

RG-90.047.0065

Summary

Peter Solyom, born 1937 in Budapest, Sweden, discusses his father Istvan/Stefan Steiner, changing their last name to Solyom in 1937 since it sounded less Jewish; having an eleven months younger brother, Janos; his father being a lawyer; his paternal grandparents Bernard Steiner and Cecilia, born Schwartz; his mother born 1914 in Budapest; his mother running a men's clothing store; his grandparents being religious; most of his parents' friends being Jewish, but not religious; having his Bar Mitzvah; 1941 his father being sent to labor camps in Hungary; in 1942, his father being sent to do forced labor supporting the Hungarian troops sent to fight with the USSR; in January 1943, his father freezing to death by the river Don in the USSR, while working along the Soviet troops; in 1944, remembering having to wear a yellow star of David; having to let go of the non-Jewish nanny and maid, since gentiles couldn't work for Jews; in June 1944, having to leave their big apartment and move to a "Jewish house", to an apartment with four rooms; his mother being fired from her job; his maternal grandmother living with them; the train station close by being bombed in fall 1944; his mother being deported, but escaping and returning home; their house doctor helping them find a place in a house protected by the Red Cross; receiving a warning that the inhabitants in the Red Cross house would also be deported; receiving Swedish Protection Passports (Schutzpass) and moving to a house under Swedish protection; being 24 people in one apartment from November 1944 to January 1945; his mother trading a diamond ring for a loaf of bread; meeting Raoul Wallenberg and getting a can of string beans from him; getting a warning the people in this house would also be deported; the next day, Soviet troops liberating the city; the soldiers bringing food, asking for watches; the women being afraid of the Soviet soldiers, but the soldiers behaving well; relatives in the countryside having been deported to camps in July 1944; graduating high school in 1956 and starting engineering studies; in 1956, leaving Hungary and moving to Sweden with his brother and mother; immediately joining the synagogue in Stockholm; having served as the treasurer for the congregation; his brother Janos Solyom becoming a famous pianist and composer; Janos being a protege of the Bonnier publishing family in Stockholm; having nightmares about the air raids; feeling luck had followed him through life.