

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

VERA ROSENBERGER

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer:	Nora Levin
Date:	January 2, 1985

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Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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VERA ROSENBERGER [1-1-1]

VR - Vera Rosenberger¹ [interviewee]

NL - Nora Levin [interviewer]

UI - Unidentified Individual

Date: January 2, 1985

Tape one, side one:

VR: I would like for to use a word because I think I am speaking English but it is not enough and...

NL: ...oh, I think.

VR: I could try to translate. I am—I could do everything.

[tape on, tape off]

NL: This is an interview with Mrs. Vera Rosenberger January 2, 1985. Nora Levin interviewing. Mrs. Rosenberger, would you be good enough to tell us a little about your childhood, your home, when and where you were born.

VR: I was born in Zrenjanin, which was this time Petrovgrad in 1929, and my name was Weis, Vera Weis, my...

NL: Would you be good enough to spell the name of the town?

VR: Zrenjanin. I...

NL: You'll write it, thank you.

VR: Yes. Actually, when I was born it was Veliki Bečkerek. It's a very, I think Bečkerek is written, [pause while writing] and then it was Petrovgrad. And now it is Zrenjanin. It is so. They changed the name three times.

NL: And in what part of Yugoslavia was this?

VR: It was in Bánát.

NL: In Bánát. That's the north.

VR: North, east.

NL: Northeast. Northeast.

VR: And it's called Vojvodina [an autonomous province in N. Serbia]. Vojvodina [writing name down]. This part of east.

NL: Fine. Thank you. And, was there a large Jewish community there?

VR: There was, this town was Zrenjanin, I don't know exactly how many, which was the population, but, it was a town. The Jewish community was big for such a town, very well-organized, with a big synagogue. The Jewish population was mostly from intellectuals, merchants, and, and maybe a small, poor community which was helped by the Jewish community.

NL: Was, was it an old Jewish community going back a number of years as far as you know?

¹née Weis, middle name Hava.

VERA ROSENBERGER [1-1-2]

VR: Yes, as far as I know, the first Jews arrived in Zrenjanin, in Gross-Bečkerek, was in the Austro-Hungarian time.

NL: Mmm hmm.

VR: In 18th century.

NL: Mmm hmm, mmm hmm.

VR: And they even helped the Belgrade Jews during the war in, at the end of the 19th century.

NL: Mmm hmm, mmm hmm.

VR: Most of them were very good. It was no ghetto in Zrenjanin. The people lived in the nice part of the city. Most of them, or all of them were Ashkenazi Jews coming from Austro-Hungaria, with mother language or Hungarian or German. In the schools, I was born in Yugoslavia, and I learned in school Serb.

NL: Serb.

VR: Serb. But, but mother, my mother language is Hungarian. Because my mother was born in Bačka, which was Austro-Hungaria, and she went to Hungarian schools.

NL: And there was no special...

VR: The same with father.

NL: The same with father. No special Jewish neighborhoods. The communities mixed, or did you live in a...

VR: It was a mixed community.

NL: Mixed.

VR: And most of the Jewish families lived in the nice part of the city. But, between the other, mostly the Serb population.

NL: The Serb population.

VR: Most the Serb. In Zrenjanin, the population was very mixed. There was a Serb population, Hungarian population, German population, a big German population, called Schwabs.

NL: Schwabs.

VR: And, Jewish, and some, a population called the *Tods* [phonetic], which came from Slovakia, and lived in small towns around Zrenjanin, and were like house maids, in the...

NL: More menial work.

VR: Yes. Yes.

NL: And what was father's work?

VR: My father was a, a merchant.

NL: Merchant.

VR: But unfortunately he died when I was only less than four years old.

NL: Oh my. Young man.

VR: He was in his 40's, and he died from a heart attack.

VERA ROSENBERGER [1-1-3]

NL: Oh my. Did you have brothers, sisters?
VR: I have one brother, living in Jerusalem.
NL: One brother, and his name, please?
VR: His name is Moshe Weis.
NL: And how— was he younger than you?
VR: He's older, four years. He was born 1925.
NL: And how did mother manage, then, after father passed away?
VR: Mother tried to continue the work of my father, but it was very tough for her. She was much younger than my father, she was only 29.
NL: Mmm.
VR: When she was widowed. And, my father died in 1933.
NL: Mmm hmm.
VR: And we lived till 1936 in Zrenjanin, or, this time it was Petrovgrad. And left to Belgrade in 19-, in the summer of 1936.
NL: Can you tell me a little about your relations with the Serbian population and other non-Jews when you lived in Zrenjanin. Was it...
VR: Zrenjanin.
NL: Pleasant? Comfortable...
VR: Yes...
NL: ...for you.
VR: I went to a public school where was most Serbian public school, and the relation I had with Serb friends, and there was no problem which—the Hungarian or the Germans went to their schools.
NL: Separate schools.
VR: Maybe it was separate schools, but I can't remember that I met them in my class.
NL: And you were comfortable and happy in the public school?
VR: Yes, it was not a nice public school [chuckles].
NL: Oh. It was not...
VR: ...it was an old fashioned.
NL: Old fashioned.
VR: Public school, but I don't think I feel some antisemitism or something against Jews. We were in my class maybe two or three Jewish children. And...
NL: Your teachers were Serbian?
VR: Yes. Most of them. We had religious lessons separately.
NL: Separate.
VR: Yes. And we learned three alphabets in the first grade of public school. It was, Cyril [Cyrillic alphabet], which is the Serb. We learned a Latin alphabet, and we learned the Hebrew alphabet. [Laughs] I said to my mother, "It's enough to need two, but we have to learn three."

VERA ROSENBERGER [1-1-4]

NL: But of course that's the time to learn these languages...

VR: ...yes, yes, true, but I was a child, so [unclear].

NL: My. First grade.

VR: Yes, it was the first grade. Six years. I was six in April and I went to school in September.

NL: And were mother and father active in the *kehillah*? Or were just members?

VR: See, everybody, how I remember, because I was a small kid, I went with my mother after my father died almost to everywhere with her to her friends and, she had a lot of friends, and they know that the WIZO [Women's International Zionist Organization] and the Zionist organization was very active. Every holiday was a holiday. Purim was always a festivity for children with...

NL: Costumes.

VR: Costumes. Hanukkah was a holiday. And, of course there were some fights between the Revisionists and the *Shomer Hatzair*.²

NL: [chuckles]

VR: And my brother, which was, who was four years older than I, went to *Shomer Hatzair's* camp in Zrenjanin. I was too young, but I went with him.

NL: [laughs]

VR: And it was vis-a-vis the synagogue. And then we left Zrenjanin, but I, I remember, I remember very well the atmosphere, the people from there, which most of them never came back from Sajmiste [camp in Zemun, near Belgrade], from Belgrade, because in '41 I was not in Zrenjanin, this time Petrovgrad. I don't know which name to use.

NL: Well...

VR: Because I was born in Veliki Bečkerek, in my town when Alexander was...

NL: Killed.

VR: Killed, they, they, I don't know if it was in '34 or '5, they proclaimed the Veliki Bečkerek to Petrovgrad. I don't know if from the King Peter, or...

NL: Probably. Yes. Probably.

VR: Yes. And then after the war, Petrovgrad, changed the name to Zrenjanin, [unclear], Zrenjanin was a partisan Yugoslav hero.

NL: Ah, I see.

VR: So, Petrovgrad gets the name of a hero from the war.

NL: I see.

VR: Second World War, from a partisan hero.

²*Hashomer Hatzair* - a left-wing Zionist organization as opposed to the right-wing Revisionists.

NL: Interesting. Yes. And, what is your impression of the, the atmosphere around government policy in the early '30's? It was still the time of the King...

VR: ...I...

NL: ...Alexander.

VR: I, I was very young.

NL: You were too young.

VR: But...

NL: ...you were born in '29, of course.

VR: ...I felt that the Jewish people had no problems. I, I know that in Zrenjanin, there were—I, I can't remember how many doctors, lawyers, pharmacies, teachers, very well-done merchants...

NL: It was a prosperous community.

VR: It was a very prosperous—not only, I just heard from somebody who, ah, he, his father was a founder of one bank in Zrenjanin in the late '90s. He's now about 80 years old, but very, very with it and alive, and he left Zrenjanin when I was born [laughs].

NL: Ah, yes.

VR: But he remembers, his wife remembers that in Zrenjanin was a very nice atmosphere, cultural, and it was a, they had a, but I don't know the name, they had a, a, a newspaper.

NL: For the Jewish community.

VR: For the Jewish community. And the newspaper was, I think, adapted by the Jewish people for the poor area.

NL: In Serbian.

VR: In Serbian, or in Hungarian. I can't...

NL: Yes. Yes.

VR: Remember. I was too young. But maybe, I hope I can find and ask. He is old gentleman, because he, maybe he can, even if he left in '29 when I was born in Zrenjanin, he may remember, since it was his mother and father lived in Zrenjanin, and even his father died not long ago in Zrenjanin, so he was back to visit.

NL: He went back.

VR: And—yeah—he may tell more, more of this. Then I have a girlfriend too.

NL: Oh, good.

VR: But I think the relation was nice, and I, I can't tell because I was too young.

NL: Too young.

VR: But I think it was prosperous, in a very cultural atmosphere, and,

NL: Well-integrated.

VR: Integrated.

VERA ROSENBERGER [1-1-6]

NL: Integrated, yes, integrated. And mother and the family left in '36 for economic reasons, or?

VR: My mother, brother, and I left, I think, for economic reasons, because my—it was left something. We have a, my mother bought a house in a nice part of Zrenjanin where the others, many Jews lived, and, but, she has no, no income, so we leave from what was left after our father, and she decided to try to go to Belgrade to rent a big apartment and to rent to Jewish students,

NL: Rooms.

VR: Rooms. And she did it, and from '36, first we lived near to Dorcol,³ the Sephard Jewish part of, the Sephard ghetto. Dorcol was very like a ghetto, and, we have only a small apartment with two rooms and in this one room lived a girl from Zrenjanin, and...

NL: A student.

VR: A student. And her friend from some other place. And this friend is still alive.

NL: Oh.

VR: She's a doctor, a retired doctor.

NL: Nice.

VR: And then, they brought, because this community, was the student community, was very advanced, they were, most of them were leftists this time. Some of them rich, and some of them very poor, coming from Macedonia or from the rural area of Serbia, and they helped each other very much. So, in some times the two girls asked to have some girlfriend's boyfriend, in our living room to be and they paid for them, and, the boy was from Bitolj [also, Bitola], I think so, from Macedonia. The girl was an Ashkenazi girl, and one of the girls married a boy from Bitolj, a Sepharad. I knew—I would like to tell how it was, they—the, it was not a difference between the Ashkenazi and Sephard students. My, my story is other. I came from Zrenjanin to Belgrade, and went to the public school, where most of Jewish children were Sepharadi. And I was a blond girl with blue eyes, with a strange accent for Belgrade, because my mother language was Hungarian, and they said, "You are not Jewish. You are a Tudesko." Tudesko meaning German [in Ladino and Spanish].

NL: [chuckles] German.

VR: Yes. And where it came to go to the religious lessons which were in synagogue, the Sepharad synagogue, they said, "You, you, you are not Jewish. You are not to come here at night." And then came the rabbi, and I was crying, because...

NL: You were rejected! [laughs]

VR: Yes, and he said, "Don't be the, it's not right you are Jewish, but you have to go to the other synagogue, the Ashkenaz."

³The Jewish area of Beograd was called the Dorcol.

NL: The Ashkenaz?
VR: The Ashkenaz, yes.
NL: They had separate synagogues!
VR: Yes. Separate synagogues. And I went to the Ashkenaz synagogues to, to have the lessons.
NL: Mmm hmm.
VR: But, then we changed our apartment. We went to a better place, into a better, bigger apartment, still renting rooms for Jewish students. So I know, many of them I know many of them. And, I still went to another school where I was the only Ashkenazi Jew.
NL: Mmm.
VR: Most of the children were Sephardic Jews. But I, I, I think, it was not a difference. I had a lot of Serb, girlfriends there. Very, very good girlfriends.
NL: So, the relations were...
VR: ...the relations...
NL: ... good...
VR: ...were very good, no antisemitism or something from the teachers.
NL: That's interesting.
VR: Nothing in Belgrade.
NL: Mostly Serbian teachers, too.
VR: All Serbian.
NL: All Serbian.
VR: All Serbian teachers.
NL: And the Jewish community in Belgrade was quite large, I imagine.
VR: The Sephardic was much larger than the Ashkenazi. The Ashkenaz was newer.
NL: Newer.
VR: The Sephardic was old community. And they have many, they, they, after the Second, the First World War, most of the Jewish intellectuals learned in France.
NL: I see.
VR: And the Sephardic community was richer, bigger, they have, I, I don't know, in this book I read about the [unclear], but it is not exactly because they are taking in account only the people, Jewish people who paid taxes to the Jewish community.
NL: Oh, right.
VR: So it's not the...
NL: ...[unclear]...
VR: ...exact number, but physicians, teachers, engineers, I'm sure they were, and, as it is in Ashkenazi community. Many merchants, very—many wealthy, Sephardic Jews, they have some influence, even in government circles, and friends of the kings...
NL: Court.

VERA ROSENBERGER [1-1-8]

VR: Court. And there was a very poor community in Dorcol. I know this community because I first went to the *Tekhelet Lavan*, which was a rightist Zionist movement, and I don't like this.

NL: What is that called again, please?

VR: The *Tekhelet Lavan*.⁴ The *Tekhelet Lavan* is, *Kahol Lavan*, it's the flag, blue and white [*Blau-Weiss*].

NL: Blue and white.

VR: Yes. And, but then, because my brother was in *Shomer Hatzair* in Dorcol,

NL: This blue and white, was it Revisionist?

VR: I think...

NL: ...Jabotinski?

VR: ...it was more right, than left.

NL: More right. And you didn't like it.

VR: Ya, I didn't like it. It was all Ashkenaz, and I have always some, some, some—because I was with Sepharad children, I have a plan to be with them, and the *Shomer Hatzair* was in Dorcol, in the poorest part of Belgrade.

NL: But there were no Sephardic children in the *Hashomer Hatzair*, were there?

VR: They, yes.

NL: Yes. There were.

VR: Most of them, not all of them were.

NL: Sephard.

VR: Most of them, yes. In Belgrade, in Dorcol, because it was in the heart of the Sepharad community.

NL: I see.

VR: And my brother was in *Shomer Hatzair*, and I went to, with,

NL: To meetings.

VR: At the age of 10, because it was the earliest age to go, to, to, be in the movement. So I went there, and I was first the only Ashkenaz girl in my group. It was a group of about 30 then. Some of them were from very, very poor families, and some of them were from rich families. And, it was, then, it was far from my house, because we went and lived near the bridge to Zrenjanin. But I went there, and enjoyed exactly on April 6, which was the day of war, when Belgrade was bombed, we were supposed to get out er— first, I don't know how I told you, to get in to have,

NL: *B'nei*.

VR: *B'nei Midbar*.⁵ The first,

NL: An initiation?

⁴A Zionist youth movement in Serbia.

⁵*B'nei Midbar* was a youth movement in the *Hashomer Hatzair* Zionist movement in Yugoslavia.

VR: Yes.

NL: Yes.

VR: And it was never held, because it was exactly on the day when the war erupted.

NL: Oh my, yes.

VR: And, I brought to this group only one Ashkenazi girl, living very far from—far from there, but she was my girlfriend from the religious lessons in the Ashkenazi temple. So she came with me, and she was partly involved. She's living in Israel, but she was a very short time, and because she lived very far from there, she came only on some occasions. Nobody from this group, my group, was alive.

NL: Survived.

VR: Survived. In Belgrade. Only this Ashkenazi girl. And my first instructor left Yugoslavia with a large group of, *Aliyat hanoar* maybe, made it. A group of girls and she's living in Shar Hamakkim in Israel, but her brother, who was in my group, and the whole family was...

NL: ...perished...

VR: ...killed. Perished. And all the children, I'm sure, because they were mostly poor, they have no way to survive, perished in Belgrade till the end of 1941.

NL: Before we come into the Hitler period, in the years from '36 to '40, were you aware of any change in the political atmosphere?

VR: It was a change, pro-German.

NL: Pro-German.

VR: And...

NL: And how did it, how did it affect you, or how did you become aware of it?

VR: After '40 in Yugoslavia the schools were four public schools, and then *gymnasium*. I went, to *gymnasium* two classes, the first and second. In the first class of *gymnasium*, we was taught French, like the second language, and I was with another Jewish girl in this class. We were only two of us. But in 1940, it was a *numerus clausus*, and the other girl was from a very rich family, and her parents said that because they are enough rich to take private teachers, they will take out their daughter from the school, and I was left...

NL: All alone.

VR: In my class, in my class the only Jewish girl. And I must say that the teachers were very, very kind to me.

NL: They were.

VR: They were, and they made no exception, even more, they, they, I have a feeling that they liked me, and, and tried to, to, to assure me that they, they liked me.

NL: They liked, that there was no anti-Jewish feeling on their part.

VR: Right. Most of them, even they had a young woman teaching religion, and she asked me to stay on the religion lessons, because she said it's no difference

between us and you. Please stay on our lessons, because I, we preferred the Jews. I mean, she would like to, to, she was a younger, maybe she wasn't [unclear] or something, a young teacher.

NL: Mmm.

VR: A woman.

NL: A woman.

VR: It was the first time that I have seen that a woman is teaching religion, and not a pope.

NL: Not a priest.

VR: Not a priest.

NL: Yes.

VR: And she was very nice to me. Then, I went to the second place, and then instead of French we learned German.

NL: This was 1940?

VR: This was 1940, the second class, 1940, September, 1940, till April, 1941.

NL: Now, were you affected by the Italian presence at all in Yugoslavia?

VR: No, because first of all the Italian presence was in Dalmatia, in...

NL: Croatia.

VR: Slovenia and Croatia, and not...

NL: ...Not north, north at all...

VR: ...in this part.

NL: And after the assassination of the king, was it, Paul who became the king? King Paul?

VR: No, first, the, Pavel the cou-, cousin, the, the Aunt⁶ of the King Peter.⁷ Peter was very young when Alexander was assassinated....

NL: ...assassinated, yes.

VR: And, over came this Paul.

NL: Mmm hmm.

VR: His name was Pavle, because who would be king was too young.

NL: Too young. Mmm hmm.

VR: And, he was, he was more, maybe German-oriented. I can't say he was German-oriented, but he had some, in government, some...

NL: Pro-German.

VR: Pro-Germans, like Svetkovitch [phonetic], and then other people. Till the *putsch* in März [March]...

NL: In March.

VR: The 27th.

⁶Interviewee probably means uncle.

⁷In 1934, Alexander was assassinated. Prince Pavel became a regent for Crown Prince Peter, still a minor. On March 27, 1941, Prince Pavel was ousted in a military coup and Crown Prince Peter was declared king.

NL: Yes.

VR: But, I, I, I can't tell you exactly. I know about it from the books, but like a young child...

NL: Well, the important thing is your own impressions of the political atmosphere, and obviously your school life didn't change much except for the language.

VR: I always learned only Serb.

NL: But I mean...

VR: ...in school, no, the *numerus clausus* and the German.

NL: ...in school the German, the *numerus clausus* and the German. Was there any pro-German indoctrination in the lessons that you remember?

VR: No, no, no, no.

NL: That's interesting.

VR: It is a Serb school, and the Serbs never liked the Germans.

NL: Mmm hmm. Mmm hmm.

VR: And, not in this school which was in center of Belgrade and a very good school, it was a, there was two *gymnasiums* together, the second girls and the third girls *gymnasium*, the second was for the Serb aristocrats from the very high positions. The third was by [unclear], I went to the third because I lived nearby. But, it was, no German, I mean this changed, because Yugoslavia was in [unclear]...

VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [1-2-12]

Tape one, side two:

NL: Side two, tape one, continuing our interview with Mrs. Rosenberger. You were saying that...

VR: France was...

NL: France was the best friend.

VR: The, the, yes because during the war they helped the Serbs, and, most intellectuals went to study to France, and they was the friends of Yugoslavia.

NL: Yes.

VR: And, it was a—and, everyone, I mean, all the schools, the second language was French, so in this time it was the German influence that changed from French to German. After one year.

NL: After one year.

VR: Yes.

NL: Yes.

VR: And the *numerus clausus* which begin, I think, not in '39, in '40.

NL: In '40.

VR: In '40.

NL: Do you know if mother's life changed as a result of this change? Did she feel any, discomfort or discrimination in her experience as far as you know?

VR: No, because she, we lived in not a Jewish, community. We were, in our house I don't know if, it was a big house, if there was a other Jewish family lived, but we never felt...

NL: There was no discrimination.

VR: It was no dis-, no discrimination.

NL: No discrimination.

VR: They, it, maybe it was antisemitism, but I never felt it.

NL: And, and...

VR: And my mother, I don't think, no.

NL: And where was your brother at this time? Was he still in a *gymnasium*?

VR: Yes, he was still. He was four years older.

NL: Older.

VR: Older, and he went to a—for boys, it was separated.

NL: Yes.

VR: Boys' and girls' *gymnasiums*. And he was involved with *Shomer Hatzair* in Dorcol, as I was. And, I have in this, in *gymnasium* too, Serb girls.

NL: Friends.

VR: My friends.

NL: Did any of those friends in *Hashomer Hatzair* and their families leave to go to Palestine in the late '30s?

VR: Only, I know only from *Shomer Hatzair* I know only one girl, and the group, maybe a group of not only Belgrade Jews, but from all the country, who decided the last moment...

NL: The last moment.

VR: To let them get a certificate.

NL: But you were planning eventually to go, I presume. Or, or...

VR: See, I can tell you, before we left Zrenjanin, my mother was asked by a, a Jewish, rich Jewish merchant, if she would like to go to Palestine, he can get, he was able to get a certificate and to pay the money to send us to Palestine.

NL: Mmm hmm.

VR: But my mother was, she thought about this, but she was very afraid to leave the whole family to go with two young...

NL: Small children.

VR: Children. And then, my mother has a very good girlfriend who had this time two daughters in, in Palestine. One living in *Shar Hamakkim*, and the second in kibbutz *Gat*. My mother's girlfriend visited Palestine in 1938, and she came back and told how very, very difficult is their life in Palestine, how they are working, and it was very hot. And in 1939 the last moment her, one of her daughters with her husband come, came to Belgrade, and proposed to my mother again to make a classificante [?] marriage to her husband and to take us out from Yugoslavia to Palestine. And my mother again refused. They then went to Romania and they maybe took somebody with them back to...

NL: ...Palestine...

VR: ...Palestine. In meantime, one of the daughters is still alive and in kibbutz *Gat* the older, who was in Belgrade this time, made a suicide.

NL: Mmm.

VR: I never met her again, but I met her husband. And I went to a nursing school, and I worked in a, a, skin department.

NL: Dermatology.

VR: Dermatology. First man I met was the husband of, of my mother's best friend's daughter.

NL: Oh my, extraordinary.

VR: And, he recognized, I mean, he recognized me, but they have a daughter. She is now a mother, but I never, never discovered what happened exactly to the mother.

NL: His wife.

VR: Yes. I know only that she made a suicide.

NL: Mmm.

VR: And the mother perished in Belgrade. She was left without strength to, to make something for her.

NL: To cope.

VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [1-2-14]

VR: To cope with the—and she just, I know because this, our very good friend who lived in my, our house and then I lived in her house in Belgrade after the war, he said she just left with the first call. She was not called, and she went to Sajmište and she perished. She was not able to cope with the situation.

NL: There, there was an overthrow of the government in '40 with this man Sim-, Simovic [Dusan Simovic]...

VR: Simovic.

NL: Simovic, the anti-Nazi.

VR: It was, it was not in '40. It was in March 27, 1941.

NL: March, '41.

VR: Yes. Only a week...

NL: Before the invasion.

VR: Before the, almost ten days before the invasion. And it was one day's joy, and everybody was on the streets, and everybody was very optimistic that we are not making a...

NL: Capitulation.

VR: Capitulation to the Germans.

NL: Mmm.

VR: And, it was very short.

NL: And the Germans came in and crushed the...

VR: The Germans first bombed Belgrade,

NL: Belgrade.

VR: Three days day and night, almost without, resti-

NL: Stop.

VR: Stop. But, I would like...

NL: And where, where were—oh, excuse me, go ahead dear.

VR: I would like to tell you something about. I was a very young child, but I always observed and heard what the people are telling. Sometimes my mother gave, dinner for the students. She cooked for them to make a bit better living. And, in Belgrade was a Jewish, a mentor for Jewish students, a place where you, where the meals were very cheap, not very good, but I went to there, and I was able to meet there, all kinds Sephardic and Ashkenaz Jewish students, and I heard the discussions. Most of them were more leftist. Even the, the rich, the students from richer families.

NL: Wealthier families.

VR: Wealthier families. And, during the meals there were always discussions, and this was in '40. So, I heard the discussions pro and contra, and, students who was for these, these, new Yugoslav trends to [unclear] Germany, maybe to escape the Germany occupation was attacked by the other part of the students, and then in '39, arrives the first Polish, refugees. Jewish-Polish refugees.

NL: Ahh. I didn't realize that some of them went to Yugoslavia.

VR: And they came to Yugoslavia, and one of them was my Hebrew teacher in the Ashkenazi...

NL: School.

VR: Religion lessons. Dr. Kauffman. He was a young *rebbe*, rabbi, who spoke Hebrew, who taught us the spoken Hebrew not the prayers like the rabbi, and we liked him very much. I know only him from the Polish-Jews, but I know other communities there were other Polish Jews, and they, they maybe told what happened in Poland.

NL: Mmm hmm.

VR: But I was too young,

NL: To absorb it.

VR: To absorb it. Then there came the Austrian Jews. I got a Austrian German teacher.

NL: Mmm.

VR: Private German teacher at home to help, to help him to survive. And he ate in our house. It was a young, blond man, very non-Jewishly looking, and I was taught private in German by him.

NL: So these were the first revelations of what Jews were suffering elsewhere.

VR: Yes, but, you know that how the Jewish community never thought that the same destiny may be...

NL: Strike them.

VR: Strike them. I can't understand. I was still a child. I was a twelve-year-old in 1941. There were concerns, but it, it was so near and so far.

NL: So far.

VR: And then came the Jews from Austria, and were almost for one year on the ship the *Šabac*. You described in your...

NL: Ah yes.

VR: In this time somebody from the Jewish community lived in our, one of our rooms, and he took, right from this ship, Austrian Jewish girl or young woman, but it was I think the Jewish community helped those people. It was 1,300. This time born, there were born many children.

NL: Children.

VR: And it was no help, I think, from no side, to help them to go out of Yugoslavia. So the occupation found them in *Šabac*, on the ship, and they was killed with the *Šabac* Jews.

NL: Children.

VR: Only 200 children got certifications and fled...

NL: ...they were...

VR: ...at the last moment.

NL: They were able to leave.

VR: Yes, they were. Only 200.

VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [1-2-16]

NL: 200.

VR: From 1,300 people. All from Austria or maybe Czechoslovakia.

NL: Do you remember that there were large numbers of Polish and Austrian Jews, or just a trickle?

VR: I remember coming through Yugoslavia, through Belgrade, groups of young, Jewish boys and girls from Austria.

NL: From Austria.

VR: And going to Palestine. They had their certificates.

NL: Certificates.

VR: Yes. I remember small groups even coming to the, our camp, is the [unclear] *Shomer Hatzair*, it's a nest camp, means nest.

NL: Yes.

VR: I remember, all in the synagogue of the Ashkenaz community they were helped to go farther on to reach Palestine. And very, very few people understood the situation and fled. The problem was to get certification, '40, '41, and then there was no certification anymore. From '39, because the white book...

NL: The white paper.

VR: White paper, the white paper, there was not any more, enough certification. Even if somebody would decide to go.

NL: Yes. Do you remember any pronouncements from the leadership, the Jewish leadership of the community, about the future?

VR: No.

NL: And then of course after the *coup d'etat* you obviously felt very overjoyed at the anti-Nazi stand.

VR: Yes, ah, ah...

NL: ...that Simovic was making.

VR: Everybody, everybody, was involved in this, and, I went to, with my group of camp and it was a, a very spontaneous joy, and all the people were on the streets, and, it was very, very, a, very, spontaneous and very natural...

NL: Expression.

VR: Expression of joy that we are not making a pact with the Germans. But, and the Communist party was in the head of the movement, I don't...

NL: Simovic was not a Communist, however.

VR: It was not a Communist, but the Communists were involved. It was a spontaneous, but the Communists were involved, and the whole, whole population, I think the whole population of Serbs.

NL: Serbs.

VR: And the Germans infiltrated Belgrade, I mean the fifth column, they were in big amounts in Bánát. They were organized, because when the Germans came in they had the lists of prominent Jewish people, of prominent Communists, of prominent Serb

VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [1-2-17]

people, and in the same day when they came in, they begin to collect them, to kill them, so the...

NL: The preparations were made. The preparations were made.

VR: The preparations was made very carefully, and I think with the German...

NL: Efficiency.

VR: Efficiency. I know only that one German, once we have an empty room, and one day, because our name was Weis, I don't know how he find us out, us, he came and asked for the room. And moth-, my mother recognized that he was German, and she was a little bit afraid to tell "no". And he came in and he put Hitler's...

NL: Salute.

VR: Picture on the w-...

NL: ...oh, the picture.

VR: Yes. And then, when my mother said, she said, "I'm sorry, but we are Jews." And he left in the same moment.

NL: He left.

VR: He left. He left without saying nothing. It was only one day, there...

NL: He was in the army, do you think, or was he S.S.?

VR: He...

NL: You don't know.

VR: I don't know, but he was a German, Serbian Serb-speaking, but even in Bánát you had a lot of Germans.

NL: Ahhh.

VR: And they was able to go to everywhere, and I'm sure in Belgrade they were, was very organized, in every place they were organized.

NL: Now when the bombing started, Mrs. Rosenberger, you and mother and your brother stayed in your apartment, or did you leave?

VR: It was a beautiful spring day. I was preparing my, getting my—I don't know how you call it.

NL: A ribbon? Was it a ribbon?

VR: Yes, yes, you know.

NL: Showing that you were initiated into the group?

VR: Yes, and it was, it's supposed to hold the whole celebration in Kali Meg-, on Kali Megdan. Kali Megdan is a beautiful park with an old fortress.

NL: Mmm.

VR: On Savah and Danuva are meeting each other, and it's on Savah and Danuva. Still today it's a very nice park.

NL: Still today.

VR: And, my mother went to the market at 6:00 in the morning, which was not far from our house. We lived overlooking Savah and the bridge from Belgrade to

VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [1-2-18]

Zemun. At 7:00 it started. The last night, and the last days before the April 6 it was a atmosphere of war.

NL: Really.

VR: They tried the sirens, they are—they tried to, they directed us to light the skies, and it was a atmosphere of war. And everybody was afraid. I think exactly 7:00 in the morning we was all in bed and our students too, and we heard the first bombs. So we went to the terrace to see what's going on. And my mother came in the last moment back from the market, came out from the lift, from the elevator, because we lived on the fourth floor, the last floor, and said, "It's a bombing. We have to go down to the—" it was not, it was...

NL: No air raid shelters.

VR: No, only the basement.

NL: The basement.

VR: Where everybody has the place for...

NL: In case of an air raid.

VR: No, no, to hold the...

NL: Lockers.

VR: Lockers for...

NL: ...storage...

VR: Storage for the wood and for the, how you call it...

NL: Coal?

VR: Coal.

NL: Coal.

VR: For the winter time. It was not a shelter. So, we went down to the shelter and in the first day they, they, they destroyed near us the next four floors house vis-a-vis our, our, house, a second house, and it, there, there was destroyed that you can't see nothing, only the dust of the house.

NL: Oh my.

VR: Then, very near to us were—we thought it's not a safe place, so we ran up again to take some clothes, and went to a second place, and then somebody remembered that on corner, on the way to the Zemun bridge, wa-, the finance ministerium has a new building with three stores down in the earth for, his reasons maybe they hold their money, maybe papers, I don't know, so in one of the times that the planes were not there, we went to this shelter, and we stayed there, almost five days. There was water, some people came, too. The stores were destroyed, so we went to take some food and shopping. Everything was in flames. Many, many, many homes. And then, on the Yugoslav army was retreating through to Serbia, and some of them came in when they was bombed and told us that the Germans are coming, and we have to leave Belgrade before the bridge will be destroyed.

NL: Mmm.

VR: So, on April—and it was no water in Belgrade, everything was destroyed. It was no—, somebody to take care of us, something. The people fled to Serbia, thinking that it's...

NL: Safer.

VR: Safer, because it's Serbia, but they was killed by the airplanes on the way, on the roads. And it was told us by the, the soldiers who was in retreat. So my mother, we have some friends in Zemun, on the 9th of April, I think, we decide to go to Zemun, because it was told us that the Zemun bridge will, the same night, expl-...

NL: Be destroyed.

VR: Destroyed. And we took with us some things and went walking at night. Because in daytime the Germans still bombed or shooted people.

NL: Was the German army already in Belgrade?

VR: No, no.

NL: No.

VR: No, they weren't, no.

NL: No, all by air.

VR: All by air. But this time maybe it was invaded from north, but not in Belgrade. So we went to Zemun. It was Pesach. And these, our friends, took us in their house, and they became like best friends. They had a, they had a son the age my brother's. They were originally from the same place, from Zrenjanin.

NL: Mmm hmm.

VR: And they took us, and the, this night, at 4:00 the bridge was destroyed.

NL: The bridge.

VR: The bridge. We heard the big explosion, and it was the bridge.

NL: That was the only way of escaping?

VR: Yes, and I think the Yugoslav army did it, to stop the Germans.

NL: I see.

VR: To, to go, but the Germans came from other side, too.

NL: The other way.

VR: So, the Germans arrived, I think, on April 10th...

NL: In Zemun?

VR: or 11th in Zemun. I know, because my mother's birthday was on April 10, and mine April 11th. And they arrived. First the, the fighting units, which looks very nice, very clean, they touched nobody. But, very soon, we have to put on the...

NL: Star.

VR: The star. Very soon in Zemun, before Belgrade.

NL: Before Belgrade.

VR: Then, we was, we were free to walk around, and nobody, I can't remember if from Zemun the men was collected, I can't remember.

NL: That's what happened in many communities.

VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [1-2-20]

VR: Yes, but I can't remember if Zemun in the time that we were there it happened. But, I remember that we have to put the...

NL: Star.

VR: Star, star, very early, a few days. And then my mother decided to go to Bačka, where her father and my grandmother from father's side lived, in Ada, in a small village.

NL: What, what prompted her to do that?

VR: Bačka was occupied by Hungarians.

NL: Hungarians.

VR: My mother was alone, and we have no relatives in Belgrade, not in Zemun, but the really reason was that in Belgrade, they asked all the Jews be registered on April 18 or 19, I think 19, April 19, and my mother decided to go home to visit relatives. She had two sisters.

NL: She was afraid of what that registration might mean?

VR: Yes, she was afraid and she...

NL: Had an instinct.

VR: She had an instinct that it could be better to go to Hungarian-occupied territory. I don't know how much she knows about what happened to the Australian—the Austrian, to Poland Jews...

NL: She may have known a lot.

VR: But she maybe know a lot because she was involved, and she heard from the students. She heard from the, these Austrian, my, my, my teacher. I was still so...

NL: A child.

VR: A child. And, she decided and she, she saw no reason to leave, to stay in Belgrade under the German occupation.

NL: Or in Zemun.

VR: Or in Zemun, which was not our home. So, we went once more back to Belgrade to take some things with us, with a boat, through Šabac, and we left our apartment.

NL: You had no trouble getting back, or getting out?

VR: No, no, no, because this time it was noth-, it was nothing organized. Belgrade was no water, no food, not really [unclear].

NL: It was a destroyed city.

VR: A destroyed city.

NL: Was your apartment still...

VR: Our apartment was still...

NL: Surviving.

VR: Surviving. Very, the next house was bombed, the other side, some still burning, because nothing worked. Everything was destroyed. It was such a terrible

bombardment that I don't think, maybe after then German cities was bombed by the Americans.

NL: Rotterdam was destroyed.

VR: It was the same way.

NL: Rotterdam, too.

VR: And Dorcol, the Jewish part of the city, was destroyed...

NL: [unclear]

VR: All was destroyed. Then we left on April 18, one day before we have to register.

NL: Register.

VR: The train from Zemun to direction of Novi Sad. I still remember how this Elsa, her name was Deutsch Elsa, with a star on her, on the station was waiting us, and crying. Nobody of her family survived. I don't know why they stayed there. Their mother language was German. They have a son.

NL: Maybe they thought they would be treated better since they were German-speaking.

VR: No, I don't think.

NL: No.

VR: I don't think, it, it was no place to fled.

NL: Well, that's what they were...

VR: My, my mother's...

VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [2-1-22]

Tape two, side one:

NL: Tape two, side one continuing our interview with Mrs. Vera Rosenberger. Yes, and so you left...

VR: ...we left...

NL: ...by train.

VR: ...by train, yeah, we took off our,

NL: Stars.

VR: Stars.

NL: Off.

VR: Off.

NL: Good.

VR: Took off our stars.

NL: Good.

VR: And, the train was not able to go through till the—we have to walk one part to the other train to arrive to Petrovaradin. Petrovaradin and Novi Sad, Petrovaradin was on one side of the Danube River, and Novi Sad, the Hungarian-occupied part, was on the other side. When we arrived there, thousands of people were there trying to escape from the German-occupied territory to the Hungarian-occupied, some of them not Jews, but we made them Jews, too. In the same time the Hungarians threw back, the people who came to Bačka after 1918.

NL: Oh.

VR: And they tried to throw back to the German-occupied part of Yugoslavia the Jews, the Serbians, the Montenegr-, Montenegrinos who lived in Bačka and was resettled there. However, we went there was big, how do you say?...

NL: Assembly points?

VR: No, we were on the beach. There was no bridge anymore because the bridge was...

NL: Destroyed.

VR: Destroyed. Oh, how you call, no, was not boats, but big...

NL: Barges?

VR: Barges, yes, taking the people to the other side. My mother has a certificate that she was born in Ada, which was Bačka in the Hungarian-occupied. So we went through the—with our documents and we, both of us were charged.

NL: So that certificate saved you?

VR: The certificate that my mother had that she was born in Ada, in Bačka, saved us for this time.

NL: For this time.

VR: In Novi Sad we met some other people who lived in Novi Sad or escaped to Novi Sad and they told us, don't stay here, because every day they are trying to find

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VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [2-1-23]

the people who came here from Belgrade or from other parts of Yugoslavia, and, throwing them back to the Germans.

NL: Deporting them.

VR: Deporting back to Germans. Try to go out from here. And the same day we took a lorry and went maybe 20km to a small village where my mother had a cousin, a first cousin.

NL: Mmm hmm.

VR: And they have a house and the husband traded with woods. So they had a big wood plant, and a young boy my age, living there. They were very happy, they were very happy to have us, and we stayed there only for one night.

NL: They, they were s-, they felt safe.

VR: Yes, they felt safe, and in the same time, the next day we have seen peasants' cars going with the Montenegros to Novi Sad to, to send them back to the Serbian-, or the German-occupied place, and the same cars come back afternoon.

NL: Mmm.

VR: So my mother decided, I would like to go home. We have to take one of these cars which are going back north and to go as far as we can.

NL: What was her thinking?

VR: She, she, she, maybe she has a, a feeling, because we left on one car, we paid, and they asked us so much, stay with us, we have everything for you. And my mother said, "No, I have to see what is happening with my father and my family. Rather, better we are going." We took the car more north.

NL: Oh, still, still north.

VR: And stopped, yes, till one place and, then we took a lorry to Kanjiza, and we went to Ada. The same night, in this [third] village, the whole family was killed.

NL: Oh my.

VR: With other Jewish families and Serb families.

NL: Oh my. By the Hungarians.

VR: The same night.

NL: That's the terrible Novi Sad massacre?

VR: No, no, no, it was in Temerin, this is not mentioned in no place.

NL: Ohh.

VR: But it was, in very beginning it was on April 19 or 20, '41. It was a small village, and not only this village, it was the first...

NL: The first massacre.

VR: The first killing. Yes.

NL: And can you spell that for me?

VR: Temerin, Temerin, T-E-M-E-R-I-N.

NL: And this is...

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VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [2-1-24]

VR: ...and the first time, I think, it was not only in Temerin, but in some small villages around there, and not only Jews, but the Serbs was massacred.

NL: Serbs, too.

VR: Serbs, too.

NL: By the Hungarians or the Germans?

VR: By the Hungarians.

NL: By the...

VR: Bačka this time were only the Hungarians...

NL: ...all Hungarian. And they did it with-, without necessarily getting orders from the Germans? They did it...

VR: ...no, they did it...

NL: ...on their own...

VR: ...not asking the Germans.

NL: On their own.

VR: On their own. And this time the Germans had influence, influence on, on Hungaria, but not on the, on the Hungarian army. And...

NL: These massacres were...

VR: They were had by the local people, local Hungarian...

NL: ...police and army.

VR: ...all, police and army, but Hungarian. And they [unclear].

NL: And mother had a, mother had a feeling that something might happen?

VR: Maybe, I never knowed, but we left...

NL: Mmm hmm.

VR: and the same night this family and I don't know how many families were massacred. Together, without any reason, without some Serb families.

NL: And where was her father and your grandfather, what was the name of this?

VR: The name of the place was Ada.

NL: Ada.

VR: A-D-A.

NL: Ada. In the Bačka.

VR: In the Bačka. It was north...

NL: North.

VR: From Novi Sad.

NL: And what his situation grandfather?

VR: When we arrived to the village, all the Jewish men were—they in, in [unclear] they concentrated in concentration camps, but I would not, it, it—they was not concentration camps like we know what is a concentration, but they was concentrated. They were asking to give gold, money, and treated not nice. In every place I think they

killed some of the prominent Jews in Novi Sad, when the Ger-, the Hungarians came in. In Ada, I don't think that they killed somebody.

NL: Grandfather was still alive?

VR: My grandfather was alive, and he came back. And most of the Jewish men, or all of them, came home after three weeks of being concentrated.

NL: Confined.

VR: And confined. And then my grandfather made some steps to assure that my mother and both of us would not be taken away back to Belgrade. He paid to Mayor of the village, and we got some...

NL: Papers.

VR: Documents, because my father was born there, my mother was born there. I still have most of the family there. So, we was left there without many troubles. I don't know about the troubles because I was too young. It was...

NL: Did you have to wear stars there as far as you remember, in the Bačka, yellow stars?

VR: Only in '44. [Talking to someone else: Bye.]

NL: [Talking to someone else: All the best, yes, bye bye.] So you were able to stay in the Bačka till '44...

VR: ...we, yes, until the deportation, till the Germans occupied.

NL: Till the Germans came.

VR: ...and...

NL: ...and, excuse me, please.

VR: The community, this was Ada is a really small village. I don't know if they had this time 10-, 14,000 inhabitants, but there were Jews, Hungarians, Serbs. I don't know about Germans.

NL: Germans.

VR: It was the part of Austro-Hungaria, mostly, occu-, not occupied but inhabited by Hungarians, Serbians, and Jews. In Ada. Schools were still '41 Serb schools.

NL: Still Serb!

VR: In '41. I mean, till the occupation.

NL: In the Bačka?

VR: In the Bačka, sure. And the, how much I know...

NL: But that's interesting, isn't it? In [unclear].

VR: No, but Bačka was Yugoslavia!

NL: But, but, predominantly Hungarian, wasn't it?

VR: They, they would—look, I don't know if there was someplace more Serbs and less Hungarians.

NL: Ah. But it was, but it was...

VR: It was ver-...

VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [2-1-26]

NL: Yugoslavia.

VR: And it was Yugoslavia, and the language was Serb. I don't think that the, that they were in Ada, Hungarian schools.

NL: And what was the political authority, Mrs. Rosenberger, what was the political?

VR: In, in Bačka?

NL: In the Bačka.

VR: Like in every place. Bačka was occupied by Yugo-, Bačka was not occupied, it was annexed [annexed] to Yugoslavia after the First World War.

NL: But I mean...

VR: In 1918.

NL: But in '41, was there a Hungarian administration, or a Serbian?

VR: In '41, it was still, April '41 it was Yugoslavia. The Hungarians occupied this part, and from this moment it was a Hungarian administration.

NL: Hungarian administration.

VR: Yes.

NL: But a Serbian school?

VR: No, no, no.

NL: Oh.

VR: They finished the moment they came in.

NL: Oh, I see.

VR: The Serbs was, have to go to Hungarian schools.

NL: Ah, yes, okay.

VR: The language, the first language was Hungarian.

NL: Now I understand.

VR: The second, German, and the Serbs has to learn Hungarian. I went there two classes, the third and fourth.

NL: Mmm hmm.

VR: And the Hungarian population from the first moment, Jews, because their mother language, most of them, was Hungarian, were in very good relations with the Hungarian population, but in the moment that the Hungarians came and occupied this part of...

NL: ...Yugoslavia...

VR: ...Yugoslavia, the Hungarian show their antisemitism.

NL: Mmm hmm.

VR: They finished with every relationships with the Jews, and it was a very Hungarian-oriented. They, they was against Serbs, against Jews, and...

NL: You, you felt it in the school.

VR: I felt it from the first moment. The director of school, which was not a *gymnasium* then another kind, low...

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VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [2-1-27]

NL: Secondary.
VR: Secondary school, the director of the school was my mother's friend from school, girlfriend from school. And when my mother came to...
NL: Register.
VR: Register me to school, she was very cool.
NL: Mmm.
VR: She, she said she would try to do, but we are not from there. Her best, maybe, to take me to the school, but she was very, very...
NL: ...cool...
VR: ...reserved, cool, and I could tell...
NL: Harsh.
VR: More than harsh. She was...
NL: Hostile.
VR: Hostile.
NL: Hostile.
VR: Hostile.
NL: So the friendship didn't mean a thing.
VR: And not only with her. There were other people. My, my mother was there born, and she had some Hungarian friends. It was like cut and stopped.
NL: Do you think it was perhaps because Hitler had given this territory to Hungary?
VR: No, no. They was Hungarians. They was happy to be under Hungarian occupations. It was...
NL: ...but I mean...
VR: ...a dream of them to be again in Hungaria.
NL: But the attitude toward Jews changed.
VR: The attitude to Jews...
NL: ...after, after Hungary got the Bačka.
VR: Yes.
NL: Yes. Af-
VR: Yes.
NL: The territorial...
VR: ...maybe they showed their real feelings about the Jews. Because the Hungarians are antisemitic, and it turns out that they were worse even than the Germans, because the Germans never could succeed so...
NL: Totally.
VR: Good, to deport all the Hungarian Jews, without the active help of Hungarians.
NL: Yes.
VR: Never.

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NL: Yes.

VR: They would actively help them [the Germans]. But this time it was still Hungaria.

NL: Ya.

VR: And I went to the school. The next year, and my last year, the same director said to my mother, "I hope this will be the last year that I have to register Jewish children in my, in my school." She was right. It was the last year, because in '40-, I finished in, summer of '43 the second place, and it was all, no more schools...

NL: Mmm hmm.

VR: And we were deported in April, '44. So after, '43, '44...

NL: No more school.

VR: No more, no more Jewish students were there.

NL: Mrs. Rosenberger, was grandfather able to continue his work, his business in Ada?

VR: He owned some land. He has a house. He was not rich, but we have everything what we need.

NL: You didn't suffer.

VR: We didn't suffer, not from hunger. And, maybe it was very hard because we have no our house. And my mother tried to work something too, but it was...

NL: Tolerable.

VR: Very, yes. And then from the father's side, my, unfortunately my grandmother died in July on *Tishah b'Av*, in '41, but I have two uncles and, three uncles and aunts in the same Ada. And, they helped us in some ways.

NL: Mmm hmm. And your brother, after he finished school, did he work?

VR: My brother was not able to go there to school because he finished in this time the sixth *gymnasium* in Belgrade.

NL: In Belgrade.

VR: So there was no more school in Ada for him.

NL: Ah.

VR: He went and worked first like a electrician, and then like a carpenter. And he worked because...

NL: You needed the income, of course.

VR: No, he has no income. We have to pay for, he's studying.

NL: Oh, an apprentice.

VR: Yes. But, it was very good to be...

NL: Occupied.

VR: Occupied, not to be without occupation there.

NL: Was it your impression that a number of Jews were in this little town? Or, you said it was a small town, so you...

VR: Yes, but it was a big...

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NL: Jewish community.

VR: Very advanced Jewish community, and in the small village there was three doctors, physicians, the veterinarian, the pharmacy, [unclear] pharmacy, I don't know how many lawyers, but there were merchants, and it was—and they have a big—for such a small town they have a big synagogue.

NL: Interesting.

VR: For the Neolog Jews.⁸ I mean, it was, there was not a Yiddi-, or, it was not Neolog Jews, but it was Orthodox because it was divided between women and men. But the really, very, very religious Jews came not to this synagogue. They have a room, for them, and they prayed on the holidays separately.

NL: *Bet ha midrash* [chuckles].

VR: Yes. Yes, and, but it was a, for such a small town a very prosperous, very organized and well-doing Jewish community.

NL: Proud community.

VR: And with a lot of young people.

NL: A lot of young people.

VR: A lot of big families, many children.

NL: Was there a Zionist movement in the community as far as you remember?

VR: It was, but not...

NL: Not the way it was in Belgrade.

VR: Not in a way, but it was, but when the Hungarian overtake it was not any more allowed to have some Zionist organization...

NL: Or...

VR: or organizations at all. Then they made all kinds, first they took away the young men, the young Jewish men.

NL: When was that?

VR: It was, I think, on beginning, the first they took them to labor camps.

NL: Labor camps.

VR: Some of them later was taken to Bor.

NL: To the mines. [copper mines]

VR: To the mines. And, from the whole, I mean, for, it was a big community for such a small place. And from this community almost nobody came back. We lived there till, April, I can't remember exactly which day we was taken to the synagogue first, but it, I, I remember that I had my birthday, and my aunt's birthday on April 19 still at home, and then, I think, we was taken from the homes from April 20. All of us.

NL: The whole family.

VR: All the Jews of Ada.

NL: All the Jews.

⁸The Neolog Jews in Europe were the counterpart of the Reform Jews in the U.S.

VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [2-1-30]

VR: All the Jews from Ada. In meantime my grandfather died.
NL: Your grandfather died.
VR: And my mother was, went through her surgery in Budapest in '42.
NL: Mmm.
VR: And she was sick. A [unclear] breast cancer.
NL: Oh my.
VR: And, but she came back, and she, she was fine.
NL: So to speak.
VR: Yes. And, they took us, all of us, they said to bring, we was prepared to go.
NL: You were.
VR: Because, because we knows that when the Germans came to Hungaria in March 19...
NL: ...March.
VR: ...that they will, that we could be deported. So everybody prepared a...
NL: Sack.
VR: Sack, and what thing, what to take. I prepared my and my brother his...
NL: What did you take?
VR: I took— I had in '43 a rheumatic fever, after scarlet fever, so I was on treatment with aspirins, and I took with me a lot of aspirin. I took from everything, I used them for four-year till in the whole deportation, and my, what I put in my back...
NL: Rucksack.
VR: Rucksack, yes. And we took some sheets, blankets.
NL: Soap, I suppose.
VR: And, food.
NL: Food.
VR: How much we can take.
NL: What, where did they tell you you were going, Mrs. Rosenberger?
VR: They said us nothing. They said us day before that we have to stay at home, not going out. The streets were empty. The neighbors, we had the next neighbor was a Hungarian family, we lived in the Hungarian part of the small village. Nobody, nobody came to ask us if we...
NL: ...needed some...
VR: ...needed some help or if they could help us.
NL: Nobody.
VR: Nobody. My aunt left some, she was never married, she left her some things to some Hungarian girl who worked with her. She worked in the apothecary, in the drug store. I don't know who she was. And we left the home like it was, with only what we can...
NL: Carry.

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VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [2-1-31]

VR: Carry, and because my mother was not very strong, I was not very strong, my brother was a 18-year-old at this time, 19-year-old, and the grandmother...

NL: The grandmother went with you?

VR: Which was not my, which was my, step-grandmother from father's side, came with us, and my aunt.

NL: Excuse me, what had you been hearing about what was happening to other Jews? Do you remember getting any reports, any letters or rumors?

VR: There were, first of all, before our deportation was in '42 the massacre in Novi Sad, and it came up and stopped two villages before Ada. And we know that they took the young men to the East front and there, that most of them were killed.

NL: ...did not come back.

VR: And they were rumors. And then, my mother went back to Belgrade in autumn, '41...

NL: Mmm.

VR: To try, maybe to bring with her, some things for the winter. She went with false papers and with a Hungarian man. They went to Belgrade and find our apartment empty, and nothing was left. And the housemaster, or how do you say it, who was taking care about the, the house...

NL: Manager.

VR: The manager, who was one of the most, the first people to go to demonstration on March 27, said to my mother, "You better go away from here, because I can—you are Jewish, and I can report you." So my mother left. It was maybe a very unwise step from her to go back to Belgrade.

NL: Dangerous.

VR: Very dangerous. And I, I, I remember how scared I was that she never, maybe never came back, because we heard about the things. It was not far from Novi Sad. The people heard about these things happening there.

NL: Yes.

VR: And, in autumn the massacre in Belgrade was gone on and on. The people from Bánát was carried to Belgrade, and I have a aunt living in Belgrade, and my two—from father's side—and my two uncles tried to bring her to Ada. But it was late, and he tried to escape Belgrade, and he came to Zrenjanin, and, she, she came to Zrenjanin, and she was arrested, for months in Zrenjanin. And they tried to save her with money, with everything, and, our friend, who is still living in Novi Sad, met her there, and he said, however, he and a few other families got a document to go to Hungaria, but she was killed. He don't know why. She was a old, she was not a young woman, she was, so my mother went back, so she heard what happened in Belgrade. And in Novi Sad the people knows what happened in Belgrade.

NL: So you were expecting the worst when you were deported?

VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [2-1-32]

VR: I, I expected, I felt that it, it is going to be something very, very wrong, but, you know, like a young girl, 15, I was exactly 15, I was very curious. I, I liked to survive all these things, you know...

NL: Dangers. It was like an adventure.

VR: Ah, it maybe looks like an adventure, and I know then that my friends from Belgrade was not alive.

NL: You already knew.

VR: Yes. Because, the rumors came that they was killed on the Sajmiste, all of the Jews from Bánát and Belgrade were killed, till the end of '41.

NL: And you thought you...

VR: ...beginning of '42.

NL: You thought you could survive.

VR: I thought nothing, because nobody was able to, to imagine what, what the Germans are really doing to the Jews. Even today, how did they did this? They are always lying to you— "We are taking you to an easier world, we are taking you to the showers, we are replacing you only."

NL: Resettlement.

VR: Resettlement. So, first the Hungarian gendarmes, some, I think, Gestapo men, and some Hungarian civil agents, came...

Tape two, side two:

NL: This is side two, tape two continuing our interview with Mrs. Rosenberger. Yes, you were saying about the gendarmes.

VR: Yes. It was very rough.

NL: Rough.

VR: They was not nice, and in our home we were only woman. I mean, my mother, my grandmother, aunts, myself, and my brother. He was the only man. They was not left young man, Jewish men, in the community. Most of them was all old, all taken by the Hungarians to labor camps.

NL: Labor camps.

VR: Only young boys, children, women, and old people.

NL: Were you marched to the synagogue...

VR: Yes.

NL: Or could you walk?

VR: No, we marched to synagogue. It was not far.

NL: Not far. And there the whole comm-, the Jewish community was it [unclear]?

VR: They brought in the whole Jewish community to the big synagogue.

NL: The synagogue was big.

VR: And we, spent there a night and the next day we was taken, and I don't know why, I can't remember this part, if we were taken by cars or we marched to the rail station. I don't know why I can't remember. We were taken to the train station and, we went to Szeged first.

NL: Szeged, where Elie Wiesel was.

VR: Szeged, I'll write it down.

NL: S-E-G-E-D [Szeged, Hungary].

VR: [Pause; writing]

NL: Szeged.

VR: Yes. Thank you. The Jewish population of Szeged was still there, and they took us to the school, Jewish school, which was near the big Szeged beautiful synagogue. It was closed. They put us to rooms. There was not enough rooms, and there was a other small synagogue. They used the synagogue for putting the people in. And I met there some, some people from Novi Sad, some people from some other places. The young people were not afraid. They was organized and we had even in such a place a nice, social life.

NL: Amazing.

VR: We made friendships, and it was all the Jews, I mean, from many parts of Bačka. Or we went to the same Serb schools. I met even some friends from Belgrade, from Belgrade. And we stayed there maybe for two, three weeks.

NL: Who provided food for you?

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VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [2-2-34]

VR: The Szeged Jews. They brought us food, and they took care...
NL: Blankets and medicine.
VR: We, we made the, we, we took with us blankets, and they gave straw.
NL: For sleeping.
VR: Yeah, for sleeping.
NL: Mmm hmm.
VR: We have, in Szeged it was, some kind on concentrating the Jews, but it was not well-controlled, so if we decided to go out and disappear...
NL: You could!?
VR: We could.
NL: Yes.
VR: I think so, because...
NL: Some people did that?
VR: I think I know only one of them. He just...
NL: Left.
VR: Left. Because the Szeged Jews came in, bringing food. I was able to get something, we was able to get letters from Budapest. I got food and blankets from Budapest. We had some relatives. And it was still not...
NL: Tight.
VR: Tight, and then they took us to see the synagogue, beautiful synagogue, and it was a, a, how old, how do you say to pray?
NL: Worship, services.
VR: Worship. With the Szeged Jews.
NL: Excuse me, did the Hungarian gendarmes come in from time to time?
VR: They watched us.
NL: They watched you.
VR: Yes, watched, but they were not there, they were not too, too, rough.
NL: Oh, interesting.
VR: And the Szeged Jews, however, felt sure, because they was in the main Hungarian land, and...
NL: They weren't worried.
VR: They weren't worried, because all the time they said, still Horthy, and the Hungarian government said that we will save our Hungarian Jews. We are giving to deport only the Jews from the *peripheria*,⁹ which was not under our control between the two wars.
NL: Annexed territory.

⁹Greek for periphery, the surrounding territory.

VR: And the Szeged Jews, I don't— and it was no place to, to flee. Because the Hungarians were very antisemitic, and to go through the Romanian border and to try to go to Israel was very hard. There was from Budapest, they were...

NL: Organized.

VR: Organized, and some was caught and some...

NL: Some got through, some did not.

VR: Yes. But, but, the J-, the Hungarians were not willing to take some Jews, even not a child to their house, maybe very, very few.

NL: Yes.

VR: So, in Szeged they separated the first time for us the young children. I have a, a, he— the father was, it was the first cousin of my mother. He was in some labor camp and we never seen him again. His wife, with a small girl, seven years old, was with us, they were with us. And one day they said, "We are taking the small, the young childrens away to a better camp where we can provide more food and milk for the young children." And I still remember they were taken away with carts, and a small baby, I was a big girl and she was a small girl, said, "But why are you not coming with us? I would like to stay with you." And I comforted her that we will see each other, "You are going to a better place. We are staying here." But I never saw her again.

NL: Where did they go, do you know?

VR: Maybe they took them first to Baja because in, after a time they took us to Baja, and they concentrated all the Bačka Jews in Baja, and from Baja the, all the Jews were transported to Auschwitz.

NL: Mmm.

VR: Now, when we came to Baja, they put, they tried to put us first to a wood stall, but my mother was coughing, and when we tried to, to find a place to put her things, she was not able not to cough, so we decided— and they said, a group is going to a other place, and I decided we had to go to the other place.

NL: Mmm hmm.

VR: But most of our fam-, friends was there. We left our friends, and only our very small family, two aunts from mother's side, the grandmother, my mother, brother, and I, went to this other camp, which was a, a, how you call it, for swine.

NL: Pigs?

VR: Pigs, yes.

NL: A pig sty?

VR: Yes.

NL: A pig sty.

VR: A pig sty, yes. And it was awful.

NL: Oh my. Oh my.

VR: But there was, we was in the fresh air and it was April.

NL: You had some food?

VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [2-2-36]

VR: And, the Baja Jews brought food. But, the gendarmes were more rough. They took us away sometimes to make some work. And we stayed there till the, I don't know if it's the Christians have a holiday on May 30.

NL: May 30?

VR: I think so. First the Gestapo and the S.S. came in in April 28, and they tried to take, some people to the transport. And in the, there were some gendarmes who was friendly...

NL: Mmm hmm.

VR: And one of them said, "Go, and hid[e] from them. You have nothing to hurry. Stay here."

NL: Ah ha.

VR: So, we, we ran just to every side, but near us was a big group of Orthodox Jews. They came from, Petrovo Selo, I thinks, they was really Orthodox Jews, with...

NL: *Peyes* [long side burns].

VR: *Peyes* and

NL: Beards.

VR: Beards— get up altogether, and without any word, went together.

NL: With the transport?

VR: With the transport. We stayed there till May 30, and then, and now I know that all the transports went straight to Auschwitz.

NL: Yes.

VR: Our transport, which was too a big transport, they took us on May 30. We went through the streets of Baja. The population was very unfriendly. They threw upon us, stones.

NL: In the train?

VR: Not on the train, when we are walking...

NL: ...walking.

VR: ...to the train station.

NL: Oh my. Oh my.

VR: And, the S.S. was there, and the gendarmes were with us, and they took us to the train station. They put us, they pushed us into wagons without counting how many people are there, and they locked the wagon. And it was the beginning of the end. In my wagon, fortunately, were many young people.

NL: You were with mother and your brother together?

VR: Yes, and we took our belongings. They pushed the belongings in. They pushed the people in, then they pushed the belongings in and closed. Without water, they— maybe there was a something, for, maybe, how do you call it I think, for water?

NL: Bucket?

VR: A bucket for water, a bucket for urine, maybe. I can't remember. But then they were, first, everybody was standing...

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NL: Shocked.

VR: Shocked.

NL: No air.

VR: No air, no place to stay, to stand. But then, there were a group of young people. They stored all the, the belongings so that everybody was sitting down, around the wagon and in the middle part, back by back. So everybody was settled, and because it was, in this wagon was a group of young people whom I met in the camp, not from Ada, from other, it was only one family with grandparents, my grandmother, and, and, and my aunt and a cousin, two aunts. And then the trip begin to travel. We traveled through Croatia. We—the, the train was many times stopped and we heard the bombs very near. We was, we stopped I—maybe in Zagreb. On the other, tracks was, we heard a Croati [Croatian] singing, there was a *Osterschau* [Ger: Easter show].

NL: *Osterschau*.

VR: *Osterschau*. So it was very quiet. And I don't know how long, because the [unclear], it was not a long distance from Baja to Austria, but we were, I think, three days and three nights in the wagon.

NL: Did you have anything to eat or drink?

VR: Yes, we had. And in some places they gave us something to drink. They opened the...

NL: Doors.

VR: The doors, and they put in...

NL: Food.

VR: No, no food, just water.

NL: Water.

VR: Yes. But we, we had enough food. Then some of the old people were confused. The grandfather of one of the friends was confused and stand up, trying to go through everybody.

NL: Disoriented.

VR: Yes, disoriented. But he was the only one, and I think we have no dead people there. We had no. And then the train stopped in Austria.

NL: In Austria.

VR: In Gänserndorf. And we heard that some wagons are opened. Our wagon was opened too. On the station was staying some people. I was a blond, blue eyes, I spoke German, and I asked them, "Should we go out from the train here or to go forward?" And this time he doesn't know that they will take out some people from the train, and he said, "If you can, go out here." And then they came and they said in German, "The young people who are able to work, very hard work could stay here. But no young children nor the older people. The older people and the young children would be taken to a place where they have not to work too hard. And where they can be better off." We decided to go down.

VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [2-2-38]

NL: You...

VR: Myself, my mother, my brother, my aunt, two aunts, my cousin. The other family, the mother and two children—one was my age—left her parents.

NL: She went off with you.

VR: Yes, we left our grandmother, and everybody was— they, they put us in lines, five in every [unclear], and they made a selection.

NL: Right there.

VR: Right there. They took out maybe, maybe 800 people. Now they made the selection *not* seeing if you are young you, you may stay here. They looked on the side. If in the one row was somebody old, the whole row they took back. It was no difference if there were three young people and two old or four young people and one old, we just, this whole row put back to the wagon. However, we went through the selection. And a group, families, even a third-year-old child was there, maybe four years old. We was all families, they put us on open wagons, and they took us to Strasshof [Austria].

NL: Str-

VR: Strasshof.

NL: Strasshof.

VR: Yes, it was a...

NL: I can't-

VR: *Durchgangslager*, they called it. Going through the only tran-

NL: Transit.

VR: Transit, yes. They examined people. We went through medical examinations. It was not only for Jews, but this time I think only the— I don't know, there we don't know the names, but we were overtaken by men who was spea-, who spoke all Ukrainian and Polish, not Jewish. And the women, we were sent to the showers, but they were showers, then sent to medical examinations, even x-ray, and we got a number, but not on our hand, we got a number, a card.

NL: A card.

VR: A card. And even my mother, which was after the surgery...

NL: Surgery.

VR: And she was, with a big scar, with one breast, and I was scared that she can't go through. She went through. But...

NL: What were— excuse me.

VR: Austria...

NL: Were Germans examining you, or the Ukrainians?

VR: The Germans were the doctors, but the helpers...

NL: Ukrainian.

VR: Ukrainian and the same, same rough...

NL: Harsh.

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VR: Harsh people [shouting] “*Los*,” crying on us and pushing us, but we got back our clothes, our dresses, and then they put us to some barracks. We stayed there for two days, maybe. We got some kind of soup and food. And they, they took us. They made from us groups and took us in small groups away to farms.

NL: To farms.

VR: And, I was in a group with 35 young, I mean young till 40’s, maybe.

NL: And mother was with you?

VR: Mother, and the aunt, two aunts...

NL: Two aunts.

VR: ...and the brother and I were together. Some other families from Ada, and some other families which I met them in Szeged and then in Baja and we was together. One girl, who was x-rayed, from one of the families, and they found that she has pneumonia was sent to Auschwitz back. They took her in, Ga- in Strasshof. But she came back.

NL: She came back.

VR: She came back. She was very sick, but she came back. And we went to a big agricultural farm. And this time they were Ukrainian and Belorussian workers there, most of them young boys and girls. Some of them came voluntarily, and some of them was taken by the Germans to work.

NL: Forced labor.

VR: Forced labor. We was not allowed to speak to them, to see them. We heard them sing songs ‘cause they sung very nicely. We was always working separately.

NL: What did you pick? What vegetables?

VR: Ah, it was a...

NL: Potatoes?

VR: Potatoes, carrots for animals, carrots for animals, the white carrots, the sugar carrots.

NL: Corn?

VR: No. Carrots.

NL: Carrots.

VR: Yes.

NL: Carrots.

VR: You know, they are white carrots.

NL: White carrots.

VR: And animals are eating the white carrots.

NL: Yes. Mmm hmm.

VR: We got some rooms. They gave us barr-...

NL: In barracks?

VR: In barracks.

NL: Mmm hmm.

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VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [2-2-40]

VR: It was a farm.
NL: A farm.
VR: And still there lived some Austral-, Austrian families there. Very poor.
NL: Poor.
VR: Austrian families. The, the, our instructor, we called him the, the advisor of the [unclear], the first advisor was a Hungarian.
NL: Mmm hmm.
VR: After him was a German, and it was the third one, the higher. But we got food like the old ...
NL: Workers.
VR: Workers, or menial outside workers, not the German workers.
NL: Ya.
VR: We worked from the dark to the dark, very, very, hard.
NL: Hard.
VR: Hard. But still the families was together. And it was the end of—I think, our Hungarian supervisor knows that is coming the end of the war. It was June '44, and on the way from Strasshof to this farm we met some Yugoslav war prisoners and they, they told us that the invasion began.
NL: Ahh, in Normandy.
VR: We arrived to Strasshof in 7th, June 7th.
NL: The day after.
VR: A day after, and they said, “Yesterday the invasion came.”
NL: Oh my.
VR: So we was very, we were very happy, and very hopeful that it will not take...
NL: Much longer.
VR: Much longer. And they take from our group, in Strasshof every group has a *Judenpolizei*, and his deputy, the second. The *Judenpolizei* was, how do you say, he has to organize...
NL: Organize.
VR: ...to be responsible for the...
NL: ...discipline.
VR: ...whole group. And to assure us about this came every two months came somebody from Gestapo crying and beating the *Judenpolizei*, if we are not working enough, beat him. He just like to scare us. But, if I am comparing our position...
NL: ...experience.
VR: ...with work...
NL: Others.
VR: ...then— with others, we were in, in relatively good position, because we worked outside, we managed to store some...

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NL: Food.

VR: ...food. Not too much, because we worked only with potatoes and we ate every day potatoes, but they were spoiled potatoes.

NL: Spoiled potatoes.

VR: And we had, we got every week some bread, some cheese, some marmalade, so it was not enough but...

NL: You could survive.

VR: We, we could survive. It wasn't very much, but...

NL: Much better.

VR: Much better than in other places. We were there till April '45.

NL: I see.

VR: And...

NL: Mother, mother survived?

VR: Yes, my mother was terribly sick. She got [unclear] pneumonia, in very early stage, and, but we was treaten like the other farm workers. So first we went to the doctor in the village.

NL: Oh.

VR: But, I went with my mother. My mother was lying on a cart. And it was a cart with two cows, cows, no, not cows...

NL: Oxen.

VR: Oxen, yes, and the boy who was the...

NL: Helper.

VR: Helper was a from our group. I, I went in to the, this German doctor, maybe not I, and I said, who went in said, "Here is a..."

NL: Sick.

VR: Sick woman. Three days is 40, Celsius, [104°F]

NL: Temperature.

VR: Temperature. And she's very bad. Could you please treat her?" And when he heard that she's Jewish, he sent out two aspirins and sent us back. She, she was worser and our supervisor decided to send her to hospital. And the *Judenpolizei* took her. First they took her with a cart to the train station and then they went to the other town where was a hospital. The *Judenpolizei* left my mother in the hospital and came back and he said nothing to me. I was scared, because my mother was after the surgery. She was then maybe four or five days with very high temperature I don't know what.

NL: He didn't tell you anything.

VR: He didn't, and I was crying. Since then I hate him, because he could tell me...

NL: Of course.

VR: "I left your mother in the hospital but I don't know nothing about her any more. I left her in the hospital."

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VERA WEIS ROSENBERGER [2-2-42]

NL: Unless he was not supposed to do that.

VR: No, he was not supposed to do that.

NL: He was not supposed to do it. But he still could have told you.

VR: Then I asked him, but I, he's not any more alive, but I, from this moment, maybe he was afraid that my mother is not alive and he would not like to tell me this, I don't know.

NL: You don't know.

VR: I don't know what, why he said nothing. He came back and said nothing. He back, came back with [unclear].

NL: You didn't even know where she was!

VR: We know.

NL: You did know.

VR: Which village and my mother sent letters, and she was there, she sent, not letters, cards, and she said that she was treated very well by nuns.

NL: Nuns.

VR: And she was the only Jewish one there. All the others were Polish, Ukrainians, Belorussians, and it was not a hospital for Jewish. But the nuns gave not up her, and treated her till she was in, in enough good condition to come back. But, she wrote me...

Tape three, side one:

NL: This is tape three, side one, which will be a continuation of our interview with Mrs. Vera Rosenberger. However, I had only two tapes with me, and so this last part of the interview will be self-taped. The interviewer was Nora Levin. Now, Mrs. Rosenberger, toward the end of the last tape you were speaking about mother's recovery in a hospital that was operated by nuns, and began to tell us about a letter which mother had started or had written. So, would you be good enough to go on from that point; tell us a little more about this particular hospital if you have any more information. And then please tell us about the last days in the camp, and your experiences just before liberation by the Russians. And then we'd be very much interested in knowing where you went after liberation, and if there is any message that you would like to leave for students and scholars, young people who may have occasion to listen to your interview. Thank you, very much.

VR: My mother was first hospitalized in a hospital by, leading by nuns, but because it was only the hospital for other people but not Jewish, they transferred her to a Jewish hospital in Wiener Neustadt and, she was kept there till she was healthy enough, guarded by S.S., S.S. soldiers, and all the letters that she wrote us, we never got, because there was not allowed to send them. She came back after about two months, relatively healthy, and stayed with us for the time. We worked in Dürnkrot till end of March 1945, then the Germans collected all the Jews, which worked, were working in Austria to Strasshof, to transport us to Theresienstadt. But the same day when we were in the, on train to be on our way to Theresienstadt, that station was bombed by the American Air Force, and the station and the railroad were damaged so much that never again a train could go. On the same station were German soldiers, S.S. troops, ammunition, a lot of, of foods, and everything was left there. We were brought back to Strasshof *lager*, and we waited for the liberation there. The first Russian soldiers arrived on April 10, early in the morning. On the very same day, my mother, brother and I, with a other group of people, took a cart with a horse and tried to go to the, out from the front line and to reach the Czechoslovakian border. On the way we were attacked by German planes and the horse was killed but nobody was hurt.

UI: How lucky.

VR: And this night we slept in a small house, a house of some Austrian peasants, and were molested by Russian soldiers. On our way from there till Hungaria until Budapest was not the most comfortable and nice. We was to escape from the behavior of the Russian soldiers.

UI: How did they molest you? In what way?

VR: Um, they asked the womens to go with them. We have all, our *Magen Davids* on ourselves and we explained because some of us, we know the Slavic languages, so we was able to say that we are Jews from the concentration camps and we

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are on our way home. But, they take this not in consideration. Some of them were very, very helpful. Some of them were rough, aggressive, and doesn't take nothing in consideration. But, we arrived in Bratislava, and from Bratislava, it was the same story. We went with trains, with open trains till Budapest. From Budapest we took a train straight to Yugoslavia and arrived, at the end of April to Yugoslavia.

My story is going back to Ada. I arrived on April 30 to Ada, Bačka on the first of May from the window of one of my uncles, who came back without his family, the wife and the only daughter was killed in Auschwitz. We saw, we have seen the Parade of first of May. We have seen the most antisemitic Hungarians from Ada going with the Red Flags on the streets and applauding for the Communistic Yugoslavia.

From Ada I tried to go and take some short course and I finished my fifth class of *gymnasium* in Subotica, then my sixth class back to Zrenjanin and after my mother's death, my brother and I decided to go to Belgrade, back to Belgrade, and he went to university and I finished the high school and the matriculation.

In 1948, the Jews of Yugoslavia decided to leave Yugoslavia and reach the approval of Yugoslav government in Tito in Sep-, December 1948. We left Yugoslavia for Israel. In meantime I was medical student at Belgrade University, but because the political situation in Yugoslavia and, and because the feeling that we have to go to Israel and live there, we left Yugoslavia.

In Israel, I was not able to go to medical school because there was not medical school from the first year and I became a student in Hadassah Nursing School, finished in three years in Jerusalem, and then I married and lived in Jerusalem and Haifa until now.

All the years I felt that we have to write down to our history of Yugoslav Jews, the history for, and the end of the days of so many, many relatives and friends. I first, left, fled Belgrade and most of my friends were killed. In the Holocaust of Hungaria in 1944, almost the whole family and almost all my friends were killed in Auschwitz. With coming to Israel to speak about Holocaust was difficult. The atmosphere in Israel was not accepting so much the stories about Holocaust, and I think till recently, maybe ten years ago, there was not, not, not enough spoken about Holocaust, not in the schools, not in the books, and I think it's a big, big mistake. I feel that we failed, all of us, to learn from our history, because we, we, we failed to learn even from the last tragedy of Holocaust only 40 years ago, and living in every place like nothing happened—including Israel. Now, I think that the other Jewish communities, in Europe, in United States, in Ru-, Ru-, Soviet Russia, is maybe other way the people are living very similarly like our parents lived in Europe. They are living, they have very good conditions, they have business, they have a comfortable and a false feeling of safety, which is really false. They are giving a good education for their children, but, I think the only possibility not to have another Holocaust is to build a strong, very strong Jewish state and not only sending money, but send people who has motivation, who could sacrifice the comfortable and so-called "safe" life and to fight and to work and to have maybe a harder life than here, but

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keep Israel strong. Today Israel is not attractive even for us who are living in Israel, because many, many young people, the best of our young people are, some of them killed, many of them killed in all our wars. The very talented can find a way in United States and get the best jobs 'cause they are talented. Some of them who are coming here are just crooks, making here money and taking out the money from Israel, but Israel is today, and I am afraid in 20, 30 years, if the population is not growing, if they are not coming, quantity and the good quality of Jewish people, our history will be again the same. And it's all.

UI: This concludes the tape of Mrs. Vera Rosenberger.