

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

TIBOR BARANSKI

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Josey G. Fisher  
Date: October 2, 1986

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*TIBOR BARANSKI [1-1-1]*

TB - Tibor Baranski [interviewee]

JF - Josey Fisher [interviewer]

Date: October 3, 1986

*Tape one, side one:*

JF: Mr. Baranski, can you tell us where and when you were born and a little bit about your background?

TB: In the 1880s a Polish gentleman, after the third dismemberment of Poland, when Poland disappeared from the map of Europe and the southern part of Poland was close to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was ordered to spend his soldier time in Budapest. This gentleman was my grandfather, Albert Baranski. He fell in love with the Hungarian city and after his three years of soldier duty he married in Budapest; Rudolph (or in Hungarian, Reszl) Baranski, my father, was born there. And since Austria-Hungary was together for 400 years, it was quite natural that he fell in love with a lady who was born in Wiener Neustadt, a suburb of Vienna, Maria Schelnader, and this lady became my mother. These two persons were unfortunately were too short people in love because later in life my parents got divorced, and this I do not want to comment on this day. I was born on June 11, 1922, in Budapest, and according to superstitious people, on a very lucky time, Sunday morning, seven o'clock. I was raised in very, very deep and affectionate love, sometimes maybe a little bit soft love, but God was gracious enough to give me a lot of illnesses which well balanced so, thanks God I did not become a tempered brat. The greatest influence on my life was done first by my grandfather who was a highly educated person, a very multi-talented person. [unclear] who was absolutely superb in mathematics and engineering. He was in the calculating office of the First Hungarian Aeronautics Office, only a little nucleus in the end of the 1910s and beginning of 1920s, but except sports, this gentlemen knew almost every field. He was not excellent, but a fairly good painter. He had a fantastic voice; he liked to sing. He knew literature, and since he mastered better German than Hungarian, he was a co-worker of the *Pester Lloyds*, newspaper in Budapest of German language. The funny thing was that, although he worked with this paper, his pen name, which would have been just unnecessary because Schelnader was a very good German name, as a pen name he used a Hungarian name in the German paper, calling himself Aush. So if somebody is looking in the end of 1910 and the 1920s in *Pester Lloyd*, you would find very likely several articles of my grandfather's. Unfortunately, I have never time to dig out them. It would be interesting. This gentleman had an enormous influence of me. He could teach me of things. I give you good example. When I saw as a four-years-old child a street car, I could explain it: how the copper and the iron ore was mined, melted, made a railroad of it, installed in the street, how the wood was cut out, mastered in factories, made the seating, the seat in the street car, and he could tell me all these like a fairy tale, so, except reading and writing,

when I was five years old I had the intellectual education of ten-years-old child due to the influence of my grandfather.

JF: What was the religious influence on you?

TB: The religious influence was in another way that he did, because my grandmother was very much of a churchgoer. As a child who was very sensitive to colds and flus, I was many, many time in danger that I will die. I will tell you later that between fourteen and nineteen, I had every year, one new pneumonia. And the first two pneumonias were so serious that I really almost died. So I can remember that when I was as a little boy, two, three, four years old, in my bed, and my chest was full of flu, and I was hardly able to take breaths, and my grandma was sitting all night praying rosary and asking God to help this little lousy boy to stay alive, and we went to a Holy Mary Shrine, called *Maria Remeda* in Budapest, and I was very often there with my grandmother, so from my early childhood on, I had a very serious devotion to Holy Mary, and now, as a Hungarian poet and writer, I have chosen myself a pen name. I created it from Holy Mary's name in Hungarian: Mary is Maria and I created for myself a pen name, *Mariashi* for the devotion to the Mother of Christ. But I remember from childhood on, my grandmother was very, very much religious, and she tried to educate me this way. I know we went every Sunday to church, and when we have just now in October, we had the Holy Mary devotions every evening in Europe in May and in October, and I was raised in this way. I can say that I was so much in spite of my outgoing nature, I was in the same time, people say that I am a little bit schizophrenia, because I was born in Gemini, and they are usually double people. I am very much meditative. I know from circumstances that usually every morning when my grandmother came to wake me up around eight o'clock, I exposed to her my meditations, but when I was waiting for her, and one morning I surprised her and I said, "Grandma, I know that you are an old lady, and there are much older ladies than you, and there are younger ladies than you, and there is my mother who is younger, and I am very little, how was that? When did I start to become?" And this meditation: how old I am and what is about life, they came up when I was three years old, so I know I was very much introvert, very much thinking. Another morning I surprised my grandma similarly about this, when I went in the other direction. I said, "Okay, grandma, you told me now that I was once born, but I cannot understand how I was born, and then I am now a little boy, and then I see bigger boys and bigger girls, and you are old and very old, could you tell me now how old is God?"

JF: Hmm.

TB: So this was another morning. I was fairly meditative and introvert in spite of my outgoing nature. On the other hand, when we went to the park, they could not hold me back to run to another child and kiss the child, because I wanted to love other people.

JF: Were you schooled in Catholic Schools or were you in the public system?

TB: Since we were a middle-class people, undoubtedly, let me spend for this only a very little time. The Baranskis in Poland are 700 year registered old noble Polish family of different branches. Some of my family came over to Hungary from Poland, not

by reasons as I mentioned you about the part of Poland was annexed to Austria Hungary, but at this time it was not. They came over from themselves, and that remains still big shots, but later on Austria Hungary was devoured a part of Poland, and those Polish people became very desperate and tried to make a conspiracy against Austrian emperor, and they were caught, and according to good practical methods, some of them were executed and private property confiscated, so the branch of my family became very poor. Never mind about our noble background and rich background. Naturally, the rich part of the Baranski family didn't want to have any connection with the rebels for two reasons, because they were rebels, and they became poor. Maybe the poor people would ask the rich ones for some money, so we became, I wouldn't say beggars, but in a fairly modest middle class financial situation; consequently we had no way to send our children for a while to private school, because it cost money. I was only lucky enough, in spite of I went to the government schools or public schools how you call them, whatever phrase you like, still in the old-fashioned Hungary, our level was fairly good and fairly strict. I give you, probably interesting for you to know as Americans that the so-called Hungarian *Gymnasium* is not a sport place; it is a high school because gymnastic means training, and this was the place of an intellectual training. Our *Gymnasium* system had an eight-year system. You started when you were ten, and the classes were, what you call here Grade 5, that was Form 1, and Grade 6 is Form 2. So from Form 1 to Form 8 which equals Form 8 to Grade 12. But our pattern of studies was enormously strong. You learned eight years Hungarian language and literature from Form 1 to 8, from age 10 to 18. You learned eight years Latin. When you became 12 years old, you started to go to Form 3, would be here Grade 7, you had to start, Grade 5, sorry, Grade 7, okay, you studied for six year German. Then again you became 14 years old, you had an elective obligatory language. You had the right to chose, but you could not drop it. I had chosen English, so I studied four year English. Let me repeat: 8 year Hungarian and Latin, six year German, four year English. In my case for a certain reason, I studied 8 year German and 6 year Latin, never mind, so at least what I want to bring out now in this little conversation: that you should know that our high school education even in public school was very strong.

JF: What was your social experiences in high school in terms of other children from different backgrounds, for instance, the Jewish children?

TB: Even you see, Mrs. Fisher, here I have to go back again. My first experience with the Jews is this: that either one of the best, or verbally the best, friend of my grandmother was a sweet old Jewish woman, Mrs. Schwartz, and so I was educated together with Mrs. Schwartz who liked me very, very much. The funny thing, Schwartz means in English 'black', and later on her daughter was married to another Jew whose name was Mr. Fecatur. But the Hungarian word, *fekete* means 'black' in English, so Miss Schwartz was married by Mr. Fekete, both names mean 'black'. And later on I married this lady, I met this lady many, many times, this old lady because she, I moved to another district, and by fun, she moved again to the same district, so I saw her last when I was

around 17 or 18 years old; she lived about two blocks from me, and she still loved me affectionately, because she knew me from her son, that was the first contact.

JF: Did you spend time in her home with the family?

TB: In my grandmother's time, she was rather with us. Later on, when I lived in BudaNorth called *Obuda*, then I was more often in her home than she was in my home because her son-in-law was the co-owner of a famous factory, there were two Jews who ran the factory: Mr. Goodman and Mr. Fekete, and if you see on old Hungarian products "GFB", that means the factory of Goodman and Fekete in Budapest. And this was a famous factory, only two or three blocks from my home, and at the time I said, I would go over to Mrs. Schwartz and have fine good *cappuccino*, a coffee, and good homemade cake, and so it was up to about 1939, 1940.

JF: Did you have classmates, friends of your own age also who were Jewish?

TB: Oh, yes, and we were in fairly good relation. One of the shocking deeds what you will hear from me later, a little boy, Kolinski Josha, we Hungarians always say first the family name, Joe Kolinski, who was a little tiny Jewish boy, awfully diligent, very nice; his parents were umbrella makers, and you will hear later, when I will be in my appointment as executive secretary of the Holy See in Hungary and I will meet his parents, without a son, being on the way to get deported and I could not help them. And they will ask me. "Please, Reverend, we are not Catholics, we are not so-and-so, but we have a son. He was removed from us a couple weeks ago. We don't know, if you have any contact can you help us?" and they open a university lecture, a little booklet, and I see the photograph of my own classmate. And I can still see almost in tears. I never saw Joe, and I could never help him, and he was sitting three desks before me. He was so small he was sitting in the first desk. I don't know what happened to him. Of this I don't even like to talk because I get a little bit too soft. This is a very heavy memory; he was a sweet, nice little guy. Yes I had a few Jewish classmates and like anybody else, some of them were closer to me, some of them, normal human nature, but my entire attitude from my home, was just natural to them; maybe later on when Mrs. Fisher will ask me about that: I will comment what about this global dark shadow that the Hungarians are the antisemites, so and so. Usually I don't like too much global thing because they are always twisting. Later on, I will comment, on this...

JF: What about when you were in school, did you have a sense of that feeling, did you have a sense of tension, in your classroom, in your growing-up period, between Jews and the Christians?

TB: In the elementary school absolutely nothing, which I spent in a suburb of Budapest called New Pest [Ujpest in Hungarian]. There was absolutely nothing, and there was, I think so, either nothing, or I didn't observe, in one of the high schools, because the first six forms I finished in the so-called *Arbok Gymnasium* in Buda, I would say in Old Buda. I observed some of the tension of this in my last two years of high school when I changed school, and I moved to the most condensed Jewish district of Budapest. You

probably know that from Budapest, which was in this time approximately 1,200,000 people population, from this 1,200,000, I would say over 200,000 were Jews. And this district where I went to high school called *Modash Gymnasium* or *Borchai Street Gymnasium*. Even you American Jews will sometimes hear about it because it was a fairly famous place, and some capable people came from there. This was already 1938, when the pressure of the German Nazis became bigger and bigger in Hungary. By joke, our *Gymnasium* was called the "Second Jewish" because there was a, there was a Catholic *Gymnasiums* in Budapest, there was Jewish *Gymnasiums*, established by Jews. Our *Gymnasium* was called the "Second Greatest Jewish *Gymnasium*", because, true, that in my class, the class size in Europe was between 40 and 50 which is for America an enormous high number, but this was over there natural. So in my class you had about 44 or 45 people. In a Catholic-dominated country, in my class we were 12 Catholics but 22 or 23 Jews. Now since the Nazi pressure started to become bigger and bigger, you could sometimes feel that there is some uneasy thing, and my impression is one of my classmates later became involved with the German *Volksbund* in Hungary. He was originally a very nice guy, and we became with this man almost friends, and sometimes I saw that he didn't want too much friendship with me, and I didn't understand. And when I finished high school in 1940 and for totally different reason that I don't want to explain, would not belong to this tape, I went to the so-called German *Volksbund Haus*, still I have to say, because you would be interested what was Baranski doing in the German *Volksbund Haus*. Between when I finished my high school, I wanted to become a lawyer, and since I was financially not strong enough, for one year, I wanted to go to an office to work and get a little money, and after that start the University. So I went to an insurance company, not as a salesman, as a worker, as an office worker, and this insurance company sent me for official reason to the German house because the Hungarian *Volksbund* leader was our client, Mr. Bosch and I entered this house going to him for official reason: he had a car insurance with our company, and whom do I see in one room than my former classmate, and then I understood that since this man became a traitor and wanted to collaborate with Nazis, although I approached him with friendship, he was afraid to admit my friendship because he knew that I will not approve it. So this man became awfully pale when he saw me that I see him as a little *Gauleiter* in this *Volkshaus*. But otherwise except this man, if I would say you, "Was that in our class, really attention?" If there was up to a certain, what I am almost sure there was, but this was absolutely not natural. This was a created sense, so somebody did something in underground, not by nature. They wouldn't say, "Hey you damn stinking Jews." Such a thing, thanks God, even in spite of the Nazi pressure was not in our class, definitely not.

JF: Did you feel anything from the teachers, anything from the administration during those early years?

TB: No. No. in the *Arbad Gymnasium* in Buda, absolutely nothing, that is out of question, absolutely nothing. In the so called *Modash Gymnasium* or *Borchai Street Gymnasium* from the staff, never anything because our staff was still, this was a high school

and our staff was still well-balanced. I tell you this was a very quality government school. Most of the teachers from this school were named later principals to other schools, so this school was a, in government scale, one of our three or four best high schools in Hungary.

JF: Among the class itself, there were personal friendship going back and forth to the...

TB: Yes, yes, yes.

JF: How was it?

TB: The mother, I tell you how that is. There was just a few days ago, I met one of my former classmates who lives now in Canada. I didn't see the gentleman since 46 years. I got my high school diploma in 1940, and with him we talked about our former classmates. One of our most outstanding boy was my very good friend, a Jewish boy called Andrew Boshes as you say in English, Andy; we called him Bundy. Boshes Bundy was an absolutely of superb quality both intellectually and morally. We had the Hungarian literary club, he was the star over there. I was only the executive secretary of the club, so I was not too bad, but I considered this man at least, with all my non-humble nature, he was at least 30-35% better than I was, no doubt, because very excellent both in quality and in morals. He was, as a high school student, he was able to give us three lectures without reading. He was so much full of knowledge, and he had this eloquence. He was an absolutely of superb quality.

JF: So you were in the *Gymnasium* during the period of Hitler's rise in Germany and during the beginning of the spread of Nazism. What was the discussion among the students between you and your friends? What did you know, what did you speculate?

TB: Look, number one, if you are involved deeply in studies, I can say, except the last two years, just when I went over this other high school, when you are already after 16, then you really started in the old-fashioned word to become a semi-adult and started to talk about political things, but this I can tell you very honestly, I didn't find a single person, maybe this boy whom I mentioned you before, he became a Nazi, he didn't dare to express his opinion, I didn't find a single person among the Christians as I told you, were about twelve Catholics and I think so, seven or how many Presbyterians [we called them, in Hungary, Calvinists] and all the rest were Jews, but I don't think any of us would have approved what Hitler did. And I already mentioned here, I will go over it deep in my later statements, if anybody has ever in America the temptation to say either by ignorance or by bad influence, that Miklos Horthy, our old regent, was a Nazi, then I have to say it's a very poor thing if we get ever the question what I get, what I got as a history teacher in the United States, that, in Canada even more, I taught once in Canada, and I got the question which was full of wind, and I have to put it here now because by nature, you know, the relaxed conversation, it just comes up now. "Tell, Mr. Baranski," I was addressed in Canada, "Was Miklos Horthy a Nazi?" And I became nasty, and I said, I saw that the boy was not a heckler, it was, he heard about it, so I gave a mild sarcasm, I said to him, "Of course, did you not know that the English King was a Communist?" And the boy in Canada



got out, "But, Mr. Baranski!" I said, "Stop for a moment; did you not see that the reason why you ask it because Hungary became an ally to Germany, so naturally Miklos Horthy had to be a Nazi?" I told him, "This is why I say, my dear son, since England became an ally to Russia, so very likely the English King had to be a Communist." This was already in grade eleven or twelve, and the boy was very bright and he said to me, "Mr. Baranski, I give you now a very clear distinction. England was never a real political ally to Russia. England was a war ally to Russia." I said, "Son, God bless you, for this clear distinction. Hungary, even if Hungary sometimes was political ally, Hungary never wanted to be. Hungary realized, because in 1919 we had the five year, the five months Communism in Hungary, the communism executed between 100 and 150,000 people in five months, so we knew what Communism is.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime, Hungary was mutilated at the end of the First World War, and a thousand-years-old kingdom lost two-third of its former territories, so we had two motivations. Hitler promised us that if we helped him, he will be strong enough to keep the Communists away, and he will help us to get back our old territories."

JF: Did you think that that would happen?

TB: Since we knew, number one, I want to lay down one thing. I'm not too bad in scholastics aside, languages, history, philosophy, and I was always very lousy on science, but one thing many of us suspected that since the Germans are so excellent in science, either militarily or in science or in both, they will be able to counterbalance the Russians, not because of the number, because of their superior scientific knowledge. So when Hitler promised the miraculous gun, most of us believed in it, because we knew that they were able to do absolutely unexpected things, and we said, "Why not?" Meanwhile, what is again interesting, I switch now to another topic, but you will be interesting to know, even the proud Germans said that, I give you almost verbally a statement from a German general, the guy said, the name now doesn't come to my mind, "If I would be able" said the German, "to have a German leadership and Hungarian soldiers, I would beat the entire world." Which means that the Germans believed that as soldiers, our soldiers are a better quality than the Germans.

JF: When did you first think that there was more to what Hitler was after than the scientific offering of the fight against Communism?

TB: Look, I was still in high school. I would say from approximately, in my last grade, in the 1939-1940 academic year, when I was between 17 and 18, and I started to have more and more interest to get into political things, to understand what is going on, then I saw that there is a pan-Germanistic attitude and Germany wants to be the absolute lord of Europe, I mean, the Germans, many of the Germans [unclear] did not agree with it, but you know, most of us have always a national pride. Napoleon made the French to believe that they are the only people, and this happens to us easily. If you want to notice,

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<sup>1</sup>According to Raphael Pattai, author of *The Jews of Hungary*, some 570 people, including 44 Jews, were executed for anti-revolutionary activity under the brief communist regime of Bela Kun known as the Red Terror, during this period.

the character of China means in English translation “the middle of the world”. We all people have chauvinistic attitudes, so I was in my last year of high school when I realized that Germany wants to be the absolute lord, and then I realized, which bothered my national pride, that one of my very well-balanced Hungarian fatherly friends, 45 or 50-years-old gentleman, who was very educated, had shown me a copy of the first two or three editions of the *Mein Kampf*, Hitler’s book, and there was a very bad statement which made me furious, and this was, and I give you the German sentence, and I saw this sentence in the book, when he wrote at that time in the beginning about the Hungarians, and he didn’t know that once the Hungarians would become his ally, I quote now almost verbally, what I will say now is 90% he wrote the same things with the same heaviness of construction, when he wrote about Hungarians, quote: “*Hinaus mit diesem Zigeunervolk von Europa!*” “Out with these gypsy people from Europe!”

JF: And you knew about that?

TB: I saw it that text in the *Mein Kampf*, this gentleman had one of the first three editions.

JF: This was in what year?

TB: I saw that in, but when was the first edition I don’t know.

JF: But when did you see it?

TB: I saw this in 1939-40 academic year. I was in my last year in high school. And this sentence made me furious. Naturally, when Hitler became our political ally, from the next edition of the *Mein Kampf* this statement was dropped. So if you buy now I don’t know, from the 9th edition, I don’t know, you will not find this sentence. You will not find this sentence. He was smart enough to drop this. Because, you see, and for a short while, we thought that maybe we can be in this way an ally, that this will not go over into ideological way. At least, I can say this with good conscience, until I was in high school, it was nothing if I compared with the American leftist education because you talked enough to the high school teacher who had taught for a number of years history, I can tell you in good conscience, up to 1940 in our high school was not the spirit in regard to Nazism but you see in the United States in regard to Communism. We several times talked so that Hitler was a dictator but Stalin was only a generalissimo. Why do we not say that Stalin was in the same way the Red Dictator that Hitler was the Brown Dictator?

JF: You’re questioning that now?

TB: Yes, of course.

JF: Not at that time.

TB: Such a thing was not in Hungary. We did not brainwash our kids until 1940, until I finished high school, where I was the first eye-witness. It was not told to us what a fine guy Hitler is. We said that it is very likely, what I heard that was the strongest statement, that it was very likely that Nazism would be strong enough to counter-balance the--detrimental influence.

*Tape one, side two:*

TB: So let me finish the sentence, that they thought that Nazism will be strong enough to counterbalance the detrimental influence of Communism, and, look, let me give you here another, see one question runs into another question, but if really want for the institution, I can give you later a little three, four-page brief resume of this to put it chronologically, or so to help you if you are confused maybe on the loopholes of this state. One thing is absolutely clear, that from the first moment on, Communism started: "I want world domination and atheistic world domination by any tool and any price." This was no doubt. The other thing which was no doubt, since in Europe after the last First World War came a Communist wave; in Hungary it lasted five months, in other countries it lasted two or three months, Germany was so much down, so much demoralized from the last First World War, that the most respected German by everybody, English, Jew, everybody, Mr. Hindenburg, who was really of high moral standards. He wasn't merely a soldier, but he was very decent, private life and everything, which means he did not run after woman, and in every respect he was a professional soldier, he was a reliable person, with a fairly broad horizon. He was fairly old in that time when people asked him, "Tell us sincerely, you can die any day. We are now in a very shaky position. If you will die, we can slip back easily into either [unclear] Communism or a very heavy Communist influence." And I can quote for you, I know it from reliable Germans; I have fairly good connections. Hindenburg's answer was the following: "I don't like this little suspicious corporal called Adolf Hitler, but I suggest you hold for him, I hope so we will be not worse than Communists."

JF: How did you understand Hitler's moves in Austria, Czechoslovakia, his invasion of Poland, this was all before you are talking, about the year 1939-40?

TB: No, this left me coming, this is interesting, it was almost no Hungarian, including the very low number of the Hungarian Nazis, to this point I come later, we all understood that this is German expansion. We did not misunderstand it. We all understood it right away that this is now German expansion, not only German expansion from Kaiser Wilhelm II, this is German expansion from [unclear] consistent.

JF: And how did you think it was going to affect you in Hungary?

TB: Some of us, if I would comment on the person, I would be a bubbler, I was too young to see a cross-cut in the country, but I do believe that the smartest of us said, "Until we have no doubt it is only a matter of time, in spite of we will not be politicians," but we saw that, the priests saw it, that sooner or later it would be a face-to-face confrontation with Communism, and we thought, "Oh God, how good would be these two systems would demolish each other."

JF: Before either of them got to Hungary.

TB: We knew that the Germans, now they come to Czechoslovakia, they devour half part of Poland. So when they made the agreement, one I always call it sarcastically

when the Brown Communists made an agreement with the Red Nazis, we right away knew that soon these agreement will be not enough. We have a famous Hungarian proverb, I say it in Hungarian, I translate it in German [He translates it into English] “Two pipe players in one inn are too much, or two fiddlers in one inn are too much. The German idea was *Drang Nach Osten*. The Stalin ideas was *Drang Nach Westen*. The Germans wanted to expand toward east, the Russian Communist imperialism wanted to expand towards west, so it was so obvious. We were really a little bit shocked and surprised. How the hell did these two become allies for a while, but some of the smarter said, “These allies should not last too long.” They did not because they needed space.

JF: You are talking now about the Hitler-Stalin Pact?

TB: Yes, and when they agreed with Ribbentrop that now they will devour half of Poland and half of Poland, but then this was the time when we saw that, in spite of it, because the Hungarians and the Polish or to the Polish are Slavic but we are not, but both countries are Catholic, and we were in the history only, if I am not mistaken, don't trust me now, maybe I make a mistake, I think only twice enemies but all the time warm and close allies. When the persecuted Polish had problems, they escaped to Hungary; when we had problems, we escaped to Poland, so between us was really a very cordial relation. And we were deeply sorry that Poland suffered so much. Our only hope was that soon the two dictatorial systems would confront each other and hopefully they will either demolish each other or seriously weaken each other. This was the hope of many of us.

JF: Meaning that you hoped that everything would be resolved before it hit your own borders?

TB: Yes, we did. We were not so sure since Poland and Hungary are the corridors between East and West in this very drastic part of the world. We thought that yes, maybe the big storm, will be north from us. We were not sure that we became more and more suspicious of it because when we had to enter under Hitler's side of the war because Hitler's not only promise but a promise and a frightening. “You must enter on my side if you wanted I should help you politically to get back your old territories.” The so-called Russian bombing of the same Hungarian city where I studied theology, Kassa, was, we now know for sure that this was, a German provocation in a Russian airplane. I'm not a strategist, in this section don't believe me now, it was either a Russian airplane, mastered in this time by a German pilot. The important thing was to make us to believe that the Russians were bombing a Hungarian city. So we should declare war against Russia. But behind this was Hitler with the promise and frightening, “You want to get back the rest of your territories; come and help us.”

JF: Did you have any understanding at that time of what else was involved in Hitler's plan for Europe?

TB: What I said about eight, ten minutes ago, I really--shocked, and from this time on with full speed I was looking after as much time as I could devote, which is Hitler's plan with us, because when I saw my own classmate sitting in the *Volksbund Haus*, then I

started really to open my eyes and look what the *Volksbund* does. And I definitely know we had. Again let me stop here. The Turks were in Hungary for 150 years. They were driven out from Hungary in 1686. The middle of Hungary became totally empty. The Austrian emperor, who was unfortunately Hungarian King for 400 years, very often a lousy king, sent an announcement all over Europe, "Come to Hungary. For ten years or fifteen years, it will be tax-exempt because the country is empty: start a new life!" This was the beginning and so many Germans came to our country because the country was empty. Naturally, it is not so easy that I come now to the German, to Hungary was an Italian, even an Italian settlement. Italians signed up to come to Hungary. But they came later, they became Hungarians after 300 years. But I want to tell you that to live in the neighborhood of Austria, you will not become a zealous Hungarian at all, but we were in fairly good relation until Hitler came, and some of those German guard in Hungary were bilingual; they spoke very good Hungarian and still German. They started to become hostile against us due to instigation what the Nazis did. But again I can see why I am so sorry for them because the Communists wanted to take revenge in the name of this, this I can say I in good conscience, maximum one-fifth of the German speaking ethnic group in Hungary became crazy Nazi, and all the rest did not. Yet the Communists took revenge on all those Germans, and this was absolutely not right, because before and I lived in a German district, all Buda *Obuda North*, was heavily full of Germans, and in the time of Hitler's, when he was the star, they did not become crazy for him. They didn't dare to contradict because they knew they could get in jail in ten minutes, just like under Communism. But secretly they tried to be as much anti-Nazi as possible, and later on, when I come in chronologically to the time, I will tell you about those German soldiers who came through Budapest, and spent three, four hours in my home, and were crying with me together, and they explained to me what Hitler did for their own country. Don't think so that Germans are the Nazis, as never think that the Russians are the Communists. My sweet audience, you are totally wrong. In Russia obligatorily about seven per cent of the Russians are members of the Communist Party and not even those seven per cent are in the hard Communists. Can you imagine, I had a German priest in my home for one afternoon, who was drafted as a regular soldier, no priest distinction, nothing, he was as a matter of fact a monk, and his entire monastery was confiscated by Adolf Hitler. So I can tell you if somebody has experience, although I was not myself in Germany, but chronologically after my mother spoke first German, I could testify before God and man how many Germans there that damn Hitler, wish God knows where, but I tell you to have an opinion, my dear audience, and to have the guts to stand out and tell me honestly what would the guts mean: you are imprisoned; you are put in a working camp; you are exterminated; period. [unclear] Consistent, and the man who speaks to you suffered from both, does not tolerate any contradiction, period. And a nice Austrian doctor who had out once when Hitler had epileptic seizure, because his doctor was at this time was ill, or something, and this doctor told only to his friends about Hitler. "*Aber er ist ja doch ein Narr*" "This man is a crazy guy." That was the only

sentence. Two hours later, he disappeared and they never found him. And this again, I know absolutely sure because I know a person who was a good friend of the disappeared doctor.

JF: Who heard the doctor say this?

TB: Because they was sitting in a restaurant, the Austrians and the Germans like to drink beer, and it was, I don't know what time, you don't want me to say exactly, was it eight-thirty in the evening, ten-fifteen in the evening, suddenly somebody came before the very excellent Austrian doctor, the Germans came, "Doctor, we have a medical problem. You must come right away."

JF: This is about what year?

TB: When was Hitler in Austria? I don't say now, when I am a public speaker, I was not prepared to have all the chronological chart before me, but it was in a time when Hitler was for a short while in Austria. He several times traveled here and there. And his doctor at this time, I don't know, a short illness, only for a couple weeks or something or even less, but at this time he was not available. And Hitler, when he was young, was epileptic, and for a couple years by certain miraculously it stopped, so he had no seizures for awhile and the seizures returned.

JF: He had Grand Mal Epilepsy.

TB: And then, but for awhile, I don't know why, he was out of seizures, and then again, they returned and went on.

JF: Was that the nature of his epilepsy, to your knowledge?

TB: One thing what I know, that sometimes he had seizures when he quarreled with people, and they dared to contradict him. And these, being emotion, helped to develop the new seizure. And then I don't know whether he had a big quarrel with someone or not, but this Austrian doctor was called for medical reason. At first, he didn't even say how. He was put in a car and carried to a building in which Hitler was, what building was I don't know, and then he gave the proper medical help and came back, and the friends were still there, "Oh, what was so, and so and so," and the joke, and the man who was a real, in German you say *ein lustiger Kerl*; he was a real joyful guy. He was sitting there in a very bad mood, and after I don't know, being bothered half an hour or forty minutes or so, he said only to a couple of his friends, "This man is a crazy man," and this little statement was enough that after two or three hours he disappeared and they never found him. So nobody knows, maybe he was killed in the same hour; maybe he was put somewhere, but the man, not under Nazi and not after the war, they never saw this doctor any longer.

JF: Did he describe the classical kind of epileptic seizure also in his comments?

TB: No, no, no. This doctor didn't say to his friends anything. He was, no no.

JF: He did not talk about what he saw.

TB: I want only now to demonstrate for you; this was the reason for this little story. Do not think my dear, my American audience, that anybody there to contradict, and I can give you from my own life and experience in the United States when I was several

times forced to perform a bad job in school, to be lax in discipline, to give little homework to get students along with lousy performance and good marks, and I refused it. And for this, I lost many of my jobs, and American guy doesn't even contradict in the high school to the principal. So how do you expect here in America, that under dictatorial regimes, Brown dictatorship, Red dictatorship, would you dare to contradict? You were here so lousy when I was thrown out of school. All the staff were with me, were sorry for me, and not a single man dared to put in a word for me.

JF: You talked before in this line.

TB: Yes, I did.

JF: About Horthy and the fact that you feel he has been misjudged on many historic levels.

TB: Yes. Let me tell you something. Yes, for instance, this thing that I know very well, and I give you idea now, maybe you questioning it will come up again. I want to tell you that when I give you many informations what happened in Hungary between 1920 and 1940, between the two World Wars, because I was in the prison together with very prominent Hungarian leaders, namely, the chief secretary of Miklos Horthy who retired in 1936, '38, but still had very vivid contact with the other political leaders later on, too, even if he was not active during the wars.

JF: His name was?

TB: Yes, Vitez Laszlo Magashazi. He was my prison mate in the same cell from July 18, 1949 until March 11, 1950, so quite a number of months. He was sleeping on one of my side, and the other side was sleeping the chief guard of Miklós Horthy, similarly retired in '38 or '39, so similarly not involved in the Second World War, and his name was Gyula Marti Turek [phonetic]. In Hungarian we always say first the family name Marti Turek Gyula. So then I was together in the same cell with these generals or half-generals or almost-generals, I was together with one of our oldest Hungarian counts, Count Pál Esterhazy. So I had awfully highly, distinctive. He is still alive. He is still alive. He was my cellmate; we were together in the same cell.

JF: Was your knowledge of Horthy based on what you learned during the time you were in prison or did you have a sense of his thinking during the time it was actually happening?

TB: Yes, yes. For certain, as I mentioned at the beginning of this tape, that the direct line of my family was a humble middle-class family, but our father, he is very high leaders among the, one of the chief leader of Budapest, was Gyula [phonetic] Baranski, a lawyer, and so I had through my relatives fairly good connection in society, and due to my theological studies, so I knew about Miklós Horthy much earlier, and I can say very honestly that he was never a Nazi. He never even in deeds. He tried to hinder at least as much as possible, and in March before the German army moved into Hungary, he was in this time just going out to Hitler from himself, complaining what the dirty work the Nazis do in Hungary.

JF: You are talking now about March, '44.

TB: In March '44, he was exactly hammering the table of Hitler, in front of Hitler. No, nobody in history ever dared to do this and I am still amazed that Hitler did not order his people to shoot Horthy to death.

JF: Was this, was this incident well known, or was this something that was told to you by private sources?

TB: Look, I know two things, two things, both in what wide circle it was known, I don't know, but two things. When Hitler ordered us to attack Yugoslavia, and in this time our Hungarian almost-holy scout leader, whom we liked so much, Count Pál Teleki. He was the minister president. And he said, "Okay, we regret and we want to get back our lost territories from Yugoslavia. But for us and for the present moment, for Hungarian purposes, is more important to be a good ally to them for fifteen years."—or how long they signed the non-aggression pact; I don't remember. I don't have the paper before me. He said, "We signed it, and as the Hungarians for most of the time in history were honest and spiny people, we will not contradict." But the Germans forced, and Count Pál Teleki committed suicide. He was a religious Catholic man. He said, "Under my minister presidency, this will not happen." So with this fact and the other fact that Horthy was hammering the table before Hitler, but nobody ever dared to do, these two things were so well-known, for instance to one of them, what Count Teleki did Winston Churchill, unfortunately they are smart but not too spiny politicians, said, "Whenever will be a peace treaty, in this room will be a chair for Count Teleki with a sign, that this would be Count Teleki, and it will be taken into consideration. Don't worry my dear," there was no chair and there was no sign; it was not taken into consideration.

JF: When there was a lapse in the deportations, the summer of 1944, what is your understanding of Horthy's involvement or, in that?

TB: Yes, he was, although a Protestant, he was absolutely not an belligerent and combatant Protestant. He was a very well-balanced man, and he was in very good relation with the predecessor of Cardinal Mindszenty called Cardinal Justinian Seredi [Justin Cardinal Seredi], and Justinian Seredi talked to Horthy. Of this church matter I can give you fairly good informations. Seredi was on the way to publish an awfully harsh letter in the churches. The letter was printed. The letter was at the post office. And the Nazi spies in the post office broke the packages of the church and read the letter. And rushed both to the Nazis, rushed to Veessenmayer [the German envoy] to everybody, that for heavens sake two days from now, he will deliver them and they will be there next Sunday in the churches. And then they promised everything that the church should not do. And Seredi was in this way, I wouldn't say that he was spineless; he hoped, and what you saw, really it was rarity for awhile, a halt, of all this because for while at least, they kept a part of their promise. And they said, "If we stop so-and-so," but I can say again, that since Horthy had a lot of personal friendship with the Jews, he had a personal experience that Jews are not that dirty Jews and I can say yes, there are some dirty Jews, some dirty Christians, but you cannot



say globally that because some of the persons are not honest, 2, 3, 4, 5, and I can put this on the entire people, except Hungarians: some of us are lousy people, fine, but you cannot say all the Hungarians are lousy; we have all good and bad. But Miklós Horthy's personal experience convinced him that the Jews as Jews globally are not these people what Hitler would like people to believe, and Horthy did not believe it. Horthy did not want to do it. As a matter of fact, what I still cannot prove until now, that some people said that maybe among the relatives of his wife's, there are Jews. But we still do not know, but I can say one thing for sure, that I can say for sure, with a heavy probability, that what Horthy did, he did simply because he was a man of Christian thinking, regardless if his wife had Jewish relatives or not, but I cannot prove. He did not agree with it, period.

JF: So you are saying then that it was Seredi's letter?

TB: Yes, Seredi's letter to be read in all churches on Sunday.

JF: The threat of that letter being read was perhaps what stopped the deportations rather than Horthy's intervention. You think...

TB: Yes, yes. In what percentile I cannot tell you, but try to imagine a country where we are 70, 75 % Catholics. And we were quite a church-respecting people, just like the Polish in Poland. So if in all our Catholic church, on the same Sunday, this letter will be read, it will have a definite amount of influence. But it doesn't, look, Horthy had not too much more influence on Hungarian, maybe a little bit more. Number one, you talk to a man who is interested in politics but is not politician. I cannot say for sure, but what I see from many circumstances, Horthy's influence on politics was a little bit more than the influence on the politics in England of the Queen. So he was rather a figure, a symbol, not so much feared; that's what I see from my experience. In spite of his symbolic figurehood, he had still had a greater influence on politics than the English Queen has in England, but not as much as many people would think, because many things in Hungary were running as the politicians wanted to live, not necessarily as Miklós Horthy wanted. But since most of us were Christians, which means they didn't want anything of the legal system, don't misunderstand, my dear audience, we have an extreme nature in good moods. We sometimes can bless and swear, which is not too nice; we can drink so good, but for extremities, they never were able to find too many Hungarian Nazis. They were never able to find too many Hungarian Communists. In the political things we are not extreme. In mood and temperament, yes, but in political extremities, if Nazis were, due to stupidity or whatever, were real Nazis, it would find, what can I say you, one and one-half percent in Hungary. The only thing that these little insignificant fragment was supported by the entire Nazi machinery. Not vague or strong. Why you think the Communists are strong in Hungary, yes, supported by a country with 250 million population? But if today Russia collapses, I think so that there would be a bloody revenge in Hungary right away. Many of the Communists would hang on the pole of the lamp, I can tell you, I am sure. Because Hungarians are awfully desperate, as we were awfully desperate under the detrimental influence of the Nazis.

JF: What is your understanding of the Arrow Cross?

TB: The Arrow Cross was the parallel of the *Hakenkreuz*, of the swastika. And I can imagine why they had chosen it: because the Hungarians who came from Asia, they were fighting people, soldier people, they always said the Nazis are out there, but I am so sad that these Nazi party call themselves "Hungarys," and of the Hungarian and they represent everything but the Hungarians.

JF: You feel that the Arrow Cross was not representative then of the Hungarians, that it was the Nazi?

TB: As I told you, this will come closer and closer what you are asking me. I who was so much involved in protecting Jews I saw how many Hungarians were hiding Jews, risking their own lives, that you will hear in a few minutes that my first appointment came so, that heroic Hungarian kids, and again you see here in America, they don't believe me that heroic Hungarians kids, some of them inspired by mamas and papas, so you who listen to me try to imagine that I, as the *goy*, I am not in the camp, and you, the American-Jewish father and mother, will say to little Sam, "Sam, can you play near to that camp and if you see in the grass any little papers, pick them up and put them in your pocket, because maybe they were thrown out from the camp with some messages." "Dad and I go to your synagogue, sit down, and look in the face of God, and say him God, 'Would I encourage my child?'" Because some of the Hungarian parents encouraged their children that play near to these transitory Jewish camp, throw so far to the ball that it should fall down very near to the camp and look in the grass, what you find, and let me come back now to say at the end of this little thing, these little papers picked up by six, seven, eight, ten, twelve Hungarian kids were taken home, and the papa or the mama or the uncle took these papers to the apostolic nuncio, to the Swedish Embassy, to the Portugal Embassy, and straightened out the papers and you could read, I don't mind now, "Abraham Cohen, this and this street, I am with the Nazis in the last sixteen days. I guess that this is the first step. They move us out towards Austria. Can you help?" etc. So from these little papers, I got a list from the apostolic nuncio, on which were approximately 46, 48 Jews, with the request that I should go these transitional brick factory, which at this time was not working almost a year, so on the empty grounds of this factory was a very good big fence around it, so this was the transitory Jewish camp.

JF: This was in Budapest?

TB: In Budapest. Yes, in October 1944, that I should go there and try to fish out these Jews and God was so much with me that from 47 or 48 Jews, I found more than 40. I think so, 43 I found, and these Jews, really not only I found them, but I was able to order the Nazis to take them to Sheek [phonetic] and get to Sheek [phonetic] Street No. 12. You will find a certain bookstore, because this was a Jewish house which took care of the different kind of protected Jews, this embassy and that embassy. Maybe it is good if you know not because you can't know it from books, but why should I not tell you; there were five embassies who undertook this heroic job: the Portugal Embassy, the Spanish, the

Swedish, the Swiss, and the Vatican. So we protected Jews when the almighty Nazis were so gracious to us that they allowed that a certain contingent can be protected. In our case it was a very undecent thing, because when I came, when I started to undertake the work, we had orally, and this is the thing, the Nazis and Communists, as much orally as possible because if I see a lot of oral things I can change it, very little in writing. Orally, we had the promise from the Nazis that you can protect 12,000 Jews in 42 apartment houses. And this oral promise, was changed in a few days. I just came back to the *Nunciatura Apostolica*, to the Vatican Embassy in Buda. It was near the old Embassy, the Vatican Embassy to the old royal castle in Buda on the hill, and I was just coming home, and I see, "Sir, sir, Reverend," they called me at this time, "Get fast to the telephone because just the Germans are calling you." The nuncio is speaking to them, and the nuncio's German was very poor. He spoke a Italian and French, Angelo Rota. So we get through another line, and the Germans wanted to talk to me, which didn't happen too often, because usually we were contacted by the Hungarian Nazis, and the Hungarian Nazis were backed by the Germans, but in this time, why I don't know, the Germans talked directly to us, and they said, "Is ready your list of the 3,000 people?", and then I stepped in with my fluent German, and I said to them, "Gentlemen," [can you imagine, I would like to address them, not gentlemen, something else], I said them, "Gentlemen, you make a serious mistake. You promised us that we can protect 12,000 Jews in 42 apartment houses; why are you asking about the list of 3,000?" And there was a diabolic laughter and they said [unclear] unpolite, that "You are crazy, [unclear]." "You are crazy."

*Tape two, side one:*

TB: So we are crazy; we misunderstood them; we are twisting facts because they never allowed us. There was never anything about a question that we can protect 12,000 people in 42 apartment houses, but we can protect 3,000 people in 12 apartment houses. At this time, we number already over 9,000 and we were happy that we still have about [2,500] two-and-a-half thousand or so. Don't ask me now that I remember how many numbers, but I cannot do that. I would be absolutely a liar. I don't know that. But we wrote over 9,000 protective letters called *Schutzpass*, and these letters said that this and this person is under the protection of the Vatican, and we will take care that sooner or later this person will be shipped out of Hungary, which means we had a secret agreement that in case, if these people would be really shipped out of Hungary then those other embassies would have taken over these Jews, because it is obvious in a couple of acres of the Vatican we cannot put God knows so many thousands of Jews to live.

JF: Mr. Baranski, let me back up for a minute. The last you described you were working in an insurance company. I want to get you to the point at which you got involved in...

TB: Called the Danube, *Donan Allgeweine Verischerungsgesellschaft*. It was originally an Austrian insurance company working in Hungary. Since Austrian was occupied by the Nazis in this time, everything was under Hitler, but my intention was not there for to go there; I wanted simply to go to an office and to earn; I would have been able to put aside in good dollar value about \$1,200, \$1,300 after a year, and then I would have started my studies, what I intended in this time to study law.

JF: What changed your mind to go into the priesthood?

TB: Mrs. Fisher, your question is, hits me now much more than you would think, because there happened to me a very extraordinary conversation with someone. And the anniversary of this conversation was yesterday, evening. It was October 1, 1940, in the year when I finished high school, and this conversation changed the entire course of my life. The anniversary of this conversation was just the forty-sixth anniversary yesterday evening. I was very deeply moved, and I addressed the people yesterday, because yesterday I could not think that day about anything else but this conversation which happened to me 46 years ago. Is a very blessed individual who since that time died, and this conversation changed my entire course of my life, and this made me right away to decide that I want to go for priesthood, and I had to wait naturally until next fall, not naturally, I could have done, but usually there are a little bit too square, but those things were bound to academic years, so I had to wait until the next academic year in Fall 1941 starts; so from 1941, just what I gave you, Mrs. Fisher, my curriculum vitae, when you see College of Veszprem and College of Kassa,<sup>2</sup> then you see theological colleges, and I studied one year in Veszprém,

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<sup>2</sup>Pronounced "Kasha"; named Kaschau in German, Košice in Czech.

which is a city in Transdanubia [Dunántúl]. If you look at the map, and you want to find it easily, my dear Americans, look where Hungary is, Transdanubia, the big lake, relatively big lake, Balaton, and near Balaton is Veszprém. I studied there in 1941, '42, and from 4/42 until 4/44, two years in Kassa, which you can find now on the modern map with a Slovak name, Košice, and this is old, ancient Hungarian city, between 700 and 800 years old. It was very ancient nest of our famous revolutionary at the beginning of the 18th Century, Franz Rakosi II [Ferenc Rákóczi II 1676 - 1735] who made a big revolution for quite a few years against Austria. Of course, we are always the hated Hungarians. It is so obvious, so we are full of zeal, but what can we do. Okay, I don't comment on this. So, then I studied in Kassa, and when I came home from Kassa, because the Russians moved in, in War 1944, and between Kassa and Budapest my trip was very risky, coming with three trains and with two cars, and then I crossed a certain area, and the Russians were only six kilometers, not even six miles, from me and they almost captured us, but I was still able to get to Budapest, where I arrived around 20th of October '44, and next morning I started to, what you will hear later, to go to the Apostle Nuncio because of our very dear and good friends, a Jewish family. I just talked to weeks ago with the lady, who is now around 80 or more, and she lives now, I mean the papa died long ago, but the lady lives in California, and her son, whom I protected, whose protection letter people can read in the famous book of Harvey Rosenfeld, *Raoul Wallenberg, Angel of Rescue*. This book is publishing the protection letter of my Jewish stepson because we had an agreement: if his parents would have been killed, I would become the stepfather of this boy, Gabor Szekeres, who is now a doctor of chemistry and doctor of law, and runs in Los Angeles an office of chemical patents, and became a very... The nice thing is that God gave us a chance to protect him and his parents, and relatives of the family, and later on my wife was able to help him and his bride to come. They escaped from Communist-dominated Hungary to Austria, and my wife helped them to assure for them some scholarships here, so they could come here and the wife became a doctor of, medical doctor, and he became a doctor of chemistry due to the help of my wife. It was really providential that God used us in the life of the Jewish family, of the Szekeres family.

JF: Before your opportunity to work in the capacity which we are going to focus on, what happened during your studies for the priesthood? What did you know about what was going on? What was communicated to you through the Church?

TB: We were not, we were theological students for diocese, we were not monks, so this means we were not forbidden either to listen to the radio, or forbidden to read the newspaper, but you see, what many of you can almost not understand, our entire atmosphere, study atmosphere, in these old-fashioned countries was very strict. We didn't even want to go too deep in other things, because we would be distracted, you had no time. If you imagine that in the old-fashioned European country you went six days to school, even Saturday, normally from eight o'clock in the morning to one o'clock. Of course, in a college or university, you know, it is not so, but the six-day school system exists. Yes, and

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since we had so much to study, okay, we read every day, every day, it could have happened a week I had no time due to my, but it was not forbidden. If I went to the lounge or so; we had in every seminary a little place where you could after dinner, we could go for half-an-hour or something, or stay for quarter of an hour or so, depends on what the schedule of the day, and you could go there and play a little ping pong, listen to the radio: so we were still very normal youth, nothing was wrong with us, but we had no time. So I read more and more, I started to see that how now the Nazi serpent wants to eat the prospective victim, and do this and this and this. There came many messages; as I mentioned to you, for me the great stimulus was to see a former classmate, who became almost a friend, and, as I told you, not I was the obstacle, I saw and him he doesn't want to build up to a friendship, and later I found out, because he knew that if I had known he is secretly a Hungarian Volksbund man, then I would have stopped right away, because these traitors I do not want to make friendship. Because otherwise, he was a diligent student, a very good student: I can imagine that his parents would not approve of this. He came from a very nice German-active group in Hungary. He was my classmate in the so-called Jewish *Gymnasium*, but it was mostly Catholics and the rest were Jews.

JF: Did you have knowledge, during the time that you were in your training, of what was happening to the Jewish population in Europe?

TB: No, about the Jews we knew very little, and the reason was because the Hungarian papers had the censorship, what the papers have under Nazism. No, not too much. We knew certain things, but what we knew was rather through Church channels.

JF: What did you find out through Church channels?

TB: No, no, this, yes, we knew now that the pressure is greater and greater, that Hitler's intention which became, I don't know exactly, I would say around '43 it became obvious. It became obvious that Hitler wants to de-judaize the entire Europe. Which means, when you project this, this awful intention to Hungary, his idea was, we got the proper information from Eichmann that the Budapest Jews can be killed in two or three years; no problem.

JF: You were aware then that the plan was extermination?

TB: From around summer or fall of '43.

JF: That was your awareness?

TB: Yeah, and I tell you another thing, since I went in seminary and I was not a monk, I was permitted to be home every summer. Which means, when many of the German soldiers moved through Hungary, several times some of the German soldiers came to me. And again, certain people, those people need each other most of the time who fit with each other. So I met those German soldiers who remained patriots but absolutely not Nazis.

JF: You were talking about Hungarian soldiers who were German.

TB: No, no, no, German soldiers in German uniforms that I had a chance to meet. And they were talking just in the same way, my dear audience, how Tibor Baranski is talking. They understood that, yes. if we do not do something with Communism,

Communism will sweep away the entire world. But they did not approve anything of Hitler's Nazi attitude.

JF: You were aware then by B43 of the existence of the death camps?

TB: At least around, I would say now, with the best conscience I can tell you for sure that I was aware of this between July and September B43, yes. I don't know exactly from which month on, yes, I knew about it, yes.

JF: What was your understanding at that time of the Vatican's stand?

TB: No, at this time, at this time I was too much a seminarian to know that the Vatican's stand, yes, because, one single thing again, let us go back what you should know. We had a very spiny Pope called Pope Pius XI, a very, very strong character. And this gentleman was waiting, I mean for good intention, not for wishy-washiness, was waiting 20 years to study what Communism will do in Russia, because Communism came in Russia to rule in 1917, and the Nazis roughly came in rule in Germany in 1927 [Hitler came to power Jan. 30, 1933], roughly at least, so I can say that the Vatican was waiting 20 years what is in Russia, and about ten years what is Germany. In 1937, March it is sure, at least for the anti-Communist papal Encyclical, maybe the same month, March or April, was '37 [March 19, 1937], Pope Pius XI published a Latin Encyclical, which naturally in a few days is translated in five, six, seven main languages. The title of this is *Divini Redemptoris*, usually the title are the first words of how the Encyclical started. "After the Divine Redeemer", and so on and so. Was the anti-Communist Encyclical; the other was so much against Nazism that the Pope didn't even think it is worth to make it in Latin, so he made it right away in German, "*Mit Brennender Sorge*" [With Burning Sorrow], we are watching with anxious nervousness, with anxious care, what is going on over there, *Brennender Sorge*: with anxious care.

JF: This is 1937?

TB: This is 1937, both Encyclicals are in March, maybe I don't make a too great mistake, March or April. And there the Pope points out what Nazism does. And there for sure because then he has enough information to come out with this, and very soon the Vatican got actively, this is again what always Tibor Baranski wants to emphasize, together with Raoul Wallenberg, that he hate any kind of belief what you put on a shelf. The nicest, the most noble belief is good for nothing if it is on a shelf. If you believe so, arrange your life according to your belief, do something! So the Vatican, as soon as the Pope saw, they tried to effectively do something. I have a very, I would say, and I ask you, my dear audience, even if you have never seen me, don't think that the man is not proud. I have a very serious little pamphlet in typewritten; it's about nineteen page, I don't know, which clarifies, not because I am a Catholic, and, so help me God, only to protect something what is true, so many Jews complain, including the Holocaust Memorial Council the Church did not do its moral duty. And I can say, so help me God, that this accusation is a sad lie. I lived in Italy a year later for half-a-year, I was in connection with the best places. I was motorcycling in the private garden of the Pope, I had very good conscience. I know, not I

was motorcycling, a guy, a priest who is very good, I was sitting in the back seat, I know almost everything in this field. In Italy there were half-a-million Jews; 400,000 of these were protected by the Catholic Church,<sup>3</sup> and this you can take from me black before God, either in monasteries, or in caves or in so and so. Some of the monasteries had special wine caves, and they walled them up and put there a lot of Jews with food and everything. Even for hygienic purposes, there were a special place in this cave where they could go for human needs, and so everything was as much hygienically arranged. We in Hungary, for instance, when I had some of my underground Jews, we had sometimes factories, that a part of a big storage rooms was closed up and walled, and behind that was the Jews.

JF: Was this something that you saw when you were in Italy?

TB: My dear, look, I talked to Italian Jews myself, not only to Church people, who admitted that, yes, it is absolutely true that the Church gave us an unparalleled protection.<sup>1</sup> Now, besides this, besides this you have you have here a first-hand man, because I saw, and this, my dear audience, in what decade you will hear my voice, don't forget, Tibor Baranski had seen letters in the hand of Angelo Rotta, coming both from Vatican offices and at least two, I don't dare to say three, maybe I saw three, handwritten letters from Pope Pius XII to Angelo Rotta, which means though the Pope did not write to everybody, but it seems so they were personally in good relation.

JF: Now this was from Pope Pius XII?

TB: Pope Pius XII, in which he encouraged that we should do the very best what we can do. We have to evaluate ourselves what the situation is, but we should do the very best. So I did not see only letters from the Vatican offices, but I saw from the Pope himself.

JF: Meaning what?

TB: Yes, you protect the Jews as much in every way as you can.

JF: Is this what he said in these letters or did he?

TB: Yes. Yes. Yes.

JF: Or did he write to protect the Jews?

TB: Yes, he wrote Angelo Rotta, that you have to evaluate what is going on, and you do the farthest [farthest] in helping them, in protecting them, and render the best service you can find out under the circumstances, not that the Pope was shy, and this is what I come back now, I say the sentence what I interrupted you, you see, sometimes an old man interrupting myself. I have a paper, the title of this is, "What did Pius, Pope Pius XII do for the persecuted Jews?" And in this I testified two very important things. The number one, that I saw these letters myself. I know what we were asked to do. And that at the end of this paper, and again don't think I am not too proud, at the end of this paper I say, if an apostolic nuncio in Berlin, in Warsaw, in Prague or so did not have people like I was, then the apostolic nuncio was almost powerless, because what we see nowadays, in the old time people were so narrow-minded, you Americans are still so, we send an ambassador to

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<sup>3</sup>According to *Uncertain Refuge: Italy and the Jews*, by Nicola Caracciolo: During World War II, Italy had 50,000 Jews and 8,000 were murdered; 42,000 survived.



China, but they don't speak Chinese. We send an nuncio to Germany, he don't speak German. We send a nuncio to Hungary, he doesn't speak Hungarian; now what the hell can the guy do. If you have a guy like Tibor Baranski, that is very fine; if he has not, what can you do? Angelo Rotta had a nice Italian guide, Monseigneur Perolino, he is still an old priest in the Vatican. He had a nice Hungarian secretary in Bolashka Selecium [phonetic], a guy. These three people, I don't say they did nothing. They did nice diplomatic letters in the Papal Embassy, and telephone calls and this and that, and never ever they came out to me to fight in the first line of the war. They didn't come out with me. What bothers me, a couple years ago, three, four years ago, the Communists went to interview Perolino who is now, how can you say, an honorary title of a Bishop something in Vatican. This guy in his old age is so unfair: "What we did for the Jews." The hell! He should have told, "They are fine, we did some nice diplomatic letters and so on," which is not nothing. But if I would have been he, as you hear from me, my dear audience, I am going to say this, though I don't know for sure, why did he not say, "There is a little clerical guy, I forgot his name, but if you would find this guy somewhere, he could tell you firsthand because he was out with the Jews." Monsignor Perolino is now, as I told you, a big shot in the Vatican, he still did not say that, not really the big job, but this young twenty-two years old guy, who was out in the first line of battle.

JF: What is your feeling about the fact that the Pope, though he might have communicated these orders privately through letters, did not come out as publicly as some people wished he would have?

TB: For instance, let me give you now a realistic example. When Angelo Rotta was later shipped out from Budapest, I don't even know how many of his administrative things existed, maybe they were bombed apart, because later on he had to leave his building due to the bombing of Buda, I don't know how many of them were bombed apart; if they were not, was he permitted to take them with him? You should see there all my reports and so and so, what I wrote to him. How many of these reports exist, how many were snatched away. But among those should have been those two, three, maybe the Pope wrote him four, five, six letters, I think in good conscience I saw at least two of them, something is suspicious, maybe three. Which for me they are so valuable, at this time I did not speak too good Italian, but we were sitting side by side just as I sit now with Mrs. Fisher, not even so, because Angelo was sitting on the same sofa, and reading them to me line by line. It was not too difficult because Italian is near to Latin. But at least I needed some help. Now so I know he translated to me what are indeed the Pope's encouraging him to do, and he smiled at me and he put his hand on my head and said, "Okay, son, I write back that I have here a good helper who does this and this."

JF: As you remember those words, can you repeat them for us in any more detail than you did before?

TB: Yes, look if I would give you this, unquote, a closest summary, the Pope in his two letters, just as well as his Vatican offices, asked us, that we hear from Rome, do

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not see closely what can be done, but he definitely wanted to ask you to render the farrest help what you can do with the Jews; protecting them, supporting them. They definitely, one of the Vatican letters gave a few words about the safe conduct letters, that you continue that work, and as much if possible, there was even, I don't know now, was it the Pope's letter or so, that the only thing what I did not say, what we cannot say, since we are Christians, that the letters went so far almost to express, that unless you run into immorality, they did not encourage me to go and kill a Nazi. But the letters in such a strong linguistic verbiage that whatever, go the farrest, the utmost, what we can do for those Jews. So this I can say before that this is absolutely not true, regardless if the Jew has now a good intention or has a bad intention, the Pope did very much and in my paper, if it will be ever published, for what I said, the paper I wrote three or four years ago, still there is no printing, newspaper, New York Times, magazines, they don't print it, and I had it ready. And in this, beside this statement that you heard from me, is another very important thing. I was together in the prison for a short while with a Hungarian liaison officer. I still don't give out his name because the guy can be still 85 or what he is old, when I don't know for sure somewhere that he died, and then I will use his name, and this liaison officer knew many, many things. Therefore, again, you hear from Tibor Baranski something which has nothing to do with Angelo Rotta, but I think that for some of you, you will get excited. This man had a personal acquaintance, I don't think a friend, but a personal acquaintance, with this German soldier who was ordered to burn the body of Adolf Hitler. Consequently, you hear now from somebody, who has from second-hand through this Hungarian liaison officer, had a direct relation with the soldier who burned the body of Adolf Hitler. This man had a lot of knowledge, what naturally he could not pass until it was dangerous, but from the same person with whom I was in between one and two weeks together in the same prison cell, this man told me another thing, and this is important here now. This comes from Pope Pius XII. Pope Pius XII was for a while so much anti-Nazi, he was all the time anti-Nazi, but he was so, I would say even imprudently, what I would not have done, and I hope not I am a coward, not too bold but not too coward, but I even condemned that the Pope didn't do well, he was for a while involved almost in, for a year, in an active conspiracy with Germans against Hitler, Pope Pius XII. What I would have, look, the only thing here, I don't comment on this more, but let us work on it that my paper should be published, and then you will be able to read it. This, not even Tibor Baranski would have approved, I tell you why, because if you are the Pope of the Church and your personal involvement in this conspiratorial alliance had been discovered, all the Catholic priests would have been executed in Germany, so you cannot have a personal involvement in a conspiracy like that. The Pope stepped out only in about a little bit less than a year, when he saw that the Germans seemed so that they don't dare to carry it out. But I wanted to, this is why I use this, only for this reason, that it's many people think that Pope Pius XII was not involved because he was a coward; not he was not a coward, he was too much bold, in this part I would not have done myself. Because of the Pope, I cannot do it.

JF: Do you think that that involvement in.

TB: Yes.

JF: Than plan.

TB: Yeah.

JF: Kept him from making overt statements against Hitler?

TB: No. No. This you see again in my paper, and as I told you, I wish it should be soon published because you will see in this very important things. Because you see, when I speak my mind, what I do now, I don't dare to come too much down because I want to be very accurate, and if I am not, then I rather say, I don't know. Let me have a little breath to organize it. In this paper, I quote this kind of decent Jews whom you Jew [unclear] you see names and places. And they say themselves, that we the Jews asked the Pope not to be too harsh, because the Nazis take right away revenge on us, not on the Pope. When once the Dutch Bishops were very harsh on the Nazis, right away a couple days later so many priests, so many nuns, so many so and sos were captured. So they told to the Pope, "Dear Holy Father," I quote a little bit in Baranski style, not that they didn't say it this way, "Please don't have a too big mouth because not you who will be put in jail, we will be put in jail. You rather try to chose for yourself a way where you activity will not provoke the Nazis to bigger anger."

JF: Which Jews were these?

TB: Some of them the Dutch Jews, some of them the German Jews. I will quote you, you will see in my paper, you will be very much, the paper is very accurate, it says this and this and so-and-so. Now let me tell you something what you will, my dear audience, like very much. So when I heard, because this is an awful valuable information, when I heard from this liaison officer that Pope Pius was involved in this, to me it was so interesting, I didn't think for a moment the man was not of this moral person, I don't think he lies. So, I was fairly sure that he did not lie, I was sure in this, I, a little bit question in myself, did he get to this information from a real proper source? Many years later, our conversation was, I guess, in the beginning, in the first few months, January or February 1949, in the so called Marco Street Prison in Budapest. And many, many years past, and I was in Rome from the end of November '56 until middle of May '57, and the next information I got to either, I would rather put it in this way, I got the next information between December '56 and February '57 from the Vatican, again from an unnamed source. And the unnamed source told me exactly the same what the liaison officer said. That, yes, Pope Pius XII was for a while, a little bit less than a year, serious actively involved in a conspiracy against Hitler.

JF: Which part of the war do you think this was?

TB: Let me give you this answer, that you can yourself finish the statement; I will send you a copy of this paper and then you can have all the dates properly, because when I write down, I inherited from my mama a lot of German blood, and I don't want to be inaccurate, when you have something for me that it is important, then I don't want to

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navigate somewhere on uncertain waters. Rome gave me the next information. Then I came out the United States. Again a few years passed, and then I almost fainted when I saw a Catholic magazine or something, in which a part of the lecture of an American Catholic priest professor was published, and the lecture, to my greatest amazement, informed me about the same. The only thing, in America I have not so good contacts with the Church as I had in Europe. I really, regardless if this professor died, or did not die, I don't know how old he is now, I would like to know from where the hell did he get this information. In America, not too many people have an access to Vatican informations, but I can say you very interestingly that the first information of this I got from the...

*Tape two, side two:*

So the first information I got from the liaison officer, the second information from the Vatican, and the third one, I don't know exactly now how many years ago, from this Catholic magazine, and I was deeply shocked in a good sense, how come that somebody both had the proper channel to know it, and had the guts to bring it out into the open. What in this entire story for you, my dear audience, is important. We are all human beings. We had about six unproper Popes in 2,000 years. Why do we not, are we not, regardless not that you be listened to the God truth of Christians, I am always sad when I hear about nonproper persons in any religion, in any social contact; it is not good to hear about that people. Why are we not happy that there was once the Church had a Pope and at that time was a fairly nice guy, and absolutely not an inactive man, but several circumstances suggested to come out with certain things and activities in a smarter man, where there is good intention he will not hurt more those who are brothers, who should be saved, and not put people in the ditch, and several Jews asked, and this you will see in my paper when you read, that exactly asked the Vatican. Not to be too harsh because they saw that the Nazis for a while did not imprison the Pope but they did take revenge on the Jews themselves.

JF: Do you know specifically the names of any of these Jews?

TB: By my mind not, but I quoted them because I got these statements from very competent sources, so in my paper you will see names, and I am now really sorry because it would have been very easy to bring one of these papers with me, and read out the fact that Mr. so and so, Dr. so and so from here and here, but this is no problem because this little, I would say conversation, whatever we had here, will be supported by that paper and these two together will make for you a definite plea of sense.

JF: Thank you.

TB: Departing a little bit from this and coming to the other side, in what I do think so you will be interested. Usually the way is this, that the apostolic nuncios in these different countries, Budapest, Warsaw, Prague, in other Nazi-occupied countries, in Latvia, Lithuania and so, in Holland, then you'll get secret instructions, very likely not through the mail, but through personal channels. You will be smuggled some letters, where the Vatican will send them, or sent them already in the past, this information what we got in Budapest. Because, as I told you before, yes, several letters some "officially" from the Vatican office, typewritten, etc. Now these letters reflected exactly the same, maybe a little bit in a cooler diplomatic way than the personal letter from the Pope to the nuncio, so the Vatican was sincerely so involved as an honest Christian should, probably I, mentioned you since we believe that in God we are all children, because our soul is given to each of us individually by God, we do believe if we are honest Christians, then our belief will be not theoretic. Let me go to the next step. I mentioned it already 20 minutes ago when, the efficiency usually of the nuncio depended on his helpers. Since according to the old-fashioned world

including, unfortunately, the Church, nobody thought that a representative of a different country must speak the language of this country, not should but must. Therefore, he had to rely on his helpers. Since the nuncio had almost in every country an Italian secretary, this nice secretary was good for nothing because this secretary usually never spoke Chinese, never spoke Hungarian, never spoke Finnish, never spoke this or that. Some of the European countries, yes, you can expect that the Italian secretary in Holland didn't speak Dutch, in Hungary didn't speak Hungarian, in Poland, didn't speak Polish, and consequently the nuncios had usually a secretary who spoke Italian from this country where they served. So.

JF: This had been your role with.

TB: Our Hungarian secretary beside Angelo Rotta, I mentioned his name before, Reverend Bolashkari [phonetic] he spoke Italian. Yes but the problem in 1944, was, and here I come now to another serious point, now the Christians any denomination, not the Jews, we do not like one virtue and this is called boldness. We talk about it two-and-a-half minutes every year, but not too much. So when it comes to the time that we have to practice boldness, then is a great problem. Usually these secretaries, regardless if he was a Hungarian secretary beside Angelo Rotta, a Polish secretary beside the papal nuncio in Poland, not too many people are bold. So when it comes to the point, we go now to battle line to fight for those Jews, then comes the trouble. The nuncio could have done a much better work from Spring '44, but these two secretaries will not go for this. When I went to the nuncio first, for protection letters to my Jewish friends, number one, he looked at me and he said to me, "Son, it is not so easy to come to me, how did you come here?" and I said, "I had a mouth, I had legs I came here."

JF: How did you come?

TB: As I told, there was a long half a mile line, I don't think too much less, of these poor Jews, and I passed by the line. When the gate was open and somebody came out, I had a very friendly smile to the doorkeeper man there a very nice old gentleman, later we became good friends. Of course, he saw in these days so many priests. Now he saw I have a *soutane* just like an ordinary priest. He did not start to identify me who am I. Maybe I could have been a spy, but he greeted me, friendly, let me go. I stepped into a strange building. I told God if I will turn now to the wrong direction, maybe the right, if they ask who [unclear] That would have been very bad. God was so good to me that I just had chosen spontaneously a good direction. So the guy didn't even think I don't know what was there, and I was approximately on hour or less than one hour in the building, I was in front of the apostolic nuncio. I introduced myself, and I told why I came; I gave him the protection letters: everything was filled out, so he had to sign, I put on the seal, I then went to the other room to get the registration number.

JF: Could you tell us a little bit more about the contact that you had, that you were seeking protection for?

TB: You will right away, but only let me, say the second part. Two days from this time, or one day, I don't even know what was there, and I was approximately on hour or less than one hour in the building, I was in front of the apostolic nuncio. I introduced myself, and I told why I came; I gave him the protection letters: everything was filled out, so he had to sign, I put on the seal, I then went to the other room to get the registration number.

JF: Could you tell us a little bit more about the contact that you had, that you were seeking protection for?

TB: You will right away, but only let me, say the second part. Two days from this time, or one day, I don't even know, I was again there and I got in so easy in the building, I gave him again the other protection letters. And then the nuncio was really shocked how I do it. And his question was, I never will forget: "Tell me, my dear son," he knew that I studied theology, "Tell me, my dear son, could you cheat the Nazis as well as you can cheat me?" I said, "Excellency, you, what you see now is really not true, I do not cheat you." He said, "Yeah, you are right I was not accurate, but you were very smart, you behaved in a very clever way. Are you so flexible, and you are so active, could you do something?" and I said, "What do you mean?" It was about five o'clock afternoon, four-thirty, "What do you mean, Excellency?" "Have you time to have dinner today with me?" Oh boy, a little guy studying theology, and a diplomat from the Vatican! I say, "Of course, I have time." to have dinner with him. "Okay, keep yourself busy in this and that room. We eat around between seven and eight." Of course, this man had a very priestly spirit. He was in his time in about the age that I am now. But he was not in too good health, he had trouble with blood pressure and this and that, so he was not in too good healthy shape. But this man did not know what does mean office hour, he had a priestly spirit he works as long as the need dictates, not what the paper says. And I think so we didn't get earlier to dinner than around eight-thirty. And then he started to talk, and this was the time when he had shown me the list of those 46, or 47 or 48 Jews, I don't know, but more than 45, not 50. "Here are these and these people; according to our information, they are now in a brick factory which is out of work due to the war, and therefore it offers a very good possibility for transitory Jewish camp," and I don't know he says, "You cannot even know how to pronounce the name." I laughed when I saw the name, because it is one of our longest name in Hungary. I say it only for you, my dear audience, the name is [very long, multisyllabic Hungarian] and I said to him, "Excellency, I really believe you cannot pronounce this name." He smiled and he said, "Have you any idea where that is?" I said, "Yeah, when I was a young boy, I played soccer on the ground of this, yes." "Oh." When we talked about this, we started to eat eight-thirty, so it was a little bit after nine when we came to this part. "Are you willing to go for these Jews tomorrow morning?" I said, "No." You should have seen the face, the stupid face, how this man looked at me. "No, no. Then what do you want to do?" "To go now." "Now? This is nine-thirty, or nine-fifteen." I said, "Excellency, did you call for me now that the Jews should tremble here now together, or did you call to me

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that I should do something? I don't give the Nazis time until tomorrow morning: I want to go now." "Okay, okay, then you want to go, do it. I give you right away my little Opel. I said, "Excellency, this car I don't go." Again the funny look. "No? So what do you want?" "You give your Rolls Royce, please, yes." "Why do you need the Rolls Royce?" "Because I go to primitive people. On the road are running hundred and hundred of Opels but not a single Rolls Royce. If I go with your black Rolls Royce, elegant flag, an elegant Hungarian flag, the very elegant sound of the horn, this gives an impression to those primitive nothings and they will be right away..." You should have seen this man! He got up from his seat, he came to me, he put his hand on my head, he mad so and so and so to me, and he said, "*Ich glaube jetzt habe ich denrichtigen Kerl Gefunden.*" I think so I found in this moment a proper guy. So he had the flicker in his eyes, that this is the man he should have had from Spring on. This man will know what to do.

JF: This was what date?

TB: This was, as I said to you, I guess it was between the 21st of October and 23rd of October, as soon as I came home from seminary. Szalasi, the Nazi leader, took over the government by force on 15th of October, two, three, four days later, we left the Seminary of Kassa. I came home, my home didn't even give me time because if even if my home loved me, because my stepmother was really like a mother, so, God bless her, she was my aunt and my godmother and everything together. So she loved me, but she was so anxious, she knew if we are late, then our Jewish friends can be perished [he might mean banished] So when I came home tonight, right away next morning I went to the apostolic nuncio. So I knew definitely that I hurried. And so this was two days later, so I went to the factory, and I had with the factory a damn miserable conversation. That was the first in my life. I am a modest man who [unclear] from a real good home whose entire spirit was polite and so. I went to the border of the language what a theologian may use. But I fixed up those Nazis bitterly at the entrance of the factory, and the entrance was closed by chains, and they didn't want to let me go in. And I said to them, "If you don't let me go in, I order the chauffeur to drive the car into your gate. So the car will get crashed in the gate, and I make a photograph, I send it to the West, and in a couple days it will be published in every country." And how and why, thank the good Lord, they opened the gate; they let me go in.

JF: This were German Nazis?

TB: No, no they were Hungarian.

JF: Hungarian Nazis who were guarding the camp.

TB: Yes, from the Arrow Cross party. And then came the next step. I came, I went in, and right away took my pass to the proper direction. And the Nazis were shocked, because I said that you show me the way, I told them they don't have to show me anything. I went in the proper direction. And they say, "How do you know where to go?" And then Baranski was a bad guy, many times since that time, I said, "That's not your business, I know it and that's enough," and I didn't explain then that when I was 12 years old, I played



soccer in this ground. It's not their business to know that I know some buildings, that the factory this and that was [unclear], and the shocking thing for me was the so-called big oven that the bricks are burnt. That is such a place, at least one and a half, size of one and a half Church, a big place, and they have a funny way of how to put there those bricks and burn them, but, as I said, the factory was closed for about a year or so due to the war, and this big place, with this spacious place, was good to shovel in the Jews. And there, according to my most humble guessing, between one and a half and two and a half thousand Jews in there.

JF: You mean they were keeping the Jews?

TB: Yeah, yeah, in this.

JF: You.

TB: That was a big, fairly dark building, because there were some lights, you know, but, you know, no window because this, they were not there long, they were there maximum for 3 days because this was only a transitional camp, you know.

JF: This was before the deportation?

TB: The Nazis, no, during the deportation.

JF: During the deportation.

TB: They drove the Jews on the road just like cattle. The same a couple weeks later I suffered from the Russians exactly. They don't even keep for us wagons. We are much less valuable than that. The wagons are for more important things, not for us. So the Jews had to go on feet from Budapest at least to the Austrian border, and they were wagoned in and shipped somewhere, or maybe even Austria, they walked a couple more miles and then they got into the wagon. Don't think they'd spend wagons for us. That's too valuable. It cost a lot of money. They had to go and, of course, meaning or food and meaning of this and that, when I went into this big, spacious, dark place with very little flickering lights and so, and dim lights, then one of the first person who was lucky enough to be near to the entrance was a lady, I just said, show me Mrs. Fisher, picture in the magazine, whom I know because her older sister was a friend of my stepmother's, so I met this lady first when I was a young scout in 1936, and my scout camp was near to the [unclear]. In American measurement it was nothing, in Europe it was 30 kilometers is a log, but in American measurement nothing. So they lived 30 kilometers from the place where my scout camp was. And I got permission from my scoutmaster in 1936 to see these people. I knew only the older daughter, who worked in Budapest. And then I met first in my life the younger sister and her mother and her father. I had no idea in 1936 that eight years later I will protect the same people in the papal houses, and her younger sister was an awfully pretty Jewish girl, and in spite of it I was at this time only 14, and she was about 23 or so, but I knew enough what is a pretty girl. I looked at this nice pretty girl, and had I ever idea that this pretty girl I will protect, I will meet her in the factory, and she will look like a skeleton! And she steps near to me, and as you say for Joseph: "Joe" and so, when you say Tibor in a little bit milder way you say "Tibby." And she whispers, "Tibby." So

she comes near to me and whispers “Tibby,” that’s me, you know what I had to say to her, later on a couple weeks later, I give her a big kiss, I said to her, “You are an idiot. Shut up! If the Nazis hear that you and me are in “Tibby relation, then you will not come out from there and I will not come out from there. For heavens sake, be a little bit smart.” I had to be there the official guard, and so I was so lucky that I found, as you heard, my third time, my same statement, I found approximately 43 people out of 46 or 47, something, so I was more than lucky. And don’t ask me how I did it. I think so this was exactly the grace of God.

JF: Did you literally look thru these masses of people or did they have a list and call out names?

TB: No, no.

JF: Or how did you do it?

TB: Mrs. Fisher, if you would hear my voice when I want to shout, and I am so sorry yesterday that you didn’t hear my voice well enough in this hall, but, you see, if somebody would have given me first a chance to make an attempt and, “Can you hear my voice in the last row?” because I don’t know. I have a voice that everybody heard me in the immense big room, and I shouted. I said, “Now everybody get up and listen, and I tell you right away what kind of names I am looking for.” So I called them by name, where I had an address, I mentioned the address, and as I told, I was shocked by the good result, that I found so many people. And then I made the Nazis to segregate them in a little building, and I said them, “Tomorrow morning between eight and nine they will be in this so-called distribution Jewish house, you hear from me before, in Sheep [?] Street No.12.” And I told “If you Nazis will not do it, after nine o’clock Angelo Rotta will call up *Szalasi*, your leader, and say to him what lousy people you are.”

JF: The Nazis were to deliver them to this house?

TB: Yes. They didn’t even need my escort. They did it for me. They were so much afraid.

JF: How did you get the names of those specific people?

TB: This is, my sweet lady, what I said before, that the Hungarian Christian kids were playing, exactly beside the fence of the factory.

JF: And these were the names.

TB: The Jews had thrown out, a little paper it was, you know, a folded little paper, in very little small balls, somebody would throw it out. And the Nazi guards were mainly around the entrance: they didn’t think so much when six or twelve or fifteen kids are playing soccer, the Hungarians we know, we call the soccer “football,” and we are crazy soccer players, we do it when we are nine, ten years old, so we play. And they were willingly kicking the ball so near to the fence of the factory that they can look into the grass to see if any of these little paper things are found.

JF: This was a planned soccer game then?

TB: They played other times, too, yes. But then they were warned by parents to do so, and this is why I said to you that, try to imagine that sometimes, some, I don't say that they are bad intentions but sometime some of the desperate Jews or too subjective the Jews say, "We got never any help." So help me God, this was the beginning of my mission, this was the first list I got, so I started to help the Jews.

JF: Were these parents, that asked their sons to find the notes, requested to so by the papal nuncio, or was this just a simultaneous movement on the part of the Hungarians?

TB: Mrs. Fisher, so help me God, there was no, the nuncio was not in contact.

JF: Okay.

TB: They were very simple people. Maybe one papa was an engineer, but most of them were simple workers, very simple people.

JF: And these were collected and taken to the papal nuncio?

TB: Look, it is so bad, I wish I could show you some pictures and talk beside it. Now little Joe finds two of these papers, puts them in his pocket. Stevie finds only one. Andrew doesn't find a single one. Michael finds five. And they are late, "Ok, we go and eat our dinner," or something, and they go away. But the Nazis don't see that in their little pocket they have some of this. Then they go home, and then they are straightened out. They usually were smuggled: the two best places were either the papal nuncio or the sheep [?] street 12 and then they decided that this guy had up to the present moment no protective letter from anywhere. This guy had a protective letter, but the Nazis destroyed it and have thrown him back into the death march of the Jews. So this was the way how we got these names. And the nuncio had nobody who can go there and look after them. As I told you before, his three secretaries were not good for that. The Italian guy cannot talk to the Hungarians, and the Hungarian guy had probably not the guts and not the spine and not the boldness. I don't say this is bad. The only thing, for your future, you don't know anything about danger you are from communism. If you educate here only cowards, and there is only one boldness, how can I make open sex with a woman on the street, that's boldness. No, developing let's have another boldness. If you develop another boldness, and when your neighbor will be really in danger, or somebody will be attacked in the subway in New York, then you will not be afraid to go and kick down the gangster. This is what I call, it is my word, Christian boldness, or if you want to say, Judeo-Christian heritage, but this is the boldness that God wants.

JF: What followed this instance of your being able to save these 43 Jews? What followed?

TB: Next morning, of course, I am home. My friend who lived exactly next door to me had a telephone, and this time we had not too many telephones, and from this telephone I called up the nuncio, and I said, "Excellency, in a few minutes your car will be back," and beside the chauffeur was a young student who studied diplomacy. These two people came with me: they didn't step out of the car. I said, "Be there; if the Nazis do not

let me come out, at least you can give a message.” But I called up the nuncio, I said, because his car took me home and then went back to the building of the *Nunciatura Apostolica*. And then I called right away, and I said, “Excellency, between five and ten minutes the car will be home, and I want you to report to you that, except two or three persons, I found everybody, and they are at the present moment segregated, and they will be tomorrow morning at nine o’clock I Sheet Street 12 [spelling], and I ask you only, do you want me anything else?” And he said, “I want you please come up tomorrow morning to me,” so right away I started to get a next appointment. We had a lot of Jews who are crossing the Austro-Hungarian border almost day by day. The next group, next group, next group. “Go there and help us to brush up these groups.” Because they, Father Kohler from the Order of St. Vincent De Paul, [unclear] a lot because they do a lot of charity organizations, St. Vincent De Paul. He was a French priest a couple hundred years ago, and he was a fantastic man. I can really say, he was actually one of the greatest guy in Catholic charities. This man was excellent, and he founded a man order for that, for the poor people, and founded the nuns with the big hats, white hats, so this was, one was the male order, one female. So Father Kohler was a man from St. Vincent’s order, but he was not too old, I guess he was in about an age as I am now or so, but he was, there was a lousy fall, [unclear] in his stomach and [unclear] so early and he was ill with pneumonia, he was in pretty bad shape, and the nuncio told me, could you go up there and take over the work from Father Kohler. By the way his nephew is a priest and still now my very good friend, Father Gurlai [phonetic], a priest in Hungary, and was eight or nine years in Russian captivity. So with some people we have still a good relation. So I rushed up there, and then I started to brush up the groups and what you heard from me near the beginning of my speech, this was the place in Hegyesalom, that’s a little town near to the border of Austria-Hungary, where I met that old Kalinski couple, who said to me that, “Reverend, we have the only son, Joe Kalinski, we didn’t become Catholics and so and so, but since we feel on you that you are concerned in people, if you see him anywhere, could you help.” and then they opened a little university lecture booklet. We have a booklet with our own personal picture, and every year, his semester, this subject, and signature, and next page this semester, this subject.

JF: This was your classmate?

TB: And he was sitting three or four desks in front of me. And I say Joe’s parents. I didn’t say to them, they didn’t remember, but I was two or three times in their umbrella shop, but “What the hell do you want?” you are 13 or 14 years old, and now I am 22 years old, young guy who looks like a priest: I didn’t explain to them. But you never forget, and this was the place when then I brought with me some *bianco* or protective letters, those protective letters for the Nazis, destroyed and the person was able to identify himself I could make a mistake that maybe you, Mrs. Fisher, gave me the daughter of your sister, because I have a picture. But if you said my name is this and this, and my birth date is this and this, I said okay. You have no protection letter: no it was destroyed. Okay, you

have here a duplicate I filled out one, I had the serial number and everything, I made the serial number that the original had this. I put on this 506 per E. This means that two, 506 original one was destroyed, and the E means only that the previous one was destroyed, and this is now only the legal duplicate. Due to this activity on the second day, the *Gestapo* came the German secret police, it can kill me.

JF: What happened?

TB: I got a room in the priest, at the rectory, and, you see, this is again when sometimes you are too happy and you destroy your own future. Some of those free Jews who were happy that I gave them the protection letters, they started to talk about the little priest who came for, everybody thought I was already a priest, the little priest who came from the nuncio has a lot of *bianco* letters. What was in the mind of an average man, the *bianco* letter can be only some forgery. Not because there was any problem, why should we not forge them when the Nazis are illegal, but it was not even in this case, was absolutely legal. The Nazis heard that I had *bianco* letters, what I can fill out. They came to the rectory, the funny thing was when they came in, I know there was an entrance, and I was sitting around the desk like this on the side, there was a round desk over there, and the rector and his chaplain, but they went right away to the chaplain, which means that the impression was that the chaplain is me. And I let them talk to the chaplain; I did not correct them, you see. I thought only that in the moment when they would say to the chaplain, "Now you come with us," then I will say, "Gentlemen, one second, you made a mistake, Baranski is not he but me." Since the chaplain was not involved in my work, they had only a total confidence, I said, "You come from the nuncio, please." The chaplain did not want to believe that I have *biancos*, because to his little [unclear] or experience, what idea he has what about this. Okay, the Germans did not understand him too well, and the chaplain over there, although he was on the Austro-Hungarian border, but he was not from this area, so he did not speak German. They had a Hungarian Nazi make a translation. And the Hungarian Nazi's German was very poor, and he made a rather stupid translation. So in spite that I was little bit anxious when they will shoot me, because I knew that when they would take him, I would not allow it. The translations were horrible, and they drew me several times to laughter almost, because he translated so stupid. The Germans were not interested in even listening too much to him, they listened to the eyes of the chaplain, and I saw that subjectively the chaplain told the truth: he didn't lie. So after about one hour, very miserable interview, the rectory was occupied, there were about eight Gestapo people with guns. And then finally the Gestapo leader, I don't know what kind of officer rank, said, "Okay you damn traitors and so and so..."

*Tape three, side one:*

TB: "Maybe you damn traitors, in this instance maybe you don't lie, okay, but we shall still investigate, and if we find anything, within a day we return and somebody will be after you, you can be sure!" They jumped up and walked out the building. I had still with me about three or four *biancos*. The fire was burning in the stove; I took the three *biancos*, and there had thrown it in the stove. The chaplain and the rector looks at me, "Our dear brother, what did you put in the stove?" I said, "Three biancos." I still think so that this poor old priest almost died. Then I said to him, "Reverend, I thank you for the nice testimony, but can I explain to you now that we can't have three *biancos* without cheating," and then I explained to him the procedure. Of course, he was so nice, he said, "You are right brother, I didn't think." So I want to tell you only, hide the man with the big mouth, I want to warn you sometimes, don't have a too big mouth, at least have control over yourself when you say something, that who hears what you say. Because those [unclear] Jews that were happy to get from me the *biancos*, they thought probably so that the Nazis heard about this conversation, and this almost brought over me. I assure you, if the Nazis would have found me guilty, I don't give you fifteen minutes, I would have been in one of the neighboring forests with a little hole in my head, and, you know, that would be enough. They would have found my body, they would have sent it with a grave reverence to Budapest, they would have sent a letter to the nuncio: "You see, those damn Jews killed this sweet priest who helped them." So they would not even let me [unclear] they would have said the Jews killed me. They would be so gracious and say that they found my body. You have no idea, can you keep, my Americans, in your mind, Nazism and Communism is exactly the same. Nazism was the vehicle of Pan-Germanism, and Communism is the vehicle of Pan-Russianism or Pan-Slavism, but morally either is inhuman, totalitarian dictatorship. Please believe me, I don't say it because I am a mad anticommunist, I say it because I studied it, and I experienced it.

JF: Were you not also in danger just by appearing at the camp?

TB: Not in the camp. Later on, when I had, as I told you before, that I had to change, we had to change, we passed out over 9,000 protection letters, and you are sure you can pass out almost 3,000 more, as I told you, the oral promise was, or agreement, that we can protect 12,000 Jews in 42 apartment houses, which were reduced, later on, 3,000 Jews in 12 apartment houses.

JF: This was just the Vatican?

TB: Yes, everybody had a different contingent. The reason why ours was so small because the Nazi reply was always, how the hell can you protect so many Jews, you have no place in the Vatican. So even legally, the Nazis are legal, there was a greater contingent for Sweden and for Switzerland and for Spain and for Portugal.

JF: So that while, when you went to the camp, you were under that [unclear].

TB: In that time when I went, either to these transitory camps or I went up to Hegyeshalom, to the Austro-Hungarian border, then we still shoveled those Jews into the 42 houses were in different parts. Most of them because there was a so-called Jewish ghetto in Budapest, a district where more Jews were than some less, so many of the 42 houses were in this area. There you have a beautiful Arabic-style Jewish synagogue, very nice, there is a big synagogue in Budapest, pretty oriental building, very, very nice. In the Dohany Street, so it is a beautiful synagogue, and most of the Jews were living in the Seventh District of Budapest, most of them, but of course, here and here. And many of those 42 houses were in this area. You see again, when you ask me, Americans, what do you mean now? The Nazis are dictators. They can say to a Christian, "Out of your apartment! I need it now for the Jews." And you have nothing to say, you move out from your apartment, you leave there your furniture, and the new apartment, to move with your family, five Jewish families will be shoved in there. Now, when the Nazis finally, what you heard from me about an hour ago, devilishly said, "No, you can protect not 12,000 Jews in 42 apartment houses, but only 3,000 Jews in 12 apartment houses," that we had to renumber and redo all our protection letters. And this was one of my worst missions, when I came home from Hegyeshalom, and the nuncio said to me, that I have been now the Angel of Death and go through all the 42 houses and announce to those sweet Jews that, "My dear brother, you filled out these papers in vain; from this moment on, it is not valid any longer." I tell you honestly, it took me about one-and-a-half days to do this. I came home, and I cried like a hysterical woman. Because it was terrible to see those faces. This was one of my eight or ten most shocking experiences in my life.

JF: How many Jews did you have to tell that to?

TB: Since, as I told you, we had over 9,000, and I had to reduce it to 3,000. Consequently, can you imagine I said that "look, you come here now right away and you give me," it was very fast, because I let them know at the houses that I come, and I said, "Give me, make me right away an alphabetical list until I come to you with all your names." And then I had my chart, and I said, "I go now through names and you listen to me, and whose name will be not mentioned, these person has no more protection from us."

JF: How could you make those decisions?

TB: In, look, since the Nazis said to us that we can protect those people who are Catholics, we tried at least to be, one thing even the Nazi accepted, it was very interesting, because they said that this you don't give up, you are now a Catholic, but your husband is not. Then you do not break the family, the Nazis had to agree on this, that I do not break up husband and wife. So in this case, the husband was Catholic, you were Catholic, the other spouse was definitely protected. It was not allowed to split. We tried.

JF: So mixed marriages were.

TB: We tried to protect at least those people who were Catholics from the 1920s and 1930s, not Catholics in 1944. But at least if somebody became a Catholic long, long ago, not only because he was persecuted.

JF: All right, so that the first people were converts.

TB: Who long ago, because this was the only way the Nazis allowed this the apostolic nuncio [you] had a right on on other ground, only to protect those Jews who are Catholic.

JF: You were not then allowed to protect Jews who either had not converted or were not.

TB: Or their spouses. No. No. This was out of question. But many Jews were only formally baptized who really did not want to become Christians, but they said, I have the paper, at least I will be. Many of them were not even baptized, got a false baptismal certificate.

JF: Can you tell me more about the false baptismal certificates?

TB: No, because I know priests who did it, but I was not, Mrs. Fisher, I could not have even time to sometimes sleep and eat, I had not time to be, I knew only that some priests later on said, why should I spoil and destroy my own sacrament, I don't give to them, I don't need for them, not even formally baptize them, I give them only a false paper that you are baptized people.

JF: And you did.

TB: Because I believe in my religion, I could not, why should I do this, spoil my own sacrament, I believe in that. Okay, I want to save these Jews, okay, I need a false paper that he is baptized, but he is not really, but the Germans have to make the church activity for them. Okay, we gave them a little catechism to learn, a little bit something so if the Nazi would examine you, you can answer these, at least the 20 most important questions that is.

JF: Were you also signing these false baptism certificates?

TB: No. No. No.

JF: You couldn't because you were not ordained?

TB: Of course, yes. Not only because I had no access to these, I was not with the rectory, because the rectories had all these, that's again an administrative machinery.

JF: So these 9,000, or these 6,000 of the people that you had to tell that you couldn't protect.

TB: Now. Now comes something that was, what happens.

TB: I, after this one, one-and-a-half day, so I started in the morning and the next afternoon I finished, within two and four o'clock, I don't know, and then went back to the nuncio. And I said to him, "Excellency, you didn't instruct me about something: I decided for myself." At this time the guy liked me very much, he said, "Tibor, whatever have you decided?" I said, "You are my boss, sit down and listen." "What did you do and what did you not do?" I said, "I told them that the protection letter is not valid any more. But one thing I forgot to do." "What did you forget?" "I didn't collect them. I let the protection letter with them because many Nazis are ignorant. Number one, the Nazis are fundamentally illegal, so even if you cheat them, you don't cheat, because a gangster and



robber you cannot cheat. You have right to your life, not the gangster has a right to your life, so the entire moral and legal standpoint is totally wrong. You cannot cheat a gangster. You cannot cheat a Nazi or a communist, because the Nazi and the communist are the gangsters, not I am the gangster.” So this is the basic point how I approached to this incident. Consequently, this Jew, by the law of God and by the law of the Nazi, got legally his protection letter. The Nazi decided, from one moment to the other, that this protection letter is not valid any longer. [unclear] absolutely nothing, so let us have him the protection letter, many of the little Nazis have no idea about this changing rules, and this can happen with the Jews. I want to see you all ready, because maybe we can come to you tomorrow, maybe not, there are still a few minutes, to know right away now, I can die between now and tomorrow, I want you to know right away now that almost all Jews of Budapest remained alive. Because Hitler’s decision, very likely on Eichmann’s report, was, the most important thing that we should get those damn Jews in rural areas because they can hide. So I would say the Jews in rural areas were exterminated, I hate percentages, my impression is around 90% so those Jews, I give you a good fact why I think this, again as I told you before that how many Jews I have underground, now I give you another thing, the reason why. I had a Catholic theologian professor who was a saint, Dr. Arnos Pataki [phonetic]. He was loved even by the Jews, so he was a real holy man. Two or three Jewish synagogues brought to him their holy scriptures. You know in Europe, they have a single chest, what we have here the children’s<sup>4</sup> toy chest, but this chest is beautiful, elaborated gold and so, so the Torah and this and that go in the chest, and the asked Dr. Pataki, “Dear professor, some of the people from our synagogue know that you are you, so when we come back, save it for a while. We hope some of us come back.” And I was, he taught me New Testament, but he read Old Testament just like a Jew. We were only able to read punctuated texts. Professor Islich [phonetic] and Professor Pataki [phonetic], I mention these two people were so good Catholic Jews they were able to read unpunctuated texts. They were very good, and in 1947, when I was in the home, when the professor was in feeble health, and I made my order like I am using his home, the chest was still there in B47 and no Jew came to claim it. Which means that between B45 and B47 anybody who would have remained alive from these rural synagogues they would have come. Many other people from where I got information, overwhelmingly those Jews in rural areas were exterminated. When the northern part of Transylvania for a few years returned to Hungary along with this northern Transylvania, you can look into statistics, I never liked to say numbers because in numbers Tibor Baranski is not good, don’t trust me too much the numbers unless I read them from data, I think so I gave, I am not too far from the truth when I say that Hungary this northern part of Transylvania, with some parts, the southern part of Czechoslovakia is northern part of Yugoslavia, these sections returned for a while to Hungary, due to our allyship with Hitler, and these territories along with the old Hungary together we had between 700,000 to 900,000 Jews, a fairly great Jewish community. And

my close guessing is, again I don't like to say numbers, please check it somewhere else, my close guessing is that from these amount of Jews, maximum 300,000 remained alive, so I think about a half a million of them were exterminated, and Professor Pataki then had these holy books and so, and nobody came to claim two years later. So again, because you see sometimes a man says something, and he cannot substantiate what he says. I always like to give substantiation to my statement that you should not think, "Okay, he's an old man, he doesn't want to lie." But who knows after so many years? I have still very clear visions what happened and why happened.

[This is a continuation of the interview with Mr. Tibor Baranski on October 3, 1986.]

JF: Mr. Baranski, when we were talking yesterday, you were describing limitations that you were under in handing out these passes that protected Jews to those who were either converts or married to Catholics. Could you clarify for me please? Exactly who gave the order to Rotta or to you as to whom you could save?

TB: The original intention of the Holy See, not only theoretically, but actively, was to free as many Jews regardless of religious denominations, which means if they remained in Jewish religion or they became Catholic, that was regardless. The Holy See wanted anywhere the Church representatives in any country to save as many Jews as Jews, regardless [unclear] possible. The greatest evidence of this was, the western world can easily check at any moment, go to Italy now, get in touch with competent and moderately competent church leaders of higher or smaller rank, in Italy itself there were in 1943, '44, approximately half a million Jews, four fifths of them,<sup>5</sup> that four fifths of them, that means around 400,000, were saved by church institutions, rectories, monasteries, and other church institutions. If this isn't evidence both from church side and from Italian Jews. So I lived as a Hungarian refugee half a year in Rome. I crossed Italy as a public anti-communist speaker, and delivered many, many, many anti-communist speeches in Italy between December '56 and May '57. I was interested since I met in Italy, Angelo Rotta, my former boss, who in this time was already retired in the Vatican. I met him quite a few times, I was there to say, between 10 and 20 times I met with him. I visited him in his own apartment four, five, six times, so I can say I was definitely interested, and when I heard information from him how it was in Italy, I contacted people, so my statements you could take a hundred persons value. I switched now back, please to Hungary. In regard to Hungary, the Pope's intention was that we should save as many Jews again, regardless of what religion. I mean if they remain Jewish in religion or they became baptized or so. What you, my listener, whatever you hear in the 1980s or after 2000 AD, I don't mind when you will listen to my speech, but it is important; Angelo Rotta the apostolic nuncio of Hungary did not save

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<sup>5</sup>Italy had 50,000 Jews total - 8,000 were killed, 40,000 survived from *Uncertain Refuge: Italy and the Jews during the Holocaust* by Nicola Caracciolo.

predominantly Jews who were Catholic because we wanted so, but because the Nazis did not give us permission on any other ground. They said, "You have no reason to protect other Jews, only those who are Catholics," and they cynically said, "Even those are too much for you, because the Vatican exists only a couple of square miles or something, or even less. Where the hell would the Pope put all those Jews in this little territory of the Vatican?" Of course, to you as my listeners, I have to inform you we had some secret agreements already with Spain, with Sweden, Switzerland, Portugal, that in case if the Nazis would have won the war, unless the Nazis in spite of all the promises would have killed the Jews, maybe they would have not done so, we can never know, what the Nazi or the Communists are or what he promises, and what will be the action, but if the Jews would have remained alive and the Nazis would have been so gracious in case of victory to allow us to give a real lifetime protection for them, then they would have been shipped out from Hungary, an x amount of the papal Jews would have been taken over by Spain, Portugal and so and so, naturally the Nazi argument in his own cynicism was right, and this couple little territory, a couple miles or so, or a couple acres, there is no room for people, so, of course, they right away knew that something is phony according to their mind, how can we put those many people. If we had x amount of Jews protected in Hungary for the Vatican, x amount Jews protected in Poland, in Warsaw, for the Vatican, I cannot tell you, I have, I am very competent in my field, my dear listener, but not in European measurement, I don't know how much the Nazis in Warsaw were able to destroy those Jews, or still were inefficient because maybe the Polish residents, and I want to tell you that don't think that the Poles are people that are equal to anti-Semites. I know myself quite a few Poles whose parents and relatives saved a lot of Jews, so, please, believe me, I understand, and I say this meaning to those listeners who are of Jewish origin, some desperacy brings out of you some stupid statements. Will you be sweet and nice and honest enough if I never allowed, generalize again, the Jews, will you a little bit hold back and you don't generalize against the Poles. A generalization is always murderous. It is not wise, don't do it.

JF: You were saying before that the Jews that you were hiding underground were not all designated then as converts or from mixed marriages?

TB: No, this I can tell you with very good conscience I am almost positive, you see again, I'm very cautious when I say something, I am almost positive that most of the Jews my underground organizations protected, most of them were not Catholic Jews, had not even a false baptism letter, nothing. We protected our brothers and sisters in God. Period. I didn't mind. As you heard previously how my guessing is that I very likely protected somewhere between 5,000 and 8,000 Jews underground. My reason because I had this guessing from the food portion if I knew that so much and so much food is needed for my 3,000 Jews, and I got usually either the double request and more than double, then I had to suspect that underground I had at least around 6,000 Jews. From this underground, once will know when we die, maybe God lets us know how what was the real number, one segment I can tell you with absolute assurance, and if you contact the Grey Sisters in

Buffalo, New York, they will tell you. Sister Natalie who is still, I guess somewhere around 65 or something, is alive and very good mental shape, and she was the main helper of the founder and I would say, almost a living saint. A couple years ago died, Margaret Schlachter, the founder of the Gray Sisters, and she has, she is declared the Righteous Gentile, and she was awarded after her death, not in her lifetime, her organization can tell you through Sister Natalie the truth, they are responsible for approximately 1,000 Jewish lives in spite of all their modesty as sisters, nuns, they were so tough the Nazis became so mad at the constant and successful work of those sisters that one of them was executed.

JF: Do you have any knowledge of what was going on in areas that were not in Budapest, or perhaps other areas in Budapest that were not under the control or under the direct guidance of the papal nuncio? Were they also helping in this regard, or was there a difference, depending on which parish, which priest was involved?

TB: The first thing, and thank you for that question, as I told you, those priests and parishes and believers in rural areas were very likely less efficient than we were. The reason was not in spirit, the reason was on the promptness of the Nazis, before the rural area Jews waked up, or the residents waked up, the Jews were already caught. Remember what I said, I don't know, two hours ago, I don't know exactly, that due to Eichmann's suggestion, Hitler's idea was that those Jews in Budapest, never mind that they are many, but Budapest can be surrounded easily and they can be annihilated. The Jews can hide in rural areas, so the first thing is, let us collect them fast because they can hide, and unfortunately this effort of the Nazis was in high person (large numbers) successful. So before local parish priests and Hungarian villagers could have done something, the Jews were already gone.

JF: Do you think that the local parish priests were also sent letters from the Vatican asking them to help? Or wasn't there time for that?

TB: No. My dear lady, and my listeners, you have no idea how difficult was the correspondence. If you will read Harvey Rosenfeld's book,<sup>6</sup> the only thing I don't know why because Harvey is an awfully conscientious person. He is alive and I suspect extremely due to his zeal, due to his professionalism, due to his conscience, corresponded half of the world, he traveled and everything so I would say his book is, according to my conscience, I don't know we have now about 12 or 13 or how many Wallenberg books. His book is among the best two or three books on Wallenberg, and I say this with my best conscience, but please be caution in this, usually when we protected the Jews, we did it mainly on our own Christian conscience. In this time the correspondence between the Vatican and other countries, the Nazi dominated countries, was extremely difficult. The correspondence still was easier than Harvey Rosenfeld described because we had some underground people who passed the borders. One thing was, you would not even believe here, several people were pseudo-Nazis and pseudo-Hungarian Nazis who had worked on paper, members of the Arrow Cross party, but they were now on our side and they were now our liaison people

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<sup>6</sup>*Raoul Wallenberg: Angel of Peace* by Harvey Rosenfeld, Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1982.

slipping through the border. Please do not forget that when you work underground you have to be shrewd. If you are not, you cannot succeed.

JF: When you mention the underground, are you talking about an involvement with the Hungarian underground as whole, or with a church underground?

TB: Yes, in my case, I, due to the shortage of time, I was not in connection at least maybe some members in both undergrounds, but to my knowledge I had no time to be in connection with the so-called political or war underground to fight the Nazis. I simply had no time. I was predominantly with this underground in connection to save Jews, but I am pretty sure that several people of them were the members of both undergrounds, which means they had guns too and sometimes shot some of the Nazis, too, or later on, when the Communists came in, but my predominant concern and knowledge goes to those who were in the protective movement of the Jews I had not even, try to imagine, my dear listener, that my function in this direction was for about two months. I started around the 22nd, 23rd of October, and my last day I saw the Jews in the so-called International Quarter, that was, you can read in Harvey Rosenfeld's book, if you take a map of Budapest and you see where that San Margaret Island is, from the right side is Pest and the left side is Buda, and on the right side from Margaret Island, exactly where Margaret Bridge comes down to (Pest), north from that a couple blocks 10, 12 blocks was the so-called International Quarter. This was where these five embassies had their apartment houses, where the so-called legally protected Jews were shoveled in. Which means in this case, my dear audience, you would be shocked to hear, the dictatorial system whether Brown or Red can do it, and they ordered out the Christians from their own home, never mind, and they said this and this and this apartment house we need for the Jews, finished! And you get out! You can leave there your furniture, everything, and maybe in an apartment which was geared for one family, they shoveled in five, six, seven Jewish families. How they would survive, that is not the Nazi concern.

JF: Can you give us some details about your work in the committee that you have referred to, and your position?

TB: You mean the United States Holocaust Memorial Council?

JF: No, the committee in Budapest which you chaired?

TB: Yes. As the need dictated, of course, we were permanently in contact with each other, we the executive secretaries of Switzerland, of Spain, of Portugal, of the Vatican, we permanently were in contact with each other by telephone. As far as I can recall, we had approximately from the beginning of my work, which means around 23rd of October 1944 until 24th of December, we had about five or six meetings.

JF: Was the Red Cross involved?

TB: The Red Cross was involved.

JF: They had a separate representative?

TB: Yes, they had. And you see, let me first answer to this, we usually meet at the meeting in a different place in order to avoid that the Nazis were able to find out. They

*TIBOR BARANSKI [3-1-44]*

never knew where the meeting was. It happened once we had in a library, in a big apartment or so, it depended so because we decided...

*Tape three, side two:*

TB: Let me continue now. I just talked about, Mrs. Fisher asked me how these representatives of the embassies, the special, I call us, this goes in English, Executive Secretaries of the Jewish Protection. How did we meet? If we had the personal meetings, that means we had so many problems to discuss it would be inconvenient by telephone. Then we called up each other between one and three o'clock in the afternoon, and we decided that around five-thirty or six we had a meeting here or there, usually in different spots so the Nazis should not be able to find out, and even for the different spots we had very good words, so sometimes we didn't name the places in their own names, we used if somebody would have listened, he wouldn't have known. So maybe now in the library, we had a so-called English library in Budapest, which at this time I mention was not English library any longer but still a little place of intellectuals, and so we met there, or we met in a fairly large apartment. For you, my dear listeners, it is moderately interesting but still I think there is some interest to know that as well as Raoul Wallenberg, so Tibor Baranski will not actually plunge into something because our God-given conscience forced us to do so. Now, at least Raoul Wallenberg worked in this field from July 1944 so he got a little experience. Tibor Baranski, the person who talks to you, had no experience. He came out from a seminary and from one day to the other he plunged in the middle of this. I think so that the first meeting I was present was either the very last days of October or very first days of November, so I guess somewhere between October 27 and November 3 or 4 was the first meeting where I was there, and I will never forget, I just told my boss that yes we have now a telephone, so and so, it would be very advisable if people would meet. I tell you so honestly, these little details of everything, I cannot tell you because I am much more honest. After 42 years, it is not so easy to remember all the details, so, at any rate, [unclear] I go there, and I went, I arrived, I don't know 15, 20 minutes earlier before the official start, and when I saw the time was near, I wanted to sit down somewhere around this long, elegant table. And a representative of the Portuguese told me that, "Reverend for a second you have to sit at the chief place." I looked at the person and said, "Now why do you think I should?" You should see this man, he looked at me like stupid, "Why should you not? You will conduct the entire meeting." I started to sweat, my nice boss Angelo Rotta, did not tell me that this is in mini way the same as in maxi-way. When in any country of Europe you had diplomatic corps meetings, then in European countries, according to old tradition, the nuncios of these countries have the honorary primary. They sit at the head of the table and they conduct the meetings. Even if in reality sometimes, the bigger lead of this meeting, we would hand to the French ambassador or the Danish ambassador, but they always presided. In the Jewish matter I, the twenty-two-year-old theologian, represented Angelo Rotta, so I had to sit at the head of the table, and in this time, due to the fact that we had here a blessed lady who is now, I guess around 70, I don't like to talk about age of ladies,

it is not a European custom, the wife of the nice and honest and blessed Nazi man who was later on executed on common responsibility, however, he was a wonderful guy. His widow Mrs. Baroness Kemény, and in her maiden name, Elizabeth Fuchs, I met her in the same motel from where I talk now, this May, and the entire line went so that her husband Gabor Kemény was the white blackbird, for which he suffered very much from the crooked Nazi ministers, and they called him that he's kissing the ass of the nuncio, and kissing so and so, the most crude and unpolite way this man suffered day by day. His wife pushed him to bring from the Cabinet as many concessions to the Jews as possible, and this man did. And, therefore, the speaker said that the speaker said that the earth unfortunately was made by us a rotten place because this man, only because he was a member of the arrow party, nothing else, but what he did, I think the Good Lord rewarded him long ago. Never mind, whatever good he did was forgotten, you dare to be a member of this rotten Cabinet, consequently in common responsibility he was executed. They couldn't find against him a single thing, not even by force; they tortured him as well as the Communists tortured later me in the prison. They couldn't find a single deed against Gabor Kemény that he did something wrong. The opposite, he made, he wrenched out some concessions from the Cabinet: he let his wife know: Elizabeth Fuchs Kemény right away called Angelo Rotta, and after that called Wallenberg and this is why we were able to do something, and this, my dear audience, believe me, that in spite of our wonderful fates, what the grace of God and the help of Gabor Kemény achieved, if he wouldn't have been there, they would have done maximum ten percent.

JF: What were the concessions?

TB: For instance, it happened that for a few days the Nazi Cabinet abolished the protection letters of all the Jews. And that they would all be taken out from the protected houses. Shuttled back to the ghetto, because the Nazis need a certain section in this district of Budapest where most of the Jews lived, and this time they made walls around it, and they made, can you imagine, middle of war! It was not important to fight against the Russians, but it was important to surround with walls the Jewish section of Budapest. You can see again how perverted these people. And this nice Nazi guy handled so much that the meeting now, maybe somebody in another book will render you exactly the time. Due to our conversation with this Baroness Elizabeth Kemény, she said that very likely the Nazi meetings started around seven or eight o'clock in the evening, and sometimes midnight or after midnight, in some books you may find exactly the time, came out by radio, Baroness heard herself, she learned for the sake of her husband, she was an Austrian lady, she married this Hungarian, so she learned for his sake Hungarian, and she opened the radio and heard, yes, the protection letter of the Jews was again reinstated.

JF: When you say Nazis, are you referring to German Nazis, to Eichman, to the Arrow Cross?

TB: Yes, I thank you again for the question. Number one, what does Nazi mean? Abbreviation of the phrase National Socialist. The Germans called themselves Nazis. That



is a very good question, Mrs. Fisher, because you see in history books, in newspapers, a lot of confusion. Will you be, my dear listener, register in your head that in the Twentieth Century terminology the correct way of talking, the general term is National Socialism, and the subdivisions are Francoism, Fascism, Hungarism, so when many of our books and newspapers and T.V.'s say the stupid thing. Fascism was a subdivision, an Italian subdivision of Nazism. The general term is National Socialism, and if we talk about Fascism, this is only that Italian shape, what Mussolini thought, not the word Fascism as a general term. That was a subdivision of Italian, Italian type of subdivision of Nazism.

JF: When the Baron was able to get these concessions.

TB: Yes.

JF: Who had made that decision? Who had made the decision in Hungary to prohibit these letters from being used? Was it the Hungarians themselves?

TB: The Nazis, yes. Look, the entire thing what I definitely know, because later on I was mainly in prison with the Horthy time leaders. Among us were one or two half Nazis, too. Usually they were not with us, but one or two, and one of them was a fairly honest man. The Hungarian Nazi leader Szalasi, if there would have been time he would have worked very much on it. You would be amazed, what you would hear from me it would be very much on it to create Israel State. He was, Szalasi, by person, not an anti-Judaist, he was an arch Judaist. He wanted Hungary without the Jews, but he himself did not want the Jews to be perished. He only was, he once said the Jews should have their own state, make it even larger than in the time of Solomon, and shovel them there. Szalasi was a stupid guy, not an evil guy. In this way he was stupid, the poor guy, I don't say he deserved execution, that why did he allow that Hitler should appoint Szalasi to Hungary. If I had been Szalasi, I would have told Hitler, you can kill me, but in your rotten business what you do now I don't get engaged. Szalasi did not like the Jews, but was not a bloody anti-Jew. He was a guy who was sitting on the top of the coach and had no power over the horses, so his Cabinet did what they wanted. He was practically a puppet figure, and the Cabinet had to obey. Some of them obeyed happily, some of them did not obey happily, but what came from the Hungarian Nazis, the order of this really came at least 90% from Germany. I don't want us Hungarians washed white what some of us did wrong. No, I am to this much more honest. But definitely, I give you an interesting thing, how often a Hungarian with a big mouth, "These lousy Jews;" but when it came to the point, you will hear now something that very few books will register again, because [unclear] I know this, I saw some Christians marching with the Jews. They had a big sign hanging on their chest, "I am a crooked Christian, I march with the Jews because I express sorrow or I give help to the Jews." And my dear listeners, I can guarantee, those Christians, I don't say every, if you would say what do I guess, somewhere between one and three hundred. So comparable to the many thousand Jews, it is not too many. But these poor Christians, you can be sure they were killed, they could never come out of there because the Nazis hated them. You'll read it in Harvey Rosenfeld's book and some articles, one of these idiots came to me, or

some, maybe two or three, and the question was, can you imagine, this crooked way: "How can you save Jews when you are a Christian?" I said, "You idiot, I just save Jews because I am a Christian. This is just not a contradiction, that's a logical consequence. But if in your stupid mind, you are only baptized, then the baptism for you was totally irrelevant, totally irrelevant." Is about the same why for medical reasons many Americans have circumcision. But if the circumcision means for a person the religious way, then this is nothing. The circumcision and the baptism is an entrance ticket, a ticket card to a club. You will show yourself how you live in this club, whether you become an honest Jew or an honest Christian, but the circumcision itself doesn't make a good Jew, and the baptism doesn't make a good Christian. We shall see later how you live up to the principle what your circumcision or your baptism was. So this idiotic Nazi told me, "Why do you do this?" and in his stupid mind that I was baptized, I should not like the Jews, and I told him did Jesus Christ not do everything for his own people? He even cried then and predicted that Jerusalem would be destroyed. He was a very good Jew. He loved his people, and he cried when he foresaw that something would be very bad for his people. How did he imagine that Christianity is a contradiction with the heroic love toward my neighbor?

JF: You have mentioned the help that Christian groups such as the Grey Sisters gave the Jews. You also had talked to me about the help that individual Christians gave in order to hide the Jews, both in their homes and also in larger places. Could you describe that for us on the tape, please?

TB: I cannot say by thousands but definitely by hundreds, we Christians who were executed when the Nazis found Jews in their homes. The tragedy was that while sometimes a Jew was simple shot to death when they found him, the Christian, when they found the Jew in his house was first tortured. He was supposed to go to the Nazis and say that this and there dirty Jews hide, and since this Christian was, thank God, a Christian, for he was no dirty Jew, for he was brother in God and he was protecting him. To hide somebody in home was more than risky, and was successful practically either in Budapest. You know, Chesterton has a famous comparison: you want to hide a leaf, hide a leaf in the forest, because there are many leaves, they do not find it easily. You want to hide a person, you can hide a person easily in Budapest where there are too many people. On the other hand, it depends again in what rural areas you were. In certain rural areas, as I told you before, the only thing what I could not hide there too many people because the Nazis acted too fast. The population didn't even know, and they were already in the back office. But if in some rural areas they found it out in time, then in those areas where they had mountainous regions, Transdanubia, Southern part, Northern part of Hungary. South of Slovakia, if you looked at the Hungarian map and you will see some mountains called the, you would hear now how weird Hungarian names, Cserhat, Matra, Bukk, in these mountains you could hide. But if you were, for instance, even if you would have the time, let us say, in the Hungarian prairie, in the plains, there was not too many hiding places. From the so-called Hungarian Alford and the plain where it was mountainous, unless the

Nazis were so quick, that before the inhabitants knew about it, the Jews were already taken out, then they could hide. So the two real best places were the city and mountains. However, in other areas we found out that a very practical way how to do it, if we had large enough factories, not the totally empty factories, because they were several times searched by the Nazis, but the active working factories if you could save little sections, like a small corridor, we could hide in those corridors between one and twenty people, it depends what kinds. Imagine please, the bigger room, I had shown to Mrs. Fisher, so maybe she can even draw or I can draw for my audience, which can be attached to the tape, that if we had a factory and this factory storage place, sometimes in the storage spaces you could make a little wall and find a space behind the wall, as I told you before, roughly between one and twenty people, it depends what size this factory or this storage space was. Then we try to install in this something for human needs, that it would not be against your health, we could do it a little bit something, either active water, or a way how you can get water once every two days or so, where it is possible to have at least have the temperature a little better off than the freezing point. I want to say almost zero but here in America you have Fahrenheit but we talk in Celsius in Europe so I will say it so, it was a little above freezing point, then we would give them enough clothes. These protection possibilities were the most realistic one, because very rarely the Nazis suspected that in this active factory we had in storage so and so. They did not even suspect that we had a way how we can build a new wall and make it so artistically dirty that they didn't even think that this wall was built three weeks ago.

JF: Do you have any idea how many Jews might have been saved through this?

TB: We have, what I say now is not my statement, but I read several books on that, the closest guesses are that between 40 and 70,000. Not too many less than 40,000 by this.

JF: Were hidden?

TB: Yes, by this, yes were hidden, this was not by us Nunciatura, not by [unclear], but by private individuals, either in their homes and in factories. If you read in different book, this is the closest number, approximately, not, unlikely more than 70,000 but definitely not less than 40,000.

JF: In your dealings with the committee that you chaired.

TB: Yes.

JF: Did you have any contact with the Jewish, the Central Jewish Council which was organized in Budapest to handle Jewish concerns?

TB: Not I have so much, Angelo Rotta had a lot. I tell you I was so busy with my Jews every day. Let me give you a little impression how it goes. I was, as I told you, at this time I was studying theology. I was a little plain guy, therefore, if you contact several Jews in Israel, and you would say that Tibor Baranski, "Yes, the priest." If you would say, "He was not a priest, he was only a theologian," "Yes, he was a priest, he was all black." Because usually in Hungary, if you were working you went at the diocese, you were all in

black. My seminary in Kassa, they didn't make any distinction, therefore they thought I was ordained. Rephrase the question again because I, I.

JF: I was wondering about your contact with the Central Jewish Council?

TB: Yes, so what I wanted to bring out from this, I was, thank you, my mind escaped, I got up in the morning six-thirty, if I were home. Several time I sleep in the Nuncio, the Apostolic building, but regardless where, if I waked up in the Nuncio's building, that was the easiest way for me, because the Nuncio celebrated the morning mass, I could be there right away. If in my home, I rushed to a church for a mass, I was around eight o'clock, down the International District was called Boshony Street [phonetic] and Atjinson [phonetic] area. You will hear several times this word Boshony Street. Boshony Street and the Atjinson area, this was so called International Quarter where we, the different embassies had our apartments houses. So my first thing was to rush down there. I got there, usually somebody gave me a ride, not by streetcars, I rushed down, I was there around nine o'clock. I had there a little office in an empty shop, which was once a coffee and delicatessen shop, and it was empty, and I had there tables and a little office, and this was my center office. My center office was Boshony Street 20. On the corner of Boshony Street and Sighet Street I would go there and check on [unclear]. This was my central house. This was one of the papal houses, and I had there my office. Usually the Nazis allowed, sometime it was bigger restriction, sometimes not, in average I can say, and many people confirm that the Jews usually had permission from ten to three or from ten to two, but in average they had permission to be out at least four hours, sometimes five or six, this was not [unclear]. Consequently from other houses they could come to my office. My office had a telephone too. I was usually there until four o'clock. Usually, again, you can never say, an average in such a hell and fire turmoil never exist. It could have happened that there is even two days in a sequence that I arrived in the last hour only and that the poor Jews could not contact me. Tough luck, I couldn't do anything; sometimes when I had to go and save somewhere Jews, then I was not in my office nine o'clock in the morning, only one o'clock.

JF: During this time were you asked by Jews, or were you involved in trying to get any of these Jews out of the country? Were you involved with Zionist groups for instance, or other kinds of rescue organizations?

TB: The Zionists groups were usually in contact with my underground. It couldn't be because you see, my main responsibility was to manage 3,000 people in 12 apartment houses and I had a lot of serious things, and again I was something what I want to tell you. Yes it happened, for instance, once that they told me that, "Hey, sir, just in this and this house," it was maybe just in my own house, "just two Nazis down there and they are ransacking and taking out from this apartment that and that so and so." Again, I don't want that you, my dear listener, should think that you hear now a big shot, God gave me grace to be a little bit bolder than the others. I had no gun, I had nothing. I rushed up into the apartment, I shouted to the two Nazis who at the same time drunk too much alcohol in

them, and I said to them, "Hey you, junks, out of here!" Try to imagine that, they have the power and you are an idiot like Tibor Baranski who addresses them "little junks." In good Hungarian phrases: "Hungarian phrase" "*Csirke Figo*" [meaning] Chicken thieves. "You stinking junks, out of here!" You know how they were amazed; they suddenly saw that maybe Nazism is over. Because whoever dared to address them in this miserable way, but my principle is that not my addressing style humiliates you, that you became a rotten guy, this humiliates you, they call you only by name. This is what you deserve. They got so mad, they left there everything naturally. And they accompanied me, later on the Nazi established himself as they wished. In every district in Budapest they had a Nazi house. The chief house was Andrashi Andrassy [phonetic] Street 60, which later on as a revenge became a chief Communist house, where they tortured numerous people who were not even Nazis, who had nothing to do with them. But this was again their revenge, and several time you take revenge on people, just now like on Demjanjuk and Demjanjuk has nothing to do with the evil Demjanjuk, because the evil Demjanjuk could be 20 years older than the present guy. The same people, the Communists, a limitless revenge but it started at the Nazi miserable house was 60 Andrassy UT. But in every district was a smaller house. So they took me from my house to the district where this International Quarter was, was District No. 5. And they had there a Nazi house on the corner of Poszony UT and Szentistvan you can Poszony Street and St. Stephen, how you call it in English. Street, never mind. If you any time go to Budapest, come down from Budapest on Margaret Bridge, the first house on your left, was for a couple months the Nazi house, and these two people accompanied, I went with them and they went with me, we were catching each other. Which was a little bit inconvenient was only this that one of the Nazis had a gun and bullets, the gun was loaded, and the Nazi went with the gun on my side in this way up and down, so if he was a loaded man had become nervous and pulled it, then the guy would not talk [unclear], and walked beside a drunken man about four or five blocks is not too convenient. Then they took me down into the basement and I was expecting that very soon I will be not alive. As I mentioned to you about fifteen minutes ago, we had a lot of nice people, who became pseudo Nazis, and they were all people that had to be a member on paper of the Arrow Cross, otherwise they couldn't help us. And one of these nice pseudo Nazis was just on duty in this house, so it seemed it was God's grace that the guy saw me, he rushed out of, I didn't know that he had seen, many of these people I didn't know personally, some people knew them, and the guy rushed out from the house, rushed to the next public telephone, called up the *Nunciatura Apostolica*, my boss, and he said, "Hey, your representative Tibor Baranski was just accompanied five minutes ago in our basement. If you will not come within one and one-and-a-half hour, even less, maybe you won't find him." They started already talking to me in a very unpleasant way because I wanted to go to the boss and talk and they tossed me down into the basement and I was really happy that I didn't break my legs. So I was there with some other people. And, of course, we were all standing facing the wall, we couldn't even look at each other. And it

was really, I guess, less than hour, can be even within 40 minutes, standing there the minutes move very slowly. And suddenly somebody comes to me in a total different way, addressing me, "Reverend, please come up." I turned, I went up, and I said, "Where did he go?" "Please walk out of the door." The car there was the nuncio was there. Then I was really awfully close to be killed. The other time was when I was up in Hegyeshalom, what I told you, at the border and the Gestapo came, and in connection with the *bianco*, the protection letters, and it was then later on a third occasion, so I had two occasions when the Hungarian Nazis were near to kill me, and once when the Gestapo, the Gestapo doesn't want to joke, they would rather send to you a bullet before they argue with you-- they have no time for talking. And as I told you, it would have been there because some time they killed some of our people and right away told, that those dirty Jews did this and so and so, so they could have easily declared about me, that you see the Jews were not even thankful to this man because they killed him. It would be another question to ask "Can you prove, how did the Jews get a gun at this time?" There were some people in the underground. Since I told you the underground people who did not only have a really active in gunfight, you know. I was not part of underground work, I was not involved at this time.

JF: You were talking before about the first meeting that you chaired. Could you tell us how frequently in that and what happened at these meetings.

TB: Altogether, as I mentioned to you, we met in the time when I was already on duty in the service between the 23<sup>rd</sup>, approximately 23<sup>rd</sup> of October, and 24<sup>th</sup> of December, I told you, Christmas evening 24<sup>th</sup> around seven o'clock, I saw last time my Jews. It could be later because the war came so close that from this time, unclear could not go over the bridges from Buda to Pest or Pest to Buda unless you were a Nazi, you had a Nazi party paper, or you were a soldier, so definitely they did not allow me to go over, so between the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, the 30<sup>th</sup> of December, I could not...

*Tape four, side one:* [by mistake interviewer says tape five, side one]

JF: We were talking about how often you were able to meet with this committee of neutral nations during the two months that you were able to function as a unit.

TB: Yes, so dear Mrs. Fisher, I remember the end of my previous sentence so I want to say only that to finish the sentence on the last date, that between the 24<sup>th</sup> of December and 30<sup>th</sup> of December I could not meet my Jews any longer, I could not go over the bridge. My residence was in Buda North or Obuda, but I was in permanent telephone contact, and probably in my yesterday interview I mentioned about a very poorly blessed priest who was one of my best helpers, and he did a fantastic job and protected the Jews just with the same conscience and expertise what I did, very, very good.

JF: What is his name?

TB: Hardly; Charles Hummel, how do you pronounce Hummel. You know I have a Polish name and he had a German name, [unclear] Hungarian Guy Carl, Hummel, Hummel Korchi, he.

JF: He was also Hungarian.

TB: He was a Hungarian, he got from God a great reward, a few days later he died in martyrdom, he wanted to protect Hungarian women from the Russians, and the Russians took the gun and cut him in half with bullets. So this, was, I would say not cynically, as a Christian, this was his reward. Maybe sooner or later if I can, I would really make an effort. I'm a poor little guy who would like to make an effort at Rome for his canonization, because he was really a saint. He did really everything for Christ, just as Tibor Baranski. We are not blood relatives to the Jews, we are only soul relatives, because God is our common Father. And the guy had the same, he was really fantastic, and up to, I think the last time I talked to Carchi [phonetic], Charlie, was the 30<sup>th</sup> of December. Yes, because I even, in this time I was not home, I was in a church institution, but I think I called him up from there.

JF: He was an ordained priest?

TB: Oh, yes. Yes. I think of my diocese, yes, I think so of my diocese.

JF: And he was working with you.

TB: I tell you, this happened quite a few times, this is again something what I think for the Jews will feel now good, because you know that I don't, when I don't think something is correct, you will hear from me. But he had some of the rectors that were so nice, and when they saw that the Jews are in very great need, then they relieved the chaplains, need a hundred persons, to relive the person from their chaplain work, left work for chaplains for the Jews.

JF: And this is now.

TB: This guy probably was a chaplain, yes, but don't ask me now in what rectory, but he was really such a nice holy guy that it was no doubt the rector would have

been hundred percent sure this guy could devote all his time to the Jews, what this man did.

JF: His last name for the record.

TB; H-U-M-M-E-L, you probably will see if you are Jewish but if you like art, you will see a lot of little statues called. So.

JF: Yes.

TB: She was, I think, and Austrian lady or what, by a coincidence, the same founding named as this priest. I don't think they were relatives. Same, same name, but I can say he was one of those very few people in my world that I can really say that he was not only ordained priest, he had a priestly spirit. This man knew what it meant to help God and love neighbor and not only dreaming of, but active love, and was very, very good.

JF: Was there anyone else in talking about this network.

TB: Yes

JF: Of people of the neutral nations that you mentioned before, other than the Baroness and her husband who was involved from a political angle. Is there anyone else that you can mention who was involved, be it someone else in the Hungarian government or from any other source that was part, either officially of the committee, or that you do was involved in rescue work?

TB: Yes. For what I can say that in a, I don't usually like the word, they, in America they use, "Are you proud", I don't like it because to be proud is not a Christian virtue. I can't say I am thankful to God that we had quite a few along our Hungarian aristocratic who were involved in saving Jews.

JF: Can you remember any of their name for us?

TB: I definitely know that by money and some diplomatic work the Prince Esterhazy whom I was later in the same prison cell with the Communists that his people was involved. The Esterhazy's you'll know about them, my dear Americans, through Hayden who was playing in Esterhazy Castle near to Austria. This family, many of them are counts, and some of the top ones are prince primates like [unclear], Cardinal Mindszenty, they had such a high-ranking political life that they were either after the son of the King or sometime before the son of the King, because the old-fashioned Hungarian style came down from St. Stephen, who respected so much from the church. And soon after the royal only came the Esterhazy, but there were some Count Esterhazys involved. Again I wish I would have got this question before I came to this hotel, because I have some notes at home, and I can maybe even promise you, maybe by writing, because there were some of our people who would be really worth to be mentioned. And then I can say, because you see I come from an old noble Polish family, but as a Christian, we talk about nobility which comes from God, not from Kings. And why I am really happy, and thankful to God, I don't like the word proud, that these earthly noble families were noble in the, according to the measurement of God, too, not only to that a king once named their ancestors noble, they behaved in this way. Old by money, I met myself, the only thing,



you talk to a man who gays vary feeble minded, I have an excellent face memory and a very good name memory, but some of these people, when I went up to the Nunciatura, I said first two things what I did not finished for this is Fisher, and I want to finish. One of my sentence was, about 10 minutes ago, and you should find this there, when I finish my job in my office four clock around the afternoon, from that time when I went up to the nuncio, and I was either continuing work in there up to midnight or over midnight, or I went home to sleep. Most of the time later on I remained there because I had a time. I took a lot of undergarments, a lot of this and lot of that, I had there a little cabinet it were, I washed myself because we saved a lot of time. It was very complicated to go about, I would say about three miles, four miles, to send somebody there to bring me over, to bring me back, that was all a waste of time. So when usually when you work from the beginning that very often I had not too much more time, I hardly believe it I slept more than five hours any night, this I can say, but I had many nights when I slept two hours, I slept half-an-hour. There was a sweet lady, a Jewish lady who was and old convert, she converted to Catholicism around 1916, 1920 or so, you again, if you locate in the story of Cardinal Mindszenty the brother of this lady, Nandor Voykoy [phonetic], was involved in the Cardinal Mindszenty trial, because the Communists wanted to prove that Cardinal Mindszenty's crooked. You know, usually a crook wants to smear you that you are a crook; this is the old custom. And Mr. Nandor Voykoy was supposed to, Mister Nandor Voykoy was to supposed to be a collaborator with Cardinal Mindszenty in an unfair business to make in an illegal way money to help the American so and so, that is the accusation. So this Jewish family, the long, long ago who were Catholic convert and Roszy Voykoy, and Irma Voykoy, his two sisters, were the chief people who ran the nuncio's office in the Nunciatura. That was Roszy Voykoy, an absolute brain, fantastic brain and fantastic diplomat. And first Roszy Voykoy reprimanded me very badly because I got to the nuncio without her permission, and our friendship started so that he quarreled with this lady miserably. And later on she loved me, so you can imagine I loved her, and she gave me all, she was an unmarried sweet old spider [may mean "spinster"] and she loved me so like an aunt, we became awfully good friends and why I brought these people into the picture, when sometimes we two worked with Roszy until three, four o'clock in the morning, and she was sitting on a sofa just like I sit now, with Mrs. Fisher, and while she was talking to me, her nerve system switched out, she fell asleep in half of the sentence. And I let her sleep about half-an-hour, and she woke up, "For heaven's sake," (she didn't call me any longer Reverend), "Tibor, what happened to me?" I said, "Nothing, you fell asleep." So we started to laugh and guess, my dear listener, what happened? 20, 25 minutes later I reproduced the same, she was looking at me, and I fell together like I don't know, like a piece of rock and I started to sleep, because my nerve system was so tired but you see in this time we had not too much choice, because if we would have taken too easy, maybe if the price would have been a lot of human lives. So we had to take it very seriously, and this was one story. Now my, the question for Mrs. Fisher was, "How often did we meet?"

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My answer was about five or six times between 23rd of October and 24<sup>th</sup> of December. The usual reason was, and so many problems piled up, that it was not reasonable any longer to call each other by telephone, then we said together, about Jewish food, about Nazi dirtiness, about abuse what they did when they broke in. The story I gave you before, started so that I arrived at my Jewish house, and there was a Jewish doorkeeper who was so stupid and opened the door trembling for the Nazis. I told you, "You are an idiot, why the hell did you open for them the door? Why did you not allow them to shoot the door apart? Then I can bring another Nazi and show what these people did." And after that they did the ransacking. So several times we had meetings, then the problem was, atrocity of the Nazis, serious health need of the Jews, problems here and here, some of the old apartments, three apartments in this house, five apartment in that house, plumbing problems, this and that and how can we mobilize somebody suddenly? My sweet listener, you don't know that we had to be administrators, poppas, mommas, doctors, whatever. So it was, several of these meetings which did not last in spite of all these too long items, our longest meeting was four or five hours. So look, when you are in real danger you don't want to hear your own voice, so okay, you speak really as much as the need is decreed. So this I can say very honestly and then these meetings, I don't think so on all, if I say six, let us say six, maybe Wallenberg was present only four times, I'm not sure. Because sometimes as simple as, I tell you right away why. And maybe here will come now Per Anger to speak in Philadelphia, and maybe if he would hear it, he wouldn't like it because usually people, smart people and they are jealous. I think so Raoul Wallenberg was not only what Tibor Baranski was, but Raoul Wallenberg was almost the same as Angelo Rotta. Okay, he had an ambassador. But he had slightly, or not even slightly, a bigger power than I had. Because several times, we don't stay in contact with any of them, so, of course, with the ambassador. But I think so several times, Mrs., the Baroness, Elizabeth Kemény, called up the nuncio and called up Wallenberg, directly. Again it is much shorter and he knew what was going on. And what I said in the beginning, I hope so it was not my proud, I would shame myself if it were, but I didn't even want to talk too much with these two secretaries of the nuncio, either to the Italian one or the Hungarian, and I have no time. And he several times gave the proposal when I came back, "Would you want me to call in the two secretaries?" I said, "No, I have no time wasting time. If you played the smart aleck, and I have no time for smart alecks. I report for you what happened, you give me the suggestions," and I don't say that the two secretaries didn't do anything because sometimes they would write diplomatic letters, make telephone calls, very fine. But never, ever, they came out to the battle line. I think so Danielson once or twice went out to see. Angelo Rotta was too old to do it. He was not, I can assure you, he was not a coward at all but too old, 71 years of age is not too old, but his health was not so good. So he did not, but he was really nice and I can say we argued almost never with each other. Because I told him everything, so as AK a son to his father, that was so and so and so. I opened before him the picture what the situation was, what did I do. The story you heard from me before

when I was presiding at the first meeting without being prepared by Angelo Rotta. And I a little 22 year old potato chip, I was sitting there, and everybody looks at me, and the questions come, "What is the opinion of the nuncio in this and that problem?" And I say, "Jesus Christ, help me what the hell can I do? If I say to them the nuncio has no opinion, is Angelo Rotta stupid? If I say Angelo Rotta did not prepare me for this meeting, what will they think again?" So when I said "The Nuncio's opinion" I jotted it down on a piece of paper what I said, so that there were the eight, ten, twelve most important things, only speech words I jotted down, I came back and I said to him, later on, I was for him "Tibor" and he was for me "Father" and "Excellency". I would say "Gather, you made the best trick against me." "How did I do that, what did I do?" "You sent me to a meeting unprepared and I know why it was, because you are a diplomat; I do things fairly well, and you subconsciously thought that I am such a genius that I didn't have to be prepared, but Excellency, that is not so." And he put his hand on my head and said, "Son, shut up, I know you did everything well." I said, "Excellency, you sit down now and I go from point to point: I will tell what I said in your name, and if anything was still wrong, you can tomorrow make adjustments." I was very happy because he was highly satisfied with all my points, but, my dear audience, try to be a poet, jump in my role imagine that you are 22 years old, full of zeal, but far not enough knowledge. And you cannot explain that I had a nuncio who is so involved and words so much with diplomats together, that he did not even realize that now, he's a man who works well but he's not prepared for many things. So for the later meetings, I was prepared. I went to them myself, no, no, you either went or you had no time by telephone. "Excellency you have to tell me. The very likely problems will be this and this and this. If I say so and so, will it be okay?" So this is for you very interesting to know, you see the life went too fast. I can understand that for many things we had no time. Just a few minutes ago, Mrs. Fisher asked me if I was involved with Zionists and so and so directly. I could not be because the 24 hours were not enough. But my underground, which helped the Jews very efficiently, they were in contact with the Jews. I myself by telephone was several times in contact with the International Red Cross.

JF: What was your impression of them?

TB: Look, very sincerely, I think so that too, and I want my audience, my listeners, to know that, again I hope so, so subconscious pride. The two best quality in work were Wallenberg and me. The other embassies were not dead. As I mentioned to you before, the Swiss Embassy made a serious mistake that they had not enough control of their protection letters, and too many forged protection letters came out and they were later on not respected, not even those ones who had officials. In AK many other ways they were not as efficient and so as we, what bothered me several times, and I brought down Jews from Hegyeshalom on the Austrian-Hungarian borders, border, and some of the representatives of these embassies were Hungarian Jews. And this, again, maybe some of you will not like that I say it in the tape for history, some of the Jews were not interested in their own Jews. I give you now why I say this. We find so many and so many Jews. I

brought down approximately 280 persons from Hegyeshalom. There were small wagons, don't think so for passengers, for cattle. These people were shoveled in like animals. So, in these small wagons 70 people were shoveled in. The Nazis closed the door of the wagons, put a lock on it, just like an animal, and the other nice guy, I don't mind now whether he was a guy from Portugal, or was a Hungarian guy employed by the Capoti or was a Hungarian Jew employed by the Portugals, they sat smoothly in the car and carred down to Budapest. When I came through a Hungarian City, and for the record is good, some of you can know it when you look at the map, in Transdanubia near to the Danube, north, south from Slovakia, a city called Győr, G-Y-Ö with two dots-and R. And I came through that, yeah, I have to say, when you say, "How did you come through that?" I did not sit in a car to come back, I went with the same train as my Jews. And the train was no place. It was an electric train, and the chauffeur of the train got for me heavy money, and he allowed me to stay within the same train. When we had an air raid, then the train, the wagons, were disconnected three here, five there, so if any bombing would come not all the train should suffer, the same they did not get a single one. Then later on before Győr we stopped, I had opened the door of the wagons, I gave them fresh water, I gave them fresh things for human needs, and this was the time when I was very sorry, because from these 280 people, 60 or 70 were from my group, and some others from the Swiss, and some others from the Portuguese, so this was usually a pattern because we had not enough people, that everybody from every embassy should be there, so I, the papal guy, I bought Spanish and Portugal and Swedish, and the other guy from the other brought for my people. What I want to bring out here in this, that I had the conscience to go with the train. Many people did not. They sat in the car, and I tell you that the tragedy was, when I came through Győr through the city, somebody whispered to me that you know there on the Eight Railroad Track, there are several wagons with Jews. And I cannot tell you, I am very honest with you, I remember many things, but this I cannot tell. I hope so that finally at least several of them did not die. But I could not do anything, because if I want them to look to me, the Nazis will observe it, and not even I will go out from them. So I went through with my Jews. I started from Hegyeshalom, I think so, Friday evening and I arrived at Budapest Sunday morning.

JF: You mean these other cars.

TB: There were supposed to be accompanied by those, by somebody. And the somebody did not accompany those Jews. He let them be in those cars like cattle with a lock. "They will be taken back to Budapest." But it was a question whether those Jews, it was about five wagons or six wagons or what, whether they died there or not. What I can report to you, my dear listeners, with good conscience, I came down to Budapest Sunday morning, again, see this is something I even smile now when I think about it, I made the Nazis to help me. So I got the Jews by the help of the Nazis in the [unclear] house, the Jewish distribution house where in one day the Jews were shipped there around noon Sunday, and Monday morning they all went to the houses, these Jews to the papal houses,

the Jews to the Spanish houses. And I was, at the nuncio's office around Sunday noon. I reported to him what I did and already from the railroad terminal, I called him up, and I said, "Excellency, it's not enough I brought 280 Jews, so many papers, so many this and that, but I want to tell you, alarm right away and find out which embassy or which consulate or whatever it was responsible for wagons, I guess one or two days before me, so when I stated Friday, they either started Friday morning or Thursday or something, but the people did not travel with them, they came down, they were on the seven or eight H railroad track in Győr and nobody took care of them." The nuncio, I remember one thing that he told me when I came at noon, that yes, he already contacted people but really later, what happened to them I don't know. You see this is again.

JF: You never found out what happened to them?

TB: Later on, look, maybe later I found out, but at the present moment it escapes my memory, but I know two things for sure. I didn't even wait until I got at noon to the Nunciatura. From the railroad terminal I called the nuncio, "We are here, my Jews are shipped now to [unclear]so and so, but I want to report to you that I found in Győr this and this. And I went very afraid if we will not hurry, many of those people will die, "If they are not dead already."

JF: You said before that the representatives from these other neutral countries.

TB: Yes.

JF: Were not always the people who did the work. There were Hungarian Jews that did the work for them. Which countries were those and was that standard? Were these Hungarian Jews you told.

TB: Yes, I tell you for a certain reason, these I cannot, I didn't come in time enough to find all this out, so I can only give you only very meager reply. For a certain reason, of course, you know very well, Spain would have permission, Spain was Franco, although Franco was in awfully bad relation with Hitler, because Hitler wanted him to come a direct war ally as we were. And I knew, you see again, I am awfully lucky, because in the prison I was together with very competent people, and I can give you many things that almost nobody in the world can. And Franco answered to Hitler because Franco, okay I don't want to wash him white, what he did wrong, he did wrong, but when he got information how Hitler works, then Franco's answer was, I can quote only what I heard. He said to Hitler, "Look, you are navigating in this kind of water what my conscience never permits doing this and this way. I will not become your ally". And this made Hitler totally mad. This made Hitler totally mad, so okay, he was at least in his own stupidity smart enough not to break totally with Franco. But Franco was, I am almost sure, if Hitler had been victorious, sooner or later he would have found out something, he would have had Franco killed or something, because Franco did not obey to Hitler as Hitler wanted.

JF: Does this mean that at the committee meetings that you chaired, the Spanish representative was not a Spaniard?

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TB: No, no, usually, no, I tell you what the problem is, for if he was a Spaniard, I forgot now his name because, you see, it was very difficult in this time to find a common language. If these things would have happened 60 years ago, there would be not problem, because my father's generation all, never all, most of them, learned French. In my generation it got split. Many of us learned English, but still a lot of us did not. So the common language we could all talk, and I talked with Wallenberg, was in German. So we had to find from the Spanish, from the Portugal, so, from the Swiss it was easy to find. So who speaks German. And this was, as you know, very well, it was not the ambassador himself, always an executive secretary like Wallenberg, like Barnaski, and sometime this person, I cannot recall now, the problem is again is if I would see photographs, I would say this and that man, but I don't know the names. These persons if they were Spanish or Portugal, or Portuguese, then they could speak German.

JF: Do you remember if they were Spanish or Portuguese?

TB: One of the Portuguese representative, I think so he was the second, I don't think he was the leader, I should remember his name but he was a Hungarian Jew.

JF: This was the Portuguese.

TB: Portuguese, just the same man told me I should move to the head of the table, because I would be presiding. He was almost there on every meeting. But he was a Hungarian Jew, and employed, just as I was by the apostolic nuncio, he was employed by the Portuguese embassy.

JF: Was this also the same with Spain? Or no?

TB: Every embassy, usually embassies had when we came together, not five people came together, about twenty, twenty-five came together, so almost all of us brought two or three helpers.

JF: I see.

TB: I brought with me Charlie Hummel once or twice. He was up and so busy he told me, he would let me do my own job, take somebody else. But usually I would almost dare to say that we never met five. It think the smallest number we had was fifteen or sixteen, so we all had two, three four helpers with us that. In the discussion we should hear together what is going on.

JF: Were the Jews who were involved in you committee.

TB: Yes

JF: Individually hired or did they have any contact with the central Jewish council?

TB: You will be amazed, in my direct little staff who came with me, there was only one Jew. Because I worked with Christians who were awfully young, who were resolved like me, and I don't say morally, don't misunderstand now my deviousness, but as young people that were almost gangster-like, so they knew the style, how they have to treat the Nazis, because I wanted to be very efficient. And some of them, they had always in their pocket, and Nazis think they are armed so when they went to the street, we wanted

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sometimes to carry Jews in the evening somewhere to a doctor. And the guy put something on his arm, took the Jews on the street car, two of them, he met another one, "Yeah, I take this damn Jew, so and so." The other Nazi was okay, and they took the Jew to the doctor. We did sometime in a very, a very romantic style, you know, so just like if we were gangsters ourself, because otherwise, if you do everything in a very modest way, then they catch you. So I wanted, look, and I ask you now, Mrs. Fisher, because you know I say not to the tape, but to the future, Mrs. Fisher is awfully charming, I like her, I respect her, but I have, in the same time, I do not depart from the truth, even if you don't like it. There were not too many bold Jews.

JF: There were not too many bold Jews?

TB: If you wanted an efficient work, really an efficient work. Why this poor Jewish doorman opened the door for the Nazi. I don't, "You idiot, even if he shoots the door apart, then he shoots the door apart, but you don't give him help!" "But I was so trembling." "I am very sorry, we have to find another man to do the door, because they could have done real..."

*Tape four, side two:*

TB: So where have we been now?

JF: We were talking about your comment that many Jews who were in a helping position were not bold.

TB: Yes, and I tell you very honestly, whenever you reread my pamphlet, what I mentioned to you yesterday at the beginning of the interview, "How much did Pope Pius XII do for the persecuted Jews" is the title of my pamphlet, and again, you see, you talk to a man who is straight and very often not modest, unfortunately but very straight, and I finished this paper with a little dangerous sentence. Just those people are smearing Pope Pius XII's cowardness, who were themselves not too bold. I gave this so much, Number One, I can tell you for the sake of the good Lord Jesus Christ, that my boldness came from the grace of God. I don't contribute to myself anything. And I am sometimes amazed that I would be able to be as bold now as I was at this time. The boldness is a virtue that is very difficult. At this time you needed it in every minute, so what I just answered a couple minutes ago, Mrs. Fisher, you heard me, that, yes, in my staff, at least those who came out and did risky jobs, one Jew, I definitely remember, maybe it was two, I don't know, but I worked with Christians, maximum two of them, [unclear] naturally a priest, maximum two or three of them were about thirty. They were young men, they were bold, they had more in real Christian morals, not what's in style outside, they were gangsterlike doing what they were doing, then they could be efficient.

JF: Let me ask you something. Were you aware of what was being done by people like Joel Brand, or Hannah Szeues, or Dr. Kasztner in terms of rescuing the Jews of Hungary?

TB: About this, I by person knew a very little; a very little. I had the name of Hanna Szeues. I knew about her, but can you imagine, when you heard in the beginning of the tape, that we had not even time enough that I should have ever met Barouess Kemény, first angel through whom came every good to us. So we were so much involved in ourselves, and several times, let us say, I got a special telephone call, and the telephone call said see [unclear] in the department because people want to see. And I right away knew that some underground people want to come now and see me. I was really so many parts, I simply could not. Her name I remember. Since my main memory is not good, maybe the other names, if you had interviewed me 25 years earlier, I would have remembered, the names are escaping my mind. But I can see but beside what you heard from me until now [unclear] I had several times ten minutes, half-an-hour or one-and-a-half hour meeting with certain underground. And the underground, my dear American listener, means this that I know, if possible, only four or five chief people, and the four or five new other four or five. I switch now for three or four sentences to another topic. Why is so difficult that we Hungarian Freedom fighters cannot identify each other? Because we [unclear] the same



method. Do you know that I do not know a single freedom fighter's real name with whom I was fighting? They knew my name for a certain reason what I don't want to give now, so I would say that almost all of them knew my first name. I begged them, because it was already after my five-year prison time, "Please don't tell me your name. I want to have your nickname. I don't know, monkey or this, or that, a nickname". Because if the Communist ever catch me and start to torture me they can torture me as much as they want, but what I don't know, I cannot speak up.

JF: Were you aware that any of these underground connections might well have been Jewish as well?

TB: What I remember in good conscience, I met definitely not too much more, around eight or ten underground Jewish people. No, no, don't misunderstand me, that does not mean now that I say, I don't fall in the same trap, but I don't want you to fall, I never say something global, there were very bold nice people, but [unclear] but I experience now, that those people have the biggest mouths now who were not so bold at the time. Can you imagine what those mean, every moment that they are after you [unclear]. I don't know, I think they are killing from the grave. But what comes before that, we are human beings, and to be tortured is a very dangerous thing. So we knew that when we fall into the hands of the Nazis what we will pay for all of it. So many people, it's, I don't throw a stone to them. I have no moral right, nobody has. The only thing I have right to say that people who are not too bold should be humble enough to keep their mouths shut and not judge somebody else. Again, what you will see as you hear from me now for the third time, when my paper comes out, there was nothing about the boldness [unclear] if you want to anybody else, I as a competent witness before God and man can testify that the [unclear] in connection to the Jews had nothing to do with his boldness. But when you see my paper that I will call Jews, who knew Jews and respect, you cannot argue with [unclear] everything sources. Said, please don't use a too harsh language, don't do so and so, because you know tomorrow you do not be captured by the Nazis, but tomorrow will be taken revenge on us, so this had nothing to do, and this I definitely know, plus I know how wonderful the Vatican was, wonderful, the Vatican should not be written down to us they were cowards. If you want at least, I don't know, Mrs. Fisher thinks, a very short thing I can quote for you. Harvey Rosenfeld disclosed, and just quote him verbally the Vatican statements how happy they were, how wonderful Angelo Rotta worked, and the wonderful work both came from his spirit, but came in the same time from the encouragement of the Vatican. Some people want to say, I think you can even Per Anger, I am not sure in that, but some people say no, what was wonderful with the apostolic nuncio that he was such a [unclear] force, but it's not true that only he within the Vatican was. We, unfortunately, haven't got always enough money. For instance, when once we ran out of money, then my boss called [unclear] of the International Red Cross, and Tibor Baranski and [unclear] got a lot of money. And, this I can say as an interesting thing, when the Russian captured me, from this lot of money I still

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had in my pocket about 700 *Pengo*, which was about the same value as now a days \$700.00 Canadian dollars.

JF: Can I just interrupt before we go on to a different area. Let me just say that in line with your very important statement that we have to be very careful not to generalize, the Jews who criticize are not the same human beings as the Jews who did or did not explain things and show their moments, and we are all in this together.

TB: I know. You see, my dear listener, I wish that in 2,050 when we can feel one thing. And this is what I think of, that in spite of all my big mouthness that I have, God gave me a grace, I want to tell the truth, I come close to it, and I sit with an interviewer, who is almost my female [unclear]. We can talk to each other from the gut with all sincereness. It's awfully important, my dear listeners, in the modern world, you are living in a phony world, and

God gave both of us the grace to talk in front of Him with a responsibility. In the book, I give you a quotation from the book of Harvey Rosenfeld, I read for you a very interesting quotation, because the book says, is a special chapter in here, Harvey Rosenfeld book, the fifth chapter which deals what the apostolic nuncio did and what the papal embassy generally did under the interesting title, "How Many Divisions Has the Pope?" And on page 79, Harvey Rosenfeld is quoting somebody, namely the Reverend Robert A. Graham, one of the coeditors of the Vatican documentation of World War II. And he is quoting a part from the Reverend Graham, just proving that his opinion is fairly close to my opinion. Let me read this little section, and the first sentence will be from Harvey Rosenfeld, and the rest will be from Reverend Graham. "Baranski's comments on relations between the nuncio and the Vatican find support from Reverend Graham." Now comes the Reverend: "The documentation leading up to the November-December nightmare illustrates quite clearly that Rotta did everything on the approval of the Pope, although some of the material details were never communicated to Rome. For instance, the issuance of the "Protective Passports" was never notified to the Vatican. It was impossible and not even necessary." That's all from Reverend Graham. Now comes a quote here, intermissions, a certain sentences Harvey Rosenfeld does not quote, and then he continues still with the statement of Graham. "I think you will find on close examination that Rotta had the full confidence and support of the Pope in his attitudes and actions in regard to the Jews. Rotta was in this, as in other cases, a representative of the Pope." Now here Baranski to this has to add something. I definitely know that Angelo Rotta informed wrote information to the Holy See. It can easily happen that one of our secret messenger was caught by the Nazis, and this information did not get to the Vatican. But I know myself and here again a historical statement, yes Angelo Rotta wrote to the Vatican, I mean to the Pope or to the proper office, that, yes, we want to protect people. Again, for me it's funny, again, here is in parenthesis: (Protective Passports 15,000). I don't know from where does the Reverend Graham get this because the eye witness, from where does the Reverend Graham get this because I, the eye witness, never knew about anything other than the 12,000. I saw

myself Vatican documents that they write 13,000, but this I do not understand. On one side Reverend Graham said he did not report on the passport and protective letters. I know that he did, maybe it didn't get to the Vatican; on the other side how did then the Vatican write of 13,000? So here is a certain contradiction. And to try to speak of Tibor Baranski is fairly feeble minded in numbers, but I tell you the reason why I cannot forget, because what you heard from me on the beginning of this tape, when the Nazi made a dirty trick, this is why I cannot forget. That I came to Angelo Rotta, the oral permission was, we can protect 12,000 Jews in 42 apartment houses. Then one day the Nazis talked, meaning not a Hungarian but the Germans together, either only the Germans or together, I don't know, but I talked in German myself, so I was asked, "Rush right away to the telephone because they just called Angelo Rotta and he's not fluent in German. You pick up the other line and answer." And then they said, "Are you ready, with the Contingent?" Which means the list of the 3,000 people." And then I said to them, "You are very wrong, because there is not no word about 3,000, we will be soon ready with a list of 12,000." Then came the cynical laughter and, "No, you are not right. You are confused. We never allowed you to protect 12,000 Jews in 42 houses. You remember very well the words!" This is now why Baranski is not mistaken. But you can protect 3,000 Jews in apartment houses. Therefore, to me the 12,000, my dear listeners, you can put your soul on it that this is the number; Baranski doesn't make a mistake. So I do not know of when they bring any other numbers, 13 or 15, and I would be very sad if the other search of Harvey Rosenfeld, I mean not that he doesn't write correct, but if he get the correct information, because it is such a stupid sentence. What I cannot put in the, it was told to Harvey Rosenfeld by an Hungarian guy Reibarg. It is simply impossible that one of the sentences says, like if Angelo Rotta would have given him approval, he can do anything what he wants, I give you ahead our absolution. This doesn't fit to the mouth of a conservative person. Even if he tried to get people younger on this, but bold, on behalf of the Jews, a Catholic priest who listens to confession does know very well that I cannot give you an absolution for a sin that you commit in the future. It can be written either by a poet or by God knows what. We have just a Hungarian poem; the poem is what is written, but from such a responsible, because Angelo Rotta some of them they call him Monsignor No. All these papal nuncios are ordained bishops, only they have no diocese. They are ordained bishops. A bishop will not tell you. Look, anything can happen in the modern world that we have now, a lot of liberal interpretation, but in my old fashioned world, that a nuncio would say somebody can do anything and give you absolution ahead. And the only thing what I want to bring out is if there were any forged paper like this, I would be very, very sad. But from the book of Harvey Rosenfeld that he interviews Ujváry [Ujváry according to Rosenfeld, was a volunteer worker of the International Red Cross.], one of the guys who helped us. I met with Ujvary very rarely. I think so, I went up with Ujvary to Hegyeshalom, and then we were the guests of the see of the bishop of the same city I mentioned before, six or seven or how many wagons of Jews, and the bishop of this, Baron Williams [unclear] died in the same way that my priest friend

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Charlie Hummel, because he wanted to protect in his bishop palace Hungarian women, and Russians died in this way and Charlie Humel died in this way. So this priest and I went to the Hungarian border was with this guy and seemingly gave out several false papers, protection letters. My listeners, don't misunderstand, the Nazis were illegally any way you can fight as you want, but still I was very much afraid. Underground I would rather fight someone, but I don't want to run down the credibility of our letter. This is what the Swiss did, absolutely stupid. They made almost official [unclear] so the Swiss ambassador knew about it. But this was not correct, and I don't want to believe, I cannot say anything because Angelo Rotta died. I am not so sure that Ujvary's action was with the approval of Angelo Rotta, and if it were, since Angelo Rotta respected me so much, really it was a father and son or uncle and nephew relationship very much. I studied for priesthood, he was a bishop, he saw how it was. He never mentioned to me that he would have given to Ujvary [unclear]. We didn't talk too much about diplomatic things because we had not time. He told me only as much as was important for my work. But if I asked him, I would get an honest answer. But certainly he could be wrong because we were in the same line, I worked in the same line as Ujvary. So Angelo Rotta would have supposed to tell me that Ujvary is so and so, but I never knew. I can mention you a famous Jesuit underground man, Father Raile worked for us, and he was very successful, Father Raile. This Jesuit was one of the underground. But I am not even sure, you see, to work in an underground it was never to good for somebody else to know. I am absolutely not so sure, maybe his chief Jesuit superior knew about it but not even his Jesuit colleagues. There is always the danger when you get caught, and then the other man can say this and this. But Father Raile was lucky enough, he was not killed by the Nazis. I think he was later on killed. I don't want to say here a statement, because this is a statement for history, and I want, I don't want to pass you unsubstantiated statements as possible, so most of my statements, therefore, you heard before, I didn't say too much about names and numbers, because I want to be as accurate as possible, and I would rather be believed the written statements, but I forgot now. Some of the Hungarian people will not believe it isn't so, not now because what is not time?

JF: Could you tell us about your dealings with Wallenberg, your impressions of him as a person, and perhaps give us some examples of some of your conversations or interchanges?

TB: Yes. Look, here I don't have to talk about this so much because I have in my, among my papers, here is a paper what I will give to you, Mrs. Fisher. I was interviewed a couple years ago by the [unclear], two interviews, one interview what I did, and the other interview was my relations with Raoul Wallenberg, and this interview had a lot of things. I can say only, earlier I mentioned before, too, as a brief summary. We had many, many things in common. Well, Harvey Rosenfeld had mentioned too, this Wallenberg article what I am going to give a copy to Mrs. Fisher, goes a little more in detail. That he really became relatively most relaxed from the moment on when he had with Angelo Rotta private conversation, because sometimes he met Angelo Rotta [unclear],

but this was not a good place to warm up with a [unclear], let us say, he went to an official party of Mrs. Baroness Kemény, and, you know, it was not so good as when I took him there, and only the nuncio was there, and only Wallenberg was there, and only I was there.

JF: Were there many such meetings only the three of you were present?

TB: That was the only one. This was so that we finished once with ambassador meetings, the representatives of the ambassadors, and relatively was early, [unclear], but definitely not too much more. And suddenly, I don't know, I got an inspiration, and I told him, "Mr. Wallenberg, wouldn't be good for you to meet Angelo Rotta?", and first I saw he was a little shocked and...

JF: Why?

TB: I thank you for the question but I am almost sure you don't ask it for yourself, you ask it for the listeners. We are full of prejudices. If you are really sincere, I think so we could shame ourselves and laugh at ourself. He is a Catholic, and very suspicious, but he is a Baptist, he is a Jew - yeah, but he is a Catholic. So we have all of these stupidities, instead of digging down and say, hey, wait a little bit! Do we have not much more in common than this little one which divides us? We are full and full of prejudices. Of course, he was a modern man. He was a saint man not only because he meant to die. I had the opinion in the same time when we worked with him. I had the opinion in the same time when we worked with him. Yes, but it is very difficult to step out of your background. He was a Northern man and he was a Northern Protestant. And Angelo Rotta was an Italian, as in American with maliciousness you say Dago, [unclear] all the way from the dead, you always want to find a degrading word for somebody. [unclear] He was an Italian, he was Catholic, he was a bishop, and therefore was so cute that you could laugh and cry together, that once the debut as a side product produced something wonderful [unclear], that in this turmoil two sweet, nice guys came together, found out how wonderful they are, how wonderful the work which brought them together, and then next morning Angelo Rotta says to me, "Can you imagine, a Northern Protestant such a nice guy!" And two days later, Wallenberg calls me up, and says, I don't know the discussion, and says, "Mr. Baranski, one thing allow me. I know you yourself are a Catholic, but I would like to say something, I am happy to shout, I was never too thrilled that an Italian Bishop can be such a wonderful man. And you see, this is whenever you do this, tomorrow, or ten years later, can you human beings dig down and find out first how many things you have in common or you pick out those [unclear]. What binds us together, and the only thing, maybe you will return later on, because I can't stop emphasizing if you would first believe that we are all the children of God. He gave all of us eternal living human soul, only our body dies. We did not live forever, but we shall live forever. If you could really believe in this, my dear listeners, it would be no problem. Two wonderful people with more or less prejudices found out in one-and-a-half hours cordial conversation, and I was so happy that none of the nuncio's secretaries were in the room, there was only the Nuncio Angelo Rotta and Tibor Baranski. And this atmosphere was so divinely cordial.

JF: What did you discuss?

TB: Many things, Jews, a little bit Wallenberg told about this. You know when you have a private discussion, it jumps. You chat a little bit what about this, what about that, coming back again to our work. Because we had in this time what we officially, I very likely think, don't believe me now one hundred percent, because it was so long, I guess that very likely it had to start, and we had a meeting now, and the results were this and this. And then comes out some official thing, and then, now Mr. Wallenberg, I don't know that he was really in his job to study for this affair, but after that he was interested in something else, and then Angelo Rotta you know, how was this, and you know, from official things to nonofficial, but the entire atmosphere, regardless what we talked, was not official atmosphere. Even if sometimes the matter for a few minutes was an actual matter, it was just as relaxed as sitting now here with Mrs. Fisher, absolutely nothing now as [unclear].

JF: Your other contacts with Wallenberg, were primarily in meetings?

TB: [unclear], of course, by telephone, yes. Therefore, when you will have, Mrs. Fisher, you'll put this little thing in your archive, and you will read, the closest the two of us, I told you, very likely, we would have, let us say, the Communist would have not killed Wallenberg, he could have remained there, he would have started his fantastic plan as he wanted, [unclear] the entire Hungarian [unclear]. He was not only friends with the Jews. He was a deeply Christian guy, therefore, he suffers now, or dies now, he dies with the Hungarians. He said to this woman, [unclear], so Wallenberg was an awfully human being. The only thing, as a Northerner, and not only a Northerner, in Europe certain things didn't run too fast. If you were in Hungary, two months later, half-a-year later, ten months later, you would have started Raoul and Tibor, was but in such a short time, it was still Mr. Wallenberg and was still Reverend Baranski. But the relation became closer and closer and closer the closest statement what you have in my Buffalo Jewish Review article, what I am going to read to Mrs. Fisher, the closest was what once he told me, "You know when all this craziness and idiocy is over, you must have a [unclear] Vatican, my mother ants, you must see my mother, she wants to see you." This was the closest we were involved [unclear]. "My mother always told me, Raoul I think, okay, what you want to do is [unclear] but one thing [unclear]. To this mission you need a bigger mouth and, Reverend, you have this mouth that my mother wants to see." So this was the closest thing he [unclear]. "And my mother would be very much satisfied when I would meet." This is why I say that in the false Wallenberg film, Chamberlain plays Wallenberg. If the writers of the film and Chamberlain would have consulted me, I would have told him, play the same, but play it in a lower tone. Act so as Tibor Baranski. But Wallenberg was not as noisy as I, Wallenberg was more quiet, had the same resoluteness, had the same idealistic enthusiasm, work concept, but he was more quiet than I, was not so noisy, and Chamberlain sometimes plays as if he were me. Which is [unclear] Wallenberg's nature. Don't talking about the dirty thing of the film, the Baroness Elizabeth Fuchs, had absolutely nothing sex with

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Wallenberg. For two reasons not, she was deeply in love with her husband, and they were only two years married. She had a big sweet tummy, and she soon gave birth to the child...

*Tape five, side one:*

So when I talked to Mrs. Baroness Elizabeth Fuchs Kemény, this May in the same hotel about this time, about the falseness of the film, she said, "Number One, I loved my husband extremely, and I had the big [unclear], very like what kind of dress so you can see how heavy pregnant I am. I left Budapest not in a train. The film showed I had a love affair. I left on my own car or whatever, whose car, with my chauffeur and my cook, [unclear]." So the entire thing was totally false, only one action which could have been misunderstood, when she was able to make her husband be as [unclear] Schutzpass, conduct, safe conduct letters, that Wallenberg was so happy that he sent her such a big flower arrangement, which went almost from the floor to the ceiling. This was the only action what somebody could have misunderstood. But she said with the best conscience, she prayed daily. I can testify, my dear listeners, I have some, in Christian terms, very good girl friends, but just as I have a friend, if I have a friend, I am not a homosexual, doesn't mean that my girl friend in an American term has to be my sex friend, normal good friend that liked and respected each other very much without the slightest sex. So this I have to say in order to protect. This still made a very bad time for the Baroness because the wounds it caused her and her relatives and friends and I want to tell you, called her up, my dear listeners, whenever you see this film, I like for history, that sometimes the evil people are even stupid. It is not enough that they made the slander about her, they sent her a complimentary copy. My dear listeners, you simply cannot understand it. So while I speak in your face, I make a photograph of you and a present for you, so that you remember as we are speaking to your face. I can't understand.

JF: Was the part of the film about the efforts of her husband to reinstate the Schutzpass being due to her pressure accurate?

TB: Yes, but again, again, the way, she did not terrorize. You see here are certain things I do not understand. As Harvey Rosenfeld was honest and interviewed me, so when Harvey Rosenfeld, Raoul Wallenberg (unclear} if there were any inquiries, then can be only there, because maybe I don't want to, I myself were honest here. I don't want to smear someone, but I think so some of the statements from (unclear, could be Levai) I don't like. I don't know (unclear, could be "Levai") told everything correctly but exaggerated. (See pp 52 - 60 Harvey Rosenfeld). But as Harvey Rosenfeld wrote this subject in a most correct and honest statement, what gives the writers of the film (unclear) lie about a piece of history, and beside Per Anger, beside Danielsson, there is somebody else from there, why did they not come to me. (2) We could have helped them to really put together a story very, very close to the truth. They pictured my old regent in Hungary, who was a totally honest man, as I told you, he had even very close Jewish friends.

JS: You're talking about Horthy.



TB: They pictured him as a chubby guy, balding head, beard and I I come next time to Philadelphia, I will show you a picture, Mrs. Fisher, maybe I will get somewhere and send you at the archives. Horthy was almost the most handsome guy, like an actor. He and his wife were the most demonstrated royal couple that were in the region. When they appeared somewhere, when they appeared, you looked at them, they looked very good. So I think, if I don't like someone, it doesn't mean I have to picture him like an idiot. He was not (unclear) a Nazi, I did not agree with Mr. Szalasi, maybe 2% out of hundred, so the other 98% I did not agree. But it does not mean, my dear that I had to put, again the guy who played Szalasi looked again like an idiot. Szalasi was a good looking man though not as well as Horthy, but not again, these, listeners, remain human. You want to be treated nicely by people, treat others; you want that people should not slander you, don't slander others. The first thing when I make a film on anybody, and if I had enough information on things the film should be true we have enough information on Wallenberg to make an interesting but true film.

JF: Can you add anything to what you have said about Wallenberg to give us this kind of picture of him that you would want us to have, that you would want relayed to the future?

TB: Yes. The Number One from where I have to start, he exactly, because once he asked me if you know me, my dear listeners, maybe one in the picture, I have a fairly big nose and (unclear) Jewish ancestors, so Wallenberg once asked me sincerely, "so tell me, Reverend, are you yourself of Jewish origin?" I told him with a smile, I told him, "Could be so, I do not deny, the only thing what was available on my father's side, we are 700 years as I said with Poland, and, my mother's side, I can go 300 years. I am not, but if you ask me about it, may I ask you back, have you a Jewish origin." (2) and he said, "Yes, one of my great-grandparents was". (Rosenfeld states that it was a great-great-grandfather, also a great-grandparent). And he had a varied (unclear) look. I rarely thought in my life so sincerely and so on, except some my best two or three friends, so honestly said, "How much as you can control and check yourself, how much does this Jewish ancestry matter with you in protecting the Jews?" He said, "No, the first thing is, the inhumane attitude." I learned about, he was in Palestine, he heard about the Gestapo (unclear) very sensitive (unclear). "We should, not theoretically, but in reality, should get involved." And if anybody of you would say that maybe the speaker who issues now the answer against me, and do I realistic, maybe even Wallenberg cannot see on himself how much he was motivated by his Jewish origin. I have to this, is a very high probability, a serious counter-argument, proof, you heard from me, the third time my same statement, he was therefore, in Russian captivity because he wanted to save Hungarian Jews. He said exactly what (unclear) in my talk (unclear) and I think so from this moment on, not the Jews (unclear) I go now to Debrecen, the Hungarian city at this time occupied by the Russians, with a Hungarian puppet for government, which was appointed by Moscow, I want to talk to them and seriously warn them that they should stop the Russians with all

(unclear). He was an idealistic guy. I called with my sarcastic mouth (unclear) idiot, I myself (unclear). He thought that this (unclear) can be stopped by honest men, but what I want to say is not as important, but de to these world concept, he wanted to save his brothers and sisters in God, not the Jews, not the Hungarians, anybody to who he had an affair, just this time brought up the Jewish persecution, so you had the people in need. And I cannot give a bigger proof, and whenever I talked to (unclear) I say to them, at least once a week, we pray and go to church for Wallenberg. (Unclear) For this man is, when the Russians marched in, he took a gun to our airport, sitting in an airplane, flying back to Sweden, Jews. He didn't (unclear) but he wanted to save Hungarians, brothers and sisters in God.

JF: At what point did you feel that that effort started? Around what time?

TB: Look, as soon as the Russians marched in, as far as I know, even Wallenberg saw some of these things, we were (unclear) that sometimes it happened, I don't like to say, animal way, because does not do, sometimes say in a stupid way. An animal doesn't do this. But when one woman suffers from Russian sexual attack, in three, four hours, by eights, ten soldiers, the had not even paid to go over the same person after each other. And this, the speaker can say with absolute conscience, because I know some of those (unclear). And what I know, very likely Raoul Wallenberg met some of them, so he got both the messages and some of personal contact with those people, and his high moral standard did not tolerate it. And he said, "It is easier if somebody is killed than if somebody is so super, super, and super humiliated, destroyed his own self confidence." I can tell you, many Hungarian women committed suicide because they were not guilty in this, of course, but they didn't want to say, when the husband comes home from war, that, yes, I was so and so. Some of them became pregnant, and some of them got venereal disease, and there was no medicine at this time. And I want you to know that Raoul Wallenberg with his high standard said that, "This I will right away stop. I do not tolerate it."

JF: This was what month, approximately?

TB: This was in January.

JF: January?

TB: January, if you want to stop for a second, I can give you almost the date.

JF: That's okay.

TB: Of Wallenberg's (unclear).

JF: When he, did he actually shift then his concern at that time to the (unclear)

TB: He packed together everything and said to the Russians, "Can you help me to get to Budapest?" The Russians were awfully happy to help him, because there were already the order that this American spy called Raoul Wallenberg has to be caught. So the sweet nice bird walked in his own cage.

JF: You feel that this efforts to meet with the Russians then was focused on the treatment of the Hungarian women?

TB: Look, I spoke to somebody who worked with him. I know from this man two things, one that he said this (unclear) this woman the Hungarians were treated worse

than the Jews because it was even ordered from Moscow that for a while the Jews should not be bothered.

JF: Did you hear him say that? You were already in captivity.

TB: Very briefly, about myself I make it very brief. The Russians caught me to the north in a Church institution, where I walked from my home. I actually wanted to go and bring some food, because we at home were out of food. And while I wanted to go somewhere where I can get food, I went to the Church institution, and this woman, our place, where it became the place of nobody. On one side were the Germans and the other side were the Russians, and this place was in between, and both of the sides were having a big fight. I couldn't get out from this Church institution. I could not go for bread or something. And two days later, because I went to this place on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December, and two days later, the 30<sup>th</sup> of December when the Russians marched in, they caught me and took me away. At the time when Wallenberg, when Wallenberg was come in, the Russians, that was already the middle or a little bit after the middle of January, at this time I already made my death march around 160 miles, and I was dropped almost dead in a very serious health condition in a southern Hungarian City, not too far from Yugoslavia, called Szekszarv, look at the map S-z-e-k-s-a-r-v, Szekszarv. There I was treated for three months, until it came around Easter of '45 until I came into condition that I can travel home into Kassa. May 16, try to imagine that I had a totally exhausted body, from the Jewish protection work for two months. This exhausted body was driven 160 miles on feet in winter, with four times food in sixteen days. So I became the same skeleton exactly what the Jews were in Auschwitz, exactly. When I undressed myself in an emergency hospital, and they put me in a primitive bathtub, I tried to laugh about myself because God gave me this misery to endure, and I saw myself that my lower arm was thicker because there are two bones, and my upper arm there is only one bone, so it was thinner, and only a little noise of an animal came out from my mouth. I thought I am laughing. So I was a totally destroyed man from this Russian Pilgrimage for sixteen days. I was driven in the same death march, verbally the same as the Jews. There was no difference.

JF: What was the Russian's accusation, of you, to put you to that march?

TB: Order was given from Moscow that from the three greatest of hostile nations to Russia, the Number Three enemies to the Hungarians, the Number Two enemies the Poles, the Number One enemy the East Germans. From these three people get as many as possible, regardless what we promised because they promised there will be no work until you are 16, and civilian only in the case if they can prove that the civilian did something. That was a damn lie, because we marched with a lot of boys who were only 13 years old. I had still my priestly robes.

JF: And you were not protected by the fact that you were attached to the Vatican?

TB: The funniest thing is that my Vatican accreditation letter was even in the hands of two Russians, and it was a divine miracle they gave it back to me. They didn't

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bother it but they could have thrown it in the mud. It was even in their hands, they give it back to me. So it's good for you to know, my listeners, that somebody talks. Not that I don't tell the truth, but I even have the original two accreditation letters, and if somebody would ask now why I need two, one was in which it stated that I have right to go to the Hungarian border to protect the Jews, and the second accreditation letter said that I have right to protect the 3,000 Jews. On both of the letters is my personal photograph in a little grey clerical thing with [unclear] and with the signature and stamp of Angelo Rotta. So it was even in the hand of the Russians, but they did not honor it: they saw me in my robe; they didn't even question me, mostly they didn't. There was an order from Moscow, try to bother as little Catholic priests and nuns as possible, and as little Jews as possible. All the rest you can do what you want to. So it was true that for the first couple months, for the first, later on it was a different story. For the first couple months, not too many clerical people and not too many Jews were bothered that's true. I was one of the unfortunate who despite of all this was bothered. The reason why we were beaten was mainly this, they said a lie, but I see what was a lie and was the truth. They said that we were shooting at them, some of us, and since they were not sure, they didn't want to execute us, but to be safe they take us in captivity. This was their slant on it. The truth was this, that in this district Budanos, that there are many, many German minorities. And since they were so mad at the Germans, so the Buda District started to [unclear] from Obuda on many of the north and north to surrounding little villages were full of German subjects. And since they were really being at the Germans, they found us the lie that we are shooting at them, the real reason was not this, but to take from this area, because all of these Germans spoke Hungarian but they had no time to say, "Ok, are you German, are you not? We don't mind." They shoveled us together, so my troupe was somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000 people and two nights from the 30<sup>th</sup> of December and the 31<sup>st</sup>, and from the 31<sup>st</sup> of, fourth or first of New Year 1945 was we were sleeping in a chapel of a cemetery, and I will never forget how did we feel when we were driven into the gates through the gate of the cemetery. We were almost sure that they will take us to the end of the cemetery, force us to dig our own graves and then shoot us there. Two of the people became so hysterical that, these two people became so hysterical that unfortunately the Russians shot them to death because they didn't want a panic among us, and so these two poor people died, and then we were sleeping two nights in the cemetery chapel, and on first of January '45, they started us on our pilgrimage, because this chapel was from my residence one and one-half, two miles not much more. Anybody can check again the chapel of the cemetery of Obudac. And from then we were taken back to the Western mountains of Transdanubia behind the wall, because, you see, the Germans are already out from Hungary but there was a nest in the Buda Castle and surrounding, so the Russians had surrounded them every direction, and since this was still a war area, we were far behind the war area, and this was because so much time where they wanted to take us into a stable for the night, and the stable was six kilometers from the main road, and we went six kilometers to the stable, that's six kilometers back to continue

[unclear]. This is why originally which was approximately 150 kilometers mounted up 250 kilometers, and I guess the English mile about 160 miles. So I was totally played out, like death, and I finished that and this was the 15<sup>th</sup> of January, but still on 15<sup>th</sup> of January the Russians did not finish the occupation of Pest. So it was finished the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> of January, so after them a very few days later Wallenberg said, when he heard the atrocity, about the atrocities, and met some people who were the victims, he said, "I have to right away now and demand that this government should do something."

JF: Where did you hear this statement?

TB: When I returned, when I returned to Budapest, I met still a few Hungarians who were in relation with Raoul Wallenberg. This was one of his helpers, and besides this, I want to give you another very important statement from him, from the same helper, the Russians are told when we went to them to ask, and a couple of minutes they identified who the person is, they were awfully happy and very friendly. He said I do not back for [unclear], and at this time they didn't even accompany him because they knew that he doesn't have to be accompanied, [long passage unclear] returned in one hour to us. He was shocked how friendly the Russians were, and the same person who had previously made the statement, Wallenberg said to the same person, "The Russians treat me so friendly, I don't like it. I didn't think that the Russians will right away kill me, but I, this is, they treat me unexpectedly too nicely and in my mind is, that maybe behind this nice treatment is a shrewdness, and this is merely the beginning of a captivity." [unclear] because he didn't like, he knew, he knew enough in these few days as more and more Hungarian refugees poured into the city and said what the Russians do, he did not want to believe that they were so friendly to him. But at this time, the order was given by Moscow you have to catch this man and bring him, and they were so happy when the man from himself came to them. And they didn't want, they wanted to give him the first impression that he can confuse them, but they were so friendly that he became suspicious, however. So this is these two important statements [unclear] I get from my Hungarian painters who were for awhile the helpers.

JF: Were you surprised that the Russians wanted him?

TB: To me this thing is no surprise. For the naïve Western man, mainly Americans, because European Western people are less naïve than you are here. Everything that is not Communist is right away, or Capitalistic - Nazi, so the two things they tried to bring together. Therefore, what I would like to [unclear] now mainly 1944 or so, but I would like to warn my listeners, and as the time goes on more and more, you will agree with me, unfortunately, that even the Communists are using the same words what we are. They still have the same words, with a totally different perception. Some of the very dreadful examples today, they talk about peaceful co-existence: this is a big lie, this means nothing, and to give us a free hand that we can establish a Communist undermined. Because this is only our Communists, it is nothing else. So everything, and they know the phrases better than they can make a fist, so [unclear] how beautiful it is. I could give you from

American education some same words, but this would make this statement too long, doesn't make any sense. Watch out, and whenever you hear certain phrases which your ears like, find out if they come from the mouths of Communists, then you have to look that this nice phrase was still hot behind with what ideological content.

JF: Why do you think the Russians let you go to a hospital and let you return to Budapest?

TB: It was it was a miracle in my case. They then drove us, I think so, 10 or 12 miles south from the city of [unclear]. You can look at the map, I don't know exactly the distance, 10 or 12 kilometers. I don't even say in English the name [unclear] because it was a little place again; there were some Agrarian buildings and so and in one of the stables, we again went overnight. I think for my group, a big group of 1,500 or 2,000 people were distributed in three or four buildings. And we were on a roof of a peasant house. It was awfully cold, otherwise these roofs are not too cold, because many of those roofs still, I don't think there are any longer, but they were still at this time of straw. They can put the straw together so hard that it's not too cold. But I think there were some holes in it, and the draft came through. And at this time I was in such a bad shape that the next morning I have to come under very, how can I say, narrow steps from the stairway, and I got dizzy and I fell down, and immediately break my bones, but I fell [unclear] to the ground. And one of the Russians wanted to kill me, I know it from the Hungarians, and took up from his shoulder the gun, the same way as the Bishop of Győr was killed and my friend Chuck Hummel was killed, so they wanted to kill me the same way. There was a nice Russian guy, this again you should understand, the Russians we were driven us, they were soldiers in several battles who were so tired that it was for them a rest to drive home captives. They were taken out from the battle lines and put on an easier assignment. And one of the Russians was a very nice and religious guy, and liked me very much when he found out that I am a priest, against the Nazis, holy pictures, he was kissing the holy picture, and he kept always his eyes on me, and he said to me, and this time I spoke Slovak, so when I spoke slowly Slovak and he spoke slowly Russian, we were able to understand each other, and he said to me, "Reverend, I don't even mind if we lose the war, but I wish we would lose because I didn't see my family for six years." He had either six or seven children, I don't know, he was at this time fifty or fifty-two and at the present moment I am quite older than him and I look much younger than this man was at this time. He looked totally as an old tired person. And on this morning, when his superior, wanted to shoot me to death, this I know only from the Hungarian because I fell down from the stairs and the way I was spent, and this my Hungarian told me, that I was almost sure to be killed, and this guy just brought out horses from the stable, and he saw that the guy is just taking out the gun from his shoulder, and I am there as a useless piece of trash. And he left the two horses and he said, rushed to this man, and it was winter and it was ice, and he kicked the foot of the other man, so he slipped on the ice and fell on his fanny.

*TIBOR BARANSKI [5-1-77]*

*Tape five, side two:*

TB: Okay.

JF: Okay.

TB: So when the good Russian kicked the bad one, and he slipped down on the ice, and his gun was shooting off a few bullets, but thank God, in the wrong direction, then he was even beating his superior, I know it from the Hungarians, not from myself, and he said to his superior, that you are a bad guy so and so, because you want to shoot someone who has fainted, who did not attack you, that he does not deserve any of this. And there he was so nice, pick me up, and put me in this carriage which he was driving, because the very sick Hungarians were taken to [unclear] Szekszarv the city, and those who were, only 85 persons had to walk after these carriages and this is only my last little fun that I was almost killed by love, because later on this man did give me a little bit to drink from Hungarian wine. Now try to imagine, I got food, not regular one, four times in sixteen days. Now he gave me wine, even this, okay, would be fine, but when we got into the city, I don't know, in 40 minutes or 45 minutes, some of the Hungarians were pity on us when they saw us, and they were standing in line for food [unclear], and even this food which was even burned, they didn't take it home; they gave to us because they saw we are much, much worse shape than their own family. This was the real nice and this can give you, my dear Americans, a picture of the Hungarians. They were not all so bad. When you are a momma and the reason that you stand in line for your family, and right away forget about your family when see people in more miserable shape, and the milk which could be drank or something else, which was given out, they gave to us. And, therefore, the love almost killed me because they really rushed to us. I was just on the side of the carriage and asked me, "Pick up something and eat and drink!" Guess what, since the Russian gave me wine about 45 minutes earlier and she gave me milk, I started with the diarrhea and I almost died. By the grace of God, as I told you, I looked at them end of this pilgrimage so like a Russian Jew, like a Jew in a concentration camp, the Russian made me out, and it took me three months to because again like a human being and to be able to walk.

JF: You were permitted to go back to Budapest?

TB: When they gave us back to this hospital, emergency hospital, or temporary hospital, they didn't want to bother themselves. They said that this group. I can say it was 120, 130, all the rest of the group, they had to march, [unclear] all the time. As far as I know, nobody of this 1,500 or 2,000 of my group came back. So our little group of ill people were left there and they said, "These miserable Hungarians, okay, they can go home."

JF: When you returned to Budapest, was there any opportunity to continue your rescue work at that point?



TB: At this time, the Jewish rescuing was no more because, as I mentioned before, that for a considerable time, I don't know how many months Jews were not bothered any longer, but even for a while Catholic priests were not. That came later. That was the double order that the soldiers got, don't bother the clerical people, priests and nuns and monks for a while, and definitely not the Jews. This was the strictest order because Stalin wanted it to appear before the West against the bad Nazis and he is the liberator [unclear]. So I was really depressed when about two or three years ago we had in Washington the Liberators conference for two-and-a-half days, and all those people who were still alive [unclear] were invited who freed the Jewish concentration camps. And some of them were Russian soldiers, and they wanted to introduce me to them, and said to my Jews, "Don't do because I will turn away and not [unclear]." They even reprimanded the leader of our, of the Jewish, of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, my Transylvanian Hungarian Jew, Elie Wiesel, Hungarian [unclear], because I said to him that you would have had the moral obligation to describe the letter to Moscow, and say [unclear] yes it is dog that these came to the Death Camps, but you are the same damn guys as the Nazis were, and you made only a shop window work. The liberation was in the Pseudo-Liberation because at the same time in your tents in Russia, you called thousands of Jews, only we didn't know about it. So we have nothing against those nice people who did the action, but we have something against those people who have the Red Star on their cap, because they represent another system who are just as bad as the Nazis. For this reason, we don't invite them. But, you, Elie had not the guts. And the Jews would have the first mission in the world to fight against Communism and prove to the world that this is nothing else but another continuation of Nazism, the Red Nazis of the Brown Communists. Just the same, and the difference is that Nazism was therefore less dangerous. For whom was Nazism dangerous? [unclear] the Jews, the Hungarians, this and that. Because, for us a 60 million German unit under dictatorship is a danger, but can you imagine, my dear listener, I don't know when you listen 60, 70 years from now, what you will understand what you have heard in this time but I want to tell you that after you see all the Germans unite, or all Italians unite, ok, ok, very fine. Can you imagine a slogan "All workers of the world unite?" Can you imagine that slogan? So if I can make busy the workers only for half a year, only for half a year, the time will be enough to establish a Communist world domination, and there is no back. What you see, my dear audience, why is Communism from Russia, because a Czar was a devil. The poor Russians had a dream, they would become much bigger, better than the Czar and not even the lousy conditions, that you can promise me anything, I will join this thing. So the Czar was really bad, but you see speak again, you hear again somebody, who has again interesting experience, because my own father, God give him eternal peace, he fell in Russian captivity in 1916 and came home in 1920. He was in captivity for little bit more than year under Czarism and almost three years under Communism. My father did not fell in Russian captivity only as a Hungarian, but he has a Polish and Slovak origin. My father spoke perfectly Polish perfectly. Slovak. He learned

Russian within less than two years after being in possession of two Slovak languages. My father understood immediately everything what was going on around him and when I said to him, "Papa, can you give me a little grasp of how was everything?" listen now to a sentence which comes from somebody who was an eyewitness there. He said to me, "Son, Czarism was very bad. A lord could kill his serf but if he did not, usually people had enough food, had clothes, sometimes the clothes were very crude but they had enough clothes, enough shelter. Now came Communism and from this time on, was absolutely no personal security and safety, was no food, was no clothes, and was no shelter." And, my dear listeners, you can believe someone, my father is an apolitical man, not like his son. At least I am not a professional politician, but I am interested, but Papa was a normal [unclear] person, but he experienced all these three years in Russia. Russians would believe Communists surely because the Csar was dead. Nobody ever dreamed that can come something which was much, much, much worse.

JF: When you returned to Budapest, were you able to resume your studies to become a priest?

TB: Yes, now here we come to a section, which is totally my private. I will answer moderately because here is something that I very likely, I can't promise exactly, I guess in about two or three years I will touch in a book, but what I can tell you, yes, for a while they allowed me to continue my studies. However, very soon started an ordinance of persecution of the Church, and soon came a lot of restrictions. We had in Hungary a lot of Church schools, and what can I say again, it is again so difficult because to talk to a man who came from there, my listeners, [unclear] Know the difference try to believe me now that I am not a Catholic chauvinist. The Church schools, even the government schools were excellent in Hungary before Communism, but the Church schools were much better. If you would watch here how many people here finish their studies, excellent Hungarian schools, we were in church schools, not only Catholic persons, but others. The reason is, therefore, it was because many of these people who taught in these schools, in the Catholic schools, were monks. They had absolutely nothing else to do only to teach, a monk has no wife, no children, so our study pattern in Catholic schools was absolutely superb. I myself did not attend Catholic schools at all until I started my studies for the priesthood. I attended government schools or public schools, but they were very good, very good so our level was excellent. The communists, from about, I would say, they entered, and they finished conquering Hungary, they started conquering Hungary early in summer or early fall '44, and they finished conquering Hungary on fourth of April 1945. I would say, in less than three or four months organized church persecution started, which means you cannot send a child to the [unclear] religious education.

JF: And that stopped your education as well?

TB: This not because by this time I was already in the university [unclear], and for a while, that came later when they closed this seminary and that seminary. At that time when this came, I was already imprisoned. The general closing of the seminaries and so

and so started from '48 on. And they imprisoned me on 5th or 6th of November 1948. So it will be very soon thirty-eight year anniversary of my imprisonment.

JF: And you were imprisoned for your anti-communistic activities.

TB: In my case, this does not belong so much, only that you should know the person who talked to you, I was really a very active young man, so I was involved in the underground work, but I can tell you again, which would be for the listener very interesting, that around 90% of those in the prison around me were absolutely innocent. The only crime, they had either some person good what they wanted to confiscate, so they wanted to put on the crime and say, you will be sentenced to jail for ten years and all confiscation be removed. So at that time they let the guy come out after three years. But they never give him back his good. It depends on his good. So this was one of the reasons, or, you want to send your child for a religious education, and they found another ground, they locked you in prison, or you didn't want to enter the Communist party. They wanted to force as many people as possible to enter the Communist party, and if people did not want to do this, you lost your job. You were a physician you were this, you were that, they definitely wanted me in an intellectual I should enter the Communist party to be made an example to the peasant, and to the workers, but the intellectuals did not want to do it so this was the main reason in my group, thank God we were active me, and tragically we were active. Yes, we were both involved in spying and conspiracy, if you can call it conspiracy against an illegal system, so when the judge said that I am a conspirator, and I [unclear] and you can hear that the speaker is a whole idiot, I told her, "Judge, the conspirators are you Communists, cause the greatest conspirators you want to steal from mankind the belief in God and belief in positive morals. I am not a conspirator. When I come out from jail I will continue my work against you until you are out of Hungary." But the minute you say that under Stalin's time, we called a Stalin year in the last five years of Stalin, '48 to '53, and the speaker was unfortunate to be just at this time in prison with the Communists and the Russians, so this is the reason why they almost destroyed many of us because the treatment they gave us was really just equal to the Nazis. I was together in one cell with a Jewish rabbi, Moishe Weizer; he is now the rabbi in Vienna. He was my cellmate. He had a tattoo on his arm, either from Auschwitz or from [unclear], I forget which. His first wife and children were killed there, and his Hungarian name is not Moishe but [unclear] so I called him sometimes Moishe sometimes [unclear], Lajos and he said to me, "Tibor I can tell you, because the Nazis did not concentrate too much on individual torture unless you came to a..." who was this miserable doctor, who did the research?

JF: Mengele.

TB: Mengele. If you didn't get to such a group, they usually didn't bother you individually, too much very rare. They let you work to death, or let you starve to death, but the Communists, they came to our cells three, four times a night, beating you and kicking you, cutting out, smashing the [unclear], etc. So many people got a nervous breakdown from this permanent bothering. And this Jewish rabbi told me that, "I was in both, I know

what I am talking; this is worse than the other one, and I wish they would kill me now.” No, they don’t, they specialize in torturing. Then I was together for another year with a Jewish choirmaster in the Communist cell. And, you see, if I would have had this interview, about fifteen years ago, but in the meantime I forget everything, because in prison we didn’t get books. So I taught him a little Latin, and this and that, and the Jews taught me the Jewish prayers, so when I came to the United States in 1961, I was still able to pray the Kiddush with my Jewish friends. If you want I can intone for you the *Shabbos*, so like this Jewish choirmaster, even now, *l’cho dodi*, I can sing you a Chanukah song, I can sing you the national anthem of Israel, in Hebrew words, *Kol od va-levau*.

JF: Mr. Baranski, you have been honored by *Yad Vashem* for your work.

TB: Yes.

JF: As a righteous Gentile. You have been honored, and we are very lucky to have you as a member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. We want to thank you so much for sharing your time with us, and for us to be able to thank you for all that you have done for Hungary.

TB: Let me answer you, Mrs. Fisher, with this nice verse. This is a famous Protestant slogan [unclear] and the craziness, I don’t want to bother [unclear]. They thought that the Catholics are adoring the saints, such as [unclear]and, therefore, they are against our attitude, but they are wrong, they [lengthy passage unclear]. They answer to us, when they thought that we do this [unclear], solely [unclear] we should give glory only to God [unclear] so I, the Catholic, answers you with this famous Protestant slogan: “The glory is only to God.” When I, the little crooked guy, is named “Righteous Gentile,” I need to say that not only in my face, but in my soul, I feel a blush; I don’t deserve it.

My nice Jewish friends in [unclear] were so nice, surely I accepted it because I saw that they [unclear] love, I accepted. [unclear] garden of *Yad Vashem*, but I said to them, “Look, [unclear] asked the good Lord to send me down an angel [unclear] because all this belongs to him.” What is real God’s [unclear] is this, that such a little nothing like me, by the eternal permission of God could have been part of this magnificent plan to save human lives, so the appointment [unclear passage] when God is so helpful, coming down to a little lousy man and allowing him to be part of a blessing program, be so kind and [unclear] please God, and be sensitive that maybe God restores you in some blessed programs. Many of them are indirectly [unclear]human life, [unclear], become papas, become mamas, become teachers, become physicians. Many blessed programs are [unclear] fulfill what God wants you [lengthy unclear passage] our little nothings [unclear] we can’t deny the spirit and the love of God. [unclear] Thank you very much.