

SAPHIRA HAAS

INTERVIEW

November 27th, 2000

(We had done a preliminary interview - Victoria got her to repeat what she could use on film in editing with action, etc.)

V - Mrs. Haas, when did your family move to Bordeaux?

S - When? I think in '31 or '32. They got married, so they moved. Maybe '30, I think.

V - You were living in Bordeaux?

S - We lived in Bordeaux, yes.

V - Then in 1939, was that when you started to be aware of danger?

S - Yes, when France was divided to occupied place and the other one, the free country.

V - So what happened in 1940, I believe there was an incident where your father, where the Jewish men were called into the town square?

S - NO, we had a friend, my uncle had a friend, his name was Msr. La Porteree and he helped us to cross the border from the occupied territory to the free territory so we in the free territory.

V - So what happened when the Germans took you to the farm to the cabins?

S - I think it was all ready in '42, I think, '42 or '43. Then they took us to a village all the Jews that were in the area and so when they found out that we were Turkish, because we had Turkish citizenship. They sent us to another; they didn't take us to the camps or something else. They took us to a village in the middle of France. It was La Selle du Noys in the Croise department.

V - SO already having a Turkish....

S - We had already, you know we were Turkish, so they didn't took us to the camp or something like that...

V - So in 1944, you got word at the Farm....

S- Yes, we had friend, my father had a friend in Paris, so he told him hat the Turkish government move the Jewish to Turkey, they have a train, so if we want to go, we can go to Paris and leave with the train. If not, the Turkish will not be responsible for us anymore.

V - And what year was this again?

S - In 1944.

V - So you were issued a new passport in Paris?

S- So we went to Paris and then I think my father went to the consulate. He took the passport. This is the passport that we have. So after 2 or 3 days in Paris we went to the station.

V - I'm sorry can you hand me the Turkish passport? I want you to hold up the passport and say this is my mother, and give your mother's name, what her maiden name was as well. And just say we received this Turkish passport and that this passport saved our life.

S - SO when my father went to the consulate he got a passport. Like this (Shows passport). The name was Yusef Kapsuto, my mother, Refka Kapsuto and mine was Zaphira Kapsuto. We have picture form the passport and in this we went up to the train. The train was only a wagon....

V - Backing up a little bit, did having this Turkish passport, do you feel it saved you life?

S - I think, it was the only the paper that we had that showed we were Turkish citizens.

V - Does your mother feel that? Ask your mother, does she feel having that passport saved all your lives?

S - (She asks her mother who says she doesn't understand in French)

V - So, then you got on a train and the consulate put you on a train with a group?

S - We had the wagon, it was full. Only one wagon, closed, with soldiers, German soldiers on the doors, and it was really a lot of the people were old.

Most of the people were old, some little children also. This wagon was connected to the military trains who went from France to the east.

V - So, then you arrived in Sofia?

S - We went all over Europe like this. The Journey took a week.

V - And where did you enter Turkey?

S - When we got to Sofia, Bulgaria, the night before was a big bombing to the city. They city was destroyed. The railway was destroyed, so the wagon could not pass. We had to go to the other side of the city; they had a little station. So we had to take our things and we marched for a few hours to the other side of the city and to the station. At the station, we stayed there for few hours also. In the night we had an alarm, cause it was war. We heard airplanes pass, and we had an alarm. So they took us out of the station with the train, but we came back. But in the morning, we took the train, Bulgarian train to the Turkish border and then they changed the train to a Turkish train to Istanbul.

V - Do you know of any other Turkish families that were saved?

S- We had with us only a young woman. Her name was Lara Chicarel. But she passed away already. She was with us even at the farm.

V - She came from Bordeaux as well?

S - No she was from another city, I don't remember.

V -You met her at the farm?

S - We met her at the farm, she came with us.

V - Did she have a valid Turkish passport with her?

S - I don't know if she had some passport like this, I don't know.

V - Did your mother and father ever talk about this once you were back in Turkey?

Do you remember them saying like "thank god, we had this Turkish passport to get us out of France."

S - I don't know but thank god we are alive. I don't know if it was the passport or...

V - I know that you were a young girl, did you ever hear any of the names of the diplomats, the Turkish diplomats at the Turkish consulate?

S - I am sorry no.

V - But you have the passport, what it took.

S - Yes, yes.

V - Thank you very much.

EDMOND SIDI

INTERVIEW

November 27, 2000

M - Give me a sense of your background.

E - I am born in Vienna, I arrived in Turkey in '34. In 1940 I decided to say a good Zionist. In '42, '43 my Bar Mitzvah I accept to learn Hebrew in (Speaks Hebrew).

M- In the pioneering movement?

E - Yes, sure. Everything was illegal. I study Hebrew with a group and the destination was Palestine, Israel. June '48, I decide to arrive to Israel with a group. I receive from Izmir from the (Hebrew Word) passports, money and everything, we arrive and I don't say nothing to my family. I leave to Istanbul with a group. From Istanbul, this is the story, with the group from Istanbul, Edirne, Cannakale, and Izmir. They were all from the (Hebrew Words) near (Hebrew Words) and the name from the boat was " Rami" Panama. We arrived to the ship 400 persons 4 nights, 5 days and very very strongwaves. I was the fist aid in the ship. I like sea, five years I know to swim. It was nothing for

me, I helped the people and we arrived to Haifa. From Haifa the same day to (Hebrew word) and separate the group. Many young children arrived to Kibbutz (Hebrew Words) where good Jews arrived to (Hebrew words) I arrived to (Hebrew words) (these are locations) direct to the army. After 15 days to (Hebrew word) camp etc...I arrive to (Hebrew word) to the (Hebrew Word) religious battalion (more Hebrew words).

M - The religious battalion.

E - Yes. This Battalion was in (Hebrew words) . Eighty-eight religions soldiers, officials everybody was dead in (More Hebrew words). I and many soldiers we are here and I continue the army. I study first aid and also in the school, also, military school, first aid military school, I was also chief. I participated in the war. After I changed my profession I received the administration branch as adjutant. I continued in (Hebrew Word), 7th division, after 7th division I changed many places. In May 72 I receive my retirement from the army. In 73 I fight with Sharon, in the same division with Sharon together. I am married, my wife is from Slovakia, and I have three children, five grandchildren. One just went to the army and the small one is 5 months.

M- Let's start back a little bit. How did your family get to Vienna?

E - My family, father, mother, and four brothers and sisters in 1920 immediately after the first World War and the young Turk with Mustafa Kemal, Attaturk, was the revolution. This time one from the family go to Egypt, my father's sister and my father to Vienna. In Vienna stay to 34 , 35. I am born in '30. My mother and my father was ??????and my mother was a financier in Badenbadenstein. And old spa hotels received from Turkey the Jews from the Levant and she translated give the hotels. My brother, who is dead was a football player and hockey in ???????

Was a big?????? in Europe and today if you go to Tel Aviv to (Hebrew Word) If you ask ??????????you can see Abraham Sidi was my brother.

M - Do you remember why your family went back to Turkey from Vienna?

E - Sure, exactly after in '34 if you know the story, ??????was a killer. And the anti-Semitism, the Nazism was too. My family decided to return to Turkey. That's all. In this time my family has Italian nationality, I am born with Italian nationality. In 1939, the Turk government don't accept the Italian nationality from my family, and we receive forces the Turkish nationality or go from Turkey. And we received the Turkish nationality. I am also, I was a small boy,

I received the Turkish nationality. Today, I fight to receive back all my Austrian Nationality or my Italian nationality. I don't know if.....

M- Tell me a little bit, you had an Aunt who ended up reunited and coming back to Turkey.

E - My family was very active family, my father was a commercial (man) in the Fruits Bourse (Exchange) was the director and so we stay in Turkey, we lived wonderful, I go to Samsun, to my family, my grand family every six months, I like this place, I like the sea, I have wonderful friends in Samsun. Fifty years after I go to visit this place, I receive a shock, today you don't see oneonly fundamentalists, Turks, Muslims....you see in this place very religious persons.....perhaps Five percent ofwas wonderful city. I have nothing today but good remembrance for my family for my young time when I fought to arrive to Israel.

M- Tell us the story a little bit about your aunt who was saved by reclaiming her Turkish citizenship in Paris.

E - This woman I know from my mother take her by, two year old, she leave Samsun. My uncle was in Baku in this time and she goes to Paris. I know also from my uncle and my mother, very good relations, give money, write and communicate with the son. The Sorbonne is not cheap. More I don't know nothing. I have picture, not from the army, not from the war. I have mother's picture. I visit the mother after when the child is dead, she don't stay more in Turkey and give the divorce with the uncle.

M - What happened to her in France.

E - The woman?

M- Yes, How did she come back to Turkey?

E - She came back, I know exactly the date also, in 1940-41. This is the date she came back to Istanbul. After one year when the son is dead, killed, is dead, she leave Turkey and give the divorce to my uncle and she come to Israel. To ??????????. In this place has a brother. I visit this aunt with my sister, together in (Hebrew Word). This was the first I see this woman. More I don't see.

M- Tell me about your father's activities in the 1940's to rescue Jews in Turkey?

V - The uncle...

E - First I can say from my father. I tell you why, because my family know a very good "Deutsche" and French, Italian, many languages. I speak also. We receive many people via Romania, and via Bulgaria arrived to Turkey to Istanbul. In Istanbul was the Jewish organization, Jewish agency, I can say this, perhaps tomorrow you receive more information. We received this man, a Jew who arrived from the Holocaust, to the families. My family received also two, three persons, I remember this, young boy. Our organization arranged to arrive to Israel from Beirut, Syria, and north Israel, north Palestine. Now, I know you have a meeting and this man can give you more information, was our chief, in Turkey, in Izmir. My uncle, my father's brother Emmanuel was young from my father.

E - Emmanuel Sidi was the young brother of my father. He was also a commercial man. He visits Budapest, Vienna, Czechoslovakia with my father together. They came back to Izmir and stay in Izmir during the war. After the first war. The time if you remember the story when Attaturk burned Izmir, the Greek soldiers go to the Izmir Gulf, ??? And my uncle had (????????Unintelligible) many families and arranged the communication with the government, the young Turkish government and I can say this ten points to Attaturk, and Attaturk, don't touch one Jew family. It is not important that they were minority or Turkish nationality. Jewish was exactly as in Egypt, and Moshe Rabino say (unintelligible) and every Jew stay in Izmir. I know this from my father and my Uncle's stories because in 34 when arrived back to Turkey, Izmir, from Vienna. These two brothers were together in the same home. This is a family home, 10 12 rooms, very big home, was my best story and I can forget this today this home don't exist. We have the family six home, one after one together, the garden was the sea. So I from 4-5 years know more the sea than the tramway. I like the sea today also. This is exactly what I know from Emanuel family. Emanuel family also they receive from the holocaust the Jew when arrive via Romania, via Poland, from Poland to Turkey and the Jewish Agency, I know the name from the persons, one is dead, Akiva Levinsky.

Was one from the chief from ?????????? in Istanbul, by many years. Tomorrow you will receive much more information because then I was very very young and when the ??????????????from Austria, from Vienna. Father was the chief of the ?????????? in Istanbul and in Vienna also. I can give you the name, Hans Ziffer, we were very good friends, also was our boss in the organization in Turkey. This is now, all the family are here, Emanuel Sidi's family except one daughter, she is in Istanbul. Other, everybody is her.

M- You were Part of the Zionist movement in Turkey.

E - Which movement?

M- You were part of the Zionist youth movement in Turkey.

E - No, no..

M - (Speaks Hebrew)

E - Sure, sure...I say this I arrive here with the Jewish organization, I was member in the Jewish organization (Hebrew Word). (speaks Hebrew)

M- What characterize, what were the activities of the youth Zionist movement?

E - To learn to fight. To learn to live in-group. To learn what is this socialist. To learn the religion also. Because we also had to learn religion (speaks Hebrew).

Was together. Same excursions together, to fight....

M- You were with the (speaks Hebrew).

E - I was a little normal. I am also today normal and I am religion and I go to the synagogue every Saturday. I learn 38 years one page (Hebrew Word) everyday. Yes I like this. I am normal, yes.

M- Any thing else you want to tell us.

E - (speaks in Hebrew) A young girls story, before the war, in the war, after the war. That's all.

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