
father was there,

1157
01:08:59,930 --> 01:09:03,890
he called up the Ministry of
Labor, asked ask them question.

1158
01:09:03,890 --> 01:09:06,890
Took a while for the
answer to come back,

1159
01:09:06,890 --> 01:09:09,020
and finally, the answer
was no, that there

1160
01:09:09,020 --> 01:09:15,229
was no qualified Gentile jeweler
to come and take over the shop.

1161
01:09:15,229 --> 01:09:20,270
So he-- the chief of
police gave my father

1162
01:09:20,270 --> 01:09:23,390
a temporary exemption.

1163
01:09:23,390 --> 01:09:26,790
And on the strength
of this, we came--

1164
01:09:26,790 --> 01:09:32,720
we all came out of our hiding
and went back to our apartment.

1165
01:09:32,720 --> 01:09:39,710
And the-- but apparently, that
wasn't a final chapter on this.

1166
01:09:39,710 --> 01:09:42,979
A few weeks later, there was--

1167
01:09:42,979 --> 01:09:46,310
apparently, the town
council, or whatever

1168
01:09:46,310 --> 01:09:50,870
it was that had both the-- the
town functionaries decided case

1169
01:09:50,870 --> 01:09:55,040
by case, made the final
decision about whether this

1170
01:09:55,040 --> 01:09:57,860
or that person would be exempt.

1171
01:09:57,860 --> 01:10:00,500
And apparently, when--
what we heard later on

1172
01:10:00,500 --> 01:10:04,820
was that when our case came
up, actually, most of them

1173
01:10:04,820 --> 01:10:07,610
wanted to send us off.

1174
01:10:07,610 --> 01:10:11,180
But it was the president
of the Chamber of Commerce

1175
01:10:11,180 --> 01:10:15,110
said that if they
send my father off,

1176

01:10:15,110 --> 01:10:18,480
he would resign as president
of the Chamber of Commerce.

1177
01:10:18,480 --> 01:10:20,405
Now, the reason
for that was this--

1178
01:10:20,405 --> 01:10:23,300

1179
01:10:23,300 --> 01:10:28,130
as you may or may not know,
in time of the Czechoslovakian

1180
01:10:28,130 --> 01:10:34,010
Republic, really most of the
industry was in the Czech part,

1181
01:10:34,010 --> 01:10:35,600
not the Slovakian parts.

1182
01:10:35,600 --> 01:10:39,980
So the Slovakian's very
underdeveloped in terms

1183
01:10:39,980 --> 01:10:47,540
of industry and even
trades, very skilled trades.

1184
01:10:47,540 --> 01:10:50,510
So that there were not
very many master jewelers.

1185
01:10:50,510 --> 01:10:53,720
And I talked to him [INAUDIBLE]
This all goes all the way back

1186
01:10:53,720 --> 01:10:55,160
to the Guild system.

1187
01:10:55,160 --> 01:10:56,630
To become a jeweler,

you had to be

1188
01:10:56,630 --> 01:10:59,250
an apprentice for a
few years, and then

1189
01:10:59,250 --> 01:11:01,760
a journeyman for
another couple of years

1190
01:11:01,760 --> 01:11:03,620
until you became
a master jeweler.

1191
01:11:03,620 --> 01:11:06,170

1192
01:11:06,170 --> 01:11:13,760
My father's shop had
four Gentile apprentices.

1193
01:11:13,760 --> 01:11:19,670
So that these were four
future Gentile Slovak master

1194
01:11:19,670 --> 01:11:24,470
jewelers who this president of
the Chamber of Commerce felt

1195
01:11:24,470 --> 01:11:27,980
were sorely needed
because there were so few.

1196
01:11:27,980 --> 01:11:32,000
And the-- his idea was that
if my father were sent,

1197
01:11:32,000 --> 01:11:36,620
the shop would collapse, because
he knew that really my father,

1198
01:11:36,620 --> 01:11:39,650
even though officially

belonged to his partner,

1199
01:11:39,650 --> 01:11:42,350
that it was he who
was making it run.

1200
01:11:42,350 --> 01:11:47,480
And so his opinion prevailed
and we did get a more firm

1201
01:11:47,480 --> 01:11:51,410
kind of exemption.

1202
01:11:51,410 --> 01:11:55,580
Now, one never knew
during that time

1203
01:11:55,580 --> 01:11:59,060
how long an exemption
like this would last.

1204
01:11:59,060 --> 01:12:02,540
Just as after the first
time when we were let go,

1205
01:12:02,540 --> 01:12:05,510
six weeks later,
we were-- they were

1206
01:12:05,510 --> 01:12:08,030
ready to send us off again.

1207
01:12:08,030 --> 01:12:10,580
And there were different
groups of people

1208
01:12:10,580 --> 01:12:14,030
who had been exempt
for a period of time,

1209
01:12:14,030 --> 01:12:16,460
and suddenly, the rules changed.

1210

01:12:16,460 --> 01:12:20,090

For example, for
some period of time,

1211

01:12:20,090 --> 01:12:23,930

American citizens were exempt.

1212

01:12:23,930 --> 01:12:26,190

And there were some
American citizens,

1213

01:12:26,190 --> 01:12:31,190

people who had immigrated before
the war, who then returned home

1214

01:12:31,190 --> 01:12:35,780

after securing an
American citizenship.

1215

01:12:35,780 --> 01:12:41,750

And suddenly, the grapevine
had it that, true-- and with--

1216

01:12:41,750 --> 01:12:44,510

they were correct that the
Americans said that exemption

1217

01:12:44,510 --> 01:12:47,360

was going to drop.

1218

01:12:47,360 --> 01:12:51,830

And word got out
enough in advance

1219

01:12:51,830 --> 01:12:56,880

that most of the people
involved were able to hide.

1220

01:12:56,880 --> 01:12:59,210

So the next day, the
announcement came,

1221

01:12:59,210 --> 01:13:00,920
this is all a mistake.

1222
01:13:00,920 --> 01:13:03,710
American citizens
are still exempt

1223
01:13:03,710 --> 01:13:06,560
and continue to
forever be exempt.

1224
01:13:06,560 --> 01:13:09,020
And a couple of days later
when everybody had come out

1225
01:13:09,020 --> 01:13:14,690
of hiding, they were able to get
most of them and deport them.

1226
01:13:14,690 --> 01:13:16,410
And so various groups--

1227
01:13:16,410 --> 01:13:19,760
so you never knew what
was going to happen next.

1228
01:13:19,760 --> 01:13:24,440
At some point, a new
law came into effect

1229
01:13:24,440 --> 01:13:29,750
that the families in which
at least one member had

1230
01:13:29,750 --> 01:13:36,710
converted to Christianity
prior to 1938 would be exempt.

1231
01:13:36,710 --> 01:13:40,550
And the idea of making it
prior to 1938 was with the idea

1232
01:13:40,550 --> 01:13:45,680

that this would be opportunistic
and it had to be sincere.

1233
01:13:45,680 --> 01:13:48,740
And of course, who
converted prior to 1938?

1234
01:13:48,740 --> 01:13:51,300
Very few, if any people.

1235
01:13:51,300 --> 01:13:54,510
But necessity is the
mother of invention,

1236
01:13:54,510 --> 01:13:57,090
and pretty soon that
whole trade developed

1237
01:13:57,090 --> 01:14:00,630
around false conversion papers.

1238
01:14:00,630 --> 01:14:02,130
Now, these were
real in the sense

1239
01:14:02,130 --> 01:14:06,240
that priests were involved in
giving them-- actually selling

1240
01:14:06,240 --> 01:14:08,040
them to Jews.

1241
01:14:08,040 --> 01:14:11,340

1242
01:14:11,340 --> 01:14:15,690
And they would make these out
where one person in the family

1243
01:14:15,690 --> 01:14:18,690
had supposedly
converted prior to 1938.

1244

01:14:18,690 --> 01:14:21,930

And they-- as witnesses,
they would put down

1245

01:14:21,930 --> 01:14:23,850

names of people who had
died in the meantime

1246

01:14:23,850 --> 01:14:25,950

so they could never
be challenged.

1247

01:14:25,950 --> 01:14:29,250

And as I say, a whole
trade developed and--

1248

01:14:29,250 --> 01:14:31,050

but the funny thing
is, this is in terms

1249

01:14:31,050 --> 01:14:36,540

of the kind of community it was,
that a lot of-- and we still

1250

01:14:36,540 --> 01:14:40,030

had a lot of trouble about
making that decision,

1251

01:14:40,030 --> 01:14:43,260

even though it was
a fake conversion.

1252

01:14:43,260 --> 01:14:48,030

But the tradition that
one thing you do not do

1253

01:14:48,030 --> 01:14:51,210

is deny the name
of the Lord was so

1254

01:14:51,210 --> 01:14:55,170

strong in many of these
families that a lot of families

1255
01:14:55,170 --> 01:14:56,700
had trouble with it.

1256
01:14:56,700 --> 01:15:00,330
And strangely
enough, a child would

1257
01:15:00,330 --> 01:15:03,720
be picked to be the
one who had converted

1258
01:15:03,720 --> 01:15:06,270
because the parents
would refuse to have

1259
01:15:06,270 --> 01:15:09,380
that blemish on their record.

1260
01:15:09,380 --> 01:15:12,720
In our case, my father didn't
have any problem about that.

1261
01:15:12,720 --> 01:15:14,700
He volunteered to be the one.

1262
01:15:14,700 --> 01:15:18,150
But somehow, I remember, even
though it was only my father,

1263
01:15:18,150 --> 01:15:23,160
my family still felt that we
all should act like we meant it.

1264
01:15:23,160 --> 01:15:25,050
And so for a while,
my sister and I

1265
01:15:25,050 --> 01:15:30,150
were taught the
catechism by somebody.

1266

01:15:30,150 --> 01:15:34,740
Now-- but then after a
certain period of time,

1267
01:15:34,740 --> 01:15:36,650
the transports stopped.

1268
01:15:36,650 --> 01:15:39,450
And I don't-- again, I don't
know how much you know that

1269
01:15:39,450 --> 01:15:43,600
history, but this was one of the
few instances where, in fact,

1270
01:15:43,600 --> 01:15:47,730
the papacy did intervene
on behalf of the Jews.

1271
01:15:47,730 --> 01:15:53,790
What happened was,
this was after the two,

1272
01:15:53,790 --> 01:15:57,420
actually Slovakian Jews,
escape from Auschwitz.

1273
01:15:57,420 --> 01:15:59,550
I forget their names.

1274
01:15:59,550 --> 01:16:03,900
But-- and they brought back
very detailed information

1275
01:16:03,900 --> 01:16:05,820
about just exactly
what was going--

1276
01:16:05,820 --> 01:16:08,190
what was going on in Auschwitz.

1277
01:16:08,190 --> 01:16:09,990
And they were actually

then smuggled--

1278
01:16:09,990 --> 01:16:11,730
they came back to
Czechoslovakia,

1279
01:16:11,730 --> 01:16:16,140
was smuggled by the Jewish
officials to Switzerland,

1280
01:16:16,140 --> 01:16:19,020
and gave that information to
the United States officials,

1281
01:16:19,020 --> 01:16:20,250
actually, at that point.

1282
01:16:20,250 --> 01:16:25,980
But also, to the papal
delegates so that by that point,

1283
01:16:25,980 --> 01:16:30,750
everything was known because
of that particular report.

1284
01:16:30,750 --> 01:16:32,910
And as a result
of that knowledge,

1285
01:16:32,910 --> 01:16:35,910
the papal nuncio did
put a lot of pressure

1286
01:16:35,910 --> 01:16:39,910
on the Slovakian government
to stop the transport.

1287
01:16:39,910 --> 01:16:42,600
And this was within the power
of the Slovakian government,

1288
01:16:42,600 --> 01:16:46,080
just as it had been a

Slovakian government initiative

1289

01:16:46,080 --> 01:16:50,620

to get the transports
going in the first place.

1290

01:16:50,620 --> 01:16:53,930

And this was a
very Catholic area.

1291

01:16:53,930 --> 01:16:59,850

And in fact, the Slovakian
FÄ¼hrer was a priest when Signor

1292

01:16:59,850 --> 01:17:03,870

Tiso was the Slovakian FÄ¼hrer.

1293

01:17:03,870 --> 01:17:06,690

So because of that
pressure, the transports

1294

01:17:06,690 --> 01:17:10,660

did-- were stopped for
some period of time.

1295

01:17:10,660 --> 01:17:15,210

But of course, one never
knew when they would resume.

1296

01:17:15,210 --> 01:17:21,390

And you asked before, did people
know and when did people know?

1297

01:17:21,390 --> 01:17:25,650

We did get postcards from that
first wave of people, including

1298

01:17:25,650 --> 01:17:30,570

our relatives, who either
from Majdanek or Sobibor,

1299

01:17:30,570 --> 01:17:35,800

I forget, with messages like,

everything is wonderful.

1300
01:17:35,800 --> 01:17:38,370
And so-- and they were made
to write these postcards just

1301
01:17:38,370 --> 01:17:41,100
after arrival.

1302
01:17:41,100 --> 01:17:44,850
And the usual communication
did get transmitted

1303
01:17:44,850 --> 01:17:48,960
to the community there,
namely a coded message

1304
01:17:48,960 --> 01:17:52,320
that at least let people
know things are really bad.

1305
01:17:52,320 --> 01:17:54,840
And it might have
been something like,

1306
01:17:54,840 --> 01:18:00,390
Uncle Al went to visit
Aunt Ethel yesterday

1307
01:18:00,390 --> 01:18:03,610
and we expect to visit
her very soon ourselves.

1308
01:18:03,610 --> 01:18:04,800
And she is dead.

1309
01:18:04,800 --> 01:18:08,190
So that knowledge--
but the details,

1310
01:18:08,190 --> 01:18:10,410
I think, in terms of
gas chambers and so on

1311
01:18:10,410 --> 01:18:11,550
were not known.

1312
01:18:11,550 --> 01:18:15,210

1313
01:18:15,210 --> 01:18:20,940
So the next chapter was this--

1314
01:18:20,940 --> 01:18:23,820
even though at that point
things were relatively calm,

1315
01:18:23,820 --> 01:18:26,820
and because there was a
cessation of the transports.

1316
01:18:26,820 --> 01:18:29,940
And here again, for
some period of time,

1317
01:18:29,940 --> 01:18:32,550
those people who were
left tried as much as

1318
01:18:32,550 --> 01:18:38,220
possible to restore a
normal type of life, as much

1319
01:18:38,220 --> 01:18:39,100
normal as possible.

1320
01:18:39,100 --> 01:18:44,820

1321
01:18:44,820 --> 01:18:50,560
But the big question mark
was, things are just bound

1322
01:18:50,560 --> 01:18:55,390
to get worse, particularly,

as the war winds down,

1323

01:18:55,390 --> 01:18:59,480
comes to its final stages.

1324

01:18:59,480 --> 01:19:03,610
And how will one
get through that?

1325

01:19:03,610 --> 01:19:08,530
So for a while, a
new idea sort of

1326

01:19:08,530 --> 01:19:13,240
became popular in the remaining
Jewish community there.

1327

01:19:13,240 --> 01:19:17,650
Namely, that at the very
least, what you need to do

1328

01:19:17,650 --> 01:19:26,140
is to get your children to a
boarding school in Hungary,

1329

01:19:26,140 --> 01:19:28,690
to Jewish boarding
schools in Hungary,

1330

01:19:28,690 --> 01:19:31,450
so if things start
being bad here,

1331

01:19:31,450 --> 01:19:37,210
it'd be much easier for
parents that are not encumbered

1332

01:19:37,210 --> 01:19:43,510
by their children to make a
quick escape themselves out

1333

01:19:43,510 --> 01:19:47,260
of Slovakia and join

their children in Hungary.

1334

01:19:47,260 --> 01:19:51,610

And by that time, it
was possible for money

1335

01:19:51,610 --> 01:19:56,050

to obtain very good
papers that gave you

1336

01:19:56,050 --> 01:20:00,070

a legal Hungarian
passport so that one

1337

01:20:00,070 --> 01:20:03,210

could make that trip legally.

1338

01:20:03,210 --> 01:20:09,380

And at some point, my parents
got caught up in the same idea.

1339

01:20:09,380 --> 01:20:13,930

And so at one point, my
mother took my sister

1340

01:20:13,930 --> 01:20:17,500

and me to a town--

1341

01:20:17,500 --> 01:20:20,590

a city in Hungary,
Miskolc, where

1342

01:20:20,590 --> 01:20:26,050

there was a Jewish boarding
school in which there already

1343

01:20:26,050 --> 01:20:28,900

were a number of the
kids from Michalovce

1344

01:20:28,900 --> 01:20:30,910

that had been placed there.

1345

01:20:30,910 --> 01:20:33,370

And what I remember is
that, again, initially, I

1346

01:20:33,370 --> 01:20:35,270

found the whole
idea very exciting.

1347

01:20:35,270 --> 01:20:37,390

And I had read in
books about boys

1348

01:20:37,390 --> 01:20:40,850

in boarding school,
and so on and so forth.

1349

01:20:40,850 --> 01:20:46,690

And so when we got
there, my mother

1350

01:20:46,690 --> 01:20:50,660

did put me in this
boarding school.

1351

01:20:50,660 --> 01:20:52,720

What month and year
is this, do you know?

1352

01:20:52,720 --> 01:21:00,530

This is about February of 1944.

1353

01:21:00,530 --> 01:21:03,070

So she put me in the board--
in this boarding school.

1354

01:21:03,070 --> 01:21:05,830

And what I remember
is that immediately I

1355

01:21:05,830 --> 01:21:12,790

felt tremendous homesick and I
was very unhappy and very sad

1356

01:21:12,790 --> 01:21:17,080

about looking ahead to
having to stay there.

1357

01:21:17,080 --> 01:21:19,090

And because of all
this, I do remember

1358

01:21:19,090 --> 01:21:21,280

trying to put a lot of
pressure on my mother

1359

01:21:21,280 --> 01:21:22,480

to change her mind.

1360

01:21:22,480 --> 01:21:27,220

And I was a precocious
maturity, I talked to her about

1361

01:21:27,220 --> 01:21:29,530

how we're going to be
separated by a border,

1362

01:21:29,530 --> 01:21:31,360

and this is wartime,
and one never

1363

01:21:31,360 --> 01:21:34,720

knows what's going
to happen, and so on.

1364

01:21:34,720 --> 01:21:38,050

And so she ended
up really feeling

1365

01:21:38,050 --> 01:21:40,210

very conflicted
about the decision

1366

01:21:40,210 --> 01:21:44,020

that she had made to
place me in that school.

1367

01:21:44,020 --> 01:21:46,990

And she decided
to delay, really,

1368

01:21:46,990 --> 01:21:48,890

the whole thing of my sister.

1369

01:21:48,890 --> 01:21:52,270

My sister needed a tonsillectomy
so what she decided to do

1370

01:21:52,270 --> 01:21:55,780

was to go to Budapest
and have my sister have

1371

01:21:55,780 --> 01:21:58,090

her tonsillectomy there.

1372

01:21:58,090 --> 01:22:02,260

While my sister was
recuperating in Budapest,

1373

01:22:02,260 --> 01:22:04,900

she still was very troubled
about her decision.

1374

01:22:04,900 --> 01:22:08,410

Although, one of her
principal worries

1375

01:22:08,410 --> 01:22:12,100

was whether I might be
subject to bombing attacks,

1376

01:22:12,100 --> 01:22:14,440

because there were some
important industries

1377

01:22:14,440 --> 01:22:19,150

in Miskolc, and people were
talking about possible bombing

1378

01:22:19,150 --> 01:22:20,380
there.

1379
01:22:20,380 --> 01:22:23,680
But she also-- she
was staying at a hotel

1380
01:22:23,680 --> 01:22:26,320
where there was a
Jewish concierge.

1381
01:22:26,320 --> 01:22:31,240
And she got to talking
to him, and he gave her

1382
01:22:31,240 --> 01:22:34,620
another source of
anxiety, because he said,

1383
01:22:34,620 --> 01:22:37,870
you think it's going to
be all that safe here.

1384
01:22:37,870 --> 01:22:39,860
And my mother asked,
what do you mean?

1385
01:22:39,860 --> 01:22:45,100
And he said, well, I've seen a
lot of German officers lately

1386
01:22:45,100 --> 01:22:46,090
come here.

1387
01:22:46,090 --> 01:22:48,070
And I don't know
what's happening,

1388
01:22:48,070 --> 01:22:50,940
or what's going to happen.

1389
01:22:50,940 --> 01:22:55,610
So there was another

source of concern for her.

1390

01:22:55,610 --> 01:23:01,260

She got so worried about
it, she wrote my father

1391

01:23:01,260 --> 01:23:05,120

in some coded way
that she was thinking

1392

01:23:05,120 --> 01:23:07,250

about changing the plans.

1393

01:23:07,250 --> 01:23:10,550

And my father sent
her a telegram saying,

1394

01:23:10,550 --> 01:23:12,920

act according to our
original decision.

1395

01:23:12,920 --> 01:23:20,120

And she was unwilling to take
it upon herself to change that.

1396

01:23:20,120 --> 01:23:22,400

But she was looking
for someone who

1397

01:23:22,400 --> 01:23:26,660

she knew was in Budapest from
our hometown who was planning

1398

01:23:26,660 --> 01:23:30,350

to go back very
soon to Michalovce,

1399

01:23:30,350 --> 01:23:34,920

and wanted personally to let
him know about all her concerns

1400

01:23:34,920 --> 01:23:35,600

and--

1401
01:23:35,600 --> 01:23:38,450
so that he could
talk to my father.

1402
01:23:38,450 --> 01:23:41,870
She looked all over Budapest
for him, couldn't find him.

1403
01:23:41,870 --> 01:23:45,000
On the last afternoon of
this man staying in Budapest,

1404
01:23:45,000 --> 01:23:49,220
she happened to run into
him at a restaurant.

1405
01:23:49,220 --> 01:23:52,520
Again, pure chance.

1406
01:23:52,520 --> 01:23:56,960
So she told him all about
that and how she worried--

1407
01:23:56,960 --> 01:24:01,190
would be terribly worried,
et cetera, et cetera.

1408
01:24:01,190 --> 01:24:06,390
And he got back,
talked to my father,

1409
01:24:06,390 --> 01:24:09,110
and my father at
that point, I guess,

1410
01:24:09,110 --> 01:24:12,830
got so worried that if
something did happen,

1411
01:24:12,830 --> 01:24:17,510
he would have to bear
the brunt of that.

1412
01:24:17,510 --> 01:24:22,830
So he wired my mother
to bring me home.

1413
01:24:22,830 --> 01:24:26,160
And I remember
that day very well,

1414
01:24:26,160 --> 01:24:29,930
one of the happiest days of
my life at that point when--

1415
01:24:29,930 --> 01:24:34,670
totally when I had sort
of begun to resign myself

1416
01:24:34,670 --> 01:24:39,260
to staying where I really still
very much didn't want to stay,

1417
01:24:39,260 --> 01:24:43,260
that the director of the school
came to me one day and said,

1418
01:24:43,260 --> 01:24:47,150
you're going to Budapest
to join your mother,

1419
01:24:47,150 --> 01:24:50,150
and arranged to have someone
accompany me, take me

1420
01:24:50,150 --> 01:24:54,290
to Budapest, and join
my mother and came home.

1421
01:24:54,290 --> 01:24:59,440
When he brought us home,
people in Michalovce

1422
01:24:59,440 --> 01:25:01,550
said-- thought my

mother was crazy.

1423
01:25:01,550 --> 01:25:03,800
She was a totally
pathologically,

1424
01:25:03,800 --> 01:25:06,620
overprotective mother.

1425
01:25:06,620 --> 01:25:09,410
And how could she
have done this?

1426
01:25:09,410 --> 01:25:15,110
I remember running into the
father of one of the boys who

1427
01:25:15,110 --> 01:25:18,830
was there in that school
who, when I was there,

1428
01:25:18,830 --> 01:25:21,980
told me how very unhappy he
was there and how very much

1429
01:25:21,980 --> 01:25:23,840
he wanted to go home.

1430
01:25:23,840 --> 01:25:25,460
And I talked to--

1431
01:25:25,460 --> 01:25:27,260
his father asked
me about his son,

1432
01:25:27,260 --> 01:25:30,040
and I told him that he
really was very unhappy

1433
01:25:30,040 --> 01:25:32,400
and very much
wanted to come back.

1434

01:25:32,400 --> 01:25:33,950

And the father said,
well, he doesn't

1435

01:25:33,950 --> 01:25:36,410

know what's best for him.

1436

01:25:36,410 --> 01:25:41,720

Well, as everyone knows, really,
within two or three weeks,

1437

01:25:41,720 --> 01:25:45,020

the big turn around
in Hungary took place.

1438

01:25:45,020 --> 01:25:48,830

Germans did come in much
more directly controlling

1439

01:25:48,830 --> 01:25:52,220

the situation, and
the deportation

1440

01:25:52,220 --> 01:25:55,540

of the Jews from Hungary began.

1441

01:25:55,540 --> 01:25:56,240

You out of tape?

1442

01:25:56,240 --> 01:25:58,198

And you're-- actually,
we're running out, yeah.

1443

01:25:58,198 --> 01:25:59,410

Maybe I should switch it now.

1444

01:25:59,410 --> 01:26:00,960

OK.

1445

01:26:00,960 --> 01:26:02,000