

**TURKL, Eugen**

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**Abstract**

Eugen Turkl was born in Baja (then in Yugoslavia) in 1903. His family kept kosher, but was not very religious. He had Christian as well as Jewish friends. He saw no anti-Semitism in Baja until August 20, 1921, after Hungary re-annexed it, and he heard Hungarian officers singing, "...every Jew is a scoundrel."

[Baja's Jews were deported in May 1944. He estimates that 80 percent of them, about 1,800, died in "labor service." Eugen and his younger sister were the Turkl family's only survivors.]

He went to Budapest in 1927, married Marica in 1928, and had a daughter, Evi.

In autumn 1940, he and other men were taken to a labor camp in Transylvania for three months. They all returned in good health, he said. Eugen was exempted from subsequent labor deportations because he worked for a factory whose goods were regarded as essential.

Eugen did not have to wear a Jewish star, due to his exemption, but his wife and daughter did. The family had to move to one of the houses in Budapest where Jews were allowed to live.

Despite the exemption, Eugen was put in a larger deportation and scheduled to be marched to Austria. His younger sister escaped and returned to Budapest, where she passed as Christian.

Eugen was saved from the deportation line by getting someone to say he was awaiting Swedish protection. Raoul Wallenberg, at the train station, said such people should not be deported.

Eugen compares Swedish protection and Swiss protection.

His wife's family members, with others, were marched onto planks in the Danube, forced to stand for hours in sub-zero weather, and then shot by Hungarian Arrow Cross soldiers.

Eugen, his wife, and daughter barely escaped the same fate, after soldiers talked to Wallenberg.

He says of Wallenberg, "Everyone had no doubt that there was a young attaché who was brave and did everything."

## Tape I, Side

Eugen Turkl: ...It was about the year 1800 that my ancestors got to Hungary, when Joseph II let Jews settle down in Hungary, but only in the villages. Well, Hercegszanto is about 30 kilometers from Baja, and my great-grandfather and I can't tell you if he went there or he was born there, you know. So, it was maybe my great-great grandfather, no... my great-great grandfather got there and he had been born abroad, but as a young man he got there. My grandfather was born in Hercegszanto in 1850, at the time when it was necessary, that...and his family had come much earlier to Hungary. Well, at Hercegszanto, the Jewish religious community still was in existence, between '36 and '45.

Peter Bajtay: Was it a large religious community in Hercegszanto?

Eugen Turkl: I don't know how large it was, but there lived quite a lot of Jews. I visited Hercegszanto twice, with my grandfather. My grandfather had only one younger brother, who lived in Yugoslavia, and every year he came to Baja to visit their mother's tomb in Hercegszanto. But not their father./.../ I got to Baja in 1928, and to Pest in 1927 ... But they kept going there, that uncle of my father's came every year, you know. And they went there. At that time, there must have been quite a large community, and it had all the documents, and I got to know the date when my grandfather had been born, in 1850.

Peter Bajtay: And when were you born?

Eugen Turkl: In 1903.

Peter Bajtay: And were you born in Hercegszanto?

Eugen Turkl: No, in Baja. Then my grandfather, they went to Baja. My grandfather's father was an old man already, he was a widower, and he got to Vinkovci (Vinkovci, Croatia) and sometimes he stayed in Baja or with one of his sons, but that younger son was

Peter Bajtay: What did your father do?

Eugen Turkl: Now, just wait a minute, I tell you that my great-great grandfather dealt with textiles. He had a shop selling textiles in Hercegszanto, and, besides, he was the postmaster there. So, at that time postal traffic must have been very little in Hercegezanto, but, at any rate, he was the one, as my grandfather told me about when they went shopping to Pest by a gig, and it took them three days to get from Hercegezanto to Pest, and then they did the shopping, then there was no other kind of communication only the cart. I was born in 1903, and continued my studies in Baja and later in Szabadka (Subotica, Serbia), because in Baja there was no school of commerce. And I came to Pest in 1927, and got married in 1928.

Peter Bajtay: What was your family's social and financial situation like?

Eugen Turkl: Well, my father worked for long years in Baja at a big textile firm called Reich Parkas ... My father wanted to make himself independent already in 1912. The work with the Reich was such that employees there each looked after different villages. So, they knew my father as well as we did, everybody knew him, and they went shopping in Baja. Then, after the

First World War, he became independent in Baja, in 1918. It was also a shop selling textiles, and there I got, too, after finishing school.

Peter Bajtay: How many children were there in your family?

Eugen Turkl: Three, originally, but the youngest died at a very early age. Then my father was still in Bacsalmas, and that child was born after me. They had an employee in Bacsalmas, there was also a quite big shop, not a department store, but a big shop. I think he was there for just a few years, and he worked for Reich until 1918, and in 1919 he became independent.

Peter Bajtay: Were your family religious?

Eugen Turkl: No. My mother kept to religious rules to some extent, to a hundred per cent, her father was a cantor in Baja. So, he was a very religious man whom we didn't know, we even didn't see a photo of him, because he said, that a religious man wouldn't have a photo made of himself without a hat on /../ So, never, only our grandmother told about him from time to time, he died in Baja, quite early.

Peter Bajtay: Were the children brought up in a religious spirit?

Eugen Turkl: No. You know, in a religious spirit, look, the number of Jewish inhabitants in Baja, before the war starting in 1938 was around 2,000.

Peter Bajtay: What was Baja's Jewish population?

Eugen Turkl: About 10 percent, about 8 to 10 percent. And quite early, I know this from later events, younger ones quite early left Baja, as there were less possibilities than in Pest or in other parts of the country, or somewhere abroad. So, when it happened, the Jewry were exterminated, 80 percent of the Jewry. Then the number of Jews was about 1,800.

Peter Bajtay: Did they live in a closed community or where they assimilated?

Eugen Turkl: They were assimilated. Absolutely. There were no Orthodox Jews at all. Religious Jews 00-150. In Baja, markets were held twice a week, on Wednesdays and on Saturdays. Well, some of the tradesmen were open during those weekly markets. Altogether, there might have been 20 persons in Baja, who were absolutely religious Jews. Well, a hundred percent. My mother also kept to everything, but the family were by no means bigoted.

Peter Bajtay: But your father didn't, at all.

Eugen Turkl: My father was a very good Jew, and I was always astonished as how well he could pray, and we couldn't pray properly in Hebrew, you know. But he didn't keep to the customs, he had to travel a lot in his business. He traveled to Vienna and Pest.

Peter Bajtay: But at home you all celebrated the holidays, didn't you?

Eugen Turkl: Yes, holidays were observed, absolutely, and our cuisine was kosher, too. But we, the children and our father didn't keep to the /../ At home, we ate no other kind of food but kosher food. But we belonged to a generation, and seemingly my father, too, who didn't observe customs already, still we celebrated all the holidays /...

Peter Bajtay: You have mentioned your education. Did you go to an elementary school in Baja?

Eugen Turkl: To an elementary and to a higher elementary school.

Peter Bajtay: Wasn't there a Jewish school?

Eugen Turkl: No, not at that time already. My uncle still went to a Jewish school, but my father did not. My father also attended a higher elementary school, my uncle I don't know where, he was the youngest in the family, there were five children altogether, three sisters and two brothers. So, my uncle went to the Jewish higher elementary school in Baja. That Jewish higher elementary school was on such a high level, that when my uncle got to Pest, he could get the best job available. It was such a school. Then, at the First World War, and when the First World War began, I then went to a higher elementary school. /.../ The one in Baja was quite a big one, but I went there only for a year. Then it was moved to the building of the Association of Young Tradesmen, that which was situated next to the higher elementary school of Baja, and as there – to the building of the higher elementary school – the wounded were taken, the school was removed. It was quite a large building, well, naturally crowded, but the teachers, too, most of the teachers had been called up. Most of the teachers were retired ones, and they were called up. My daughter left Hungary in 1940 (?). She could return last year for the first time. She graduated from the University of Medicine in Paris and then married a Frenchman. ...

Peter Bajtay: And after passing your final exam at the secondary school?

Eugen Turkl: Then I worked in the shop. My younger sister is six years younger than I, we two are the only survivors from our family. All the others were killed or died. Well, there I learnt a lot from my father. During the holidays, he also took me to Baja, because then Baja still belonged to Yugoslavia, for three years, well, you know, the Yugoslavs occupied Baja, and the part of Hungary south of Pecs in '18 and then, you know, my father kept traveling to Zagreb, Belgrade and Fiume (Rijeka, Croatia), and somewhere else, too, where there were such factories for wholesale, to buy materials. And it was not so as it had been before the War. There were very few of the well-known Austro-Hungarian goods. And there were new articles, which had to be seen what they were like, because they were not known. It was mainly the Italians who quickly after the First War started producing. And then my father always told me to go with him, as everything we would buy had to be taken a good look at, and so I could also learn. I learnt a lot from him, and I gained a lot ... I owe him a lot, very much. ...

Peter Bajtay: I wonder if you thought of continuing your studies after passing the final exam at the secondary school?

Eugen Turkl: No. Look, in our family there were merchants and tradesmen, I say, my great grandfather was such. Do you want to have a look at his photo? He looks like a real Hungarian man. In Baja, there lived a family who had also come from Hercegszanto and who were very good friends of mine, and their father told me that my great-grandfather, if there had been some wedding or else, then it had been a celebration lasting for three days, because he had lived just the way the people of Hercegszanto had. Anyway, in Hercegszanto there were Hungarians,

Germans, just a few Germans, and they were neither Slovaks nor Banievatzes /Serbians.... They were such Shokatzes. One part of Hercegszanto were Hungarians, the most part, a very small part Germans, and about 20 per cent Shokatzes. So, my great-grandfather, you will also see him wearing national costume, were completely assimilated. ...

Peter Bajtay: Wasn't it a problem in your family if someone was a Jew or a Hungarian? In the family?

Eugen Turkl: No. My friends, I mean my Hungarian friends were good friends of mine just like my Jewish friends. In Baja, we lived in Jozseivaros (Josvafo ?), it was let's say an eight-minute walk from the inner city, and that part was called Jozsefvaros (Josvafo ?). And there I was on good terms with the Christian boys just like with Jewish boys.

Peter Bajtay: So, it can't be said that you were brought up in an expressively Jewish consciousness.

Eugen Turkl: No, in Hungarian, I'm sorry but I must tell you and this shouldn't be recorded, that we were brought up in the Hungarian spirit. And it was a great mistake. Many were destroyed because they hadn't been able to imagine why, when all of us had been Hungarians, only our religions had been different. I can tell you ... that terms like Zionism and anti-Semitism weren't quite clear to me. I met Zionism when the daughter of my grandfather's younger brother got married and a son was born to them, you know boys are circumcised or Christened normally, and my grandfather said he would naturally go to see that boy in Vinkovci. Grandfather was quite old then and he was told not to go alone but that I should go with him. I was about 17 then. So, I and my grandfather went there by ship, because at that time one could go by ship from Baja to Vinkovci. My grandfather's brother had no other brothers or sisters, there were only two brothers. They had sisters, too, as I learned later, but seemingly they had died earlier, because they never talked about any sisters. And then, the wife of my grandfather's younger brother, who came from a very good family, a real Jewish family, had some ten brothers and sisters. They were well-to-do people. And they had sons, and they put me in touch with them. ... We didn't go there for only one day, we spent there several days. And then those boys began to talk about Zionism. I tell you, this was like Chinese to me. They went to a so-called Haskala, a school where they were taught how to cultivate land, as their aim was to get to Palestine. The younger generation. When it was Israel, I heard that they were quite well-known there, in Israel, and they could get there. You know it was between the two world wars. Between 1918 and 1938, or I don't know exactly, every year my grandfather's younger brother came to see us, and we always heard something about the family. But it was so, that we had no contact with his wife's family.

Peter Bajtay: Let's return to the twenties now?

Eugen Turkl: ...At that time, we the young ones were responsive to new ideas through literature, we read Ady, Babits... Baja belonged to Yugoslavia, but poems by Ady got to Hungary and they were in fashion then, in Hungary conditions were terribly bad, you know, and after the First World War and the Communism, many from Baja fled there. They didn't live in Baja one could get everything, and my uncle gave him food to bring to his family. People only

ate vegetable marrow, because there was nothing else to eat. It was during the first Communism, in 1919. Well, then once a week, in the evening both Christian and Jewish boys came together. It must have been on Saturday evening, as at that time people still worked on Saturdays, and we got together and discussed things. Not politics, only literature. There were ones who stood up for old literature and we, several of us who loved Ady. Well, Hungarians came on 20 August 1941, 1921, well, the Yugoslavs handed over Hercegszanto and such to the Hungarians, because originally they had occupied them.

Peter Bajtay: It was in 1921.

Eugen Turkl: They occupied it as far as Pecs, but there were no Serbians there. In Baja, there were about 20-25 Serbians altogether, or 30. Well, then, on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1921, the Hungarians came in, only clerks to enter on duties, and I can remember well, that on 20<sup>th</sup> August we were all standing there, it didn't matter if one was Hungarian or Jewish, and we sang Hungarian songs and such, mainly the youth, you know. Because that part again belonged to Hungary. And we were afraid that Serbian policemen and soldiers would come and molest us, but nothing happened. But the town commandant, the Serbian town commandant, said them to leave us alone, because it was understandable that then again when the town had been re-annexed, people were happy. So we say. Now, then the following Saturday evening we gathered together, there were some 20 of us, who lived in that part of the town and opposite us there was, it was not a pub or inn, but a kind of restaurant, which had a separate room. It was always there that we gathered and had talks. We drank coffee or wine or I don't know what. And then, not in that separate room but outside, some Hungarian officers appeared and started singing, "Berger, Berger Salzberger, every Jew is a scoundrel." Well, we said, we were "happy" to hear that such things are in fashion in Hungary. And then we stopped getting together. That no one should have thought they had been political meetings. So, on the one hand, this was the case: I didn't know Zionism, as we had been brought up to be Hungarians. And though we were always told we were Jews, but Hungarians. On the other hand, you know, there was no anti-Semitism in Baja. You know that in Baja in 1912, there were two Reich families. To one of them belonged a young lawyer and he was elected MP in 1912, as opposed to the young minister of the interior... This shows, that well, I don't say that, I'm sure and the Reich family must have voted for the minister, because at that time, the rich ones had to vote for the government, but... a very high percent of the town's population voted for Dr. Aladar Radjk, as he belonged to the Independence Party, and the fact that he was a Jew didn't matter at all. The only thing that was important was that he was a young lawyer of good reputation who belonged to the Independence Party.

Peter Bajtay: Was it after Baja had been re-annexed to Hungary?

Eugen Turkl: There was no anti-Semitism in Baja. It was an interesting thing that in Baja, the Jews didn't convert to the Christian faith. The first Jew to get converted was a young Jew, a young Jewish family rather, he was the son of a grocer, and the other was not a native of Baja, he had just got there, and he was a bank manager, and his wife. That was not in fashion in Baja, people were good Hungarians there. Do you know that before the First World War, or after it, too – I don't know if you know what Kol Nidre is. Yom Kippur?

Peter Bajtay: No.

Eugen Turkl: It is the greatest, you know the day of conciliation, the greatest holiday of the Jewry. The so-called Yom Kippur. And that evening, the evening before the holiday was celebrated by even not so good Jews and even by non-religious ones. So that Yom Kippur evening, it was such, there was a cantor who had such a very good voice, that today he could be an opera singer, and it was said that the cause that he was a cantor in Baja was that he was a real man and in Baja he was forgiven for it, because, otherwise we wouldn't have had such a good cantor. And, you know, the mayor of Baja and all those who were of considerable rank, all those officials were present on that evening, which was the greatest holiday of the Jewry, and they also heard the whole evening through, the Yom Kippur, as that cantor, Berger sang. So I can tell you, that we are on good terms with Christian boys, Christian friends, well, with those who lived in that part of the town... Well, there was a form in the secondary school in Baja, of which it was said that this was the first such form, as quite a high percent of the pupils there, well not 10 or 20 percent but maybe more than 50 percent, were Jewish boys.

Peter Bajtay: So, in your family it was neglected that anti-Semitism existed.

Eugen Turkl: No. One of my uncles, well, one of the Turkl daughters married a Christian man. She married a Christian man in 1907. It was quite a big event, you know. Because to the so-called middle class, not rich, you know the Turkl were always people of high reputation, but didn't belong to the so-called rich men. They lived under quite good conditions. My aunt worked at a shop selling articles of fashion for men and women in Baja and my uncle Vincek also worked there. They fell in love with each other. My uncle stated that if it was needed he would be converted to the Jewish faith. My grandparents, the Turkl grandparents were also good Jews but were not so religious. Not at all. So, they didn't insist on that so much, not like my mother's or my grandmother's family. They were 100 percent Jews.

Peter Bajtay: So, you said, in 1921 Baja got back to Hungary. But Horthy...

Eugen Turkl: I say, I left in 1927, there was nothing like that, of which it could have been said, that people let's say, look, well, relatively...

Peter Bajtay: Were you touched by the numerous clauses?

Eugen Turkl: Not my nearest relatives, as none of us wanted to study at a university, but my cousins were, who were my father's relatives. There were two, one of them got to Zagreb University and the other to Vienna...

Peter Bajtay: To what extent did your peaceful life change when, in 1927 you got to Pest? ...

Eugen Turkl: Look, it was quite natural that I then got into a completely different circle than the one in Baja, and it was because of my wife. My father-in-law was an army officer while being a Jew and he was discharged with a pension as a lieutenant, because he didn't want to be converted to the Catholic faith. My father-in-law and his children, my wife being the oldest daughter in the family, were members of the Association of Hungarian Tourists. In 1927, when I had come to

Pest, they were politely asked to leave that association, as Jews were undesirable there, well there was no objection against them, but they were told to join some other association of tourists.

Peter Bajtay: Can we say that after getting to Pest your Jewish consciousness became stronger, as in your circle of friends or relatives there happened such things like this pensioning off of your father-in-law?

Eugen Turkl: You know, when the first laws were issued from 1938, my father-in-law said, "never mind, children." He said there had always been something, some anti-Semitism or such, but not to be afraid of it. He said, they had always been good Hungarians, so they had nothing to be afraid of. We told him not to be so optimistic. We were not and we were much afraid that harder times would follow. But, you know, he had grown up in a completely different world... Among my wife's acquaintances, there were Jews and Christians alike. The people in Budapest always lived in another environment than those in Pest ...

Peter Bajtay: Pest was more urban.

Eugen Turkl: Yes. Budapest was more provincial. Well, my wife, her father and her younger sister were tourists. At that time, there was an association called Gyopar/Cottonweed. Most of the members of which were Jews, you know, because we couldn't join the other association. My wife was even the secretary of that association -- They built a house. I mean the Gyopar association, it was I think 30 kilometers from Pest, and it was not a house of stories, but it had a kind of gallery, and they went there and gave it the name, "Marics Stairs." I often went on excursions with them. It doesn't mean that there were not Christian people among them, but most of them were Jews.

Peter Bajtay: How do you think, whether Hungarian policy between the two world wars were anti-Semitic or not?

Eugen Turkl: Look, this cannot be said, one can only say that it all began with Combs, when a minister officially announced that he was anti-Semitic...

Peter Bajtay: And was the Hungarian society anti-Semitic or were there...

Eugen Turkl: Look, those living in Budapest were anti-Semitic. They were born anti-Semitic.

Peter Bajtay: Will you give details?

Eugen Turkl: Look, I can't describe it in details, because I relatively, we lived in Budapest, too, after getting married, but those living in Budapest, you know, were more conservative and they didn't like Jews, in spite of the fact that Arnold Kiss, Chief Rabbi in Budapest, was the greatest Hungarian. It can be said that the greatest Hungarian was Szechenyi, you know. But if you read poems by Arnold Kiss, or prayer books by him published in Hungarian, and which, of course, were addressed to the Jewry, but at the same time to the Hungarians, too, because he was as great a Hungarian as a Jew...

Peter Bajtay: Despite there were anti-Semitic people living on the Budapest side, ... There must have been Jews there?

Eugen Turkl: Yes, much less. ...

### **Tape I, Side B**

Peter Bajtay: Can it be said that in the thirties you felt defenseless, or more uncertain as a consequence of being a Jew? Because of Gombos's statements, etc, before the Jewish laws?

Eugen Turkl: No, look, in general I wasn't interested in politics. I must tell you that my father, who didn't belong to those who were engaged in politics, was interested in one thing. Actually, in two things. His family and the trade, which was important for him. During the German occupation, about 600 Jews were taken away from Baja to Topola (Topola, Serbia), and they were under very bad conditions. My father was 66 then. He was discharged. It was said that the others had been taken to Germany, and elderly ones got back to Baja. And at the firm, where I worked, there was an employee there, it was me who had brought him there, a young man, also from Baja, a Christian boy, who had been an apprentice when my father had been employed by the Reichs. And he knew my father very well. He had worked beside my father. And then I heard that my father had been taken to Szeged from Topola (Topola, Serbia), and he, when he left the Reichs, got to Szeged, too, so he knew Szeged well. There he lived for long years and then got to Pest... I asked him to travel to Szeged and bring my father some food and money. I didn't know in what way he had got there. I knew that they were staying at some barracks, because I had got a postcard from him. So, that young man traveled to Szeged and found my father quickly. He knew him, so there was no problem. And my father wrote me a long letter. He wrote -- unfortunately I haven't got that letter now, I have lost it, as many other things have been lost. My father wrote me, but it was before the Jews from Baja were taken away. "You know, my son, when I was a young apprentice, I lived under hard conditions, in the sense that then there were order prohibiting several things, and later, too, I had to work hard, but what happened to me here was really, not that we had to work very, very hard, but how we were treated, and we had to stand in queues already at dawn, and we stood there for an hour, but now, thanks to God, it's all over. We are here now, and I hope that soon I'll go back to Baja, and then it will be over... And then again I can live my ordinary life." Poor father, he got to Baja, and immediately into the wagon. I ran after the wagon, and I found my mother. Two youths who had returned from hell, from Auschwitz, told us that my father had found my mother and they were taken in death together. But he was an optimist even then, and couldn't imagine that any harm would be done to him or that he would be killed, as he had always been a good Hungarian, he had never done any harm to anyone, he had never said he had been a Jew first of all. He had always been correct, he had always worked and lived for his family. I must tell you that then my father worked in a company together with another man. His companion committed such things, that improvence (?) had to be announced in '27. And I kept going to Pest in 1927 very often. And I, the 20-year-old boy undertook it, because my father said he'd rather commit suicide, but would not go to those to whom he had been going for years, and who had respected him, so would he go and say that... (inaudible). So, in the end, I undertook it. I ear-witnessed the following conversation. I was going home to Baja from Pest by ship. I say, we often went to Pest, because I arranged the composition of the whole firm. And there were people from Baja sitting there, some of them I knew well. There were three or four "Linen Slovaks", you know

who they were, they were Slovaks but had got to Hungary and under quite good conditions, as there were three or four of them, who kept going to textile markets, but they were well-to-do people. There was one among them, whose name I can remember even today, Schulek. He was the oldest among them, their senior. They didn't recognize me. I heard them say, "What do you say to it, that he was a good and correct dealer." ... And they said they "felt sorry for Turkl, because he had been such an excellent, correct, honest, and good dealer. We had done many deals with him, but it had never happened, that ..." I say my father in that letter of his, if I had that letter, but as far as I can remember... He couldn't imagine that, though it happened at the end of May '44, then the Jews from Baja were deported, why they would do any harm to him, as he had not done anything in his life. Because he was of Jewish religion, but he couldn't choose when he was born. I always say, when someone talks like this, that he says he is Christian, when I speak to Hungarians, "Did anyone ask you or the stork, because at that time storks brought the child, where to put him, whether to the Turkl's or the neighbors, to a Christian woman ... (inaudible). They didn't ask anything, but put one here and the other over there. No one could choose where to get when born.

Peter Bajtay: Getting back to the thirties, when Hitler came into power and the racist laws were issued.

Eugen Turkl: Look, in Hungary at that time, relatively...

Peter Bajtay: You got to know it, and how did you react?

Eugen Turkl: I tell you. This... I was in Vienna in '23-'24. I lived there. I told my father, one could never know what would happen, and I'd like to know a little German well, and see something else, too. My father had often done deals in Vienna and at the Gerngross, which was the biggest department store there, they also sold things in England. Well, he arranged for me to work there, at Gerngross' as an apprentice. And really, I stayed there one or two years, it was in '23 - '24, but it wasn't two whole years as I got there in Spring 1923 and returned to Baja in Autumn 1924. And there lived Ujlakl's father, who was born in my grandmother's house, the same house where we lived in Baja... And he helped me a lot when I was in Austria. Well, and he didn't take up Austrian citizenship but remained a Hungarian citizen, Illes Fischer. And when Hitler invaded Austria, Fischer had a Hungarian passport, so he left there everything and traveled to Hungary, because he thought, as he was the representative of an English firm, that the firm would send him an entry permit. And so it happened, well, Hitler invaded Austria in '38 and then, in '38 he (Fischer) went to Budapest. A brother of his lived there. He stayed there only for some months and then he got the entry permit and went to England.

Peter Bajtay: When Austria was invaded in '38, you wrote in your recollections, you suspected that Hungary the same loss would befall Hungary, too. You thought, the Germans would go further and invade Hungary, too...

Eugen Turkl: Of course, we know that, and what I wanted to say was that this friend of mine hadn't told a lot. He appeared when in Vienna, Jews were already made to wash up the thingummy (?). And this happened and other things happened, but he didn't tell a lot. He was a bachelor, he never got married, and he didn't talk a lot. Still, we heard enough. I must say that

even after Austria was invaded, we went to Switzerland, because we had kind acquaintances, relatives of my wife's, distant relatives, whom we hadn't known until then. We went together on holiday to Italy, they were elderly people, and we made friends with them. So they invited us to come to Ballen. It was about 50-60 kilometers from Zurich. The others of them, because they were two brothers, lived in Lausanne. Both of them were very well-to-do. And you know, because Austria had been invaded, we traveled via Yugoslavia and Italy, went to Zurich, you know, and that elderly man and his wife weren't much engaged in politics. They owned a jeweler's shop. And I asked them if one could bargain there and he said, why, if they could sell something cheaper, they would. We were also taken on excursions. The mayor and the tailor of a small town organized excursions once a year, not for all, but only for those who graduated together from school. Then, in Switzerland, he told, "You know, Jenö, last year a beggar came there." And it was such a, I don't know, what that a beggar appeared there, because we said that very... They owned a very nice cottage and a very beautiful garden with it. You know, in summer there was kohlrabi and everything. And we stayed there for two weeks, and it was impossible and unimaginable that someone else would pick them when the owners would be away. "No," he said, "They knew they were mine, and who would touch the other's property?" It was such a world in Switzerland at that time, that is now unimaginable. His elder sister, who lived in Lausanne, was a simple woman, was waitress at a restaurant, that was how she started her life there. But she recognized and understood that we were thinking of settling there. Of course, there was no difficulty to do so. She could understand it, she said, she understood it. I went with her, we went with her and they showed us the whole country, Switzerland.

Peter Bajtay: Could you have stayed there?

Eugen Turkl: Well, she said the following – we didn't speak French then. We spoke German, though not fluently, and she said -- "Look, in German Switzerland, it is very difficult to settle. It is possible only if you have considerable capital." We didn't have a penny, we had some hundred Swiss Franks, which we had got when we traveled there. We had received more than what we needed. And she said that settling in French Switzerland could be arranged. She had good contacts, too. They owned something with petrol and oil and such. It was in Lausanne, at a very good place. It concerned my wife only, because they knew she spoke Hungarian, German and English fluently, but not French. The first to learn French was my daughter. She said, for one year, until she knew French so that she could work as a domestic servant. That was unimaginable. Our situation in Hungary was such that my wife worked at Metro G.M. and (inaudible), you know, was in a leading position. So, we didn't even speak about me. And there was another thing, too. Hitler also referred it. Namely that Jews liked if the family were together. We couldn't imagine that we would have fled, I and my wife, I mean, and our parents and relatives stayed, and they may have been killed. It was such a thing, to a certain extent, that should I save my life and my wife's life.

Peter Bajtay: Did you return then?

Eugen Turkl: We returned. Then, we traveled to Italy once again to Switzerland. And they also came to Hungary. They wanted to see the Hortobágy on the Hungarian Plain. We traveled to Kecskemét. They wanted to see it by all means.

Peter Bajtay: And what about the Jewish Law of '38-'39?

Eugen Turkl: Well, when in '38 the Jewish Laws were issued, they touched mainly those who worked for companies where the percentage of Jews was higher than stipulated, and who weren't in leading jobs. Because who did the firms discharge, not those who had been educated there and so they got into leading positions, as they got there not because their fathers or grandfathers were at the firm, but because they were talented. So, mainly those were touched, who lost their jobs because of the Laws. I must tell you honestly, that according to me, in '38 when I went to Baja or when Hitler attacked Poland, we succeeded in bringing Jews, Polish Jews to Hungary, and with this, you know, my grandparents had a house and it was a big flat, there two and one of their daughters lived with them, the eldest one. So, a Polish family who had got to Hungary were accommodated there in Baja. And they told them what was happening in Poland. So, at that time I had already no doubt that the countries which got into his hands had very little hope to survive.

Peter Bajtay: Did you think that the same loss would befall Hungary, too?

Eugen Turkl: Look, we Jews have a great fault, I tell you sincerely. We always have the hope that maybe it won't happen to us. It is possible a consequence of the persecutions lasting for centuries. Because those who, let's say didn't get to Spain or to further something, or lived where there was no persecution, they are always optimistic. They always thought it would not affect us. In Pest, it was said that the war would sooner be over. The fact that the Pest Jewry escaped in a relatively great number, and more precious Jews were killed, I think was caused by two things. On the one hand, because Horthy then... and I can tell you, that I, at the firm, as long as the Germans invaded Hungary, I wouldn't say I didn't feel that, and drew back to a certain extent, because I was a commercial leader. You know, during a war, goods have great value. And then the merchants and purchasers came and wanted to buy more than we could sell. Before the war, it had been just the opposite. We wanted to sell more than they wanted to buy. Can you understand how it is? In every war, there is a shortage of goods and if there is one, then he who can bring more goods can earn more and better. During a war, one can sell everything and all this, until the Germans invaded Hungary, except those who had been taken on labor service and left Hungary. Well, who got to Russian territories or anywhere else? And let's say those who belonged to the so-called Polish Jews, who weren't Hungarian citizens, because those were the first or among the first to be destroyed or taken I even don't know where, but the real trouble, you know, for example my younger sister and her husband, who had been in Baja and when they returned, the Germans had already divided Hungary. One of my uncles went to see them, her/his/ (?) parents lived somewhere also, and he asked them if they had heard that the Germans had invaded Hungary. He said nothing on earth could be seen in Baja. When travelling, they already saw German soldiers standing by the bridge in Baja. They could escape by my brother-in-law's having a card and they were let go, and several people were immediately taken away.

Peter Bajtay: On the basis of your recollections, it comes to light that in the forties, i.e. in '41-'42-'43, the Jewish question was treated relatively moderately, and Hungarian Jews could live in a relative peace. You wrote that "in 1942 you felt the influence of Jewish Laws even less," and

then, in '43, certain persons were exempted from labor service. What did you attribute it to, to the Kallay government? The Kallay government was relatively moderate.

Eugen Turkl: Yes, right, you know it was the so-called “Kallay *pas de deux*,” to the left and to the right. But he was moderate, and was quite a sly Hungarian who did so to prevent the Germans from invading Hungary. And at the same time, it couldn't be said that Hungarians were so worthless and followed the Germans in everything.

Peter Bajtay: How did you experience that pressure that had been started immediately after the Laws were loosened? I think of 1942-1943.

Eugen Turkl: Look, I tell you, in 1940, I was on labor service for three months. Then labor service was still a “nice trip” and especially for those who had some money, they could supply it...they bought something. Then one, you know, we got to Transylvania, and there we could buy something if we had money. Look, I was taken to Transylvania in Autumn 1940, a captain was the commander. We knew he was the best friend of that. Those two rascals, you know, good friends of Laszlo Endre's. When we were there, three young men were tied to poles. He said, they had laughed. And we were desperate to see them and thought, God, what would happen to us. Well, then, on the train some people managed to arrange to get into passenger coaches... And it was by chance that I also got into a passenger coach. There was a young lawyer whom I knew well, and he told me to go there, into that coach. Of course, I took a place there willingly, even if one could only sit there, and by the time we reached Transylvania, there were some very clever and good fellows, people, who could get accustomed to other people and spoke their language. So by the time we reached Transylvania, the captain was less anti-Semitic than before, that he thought that those Jews had to be exterminated. He had changed his opinion and he said, he saw there were also quite decent Jews.

Peter Bajtay: And how did he change his opinion?

Eugen Turkl: On the way to Transylvania, they had long talks with that captain, and they told him that it all was not quite like that... And, I say, when we got there, the night before we spent outdoors, as the train arrived at night and they told us to wait there, and in the morning they would tell us where we would get or taken. And those young men said, they thought we shouldn't have been afraid of that captain. The captain told one of them to work at the office. Then, those who would work in the kitchen were gathered. They said they could cook and such, and so did I get there, too. ... There was a Jewish lieutenant who carried out the captain's orders. He might be a bachelor, too who hadn't eaten anything good in all his life. ... But food, actually, was bad, and most of it was sent back as the people couldn't eat it. And then we told that lieutenant that it was impossible. Well, there were a few of us who had money and could buy food, but there were many who didn't have a penny. If they had had, they had left it at home for their wives and children. And then that lieutenant said they would arrange that I could go shopping, i.e. things that were needed in the kitchen. And he told me to find out what the menu should have been. I said he would see that things would be better then, if I could run a shop, I would also be able to run that kitchen. So they arranged with the captain that I would do the shopping and bring letters and parcels from the post office. I must tell you that the captain got

only postcards, and I read them. And his son always wrote him that he hoped he would kill the Jews and not even half of them would return. And I always tore those postcards. And the captain always said they didn't write him anything. So he said and thought... After three months, he was discharged. No harm was done to anyone. I must also tell that...

Peter Bajtay: What did you do, what was your job?

Eugen Turkl: Well, relatively, if I tell you, there was such a... I worked, there was a kind of ditch or trench, and when there was much rain it was filled with sand and we had to clean it. Or on another occasion, we had to transfer goods from one wagon to another one. But it wasn't difficult or hard, either. There were enough of us to do it. It was told we had to work from 8 A.M. till 5 P.M., but we finished it by noon or 1 P.M. Then, we tried to find a place where one could eat something good, but it was a smaller place. Well, from among those who got there, to Transylvania, in 1940 not 99 but 100 percent returned home in good health. Nothing special happened, once came a kind of controller to the office and asked where the captain was. The captain was away ... The town was not far from there and sometimes he went to town. He also asked what we were doing. I said I had just done shopping. He said to go at once and work. In the evening, at about 5 P.M., when the captain returned, he said, "What the hell, you had left all the mess here." I said, "There had come the ... We had been chased out to work, and the captain had to report himself immediately." I don't want to tell you what he said to that, you know, and everything remained unchanged.

Peter Bajtay: Were you taken on labor service once again before the invasion?

Eugen Turkl: No, I was lucky, it was a big luck. It was at the end of 1941 or beginning of 1942. All the company was called up but only up to those born until 1905. Those born in 1904 and 1905 were taken to Russia. Even those were killed whom I thought would anywhere in the world survive. Not because they were so sly but because there was something in the, when they started talking with people... Well, in Russia, they couldn't very much speak. I had a colleague, together with whom I had got to the firm, and he was the most excellent and the nicest man I had ever met. Unfortunately, he also died during the retreat. First he was ill, then he was missing. After the war, a sergeant visited me and I asked him about that man. And he said, they had liked him very much, and had done everything they had been able to do to cure him. And he had got relatively well, but when they started retreating, everyone only wanted to save his or her own life. No one cared about the others, only about himself. And then he probably was taken captive, and they died if they were not in good health. Nothing else was important. So then I wasn't enlisted, and when the following calling up took place I also got the summons but then I was already exempted. Well, the Pest depot had a military commander, a lieutenant-colonel, a discharged one, from whom I always received a card to prove my exemption. I would have had to join the army, but I showed that document and nothing happened.

Peter Bajtay: So, were you exempted because you were important for the firm?

Eugen Turkl: Yes, for the factory. I was important for the factory, because in a factory it means a lot to produce articles which can be sold, and which we needed, let's say. In every factory there are articles which sell good and are also ones which don't. We were disposed of by

Prague, as the headquarters and everything were situated in Prague before the war. But when the conditions...

### **Tape II, Side A**

Peter Bajtay: So, we got as far as 19<sup>th</sup> March, when the German invasion took place. Can you remember that day?

Eugen Turkl: Yes, of course.

Peter Bajtay: Will you tell me what happened? Where were you then, what did you do, how did you learn about the invasion?

Eugen Turkl: It was Sunday, and my wife's female cousins also lived in Pest, and on Sundays they used to come to see us, not every Sunday. And when the Germans invaded Pest, you know it was in the morning, we made a round call, and said we cancelled the meeting. And everybody should have stayed at home, as we didn't know if we met any troubles if we went and traveled somewhere, as we didn't go anywhere the whole day. I only worried about my younger sister and her husband, as I've told you, because they were in Baja at his parents'.

Peter Bajtay: So, the family were separated.

Eugen Turkl: Yes. My younger sister had come to Pest, too, in 1928, and got married the same year as I, only a bit later in that year.

Peter Bajtay: What did you think would happen after the invasion?

Eugen Turkl: I tell you, I was prepared for the worst. But not everybody was prepared for the worst, in spite of the fact that I was in a special situation. Because one of my wife's female cousins and her family managed to come to Pest, and what was more, she had a Hungarian name, well, and her father and mother also lived in Belgrade. They were Hungarians or not, and they lived in Pest. And he was a senior civil servant at the MAV/Hungarian State Railways, and he had a card from there, with a Hungarian name. And when they were demanded their papers, because Bacsa had already been invaded, and they showed them their documents and they didn't even think they were Jews, and his wife came and his family, his daughter.../inaudible/

Peter Bajtay: And to what extent did your life change then?

Eugen Turkl: Look, we can't say it changed radically during the first week, but my wife's female cousin and her family didn't come when the Germans, but before that shameful murder happened in Novi Sad (Novi Sad, Serbia), that Hungarian soldiers, officers killed two thousand Jews, Serbs... And unfortunately also seven or eight people from family. Not from my family but my wife's. My wife, and her father also came from Novi Sadujvdek (Novi Sad, Serbia ?).

Peter Bajtay: Yes, you wrote about it in your recollections.

Eugen Turkl: And he was a great Zionist. In general, Yugoslavic Jews at least most of them were Zionists, because it was in Yugoslavia's interest to set Jews against Hungarians. They didn't become Serbs so easily. Only the young ones could speak Serbian, who went to school

there, you know. My wife's uncle was the manager of one of the biggest Yugoslav banks. He got to Ujvidek (Novi Sad, Serbia) from Szabadka/Subotica (Subotica, Serbia) where he had been a managing clerk. So we, I mean, our family learned quite early what could happen next. But then, after coming to Pest, he got into contact with the Zionists, and you know, I also went with him once a week to Kiraly Street where there was a Zionist club. Well, it hadn't been closed down only when the Germans came in, and it was there that we heard those terrible things which were happening in Poland.

Peter Bajtay: When did you hear about them?

Eugen Turkl: ...Well, let's say in about 1942 or 1943, it was then that the family, father, mother, their son and his wife and the three children came to Pest, and I kept going with him to that club. Once a week, we went there and I went with him. We heard about everything that had happened in the different parts of Europe which had been invaded by the Germans. I've mentioned Kastner, he was an extraordinarily clever and very handsome man, and such a man who could understand people and knew how to deal with them. He was that kind of man who could make contact with even the last Nazi club. And he related that Jews from Slovakia and also from Poland had been successfully saved. It was then that we heard those atrocities, what had happened on places invaded by the Germans.

Peter Bajtay: Did you know Kastner in person?

Eugen Turkl: Yes, of course. I mean, I saw him there.

Peter Bajtay: But you weren't Zionist, were you, only you were interested?

Eugen Turkl: With that cousin of mine, you know, who had come from Belgrade, and had got a flat somewhere in Pest, we were always together, we went to see them, and they came to see us. One could go anywhere he wanted before the deportations. And then, one could see that unluckily nothing else but the same would happen here as in other European countries occupied by the Germans.

Peter Bajtay: Were you, Jews prepared for the deportations? Did you think it would take place?

Eugen Turkl: Well, in the country, I'm quite sure, that in Baja people didn't even think the situation might have changed to a worse one. ...In Baja, there lived a family who owned a huge distillery and other properties, too. They were two brothers, and when one of them died, the other married his wife. He was the elder one, and later he lost his sight. So, they only stayed at home and went nowhere... They lived on such a big territory, well if I say that the territory of that distillery was one kilometer long at least. And then, before deportations were started in Baja, the mayor of the town, who was a terribly correct man, went there and told them what would follow. Unfortunately, he could do nothing. He had a daughter and a son. His daughter had left for Pest and got married there, and also his son had left much time before... The mayor said he had come there because he knew their conditions. He was a blind man, you know, and they lived like lords. And he could spend their property only on living well, because, as I've said, they went nowhere. And they committed suicide. They were buried in the Jewish cemetery. ... So, they knew something awful would happen, because they committed suicide. But ... people

were rather optimistic, that it couldn't happen to them. Poland was different, Polish Jews were such that even a part of Hungarian Jews weren't willing to have contacts with them...

Peter Bajtay: Can the reason for that be found in that the most part of the Hungarian Jewry were completely assimilated? And the strong consciousness of being a Jew died out in them.

Eugen Turkl: Yes. First, there were constant pogroms in Poland. In Hungary, there was the only precedent, the Tiszaeszlár action. But it was in 1869.

Peter Bajtay: And they were acquitted.

Eugen Turkl: Yes. And by that time, it had already been forgotten. You know, I don't know if it's wise to tell you, because you are recording it on a cassette. ... Uncle Fischer once said, "You know, when we were young, and the older ones gathered together and they said that unluckily, there might be great troubles, as such anti-Semitism would develop that would touch us, too. And because until that time most of the Jews living in the country had an inn, a greengrocer's shop or such, or they were simply bargaining Jews, and they were not envied those things. But now, young ones are becoming lawyers, physicians and such, which would create rivalry among Jews and Christians. And we are very much afraid that the same will happen." They also knew that there had been *pogroms* in Russia, there had been pogroms in Poland.

Peter Bajtay: Developing the train of thought, rivalry created envy.

Eugen Turkl: Yes, well, they also occupied places which were part of the possibilities, or the real middle classes. No doubt, lawyers and doctors lived under better conditions.

Peter Bajtay: When were deportations started in Baja?

Eugen Turkl: In Baja, Jews were deported on two occasions. One of them was around 20<sup>th</sup> May, I think, the other at the end of May, or one was at the end of May, and the other... Well, I knew it exactly because first my younger sister came home for the second time. If you happen to travel to Baja, go and see the synagogue. There is also a library and a reading hall. It has been renovated nicely. I was astonished to see how beautifully it had been done, partly by the town and partly by the authority for preserving monuments. ... Covered building was erected in memory of those 1,800 people who had died in labor service, and there is a marble plaque with their names written on it in alphabetical order. Among them are some of my relative's names, too. ...

Peter Bajtay: Were Jews in Baja gathered together in ghettos before the deportations?

Eugen Turkl: No, only...I say, only 200 of the men. In Baja only some buildings were marked out and there they were gathered...

Peter Bajtay: How did you live in Pest? The first anti-Jew orders were issued, you had to move, etc.

Eugen Turkl: For us, it meant that for some time we lived in our own flat, and later when Jews were moved into Jewish houses, at No. 43 Csáki Street.

Peter Bajtay: Did you have to move into a Jewish house?

Eugen Turkl: At No. 38 O Street, there lived my younger sister and one of my uncles.

Peter Bajtay: When was it? Did it happen in May or later?

Eugen Turkl: It was before the deportations, it might have been then. I can't tell you exactly. As for us I can remember, it was some time in May. Then, my wife and my daughter, you know... My younger sister lived at No. 38 O Street, and they lived there.

Peter Bajtay: How did you earn your living? How did you eat?

Eugen Turkl: Look, at that time it was not so, then we could go outdoors.

Peter Bajtay: Was there a prohibition on going outdoors?

Eugen Turkl: It was later, it was after that that the prohibition was announced.

Peter Bajtay: So, you moved into the house with her, and only then was the prohibition announced.

Eugen Turkl: Then, only then. And, you know everyone had something at home, some food, let's say, I often sent them food, because there were some five or six non-commissioned officers, such very correct, and I have it sent by them or I myself brought it, as long as we could freely go in and out, and I went to see them.

Peter Bajtay: Did you work on?

Eugen Turkl: Yes, always. Except for three months when I was called up, I worked. I kept going to the factory until the Germans let me. My life changed only in that I had to live in this factory as it was ordered. In the factory, there were some six, eight or 10 rooms upstairs, downstairs was the depot, and some of the rooms had been emptied, and a colleague of mine and I lived there. There we lived. Until in September, Horthy announced that we would break away.

Peter Bajtay: It was on 15<sup>th</sup> October.

Eugen Turkl: Until then, or nearly until then, it lasted until the end of September when it was told that those weren't allowed to stay in factories. But those also had to join the troop which they had been posted to as laborers. And it was in the synagogue in Csakl Street. And both my colleague and I joined our troop. Then my wife, you know, the situation was such...

Peter Bajtay: So, you joined your troop in late September.

Eugen Turkl: We went to the church in Csakl Street in late September.

Peter Bajtay: Then, actually, you didn't cease to be employed by the firm, only you weren't allowed to live there.

Eugen Turkl: It wasn't quite like it. I had lived in my own flat until those deportations started. Then the order was issued that one had to live at his firm.

Peter Bajtay: And such order existed, dating from earlier times, that the number of Jewish employees had to be reduced gradually, so they had to be dismissed. And it was planned who and when would be dismissed. So there might have been people who had been working until October 1944 and then released.

Eugen Turkl: Yes, but when Sezlasl (?) came, then already not.

Peter Bajtay: Weren't you touched by that gradual reduction?

Eugen Turkl: No.

Peter Bajtay: You had an important job and your work was needed.

Eugen Turkl: Yes, naturally, and, I say, it was an accidental and exceptional case that the manager, who was also a Jew, left first, he was dismissed first.

Peter Bajtay: So, he was taken away on 19<sup>th</sup> March, wasn't he?

Eugen Turkl: No, he wasn't taken away, he was just dismissed. I mean, the manager, not the boss, the manager of the firm...

Peter Bajtay: So, you were an exceptional case, because the order was issued that Jews weren't allowed to work except those who did important jobs.

Eugen Turkl: Yes, but with me, it was so that I kept going to the factory. Until the Germans came, of course, on the ground floor there came customers and it was from that those few Christians came who opened shops then, and of course they had no idea how to run a shop, only I was better if I wasn't there in front. Simply, it was done by the others, but the whole system was just like before.

Peter Bajtay: How many Jews of such important posts were there?

Eugen Turkl: Well, there were two...

Peter Bajtay: So, two of you remained, and the others had been dismissed.

Eugen Turkl: Well, most of them had been dismissed. There might have remained, I don't know, maybe, two more employees, This was being a leader, too, and he only dealt with financial and fiscal affairs, well, he was a jail lawyer, you know, but he was half-Jew.

Peter Bajtay: Was he affected, too?

Eugen Turkl: No, he wasn't, seemingly it was in such a form, he might have been...only in one-third, I don't know it exactly, but he didn't even work there full-time.

Peter Bajtay: Did he wear a star?

Eugen Turkl: No, he didn't.

Peter Bajtay: Didn't you wear a star?

Eugen Turkl: Oh, no.

Peter Bajtay: So, those who worked didn't have to wear stars, did they?

Eugen Turkl: No, those who were exempted didn't have to wear them. So, they got into an exceptional situation. Look, one thing is certain, that under the Kallay government and Magybaczoni, those things were reduced. Then the so-called intelligent Hungarian classes, I am not speaking about the working classes, as they were always against it, you know, slackened pressure to a certain extent. Let's say not in the form of shouting, but they made the conditions easier. It started with, I don't know if you know, that in Auschwitz, in 1944, at the beginning, I think guards and the orders were relieved. It was before the deportations of Hungarian Jews, that there, too, conditions became easier. Well, those who hadn't been burnt, got into a better situation. But it lasted only for three months, and then the whole staff was relieved again, and again new men came, such men who were 100 per cent SS and reliable, and then everything started again.

Peter Bajtay: I don't quite understand this. You didn't wear the yellow star. Didn't your family wear it either?

Eugen Turkl: Yes, they did. My family were like the following.

Peter Bajtay: So, you were favored, exempted because you had an important appointment at the factory.

Eugen Turkl: Not only Hungary, but each country which was taking part in the war aimed at keeping the pre-war level of production; it was in their interest to do so. And all those who did important work – this order was issued in late 1942 or early 1943 – were exempted, but they had to join their regiment, only that they were then let leave.

Peter Bajtay: Leave for what?

Eugen Turkl: It happened so, that I joined the army twice. And spent there the whole morning. Then they said, it was all right. I was called up from Pest and I joined where I was called up. I can't remember where, it was Szentendre or Monor, it was in the vicinity of Pest. I was interested first of all in saving my wife and my daughter. I don't know if you know that in Pest, people weren't deported. The order came that men younger than 60 and women younger than 45 or 44 had to deport to Obuda (Budapest). And from there they were taken to Austria on foot.

Peter Bajtay: It was later, in November. I mean the internment.

Eugen Turkl: No, it was earlier.

Peter Bajtay: But they had been taken earlier, you mean the death march to Hegyeshalom, I'm sure.

Eugen Turkl: My younger sister was also taken only that she was clever enough to escape. At Almasfuzito, (? Found nothing like this) she escaped when they had a rest, there was a house there and she went in there and escaped. She told that she was a Jewess and wanted to escape and asked them to hide her until the march left. And they hid her, they were nice people, and in the morning they even took her to a place where they thought some van would come and... The

man and the woman told the driver she had been their guest, so they put her on the van which took her to Pest. And she went home, but there the wife of the porter told her to go away, because all the Jews had been taken or left. Then my younger sister first went to an acquaintance of hers for a night, and then she was very lucky because she looked like a Christian woman. Then there was an order that those who were fleeing from Transylvania or from Yugoslavia, not those who had lived there but who had got there... Well, those could report themselves and got ration cards and identity cards. Everyone said she had no document. She had to leave quickly, so she didn't think a lot, and she got a paper set with a name she had given. ... My uncle, I am telling you this because it was a good example, one day when my parents and relatives in Baja had already been deported and I knew where they had been taken. I told him, "Jancai, there was a great trouble." What was the trouble? The trouble was with Auntia Vilma, she was his wife. He said, Aunt Vilma hadn't been converted, she remained a Jewess. And the house warden told them she had to go to the house where they were being gathered. I said, "You know, Uncle Laci, what it means, it means death." Just the same as it meant for my parents. He asked what to do. I told him to go to the Catholic priest and ask for such a conversion document. He said, they had already been there, and the priest said he could make it only if she learned for three months. I said he was crazy, three days most, because he was a very decent man. He said they loved my uncle and all his neighbors loved him. They didn't even know they were Jews. They thought they were Christians. And he said, they had already been to the priest, and he had said three months. I said he was crazy, and that they should have tried to do something else. The house warden was a very correct man, he had only been appointed, he was not an Arrow Cross man. ...

### **Tape II, Side B**

Peter Bajtay: When deportations were completed in the country, I think, you knew they would be started in Pest, too. What kinds of ways to escape did you think of? I mean obtaining papers or somehow to avoid deportation, because one started in such cases trying to defend himself. Did you try to obtain documents or in what way?

Eugen Turkl: Look, naturally, I say, my situation was such that when those women and men were called up to the brick factory in Obuda (Budapest), my wife didn't have to go as she was older than those who had to, having food for three days, and this and that with themselves, then she didn't have to. And then I...well, it was so that the cellar, the ground floor and the first floor didn't belong to Perlisz, they only rented them. And it was in Erzsebet Square. And the house warden there was an extremely correct man. I tell you, the woman first of all. I had an oldest office-messenger, who was also the most honest man I have ever known, he was an elderly man. But, seemingly, he got married at an older age, and, well, his wife was younger. Then a daughter was born to him. His wife was about the same age as my one, and his daughter as my daughter. And then I asked him if he could give us his daughter's birth certificate, and also his wife's. He brought me them, and the man who was the porter, and who was a very correct man, he was socialist, he was a kind of...he was a kind of plumber, he fitted together radiators, and when my wife had to leave the flat in O Street, I searched for a place where I could accommodate them. I asked those people, and they said there was no obstacle to it, so my wife and daughter lived there for about one month. It was a very advantageous situation there, first of all because we stayed in

that house, so if something was needed, my wife and daughter didn't go into the shop, but the warden came and could tell. It was no crime. What was more, they had already been there for three or four weeks, when once the man came home and said that he had seen a poster announcing that all the Christians who were hiding Jews would be shot to death. He said, he hadn't told it because Marica and Evi ... And his wife said, and I'll never forget it, "Let them rather shoot me, but I won't chase Marica and Evike away." So I went to them, because there were really very few people. I knew he was a very good soul still. I said they couldn't stay there longer. I couldn't risk those people's lives. In the house, there might have lived Arrow Cross men, too, and my wife didn't go outdoors, still... And then I phoned to one of my female cousins, who had a job then, having Christian papers, and she lived, she had a friend who was called up, a first lieutenant, and she got his flat. He let his flat and he had a sure, paid job. She lived there and he (?) paid, also a blond woman and I phone her whether Marica and Evi could be moved there. She said she would for a time. For how long? As long as I found a better place. She said, yes, there was enough room and she lived there, too. There was only one thing, that they couldn't use the lavatory during the day, because they knew that the first lieutenant didn't stay there and had let the flat, but every morning she went to work and returned only later. Not very late, at 4-5 o'clock in the afternoon because she worked for a transporting enterprise. I told her they would solve it somehow. I told my wife that the lavatory shouldn't have been used during the day. They stayed there only for eight days, as it wasn't safe enough there, either, though she always brought them food, I mean my female cousin. And then I could arrange Swiss protection for my wife and my daughter. And then I told them to leave. A colleague of mine I had known for a long time, a very nice fellow, I asked him to go with them there, to number I don't know which, in Szent Iatvan Park where there was such a Swiss protected building. If they had been demanded their papers they would have produced them, still they wouldn't have gone alone by themselves. And the little girl was told her name was this and that. Her name was not Eva. If anyone asked, her name was Terecakel, I don't know what, Marla, I think. So they went to that house in Szent Istvan Square, protected by the Swiss and not long after we had to join in the synagogue in Csak Street. It was a unit consisting of some 180 men. Then there were many who had got away from their company and got there.

Peter Bajtay: And from there did you get to the Jozsefvaros railway station?

Eugen Turkl: Yes. Well, now comes the, well, I went to see my wife not once. He came with me. And then I returned there. Well, then, that man was a very correct one, that first lieutenant. He was the commander of the company in the synagogue in Csak Street. We heard of things, because we kept going to work from that synagogue to houses which had been bombed, to clear away the ruins. And once, in heavy rain, we were taken, then defense was about 30 kilometers from Budapest. We dug trenches, because that was how they wanted to stop tanks.

Peter Bajtay: Will you tell me how you got to Jozsefvaros (Josvafo ?)

Eugen Turkl: Well, when we were there, we weren't allowed to leave, it was closed...

Peter Bajtay: Which day was it after 15<sup>th</sup> October?

Eugen Turkl: It was before 15<sup>th</sup> October. We got there at the end of September or the first days of October.

Peter Bajtay: Still the Arrow Cross men?

Eugen Turkl: Before that, you know. Well, there were some who were clever and in the last minute walked off.

Peter Bajtay: Were you taken to the railway station?

Eugen Turkl: To the railway station, and from there would we be taken away. All such trains of forced laborers departed from the Jozsefvaros (Josvafo ?) railway station.

Peter Bajtay: Departing trains?

Eugen Turkl: No, I don't know that, because those who were on labor service, you know, departing trains departed from Baja or, it was only in the country the deportation.

Peter Bajtay: So, you on labor service...

Eugen Turkl: I say, during labor service we went to clear away ruins, and for example we kept going to the Eastern railway station, we got arm-bands, such yellow ones, and we were station porters, because there were no station porters. And huge crowds – Russians were further than Kiskunhalas, huge crowds were fleeing. Austrian soldiers were arriving, and we carried their luggage. Well, then the synagogue in Csak Street was closed down. I mean, we couldn't go out or anything, and then they said we had to stand in queues. And we had to go to the Jozsefvaros (Josvafo ?) railway station. We went there, and my colleague's older sister, she had French citizenship, too, so she wasn't afraid at all. We always saw her come after us, and we didn't know we were being taken to the Jozsefvaros (Josvafo ?) railway station, only that we were being taken somewhere. And she came after us because she wanted to know where we were taken. So, we were taken to the Jozsefvaros (Josvafo ?) railway station. There were already wagons there, and we knew we would be wagoned and taken out. And then a sergeant appeared there. And he said those who had got Swedish protection should stand aside. Only Swedish. And that colleague of mine had, because his younger or elder sister had arranged it for him. That man's younger sister, as I've said, had lived in France for a long time. She was a ceramist, very well-known. Then they stood aside, stood in queues, they commanded start and left. There were wagons there, well they were more than we could have seen where. But one could hear when someone marched and stopped somewhere, that they weren't taken, because they stopped. Then, after five minutes maybe, I heard them tell names. These should have stepped forward and gone to the other side. Because the arrangement of the Swedish protection for them was in progress. The third one, next to me was a man who was standing beside me. I told him, listen. Have you got any acquaintances? He said, my friend, surely. I said to him, "It seems that it could be done somehow, so if you get out, please try to find him as a colleague of mine and tell him to arrange it for me to have my name called. Then he went and after five minutes my name was called. I went there, and asked what it had been. He said it had been arranged with Wallenberg that certain people could be picked out on the basis that their protection was just being arranged.

Peter Bajtay: So, certain men, who were called, had already had...

Eugen Turkl: No, only those had who told our names, but only those could go... There must have been ones among them whose was in progress, but most of them were not. There weren't so many of us. I mean who had some acquaintance there whom he could ask, my colleague had, you know, Swedish, and he was taken there, and he told, and when I got there they said they asked Wallenberg if it was possible that those whose were in progress or would be... And at any rate when I got there I saw that very young, short man, who was giving orders that, I swear, a chief of staff couldn't have done it better. He disposed there of everything, of these. Not of the soldiers, but of those who had got there or had been taken there.

Peter Bajtay: Was it he who read the names or some colleague of his? What did he do?

Eugen Turkl: No, he just allowed it...I don't know what he did there, he was there, you know. He was at the Jozsefveros railway station, because, possibly, he had been informed, he might have been informed by my colleague's sister. She must have phoned to the Embassy, you know, that people protected by the Swedes were being taken to the station. And when we arrived at the station she phoned again that the Swedish Embassy should have done something, to send someone to pick them out...that they shouldn't have to get in the wagons.

Peter Bajtay: Was Wallenberg alone or in the company of German, Hungarian officers?

Eugen Turkl: No, he was alone, and there must have been Hungarian officers there, but not German ones I think, but he was alone.

Peter Bajtay: And what did the soldiers and officers say to this, that there were people who were called out?

Eugen Turkl: Nothing. They didn't say please, but simply that those men had to leave on the authority of the Swedish Embassy.

Peter Bajtay: Did Wallenberg say anything to those who had made you go there or did he simply ignore them?

Eugen Turkl: Yes, he ignored them, there might have been some men who had phoned to ask if it was possible to pick out and call those whose were in progress, you know, and that they were also protected by the Swedes, and as we were let go over without more ado, we couldn't see anything, they just told us to stand separately and there we were standing with the wagons in front of us.

Peter Bajtay: Were those who were called from the synagogue or from somewhere else?

Eugen Turkl: No, not from the synagogue, those 150 people, with that first lieutenant, yes.

Peter Bajtay: Was there any other groups besides those 150? Were there any other?

Eugen Turkl: I can't remember that there were any other groups... I saw there a man who was giving orders and I asked who it was, and they said it was Wallenberg. And, I say, he was a very young, short man, and was giving orders like a general.

Peter Bajtay: Excuse me, I'd like to ask you, if the man who informed you that it was Wallenberg also told you what that man was dealing with, actually?

Eugen Turkl: Well, we knew that...

Peter Bajtay: So, then you already knew who Wallenberg was.

Eugen Turkl: Of course, I knew very well.

Peter Bajtay: Did you know about his earlier actions?

Eugen Turkl: Yes, naturally.

Peter Bajtay: So, his name was not new to you, nor his activities?

Eugen Turkl: No, I already knew that there was an attaché called Wallenberg, who provided so-called Swedish protection... Well, there were also other kinds of protections, there was the Swiss, the Papal protection, and also Spanish. Yes, but I can't remember if there were people at the railway station protected by others. Later, there might have been. They might have said that those protected by the Swedes should have gone to a Swedish house, should have left and gone to the first Swedish house they would come across, and try to find places there.

Peter Bajtay: Didn't you get proof that your application is in progress?

Eugen Turkl: Those who had protection papers in their hands were taken, and sent to Swedish houses, here or there, and we were made to stand in a queue, and accompanied by a non-commissioned officer. Now I can't remember by whom, they told me to start for Csakl Street, I have already said that to Csakl Street, or in Paralelil Street there was a cellar where there were already Jews there, and that cellar was protected by Swedes, and then passes were taken there to them.

Peter Bajtay: When did you receive it?

Eugen Turkl: I spent there only a few days, and there were such plank-beds and there we slept. I spent there some days and then once came there two or three such Jews who dealt with saving people, Hungarian ones. That one who was a brother of my sister-in-law's brother-in-law. He lived in Turkey, and when he had heard what the situation of Hungarian Jews was like, he left for Hungary, as a Turkish citizen having Turkish documents to save what could be saved. And when they came in, he searched for me there. I didn't recognize him. He told me who he was and that his sister-in-law was Pirlke who had told him that I was there. And that he had come to warn me, and said that I should have obtained the free pass as soon as possible, because one could never know, and there might have occurred such an Arrow Cross rascal and demanded my papers. ...

Peter Bajtay: Excuse me, one more question. How many of those 180 people got there, into that cellar?

Eugen Turkl: Six or eight and about 15 or 20 who had already received passes given by the Swedes.

Peter Bajtay: And did the rest get into wagons?

Eugen Turkl: Yes, they did. But it was quite an exceptional case, as the train couldn't go farther than Austria, well there were such fights going on or I don't know...After the war, I met such people who had also been in that wagon.

Peter Bajtay: So, they didn't go to Auschwitz but to Austria, did they?

Eugen Turkl: No, they didn't get farther than Austria, and then, when Austria, too, when Americans or I don't know who occupied it, they could return home. And he said that nearly everyone, I could be said, returned, no more than one or two, who were ill didn't. Well, from among those who under Swedish protection, or who later got it and got to Swedish houses, several were killed, who were taken to the Danube bank, and those who had originally been taken away, most of them returned, as didn't get to such places from where they could be taken farther.

Peter Bajtay: Then, you later received the Schutzpass and got into a Swedish house?

Eugen Turkl: Yes, I got the Schutzpass, and another one, a young man from Ujpest, he was brought it at the same time, by a friend of his or I don't know who, and then he told me to go to the first Swedish house we would come across. And it was somewhere in Jozsef Katoma Street, No. 21/b, I think, ... and there we were received so that there was no room for us. It was full. It was a huge building. When I got married, I got my first flat there. I knew that house very well, and the moment I wanted to leave someone came there, who was a customer of mine, and asked why I was there. I told him that there was no room for us, and he said, for me, there was. ... I told him that, unfortunately, Marica had no protecting paper yet, only Evi, as she had got my free pass, I mean, my daughter. She was seven years old then. And he said Marica's affair would be settled, Marica was staying in a Swedish protected building, and really, in a few days it was arranged and my wife also went to the house in Katoma Jozsef Street. We stayed there, we had a flat consisting of a room and a kitchen, or such. The situation was such, that Jews who had left or had been deported, so they had been taken in Becal Street, or they had had to, you know, part of them got near the synagogue. And those flats got emptied, and there lived some of those protected by the Swedes.

Peter Bajtay: Were there Christians living there, too?

Eugen Turkl: Of course, a great number of Christians lived there. It was a huge, there is a huge four- or five-story building on the corner of Csaki Street and Katoma Jozsef Street, and there they stayed.

Peter Bajtay: What conditions prevailed in that house? How could you get food, wash, was there electricity?

Eugen Turkl: No. Look, where my wife was, they were in Szent Istvan Square, on the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> floor, there was no water, they had to go downstairs to the cellar, there was running water. To some extent, there could always be found, I mean, one could go outdoors for two or three hours, even from there. And there could always be found, for example at No. 43 Csaki Street, in the flat

next to mine, there lived an old woman, a widow with her grandson and his wife. That woman loved Evi very much, and we were also on good terms with her. And when she got to know that we were in that Swedish protected building in Katoma Jozsef Street, she often came to see us and brought us some food, even cooked dishes. And we told her, "On my honor, I ask you Aunt Berlinczl not to come here, someone may see you, don't you know what kind of posters have been issued?" And she said, "What can they do to me, to such an old woman? Why should I let you starve?" She was an 80-year-old woman. And I always told her not to come, because I was afraid that despite we had those papers... Marica felt safe. The woman didn't come in, she just gave down the... One entered the gate, and there was a covered part, there were two or three men who demanded everyone's papers. In the gateway, there were desks, so one couldn't get through.

Peter Bajtay: Was there an inscription on the wall of the house which said it was a Swedish protected building?

Eugen Turkl: Yes, on each of them.

Peter Bajtay: Was there a flag, too?

Eugen Turkl: I think there was, well, on each of those buildings there was an inscription and a flag.

Peter Bajtay: To what extent did the Arrow Cross accept them?

Eugen Turkl: Look, the situation was the following. Arrow Cross men came there and called upon women between 18 or 20 and 30 to go downstairs. And then they told them to show their papers proving Swiss protection, you know. Who wasn't protected was simply taken away and got into those groups.

Peter Bajtay: Was the Swiss free pass accepted?

Eugen Turkl: During the time we spent in that Swedish building, Arrow Cross men didn't come. Or they might have come, but then those men there told them we were protected by the Swedes and they would immediately call the Swedish Embassy, and then it was respected, it was already when Szalasi... This situation was respected. And when the Szalasi government had returned towards the West, only the wild mob and blinded Arrow Cross men remained who did whatever they wanted.

Peter Bajtay: Did it happen that you went out and in the street you were demanded your papers, and then you showed the Schutzpass and were let go. I mean, I wonder if you made use of the Schutzpass?

Eugen Turkl: If I went and bought something and... I must have gone shopping, but I can't remember if I was demanded my papers on such occasions. My wife didn't go out, nor my daughter. Well, when Horthy made that speech of his, we were staying together with a shoe-factory owner, who was a very good friend of mine, and whose shoe factory was opposite us, and there we went to listen to Horthy's speech. For one day it was as if it had been over. We just listened, he came with us there and some of us went there.

Peter Bajtay: What was life in the Swedish house like? Was it separated from real life, or was thee a kind of community?

Eugen Turkl: What do you mean by separation? You mean from Christians?

Peter Bajtay: Yes, but were you together with the protected ones?

Eugen Turkl: No, the protected ones frequented each other's company and very many knew each other. For example, I tell you when on Christmas Eve, holy night, they said they would organize an evening for the children. The children sang there and there must have been a lot among them who had been converted. We were there, too, with Evi, and my sister-in-law and her daughter, but she was even younger than two years old. Her mother was staying with us. Well, and then they were singing, "angel from Heaven" and suddenly the Light Boulevard, you don't know that, well part of Great Boulevard...if you go past the Western Railway station, by tram No. 6, there are the Vigszin haz, too. Gaiety Theatre...

Peter Bajtay: It is Saint Stephen's Boulevard.

Eugen Turkl: Saint Stephen's Boulevard, well a bomb fell on the house next to Vigszin haz, and there was such a big clap that each of us, one felt as if a bomb had fallen on our house. And my sister-in-law said it was because we Jews had gathered there and organized a Christmas Eve for our children. And then, of course, everybody went home, you know, and it was said that the Vigszin haz had been bombed. But it was not the Vigszin haz, only the building next to it. And it was on Christmas evening, on 25<sup>th</sup>. And on 31<sup>st</sup> in the afternoon, we were taken to No. 60 Andrassy Avenue. ... I remember that it was around three o'clock, that suddenly in the courtyard, there was a big noise and shouting that all the Jews had to go downstairs. They said all the Jews because there were Christian tenants living there. And that whoever stayed upstairs would be shot immediately. Well, most people went downstairs. There might have been some who hid, and in the end, they didn't go and search through all the flats. So, we went downstairs to the courtyard and there we stood for quite a long time, there were some 170-180 people in that house. There we stood, and we had a very good friend who owned an upholsterer's workshop in the house next to our one in Csaki Street. We had had made friends with him and he had given a key to me. ... He gave me a key to his workshop, they weren't working there already. In Pest, no one worked only those Arrow Cross men were ravaging. And that we should have gone in there, and the house had a second entrance into Csaki Street. And then back to the cellar, and it had an exit there and there was the key that I could go into the workshop. I curse that time.

### **Tape III, Side A**

Such a thing in my life – not fright, rather helplessness or inertness, but I couldn't have made a step. So it was. I had something in myself. I wasn't shivering, but it was as if all my strength had left me, and I thought I could escape, but my wife and my daughter and also my sister-in-law and the baby would be killed. It was impossible. While I was thinking of such things, we were taken out to the street, and they made us stand in queues of four. In front were the men, and then the women and children. Well, no, I don't want to tell everything, but in

Ujvidek (Novi Sad, Serbia) it happened to my wife's family and her cousin, to her close relatives, that they had been among those who had been on the Danube. There, they died a martyr's death. And we later heard that it was as cold as 10 degrees below zero centigrade, and they had to walk onto planks, and then they were shot into the Danube. And also we heard later that there had been seven of them in the family, three couples and their mother and an unmarried girl, and they pushed themselves forward, because if they had to die, they wanted to die as quickly as possible. And it was lucky for those whose turn didn't come. So, I told my wife and my sister-in-law not to push ourselves forward, because everybody was pushing himself. You can imagine, that there were some 140-150 of us in the cellar. I mean at 60 Andrassy Avenue, because there was no fresh air, only foul smell, children were crying, and I told them to stand back, because I knew what had happened to our cousins, husbands and families. And we were the last to come out. This girl was even younger then, between one and a half and two years old, and was a terribly bad child. She was restless. She was born in 1942, and then it was December 1944. And that child was crying terribly and kicking about, because she was a bustling child, and my sister-in-law could hardly hold her, and I asked them to let me go there because the child was crying so much. Because then women and children... And the moon was shining, but so brightly that it was brighter than during the day, the street where we were being taken along in Andrassy Avenue and then at Vilmos Csaszar Street as far as the Danube. All the way long, I talked to my wife about whether to arrange for our child to run away. Maybe they wouldn't have shot after her. But where could she run? Where can a seven-year-old child go, where to escape? So, in the end we didn't let her. And then, simply, an order came that men should step forward. And men stepped forward. We were standing there in that terrible cold, my winter coat had been taken off me, shoes had been taken off, but mostly the men, and not the women. And there we stood at least for two hours.

Peter Bajtay: Was it on the Danube bank?

Eugen Turkl: Yes, on the Danube bank. When we were still standing in Csaki Street and Katona Jozsef Street, there must have been some Christians in the house who had friends from among us, and they may have called the Swedish Embassy to tell what was happening to those protected by them. The Swedish Embassy didn't answer, and then we heard that Wallenberg himself had disappeared. Well, then it was some two hours later that a car arrived there. And that car, who sat in that car started to negotiate with those Arrow Cross rascals who were accompanying us.

Peter Bajtay: How many were there in the car?

Eugen Turkl: I don't know how many could there be. Two or three. Well, I can't tell you. My sister-in-law, who might have paid more attention to the events, said that they were the ones who brought the command to bring the women and the children back. Just as it had been in Jokal Street, where only men had been taken. Women and children remained there and escaped. I said they had only wanted to loot the flat. Well, if there were the women and the children they wouldn't be able to do that. But it is also possible that the great massacre, that there still were some who could put an end to it. Well, we were told to turn about and we were taken directly to No. 60 Andrassy Avenue, but not into the cellar, you know, the women and the children.

Peter Bajtay: Did the men remain there?

Eugen Turkl: The men disappeared. We heard shots.

Peter Bajtay: Men were being taken farther.

Eugen Turkl: They were, but we didn't see them. Simply into the Danube. And if I hadn't had it, I should have died the same way. Or rather, the man whom I've spoken about, who had told me there would be room for me, also escaped. It was between five and six o'clock, and they caught at something at a place where there was warm water, and in the warm water...because they knew they couldn't stay in cold water when it was 15 degrees below zero. And then we were taken upstairs to the first floor. The women had already come there. What had happened? I said they had been taken to work, I was sure. We went to work, you know, to the synagogue in Csakl Street. And some men had to be sent from among these protected by the Swiss, some six or eight men, but they later returned. And they did such things, that, there were two men, I and another one, who pushed his own child in a trolley. That we had to go and sweep the snow off Andrassy Avenue. In front of the building No. 60 Andrassy Avenue, but when we left there, seemingly Jews had remained there, who had been taken there, some eight-ten of us, who, though there were no brooms, only who, that hard piece of wood and with that. One of them beat me on my head so hard, because I was the tallest, it wasn't mortal, just... And then, we started to, what-d'-you-call-it, the things. Then, getting back to the women, I said, "Calm down. But those women were deadly tired. From 3-4 in the afternoon to morning when we got there, it was four o'clock, there were some mattresses or rather straw mattresses. And they said, they were the what-d'-you-call-them, to lay children there. Others sat on chairs or simply on the ground. And they believed, more or less, what I told them, because they were so tired. But I know what had happened... It was one of the most horrible moments in my life, that shoe factory owner called Brethschulider and his son, when they were being taken to the Danube, tried to escape. But, as I've said, it was fully light like daytime. And they shot at them and hit both. Then they were carried in front of us, we were standing in queues there. We weren't standing immediately before the Danube, but you know, somewhat farther. And he said, "You rotten Jew, you wanted to break away, you will see what lot you will fall on." And that friend of mine begged them, they were still living, only their feet had been shot at, or such, to kill him, only to let his son live. He was so young. Of course, they didn't let them survive. They gave them the finishing stroke, with their guns, and they bled to death in front of me. So, I didn't think the others had a better lot. Then it was also by chance that when once I was sweeping one of those soldiers came up to me and I told him I was from Pest, but originally from Baja. He said, he was from Baja, too. He asked, "Wasn't your father at the Reichs' as an employee?" I said, yes, he had been. He said he had learned beside him. I asked, "How did you get here?" He said, "Look, I had two choices. Either to be taken to the front or to come here." So, I chose rather to come here. And I've heard that in Bacsa there is already a peaceful life, so as soon as it is possible, I will get away."

Peter Bajtay: One thing, when the car stopped and those armed men came...

Eugen Turkl: Those Arrow Cross men went to the car and they talked with them.

Peter Bajtay: Do you think they were from the Swedish Embassy?

Eugen Turkl: No, by no means not.

Peter Bajtay: Who may have they been?

Eugen Turkl: Yes, Hungarian officers, Hungarian Arrow Cross men, who weren't totally crazy, because not all of them were rascals. I can't remember if they wore uniforms or not. We only saw men. Those men went up to the car and talked with them. And about half an hour later they said, "Ahead." And they came back. And if they were army officers, look, among army officers there were also such ones, I tell you, my younger sister related that she had been in one cellar with that woman and her son. And people were down there, everybody, and when there was an air raid, and there was a chemist's in that building. She said they had spent more time in the cellar than upstairs, because there had been constant bombardments. The Russians came having little bombs, and that was why not many things were destroyed during the bombardments. And she had a son who was an army officer. And the parents asked him how long it would last, and what would happen to them, they would come... He said, "Don't be afraid, father, don't be afraid, mother, new German arms will be brought and these here will run back like flies." He also wanted to become a chemist, you know. Probably he wasn't a murderer, only he believed the bluff that the Germans had wonder weapons.

Peter Bajtay: In the end – I've got no more questions, but as a last one, I'd like to ask you: If now, from a distance of 45 years, you think back to '44 and first of all Wallenberg, how has he remained in your memories?

Eugen Turkl: I tell you, there are two men living in my memories, for both of whom I erected a statue. For one of them, for Wallenberg, they erected, because he belonged to those few who had something inside that very few people has, that he could create relations with people easily. He could speak in such a way that each man who had some sense thought that he could have only troubles, and that might help him somehow. Saying this I'm not thinking of Jews, but the Arrow Cross men.

Peter Bajtay: Was it your impression when you saw him?

Eugen Turkl: And what I heard of him. You know, those who had been staying in that protected building earlier, because it had been opened earlier than when I got there. They may have seen him or got directly to Wallenberg, I don't know. I was not interested in how he spoke, but in having the Swedish protection, and we hoped we could survive until the liberation.

Peter Bajtay: Did you trust in the Swedish protection?

Eugen Turkl: Much more. Look, I tell you why. Swedish protection was provided only at the Swedish Embassy. The Swiss ambassador, not that he saw it somewhat better, or it might have been less dangerous, but the Swiss gave such forms to certain saving committees, which later filled them up for people on commission... Well, on such Swiss protection. But Swedish protection could only be obtained at the Swedish Embassy. Somehow one got there and got it. The Swiss only later had... they gave only empty forms. But then there were already those

saving actions. They were empty forms with no Swiss what-d'-you-call-it on them. There was the name on it, date of birth, and signet, but, look, it was no problem to make such seals. With the knowledge of the Swiss ambassador... the Swiss ambassador took notice of it that all who could be saved had to be saved. With the Swedes, in a way, you know Wallenberg saved a lot of people, as many got such... Who stayed in Swedish protected buildings. But the Swedish ambassador did it only in such a way that those were the ones who had to be saved or who were in certain danger, and then they were filled up with all the personal data and a photo. So, I can tell you nothing else about Wallenberg, only what I saw then and there, this is one, and the other what I heard at the Swedish Embassy, because, well, not at the Embassy but in that protected building. Everyone had no doubt that there was a young attaché who was brave and did everything.

Peter Bajtay: Did they tell stories about him?

Eugen Turkl: Look, I tell you, I have read a lot about Wallenberg, everything I could. I don't know if you read Miksa Penyo's... You must get hold of it by all means, it was also published in Hungarian. Miksa Penyo was the secretary general of the national association of factory-owners, and, by chance, also from Baja, and, by chance he was an acquaintance of one of my very good friends. Miksa Penyo's brother, elder brother was the manager of the big mill in Baja. So, that acquaintance of mine often went to Miksa Penyo's, in normal times. And his second wife was a Christian woman, and he saw from the first minute, that... He was also searched for, but one day later than the others. And then he escaped. If one read that book, it is much more interesting than what I wrote, or anyone wrote, because he had kept a diary. First of all, Miksa Penyo was a very clever man. I don't know whether you know that he was one of those who were the first to help Ady and other new poets financially. Not from his own money, surely not, but from the association of factory owners. And he wrote his diary every day. This book is about that... And besides, he spoke Hungarian, German, French, and I think English, too. He always listened to the radio, and not only Hungarian or German, but different other stations, too. And it is interesting, because about certain days I didn't know when it was. But when I read Penyo's book, then, you know, I learned the exact dates, when this or that had happened. He was hiding and I was not. I was only an exempted person. But, you know he was a much better writer than I because he was a professional writer. There was the "Nyugat"/Occident, which was the first paper of the new world and the new generation. That was published by Miksa Penyo as editor-in-chief, and he also wrote in it. If one reads that book, then really very clearly and well, I recommend it to you, that you read it and you will learn very much not about Wallenberg, rather about those times, because Penyo wrote it every day. He was escaping and fleeing from one place to the other, and not only he but his family as well. He had one son and a wife who was a Christian woman, and his son was also Christian.

Peter Bajtay: And he himself a Jew?

Eugen Turkl: Yes, he was a Jew. According to law, he was a Jew.

Peter Bajtay: Thank you very much for the interview.

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