

YEHUDA MANDEL [1-1-1]

THIS IS AN INTERVIEW WITH:

YM - Cantor Yehuda Mandel [interviewee]

NL - Nora Levin [interviewer]

Interview Date - February 18, 1982,

March 17, 1982, June 4, 1982

Tape one, side one:

NL: Now, Cantor Mandel, would you be good enough to tell us a little about when and where you were born and a little about your family background?

YM: Dr. Levin, I was born in a small town in Hungary called Csepe.

NL: Can you spell that, please?

YM: Yes, I will. C-S-E-P-E. Ugocsa Comidat. That's U-G-O-C-S-A Comidat.

NL: That's the district?

YM: The district. On March the 3rd, 1904.

NL: So this was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

YM: This was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was in the part of Hungary which was the so-called "religious" Jewish part, where we spoke Yiddish and, eh, automatically we learned two, and some of us even three languages when we were small children. Yiddish was spoken inside as soon as we closed the door. From the inside we spoke Yiddish only. As soon as we were on the outside, the language was Hungarian and in some cases the Russian, Maloruski, the Ukrainian language.

NL: May I ask, why Russian? What was the Russian influence there?

YM: Because there, at that part of Hungary, were many, many Ukrainians who spoke Russian, and the pressure was so big, even 50 and 100 years ago, to tear away from mainly Austro-Hungary because they felt that they can't live as nationals. Their culture, their education, their music, their everything, is oppressed by the Austrian government. Therefore, they, in their own homes, just as we Jews spoke Yiddish, so they spoke Ukrainian.

NL: Ukrainian, yes, interesting.

YM: This, then, shows that that was even in many, many years ago a very highly-explosive part of Hungary. If they could have, probably, they would have torn away the part of Hungary from the Austro-Hungarian Empire in those days. This brought another interesting fact. They were completely influenced by the Church. Some of them were Catholics; most of them (the non-Jewish part, we're talking about) were Greek Catholics.

NL: Greek Orthodox.

YM: Greek Orthodox. In both cases, the Church had an immense...eh...

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NL: Influence?

YM: ...power and influence over them, and even when I was a small child, I started to go to *heder* at the age of three-and-a-half. When I was four and five, I knew very well what it means to be attacked by the non-Jewish students.

NL: You already were...

YM: They waited for us with sticks and all kinds of things, and we learned to a degree how to fight them as well. This is maybe an interesting point from a point of view when we ask ourselves, how did the things get to the point where they started in 1938 or '39 in Hungary? But they really and actually started in 1917 and '18 on a big scale when Horthy and his, eh, people, came and killed plenty of Jews in Hungary proper, and whoever could take advantage of Jews, did.

NL: Yes, we want to come to that, because that's an extremely important chapter. This was part of the reaction against the Béla Kun Communist regime, I believe. Now, can you say a little more about your childhood, because this would be so interesting.

YM: I, eh, was born in an extremely Orthodox religious family. My upbringing was the old type of Yiddish upbringing. Eh, and I was four-and-a-half years old, probably, surely not five yet, I started to learn *Chumesh* [Pentateuch], *Chumesh Midrasheh* [Post-Talmudic literature], eh, it wasn't a question of, do I want it? There were no considerations as far as psychological questions. This was it, and this is the way we grew up.

NL: Can you tell me, eh, excuse me, par-, I think I interrupted you

YM: We were seven children at home,

NL: Yes, yes,

YM: Three sisters and four brothers, of whom by today only one is alive, who came here in 1913, probably the last boat which reached the United...

NL: 19-

YM: '13

NL: '13.

YM: That's my oldest sister who lives in Philadelphia.

NL: And her name?

YM: Her name is Mrs. Helen Borish, B-O-R-I-S-H.

NL: And can you give me the names of the other children?

YM: Yes, sure. The sister who followed her was Esther. She was married to Yaakov Deutsch. One sister, the youngest sister, died. She was never married. She got what was

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prevalent in those days in that part of the world, *galoppierende Tuberkulose* [consumption] and died before the age of 20. Her name was Rivka.

NL: Rivka. And the names of the brothers?

YM: My brothers, the younger brother, is Yoel, Yoel. The one following him is Yisrael Dov, or Srulbear, as we called him, and the youngest brother was David.

NL: David.

YM: Now, my sister's children. Did I give you the name of Esther?

NL: Yes.

YM: Yes, I did. Esther had three children. These children are, all three of them, in Israel, are settled there, and there they live. Yoel, of course, Rivka had no children, Yoel was the first Associate Chief Cantor of the congregation in Zagreb.

NL: Mmm.

YM: He was professor of Hebrew Studies. The younger brother was also a cantor; they were both my pupils.

NL: Is that so?

YM: In *Chazanut* [studies of religious chants], I mean. We all went to *Yeshivot*, and the youngest brother, David, David Mandel, died in Israel in 1949. His, he already got his doctoral degree from the university in Budapest, with a yellow star on his lapel. He was a graduate of the seminary in Budapest, and, was a graduate of the university in Budapest.

NL: What a distinguished family!

YM: Interesting, maybe--he was a graduate of the, Hebrew gymnasium in Munkács, and maybe one distinction which does not apply, maybe, to too many people, is that after he went from Budapest because we were so very active in Zionist works--I wasn't home--he was engaged to a young lady by the name Hava Eisdorfer. Their wedding was supposed to take place in June in my Temple in Budapest. I wasn't home, of course, I was in labor camp already in 1940-1944, and it never took place, the wedding never took place, of course, but he went with a *Kasztner* group...

NL: Ah, yes.

YM: ...to, eh, Bergen-Belsen.

NL: Uh huh.

YM: Not only that, because of my activity in Budapest, while I was there for ten years, my family was called upon to take them along in my absence...

NL: Mmm

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YM: ...and that was, that was wonderful.

NL: Oh yeh.

YM: These people who you read in this...

NL: Yes...

YM: ...Yuri Brown story, they thought of it, because my brother was just as active. And my brother came to Israel after Bergen-Belsen. And after all this, and taught for awhile in *Gymnasium HaRaeali* in Haifa and had an appointment to teach at the university in Yerushalaim [Jerusalem] of all things, Hebrew literature. And, he never reached that day, because he died in Israel in April of 1949.

NL: Now, let's go back a bit. I'd like to know a little about your parents. Can you tell me about father and mother?

YM: Father grew up, probably, the same way as I did. He probably started *heder* [chuckles] when he was the age of three. He was a real Talmud *chochem* [scholar of Talmud]. Very knowledgeable Jew. He also spoke these languages, I have mentioned before, perfectly. He had, quite a bit of knowledge in, in not only *Sifrut* [oral law] and, Talmud and *Chumash* and so on, but he was a Talmud *chochem*. As a matter of fact, he was not, though he was an ordained rabbi by his own *rabbonim* who gave him *Hatorath Torah*, and *Hatorat rabbanot*, he never acted, never was, a professional rabbi, but he *pasket shayles* [decided questions] as they said there, and took care of the *Yeshuvim* [settlements] all around us, and Avrohom Mandel was, eh, quite a *bekovedigger* [honorable Jew]. My mother...

NL: Did he, eh, make a living out of teaching, or did he have a separate occupation?

YM: No, no, he had fields and was in the, he was a farmer...

NL: A farmer...

YM: And I, eh...

NL: Were Jews able to own land at that time?

YM: Yes. In those days, yes. My father, who was born in '77, I think, 1877. That was really the golden period of Hungarian Jews.

NL: I see.

YM: Because then, it was after '48, after the French Revolution and so on. And all these countries copied to a degree the French freedom, and so on and so forth.

NL: I see.

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YM: And that expressed itself in the fact as well for Jews not to have any restrictions. Jews, as a matter of fact, were allowed to marry non-Jews, for which before they would have been burned on the, you know?

NL: Stake, yes.

YM: But in those days there was freedom. So, you could buy a house. You could get into business, you could, you could own fields and farms and so on.

NL: And so, you grew up on the land.

YM: Yes, absolutely.

NL: Yes. And was the family fairly comfortable, economically...

YM: Yes.

NL: ...or did you have hardships?

YM: You have to know, I mean, if I should go into this, I don't know.

NL: Yes.

YM: That in, in that part of Hungary in those days, let's say my days, after 1904, when I grew up to be at least to understand what's going on, 1910, '11, '12, and '13, '14, and even to '16, there is a river which was never controlled and never, never, put into shape, so to say, which every year brought floods and floods and floods.

NL: Mmm.

YM: My father became a poor man, I think, between 1910 and 1916. Poor. They made out somehow, but they weren't comfortable at the time anymore.

NL: But, eh, the land...

YM: The land...

NL: ...was still his, and...

YM: ...belonged...

NL: ...and was he able to recover?

YM: Yes, some of it, and whatever could be done with it was done. But comfortable, he was not. Before his time, and, of course, my recollection doesn't go back to that, all these land, belonged to my mother's father.

NL: I see.

YM: Eh, and presumably he made a very, very comfortable living. So that shows that there must have come some kind of natural causes which made it impossible for them to be comfortable anymore. My mother, it may be worthwhile to mention, is the daughter of a man who was a teacher in 1830.

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NL: Oh my. A teacher in a Jewish school?

YM: There was no school. He probably was a teacher...

NL: Tutoring...

YM: ...in a *heder*...

NL: Oh, in a *heder*.

YM: Where, I don't know. In a bigger village, 15, 20, 25, youngsters got together and he taught them the same things.

NL: So she was an educated woman, too.

YM: Ya, she was.

NL: About how many Jews lived in your community, Cantor?

YM: 36.

NL: Oh my.

YM: 36 families, and maybe it's worthwhile to mention that the little community of Csepa had at one time close to 30 *yeshivah bachurim* in different *yeshivot*. 30.

NL: Extraordinary.

YM: And this is what pushed us. We wanted to be, to know a little more, and if Chaim knew this much, and got let's say *Haftorat Torah*, Moishe wanted to have the same thing, and this is...

NL: You were high achievers.

YM: Right.

NL: What were your relations generally with the non-Jewish community? You've told us about the antisemitism of the children, but, let's say, father's relations with his non-Jewish neighbors?

YM: Very respectful. Very respectful. Because first of all they depended on him to a degree. They worked for him to a degree. But let me talk about two particular cases, and I think this would be reflective on what we are talking, and in answer to your question. On one side of our house, because we lived in a house, a tremendous house, the family who lived alongside of us was the Greek Orthodox family. They had sons and daughters living in the same place, but I'm talking about the original family. On the other side they were so-called "Reformed"...

NL: Christians.

YM: Christians. We both, we were in the best of...

NL: Terms.

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YM: ...terms. They both, my mother spoke to the old lady on one side in Russian or Hungarian. They spoke to each other, they exchanged views, but we knew that inside, deep, there is a certain hatred because they were extremely devout Catholics, Greek Catholic Christians, and they were immensely under the influence of their clergy. At the time, which I can't remember, at home, we felt that the Reformed Christians, whatever denomination the Reformed movement may belong to, they were a little more lenient.

NL: Yes, more modern.

YM: More modern. We played together with these boys, with the children all together. We sang their songs, we went to the same school...

NL: So, it was a relatively benign situation.

YM: Yes, yes.

NL: There were no antisemitic episodes of violence?

YM: No, and if they are thinking of acts like this sort, let's say, pogroms and so on...

NL: Yes.

YM: ...they were very, very far from our, from our life.

NL: Yes. And what large town were you close to?

YM: We were close to two towns. One is Anagy Szo'llo's, that's spelled A-N-A-G-Y, second word, S-Z-O-'-L-L-O'-S, and our district capital, let's say, was Halmi, H-A-L-M-I.

NL: And did you go into these towns from time to time?

YM: Oh, yes, many times.

NL: Many times.

YM: As a matter of fact, after 1918, when our part of the, our part of Hungary, became Czechoslovakia, I studied in Anagy Szo'llo's. As a matter of fact, my first *yeshiva* was Anagy Szo'llo's.

NL: I see.

YM: I studied with a great man, a great *tzaddik* [very pious man], a great man, eh, Yosef Nehemiah Kormitzer. He was my first *rebbe* in *yeshiva*.

NL: And you spoke about your going to school with the non-Jewish children. Did you then go to the *heder* and to a public school?

YM: When I hear parents--and I had the privilege of teaching here in *Beth Judah* of Logan when I was the cantor for about 18 years--and I hear parents consulting, constantly consulting, how to make Johnny to want to go to school, and to want to do things, I'm always reminded of this, of this episode of my life. We got up at 6 o'clock in the morning, took care of

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ourselves, even if we were five years old, now took the *koss in die hent and gevashen die finger* [took the glass in hand, washed the fingers] and *gezukt Modeh Ani* [and said the morning prayer], and we went to *heder*. And I will never forget it. And in my profession, many many times it came back, the way we started, to study in the morning, either any one of the *Neviim* [Prophets], [sings] "*wai be mo--eh--ah--*" That *niggun* [melody], that was beautiful, it was nice, and this was the way we studied, and it was no question that the child will be nervous if I get him up at 6 o'clock in the morning. That was no problem.

NL: This was expected.

YM: Right. Eh, we, we stayed there, and *davened* [prayed], had the morning service. Until 7:30. Whenever we got there, 7:30. At 7:30 we went home to have breakfast. Because no one had breakfast before *davening*, of course. And we had our breakfast and went to the school, that means, the elementary school, the regular elementary school, where we remained until eleven o'clock. At eleven o'clock we rushed back to our *heder* and were in the *heder* until 12:00. Then we studied *chumash*, that was the *chumash* period. Then we went back home, had the dinner used to be in Europe, you know, in mid-day. We had, eh, *Mittagmahl* [mid-day meal], you know, and at two o'clock we were back in the public school. We stayed in the public school until 4:00, sometimes 4:15, and as soon as we were dismissed there, we ran back to the *heder*...

NL: Oh my.

YM: ...and repeated *Neviim* and studied *chumash*. Whoever was ready for it studied *Mishnaio*s, or *Gemura*. Or whatever. And we stayed there till about 6:00. So this way of learning, and this way of, of doing things is maybe not modern, but I think it was extremely helpful in our Jewish education.

NL: Extraordinary. Such discipline that you must have...

YM: Yes.

NL: ...lived by. And the play time was Sunday, I suppose.

YM: Play time was Sunday or whenever we could find the time for it. Play was not, all work and no play was no problem there. Whenever you could do it, you did it.

NL: Squeezed it in.

YM: Squeezed it in.

NL: Were you musical as a child?

YM: Yes. Musical, not musically educated. I was never musically educated, because I didn't have the chance. There were no teachers. I had a very sweet child's voice as a child. I

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knew, of course, how to *daven*. And I will never forget it. I was maybe eight or nine years old when I *davened* in my, in our own congregation at home in Csepa, *maariv* [evening prayer], on eh, *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, *Succot*, whatever it was. And eh, and there were, there were those additional prayers, those inserts, we call them *marouvis* [evening prayers], *lel shamurim* [prayers at Pesach night], and so on and so forth. And I did very well, I, I knew it was no problem.

NL: Eight.

YM: When I hear people prepare for the *Bar Mitzvah* a year or two earlier, I'm just angry, because if we were called and we were eight, nine years old, for a *maftir* [last reading of the Torah], it was no problem. I mean, it was, as a matter of fact the children were called as a rule, because that was the only *kibbud* [honor] a boy could get in those days, to be called for a *maftir* [one who reads concluding verses of the Torah portion], because another *aliyah* he couldn't get; the *shevah korim* [seven readers] had to be adults. So, we were the additional, an *achron* [the last], or a *maftir*, we could be called too.

NL: This was all very natural in the cycle of your life.

YM: Yeh.

NL: And so your childhood was passed quite happily.

YM: Yes.

NL: And, do you have some memories of the war years? Did your family have to move out? Were any, were there any deprivations?

YM: No. In 1914 when the war broke out, as you well know now, I was ten years old. This is just a side line. I remember exactly the spot where I read the first announcement of Franz Josef [emperor of Austria/Hungary], who said, "I have thought it through very carefully. I have given it all the consideration, and we must step in..." and so on and so forth, "the war". The war years I remember very well because there was terrible pressure on all of us. Because you have to know that we lived right underneath the Carpathian Mountains. And the first lines maybe were about 100 km, which is about 60-65 miles away from us. But I remember particularly during the war two years, when people who lived at the very end of the Galician part of Austro-Hungary, had to evac-, be evacuated and evacuated, and came to us before *Pesach*. What part of the war that was, I don't remember any more, but these people, about 60 families, came into our little community before *Pesach*, and I will never forget it. Everyone was put up. At families, my father, *zichronah l'bracha* [of blessed memory], gave a special, gave special permits to use on that *Pesach kitniyot* [forbidden food]. He consulted with his

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rabbi, and they gave permission not only for *matzoh* or potatoes or what, but *kitniyot*. In other words, vegetables...

NL: Baked beans

YM: Beans which you wouldn't eat normally. So, all these families were put up. I think this was repeated in '15, '16, '15 and '16, because as the war went on, either the Russians pushed the Austro-Hungarians back, or the Austro-Hungarians pushed the Russians back, but the war went on in that part of the world, very close to us.

NL: Very close.

YM: Ya.

NL: But you weren't involved in the...

YM: We were never evacuated. No.

NL: ...war actually.

YM: We had, of course, my mother's brother in particular, you may even know about him, Dr. Moishe Bolgar...

NL: The, the...

YM: Braun, original name. His original name was Moishe Braun. He was a lawyer by profession, and a first rate Hebrew novelist and writer and translator and, so he was at the battlefield all the time.

NL: A soldier.

YM: A soldier. And we were under his, under this pressure that we were terribly scared for him.

NL: For him.

YM: He was like more than an uncle to us. And we constantly were scared. He was then, later on during the war he was the, the man responsible for a military newspaper called *Manilova*, where he was still in great danger all the time, but at least he didn't have to stay in the first line and shoot at someone.

NL: Yes, and, the end of the war meant changes for your community. The peace treaty. What were the territorial changes that involved your town?

YM: No, first of all, before it came to the very end and before it was decided that our part of the world should belong to Czechoslovakia, or that Czechoslovakia should be called into being at all, there were the--you know that the war in Hungary, especially where we belonged to, that part of Hungary came to an end by the White Revolution, White Flower Revolution, I don't know how that Flower is called, but the Socialist movement became stronger, later on the

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Communist and here *Kun Béla* comes in--the one we mentioned before--the Hungary became Communistic. If it was one or the other, especially if it was Communistic, some people suffered from that.

NL: And you were in what sector?

YM: We were in, you mean as a party? The sector of the land?

NL: Yes.

YM: We were in the sector which was occupied once in awhile for shorter or longer periods by the Communist powers, I wouldn't even call it regime, because it was no regime, or when others came who were stronger, so we were occupied by the White, they called them at the time...

NL: The anti-Communists.

YM: Ya. By the Red; by the Rumanians; by the Czechs; by the, you name it, we were occupied by these powers. And this, of course, went on in the end of 1917, '18, up to '19. I became *bar mitzvah*, as you can see it, in about '19. After my *bar mitzvah*, I went to study in this Natsalutsch¹ [phonetic] *yeshivah*. At the time when I went in 1919...

1

May be Nagyhalasz.

YEHUDA MANDEL [1-2-12]

Tape one, side two:

NL: Now you were saying that your area was in the hands of a whole variety of occupation forces. Do you have some impressions of any of those particular periods? Did you suffer especially under any particular occupation, Cantor?

YM: I myself as a child, of course, knew very little what's going on.

NL: Yes.

YM: Because finally in 1917 I was still only 13 years old.

NL: Yes.

YM: However, what I remember and, these, I don't know if those are interesting observations or not, I remember, for instance, that we had a dog, and the Rumanians came and shot the dog. My brothers and sisters, they buried the dog and cried for the dog. This made a very deep impression on me. I know that the dog was laying around there dead [chuckling] and they didn't bury him, they wanted me to be home to, to bury him, too [chuckling]. So this kind of childish, eh...

NL: Was this part of the anti-Jewish feeling on the part of the Rumanians, do you suppose?

YM: No, it was rather to make the people feel that they are in charge.

NL: I see.

YM: Now they went from house to house and picked up from flour, from sugar, from chickens, from soap, you name it, and they took it away from the family. So this kind of thing, and this, and they were, it wasn't limited, this kind of activity was not limited to the Rumanians only, to any one who came, with the exception of the Czechs.

NL: Ah yes.

YM: They came well provided. When they came, they came orderly, in an orderly fashion. You know, of course, that the Czechs, many of them, were administrators of the Austro-Hungarian Empire already, and they knew very well how to handle people, most of them did. Of course, in the moment they took over, things started to quiet down, and people knew that if they have a chicken, the soldiers won't come to take it away from them, or, if they had, let's say, geese, fat, or lard, or whatever, not like the Rumanians or the others, they won't take it away from them. Stores started to open up again. Materials in the stores started to appear. Shoes were available. For years no shoes were available in our vicinity. You couldn't get a pair of shoes. I will never forget it. When I went to Nagyhalasz [phonetic] *Yeshiva*, I still

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had those little slats made out of wood. This is the way shoes were manufactured instead of soles. So, this, these are my impressions. Of course, what can a thirteen-year-old know...

NL: Yes, yes.

YM: ...in this kind of a boiling world.

NL: Yes, did your parents ever talk to you or to the children about the Bolshevik period of occupation?

YM: In my parents' mind, and I have to say this quite honestly, rightly or wrongly, Bolsheviks, because we were born, grew up, and lived in a different society, whatever was Red, whatever was Bolshevik, was poison. They just couldn't, they couldn't even get to the point, I'm afraid, to consider it.

NL: But this was how most Jews felt, I believe.

YM: I would say so, yes.

NL: Yes, there was a lot to fear.

YM: Yes, a lot to fear.

NL: A lot to fear.

YM: A. The financial standings of everyone were in danger, and second, the religion...

NL: Anti-religious...

YM: ...which was their life...

NL: Of course.

YM: ...which was their, their mainstay, was constantly in danger.

NL: Of course.

YM: And we heard that after, I don't know, we knew about all the troubles, let's say the, the Russian Czar and his family and his generals gave to the Jewish population of Russia, we knew about all that, and we were sorry that they were killed. But *Fonya-ganef* [Russian thief], as we called him in those days, and as he was called by the people who came to us, eh, we knew very well what happened to them, and we couldn't really, so to say, say *kaddish* after them. We were sorry as human beings that they were killed, but we knew that religion is out, and no more *heder*, and no more *Mishnah*, and no more, no more, eh...

NL: No more property, no more private property.

YM: Right, yes, no more private property.

NL: A lot to fear.

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YM: So from this you will see what our emotions and even logical considerations were. Now my father, or mother, never sat down with us to have a political...

NL: Discussion.

YM: Political discussion.

NL: [chuckles]

YM: I mean in those days. Among the boys I was the oldest, but my oldest sister wasn't even there. She left Europe in 1913. My younger sister got married and she didn't live in the same place where we lived. I really did not attend too many, and didn't even have a chance, to get the feeling--just what I heard superficially--and, of course, if Reb Moishe or Reb Chaim said that this is terrible, I had to think it is terrible.

NL: And, and it was. It was. Uh, now in 1918, 1919, what was the political setup that affected your town, Cantor?

YM: In 1918 and 1919, as I said, our part of the land changed owners, so to say, many many times, but in '19 I went to Nagyhalasz, to my first *yeshiva*. Nagyhalasz at the time, already, was Czechoslovakia. And there was a great relaxation. Our village was divided by the, rather, about four kilometers from our village we had a river called Tisza, which comes from the high, up in the...

NL: Carpathian.

YM: Carpathian mountains. And, eh, flew through, close by to our river, to our village. When I used to come home in the first *z'man--z'man* is a semester, six months, you know--when I used to come home, in '19 or maybe '20, from Nagyhalasz, for a *Shabbes* to be home with my parents, we didn't need anything else, but a permit from the, Czechoslovakian police, let's say, or *Gendarmerie*, or whatever it was, that we are citizens or...

NL: Residents.

YM: ...residents of this and this village. And even if we were stopped, we could pass.

NL: But your parents were technically within Hungary.

YM: Technically, they were within Hungary, yes. Because it wasn't decided that this wouldn't be Hungary any more at the time. When then this other side of the Tisza was, eh, adopted to be also Czechoslovakia up to a certain point, then things relaxed in our village as well. But in Nagyhalasz, really we didn't have this when I got there anymore, because Nagyhalasz, as such, because it was on the right hand side of this river, immediately was decided that this will be part of Podkarpatska Rus, yes, but it will belong as such, eh, to the Czechoslovakia.

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YEHUDA MANDEL [1-2-15]

NL: Czechoslovakia.

YM: Czechoslovakia. Now you know that Czechoslovakia consisted of Podkarpatska Rus, Slovakia, Moravia, eh...

NL: Bohemia.

YM: Bohemia and so on. So, therefore, this was just a part of it. Where we lived was part of Podkarpatska Rus, all of it belongs, now, of course, to Russia.

NL: To Russia, yes. And did you live with a private family, or did you live in the *yeshiva*? Was there a dormitory?

YM: This again is a very interesting story. *Ich hab gegessen cost-teg* ["to support learning" families provided meals for *Yeshiva* students on different days], if you know what that is.

NL: Yes, yes.

YM: I eat a...

NL: Eating days.

YM: Right. Every day at a different place. I was just extremely lucky that my father, as a, a, as the owner of some...

NL: Land.

YM: ...land and so on had cattle to sell, and had sheep to sell, and had to buy things from, eh, materials for the farm and so on, so he had these friends, and I, just by coincidence, used to have my *cost-teg* at these families.

NL: I see.

YM: As a matter of fact, my sister-in-law, Chava, who lives in Israel, her father was an associate in some way of my father, and I had a *cost-tug* [singular], a day, to get my lunch or dinner, whatever in their house.

NL: Ah.

YM: So that I knew Chava Eizdorfer even before she was born.

NL: [Laughs]. Very interesting. And this was a large *yeshiva*?

YM: It wasn't a large *yeshiva*; it was a much bigger town than ours. As I say it was the capital of this district, Ungvar, and, eh, I will say in Nagyhalasz, at the time probably have lived 350 Jewish, 400 Jewish families. So that was already a big town. Nagyhalasz had a beautiful, big synagogue, of course Orthodox, two, three *betai medrushim* [class-rooms], and it was a nice, nice town. The *yeshiva* as such was never big, and was never, there was never a *yeshiva* in Nagyhalasz in spite of the fact that the great Shmelcha Klein was the, the *Rov* in

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YEHUDA MANDEL [1-2-16]

Nagyhalasz, it was never a *yeshiva* town until Yosef Nehemiah Kornitz, *zichron l'bracha*, came and organized this *yeshiva*.

NL: I see.

YM: Which consisted always of about 30, 35, less than 40 *bocherim* [young men]. And mainly youngsters.

NL: Youngsters.

YM: Young people, 14, 15, I myself studied in Nagyhalasz for two-and-a-half years; after that I already went to Ungvar, which was the capital city of Podkarpatska Rus, Uzhgorod, today it's called Uzhgorod. Eh, and the *Rov* was the chief rabbi of Podkarpatska Rus, Eravram Yosef Greenwald, he was a *haver* of my father in his father's *yeshiva* in Ust. So, I went to this *yeshiva* to study. After that, in other words, we didn't spend, I don't know, the time in Nagyhalasz until we became ready for, for anything like *hora'ah* [teaching], or whatever it was. We studied and got a good basic education there. I myself was there, I think, for five *z'man* [semesters], that means two-and-a-half years. After that I went to--started to study in Ungvar.

NL: Oh my. And, were there any secular studies involved, or...

YM: No.

NL: ...did you have a tutor for those?

YM: In my, of course, in my village you couldn't, even if you did want to...

NL: No.

YM: ...go further than the fourth, maximum the sixth grade.

NL: Grade.

YM: Eh, so that when I came to Nagyhalasz and my uncle--this uncle which I mentioned before, was a great influence--to get some secular knowledge as well, I studied privately. At the end of the season we took our exams in a private way. Let me mention something very interesting. I never in my life had any exercises, any kind of painting or drawing; that was just strange to me. *Farbrenggen di tzait oif a solcha narishkaiten* [to spend time on such nonsense], who did it? So, at the end, when I was prepared, ya, in Nagyhalasz, there was the middle *shule*, and the [unclear] it was called, where you could get above the elementary school four grades, four years. So, I wanted to have at least get that what I could. I don't know if my father ever discussed this question with, eh...

NL: Your uncle.

YM: No, my uncle he did, but with my rebbe.

NL: Oh.

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YEHUDA MANDEL [1-2-17]

YM: Yes, you know, that was a big thing.

NL: Of course.

YM: *Hachutzoniyot* [outside studies] wasn't simple to study. I don't know if he did or if he didn't, but he advised me, probably at the influence of my uncle, to go to A, B, C, D teachers, prepare with them, and at the end they gave us then, we went to school, that was a day assigned for...

NL: Examinations.

YM: For private examinations. So, the man who gave me the exam in mathematics, and, eh, *tziur*, eh,

NL: Penmanship?

YM: No, eh, not penmanship, but you know, to...

NL: Composition?

YM: To eh, to draw something.

NL: Oh.

YM: Drawing.

NL: Drawing.

YM: You know, so he said, look, you did quite well in mathematics. You did terribly, no, he said, you did terribly in this, my department and if you will pass mathematics, well, fine, I will let you pass. If not, [laughs] you won't pass!

NL: [Laughs]

YM: [Laughs]

NL: Yah, interesting. So now, you stayed in this town for two-and-a-half years...

YM: Two-and-a-half years.

NL: And then?

YM: Then I went to Ungvar.

NL: That's...

YM: U-N-G-V-A-R.

NL: And that was in Hungary?

YM: That was, that was, that was originally, originally it was Hungary. At the time when I went there it was the capital city of Podkarpatska Rus.

NL: And how do you spell Podkarpatska Rus?

YM: P-O-D, Karpatska as you spell, it's a separate word, of course.

NL: Yes.

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YEHUDA MANDEL [1-2-18]

YM: Kar-Pat-Ski, just as I say it phonetically, Russ, R-U-S-S.² And this was the capital city of Podkarpatska Rus. In, at the time, 13, 14, two-and-a-half years, I was about seventeen, eighteen years of age, and I got to Ungvar, maybe even less, I don't know, I stayed in Ungvar for four-and-a-half years.

NL: Still studying?

YM: Still studying, and only this.

NL: At the *yeshiva* there?

YM: At the *yeshiva*. There was a *yeshiva haramah*, it was a big *yeshiva*. There were 300 *bocherim*, and there already it was divided in, eh, divisions and sub-divisions, younger *bocherim* who studied [unclear] just this. As I have mentioned before, *maidneshiur* [phonetic] and so on, so, others who studied up to this and this point, later on others who came up to, I don't know, the *horaah*, who, who stood for the *nisayon*, [exams] *paskan shailles* and so on. There was, as I have said, this Erbavram Yosef Greenwald was my father's *haver* [friend] in his father's *yeshiva*, and he was one, he was the chairman of the committee who examined for the *horaah*. *Horaah*, is you know, all kinds of other things.

NL: Yes.

YM: But among other things it is, eh *issur veheter*, [prohibition permitted] you know, *kashres* [dietary laws], and *Shabbes* and *yom tov* [holiday] and so on, so, under his guidance, his son, who died here already, in Brooklyn, who was his successor later on, I studied with him, Yehoshua Greenwald, and together we were ordained, if I may call it that, to be *rabbonim*, and to, that was not yet *haturis rabbonis* [ordination], it was just to *paskan* and to *paskan shailles* in *issur veheter*.

NL: Mmm Hmm.

YM: Up to *simankēfiyot*. That was the way it went. And that's the way, the way it worked.

NL: That was the cycle.

YM: The cycle, yes. That was the highest. That was the most, eh, progress, the highest grade, let's say, achieved.

NL: Yes.

YM: So this is what I finished in Ungvar. From Ungvar I was, at the age of 19 and older, probably, drafted into the Czech army.

YEHUDA MANDEL [1-2-19]

NL: I see.

YM: I think we should stop here and now and we could probably, ya, and we will...

NL: We'll continue, all right, thank you very much, eh.

NL: We are continuing the interview with Cantor Mandel, March 3rd, 1982, Nora Levin interviewing. Cantor Mandel, would you now tell us the circumstances under which you, went into the Czech army, and your experiences in the army?

YM: I see, eh...[tape turns off briefly]

YM: I'm sorry for this interruption. You asked me to tell you how I got into the Czech army? Of course I was drafted and, like anybody else, at the time [phone rings; pause]

NL: All right.

YM: Is this O.K.? The draft into the Czech army went like everywhere else. You had to register, and, the draft board saw you in March, for what I had to come home especially from my *yeshiva*, and I was found, eh, able to, to serve.

NL: What year was this?

YM: That was in 1924. 1924. I then, when I was drafted, I went back to *yeshiva* for my last exams which I had to go through, and with that I started to look, maybe for a position for the High Holy Days, because draftees had to report October the 1st, and on October the 1st, was I think *erev* or *Rosh Hashanah*, I tried out in a few places. Finally I, performed the services, I *davened*, and served in Ruzomberok [phonetic], that's called Russaveit [phonetic] eh, where, eh, a high military official who was a physician who had a sanatorium in Detatra [phonetic] told me I shouldn't be concerned, he will give me proper documentation that I got sick on the way to Olmütz where I had to, mail some letter that I had to report, and this would be accepted. The only thing what will happen is that I will have to serve a few days, and in this case it was ten days, after I am finished with my year-and-a-half of service. It happened that way in 1926 I got out of this early Czech military service. A very interesting thing and maybe worthwhile to mention just for one reason, how the Czech, who--how liberal and wonderful they were. In the Czech army, any candidate for the priesthood, the rabbinate, or such, had the right to, after basic training, which everyone had to go through, and that was ten weeks, he had the right to report or to request or was even asked if he wants to go to a school, school for military administration was one way, the second possibility was a school in different hospitals to learn and study and become a male nurse. I chose the hospitals, the military nursing, and went through all kinds of

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YEHUDA MANDEL [1-2-20]

courses, and finally I was placed in Olmütz, which is a town, Olomoudz³, spelled A-L-O-M-O-U-D-Z, where I served in their *basheli*, in, in the hospital there, *Nahradisko*, and *Novy Svet* [all phonetic]. Those were the two places where I served. The patients, the soldiers, came in the morning, with this kind, that kind, the other kind of illnesses, and we always had two doctors. It happened that the commandant of the school, who was a, eh, colonel, a Jew, Dr. Galner, I will never forget his name, he was the head of these departments where I served. So, I served there, and from there I was discharged from the military.

NL: That would be 1927?

YM: 1926.

NL: 1926.

YM: '24 I was taken, '26 I got out. The military service at the time was a year-and-a-half, eighteen months. From there, I went home and, eh, as every Jewish father, my father saw my future very well-established and wanted me to get married and so on. I, however, as I have mentioned before, got infected with music. It happened partially that when I came in, as a, as a, into the military, one day a lieutenant came out to the exercises and asked who could help him out. He was studying a new operetta for the, to be performed on the celebration of Masaryk's birthday, and he would like some people who could sing to help him, and so on. So my friends, who knew me from *yeshiva*, they heard me *daven* there and all that, said, "He has a nice voice." So, this man arranged with my commanding officer to see him. I didn't know one musical note at the time, not at all. And this wonderful human being was patient with me and taught me *Prodanánevěsta*, the, the, ten, the Bride, whatever...

NL: Bartered Bride?

YM: Ya.

NL: Smetana.

YM: Smetana. He taught it to me. Of course I didn't know, I was never in a theater.

NL: Uhm hm.

YM: So, I didn't know when to go out and when to come in, but he pushed me in and pulled me out, just like, but I knew the music very well, because music, a musical ear I had. I learned everything by ear.

NL: Interesting.

YEHUDA MANDEL [1-2-21]

YM: Later on, then, when I sang many other occasions, I used to speak--there were many Hungarian speaking people who didn't even learn Czech--so I used to be their, eh, to, I used to speak to them at celebrations and so on. But when I came home, we had to make a deal with my father. I am not going to get married. I wanted to go straight back, whatever it will take, but study music. One more thing, maybe is interesting to characterize how the Czechs handled things. This very superintendent of performances in Olomouc told me that if I want to, the military division, that division of my, of my military, of the military...

NL: Experience.

YM: Ya. Would pay all the expenses to train me for the opera. He felt I had good enough a voice for that. However, the only thing I have to be, I have to sign for, is four years study is a minimum, and then I have to sign that wherever I will be assigned into a chorus or to parts in an opera or operetta or so on in the state theaters, I will have to do that. I will have to sing, or to perform, whatever. I thought it was a tremendous idea. I had an uncle in, who was a little more liberal than my parents, who was a lawyer by profession, so I wrote to him and told him about the great thing what I'm looking forward to. He understood and went over to my village from a place where he lived was about 40km. He went over on Sunday and sat with my parents, with my father mainly, for hours, and tried to explain to him what great future is before me. My father had one answer, and he told my mother, this is the way my uncle told it back to me, my mother's name was Rezel. "Rezel, we"--Moishe was my uncle's name--"Moishe is here for a very special purpose, to tell us what he told us, and you heard what he said. If this comes through, then we had four sons. We will be left with three." It was a terrible shock to me.

NL: Mmm.

YM: And even to my uncle. But when he wrote to me about it. I just didn't have the, the discipline was so immense, was so unbreakable, that I just couldn't see my myself to, to do anything else but to accept his decision. So, we made the deal with my father. When I came back after I was done with my military service, we spoke about this, and he told me he will never agree I should be a dingle dangle singer or be an operetta singer, whatever. Anyway, we made a deal, not to get married, what he wanted, and not to join the Academy of Music in Brünn or Prague, as the Superintendent of Music suggested. So, I went back to *yeshiva*. And I studied for two years in Pressburg, where I stood again before the *va-adat* [board of Rabbis] and I am the *musmacht* [ordained Rabbi] today of Pressburg *yeshiva*. Maybe this is the only good thing which comes from this.

NL: Were you contented in that experience, Cantor?

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YEHUDA MANDEL [1-2-22]

YM: In Pressburg, you mean?

NL: Yes.

YM: I was, because I made myself available to many, of course you know that the congregations in Europe were organized, there was one community, one *kehillah*, but there were many small synagogues. And I was always invited to *daven* here, to *daven* there, and I was paid for it. And this money which I made there, I could continue my musical studies right in Pressburg proper, and eventually travel to Vienna and pay for my lessons, which I got there.

NL: These were vocal lessons?

YM: Vocal lessons, musical lessons. I didn't know, I had no musical training.

NL: Did you go to a conservatory, or...

YM: Later on.

NL: Later on.

YM: In Vienna. In 1926 I finally...

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-1-23]

Tape two, side one:

NL: This is a continuation of our interview with Cantor Mandel, tape two, side one. Yes, you were saying about your musical education?

YM: I got my musical education from 1926, '27, '28, when I already used to go to Vienna and had lessons in Pressburg. In 1928, finally, I went over to Vienna and settled there. The way to settle there for me was one way. I became the cantor of a small congregation which was supposed to have been built later on, a beautiful temple and so on, but when I came there, the name of it was Montef-Temple Montefiore, *Tabelstrasse achtunddreissig* [38]. That's where I functioned as a cantor and got a salary which was very small, but I taught a lot. I had children to prepare for bar mitzvahs and gave lessons in Talmud and other Hebrew lessons. And this is the way I maintained myself in Vienna while I was studying, was the cantor of this little congregation, and did other work, and studied. Now there I was already a student in Neues Wiener Konservatorium. That was the place where I studied music and voice and piano and so on and so forth.

NL: You had the best of both worlds.

YM: Ya, right.

NL: So, tell me a little about your impressions of the Jewish community as you experienced it.

YM: In Vienna?

NL: In Vienna, yes. And whether there were any ominous signs of antisemitism or the coming of the Nazi movement.

YM: If I will tell you that at the time when I was in Vienna, or a little before that, a school was organized there for the training of *Bet Sefer L'hazanim Vemorim* [school for cantors and teachers]. However, in order to understand how it could be organized, you have to know that at the time I was fortunate to meet and the school was lucky, I think, to have been organized at the time when the chief rabbi of Austria in Vienna, of course, was Rav Chajes.

NL: How is that spelled?

YM: C-H-A-J-E-S.

NL: Oh, very well-known.

YM: Sure.

NL: Yes, of course.

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-1-24]

YM: A person who was not only the great *lamdan* [scholar], was not only the, the, extremely well educated person in every field, but he loved, he was never married, and he always told us that we are his family. He used to come into school. I will never forget it and I consider it as a great, eh, as an extraordinary occurrence in my life. Rav Chajes came in to school and at the time he prepared something, either it was *Yom Kippur katan* service or something or *minha* for weekdays, and he looked at me and came over to me and got a hold of my cheeks and said, "*Solche bokerim darfen mir haben hier* [We need such young men here!]."

NL: [Chuckles] Oh, how beautiful.

YM: Eh, he heard about me, about my background, and so on. But maybe there is another thing. After I studied for about two years or something like that in Vienna, in the meantime I went to *Bet Sefer L'hazanim Vemorim*, went, had these teachings, was the cantor of this small congregation, something happened in Vienna. The 20th District of Vienna looked for a *hazan* at the time. And this is again interesting maybe for people to know. It's history. The Vienna congregation, even for its smallest district, like Florence, or it was the name of the 20th District, was looking for a cantor, so they, in those days there was no Cantor's Assembly and there was no placement commission, so they put an announcement in the newspapers that this-and-this age, and this-and-this quality and so on and so forth is needed, and whoever felt like applying, applied. One hundred and eighteen people applied in 1928, young people, all talented, all very fine young upcoming people, and out of this amount of people, about 12 were chosen, not for an audition, but *für eine Vorprobe* [pre-audition]. That means before they were given permission to perform in synagogue, the board, the rabbis, the music educators, the conductors in the different temples, the cantors of the different temples, came together in no other place but the Seitenstetten Temple. And there they listened to him, and each in his department posed questions to the candidate. If the young man passed, then he got permission to give an audition. I had one of my teachers, who was the last chief cantor of the Seitenstetten Temple in Vienna, Heinrich Fischer, was the chief cantor of Vienna because he was Sulzer's successor. And he arranged for someone from Nuesatz Ujvidék, Novi Sad, in Yugoslavia, where the congregation was also seeking a cantor. He arranged for a man by the name of Mr. Gross to be able to attend and listen to the people, to the twelve or whatever who will hear there. He had to have special permission for it, but he got it for him. This Mr. Gross came from Germany, from the Fair, went home, on his way back to Yugoslavia he stayed in Vienna, I don't know what, and came to this eh...

NL: Examination?

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-1-25]

YM: Examination, yes. He heard me and told my teacher he likes what he heard and he would like me to come down to Yugoslavia--Novi Sad--for an audition. At the same time in my family there was a lot of trouble. One of my sisters who was the immediate child after me, had *galoppierende Tuberkulose* [consumption]. And my parents weren't in good financial standings, and I was just sick all the time to help her, to try to get her to the doctor or somewhere, where we thought at least she would get some help. So I knew I had to get a bigger position, more money, and to help. My sister, unfortunately, died. All my efforts didn't help her. And, eh...

NL: What was her name?

YM: Rivka.

NL: That was Rivka.

YM: Rivka.

NL: Yes.

YM: Eh...

NL: Were you able to go to Yugoslavia?

YM: Yes. I spoke to my teacher, Chais Fischer, *Hazan* Fischer, and he arranged for me at a certain date to go to Yugoslavia. At the meantime, one of the rabbis, Dr. Bach in Vienna who heard me there, said his son-in-law is the rabbi in Groningen, Holland, and he thinks I am the ideal candidate for his congregation.

NL: Well well.

YM: So, I went to Yugoslavia. I will never forget it. I think it was the 19th of April, 1928. And I gave an audition.

NL: It was in Novi Sad?

YM: In Novi Sad. N-O-V-I, next word is capital S-A-D, Yugoslavia. I say this because I will come back to another point in the same place later. So I went down there and I *davened*...

NL: Excuse me, before we go there, eh, Cantor, did you detect any signs of growing Nazi activity in Vienna?

YM: In Vienna? Yes, a lot.

NL: Can you talk about that a bit?

YM: Yes. I used to spend a lot of time in the house of *Oberkantor* Fischer. And he had a son, Alex, who at the time was a student at the university. And one day I--it's very clear in my mind--he came home and told his parents in Hungarian, because they came from Hungary

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-1-26]

and they still spoke it, "Please, please, whatever the great position of the- eh, to be Sulzer's successor, whatever money you make here, Father, whatever comfort you have here, please don't remain here, because this thing will just fall apart. It is impossible. Today in this department of the university there were fights, and Jewish people were beaten up and weren't let go to listen to the lectures, and so on." But you could see it even sometimes in the streets and, eh...

NL: For example?

YM: For example, eh, men fighting outside and a hundred people around. No one knew what it's all about, so someone said, "Yes, this man called the other man, 'You dirty Jew.' And this one couldn't take it and started a fight." Another thing, people used to sit in the coffee houses when people used to walk by--and I experienced this myself--and they made just remarks, "This is stable, the Jewish stable, where they sit around and they do nothing, they just live on our money and our land, and so on and so forth." It was not as organized as it became later, but it was...

NL: It was...

YM: Brewing.

NL: And discernible.

YM: Yes. Yes. Definitely yes.

NL: Was there a Nazi movement yet that you recall? An Austrian Nazi movement?

YM: I was told that in Oberstreig at the time, around Graz and Linz, there were already people communicating with German Nazis and, you have to know, and you know it just as well as I do, that in the middle 20's, already '23, '24, Hitler was already arrested, was already in jail, and was already writing his eh...

NL: *Mein Kampf*.

YM: *Mein Kampf* and so on and so forth. And that influenced many people. When I see for instance that with, The Sound of Music, I see the same thing what I really experienced. How many times did it happen that we wanted to go in Austria especially is eh famous that people bought for *Ausflüge*, eh... [excursions]

NL: Outings?

YM: Outings. And how many times were we told, "Don't go there." I don't know where, this place, that place, "'Cause there there is something preparing for this and this day, and if a group of young Jews will be seen somewhere," though we didn't look like Jews but, "eh, there will be some trouble. So you better don't make that trip." You could see it officially. I

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-1-27]

know that I, for instance, needed working papers, and this small congregation didn't have too much influence, but they tried very hard to get it for me. They couldn't, and I could stay in Vienna only illegally as a cantor, and legally as a student. Because as a student I was allowed to stay there.

NL: So Austrian citizenship was out of the question.

YM: Oh, it was out of the question, sure. It was out of the question.

NL: Did you have any knowledge of Mayor Luger, was he in office at the time?

YM: He was before my time.

NL: He was before your time.

YM: He was before my time. I know that he was a strong antisemite, but I never knew him. He was before my time.

NL: Now was the milieu different in Yugoslavia at Novi Sad? Was it more benign with respect to Jews?

YM: Maybe it's worth it--yes, it definitely was, because the Serb people who took over really this part of former Hungary were depressed themselves for many many hundreds of years, and they knew what it is to live under an oppressive government, and they were very nice and pleasant, and the Slav people as a rule, I mean if you are talking about Serbs, about Ruthenians, until they are poisoned...

NL: Instigated...

YM: Instigated, there's no trouble with them. I mean you can live with them. I don't say they loved Jews. But when you have for instance a priest who will tell them nothing else but that the Jews killed Christ and this and that and the Jews, be careful before Passover, because they need your children's blood for the Passover *matzah*, then of course, a fire starts. It's terrible.

NL: How large a Jewish community was in Novi Sad?

YM: In Novi Sad there were 1,000 Jews, about 500 families, one temple--beautiful, with an organ, with a choir of 40, with, eh, it was a beautiful community. And I was there for six years.

NL: And you were quite happy?

YM: I was very happy there. As a matter of fact, I married there my wife, may she rest in peace, Zahava.

NL: Zahava. What year was that?

YM: We got married in 1930. June the 30th.

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-1-28]

NL: And so you were there until '34.
YM: Yes.
NL: I see. And it was a very contented time for you?
YM: A beautiful time in my life.
NL: What was happening to your parents in the meantime? Were they...
YM: My father died in 1930, formal death that he had heart trouble and lung trouble and all kinds of things, he died in 1930. At the same time in 1930 while being the cantor of, eh, *Oberkantor* of Novi Sad, I was elected now without any audition, in Vienna again. This time it was *der fünfzehnte Bezirk*. It was a very elegant, beautiful, section.
NL: That's the fifth...
YM: The fifteenth.
NL: The fifteenth.
YM: The Temple of the Fifteenth District. And eh...
NL: Did you accept?
YM: I went to Vienna with my wife in 1930. She didn't want to leave before--she was a teacher by profession--and she didn't want to leave before the exams are over, so we left in June. By the time--the end of June. By the time we got to Budapest where she had an uncle, this uncle was already at the station, and we wanted to go to Vienna, giving us a telegram from my uncle who, I told you before, who went to talk, speak up for me, to intercede.
NL: Who tried to intercede?
YM: "Don't ask questions. Come straight over." And the reason for it was that my father died. We were in Budapest on a certain Sunday, and it was the thirtieth or whatever it was, the first of July, and my father died Friday before, was buried on the same day, because, of course, my uncle wouldn't have done anything else. So I was never at my father's funeral. So when I went home, I sat *shiva* and [unclear]. So, eh...
NL: Did you return to Novi Sad?
YM: No, I went to Vienna and [unclear]. However, my appointment in, with *Obergeneralstabsrat* Bieck, who was the president of the congregation, was for the first or second of July. And after the *shiva* it was already the 10th or 8th of July. By the time I got to Vienna it was the 12th of July. And the secretary, Dr. Löwenherz of the main congregation in Vienna, my--you asked me before about the citizenship in Austria--told me when I told him that one of my conditions to come to Vienna is if the congregation, the community, guarantees me to become a citizen. So he said--I was very young, and he was a middle-aged person, very

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-1-29]

well-educated--so he told me, "*Mein liebes Kind, die Staatsbürgerschaft können wir nicht garantieren. Das ist die Sache der Regierung. Wir können Ihnen alles Andere geben.*"⁴ So I--my wife was a teacher in Yugoslavia at this date, and I had this beautiful position, and we went back. However, we stayed in the Marienbad Hotel, I will never forget it. And I looked out at the quay and tears were dripping out of my eyes. I was so sad that I can't come back to Vienna. I loved Vienna. I loved Vienna.

NL: It's an enchanting city, especially in this pre-war period, the inter-war period. So...

YM: So after this...

NL: Your life flowed on then, in Novi Sad?

YM: Yes, after this it's a very interesting period. As I say, up until '34, February, I was in Novi Sad. I sang concerts in the Academy of Music in Budapest, here, there, I sang on the radio. I started in 1930 the cantorial music programs on the Yugoslav radio. You may even have found something in those notes which I left with you, where there are letters and notes from the radio station in Budapest.

NL: Yes, I want you to identify those if we have time.

YM: Yes, I will, I will.

NL: Because we made copies and I think I have your original.

YM: I will. I will. So...

NL: It was a rich life.

YM: It was a very rich life. Here, the following happened, probably in 1933, fall, after the holiday, in the fall, the *Chevrah Kadisha* [burial society] in Novi Sad which was at the time 200 years old, because they started with Jews who came from Phoenicia and all the Middle Eastern countries...

NL: Turkey...

YM: Traveled through Turkey and all the other countries, and settled in Yugoslavia, and among other places, Novi Sad, so that *Chevrah Kaddisha* started to be active in that part of the world, 200 years ago at the time. So, they, eh, this was a very big celebration, where the king, King Alexander, was represented by one of his generals, and the chief rabbi, Alkali, Dr. Alkali from Belgrade, came down and there was a tremendous banquet in the evening, but in

4 My dear child, we cannot guarantee your citizenship. Only the government can give you that. We can give you everything else.

YEHUDA MANDEL [2-1-30]

the morning it started, the whole thing started with a celebration in the temple to have a service. The details are not important, but...

NL: But it was a momentous time.

YM: Yes. But what is important is that a man by the name of Dr. Braun, who was at the time--a German fellow--who was at the time the director of the radio station, the national radio station, that is, the radio station was run by the government there, you know, so, he was the director of that, and when he heard us with the choir and how beautiful it was, and all that, he came over to me after the service and said, "Could we come over once to pick up your service on Friday evening, or *Shabbes* Saturday morning, and broadcast it?" I said, "I couldn't tell you that. You would have to talk to the rabbi, and the religious committee, and so on." I spoke to the rabbi and saw right away that he will not agree. He was an extremely jealous person, and didn't want to give *koved* [show respect] to...

NL: Be showered on like that.

YM: Yes. So anyway, eh, finally this got back and forth. Finally we decided with this Dr. Braun that if he can't take the whole service from the temple, I should come and give concerts in Belgrade, and so I went every three, four, five weeks [unclear] Belgrade and gave concerts and so on. One day I get a letter from a man in Kovno, of all places. He writes to me in Yiddish, "My dear friend, *Hazan* Mandel, I heard you on the radio on this and this date, and I liked what I heard, and I would like you to come down to Kovno to give a few concerts. Concerning this, don't worry about money," he said, "it's my responsibility. But in order to make it legal, in a few days you will receive suggestions, a plan, plus an agreement from a concert bureau, Klavahoff [phonetic]."

NL: [chuckles]

YM: Klavahoff [phonetic], was the name of the concert bureau. I remember! In a few days I really received, I think it was around January or something, now, of 1934. This went on for three months in 1933 and so on. But it took us a long time. I get this, and I thought, one more thing is important, that my family, the family of my wife, was, all lived in Novi Sad, and my father-in-law, who was the rabbi of this congregation once upon a time, because he never learned the Serb language which became the official language of the community, he wasn't the rabbi or the associate rabbi but became the secretary general of the congregation. So I spoke to him, I spoke to the family and so on, and they, my mother-in-law, may she rest in peace, she said, "My dear child, you live in the same house where we are. What are you missing? Why do you want to go away? What is it, what are you really looking for?"

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-1-31]

NL: Searching...

YM: Searching for. And I didn't know what to answer. But I answered, "I will come." And we corresponded back and forth, and in February of 1934 I went down to Kovno to the house of this wonderful person who arranged for me in his--he lived in a mansion--a wing of his house, with a car, with everything, whatever I wanted to go, at my disposal and so on, and I sang, I *davened* in Kovno, in the *Dobi Shakorshul* [phonetic] first *Shabbes*, then I sang a benefit concert for the, for a *yeshiva*, and then the next week we had a concert with the Lithuanian National Orchestra, rather in the Academy of Music there, and it was very nice.

NL: A concert of Jewish...?

YM: A concert, no, no,

NL: Secular.

YM: A mixture.

NL: But some liturgical music?

YM: Ya. Yes. Definitely yes.

NL: In the Lithuanian...

YM: In the Lithuanian...

NL: Musical Hall...

YM: In the Academy of Music. Yes. And accompanying was the symphony orchestra of the Lithuanian govern...

NL: What an experience for a young man.

YM: It was just overwhelming. And I was there for two or three weeks. I sent telegrams to extend my vacation, because I had vacation for two weeks, and suddenly one weekend, one *Shabbes*, I think the third *Shabbes* or something, a gentleman is at the table with us, and this man, I think his name was Mr. Barkin, in whose house I stayed, introduces a man by the name Mr., eh, I can't remember his name now. Anyway, introduces him, "This is the president of the *Grosse Chor Synagoge* in Riga. It's my brother-in-law, Mr. Becker."

NL: Your brother-in-law?

YM: *His* brother-in-law, Mr. Becker.

NL: Barkin's brother-in-law.

YM: Ya. This man was the brother-in-law of this Mr. Becker. And Mr. Becker came to *shul*, heard me *daven*, and Sunday he tells me, "You know, we are seeking a *hazan* for eighteen or nineteen months already, *Hazan Rabitz davened Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur*. Our *hazan* until now was Herman Yadlovger [phonetic], who was *Rigenzer* himself, but he isn't

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-1-32]

there any more. And we had many, many candidates, this one, that one. I think you should try out for this position." So I didn't dare to stay any longer. I went home, and about two, three, maybe four weeks later I went back to Riga, and then my family was all in tears, why do I go? And I *davened* in Riga, and among three, we were down, they were down, the congregation was down to three people. That was Herman Yadlovger [phonetic], *Hazan* Alter, Yisruel Alter, and myself. And I will, consider this again it was a great and beautiful shining point in my career. *Rogachover Gaon* at the time, who lived in Dvinsk, but came for treatment to Riga, and I had a chance to speak with him, and before the...

NL: What was his name again?

YM: The *Rogachover Gaon*, Rozin.⁵

NL: Rozin.

YM: But he goes under the name, the *Rogachover Gaon*, *Rogachover*. How you spell it, *Rogachover*, the best way I can say it, Gaon [Brilliant Rabbi-teacher]. And he told the people, the board, when they came to him "Rebbe, we are in such-and-such a quandary, we don't have a *hazan*," and so on, he said, "*Yidden, oib yir vilt haben a Yid, a hazan, a Yid, nemt Hazan Mandel.*"⁶

NL: Ah, you had *so* many offers!

YM: Yes. Yes.

NL: Incredible.

YM: So...

NL: Did you pick up any impressions of Jewish life...

5 Joseph Rozin (1858-1936), Polish Talmudic genius, called "the *Rogachover*" after his birthplace (Rogachov).

6 Jews, if you want to have a Jew, a cantor, a Jew, take Cantor Mandel.

YEHUDA MANDEL [2-2-33]

Tape two, side two:

NL: This is tape two, side two, continuing our interview with Cantor Mandel.

YM: As I have told you before, when I initially started to plan to go to, as they called it at the time, Siberia [laughs]...

NL:[laughs]

YM: My family called it Siberia, I couldn't give them a good reason why I want to go, because really I had, we had, all we needed for sharing *kavod* [respect], and *nachat* [gratification] and live in the same town with the parents; it was beautiful. But why be in Riga--the *Grosse Chor Synagoge* was first of all the official temple of the Jewry of Lettland. [Latvia]. Second of all, my predecessor, not the immediate one, the immediate one was Herman Yadlovger [phonetic], as I said before, my predecessor there was Baruch Leib Rosowsky, *Hazan* Rosowsky, which by the way was the father of the Rosowsky who worked so much on the *M'nigunei Hatam, Ta'amag Hanigunim* and so on...⁷

NL: Ah, I see...

YM: It's his father. It's his father. I met him once in New York. He just couldn't let me go.

NL: I can imagine.

YM: That I was the successor of his father. So, when I came back home after I *davened*, and I wasn't engaged immediately because we had meetings and this, and that, and I didn't have the time to stay there for so long, so I went home to Yugoslavia. I told my family the reasons I will go to Riga are as follows: I know I have a lifetime agreement here which I won't--I will leave. Ella, *zikronah livrachah*, has a lifetime position at the state, true. We have a beautiful, artistically furnished, beautiful apartment, true. I will leave that. But where I'm going is--Riga is near the *Kol Bach*.⁸ Can you imagine that in 1934, Riga had from kindergarten on, up to university, schools and high schools where the teaching language was Hebrew. When our son was born, I will never forget it, we had a very dear friend Dr. Gurvich, a lawyer, and his wife was a physician, their children came up to my wife to visit her in the sanatorium where she gave birth, and with a bunch of Hebrew names, what kind of names,

⁷ Solomon Rosowsky (1878-1962) composer and musicologist, wrote *The Cantillation of the Bible (Five Books of Moses)*.

⁸ *Kol Bo* - everything within.

YEHUDA MANDEL [2-2-34]

written in Hebrew, they gave to her. This is the kind of, no, the fact that in the temple there was a *bet hamidrash* [Talmudic school] where 150 people were sitting every morning and every afternoon *bain mincha and maariv* [between the late afternoon and evening prayers] and they studied Talmud. The...

NL: The intellectual...

YM: The intellectual level, quality of Rigensen Jews, of Russian Jewry, I will say, of course, there were others, but...

NL: In Riga...

YM: ...was so high, was so high. Riga had 60,000 Jews at the time, I think 600,000 inhabitants, and 60,000 Jews. Every person spoke at least three, four languages, Yiddish, of course, Russian, of course, Latvian, of course, but many people spoke perfect, perfect Hebrew, German, English, French, and so on. It was such a high level, I always say if there would be a class to choose from, where to choose from, for leaders of Jewry, worldwide, it should definitely be this kind of Jewry, because their intellect, I mean the way they, they, they were *ber tzedakah*. Once a year we had an appeal for, I don't know, the *moshav zakanim* [old age home]. Once a year a beautiful banquet was arranged. *Latkes* were served on Hanukkah, and that was the time. But the *latkes* had a hole. Three, four sentences were necessary to tell the people: "*Meine tyere friynt mir huben lecher, Der moshav zakanim hot nit genug gelt.*"⁹ Money was flowing in like you can't imagine.

NL: What was the chief economic, or what were the chief economic occupations of Jews in Riga?

YM: As you well know, rubber industry was great. Clothing industry was great. Business, exports...

NL: Merchandising...

YM: Immense. And they always say that where our *sechel* [brains-common sense], our intellect, stops, the Lithuanian Jew--the ones I was with--his intellect starts there. They are such *khokhomim* [wise ones]. Such *Talmidey khokhomim* [learned wise scholars]. Such educated people, that I have never, I mean, I lived with all kinds of people...

NL: Yes.

YM: My own homeland, and eh, Hungary had quite a few nice *Talmidey khokhomim*, but there it was more on a general basis.

9 My dear friends, there are holes. The Old-Age Home does not have enough money.

YEHUDA MANDEL [2-2-35]

NL: Very high.
YM: Yes.
NL: Excellence.
YM: Ya.
NL: Yes.
YM: High excellence.
NL: So you stayed just for a short time and returned home?
YM: Eh, no.
NL: What did you do...
YM: I stayed, I stayed until trouble became very prevalent...
NL: Oh.
YM: Around Riga.
NL: Oh, you, your wife and you then removed to Riga?
YM: We moved to Riga, and were in Riga from 1934, beginning of 1934, '5, '6, three years.
NL: I see. And did your wife resume teaching?
YM: She did not resume teaching.
NL: No.
YM: She had worked in the Hebrew school, not as a professional. She had remedials, like, if children needed help, she gave it to them, 'cause she knew Hebrew at the time already quite well.
NL: And I would like the name of your son, Cantor.
YM: My son's name is Immanuel Zvi.
NL: And he was born in what year?
YM: He was born in 1936.
NL: In Riga?
YM: In Riga, May, I guess.
NL: Yes.
YM: Now, we moved to Riga, we lived there in Riga, and it was a continuation of *gan eden* [Garden of Eden], beautiful. We had no difficulties. Finally in the Baltic States, as you know, that's the closest to Germany, there tremendous fights and border clashes, and real trouble started. And the Germans became stronger and stronger, as I don't have to tell you, it started in Austria, and then continued in other places. Finally, there, it became very dangerous.

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-2-36]

NL: Would you say the seat of it was in the universities, or among the lower classes, or simultaneous?

YM: I would say it was simultaneous.

NL: Yes.

YM: Yes, simultaneous. Because I wasn't out in the Gdansk, for instance, these places which were the corridor, the so-called corridor, but there daily clashes came.

NL: Between the Nazis and anti-Nazis?

YM: Between the Nazis and anti-Nazis. Jewish stores were obliterated. Jewish people were beaten up. Some disappeared, and the danger became immensely big.

NL: Excuse me, was there an economic problem in the country, generally, at that time?

YM: No.

NL: No.

YM: No, there was no...

NL: No depression.

YM: No kind of, no depression.

NL: No depression.

YM: No.

NL: So that was...

YM: Uhrmanish was the president at the time, of the country, and it was very well-organized...

NL: Prosperous.

YM: Prosperous, a good country. And the Jews maintained the prosperity for [unclear]. The government, you couldn't detect at the time in the government any Nazism, though some people who, for instance this Guraviches, who he was a lawyer, and dealt with the courts and so on, he said yes, there is antisemitism outside in the world. We don't know about it because we live a sheltered life. But he, and in the newspapers you, you could see it. What happened in 1936 is maybe what saved us. In 1936 my brother, my younger brother, who lived in Yugoslavia, got married, and that was in April of 1936, Yoel, was his name.

NL: Yoel.

YM: Yoel. And I came to his wedding from Riga to Yugoslavia. My wife was expecting, so she didn't make this trip, she stayed there, and--my father-in-law, when I traveled, was in Yugoslavia, so I visited with them as well--he told me that he was in Budapest some

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-2-37]

time ago, and the Secretary General, Eppler, asked him where I am. He heard me once *daven* in Budapest in one of the temples, main temples, and once give a concert at the Academy of Music for the benefit of Hungarian, it wasn't a [unclear] community, it was a big article [unclear], eh, the redactor, the...

NL: Editor.

YM: Editor of that was the father of Raphael Patai.

NL: Patai.

YM: Jozsef Patai.

NL: Oh yes.

YM: So, he was a very dear friend of my uncle, and he knew that I'm close by, and at one of these concerts I participated. And this man remembered and he said--you have to know that in Budapest the congregation all belonged to one united unit. However, there are the more traditional, and the less traditional, and I think I mentioned that there is the Tabak temple for the--with organ and so on, and there is Rombach Temple, more traditional. So, eh, so this Eppler, the Secretary General, tells my father-in-law, you know, *Oberkantor* Tkatch will be retiring, and we need an *Oberkantor* as successor. So, when I traveled to Yugoslavia, I heard about this. They got in touch with me, I performed a *Shabbes* service there, and was immediately elected to be the successor of the great *hazan* Yizzis Yisroeil Tkatch. I came to Budapest in 1936, June. And there the real trouble started.

NL: So, excuse me, will you have time to start that now, or shall we save it?

YM: Shall we save it.

NL: Shall we save it, because, eh...

[unclear]

NL: We are continuing our interview with Cantor Yehuda Mandel, March 17, 1982. Yes, I think you heard where we left off, Mr. Mandel.

YM: Yes, I heard a few words, and I think it will keep me in the right direction and maybe in the right spot. When I was elected to be the *hazan* in Rombach Temple, that was 1945. The month, I don't remember exactly, but I came to Budapest in 194- 1935, rather, that's, erase that...

NL: That's all right. Yes, we'll fix it in the transcript.

YM: In 1935, then came back to occupy my position in Budapest in Rombach Temple, which was one of the main temples among the 48 or 49 synagogues which belonged to

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-2-38]

the United Jewish Organization of the *Kultusgemeinde* in Budapest. There were two main temples, one was a very modern, you have probably seen pictures of it not too long ago in *The Exponent*, and so on.

NL: Yes.

YM: And one was my temple, the traditional one. The Tabak Temple was a little bigger, but even this temple, the seating capacity of the Rombach temple was close to 4,000.

NL: Mmm.

YM: And I was very happy to come there and to be there. First of all, great, great people, great musicians, and the *hazanim* were my predecessors. To mention just two, Bachman, Yaakov Bachman, was one of my predecessors. And *Hazan* Yisroel Tkatch was the immediate predecessor of mine. Beside that, Budapest was the best and most strongly organized Jewish community of the world.

NL: Is that so?

YM: Not even London, because London has a United Synagogue, but the whole, the whole, eh, British dominion belongs to it.

NL: Mmm hmm.

YM: Here, there was one congregation, so to say, if we may call it that, it was much, much more than a congregation, there was 49, there were 49 congregations.

NL: A community.

YM: A community. And, eh, the whole approach to services, to organization, this community had their own hospitals, their own *moshav-z'kaynim*, old-age homes, their own schools, their own sport organizations, it was a country, or a government in a government, really. And if you...

NL: How many Jews were there, would you say, in these 49 congregations?

YM: I would say, I know exactly that the congregation, and I know it because there state and church was not separated; there you paid dues or rather taxes to the community; if you were Jewish you paid to the Jewish community, if you were Catholic, to the Catholic community, and so on. I know that our organization, our community, had 200,000 people registered and had over 125,000, as we called it there, *Kultussteuer zahlende Mitglieder*, people who paid dues, or rather taxes, to the congregation. So I was born in Hungary, I spoke the language perfectly. I came, so to say, I came home. As great as Riga was for me as a center of Judaism, as a center of learning, as a center of *lamdanut* [learning], as a center of music, as being the successor of Baruch Leib Rosowsky, who, I don't have to tell you was a great man,

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-2-39]

and I was very happy there, and I left a lifetime position in Yugoslavia to go there. But here, I came home, besides, and this is the emotional part, maybe, my wife's parents and the whole family lived in Yugoslavia, now, formerly Hungary, but it was only about two hours ride. So it was happiness to everybody. I came there in June to prepare for the High Holy Day services. I had all my rehearsals, the choir, and so on. Our belongings, our furniture and everything else, was packed in Riga, and on the way home, my wife went with the child to her parents to Neusatz [German for Novi Sad], Yugoslavia, and I was in Budapest. I started, really, started really to function *Rosh*, the *Rosh Hodesh benschen* [blessing], or to say, *birchat hachodesh*, eh, before Rosh Hashanah in 194-, 1936. So, we may say probably August, September, October, everything was just magnificent. And the people loved it. I started to write Hungarian articles about *hazanut* in the Hungarian--in the Jewish publications, and so on. I had organized courses for Hebrew. I got very busy in the Zionist organizations. We started making plans for the future. Suddenly I became the secretary of the *Kultusgemeinde*, the *Beamten* [officials], you know...

NL: Ah...

YM: And it was such a great thing for me, you know, coming from a little village in Podkarpatska Rus, going through all what I told you before, and now, suddenly to reach to this point, to be the chief cantor of, of one of the main temples in the world, in Budapest community. I performed services and was very well-liked, I say it myself, very well-received. We settled, we had a home close to the temple, because I didn't travel on *Shabbas*, and *yomim tovim* [holidays], and everything was fine. The High Holy days went over beautifully, beautifully, and everyone was talking. Now, we had a Secretary General who was in charge of the administration. He used to say, "No one was yet the chief cantor of the Budapest community in the main temple at age 32. Besides," he said, "there was never any one to have this position of Hungarian descent," so to say. You know the Hungarian Jews were very patriotic.

NL: Assimilated.

YM: So, it was very good. But, at the end--this went on in 1936, '37, and in '37 of the *yamim noraim* [ten days between *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*] in 1937, during the *yamim noraim*, nothing happened, but at *Shemini Atzeret*, or *Simchat Torah*, I don't remember what date, I already got a message from this very Secretary General *not* to go home for lunch after the services because the *Fremdenpolizei* [alien police], means the, I don't know what you would call it here, you know, had to do with giving permits, not giving permits to people, because I was a Czechoslovakian citizen. And later on...

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-2-40]

NL: Police for aliens.

YM: Ya. And they had their own police, and they had their own, own eh...

NL: Militia.

YM: Ya. And I was told that though my work permit to work in Hungary as a Czechoslovakian citizen is far from being exhausted, I would have to leave Hungary together with my family, my permit was revoked. Why, no one knew.

NL: By an act of parliament, or was it...

YM: Not, not an act of parliament. This alien police who had charge of the different, of the individuals, so to say, had, eh, eh, had, eh, a commander or chief administrator who was a terrible antisemite, and he looked and looked, and most probably he had some trouble with the congregation before this. And he tried to give back to them, and what can be worse than take away they were looking for a, for a *hazan* for so many months and months and months, finally everything is settled, so he tried to get them from, through me.

NL: Excuse me, but the fact that you were born in Hungary did not mean anything, inasmuch as you were a Czech citizen?

YM: Right. Did not mean anything, and I don't know even if I would have been a Hungarian citizen, if they couldn't have done something to me because they made up stories...

NL: They were looking for a pretext.

YM: Looking for excuses.

NL: Oh my.

YM: In 1937, trouble was real, real, real bad.

NL: Within the country or because of external...

YM: No...

NL: ...pressure?

YM: Because of this organization extra pressure.

NL: Oh, I see.

YM: And I had a teacher--I still functioned, but with special permissions and probably some bribes and so on, bribes which were given to the different functionaries, I functioned. But in 19- by the end of 1937, I felt it is very bad. And I wrote to a teacher of mine, *Oberkantor* Fischer, who was the successor of Sulzer in, in, eh, in [unclear] Stadttemple who was a teacher of mine. And I loved him and I think he had a lot of, a lot of feelings for me as well. And he wrote back to me and said, "I think you suffered enough for being born in Hungary. There is an open position in the Duke's Place Temple in London."

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-2-41]

NL: Duke's Place.

YM: Duke's Place Temple. That was the main temple of London where the chief rabbi was, eh...

NL: Presiding.

YM: Presiding. Dr. Hertz, who made the [unclear] to the...

NL: Yes.

YM: And he says, "I think, the way I know you and what I know about you, if you will apply, you surely will be invited."

NL: Excuse me, if we could step back a little, Cantor Mandel. Were other Jews who were also considered aliens being, eh, harassed this way too while you were there?

YM: Harassed they were already at this time. It came to the point that by the end of 1938, thousands of Jews were transported to Galicia, to be specific, to Kamenets-Podolsk.

NL: Oh yes.

YM: Where they were killed, and when I was in Kamenets-Podolsk, as a laborer, laborer in the labor camp, because I speak the language, I spoke to an old peasant who led me to the place where thousands or many, many were killed and buried, and said, "You see this mountain, that's a mountain of people. Jews were killed and buried there and this hill, this mountain covers them. This is their grave."

NL: And this was all done through some internal decision in Hungary?

YM: They said that, this very alien officer, whatever we may call it, said, that these people are not Hungarian citizens. They came, they escaped from Galicia in 1916, '17, '18 during the First World War, they stayed there through bribes, and they gave bribes to this one and that one, but now we are national Hungarian government and we will eradicate all this nonsense. And whoever doesn't belong here we'll just take them out. So they took them out, children, parents, grandparents, sick, wealthy, well people, and took them to Kamenets-Podolsk. I don't have to tell you the story of Kamenets-Podolsk.

NL: Did this attitude affect Hungarian Jews generally, in other words, the native or citizen groups, were they being also discriminated against in some way?

YM: To a degree they were, because the parliament already discussed the first Jewish--the first law against Jews at the end of 1937. The second law against the Jews, that the Jew cannot have a business of his own, he must have a non-Jew who will run his business, the second, in the base of Doraheim [?], who was the Minister, Prime Minister at the time, the second law, the second Jewish law against the Jews was bad, where a Jew couldn't have any

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YEHUDA MANDEL [2-2-42]

more a store on his own at all, and so on. People could be drafted into these labor camps. Jews could not be so in the army anymore.

NL: National army.

YM: Ya. No. It was very much up to the local, eh, local...

NL: Authorities.

YM: ...authorities to execute or how to execute these things.

NL: I see.

YM: But there were not signs, there were really laws against the Jews. People who lost their jobs, of course, they were persecuted by having to move, I don't know, to a smaller apartment because they didn't have the means to maintain. They didn't have any income.

NL: People lost businesses.

YM: They lost their businesses, they lost their jobs. No Jew could work for the government, no Jew could work for the city, no Jew could work anywhere where, eh, which had any, any work which had anything to do with the public. Not even to collect, to be a collector of the...

NL: Trash.

YM: ...of the trash. Or the gas company, or trash, or whatever.

NL: Yes. So there was a clear antisemitic line coming.

YM: Definitely. Definitely.

NL: And this, you think, was due to purely internal forces, or were there already external pressures from Germany?

YM: No, there were, the Hungarian politicians were very glad to work along with, with the Germans, and there was quite a number, Hungary, first of all, had many, many Schwab, I don't know, do you know what that means. The Germans who came to Hungary settled there, Schwabians.

NL: Schwabians.

YM: Ya. Who came to Hungary and, of course, they went with Hitler and for Hitler right away. Now wherever you had this kind of an influence, it was the, the feelings and actions against Jews were stronger. Where these influences didn't take, it was a little less, but the Germans really occupied Hungary only in 194-

NL: 4.

YM: 4. And, eh, you had tremendous antisemitism,

NL: Before.

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YM: Before that already in 1938, '39, '40, all through...

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