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Summary

Juraj Kohlmann, born in 1938 in Guta (in Hungarian: Gúta, after 1948: Kolárovo), Czechoslovakia.

The interview was conducted in the Hungarian language, in which Mr. Kohlmann had some difficulty expressing himself. His parents' common language was Hungarian, and he spoke it fluently in his childhood. His mother's primary language was German (in addition to Hungarian, Slovak, and English), his father was Hungarian, and in school he learned Slovak. He grew up in Piešťany (Pöstyén). His grandparents – Gutmann on his mother's side – and parents owned a successful bakery and pastry shop there, which her mother ran. His maternal uncle was the master baker. They lived in a big old house, with a large garden; the pastry shop was on the street front. His father also had a wholesale textile business: he purchased textiles in Brno, in the Czech lands, and sold them in Slovakia. He travelled all the time.

The family was religious and maintained a kosher household.

In 1942, the bakery was Aryanized, but his mother and uncle kept working there as employees. His father lost his textile business. In 1942, he and his mother were taken to a collection camp in Žilina (Zsolna). His father bribed a guard and organized his and his mother's escape. They went into hiding in the mountainous area around Piešťany. The father also hid the grandparents, but the Aryan owner of the bakery reported them, and the Gestapo arrested and imprisoned them in Nové Mesto (Érsekujvár). His father was never seen again, but his grandparents survived.

In October 1944, he and his mother were also discovered in their hiding place. The Germans found them while looking for partisans during the Slovak National Uprising. They took them to the collection camp at Sereď (Szered). Mr. Kohlmann remembered hearing that Alois Brunner ran the camp. Mr. Kohlmann and his mother spent a month in the camp before being transported to Bergen-Belsen. He remembers the railway wagon like a picture. Between November 1944 and April 1945, they were in Bergen-Belsen. He became very ill, had typhus and scarlet fever, and also contracted tuberculosis. The British army liberated the camp in April [15], 1945. First, he was kept alive in a British field hospital, then transferred to Malmö, Sweden for treatment. He spent a year there, while his mother was working in a factory. His mother could have gone to Switzerland, but chose to go home to Slovakia, since she did not know what had happened to her husband.

They found his grandparents and got the bakery back, where his mother continued working. In 1948, the state appropriated the bakery. His uncle left for Israel, and he and his mother were supposed to follow him, but he became sick.

He continued his schooling, and when he went to the engineering university in Bratislava, his mother moved there with him.

He became an electrical engineer and worked on the first computer in Slovakia.

He never wanted to leave for Israel. He married. His wife was not Jewish. He thinks that life is better now in Slovakia than in Israel.

He told about his experiences to his children because he finds it important that the younger generation learn about Fascism, since there is a Fascist part in Slovakia now. Antisemitism, under the surface, persists in Slovakia. It can be only felt.