

1  
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:03,465  
[TEST TONE]

2  
00:00:03,465 --> 00:00:51,030

3  
00:00:51,030 --> 00:00:51,750  
OK.

4  
00:00:51,750 --> 00:00:56,910  
So how did you react when  
the Japanese actually bombed

5  
00:00:56,910 --> 00:00:57,710  
Pearl Harbor?

6  
00:00:57,710 --> 00:01:00,520

7  
00:01:00,520 --> 00:01:06,070  
We know the Japanese,  
by bombing Pearl Harbor,

8  
00:01:06,070 --> 00:01:08,260  
joined the Germans.

9  
00:01:08,260 --> 00:01:13,690  
Because the German already  
at that time not only

10  
00:01:13,690 --> 00:01:19,990  
occupied Poland, they also  
declared war on Russia.

11  
00:01:19,990 --> 00:01:25,620  
And we didn't know  
what's going to happen.

12  
00:01:25,620 --> 00:01:28,730  
We didn't know how we  
were going to survive.

13  
00:01:28,730 --> 00:01:32,300  
We didn't know how the  
Japanese will treat us.

14  
00:01:32,300 --> 00:01:35,810  
Everything was very,  
very confusing.

15  
00:01:35,810 --> 00:01:40,640  
In Shanghai, there was,  
again, a large Russian colony

16  
00:01:40,640 --> 00:01:41,540  
of Russians.

17  
00:01:41,540 --> 00:01:44,030  
It was a very large.

18  
00:01:44,030 --> 00:01:48,050  
Much smaller, but very  
large Jewish colony.

19  
00:01:48,050 --> 00:01:51,950  
They were all refugees  
from the Civil War.

20  
00:01:51,950 --> 00:01:55,250  
And they were quite well-to-do.

21  
00:01:55,250 --> 00:02:01,130  
There was also a huge  
colony of German Jews

22  
00:02:01,130 --> 00:02:03,560  
which escaped from  
Germany after Hitler

23  
00:02:03,560 --> 00:02:10,280  
came to power because  
Shanghai was a free city.

24

00:02:10,280 --> 00:02:15,110  
You didn't need to have a visa  
in order to settle in Shanghai.

25  
00:02:15,110 --> 00:02:19,490  
So it was really at that  
time an international city.

26  
00:02:19,490 --> 00:02:23,480  
You could find beggars which  
were in Russia before the war,

27  
00:02:23,480 --> 00:02:25,610  
counts, and nobility.

28  
00:02:25,610 --> 00:02:31,970  
You could find very rich people,  
which their business was opium.

29  
00:02:31,970 --> 00:02:35,870  
You could find people who  
came from America because they

30  
00:02:35,870 --> 00:02:39,230  
were in danger in America  
because they were--

31  
00:02:39,230 --> 00:02:42,080  
we didn't know at that  
time the term mafia.

32  
00:02:42,080 --> 00:02:43,520  
Maybe didn't exist.

33  
00:02:43,520 --> 00:02:46,540  
But they were here,  
escaping from jail.

34  
00:02:46,540 --> 00:02:49,310  
It was a colony.

35  
00:02:49,310 --> 00:02:52,820  
Very colorful for writers.

36  
00:02:52,820 --> 00:02:58,280  
But very difficult to find  
a niche in this colony.

37  
00:02:58,280 --> 00:03:01,370  
There were multimillionaires,  
there were criminals,

38  
00:03:01,370 --> 00:03:06,620  
there were forgers, there were  
spies, there were refugees,

39  
00:03:06,620 --> 00:03:09,080  
there were intellectuals,  
there were merchants,

40  
00:03:09,080 --> 00:03:13,100  
there were bankers, there  
were bandits, everything.

41  
00:03:13,100 --> 00:03:16,400  
How did you live?

42  
00:03:16,400 --> 00:03:17,720  
Where did you live in Shanghai?

43  
00:03:17,720 --> 00:03:18,678  
Or how did you survive?

44  
00:03:18,678 --> 00:03:20,720  
And use the word Shanghai.

45  
00:03:20,720 --> 00:03:27,060  
Yes we, the Polish  
refugees, consisted

46  
00:03:27,060 --> 00:03:28,620  
of many different groups.

47  
00:03:28,620 --> 00:03:31,890  
There were lawyers, there were

writers, there were merchants.

48

00:03:31,890 --> 00:03:35,370

There were a whole  
yeshiva of religious Jews.

49

00:03:35,370 --> 00:03:42,520

We tried to get through all  
different channels with New

50

00:03:42,520 --> 00:03:43,020

York.

51

00:03:43,020 --> 00:03:43,660

OK, sorry.

52

00:03:43,660 --> 00:03:45,180

And with the channel.

53

00:03:45,180 --> 00:03:46,230

Sorry, sorry.

54

00:03:46,230 --> 00:03:47,580

The channel, the main--

55

00:03:47,580 --> 00:03:48,720

Hold on, hold on, hold on.

56

00:03:48,720 --> 00:03:53,340

You have to talk to me,  
you keep talking over here.

57

00:03:53,340 --> 00:03:54,540

I know.

58

00:03:54,540 --> 00:03:58,540

And use the word Shanghai  
because we don't know.

59

00:03:58,540 --> 00:03:59,040

OK.

60

00:03:59,040 --> 00:04:01,560

61

00:04:01,560 --> 00:04:09,625

We tried to get in touch with  
the Jewish organizations in New

62

00:04:09,625 --> 00:04:10,125

York.

63

00:04:10,125 --> 00:04:13,400

64

00:04:13,400 --> 00:04:20,700

And probably, they tried to  
get in touch with us, too.

65

00:04:20,700 --> 00:04:29,250

But we knew there was a law  
that no money from America

66

00:04:29,250 --> 00:04:35,490

could be sent to places which  
were occupied by enemies.

67

00:04:35,490 --> 00:04:38,540

So no money could be  
sent to Poland, even

68

00:04:38,540 --> 00:04:40,920

for the resistance movement.

69

00:04:40,920 --> 00:04:44,730

And no money could be sent  
to Shanghai, because it

70

00:04:44,730 --> 00:04:49,500

was occupied by the Japanese.

71

00:04:49,500 --> 00:04:52,110

And we really couldn't  
survive in the beginning

72  
00:04:52,110 --> 00:04:55,440  
because it was a different  
country, a different language,

73  
00:04:55,440 --> 00:04:58,090  
a different situation.

74  
00:04:58,090 --> 00:05:01,140  
But we did get in touch.

75  
00:05:01,140 --> 00:05:08,080  
I cannot be precise, or whether  
somebody looked us up and tried

76  
00:05:08,080 --> 00:05:11,140  
to help us through Switzerland.

77  
00:05:11,140 --> 00:05:14,130  
And we got some support.

78  
00:05:14,130 --> 00:05:17,010

79  
00:05:17,010 --> 00:05:22,800  
The Joint supported all  
the stateless refugees

80  
00:05:22,800 --> 00:05:24,300  
before the occupation.

81  
00:05:24,300 --> 00:05:29,220  
So they established some  
kitchens and some dwellings

82  
00:05:29,220 --> 00:05:34,540  
for the 30,000 German  
Jewish refugees.

83  
00:05:34,540 --> 00:05:37,920  
It was a very mixed up group.

84

00:05:37,920 --> 00:05:44,550

So it seems that they  
extended, from the help which

85

00:05:44,550 --> 00:05:52,810

they gave to the refugees  
before the occupation, to us.

86

00:05:52,810 --> 00:05:55,950

We didn't get any  
money, but we had

87

00:05:55,950 --> 00:06:01,140

some meager funds  
to open kitchens

88

00:06:01,140 --> 00:06:06,900

and to rent very cheap rooms.

89

00:06:06,900 --> 00:06:12,180

That was crucial because  
after a month, two months,

90

00:06:12,180 --> 00:06:19,230

after a year, we got some  
jobs among the colonists,

91

00:06:19,230 --> 00:06:28,680

the European, and other  
citizens who lived in Shanghai.

92

00:06:28,680 --> 00:06:34,950

Shanghai before the occupation  
had two very large settlements,

93

00:06:34,950 --> 00:06:38,910

a British settlement  
and a French settlement.

94

00:06:38,910 --> 00:06:46,200

And they were under the  
control of the British



95

00:06:46,200 --> 00:06:49,500  
and the French embassies.

96

00:06:49,500 --> 00:06:53,730  
But after the  
Japanese took over,

97

00:06:53,730 --> 00:06:57,720  
they didn't have  
anything, any jurisdiction

98

00:06:57,720 --> 00:06:59,580  
over their settlements.

99

00:06:59,580 --> 00:07:01,350  
But there were  
many Europeans who

100

00:07:01,350 --> 00:07:04,350  
had stores, who had  
some professions.

101

00:07:04,350 --> 00:07:11,620  
And through them, we did  
find some meager income.

102

00:07:11,620 --> 00:07:14,860  
My wife got a job  
in the hospital.

103

00:07:14,860 --> 00:07:21,310  
There was a very nice hospital  
created by the Jewish colony

104

00:07:21,310 --> 00:07:22,600  
from Russia.

105

00:07:22,600 --> 00:07:26,470  
And I started to get some work.

106

00:07:26,470 --> 00:07:28,840  
There was a magazine,

so I started

107  
00:07:28,840 --> 00:07:31,360  
to write some  
articles about art.

108  
00:07:31,360 --> 00:07:33,670  
A magazine in Russian.

109  
00:07:33,670 --> 00:07:40,670  
And I started to try to get some  
commissions to paint paintings.

110  
00:07:40,670 --> 00:07:43,180  
Of course, nobody was  
interested in paintings.

111  
00:07:43,180 --> 00:07:46,810  
But I knew that everybody who  
is successful and prominent

112  
00:07:46,810 --> 00:07:50,230  
all over the world like  
to have his own face.

113  
00:07:50,230 --> 00:07:54,010  
And he thought, if it's painted  
well, and he has a smile,

114  
00:07:54,010 --> 00:07:58,240  
and he looks important, it'll  
end up in a famous museum,

115  
00:07:58,240 --> 00:08:00,130  
and he'll have eternity.

116  
00:08:00,130 --> 00:08:06,730  
So I did paint some portraits  
and I had a meager income.

117  
00:08:06,730 --> 00:08:11,440  
You must realize that  
to eat twice a day

118  
00:08:11,440 --> 00:08:16,980  
or once a day is  
enough to survive.

119  
00:08:16,980 --> 00:08:20,460  
The main thing is not to be  
killed, not to be arrested,

120  
00:08:20,460 --> 00:08:23,760  
not to be threatened,  
not to be in jail.

121  
00:08:23,760 --> 00:08:27,910  
And since we weren't in  
jail, we did survive.

122  
00:08:27,910 --> 00:08:32,909  
And the news from Europe  
were so devastating

123  
00:08:32,909 --> 00:08:36,460  
that nobody dared to  
complain about anything.

124  
00:08:36,460 --> 00:08:40,110  
Everything-- one  
meal, two meals,

125  
00:08:40,110 --> 00:08:44,580  
a little corner in a house  
was a gift from heaven.

126  
00:08:44,580 --> 00:08:49,080  
Because we knew that  
day by day, the Nazis

127  
00:08:49,080 --> 00:08:54,510  
were killing all we left  
behind, our families, our life,

128  
00:08:54,510 --> 00:08:58,140  
our cities, everything.

129  
00:08:58,140 --> 00:09:05,160  
Of course, we were getting  
information from America.

130  
00:09:05,160 --> 00:09:08,930  
And they were devastating  
because the Japanese were

131  
00:09:08,930 --> 00:09:14,180  
moving, and moving, and moving,  
and one victory over another

132  
00:09:14,180 --> 00:09:17,120  
was in their grab.

133  
00:09:17,120 --> 00:09:24,300  
But as far as America, you  
have to take it from a witness.

134  
00:09:24,300 --> 00:09:28,670  
We didn't doubt a minute  
that America will save us

135  
00:09:28,670 --> 00:09:31,160  
and the end defeat the Germans.

136  
00:09:31,160 --> 00:09:33,320  
We knew that they would defeat.

137  
00:09:33,320 --> 00:09:37,340  
And somehow, we had  
underground radios,

138  
00:09:37,340 --> 00:09:41,180  
and we found somebody  
who understood English,

139  
00:09:41,180 --> 00:09:45,630  
and we heard the  
speeches of Roosevelt.

140

00:09:45,630 --> 00:09:50,330  
And we knew that we will  
survive unless the Japanese will

141  
00:09:50,330 --> 00:09:51,860  
kill us.

142  
00:09:51,860 --> 00:09:58,420  
And then came a very sad moment  
when the Japanese, at least we

143  
00:09:58,420 --> 00:10:06,130  
heard that a U-boat of German  
Nazis came to Shanghai.

144  
00:10:06,130 --> 00:10:09,520  
And something started to change.

145  
00:10:09,520 --> 00:10:11,560  
They left us alone  
in the beginning.

146  
00:10:11,560 --> 00:10:14,590  
They were so mean  
to the Chinese,

147  
00:10:14,590 --> 00:10:18,460  
and to the American,  
and English citizens

148  
00:10:18,460 --> 00:10:19,970  
that they left us alone.

149  
00:10:19,970 --> 00:10:22,420  
They didn't have time for us.

150  
00:10:22,420 --> 00:10:23,350  
And they were mean.

151  
00:10:23,350 --> 00:10:27,280  
All the Americans and all the  
British went to the camps.

152

00:10:27,280 --> 00:10:32,350

And the Chinese were  
humiliated terribly.

153

00:10:32,350 --> 00:10:37,750

And we were just shadows  
which they seemed not to see.

154

00:10:37,750 --> 00:10:41,500

And then came a change,  
they created a ghetto

155

00:10:41,500 --> 00:10:44,220

for all the refugees.

156

00:10:44,220 --> 00:10:46,980

And we were forced  
to live in a ghetto.

157

00:10:46,980 --> 00:10:51,010

But it was nothing, nothing  
in comparison with the ghetto.

158

00:10:51,010 --> 00:10:54,330

So we could come out.

159

00:10:54,330 --> 00:10:57,180

Some Japanese were Nazis.

160

00:10:57,180 --> 00:11:01,290

The majority looked  
at us not with hatred.

161

00:11:01,290 --> 00:11:09,180

They fear for the  
Chinese was so strong.

162

00:11:09,180 --> 00:11:13,020

The premonition that  
they would lose the war

163

00:11:13,020 --> 00:11:17,140

was so strong, too, that they  
really didn't have time for us.

164  
00:11:17,140 --> 00:11:18,690  
So we lived in the ghettos.

165  
00:11:18,690 --> 00:11:20,370  
They were very sad.

166  
00:11:20,370 --> 00:11:23,100  
But it was no comparison.

167  
00:11:23,100 --> 00:11:25,120  
I didn't live in the ghetto.

168  
00:11:25,120 --> 00:11:27,600  
Since my wife worked  
in the hospital, which

169  
00:11:27,600 --> 00:11:33,870  
was outside of the ghetto,  
I lived together with her.

170  
00:11:33,870 --> 00:11:38,830  
But I was the secretary of  
the union of the refugees.

171  
00:11:38,830 --> 00:11:42,840  
So I had the chance to  
come out from the ghetto

172  
00:11:42,840 --> 00:11:44,940  
and to go in into  
ghetto, and to do

173  
00:11:44,940 --> 00:11:49,440  
all the things which was  
necessary for the survival

174  
00:11:49,440 --> 00:11:50,970  
of the refugees.

175

00:11:50,970 --> 00:11:55,530

We were a very close and  
very tight community.

176

00:11:55,530 --> 00:12:00,390

And we lived in the  
constant expectation

177

00:12:00,390 --> 00:12:02,670

that the war will  
come to an end.

178

00:12:02,670 --> 00:12:09,960

And this terrible premonition  
that our war will be won,

179

00:12:09,960 --> 00:12:14,260

but our life will be-- half  
of our life will be destroyed.

180

00:12:14,260 --> 00:12:15,390

And that's true.

181

00:12:15,390 --> 00:12:18,270

182

00:12:18,270 --> 00:12:19,060

Let me ask you.

183

00:12:19,060 --> 00:12:22,570

184

00:12:22,570 --> 00:12:24,130

How long did you  
live in Shanghai?

185

00:12:24,130 --> 00:12:26,200

And how did you find  
out about the Holocaust

186

00:12:26,200 --> 00:12:28,160

and the atrocities  
that were happening?



187  
00:12:28,160 --> 00:12:31,660  
And also if you could tell me--

188  
00:12:31,660 --> 00:12:33,170  
There were letters from Russia.

189  
00:12:33,170 --> 00:12:33,670  
Wait.

190  
00:12:33,670 --> 00:12:34,378  
Hold on, hold on.

191  
00:12:34,378 --> 00:12:36,190  
Hold it.

192  
00:12:36,190 --> 00:12:38,470  
You also told me that when  
you actually found out

193  
00:12:38,470 --> 00:12:41,980  
about that there were Jews  
killed, that people in Shanghai

194  
00:12:41,980 --> 00:12:43,080  
committed suicide.

195  
00:12:43,080 --> 00:12:45,920  
There were radios, there were  
information from America.

196  
00:12:45,920 --> 00:12:48,070  
There were.

197  
00:12:48,070 --> 00:12:50,920  
It came from different sources.

198  
00:12:50,920 --> 00:12:52,338  
I'll give you an example.

199  
00:12:52,338 --> 00:12:53,380

I'll give you an example.

200  
00:12:53,380 --> 00:12:53,740  
Got it.

201  
00:12:53,740 --> 00:12:54,283  
Hold on.

202  
00:12:54,283 --> 00:12:56,200  
You have to tell me what  
you're talking about.

203  
00:12:56,200 --> 00:12:58,990  
So you have to say, we found  
out about the Holocaust.

204  
00:12:58,990 --> 00:13:05,350  
We found out that  
the German destroyed

205  
00:13:05,350 --> 00:13:10,420  
the whole Jewish community which  
consisted of 3 and 1/2 million

206  
00:13:10,420 --> 00:13:11,180  
in Poland.

207  
00:13:11,180 --> 00:13:13,270  
We found out.

208  
00:13:13,270 --> 00:13:15,200  
We couldn't believe it.

209  
00:13:15,200 --> 00:13:16,270  
But we found out.

210  
00:13:16,270 --> 00:13:18,850  
There were facts that  
came from Russia.

211  
00:13:18,850 --> 00:13:22,480  
They came from

underground radios.

212  
00:13:22,480 --> 00:13:25,730  
They came from  
different sources.

213  
00:13:25,730 --> 00:13:34,420  
But a crime, an international  
crime, cannot be hidden,

214  
00:13:34,420 --> 00:13:37,300  
like the crime which  
took place in Kosovo.

215  
00:13:37,300 --> 00:13:39,510  
You cannot hide it.

216  
00:13:39,510 --> 00:13:40,950  
We knew what happened.

217  
00:13:40,950 --> 00:13:42,210  
And we knew that we will--

218  
00:13:42,210 --> 00:13:46,030  
How did people react  
when they found out?

219  
00:13:46,030 --> 00:13:52,280  
Well, there were-- our  
life was cut in two.

220  
00:13:52,280 --> 00:13:55,640  
The memories were more  
alive than reality.

221  
00:13:55,640 --> 00:13:58,730  
Reality was just a  
period of waiting.

222  
00:13:58,730 --> 00:14:02,480  
It's like you sit in  
a railroad station

223

00:14:02,480 --> 00:14:04,340  
and wait for your train.

224

00:14:04,340 --> 00:14:07,550  
The time in the railroad  
station, in that time,

225

00:14:07,550 --> 00:14:11,750  
the waiting time  
is almost minimal.

226

00:14:11,750 --> 00:14:17,120  
It's what is going  
to happen later.

227

00:14:17,120 --> 00:14:19,745  
I tried to paint portraits,  
I tried to write,

228

00:14:19,745 --> 00:14:22,470  
and everybody tried to function.

229

00:14:22,470 --> 00:14:24,380  
But it was-- Life emotionally?

230

00:14:24,380 --> 00:14:25,460  
What is the question?

231

00:14:25,460 --> 00:14:27,860  
Try to repeat it to me.

232

00:14:27,860 --> 00:14:31,040  
So I'll try to be as  
precise as possible.

233

00:14:31,040 --> 00:14:36,400  
The response to hearing  
about the Holocaust.

234

00:14:36,400 --> 00:14:44,080  
When we heard that  
in Eastern Europe

235  
00:14:44,080 --> 00:14:54,360  
is liquidated one Jewish  
colony after another,

236  
00:14:54,360 --> 00:15:01,220  
we felt that we lost everything  
we know, that we knew.

237  
00:15:01,220 --> 00:15:08,150  
But at the same time, we  
felt that our life, our life

238  
00:15:08,150 --> 00:15:10,070  
was a gift.

239  
00:15:10,070 --> 00:15:13,460  
Because it was a miracle.

240  
00:15:13,460 --> 00:15:18,440  
And we didn't have any illusions  
that it was an accident.

241  
00:15:18,440 --> 00:15:20,600  
We weren't better  
than the rest, we

242  
00:15:20,600 --> 00:15:25,100  
weren't richer than the rest,  
we didn't have more connection.

243  
00:15:25,100 --> 00:15:30,830  
So we tried not to struggle  
with the question, why?

244  
00:15:30,830 --> 00:15:33,590

245  
00:15:33,590 --> 00:15:38,520  
Why do I deserve to be  
alive when my brothers died?

246

00:15:38,520 --> 00:15:39,830  
When my family died?

247  
00:15:39,830 --> 00:15:46,320  
We tried not to question this  
because it was an accident.

248  
00:15:46,320 --> 00:15:56,180  
And we tried, everyone in his  
own way, to accept the accident

249  
00:15:56,180 --> 00:16:03,970  
and to give our life a  
meaning, a certain new meaning.

250  
00:16:03,970 --> 00:16:10,840  
It's very difficult to  
define what is a new meaning.

251  
00:16:10,840 --> 00:16:17,650  
But I would say not to have in  
the future only a private life.

252  
00:16:17,650 --> 00:16:24,520  
That would be aware of mankind,  
of our people, of history.

253  
00:16:24,520 --> 00:16:31,810  
Everyone felt that he has, as a  
survivor, a certain obligation.

254  
00:16:31,810 --> 00:16:35,470  
We couldn't, we didn't  
use the word mission.

255  
00:16:35,470 --> 00:16:39,790  
Because we weren't geniuses,  
we weren't Shakespeare,

256  
00:16:39,790 --> 00:16:41,960  
we weren't Dantes,  
we weren't prophets.

257

00:16:41,960 --> 00:16:47,890  
We couldn't use the term, it  
was too big for us, mission.

258  
00:16:47,890 --> 00:16:50,680  
But everybody, in  
his own way, has

259  
00:16:50,680 --> 00:16:57,940  
to add something to the future  
of our people, of mankind.

260  
00:16:57,940 --> 00:17:02,890  
And as strange as it sounds,  
to the brotherhood of man.

261  
00:17:02,890 --> 00:17:09,750  
And for me, it was very  
clear that from now on, art

262  
00:17:09,750 --> 00:17:12,270  
is not going to  
be my profession,

263  
00:17:12,270 --> 00:17:14,520  
it's going to be my life.

264  
00:17:14,520 --> 00:17:16,589  
And I wanted to  
paint something that

265  
00:17:16,589 --> 00:17:22,099  
had to do not with a still  
life, not with a portrait,

266  
00:17:22,099 --> 00:17:25,550  
not with a sunset,  
not with rainbows,

267  
00:17:25,550 --> 00:17:30,290  
but with the struggle  
of man to live,

268

00:17:30,290 --> 00:17:36,870  
to exist, to build, and to hope.

269  
00:17:36,870 --> 00:17:45,220  
So and I later read the  
phrase that to believe

270  
00:17:45,220 --> 00:17:48,370  
is a biological necessity.

271  
00:17:48,370 --> 00:17:50,140  
I understood it.

272  
00:17:50,140 --> 00:17:53,440  
To believe is a  
biological necessity.

273  
00:17:53,440 --> 00:17:57,350

274  
00:17:57,350 --> 00:18:03,020  
This feeling was very  
strong in everybody.

275  
00:18:03,020 --> 00:18:11,790  
And everybody asserted it in  
his own private, personal way.

276  
00:18:11,790 --> 00:18:14,040  
But when I came to meet you  
the first time, you also--

277  
00:18:14,040 --> 00:18:18,530

278  
00:18:18,530 --> 00:18:22,600  
you said that some  
people's response

279  
00:18:22,600 --> 00:18:25,420  
was to actually commit suicide.

280



00:18:25,420 --> 00:18:27,120  
Yes.

281  
00:18:27,120 --> 00:18:31,810  
When the war came  
to an end, and we

282  
00:18:31,810 --> 00:18:38,930  
had the embassies, the American  
embassy, the English embassy,

283  
00:18:38,930 --> 00:18:41,720  
the Russian embassy  
were installed,

284  
00:18:41,720 --> 00:18:46,130  
people tried to get in  
touch with their relatives

285  
00:18:46,130 --> 00:18:49,730  
or to get in touch with  
the embassy directly.

286  
00:18:49,730 --> 00:18:50,990  
But not all.

287  
00:18:50,990 --> 00:18:54,080  
Some people didn't  
want to go back

288  
00:18:54,080 --> 00:18:57,970  
and didn't have the feeling  
to struggle for any--

289  
00:18:57,970 --> 00:19:00,590  
lost the feeling that it's  
worthwhile to struggle

290  
00:19:00,590 --> 00:19:03,380  
for a new future.

291  
00:19:03,380 --> 00:19:07,730  
And for the first time, there

were many, many suicides

292  
00:19:07,730 --> 00:19:09,080  
of people.

293  
00:19:09,080 --> 00:19:10,290  
They didn't want to live.

294  
00:19:10,290 --> 00:19:14,360  
It was not all a breakdown  
of their private life.

295  
00:19:14,360 --> 00:19:20,120  
It was a breakdown of  
their view on the world.

296  
00:19:20,120 --> 00:19:24,980  
As I said, to believe is  
a biological necessity.

297  
00:19:24,980 --> 00:19:29,240  
If you don't believe in  
anything, how can you live?

298  
00:19:29,240 --> 00:19:32,510  
So they just embraced the  
world of shadows, the past.

299  
00:19:32,510 --> 00:19:37,960

300  
00:19:37,960 --> 00:19:41,650  
Moving back to Japan, how  
did you live in Japan?

301  
00:19:41,650 --> 00:19:43,450  
Did the Joint help?

302  
00:19:43,450 --> 00:19:44,740  
Yes, yes.

303  
00:19:44,740 --> 00:19:46,360

But tell me that story.

304

00:19:46,360 --> 00:19:49,956

When you got to  
Japan, how did you?

305

00:19:49,956 --> 00:19:52,520

We stayed--

306

00:19:52,520 --> 00:19:54,400

Start with when we got to Japan.

307

00:19:54,400 --> 00:19:58,900

When we got to Japan, we knew  
that it wouldn't last long.

308

00:19:58,900 --> 00:20:01,610

It would never become our home.

309

00:20:01,610 --> 00:20:05,980

It wouldn't last longer than  
they war in the country.

310

00:20:05,980 --> 00:20:11,460

It was a stop for a short while.

311

00:20:11,460 --> 00:20:14,240

So we really enjoyed  
the beauty of Japan.

312

00:20:14,240 --> 00:20:16,730

And Japan still  
wasn't in the war.

313

00:20:16,730 --> 00:20:20,570

We enjoy the beauty of Japan,  
we traveled a little bit.

314

00:20:20,570 --> 00:20:23,060

We went to Tokyo.

315

00:20:23,060 --> 00:20:25,700

We went to Kobe.

316  
00:20:25,700 --> 00:20:26,900  
In Kobe we stayed.

317  
00:20:26,900 --> 00:20:30,620  
We went to Tsuruga,  
to the other places.

318  
00:20:30,620 --> 00:20:34,370  
We saw Japanese painting,  
Japanese sculpture,

319  
00:20:34,370 --> 00:20:35,750  
Japanese houses.

320  
00:20:35,750 --> 00:20:37,440  
We really enjoyed it.

321  
00:20:37,440 --> 00:20:40,340  
It was a beautiful rest.

322  
00:20:40,340 --> 00:20:41,840  
The only thing was that--

323  
00:20:41,840 --> 00:20:44,330  
For everything, and  
how did you eat?

324  
00:20:44,330 --> 00:20:48,320  
Well, they provided  
that with little houses.

325  
00:20:48,320 --> 00:20:49,490  
Who provided them?

326  
00:20:49,490 --> 00:20:50,760  
Joint.

327  
00:20:50,760 --> 00:20:53,180  
And plus, plus the  
Jewish community.

328  
00:20:53,180 --> 00:20:54,190  
Can we start over?

329  
00:20:54,190 --> 00:20:55,940  
Can we start over?

330  
00:20:55,940 --> 00:20:58,910  
Can you just start by saying  
the Joint provided us.

331  
00:20:58,910 --> 00:21:00,050  
Now, one second.

332  
00:21:00,050 --> 00:21:03,950  
With houses, where we--

333  
00:21:03,950 --> 00:21:06,160  
everybody, the families  
had their room.

334  
00:21:06,160 --> 00:21:07,520  
The bachelors--

335  
00:21:07,520 --> 00:21:08,300  
Sorry.

336  
00:21:08,300 --> 00:21:11,240  
Could you start with the  
Joint, when we were in Japan.

337  
00:21:11,240 --> 00:21:15,160

338  
00:21:15,160 --> 00:21:21,170  
Japan, as a country,  
from the first step

339  
00:21:21,170 --> 00:21:25,460  
was an overwhelming experience.

340

00:21:25,460 --> 00:21:31,390  
The beauty, the cities,  
the cleanliness, the order.

341  
00:21:31,390 --> 00:21:36,040  
And even the funny  
things about Japan.

342  
00:21:36,040 --> 00:21:38,920  
When we would go to  
different cities,

343  
00:21:38,920 --> 00:21:42,200  
we would try to  
remember our address.

344  
00:21:42,200 --> 00:21:51,170  
And the old refugees who came  
to Japan way back told us,

345  
00:21:51,170 --> 00:21:55,040  
don't worry about getting lost.

346  
00:21:55,040 --> 00:21:59,270  
Wherever you go, there will be  
a Japanese policeman behind you.

347  
00:21:59,270 --> 00:22:03,130  
And if you're lost, he will  
direct you to your home.

348  
00:22:03,130 --> 00:22:05,370  
So we didn't have to  
worry about addresses.

349  
00:22:05,370 --> 00:22:07,420  
There was always,  
wherever we went,

350  
00:22:07,420 --> 00:22:09,460  
somebody was looking after us.

351  
00:22:09,460 --> 00:22:11,620

And how did you eat  
and where did you stay?

352  
00:22:11,620 --> 00:22:16,060  
They Joint provided us  
with small living quarters.

353  
00:22:16,060 --> 00:22:18,460  
And we had our own kitchen.

354  
00:22:18,460 --> 00:22:22,180  
Life was very normal.

355  
00:22:22,180 --> 00:22:23,950  
They gave us a  
little bit of money.

356  
00:22:23,950 --> 00:22:26,500  
We could go to the  
Japanese market.

357  
00:22:26,500 --> 00:22:28,120  
You couldn't get too much food.

358  
00:22:28,120 --> 00:22:30,230  
The Japanese were with a diet.

359  
00:22:30,230 --> 00:22:32,540  
So we had no right to.

360  
00:22:32,540 --> 00:22:37,240  
Because they were preparing for  
war, everything was restricted.

361  
00:22:37,240 --> 00:22:41,800  
So we had very meager meals.

362  
00:22:41,800 --> 00:22:46,720  
But we didn't suffer in Japan.

363  
00:22:46,720 --> 00:22:50,440  
We were aware that

it won't last.

364  
00:22:50,440 --> 00:22:54,670  
And as I mentioned, after  
six months, all of a sudden,

365  
00:22:54,670 --> 00:22:58,690  
they took us and  
without explanation,

366  
00:22:58,690 --> 00:23:02,870  
without any warning, we  
were shipped to Shanghai.

367  
00:23:02,870 --> 00:23:03,370  
OK.

368  
00:23:03,370 --> 00:23:06,910  
And so let me know,  
in Shanghai, did you

369  
00:23:06,910 --> 00:23:10,780  
paint and have any art shows?

370  
00:23:10,780 --> 00:23:12,940  
And what was the subject  
of your painting?

371  
00:23:12,940 --> 00:23:18,850  
In Shanghai, it was under the  
tremendous pressure of war,

372  
00:23:18,850 --> 00:23:25,090  
of loneliness, of  
uprootedness, a human

373  
00:23:25,090 --> 00:23:30,025  
being makes the decision  
what is his place in life?

374  
00:23:30,025 --> 00:23:32,920



375

00:23:32,920 --> 00:23:35,050

From a formal point  
of view, I was

376

00:23:35,050 --> 00:23:38,620

a stateless, penniless refugee.

377

00:23:38,620 --> 00:23:43,180

But from a more  
metaphysical point of view,

378

00:23:43,180 --> 00:23:48,460

I was a human being who  
could be a part of history.

379

00:23:48,460 --> 00:23:50,020

And that's what I wanted to be.

380

00:23:50,020 --> 00:23:55,370

Even this part isn't mentioned  
in a book, or in a dictionary,

381

00:23:55,370 --> 00:23:58,150

or the history, but  
to me, this part

382

00:23:58,150 --> 00:24:01,580

of playing a part in a  
history was very important.

383

00:24:01,580 --> 00:24:05,170

And I felt, as I  
mentioned before,

384

00:24:05,170 --> 00:24:09,730

that I'm going to paint history,  
I'm going to paint struggle,

385

00:24:09,730 --> 00:24:15,850

and going to paint the  
fluctuation of events

386

00:24:15,850 --> 00:24:20,020  
and transformations.

387  
00:24:20,020 --> 00:24:24,460  
I'm going to paint something  
very dynamic, very haunting,

388  
00:24:24,460 --> 00:24:26,950  
very tragic, and very promising.

389  
00:24:26,950 --> 00:24:27,820  
How to do it?

390  
00:24:27,820 --> 00:24:28,420  
I didn't know.

391  
00:24:28,420 --> 00:24:29,950  
I was a young boy.

392  
00:24:29,950 --> 00:24:35,860  
So I painted here and there,  
painting realistic portraits.

393  
00:24:35,860 --> 00:24:38,290  
But I wasn't satisfied.

394  
00:24:38,290 --> 00:24:40,690  
And I knew that  
sooner or later, I'll

395  
00:24:40,690 --> 00:24:45,160  
find my own way of  
coping with aesthetics.

396  
00:24:45,160 --> 00:24:48,740  
Aesthetics, which  
include also ethics,

397  
00:24:48,740 --> 00:24:54,680  
a certain pride of  
being a human being.

398

00:24:54,680 --> 00:24:58,220  
I did see bad men, the good men.

399  
00:24:58,220 --> 00:25:01,850  
I saw virtues, I saw evil.

400  
00:25:01,850 --> 00:25:05,630  
And I know that the man is  
not good or bad by nature.

401  
00:25:05,630 --> 00:25:08,390  
But I knew for  
sure that he knows,

402  
00:25:08,390 --> 00:25:10,860  
he really knows the difference.

403  
00:25:10,860 --> 00:25:14,880  
And he has a chance to  
choose between good and evil.

404  
00:25:14,880 --> 00:25:21,740  
And though I couldn't  
define exactly what is good,

405  
00:25:21,740 --> 00:25:24,230  
I knew what's evil.

406  
00:25:24,230 --> 00:25:27,150  
Murder, lie, betrayal.

407  
00:25:27,150 --> 00:25:31,862  
And I have hope that I will  
never, never be involved in it.

408  
00:25:31,862 --> 00:25:32,362  
Great.

409  
00:25:32,362 --> 00:25:35,714

410  
00:25:35,714 --> 00:25:36,670

Going again.

411  
00:25:36,670 --> 00:25:37,170  
OK.

412  
00:25:37,170 --> 00:25:41,520

413  
00:25:41,520 --> 00:25:44,440  
Who did you leave  
behind and why?

414  
00:25:44,440 --> 00:25:47,160  
And what happened to them?

415  
00:25:47,160 --> 00:25:51,520

416  
00:25:51,520 --> 00:25:54,670  
I lived in Vilna.

417  
00:25:54,670 --> 00:25:56,950  
I didn't have any  
relatives in Poland

418  
00:25:56,950 --> 00:26:00,730  
because our very large  
family lived in Russia,

419  
00:26:00,730 --> 00:26:03,170  
in different places in Russia.

420  
00:26:03,170 --> 00:26:08,180  
So we left Russia,  
my father and mother.

421  
00:26:08,180 --> 00:26:10,120  
We settled in Vilna.

422  
00:26:10,120 --> 00:26:11,540  
And we had only--

423

00:26:11,540 --> 00:26:16,630  
so I left my father, my  
mother, and my father's brother

424

00:26:16,630 --> 00:26:19,150  
lived in Warsaw, and his wife.

425

00:26:19,150 --> 00:26:22,690  
So the closest family  
was very small.

426

00:26:22,690 --> 00:26:29,390  
But we had many friends  
and people whom we loved.

427

00:26:29,390 --> 00:26:32,370  
And they all perished.

428

00:26:32,370 --> 00:26:36,090  
Why did your father not go?

429

00:26:36,090 --> 00:26:40,340  
My father was ill.

430

00:26:40,340 --> 00:26:45,230  
And we couldn't think about  
making a passport for him

431

00:26:45,230 --> 00:26:51,240  
because he had multiple  
sclerosis multiplex.

432

00:26:51,240 --> 00:26:53,760  
He was quite a  
well-known person,

433

00:26:53,760 --> 00:26:56,610  
he was a beloved teacher.

434

00:26:56,610 --> 00:27:02,940  
And when the ghetto was created,  
and together with the ghetto,

435

00:27:02,940 --> 00:27:07,950

there was a group of Partisans  
which lived in the woods.

436

00:27:07,950 --> 00:27:11,280

And I've been told that  
they came a certain day

437

00:27:11,280 --> 00:27:17,650

and offered my mother and  
father to join the Partisans.

438

00:27:17,650 --> 00:27:23,130

Well, the father couldn't do  
it because he was bed-ridden

439

00:27:23,130 --> 00:27:24,990

and my mother  
wouldn't leave him.

440

00:27:24,990 --> 00:27:29,450

So they stayed in the  
ghetto without any hope.

441

00:27:29,450 --> 00:27:33,590

And the ghetto was  
liquidated in 1943.

442

00:27:33,590 --> 00:27:39,200

And the largest part of  
Vilna was exterminated

443

00:27:39,200 --> 00:27:43,700

60 miles from Vilna, in Ponar.

444

00:27:43,700 --> 00:27:49,520

That was when Germany already  
started to lose the war.

445

00:27:49,520 --> 00:27:54,470

They decided to do  
their final commitment

446  
00:27:54,470 --> 00:27:58,550  
to exterminate the last  
remnants of the Jewish people

447  
00:27:58,550 --> 00:28:02,385  
in Poland, in Lithuania,  
in Latvia, and Estonia.

448  
00:28:02,385 --> 00:28:05,030

449  
00:28:05,030 --> 00:28:08,170  
Did you communicate with them  
at all while you were in Japan?

450  
00:28:08,170 --> 00:28:10,540  
And when did you  
last hear from them?

451  
00:28:10,540 --> 00:28:13,540  
And when did you find out  
that they were killed?

452  
00:28:13,540 --> 00:28:19,160  
No, there was no way of  
communicating with them.

453  
00:28:19,160 --> 00:28:23,180  
I found out exactly  
everything about them

454  
00:28:23,180 --> 00:28:27,740  
because my father  
was quite well-known.

455  
00:28:27,740 --> 00:28:31,910  
He had many students,  
ex-students.

456  
00:28:31,910 --> 00:28:34,160  
He was like I, a socialist.

457

00:28:34,160 --> 00:28:35,900

And there was a  
socialist movement.

458

00:28:35,900 --> 00:28:39,530

So had a member of the  
socialist underground.

459

00:28:39,530 --> 00:28:43,340

And later, after the war, they  
wrote to me about my father.

460

00:28:43,340 --> 00:28:47,790

And some of them  
live in New York.

461

00:28:47,790 --> 00:28:50,000

And they told me  
exactly, day by day,

462

00:28:50,000 --> 00:28:54,470

how he lived, how he  
struggled, how he retained,

463

00:28:54,470 --> 00:28:58,730

together with my mother,  
dignity and hope.

464

00:28:58,730 --> 00:29:04,760

And of course, their son, their  
only son wasn't with them.

465

00:29:04,760 --> 00:29:07,710

He didn't protect them  
and didn't die with them.

466

00:29:07,710 --> 00:29:11,260

So I cannot  
elaborate about that.

467

00:29:11,260 --> 00:29:13,658

But didn't you get some  
postcards from them when



468

00:29:13,658 --> 00:29:14,200

you were in--

469

00:29:14,200 --> 00:29:16,350

We have to change tape here.

470

00:29:16,350 --> 00:31:13,000