

1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:03,493
[TEST TONE]

2
00:00:03,493 --> 00:01:01,876

3
00:01:01,876 --> 00:01:07,120
Do again, when we're rolling
and stuff, about memories

4
00:01:07,120 --> 00:01:09,585
and how you've forgotten
all the bad stuff.

5
00:01:09,585 --> 00:01:10,085
OK.

6
00:01:10,085 --> 00:01:13,360

7
00:01:13,360 --> 00:01:15,760
So what were you
going to tell me?

8
00:01:15,760 --> 00:01:22,920
Well, I was going to
tell you that in--

9
00:01:22,920 --> 00:01:25,850
I haven't taken you
to Central Asia.

10
00:01:25,850 --> 00:01:28,160
And this is a story in itself.

11
00:01:28,160 --> 00:01:31,190
But when we finally
ended up in Tajikistan,

12
00:01:31,190 --> 00:01:34,190
which is the

southernmost republic--

13
00:01:34,190 --> 00:01:38,390
was the southernmost republic
in the then-Soviet Union,

14
00:01:38,390 --> 00:01:40,670
we ended up in a
city called-- which

15
00:01:40,670 --> 00:01:42,680
then was called Stalinabad.

16
00:01:42,680 --> 00:01:45,200
Today, it is called
Dushanbe, which

17
00:01:45,200 --> 00:01:48,740
was also its original name.

18
00:01:48,740 --> 00:01:52,400
And there, after
a while, we lived

19
00:01:52,400 --> 00:01:58,640
in an Armenian family that
was absolutely our own family.

20
00:01:58,640 --> 00:01:59,720
That was, we really--

21
00:01:59,720 --> 00:02:07,790
I felt that I had a new family
and that I was the son of them.

22
00:02:07,790 --> 00:02:10,850
I became the
greatest of friends.

23
00:02:10,850 --> 00:02:13,700
There is a little boy
who became my good friend

24

00:02:13,700 --> 00:02:17,820
and used to read fairytales
to me when I was sick.

25

00:02:17,820 --> 00:02:20,870
My mother had a
friend in his wife.

26

00:02:20,870 --> 00:02:23,120
So this was just
another experience

27

00:02:23,120 --> 00:02:27,080
of tremendous friendship.

28

00:02:27,080 --> 00:02:29,510
All of us had basically
the same feeling,

29

00:02:29,510 --> 00:02:34,250
that we are all victimized
by the Soviet regime.

30

00:02:34,250 --> 00:02:36,350
Those Armenians were
deported themselves

31

00:02:36,350 --> 00:02:39,440
to Central Asia from Armenia.

32

00:02:39,440 --> 00:02:42,500
The Armenians, you
may know, are people

33

00:02:42,500 --> 00:02:46,280
who are extremely
skilled in business.

34

00:02:46,280 --> 00:02:49,610
This Armenian about
whom I'm telling you

35

00:02:49,610 --> 00:02:52,430
was a watchmaker
back in Armenia.

36
00:02:52,430 --> 00:02:56,990
And in Central Asia, he also
went back to the same trade.

37
00:02:56,990 --> 00:03:02,030
But he also became a jeweler.

38
00:03:02,030 --> 00:03:09,140
And during the war, most
trading was illegal in Russia.

39
00:03:09,140 --> 00:03:15,870
It was barter, it was buying
and selling, money had no value.

40
00:03:15,870 --> 00:03:21,110
So people were trying to
accumulate as many real objects

41
00:03:21,110 --> 00:03:22,520
as possible.

42
00:03:22,520 --> 00:03:25,820
Not big, so diamonds, of
course, were very valued.

43
00:03:25,820 --> 00:03:30,650
My mother still had
some from back home.

44
00:03:30,650 --> 00:03:34,430
And when we needed
money, we sold them

45
00:03:34,430 --> 00:03:38,300
slowly to whoever
was willing to buy.

46
00:03:38,300 --> 00:03:42,350

And he was our best
customer, that Armenian,

47
00:03:42,350 --> 00:03:46,160
and eventually, he had a
private house in Stalinabad.

48
00:03:46,160 --> 00:03:49,340
And he said to my mother,
listen, why don't you

49
00:03:49,340 --> 00:03:50,600
move in to me?

50
00:03:50,600 --> 00:03:54,980
Because I'm about to lose
one room because our house

51
00:03:54,980 --> 00:03:59,210
was declared too
large for our family.

52
00:03:59,210 --> 00:04:02,300
So I would love for
you to stay with us

53
00:04:02,300 --> 00:04:08,510
and we can continue our
financial relationships.

54
00:04:08,510 --> 00:04:11,000
Well, little did
we know at the time

55
00:04:11,000 --> 00:04:17,570
that we were moving in with the
biggest trader in Stalinabad.

56
00:04:17,570 --> 00:04:20,329
He was the richest man around.

57
00:04:20,329 --> 00:04:24,740
His son was an NKVD official.

58

00:04:24,740 --> 00:04:28,970

He had most of the
NKVD on his payroll.

59

00:04:28,970 --> 00:04:33,290

And whatever one wanted to
do, one could do through him.

60

00:04:33,290 --> 00:04:38,180

And the irony of it all was
that one of his side businesses,

61

00:04:38,180 --> 00:04:39,680

in a sense, the
business which was

62

00:04:39,680 --> 00:04:43,670

the cover-up for everything,
was a booth with soda

63

00:04:43,670 --> 00:04:46,970

on the main street
of Stalinabad.

64

00:04:46,970 --> 00:04:51,290

At that time, sugar was in
an extremely short supply.

65

00:04:51,290 --> 00:04:55,610

This drink was simply colored
water, rose-colored water

66

00:04:55,610 --> 00:04:57,170

with sugar in it.

67

00:04:57,170 --> 00:04:58,190

And some foam.

68

00:04:58,190 --> 00:05:00,830

I don't know how he
got this foam into it.

69

00:05:00,830 --> 00:05:03,410
Some gas that he pumped into it.

70

00:05:03,410 --> 00:05:08,630
And people would line
for miles to have

71

00:05:08,630 --> 00:05:11,060
a glass of this sweet
water because everybody

72

00:05:11,060 --> 00:05:13,370
was starved for sugar.

73

00:05:13,370 --> 00:05:17,660
He would buy sugar by
carloads at the same time

74

00:05:17,660 --> 00:05:22,470
when we couldn't get
rationed sugar at all.

75

00:05:22,470 --> 00:05:32,750
So he had enough fantasy to call
this drink Curacao, which just

76

00:05:32,750 --> 00:05:34,640
so happens that this Curacao--

77

00:05:34,640 --> 00:05:36,350
I have a picture
of it, actually--

78

00:05:36,350 --> 00:05:40,730
this Curacao was the
destination of my father

79

00:05:40,730 --> 00:05:43,160
and my uncle when they
were leaving Lithuania

80

00:05:43,160 --> 00:05:45,120

on the Sugihara visas.

81
00:05:45,120 --> 00:05:49,430
So my mother worked
there as a clerk selling

82
00:05:49,430 --> 00:05:51,716
this soda, this Curacao.

83
00:05:51,716 --> 00:05:52,216
Amazing.

84
00:05:52,216 --> 00:05:57,139

85
00:05:57,139 --> 00:06:01,450
Well, let me ask you now.

86
00:06:01,450 --> 00:06:04,370
Going back to being packed
into the freight trains

87
00:06:04,370 --> 00:06:09,130
and being taken from your home--

88
00:06:09,130 --> 00:06:12,280
and you talked about memories.

89
00:06:12,280 --> 00:06:16,310
Yes, well, you know,
now, I find out--

90
00:06:16,310 --> 00:06:25,960
was to my surprise that I know,
and as I think hard trying

91
00:06:25,960 --> 00:06:29,320
to recall those images--

92
00:06:29,320 --> 00:06:32,080
because there was some solitary
confinement for a while,

93
00:06:32,080 --> 00:06:33,970
even in the camp--

94
00:06:33,970 --> 00:06:38,770
that I retain in my
memory only the brighter

95
00:06:38,770 --> 00:06:44,710
scenes and sort of erased
from it the darker scenes.

96
00:06:44,710 --> 00:06:48,820
I have difficulty
finding the tragic--

97
00:06:48,820 --> 00:06:52,030
in my memory-- to find
the tragic moments.

98
00:06:52,030 --> 00:06:58,720
But have no trouble at all
recalling the pleasant moments

99
00:06:58,720 --> 00:07:00,460
or the funny moments.

100
00:07:00,460 --> 00:07:02,710
So it's a curious
mechanism, you know,

101
00:07:02,710 --> 00:07:05,950
sort of self-defense
mechanism that we have,

102
00:07:05,950 --> 00:07:09,730
trying to erase
what is unpleasant

103
00:07:09,730 --> 00:07:12,970
and retain what is nice.

104

00:07:12,970 --> 00:07:15,550

And one other general
remark, you know,

105

00:07:15,550 --> 00:07:22,770

is that I'm convinced now
that in life, everything

106

00:07:22,770 --> 00:07:25,510

is a question of luck.

107

00:07:25,510 --> 00:07:29,770

We were immensely lucky
in all kinds of ways

108

00:07:29,770 --> 00:07:31,430

throughout the war.

109

00:07:31,430 --> 00:07:34,810

I mean, considering the place
where we found ourselves

110

00:07:34,810 --> 00:07:39,790

in that is at the very
vortex of this horror.

111

00:07:39,790 --> 00:07:44,320

To get out of it in the shape
in which we got out of it

112

00:07:44,320 --> 00:07:47,380

took an immense amount of luck.

113

00:07:47,380 --> 00:07:54,310

And you know, luck is really
a question of coincidence.

114

00:07:54,310 --> 00:07:57,610

You happen to choose to turn
left when you have a choice

115

00:07:57,610 --> 00:08:00,580

to go straight and to go right.

116
00:08:00,580 --> 00:08:02,740
You don't know why
you are going left,

117
00:08:02,740 --> 00:08:06,190
and yet, the turn left turns
out to be the lucky one.

118
00:08:06,190 --> 00:08:12,130
And this was with us throughout
this whole experience.

119
00:08:12,130 --> 00:08:16,150
In the camp, which
was a light camp

120
00:08:16,150 --> 00:08:20,740
compared to so many other camps,
where people did not really

121
00:08:20,740 --> 00:08:23,230
die except of natural causes.

122
00:08:23,230 --> 00:08:24,730
Of course, some
died because they

123
00:08:24,730 --> 00:08:29,440
were malnourished, but no more
so than the Russians around us.

124
00:08:29,440 --> 00:08:32,309

125
00:08:32,309 --> 00:08:35,289
I'll tell you a funny
story about Stalinabad.

126
00:08:35,289 --> 00:08:38,260

127

00:08:38,260 --> 00:08:44,980
When we finally got out with
my grandmother to Central Asia,

128
00:08:44,980 --> 00:08:46,690
where the Polish
Army was forming,

129
00:08:46,690 --> 00:08:48,520
we came two weeks too late.

130
00:08:48,520 --> 00:08:52,000
By that time, the whole
army of General Anders,

131
00:08:52,000 --> 00:08:55,090
that was the first
Polish Army in Russia,

132
00:08:55,090 --> 00:08:57,670
was evacuated to Iran.

133
00:08:57,670 --> 00:09:03,970
So we came to the small railroad
station between Samarkand

134
00:09:03,970 --> 00:09:07,800
and the Caspian, Krasnovodsk,
on the Caspian Sea,

135
00:09:07,800 --> 00:09:08,800
where there was nothing.

136
00:09:08,800 --> 00:09:12,700
There were a few mud huts
and the railroad station.

137
00:09:12,700 --> 00:09:14,950
This was all there was there.

138
00:09:14,950 --> 00:09:17,600
And that was one
of the places where

139
00:09:17,600 --> 00:09:19,660
the Polish Army was forming.

140
00:09:19,660 --> 00:09:22,305
And this is where we found
out that we would not

141
00:09:22,305 --> 00:09:23,680
be joining them
because there was

142
00:09:23,680 --> 00:09:27,400
no Polish Army left in Russia.

143
00:09:27,400 --> 00:09:30,040
And one of us-- there
was a group of Poles

144
00:09:30,040 --> 00:09:34,270
who were in the same
situation-- had a map of Russia.

145
00:09:34,270 --> 00:09:37,030
And he looked at
the map and he saw

146
00:09:37,030 --> 00:09:41,410
a city called Stalinabad,
which in Tajik means

147
00:09:41,410 --> 00:09:42,550
the city of Stalin.

148
00:09:42,550 --> 00:09:45,310

149
00:09:45,310 --> 00:09:47,240
But we didn't know that.

150
00:09:47,240 --> 00:09:48,970
And he didn't know it.

151
00:09:48,970 --> 00:09:51,730
And he said, you
know, Stalinabad,

152
00:09:51,730 --> 00:09:55,900
that sounds a little bit
like Marienbad and Karlsbad.

153
00:09:55,900 --> 00:10:00,590
Now, these were Czech
resorts before the war.

154
00:10:00,590 --> 00:10:04,600
And so he says, maybe it is also
some kind of a resort place.

155
00:10:04,600 --> 00:10:07,340
Why don't we go to Stalinabad?

156
00:10:07,340 --> 00:10:10,270
Well, for this
idiotic reasoning,

157
00:10:10,270 --> 00:10:13,810
we got to an
extremely nice place.

158
00:10:13,810 --> 00:10:15,925
Because it was the end
of a railroad line.

159
00:10:15,925 --> 00:10:18,520

160
00:10:18,520 --> 00:10:21,940
It was very difficult
to get things out of it.

161
00:10:21,940 --> 00:10:24,670
It happened to be in an
extremely fertile part

162
00:10:24,670 --> 00:10:26,980
of the Tajikistan.

163
00:10:26,980 --> 00:10:33,640
A great deal of fruit, a great
deal of vegetables, some meat.

164
00:10:33,640 --> 00:10:36,640
We happened to land with
this Armenian family, which

165
00:10:36,640 --> 00:10:38,620
helped us enormously.

166
00:10:38,620 --> 00:10:41,710
There was a Polish
[POLISH],, which helped us

167
00:10:41,710 --> 00:10:46,030
with clothing and with food.

168
00:10:46,030 --> 00:10:54,220
And I began my higher education
there in a very odd way.

169
00:10:54,220 --> 00:10:55,675
I was selling--

170
00:10:55,675 --> 00:10:59,260
You know, I finished only
nine grades in Poland

171
00:10:59,260 --> 00:11:01,280
because I was 15--

172
00:11:01,280 --> 00:11:07,660
14 when I entered school
in the spring of 1939.

173
00:11:07,660 --> 00:11:12,070
I was supposed to
go into my second--

174
00:11:12,070 --> 00:11:14,440
as a sophomore into high school.

175
00:11:14,440 --> 00:11:19,610
And so all I had
there was nine years.

176
00:11:19,610 --> 00:11:23,170
I was at the bazaar
in Stalinabad

177
00:11:23,170 --> 00:11:29,410
trying to hock a dress, which we
got through the Polish network.

178
00:11:29,410 --> 00:11:34,090
And the woman, good-looking,
pleasant woman came up.

179
00:11:34,090 --> 00:11:40,810
At that time, Stalinabad was
full of Russian refugees,

180
00:11:40,810 --> 00:11:45,280
or evacuated people from Moscow,
from Leningrad, from Kiev.

181
00:11:45,280 --> 00:11:47,440
And this woman turned
out to be from Kiev,

182
00:11:47,440 --> 00:11:52,030
a Jewish woman, a
professor of French

183
00:11:52,030 --> 00:11:55,210
at the local institute,
pedagogical institute.

184
00:11:55,210 --> 00:11:57,580
At that time, there
was no university.

185
00:11:57,580 --> 00:12:00,610
And we started
talking to each other.

186
00:12:00,610 --> 00:12:03,370
By that time, I knew
Russian fairly well.

187
00:12:03,370 --> 00:12:09,130
And she says to me, well you
seem like an intelligent boy.

188
00:12:09,130 --> 00:12:13,630
What are you doing here
selling dresses in this bazaar?

189
00:12:13,630 --> 00:12:15,850
So I told her more
or less my story.

190
00:12:15,850 --> 00:12:18,940
And she says, well, you
know, come over to my office

191
00:12:18,940 --> 00:12:22,060
tomorrow, I'll see
what we can do for you.

192
00:12:22,060 --> 00:12:25,060
And I went to this institute,
and they said, well,

193
00:12:25,060 --> 00:12:27,940
is there anything you
would like to study?

194
00:12:27,940 --> 00:12:31,330
Now, studying was like having
a job because every student had

195
00:12:31,330 --> 00:12:32,320
a fellowship there.

196
00:12:32,320 --> 00:12:35,500
This was the Soviet system.

197
00:12:35,500 --> 00:12:38,440
So I said, yes, I want to study
English because my father is

198
00:12:38,440 --> 00:12:39,260
in America.

199
00:12:39,260 --> 00:12:42,670
And I hope that eventually,
I will go to America, too.

200
00:12:42,670 --> 00:12:46,550
And she said, well, I'll see
what I can do about this.

201
00:12:46,550 --> 00:12:49,000
And the group of people
from the English department

202
00:12:49,000 --> 00:12:53,260
came, they gave
me books to learn,

203
00:12:53,260 --> 00:12:56,710
to study from, to make
up the high school which

204
00:12:56,710 --> 00:12:58,720
I didn't have.

205
00:12:58,720 --> 00:13:01,420
And they said, come
back in two months

206
00:13:01,420 --> 00:13:04,990
and we'll give you an
exam, which they did.

207

00:13:04,990 --> 00:13:07,000
And this exam I passed.

208
00:13:07,000 --> 00:13:09,190
And I was all of
a sudden admitted

209
00:13:09,190 --> 00:13:12,880
to a local university
in a sense,

210
00:13:12,880 --> 00:13:15,910
to the faculty of English.

211
00:13:15,910 --> 00:13:19,100
That is what they called the
faculty of English, which means

212
00:13:19,100 --> 00:13:20,740
the department of English.

213
00:13:20,740 --> 00:13:23,950
And I stayed there for
two years and a half.

214
00:13:23,950 --> 00:13:30,820
And my beginnings in English
go back to Stalinabad.

215
00:13:30,820 --> 00:13:34,490
The year was 1942.

216
00:13:34,490 --> 00:13:37,485
So this is what I
mean, the luck which--

217
00:13:37,485 --> 00:13:39,560
now, I didn't go to Anders.

218
00:13:39,560 --> 00:13:42,650
That is, I didn't
join the Polish Army.

219

00:13:42,650 --> 00:13:46,940

This was considered a tremendous catastrophe and a tragedy

220

00:13:46,940 --> 00:13:49,310

that we were left behind.

221

00:13:49,310 --> 00:13:51,830

And all our friends and everybody else

222

00:13:51,830 --> 00:13:55,370

moved to Iran with Anders's army.

223

00:13:55,370 --> 00:13:59,270

Well, if I had gotten into Anders's army, who

224

00:13:59,270 --> 00:14:01,370

knows where I would be today.

225

00:14:01,370 --> 00:14:05,840

I could be rotting in the deserts of Northern Africa

226

00:14:05,840 --> 00:14:08,900

or at Monte Casino, where this Polish

227

00:14:08,900 --> 00:14:12,990

Army was completely decimated.

228

00:14:12,990 --> 00:14:17,670

So one never knows what is lucky in one's life.

229

00:14:17,670 --> 00:14:18,450

That's right.

230

00:14:18,450 --> 00:14:21,240

And there are

hundreds of stories

231
00:14:21,240 --> 00:14:22,310
like this I can tell you.

232
00:14:22,310 --> 00:14:26,820

233
00:14:26,820 --> 00:14:32,700
So when you left the camp
and you went to try and--

234
00:14:32,700 --> 00:14:34,010
To join up with--

235
00:14:34,010 --> 00:14:37,320
yes, when I left the camp,
I tried to join up with.

236
00:14:37,320 --> 00:14:40,830
You see, let me start
a little bit earlier.

237
00:14:40,830 --> 00:14:45,780
My aunt and my cousin
left that place

238
00:14:45,780 --> 00:14:49,380
where they were in the
Urals to join the army.

239
00:14:49,380 --> 00:14:51,750
And they made it in good time.

240
00:14:51,750 --> 00:14:54,570
Their commandant was
not dismayed by it

241
00:14:54,570 --> 00:14:56,940
because they had the same
documents that we had.

242

00:14:56,940 --> 00:15:01,020
But somehow, Polish
citizenship was not questioned,

243
00:15:01,020 --> 00:15:02,580
and they were released early.

244
00:15:02,580 --> 00:15:04,080
They made it.

245
00:15:04,080 --> 00:15:05,450
They joined the army.

246
00:15:05,450 --> 00:15:06,480
She joined the army.

247
00:15:06,480 --> 00:15:08,850
And the boys went
along as her son.

248
00:15:08,850 --> 00:15:10,890
And they went to Iran.

249
00:15:10,890 --> 00:15:15,570
But they left a grandmother
in the Urals all alone.

250
00:15:15,570 --> 00:15:19,990
And actually, her own, my
aunt's parents were also there.

251
00:15:19,990 --> 00:15:25,290
So what we did before going down
south to join the Polish Army,

252
00:15:25,290 --> 00:15:28,620
we went to the Urals to
fetch my grandmother.

253
00:15:28,620 --> 00:15:30,130
She was sick at the time.

254

00:15:30,130 --> 00:15:35,220
And so we lost three months
waiting for her to get better.

255
00:15:35,220 --> 00:15:40,380
And during those three months,
we lost the Polish army.

256
00:15:40,380 --> 00:15:47,370
So she left and she came to this
country with her son in 1942.

257
00:15:47,370 --> 00:15:52,964
And we, my grandmother, and my
mother, and I stayed until '46.

258
00:15:52,964 --> 00:15:54,610
And how did you--

259
00:15:54,610 --> 00:15:56,210
could you fix your
tongue on the tie?

260
00:15:56,210 --> 00:15:56,710
Sorry.

261
00:15:56,710 --> 00:15:59,210

262
00:15:59,210 --> 00:16:03,050
And then how did
you finally get out?

263
00:16:03,050 --> 00:16:03,740
From Russia?

264
00:16:03,740 --> 00:16:04,910
Yes.

265
00:16:04,910 --> 00:16:06,890
Well, we got out.

266

00:16:06,890 --> 00:16:10,910
You see, the problem was
that we had no documents.

267
00:16:10,910 --> 00:16:15,110
Everybody who was in those
resettlement camps would

268
00:16:15,110 --> 00:16:20,210
receive, upon amnesty, would
receive the sheet of paper

269
00:16:20,210 --> 00:16:28,590
saying that the so-and-so
is a Polish citizen who

270
00:16:28,590 --> 00:16:29,730
was released from the camp.

271
00:16:29,730 --> 00:16:31,130
That was our only document.

272
00:16:31,130 --> 00:16:33,890

273
00:16:33,890 --> 00:16:43,070
There came, in 1943, or no,
actually the whole thing

274
00:16:43,070 --> 00:16:48,080
began in 1942, when the
advancing German troops came

275
00:16:48,080 --> 00:16:54,800
to the Smolensk region in
Russia and uncovered graves

276
00:16:54,800 --> 00:17:00,350
of 10,000 police officers
in a camp called Katyn.

277
00:17:00,350 --> 00:17:06,440
K-A-T-Y-N. Which they dug up.

278
00:17:06,440 --> 00:17:09,349
And they discovered
unmistakable proof

279
00:17:09,349 --> 00:17:12,560
that these 10,000 officers
were shot by the Russians.

280
00:17:12,560 --> 00:17:14,960
They were all shot,
all in the same way,

281
00:17:14,960 --> 00:17:18,650
in the back of the neck.

282
00:17:18,650 --> 00:17:20,720
The Russians said,
this is all nonsense.

283
00:17:20,720 --> 00:17:22,609
This is all Hitler's propaganda.

284
00:17:22,609 --> 00:17:25,670
This was all done
by the Germans.

285
00:17:25,670 --> 00:17:28,610
We left the 10,000 right there.

286
00:17:28,610 --> 00:17:31,790
We could not evacuate them
because we had no time.

287
00:17:31,790 --> 00:17:33,470
And they were shot
by the Germans.

288
00:17:33,470 --> 00:17:37,700
And the Germans are simply
planting false evidence.

289

00:17:37,700 --> 00:17:41,900

All evidence was pointing against them.

290

00:17:41,900 --> 00:17:45,090

There was a Red Cross delegation that came from Switzerland,

291

00:17:45,090 --> 00:17:47,330

and that examined these graves, and also found

292

00:17:47,330 --> 00:17:51,560

that the Germans were innocent in that.

293

00:17:51,560 --> 00:17:53,870

The Polish government in exile had no choice

294

00:17:53,870 --> 00:17:56,000

but to accuse the Russians.

295

00:17:56,000 --> 00:17:58,430

And the Russians used that as an excuse

296

00:17:58,430 --> 00:18:01,070

to sever all diplomatic relations

297

00:18:01,070 --> 00:18:03,080

with the Polish government in exile.

298

00:18:03,080 --> 00:18:06,410

They announced that all the Polish documents issued

299

00:18:06,410 --> 00:18:09,050

before the war were invalid.

300

00:18:09,050 --> 00:18:13,040

The documents issued to those
who came from the camps,

301
00:18:13,040 --> 00:18:16,670
those sheets of
paper, were invalid.

302
00:18:16,670 --> 00:18:21,200
And therefore, these people
were without documents.

303
00:18:21,200 --> 00:18:23,060
And in order to
survive, they had

304
00:18:23,060 --> 00:18:25,400
to accept Soviet citizenship.

305
00:18:25,400 --> 00:18:27,740
So this was the
second time that we

306
00:18:27,740 --> 00:18:32,120
were faced with the choice of
accepting Soviet citizenship.

307
00:18:32,120 --> 00:18:34,310
Those who did not,
who decided not to,

308
00:18:34,310 --> 00:18:37,610
and there was some of those,
were imprisoned very often.

309
00:18:37,610 --> 00:18:40,220
And they had a very,
very tough time.

310
00:18:40,220 --> 00:18:43,760
Most people did accept it
because they simply saw no

311
00:18:43,760 --> 00:18:48,110

choice, knowing what would happen if they don't.

312
00:18:48,110 --> 00:18:51,470
And there again, a small piece of luck.

313
00:18:51,470 --> 00:18:54,380
Or a large piece of luck.

314
00:18:54,380 --> 00:19:00,170
My father and my uncle, when they were in Vilna,

315
00:19:00,170 --> 00:19:02,720
went to Kaunas, which was at that time

316
00:19:02,720 --> 00:19:08,450
still the capital of Lithuania and where the embassies were.

317
00:19:08,450 --> 00:19:12,770
To the British embassy, which at that time

318
00:19:12,770 --> 00:19:15,800
represented Polish interests in Lithuania.

319
00:19:15,800 --> 00:19:19,730
That is, the Polish embassy was no longer there.

320
00:19:19,730 --> 00:19:21,110
Poland did not exist.

321
00:19:21,110 --> 00:19:24,440
The Lithuanians did not recognize the Polish government

322
00:19:24,440 --> 00:19:25,370
in exile.

323
00:19:25,370 --> 00:19:28,310
But the British
embassy took over.

324
00:19:28,310 --> 00:19:30,440
And I'm sorry about this.

325
00:19:30,440 --> 00:19:32,900
Do you want a glass of
water to have right here?

326
00:19:32,900 --> 00:19:34,400
Well, no, I'm all right.

327
00:19:34,400 --> 00:19:35,600
I'll just try to control it.

328
00:19:35,600 --> 00:19:38,330

329
00:19:38,330 --> 00:19:44,120
So to come back to this
story in Lithuania.

330
00:19:44,120 --> 00:19:47,540
Since my father and
my uncle were there,

331
00:19:47,540 --> 00:19:50,780
they went to the British
embassy in Kaunas.

332
00:19:50,780 --> 00:19:53,930
They got themselves
proof that they

333
00:19:53,930 --> 00:19:58,100
were Polish citizens issued
by the British embassy

334
00:19:58,100 --> 00:20:02,210

as the representative of
Polish interests in Lithuania

335
00:20:02,210 --> 00:20:04,220
on British stationery.

336
00:20:04,220 --> 00:20:06,830
It was a piece of paper,
which I still have here.

337
00:20:06,830 --> 00:20:10,670
I think I sent it to
the Holocaust Museum,

338
00:20:10,670 --> 00:20:16,070
with a British official
stamp, the rampant lion.

339
00:20:16,070 --> 00:20:19,430
And the wording was
also in English.

340
00:20:19,430 --> 00:20:22,550
He got the very same documents
for my mother and me.

341
00:20:22,550 --> 00:20:25,400
And they were sent
to us in the camp.

342
00:20:25,400 --> 00:20:27,830
And for some reason, they
were never requisitioned,

343
00:20:27,830 --> 00:20:30,240
so we had them.

344
00:20:30,240 --> 00:20:34,320
When the Soviets, in 1943,
decided that no Polish document

345
00:20:34,320 --> 00:20:37,830
was valid, we went to

the police, to the NKVD,

346
00:20:37,830 --> 00:20:42,480
and we said, but we don't
have any pre-war documents.

347
00:20:42,480 --> 00:20:45,630
We don't have any
documents issued by you

348
00:20:45,630 --> 00:20:47,370
after we left the camp.

349
00:20:47,370 --> 00:20:50,630
What we have is a document
issued by the British.

350
00:20:50,630 --> 00:20:52,660
Let's see it.

351
00:20:52,660 --> 00:20:55,140
So we showed them this document.

352
00:20:55,140 --> 00:20:58,080
And there, they were
completely taken aback.

353
00:20:58,080 --> 00:21:00,960
Because England
was a great ally.

354
00:21:00,960 --> 00:21:04,650
There was a document there
was a British lion on it.

355
00:21:04,650 --> 00:21:08,460
And they were not going to
get into trouble over that.

356
00:21:08,460 --> 00:21:12,390
So after some going
back and forth,

357

00:21:12,390 --> 00:21:17,760

we eventually received
a so-called permit

358

00:21:17,760 --> 00:21:22,590

to live in the Soviet Union for
people of foreign nationality.

359

00:21:22,590 --> 00:21:25,080

Not saying which
foreign nationality it

360

00:21:25,080 --> 00:21:27,180

was because we had
none at the time.

361

00:21:27,180 --> 00:21:28,905

So it was kind of
a Nansen passport.

362

00:21:28,905 --> 00:21:31,680

363

00:21:31,680 --> 00:21:34,180

Maybe I should take a
drink, a glass of water.

364

00:21:34,180 --> 00:21:35,340

I'll bring some here.

365

00:21:35,340 --> 00:21:36,590

Set it right here.

366

00:21:36,590 --> 00:21:39,702

Yeah, I'll have it
right here, you know.

367

00:21:39,702 --> 00:21:41,790

So where were we?

368

00:21:41,790 --> 00:21:43,110

You were.

369
00:21:43,110 --> 00:21:46,230
So we were on those
documents which were

370
00:21:46,230 --> 00:21:49,590
issued by the Russians to us.

371
00:21:49,590 --> 00:21:51,730
Tell me again the
response of the Russians

372
00:21:51,730 --> 00:21:54,450
to seeing the British lion.

373
00:21:54,450 --> 00:21:57,660
Well, when we brought
them these documents,

374
00:21:57,660 --> 00:22:00,780
they really were
completely dumbfounded.

375
00:22:00,780 --> 00:22:03,060
They had no idea
what to do with them.

376
00:22:03,060 --> 00:22:05,290
They never saw a document
like this before.

377
00:22:05,290 --> 00:22:09,300
Nobody of our friends
had anything like it.

378
00:22:09,300 --> 00:22:11,850
What they saw was
the English writing

379
00:22:11,850 --> 00:22:15,110
and the British officials stamp.

380

00:22:15,110 --> 00:22:17,480
And so they decided
that they could not

381
00:22:17,480 --> 00:22:22,040
issue us Soviet citizenship,
I mean Soviet passports.

382
00:22:22,040 --> 00:22:26,930
But that they would give
us those special documents

383
00:22:26,930 --> 00:22:32,810
called a permit to dwell
in the Soviet Union

384
00:22:32,810 --> 00:22:35,270
for people of
foreign nationality.

385
00:22:35,270 --> 00:22:39,380
What we were supposed to do
is to register with the police

386
00:22:39,380 --> 00:22:44,240
every three months and to notify
them of any change of address.

387
00:22:44,240 --> 00:22:47,640
But other than that, I was not--

388
00:22:47,640 --> 00:22:51,260
since the Polish
army was gone, I

389
00:22:51,260 --> 00:22:55,340
was not drafted
into the Soviet Army

390
00:22:55,340 --> 00:22:58,370
even though I was
already of age.

391

00:22:58,370 --> 00:23:02,750
And I was not drafted into
the Polish Army, which

392
00:23:02,750 --> 00:23:06,470
was formed later on by the
Russians themselves, which

393
00:23:06,470 --> 00:23:11,360
was the Communist Polish Army,
which entered Poland together

394
00:23:11,360 --> 00:23:12,980
with the Russian troops.

395
00:23:12,980 --> 00:23:17,630
And which also saw a great
deal of life loss en route.

396
00:23:17,630 --> 00:23:23,720
So this is why I keep harping
on this question of completely

397
00:23:23,720 --> 00:23:27,320
unforeseen coincidental
circumstances, which

398
00:23:27,320 --> 00:23:30,320
really amount to nothing
else but pure, sheer luck.

399
00:23:30,320 --> 00:23:33,490

400
00:23:33,490 --> 00:23:36,600
And as a result, not
only did I survive

401
00:23:36,600 --> 00:23:42,810
this war coming from this
hell, which was the place where

402
00:23:42,810 --> 00:23:51,540

it all started, but I also never
served in any army from the day

403
00:23:51,540 --> 00:23:53,310
was born until the day I die.

404
00:23:53,310 --> 00:23:56,780
You know, it's very unusual.

405
00:23:56,780 --> 00:24:02,390
When did you find out
about the Holocaust?

406
00:24:02,390 --> 00:24:07,260
Well, that was really
not until much later.

407
00:24:07,260 --> 00:24:09,590
We didn't know much about it.

408
00:24:09,590 --> 00:24:10,322
Except, you see--

409
00:24:10,322 --> 00:24:11,710
Sorry.

410
00:24:11,710 --> 00:24:12,210
There's--

411
00:24:12,210 --> 00:24:14,850

412
00:24:14,850 --> 00:24:17,260
Once we get rolling, we
have to take that glass.

413
00:24:17,260 --> 00:24:21,430

414
00:24:21,430 --> 00:24:22,363
Where were you?

415

00:24:22,363 --> 00:24:24,280

And when did you find
out about the Holocaust?

416

00:24:24,280 --> 00:24:26,740

And how did you respond?

417

00:24:26,740 --> 00:24:35,290

Well, I found out about the
Holocaust in all the details

418

00:24:35,290 --> 00:24:41,870

only after I came to this
country, which was in 1946.

419

00:24:41,870 --> 00:24:46,720

But as I begin telling
you, we developed a habit

420

00:24:46,720 --> 00:24:50,080

of not trusting
Russian press and not

421

00:24:50,080 --> 00:24:52,360

trusting Russian stories.

422

00:24:52,360 --> 00:24:56,980

And the Russian press
was reporting much of it.

423

00:24:56,980 --> 00:25:00,910

Not all of it, but much
of it, they did report.

424

00:25:00,910 --> 00:25:05,740

I don't remember any Russian
mention of Auschwitz,

425

00:25:05,740 --> 00:25:07,010

for instance.

426

00:25:07,010 --> 00:25:09,370

I don't know whether
they knew about it.

427
00:25:09,370 --> 00:25:12,370
They must have known
about it, but they did not

428
00:25:12,370 --> 00:25:13,730
write about it, specifically.

429
00:25:13,730 --> 00:25:17,440
They wanted the war
to be their war,

430
00:25:17,440 --> 00:25:20,440
to be what they call
the Patriotic War.

431
00:25:20,440 --> 00:25:22,480
And this was the
important issue.

432
00:25:22,480 --> 00:25:27,300
And the Final Solution,
the killing of the Jews,

433
00:25:27,300 --> 00:25:29,220
was absolutely secondary.

434
00:25:29,220 --> 00:25:32,160
Because this--
they probably felt

435
00:25:32,160 --> 00:25:36,400
that this would diminish
their role in that war.

436
00:25:36,400 --> 00:25:39,000
They saw themselves
as the central power

437
00:25:39,000 --> 00:25:40,830
of fighting Hitler.

438
00:25:40,830 --> 00:25:44,730
And in many ways, they
were because they actually

439
00:25:44,730 --> 00:25:45,700
defeated Hitler.

440
00:25:45,700 --> 00:25:48,810
I mean, bombing
helped from the West.

441
00:25:48,810 --> 00:25:53,820
But you know, we know very well
that bombing until now doesn't

442
00:25:53,820 --> 00:25:57,240
do very much to help the cause.

443
00:25:57,240 --> 00:26:00,750
So the Russians were
dying by the millions.

444
00:26:00,750 --> 00:26:03,930
And they were
fighting the Germans

445
00:26:03,930 --> 00:26:06,120
throughout the length
of the Russian front.

446
00:26:06,120 --> 00:26:09,300
Immense lengths from
up north from Leningrad

447
00:26:09,300 --> 00:26:12,660
down to down to the Caucasus.

448
00:26:12,660 --> 00:26:16,230
So part of this was not
that they didn't know,

449

00:26:16,230 --> 00:26:20,880
but they simply didn't want to
divert attention from their war

450
00:26:20,880 --> 00:26:23,580
to somebody else's war.

451
00:26:23,580 --> 00:26:27,960
This was a war against
a beast, Hitler,

452
00:26:27,960 --> 00:26:31,740
who did not make any distinction
between a Russian, a gypsy,

453
00:26:31,740 --> 00:26:32,580
or a Jew.

454
00:26:32,580 --> 00:26:36,450
Everybody was scheduled
for extermination.

455
00:26:36,450 --> 00:26:40,270
And they would not play up the
Jewish angle for any money,

456
00:26:40,270 --> 00:26:41,580
you see.

457
00:26:41,580 --> 00:26:44,250
And this is probably the
reason why it was not reported.

458
00:26:44,250 --> 00:26:47,080
And what was reported, we
took with a grain of salt.

459
00:26:47,080 --> 00:26:50,970
Because we were sort of inured
to the propaganda, which

460
00:26:50,970 --> 00:26:54,540
was constantly being

printed in Soviet press.

461
00:26:54,540 --> 00:26:56,700
So even when they
wrote true stories,

462
00:26:56,700 --> 00:26:58,500
we tended to disbelieve them.

463
00:26:58,500 --> 00:27:00,930
Especially stories
of the Holocaust,

464
00:27:00,930 --> 00:27:05,700
which tended to be fantastic.

465
00:27:05,700 --> 00:27:13,260
So when we came to
America in 1946,

466
00:27:13,260 --> 00:27:15,900
my father and his
brother, my uncle,

467
00:27:15,900 --> 00:27:18,240
already knew all about it.

468
00:27:18,240 --> 00:27:24,120
But they didn't want to let
us know earlier in Russia.

469
00:27:24,120 --> 00:27:27,300
My father knew that
my mother's family

470
00:27:27,300 --> 00:27:34,220
was exterminated in Lwow.

471
00:27:34,220 --> 00:27:39,630
And well, all our families.

472
00:27:39,630 --> 00:27:43,040

That is, the Schenkers
and my mother's family,

473
00:27:43,040 --> 00:27:44,130
suffered immensely.

474
00:27:44,130 --> 00:27:47,310
But especially my
mother's family.

475
00:27:47,310 --> 00:27:51,300
And all this came as
a total surprise to us

476
00:27:51,300 --> 00:27:54,430
as we came to this country.

477
00:27:54,430 --> 00:27:57,430
What was your reunion
like with your father?

478
00:27:57,430 --> 00:28:01,930
Well, we came-- the
reunion with my father.

479
00:28:01,930 --> 00:28:07,330
We came in an odd way
for reasons which perhaps

480
00:28:07,330 --> 00:28:08,900
are too long to explain.

481
00:28:08,900 --> 00:28:13,370
We ended up coming on
an American liberty

482
00:28:13,370 --> 00:28:19,120
ship, a freighter that happened
to be in Odessa in February,

483
00:28:19,120 --> 00:28:21,400
1946.

484

00:28:21,400 --> 00:28:26,080

We boarded that liberty ship.

485

00:28:26,080 --> 00:28:27,700

We were the passengers.

486

00:28:27,700 --> 00:28:30,430

There was a couple
of Ukrainians on it,

487

00:28:30,430 --> 00:28:34,030

and a very young Jewish boy,
who was picked up by the Soviet

488

00:28:34,030 --> 00:28:39,460

Army somewhere and whose father
happened to be an American.

489

00:28:39,460 --> 00:28:43,270

So the seven of us--

490

00:28:43,270 --> 00:28:45,340

there was some
other person, too--

491

00:28:45,340 --> 00:28:48,490

made this trip on this
rather large freighter.

492

00:28:48,490 --> 00:28:52,750

The trip took one month,
through the Mediterranean,

493

00:28:52,750 --> 00:28:54,590

the Atlantic.

494

00:28:54,590 --> 00:28:56,590

Lovely weather throughout.

495

00:28:56,590 --> 00:28:57,820

And we landed.

496

00:28:57,820 --> 00:29:01,330

We were supposed to
land in New York.

497

00:29:01,330 --> 00:29:04,510

Then it was changed to Virginia.

498

00:29:04,510 --> 00:29:07,720

And then eventually, we
landed in South Carolina,

499

00:29:07,720 --> 00:29:10,410

in Charleston, South Carolina.

500

00:29:10,410 --> 00:29:16,060

We docked on April 7, 1946.

501

00:29:16,060 --> 00:29:20,950

Charleston was like
a bouquet of flowers.

502

00:29:20,950 --> 00:29:25,120

Every Magnolia tree, every tulip
tree, everything was in bloom.

503

00:29:25,120 --> 00:29:26,620

Cherry trees.

504

00:29:26,620 --> 00:29:31,250

And my first
impression of America

505

00:29:31,250 --> 00:29:33,310

and my expectation
for America was

506

00:29:33,310 --> 00:29:37,330

that it would be nothing but
a big bouquet of flowers.

507

00:29:37,330 --> 00:29:40,390

Well, we went to lunch--

my father was waiting along

508

00:29:40,390 --> 00:29:42,070

with my cousin.

509

00:29:42,070 --> 00:29:43,630

There was a reunion.

510

00:29:43,630 --> 00:29:47,020

You can imagine what
kind of reunion it was.

511

00:29:47,020 --> 00:29:50,260

And we got on the train
and went to New York,

512

00:29:50,260 --> 00:29:52,270

where my father was living.

513

00:29:52,270 --> 00:29:55,090

And of course, then I realized
that not all of America

514

00:29:55,090 --> 00:30:00,460

is an immense garden.

515

00:30:00,460 --> 00:31:14,000