

HVT-20

R., Samuel. 1915-

Samuel R. Holocaust video testimony (HVT-20) interviewed by Musia Schwartz and Sandi Hershon, June 21, 1994 .

3 copies: 1 SVHS first camera; 1 SVHS second camera; 1 VHS copy.

Summary: Samuel was born on October 14, 1915 in Knazice, Czechoslovakia. Samuel's father was the town Schochet. His mother was a homemaker. While he was young, his family moved to Nitra. The town had a Jewish population of 20,000, served by three synagogues and a Jewish school. Samuel was the youngest of six children consisting of three boys and three girls. Two of his brothers moved to France in 1936 to escape antisemitism. Samuel had a religious upbringing. He went to elementary school in Nitra and later studied at different yeshivas in Dobricany, Trnava, Sered, and Bratislava.

Samuel was living in Bratislava at the onset of the war. He recalls how once three refugees, who escaped from Warsaw in 1939, entered the synagogue in Bratislava during services. These refugees informed the congregation about the persecution of Jews in Poland. Samuel believed their story because he had read *Mein Kampf* and was familiar with Hitler's plans.

Beginning in 1942 the situation for Czechoslovakian Jews became more and more dangerous. In Bratislava a Jewish Center was established where Jews were required to fill out forms listing their income and possessions. Later, Jews were forced into labour brigades. Samuel was assigned to a labour brigade engaged in war work. Three weeks later he was sent home by his commander. One of his brother's friends had arranged a job for him in Bratislava at the Center for Jewish Affairs which organized different Hashchoras. Samuel was sent to a Hashchoras in Sered. In this institution, young men were prepared for settlement in Palestine. Samuel taught Hebrew and organized a Hebrew Circle.

In the spring of 1942, Samuel escaped from Czechoslovakia to Hungary with the help of a Jewish family by the name of Kalis. His own family had tried to convince Samuel not to leave the country even though Hungary had the reputation of being a safe haven for Jews. Samuel went to a small Slovakian border town by train. Late at night he met a guide there who led him through fields and meadows across the border to Galanta. In Galanta a Jewish man let him stay overnight in the stable, even though his home was searched regularly. The following morning, Samuel took the train to Budapest. Mr. Kalis, from Sered, had made arrangements for him to stay with his daughter in Budapest. Samuel lived with her for a short while. Later, Samuel moved to Rakos Palota, a suburb of Budapest, where he received aid from the local Rabbi. He found a place to stay and assumed a new identity. The widowed sister of an acquaintance provided Samuel with her late husbands documents. Some time later, Samuel met his present wife at a factory called Tungsram, where he had applied for a job.

In 1944 the situation for Jews in Hungary became critical. Ghettoisation was implemented in Budapest. One night Samuel and his wife Anna were arrested by the police. Samuel was released from the prison the next day, after paying a fine for 'hiding a Jewish girl'. His wife, however, was taken to a camp run by the organization 'Todt', which supplied slave labourers to various institutions. Samuel asked one of his neighbors to go to this camp and to try to bribe the camp authorities. This plan was carried out the following day and Anna was liberated.

During the weeks before the liberation of Hungary, Samuel and his wife hid in a Hungarian officer's bunker until the Red Army arrived in Budapest.

Samuel learned his parents were deported to Auschwitz and killed. A few months after Hungary was liberated, Samuel moved to Paris with his wife and their son. They lived there for five years. In 1951, they arrived in Canada and settled in Montreal. Samuel worked in satellite communications. During the past seven years, Samuel has worked as a translator. Presently, Samuel and his wife have two sons and two grandchildren.