

Transcription details:

Date: 06-Nov-2019
Input sound file: Matti's Interview with Father Part II - WWII 1942-45.mp3

Transcription results:

S1: 00:00 It's on. I think I already explained this to see if they had a thousand people in the-- where they assembled in the assembly place, they didn't bother, but if they did not have them, so they sent out the Czech police to round the people up. As a matter of fact, once a very funniest thing happened to me when I was living as a Jew after these months, I don't really know how many months I lived as a Jew, after this hydration affair, I lived there with my wife. I was married.

S2: 00:46 Which one?

S1: 00:47 The first wife [inaudible]. And one day the police came in the evening and I went out to open the door. There were two Czech policemen and they asked for-- her name was Helena actually, her official name was Helena Rocktober. So they asked for her.

S2: 01:10 It was not [Novercover?]?

S1: 01:13 Novacover?]. She lived on the-- on the event, she was underground but her real name, her official name was Helena [Rocktober?]. She came from Slovakia. So they came and said that they've been sent to bring her to the assembly place because she's in transport and, she didn't show up. So I told them she left-- she's a Slovak. I said she left for Slovakia many months ago. Actually, she was in the next room. I mean, I was in the foyer and she was in the room.

S2: 01:51 And you could have easily checked that.

S1: 01:52 Yes. If they had gone in. And actually they said, "Can we check the room?" I said, "Listen, I have a non-Jewish girl there and you know this is strictly outlawed and this could cause me a lot of trouble. So I ask you not to go in there." So they said, "Well listen. That's okay with us. This is not our job to look who sleeps with whom or who screws whom. This is not our job. Our job was to find Helena [Rocktober?]. She's in there. She's in there. We don't care about the other things." And they went away.

S2: 02:30 Did they know what she looked like?

S1: 02:32 No.

S2: 02:33 They would've just had to check the papers.

S1: 02:35 Yes.

S2: 02:36 So that was again-- I mean it was just like it was a stroke of luck really. And the fact that you thought to say, were you scared when you said it?

S1: 02:42 No. Not at all. Not at all.

S2: 02:44 Why? Did you know they wouldn't go in if you said that?

S1: 02:45 Right. I know that they don't like to look under the blankets. This is not what these Czech police would like to do. Besides, I think that I didn't run any risk, if that found

her, they would've taken her, not me. In any case, but I wanted of course to protect her. So this occurred to me would be a good idea.

- S2: 03:09 Did you live with her throughout the war?
- S1: 03:12 Oh yes. Throughout. Yes. Definitely. Definitely. Throughout the war.
- S2: 03:16 What happened to her?
- S1: 03:17 Nothing. She still lives in [Prague?] I think. I've seen her name in the telephone book in Prague. I don't know if it's the same woman, but I suppose so.
- S2: 03:27 Did you try to contact her when you were in [Prague?]?
- S1: 03:29 Well, I called. There was no reply. I did call when I was in Prague, two years ago
- S2: 03:35 Did you hear about it from her after the war [inaudible]?
- S1: 03:38 Oh, yes. Yes. She used to send me a-- when she went out of Czechoslovakia to Vietnam or somewhere on the vacation, she used to send me a postcard, but not lately because she has no idea where I am.
- S2: 03:54 Your next wife who you worked with at the school, correct?
- S1: 03:58 Yes.
- S2: 03:59 When did she [she?] find out that you were actually Jew?
- S1: 04:02 Well, I started an affair with her and I told her. She was very reliable. I could trust her. And I only married her after the war, of course, because I had first to get a divorce. After the war, everything has to be done in the legal way.
- S2: 04:22 Was it actually-- she was the one who had said that you were a Jew in the first place in the [crosstalk].
- S1: 04:26 Well, she had just made once a remark. It's not that she pursued it. But once we got more friendly and more intimate-- actually, I started out by wanting to take lessons from her in English, private lessons. It didn't last very long. I mean, the lessons [laughter]. The marriage didn't last very long either but still, it lasted eight years, plus when we were in Prague still.
- S2: 04:55 Was she ever involved in helping you forge papers or in any way in the underground?
- S1: 04:59 No.
- S2: 04:59 Did she know you were doing that?
- S1: 05:00 Yes. She did know. Yes, she did. I didn't tell her details because the less people know, the better. It's always better that way. Then she also was in contact with another guy, a lawyer, who was also very active in the underground and I didn't cooperate with him also. He was in intelligence. They gathered all kinds of report. So whatever I saw, I reported to him, he sent it on. He had his way of sending it on to the government in exile in London.
- S2: 05:36 What kind of things that you report about?
- S1: 05:38 Well, what I saw on my trips. I used to travel a lot, so they were interested to hear what was going on. They wanted to know what the mood of the population was in all kinds of places, and I had this in eastern Bohemia. This was my area so I visited quite A few small cities. So I gave him a report of what I thought would interest him.

- S2: 06:07 What kind of information were they interested in?
- S1: 06:09 But I just told you. They wanted to see, for instance, if there were planes on certain airfields or what the mood of the population was, if people--
- S2: 06:23 Do you meet him actually or did you go--?
- S1: 06:24 Yes, of course, I met him. I definitely met him.
- S2: 06:28 But I thought you were reluctant to meet with people.
- S1: 06:30 Yeah, he was not in my group. He was her friend. I did meet him, not very often but I did meet him. As a matter of fact, he was in contact with another Jewish fellow by the name of Fisher, who actually lived under his own name. He was married to a Czech woman and they arranged simply-- he didn't register as a Jew and this way, he state as a non-Jew. I needed to rent a room for my second wife for [Evalodska?] and he had an empty apartment. It was mostly empty. One room was occupied by a German officer and he had another room which I wanted to have. So this-- Dr. Valhalla What's the name of this Czech lawyer. When [the end saved himself?], the Gestapo came to arrest him, he jumped through a window and he fled [laughter]. So he--
- S2: 07:32 He actually ran out-- jumped out the window and [crosstalk]--?
- S1: 07:33 Yeah, he jumped after when-- it was a villa so he jumped--
- S2: 07:36 Where did he hide?
- S1: 07:37 Then, the Czech underground found him somewhere to hide. He had actually some-- woman hit him.
- S2: 07:45 How about the woman he was living with? But she arrested?
- S1: 07:49 What woman?
- S2: 07:49 Wasn't he with a woman?
- S1: 07:51 He was married?
- S2: 07:51 Yeah, but didn't they arrest his wife for now [inaudible]. Did you?
- S1: 07:54 No, he was not a jew. Dr.Valhala was not a Jew.What are the Gestapo come from because he was in the underground.
- S2: 08:03 Did he know that?
- S1: 08:04 Evidently, somebody squealed. The Gestapo had undercover agents in almost every Czech underground group.
- S2: 08:15 How did they manage that?
- S1: 08:16 Well, I don't know. I've never worked for the Gestapo. I suppose they [inaudible] them. You see, they arrested them. They threatened them. They said, "Where we let you off," or somebody did something. They said, "Okay." I suppose that's what it is. I don't really know too much about that. So this Dr. [Vahala?] knew this Pawel [foreign] and he had the room. So this [foreign] said that he wants to see me before he lets me [have?] this room for my girlfriend. So we had the meeting there in the room. He came in. I was there already. He looked at me, he said, "It's all right." But [evidently they?] came to me and said to me, "I'm also a Jew." That was very, actually."
- S2: 09:08 He didn't know you were--

- S1: 09:10 Yes. He knew I was undercover. At that time, there were no longer any Jews, really.
- S2: 09:14 How did he know you were a Jew?
- S1: 09:16 He looked at me. A Jew knows another Jew. It's very easy to-- I mean, there is--
- S2: 09:21 How did he manage to survive in Prague, just by not registering as a Jew?
- S1: 09:25 Yeah. He lived normally with his wife. He always had lived. He lived before the war with his in-laws. The big apartment, he stayed there. When it came for Jews to register, he didn't register. The people in the house never thought he was Jewish even before.
- S2: 09:42 Isn't [foreign] a Jewish name?
- S1: 09:44 [foreign] is a Jewish name, but that doesn't really-- that is not really decisive always because some people had Jewish names but already their great-grandparents were converted. And he lived in a house where his in-laws were very well-known, and these in-laws had lived there - I don't know - generations in this house. They had the whole floor, one floor in-- so the others assumed that was okay.
- S2: 10:14 So now your girlfriend at the time shared a space with a German officer? He was next door?
- S1: 10:20 Not next door. You see, it was a very big apartment between her room and the room of this German officer who we never saw. We never saw him but it was a good idea because he had his name on the door. There were maybe three, four empty rooms in between. He was on one corner and my girlfriend was on the other corner.
- S2: 10:48 You never ever met him?
- S1: 10:49 Never met him. I don't know what he did. We never met him. He had a girlfriend too that came from time to time but we never met him. I don't know what he was doing. And also when the war was over, he had disappeared. He was no longer there.
- S2: 11:09 There are a lot of people of your generation who've gone through extensive psychotherapy because of what is known as a guilt syndrome for surviving. Have you ever experienced anything like that?
- S1: 11:21 No. I don't have any guilt in them for surviving. I did my best to survive. I see no reason why I should feel guilty about it. Why do you think all those other people feel guilty? Because they asked themselves why-- they when the same circumstances like the others in camps, and this is, "Why is it that I survived and the others didn't?" It also could be-- this is conjecture on my part-- It could be that they did some things in the camp which they later thought they shouldn't have done even though it saved their life there may have been some cases--
- S2: 12:02 Well, you did some things that obviously saved your life.
- S1: 12:05 Yes, but I didn't do anything at the expense of somebody else, you see. It was not that-- because this, they say, okay, I survived at the expense of others. But I didn't do that. I didn't survive at the expense of anybody. Nobody got into trouble because I--
- S2: 12:24 Are you aware at the time that you were forging these papers and getting people to work in Germany that you were saving people's lives?
- S1: 12:31 Definitely. Definitely.
- S2: 12:33 How did that make you feel? Did you feel like you were doing a mitzvah?

- S1: 12:37 No. I think police thought I was doing the right thing. I wasn't doing any mitzvah anyway. I thought I was doing the right thing. This was one way of giving them a chance to survive, and in relative human dignity. I already explained that to you. That is how I looked at it.
- S2: 12:58 How many people do you think you saved?
- S1: 13:01 Well, actually not that many because they won't let me save them. There was certainly--
- S2: 13:09 Who wouldn't let you save them?
- S1: 13:10 The people I wanted to get after to be saved, but they refused [laughter]. I couldn't convince--
- S2: 13:17 Was that frustrating for you?
- S1: 13:19 Well, yes, it was maddening, not frustrating. In a way, I could understand they were cowards. They were so downtrodden. They were so coward that they couldn't get up the spirits high enough to say, "Okay, we risk it." But the people that got papers through me, I think they were around 8 to 10, not more than that. Actually, all of them actually survived. All of them survived.
- S2: 13:51 You think if there was more organization in the Czech resistance that you could have saved a lot more people?
- S1: 13:57 I think if there had been more organization In a Jewish resistance, if they had systematically worked for Jewish resistance, actually [inaudible] did do that. They had a better organization because they actually decided on their own that that's what they're going to do. They were very elitist, very socialist group. They did that. And they actually were quite-- I don't know how many people they saved, but I think they saved more people. Actually, they helped me too with these people that I tried to saved--
- S2: 14:38 In what way?
- S1: 14:39 Well, they got me the connections to the Czech underground. They got me the connection to it.
- S2: 14:46 Would you say that the 1944, 1945, the last years of the war were really more or less uneventful for you?
- S1: 14:54 Uneventful?
- S2: 14:55 Yeah.
- S1: 14:55 It was never uneventful because you never know whether they'll find you out or not. I remember--
- S2: 15:01 Was that something that was always on your mind?
- S1: 15:03 Yes, yes. Not always, because you couldn't live like that. But I know when I was traveling, which I was very often because I had to inspect these different places where German was taught. So each time I came home, I didn't know what was awaiting me at home because I couldn't call. There was no telephone. I couldn't call. There was a telephone downstairs. The [super?] had the phone, I did call him. But I could only ask him was there any message or something. So he said no. Usually, there wasn't a message.

- S2: 15:45 How would you have been found out if that was going to happen-- I mean, how would it have happened?
- S1: 15:51 It can be by accident. It can be by accident, you see. Something happens in the area, and they start checking everybody and somebody's suspicious, and people say something. It could have happened.
- S2: 16:05 Did you--
- S1: 16:05 And you don't know, some others could have been caught and spilled the beans. You'd never know that.
- S2: 16:12 And when you were on the road, you feel the safes?
- S1: 16:15 On the road, I felt pretty safe except in the trams because the trams, they were constantly-- they were searching the passengers. Some things happened. For instance, one day there was a very thorough search because a French general had escaped, and--
- S2: 16:35 It was a prisoner of war?
- S1: 16:36 Yeah. And he had escaped. It was General [Giroud?], if I'm not mistaken. He had escaped and he was making his way eastward. So they were looking for that, for people. And that was of course, always risky. But you had a job to do, so you forgot about-- but when you came home, you didn't know what happened at home. Besides, I had this woman at home who was very-- sometimes, she had a temper. She got into a fight with chairmen for no reason. But once, in the tram, in Prague, some German soldier just inadvertently hit with his suitcase. So she started hollering at him and said, "What? Where do you think you are? You think you're in Berlin? You have to be careful." So.
- S2: 17:39 Were you with her?
- S1: 17:40 Yeah, I was with her at that time.
- S2: 17:42 What was your point of view about that?
- S1: 17:43 Well, I think it was silly to do so, but the man was very apologetic, actually. So maybe it was the right thing to do. But I never know-- she never worked, you see. For instance, it could have happened that she would have been picked up during the day for not working, and they would have started probing why she didn't work, where she lives, with whom she lives. You don't know--
- S2: 18:06 Would she have been forced to work at that time?
- S1: 18:09 Normally, yes. Normally, yes.
- S2: 18:11 How did she get by not working?
- S1: 18:14 What you mean?
- S2: 18:14 Nobody ever stopped her and asked her why?
- S1: 18:17 No, it didn't happen. She was lucky. She lives with me. I kept her, But you see, she had some friends, so she went to some people here and there. Also, actually she had the Slovak friend who came from Slovakia who was also-- he was married to a non-Jewish woman. he lived as a non-Jew, as a Slovak non-Jew. That was easier, actually.
- S2: 18:45 Were you ever worried that she would give you away in any way?

- S1: 18:48 Well, once we had a big quarrel. It was in the middle of the night. And she says, "I don't care what happens to me. I'm going to denounce you." It was maybe one o'clock.
- S2: 18:59 It was a lovers' quarrel?
- S1: 19:01 Oh, yeah. But she went out, you see?
- S2: 19:03 In the middle of the night?
- S1: 19:04 She went out in the middle of the night--
- S2: 19:05 Was there a curfew?
- S1: 19:06 No. She went out in the middle of the night, and she said she's going to the police. I really didn't feel so bad about it. Not that I thought she would actually go to the police and denounce me. But you see, at one o'clock, a woman that roams the street is very conspicuous, and they may have picked her up for no other reason than that she was running around and--
- S2: 19:30 What did you do?
- S1: 19:31 Nothing. I stayed at home and was very nervous.
- S2: 19:35 Did she come back?
- S1: 19:36 Yes, she did come back.
- S2: 19:37 That night--
- S1: 19:37 I caught her bluff. No, an hour later, she was back. But this hour wasn't very pleasant for me, that you can be sure.
- S2: 19:45 When she came back, was she apologetic?
- S1: 19:48 She wouldn't apologize [laughter] for [anybody?]. She wasn't apologetic, but she was back, so quite evidently she had not denounced me. I don't think she really would have done that. I don't think so. But the threat itself, and as I said the fact that you ran out at such a late hour in the night was a danger in itself. So that was very tense, a very tense time. And I decided not to run after because that what you probably expected, but that would have been even worse.
- S2: 20:24 Do you remember what the fight was about?
- S1: 20:26 No. Well, I probably-- she accused me of having other women. I suppose so because she was very jealous.
- S2: 20:34 Was it probably true?
- S1: 20:35 Yes. It was 100% true.
- S2: 20:38 What other woman in the-- wasn't it dangerous for you to be seeing other women, really?
- S1: 20:42 Yes, it was. But it was fun.
- S2: 20:45 Were they non-Jewish women for the most part?
- S1: 20:47 Not for the most part. All of them.
- S2: 20:50 Now, did any of those other women, with the exception of your next wife, know that you were a Jew?

- S1: 20:56 No. No.
- S2: 20:58 Were you ever afraid they would find out?
- S1: 21:00 Actually not. Actually not because a woman that gets into a sexual relationship with you, she doesn't bother who you are actually. Well, I mean she doesn't bother whether you are Jewish or not Jewish. One was a bit suspicious once, I picked her up in a train. So I told her I was a Bulgarian. This she accepted, this seemed to her very plausible.
- S2: 21:23 Why do you-- why did you decide to tell her you were a Bulgarian? You don't even speak Bulgarian.
- S1: 21:26 No. I don't speak Bulgarian, but she thought that-- she said that I looked somehow not like a regular Czech, so I says, "Yes. My parents are actually Bulgarian." Although I told her I never lived in Bulgaria, they had come to Bohemia. And she accepted it. Yeah. She was out for fun, that's all.
- S2: 21:56 Did you ever say you were other things other than Bulgarian? Did you come up with different identities?
- S1: 22:02 No. I had to come up with the identity I had but actually I did have another Czech identity. I did a reserve identity in a totally different name.
- S2: 22:16 Why did you have that?
- S1: 22:17 Well, I thought maybe if I have to run, you see, if I needed to run so I needed a different-- so if my cover would have been blown I thought I needed to run I would need a different card of--
- S2: 22:31 What was the name on that identity card?
- S1: 22:33 I don't remember really. But the funny thing is I hid it in notepaper. I had a little-- it was very pre-war, linen paper. A very beautiful set of notepaper, and there I hid it. But I forgot about it and I gave this notepaper to somebody as a birthday present. And this girl was the daughter of one of the managers of the [foreign] store in a place called Nymburk who was very kind to me and always very helpful.
- S2: 23:17 In what way?
- S1: 23:18 Well, first of all, he always provided me with a lot of food to take home and I could get any shoes from him and he was always-- there was always a very good meal in his home. And he had one daughter was a very lovely girl, I had nothing with her. So when she had a birthday I thought this would be a good idea, a good present. So the next time I came here she said, "Well, you left something in this gift you gave me." And she gave it back to me. There was my picture
- S2: 24:00 she must have known exactly what that was.
- S1: 24:02 She must have known that it's a forged identity card because my photo was in it and a different name than she knew me under.
- S2: 24:11 What was her name?
- S1: 24:12 I have no idea.
- S2: 24:13 Do you remember his name maybe, her father?
- S1: 24:15 No.

- S2: 24:16 What was the town it was in?
- S1: 24:17 Nymburk.
- S2: 24:18 Which is where?
- S1: 24:19 It's in Bohemia. It's in Bohemia.
- S2: 24:21 So that was really very lucky that she didn't do anything about that.
- S1: 24:26 Right. I knew this was a good, patriotic family.
- S2: 24:30 How could you have forgotten that?
- S1: 24:32 I forgot where I put it. You forget things. You see, you can get into trouble by being careless. You forgot things. Usually, I used to place all documents and all papers that I needed, I used to tape them under wardrobe because that's a very safe place. Usually, I tape them under the wardrobe because if somebody would come and look under the wardrobe, he doesn't see anything.
- S2: 25:03 Well, if he looked underneath then he wouldn't have seen it?
- S1: 25:05 No, because, you see, a wardrobe really has a piece jutting out in front. So in the back, if you tape it against the bottom, even if you look under it, you don't see anything. You would have to turn the thing over to see-- to check wardrobe. So the old wardrobes, they are big so that he wouldn't see anything.
- S2: 25:32 Where else did you hide documents? Do you remember?
- S1: 25:34 Now that was usually what I did since I made this mistake because I thought it was pretty safe. [inaudible] nobody would go into it.
- S2: 25:48 Do you remember first hearing that the war was going to be over, or that things really started to change for the better?
- S1: 26:00 Right. The thing was that after Stalingrad, of course, people started believing that the tide would turn. There were too many rumors that circulated. I personally did not, but people used to listen to the BBC from London. They would check--
- S2: 26:29 Wasn't that illegal?
- S1: 26:30 Yes. If they caught you, you were shot.
- S2: 26:34 Did you know anybody who was ever shot for listening to the BBC?
- S1: 26:37 Well, I saw it in the paper. I didn't know anybody personally. So we had--
- S2: 26:42 Did you have a radio?
- S1: 26:43 Yes, I did have a radio but my radio didn't have shortwaves because without shortwaves-- actually, they already put you in jail or shot you when they found your radio had shortwaves. You were not allowed to have shortwaves. But some people did have shortwave radio. And, actually, these people in Nymburk, they asked me for a shortwave radio and I brought it to them, actually.
- S2: 27:09 You did?
- S1: 27:10 Yes, I brought it to them and it was-- again, I had a very lucky escape.
- S2: 27:15 Was this after she had found your identity card, or before?
- S1: 27:18 I think that was before.

- S2: 27:20 Why would you bring them a shortwave radio?
- S1: 27:22 Because they asked me for one and they were friends.
- S2: 27:24 How did they know you'd be able to get one?
- S1: 27:26 Maybe you're right. Maybe it was after they found this identity card.
- S2: 27:32 So you figured that you owed them one?
- S1: 27:33 Pardon.
- S2: 27:35 You figured you really owed them a favor?
- S1: 27:37 Well, I saw no reason not to do it for them.
- S2: 27:41 Isn't it dangerous to travel with a shortwave radio?
- S1: 27:44 Yes, it is dangerous but not that-- it is dangerous. Actually, what happened is, I had it on the train. I was alone in a compartment. Suddenly the Gestapo came in and said, "You have to vacate this compartment. We are setting up our office here." So I said, "You have to vacate this compartment. We are setting up our office here." So I said, "Can I leave the radio?" I had the radio on the rack. I says, "Can I leave it there?" He says, "Yes, that doesn't bother us. You must be out. You can stand there." So I stood in front. And after that, one of these guys from the Gestapo said could I sell him the radio. He wanted to buy the radio. It was a very bad situation.
- S2: 28:31 Could you actually see that the radio was shortwave from the outside or was it in a--
- S1: 28:33 You cannot see that. You cannot see that.
- S2: 28:35 It was in the case?
- S1: 28:36 You cannot see that. It's a normal radio case because, you see, what you had to do it, you had to take the condenser, or whatever there was for shortwaves out. But on the outside, this [inaudible] was for shortwaves remained. You didn't have to change that. Simply you can use it. So I told him I will be very happy to get him one radio but this radio I can't give it to him because this belongs to somebody and I just brought it to repair in Prague, so I have to give it back to him. But I says, "If you give me your address, I will get you another radio." I never got in touch with him, of course.
- S2: 29:16 He gave you his address?
- S1: 29:17 Yes, he did, he did, he did.
- S2: 29:19 Did he ever ask to see your identification?
- S1: 29:20 No.
- S2: 29:22 Now he could of gotten mad and said, "Hey, I want the radio."
- S1: 29:26 Yes, he could have. You see, they didn't do that. I mean, they were the worst people ever, but that is a thing he didn't do because if he they wouldn't do that, you see. They would get--
- S2: 29:41 Because it wasn't civilized.
- S1: 29:42 What?
- S2: 29:43 Because it wasn't the civilized way to be?
- S1: 29:44 No, it was not in the regulations, you see, this is not what they did. They wouldn't loot, they would consider that looting. But for instance, they had the things that were

looted actually taken from other people. They had warehouses where the Gestapo could get it for a song. So he knew if he wanted a radio, that's where he ought to really go. The fact is that they didn't have any good radios anymore at that time, I suppose. But he would not take somebody away from somebody who was not arrested or not a suspect. I was a traveler, like everybody else he wouldn't do that.

- S2: 30:27 It's conceivable that he could have said to you, "Listen, I want the radio. I want to hear it work. Turn it on."
- S1: 30:33 No, in a train, how can I turn the radio on in a train? There's no electricity.
- S2: 30:37 Because there's no reception.
- S1: 30:39 No, that would never [inaudible].
- S2: 30:40 If he would have found out that was a shortwave radio would that have been it?
- S1: 30:43 That would have been it. But there was really, how can he find out? He would have to try it you see. And he really couldn't take this radio away from me. Because they didn't do such things. You see. That they didn't do that he would say, "Okay, I want this radio, I'm going to tell the guy, I'm going to arrest him and take it away." They wouldn't do that. That was not they would do. They had the targets. They knew what were the targets were. But the traveler was not a target. He would order out of the compartment because they had something to speak or things to do or bring people in for interrogation. They didn't while I was there. So he wanted us out or he didn't want any Czechs sitting in the compartment. Maybe they didn't even think of any interrogation. They simply maybe wanted to play cards. They didn't want anybody else in this compartment. They were about three or four guys. So I had to stand outside, there were no seats. The trains were very full.
- S2: 31:45 When did he--?
- S1: 31:46 Actually, I usually, I always traveled second class. There was first, second and third. But on most trains that I went on inside the Bohemia, there was no first class. So I went, second class. That was the best class available and I had the season ticket, which was good on all trains. I usually went to sit in the compartment that was reserved for German officers. I usually wore black pants like SS pants, and a pair of boots which were not really regulation SS boots because I got them from Bakia. Bakia didn't make SS boots. So and I had this civilian jacket. As a matter of fact, usually I wore a tweed jacket. And I usually went into the officers compartment because that was for me the safest. The civilian [inaudible], the civilian police did not go into the compartments of the officers, because they were not allowed to check them actually.
- S2: 33:02 Were you allowed to sit there?
- S1: 33:03 Actually not--
- S2: 33:04 Well--
- S1: 33:05 --but--
- S2: 33:06 --who would have stopped you from sitting there?
- S1: 33:07 Other offices or-- but there was a control. The military police did go into these compartments, but they didn't have a lot of military police around. And it was very rare that the police came in. And once in all my experience, they were only once and they asked me I said, "I'm a civilian." And that's all they wanted to know. They were

officers who once an officer told me you are not supposed to ride in this compartment.

- S2: 33:43 Was he dressed in uniform?
- S1: 33:44 Yes. He was a uniformed officer. So I told him, "Look. I know that and if there is an officer, I will immediately vacate the seat. Now, if you have any objections, I will go out." I told him in perfect German. I speak German very well. I said, "If I distract you in any way, I will, of course, do that. But if I don't, I don't think there's any harm. I'm not doing you any harm. I'm very quiet and I don't do anything." So he started a conversation with me, actually, because he said, "No. No. It doesn't disturb me." He tried to find out what I was. I didn't tell him, of course. I was all the time--
- S2: 34:34 What do you mean, what you were?
- S1: 34:35 Because he didn't know was I German? Was I a Chez? Was I civilian? Was I on some special mission? Because he saw that my britches and my boots would indicate that I was not a civilian.
- S2: 34:54 You actually wore riding boots?
- S1: 34:56 Yes. Yes. No, they were not riding boots. They were walking boots.
- S2: 35:00 Were they high?
- S1: 35:01 High boots? Yes. No, like riding--
- S2: 35:04 Liks Gestapo boots?
- S1: 35:06 Yeah. They were not. If you really knew the Gestapo, the Gestapo really didn't wear boots. They were wearing civilian clothes.
- S2: 35:13 And you wore riding britches?
- S1: 35:15 Yes. I wore black riding britches which were not regulation SS britches but looked very much like it, you see. People don't pay attention to such details. So this officer was very curious.
- S2: 35:29 Did you do that very much on purpose? Were you trying to impersonate, possibly, a Gestapo officer?
- S1: 35:37 I did it on purpose. I didn't try to impersonate the Gestapo officer but I did try to give the impression that I was something special. That I belonged to some kind of service. They, themselves, didn't know. They had so many services, they didn't really know what they had.
- S2: 35:55 This German officer actually thought you were on some kind of a mission, he wasn't really clear?
- S1: 36:00 Yes. Yes. He wasn't clear and he tried to find out but I evaded answering him which, of course, increased his suspicion that I must be on some kind of a very special mission which I'm not allowed to tell him.
- S2: 36:16 That's very funny.
- S1: 36:18 Well, it was all right. It was all right.
- S2: 36:21 Did you come upon some sort of philosophy of survival?
- S1: 36:30 Well, it was a practical philosophy of survival because all things I did I thought of how I would be able to outwit the enemy. I give you another example, for instance, I

developed a technique of how to check out and apartment of friends we had connections with. To be sure, because you could never be sure whether his cover had been blown and then the Gestapo would be sitting in his apartment. So what I did is--

- S2: 37:07 Are you talking about friends in the underground?
- S1: 37:09 Yes. For instance, I used this myself, once, because I wanted to check out a guy to whom we used to sell Persian carpets to finance our activities.
- S2: 37:24 These are Persian carpets that were taken from the houses of Jews that--
- S1: 37:27 Jews that had already been sent-- which the organization. They were a Jewish organization that collected them for the Gestapo didn't have yet to pick them up pick [them?] up.
- S2: 37:40 And who kept track of which Jews were being transported for you?
- S1: 37:43 Well, we knew that these people in the [Hekhalots?] at that time still existed you see. And they used some of the people that lived there to help people to go to the assembly place, to help them along.
- S2: 38:01 That's the way you'd find out?
- S1: 38:03 Well, not only we found out. I just hold the keys or have the keys duplicated. So that you can get in afterwards.
- S2: 38:12 So you were going to sell Persian carpets on the black market?
- S1: 38:15 Yes. We did.
- S2: 38:17 To this guy?
- S1: 38:18 Well, this was one guy that we knew would buy them. This was the [Slovic?] actually whom [Hirarot?] knew because he was from the same village like her parents and--
- S2: 38:32 What village was that?
- S1: 38:34 I don't remember. I could find out because I have documents of where it is written because I have a marriage certificate. It must be written where she comes from. And so, but to be sure because I all ready heard rumors that something-- rumors go very quickly. Most of them are false. But I all ready heard rumors that something was not 100% there. So I went in there.
- S2: 39:07 So he wasn't a member of the underground?
- S1: 39:09 No. He was a black marketeer, very rick black marketeer. He dealt in everything he wanted. But that's why he bought this carpets. He knew they were stolen. He knew they were stolen. Although I don't think that you could-- if they say he-- Talmud says if you steal from a thief you're free--
- S2: 39:32 Absolved.
- S1: 39:33 --absolved, so.
- S2: 39:34 So what happened?
- S1: 39:34 So I got a-- I went to a agency and the people I knew, and they gave me-- they had some slips where they sent people to look at the rooms, not apartments you couldn't get, sublet. So I took this and filled in a name which I knew was in the neighboring house with a number. I took it. I went in. I rang the bell and I ran upwards. Actually--

- S2: 40:10 The next flight.
- S1: 40:11 -- the next flight up. [Gustapo?] opened the door. And when he started-- I heard the door opening. I started going down. Quite logically, he first looked down. He saw there was nobody at the door, So he looked down the staircase to see if somebody was walking. And I went down, walking down. And he asked me, did you see anybody running down? I said I didn't see anybody, but I heard somebody running down. So he said, well, he's gone. So I said, what are you doing here? He says, I'm looking for a room to rent and here I showed him that this agency had sent me. So I looked at it. It says-- but you are stupid. This is not this house. This is the next house. I said, yeah, I couldn't find it. This is exactly what happened to me. So I worked out such a gimmick-
- S2: 41:11 Was that the first time you had tried that?
- S1: 41:13 It was the only time I tried it, but I told other people to do the same thing. I have no proof that they did or that it worked, but this is the-- I did it only this time. I had no other occasion.
- S2: 41:26 [Did?] the only reason that you did that was that you heard a rumor that he had been caught?
- S1: 41:30 Right. Of course.
- S2: 41:31 If you hadn't heard that rumor you probably would've been caught.
- S1: 41:34 Well, I wouldn't if-- it depends who the man was if I had suspicion that he may be somehow in danger, I would have done it. But I didn't go to many people, to tell you the truth.
- S2: 41:47 Did you have the carpet with you?
- S1: 41:49 At that time, I didn't go for the carpet. I went to check out whether the rumor was correct so that we know that we can't use him anymore. He perished. He never came back. I know he was a-- they caught him because he dealt in alcohol, pure alcohol, which was, for [inaudible], death penalty on the black market. Read up--
- S2: 42:16 Why?
- S1: 42:17 They needed alcohol for war purposes. You see, if you deal in meat on the black market, you go to camp, to a concentration camp, or to prison. But it doesn't really undermine the German war effort or they didn't think it did to such a degree as if you deal in alcohol. Not in one, two liters. But even with one, two liters you were shot. They needed this alcohol for the war effort. I don't know what they needed it for but they knew what they needed it for.
- S2: 42:52 Did you have access to food on the black market?
- S1: 42:56 Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I had no problem with food because I went into the little cities where the Bakya branches, where we had the courses. And they had a lot of food. And the managers always gave me food because they also wanted to keep on the good side of me. Because very often I overlooked things. You see, they didn't have the course. I said, "Don't worry about it." Actually, there's one place where instead of German, they taught Russian. I knew, of course, about it. And I said it was okay. So they knew that they could deal with me.
- S2: 43:40 Your job was to inspect the courses to make sure they were going as they were supposed to be going?

- S1: 43:45 Yes. And to check them and to test the people, whether they had learned-- because Bakya, at that time, was actually taken over by the Germans, the entire organization, which was an enormous organization. They didn't do only shoes. They made tires. They made other things, too. And it was actually run by the Germans. So they insisted that all their employees know German. So that is why they set up this network of German-language courses, which I was supposed to run and to inspect. I did that. I did that, actually.
- S2: 44:27 When the head of your group turned out that he was actually a Gestapo officer and all those people-- would you remember when it was that all those people were caught?
- S1: 44:36 Well, that must have been in '44, towards-- in the middle of '44. In the summer of '44. I never had very close contact but from then on nobody contacted me because this girl was caught. Alena, she was caught.
- S2: 44:55 Did she live through the war or--?
- S1: 44:57 Yeah. She came back actually soon. She came back before the war ended.
- S2: 45:00 Did you continue to forge papers?
- S1: 45:05 Yes. Yes, we did it for other people. You see, you get to know people. Not directly, but you get to know them. Because some people escape, somebody knows somebody. It's not very organized. I mean, it's not structured. Because people look for contacts, you see? If you come in and you have-- let's say you run away from a camp or you in trouble, you can't go home. You start looking for contacts to see who can help you so from one to the other is kind of a daisy chain, but at the end, somebody contacts you says, "Listen, could you do that? Could you help with the document?" Things like that.
- S2: 45:52 When did things start winding down? When was it clear that it was going to be okay?
- S1: 45:58 Well, actually, they kept this war effort going until the last day. You really knew that the thing was over when Hitler committed suicide and when [inaudible] came in after a few, I don't know, weeks later or days later. I'm very bad on dates. He sued for armistice. In Prague, there was an uprising, actually. For five days, there was fighting, with one day in the middle there was an armistice.
- S2: 46:36 Who was fighting who?
- S1: 46:38 Well, the Czech population rose against the Germans, rose. It was a very funny situation because the Germans were still there, but the Czechs were putting out Czech flags and they were driving up and down in the trams and singing Czech songs and waving Czech flags. Actually, it was over and the Germans were still there, but they didn't do anything. You could bargain, you could buy guns for them for bread and butter, you could do all kinds-- and they, nobody really hurt them. They were still around, of course, most of them stayed in the barracks, but I've seen officers going in the middle, nobody bothered them. And there were quite a few wounded German soldiers in the hospitals. Now suddenly, the commander decided that he's going to continue the war against the Russians and he--
- S2: 47:50 Were there Russians in Prague as well?
- S1: 47:51 No. At that time, no. But the Russians were coming from the east, they were already in Moravia, yes. And he had one or two rested SS Panzer Division, that means tank divisions, in Bohemia and he called them up. And he started putting down this uprising, you see? When they came in, the people had some guns because-- they had

some weapons, most of them they got in the last time, in the last months, and maybe in the last days. So he started fighting them, and actually, in these five days, five thousand Czechs in these five days.

- S2: 48:46 They were actually fighting in the city?
- S1: 48:49 There was fighting in the city, yes. There were barricades, they were starting--
- S2: 48:54 Were you taking part in those?
- S1: 48:56 Yes, I did. I was--
- S2: 48:57 What did you?
- S1: 48:58 I couldn't do anything much because they didn't have weapons for me. I was on a barricade. You see, the Czech officers started taking out uniforms from [naphthalene?], that's why they were called [naphthalene?] soldiers, and they started organizing-- in each quarter, they started organizing this resistance, but there weren't enough weapons to go around, so we were just sitting around and--
- S2: 49:26 Did you have a weapon?
- S1: 49:27 No, I didn't have a weapon.
- S2: 49:29 Did you try to get one?
- S1: 49:29 Yes. I went to the center, so they suddenly decided that since I knew English I should be a liaison officer for for the American troops - which never came, of course - because they were very close. They could have come without any difficulty.
- S2: 49:47 Where were they?
- S1: 49:48 Well, they were about 150 miles East of Prague. But there was an agreement, you see, between the USA and Russia who was going where, and they stopped there. They sent in a jeep load of newspapermen. They came just to look what's going on, but they went out again. So I was supposedly to do that. Of course, I never had any opportunity to use it. But I was actually in my girlfriend's apartment, which was-- There was a barricade because there were tanks. It was very close to the old city square, and there were tanks positioned there. Actually, one of our guys then found a bazooka. A German bazooka. A panzerfäust, you see. And this officer didn't know what to do with it because he had no knowledge of this kind of weapon. And there was one of the guys - a guy who never even went to high school - he looked at it and says, "That can't be so difficult." He took it and shot it, and knocked out the tank [laughter]. A German tank. He had never even served in the Army, and he did it.
- S1: 51:10 So we were there. It's the old city. They're very narrow streets. So that was a bit more difficult for the tanks. And as a matter of fact, [there's?] one time a tank came right in front of the house where I was staying, and we didn't know what to do. At night we slept in the cellars because you see, they bombarded it a bit just with little planes and small 5 kilogram bombs. They didn't have anything anymore. Then we saw this tank, we didn't know what's going to happen. Suddenly, they opened the hatch and they came out with their hands up. They had no water for three days, you see. They couldn't stay in the [foreign], so we took them prisoners.
- S2: 51:58 You did?
- S1: 51:59 Yeah, yeah, yes.
- S2: 52:00 Did you give them water?

- S1: 52:01 Yes, we did give them water.
- S2: 52:02 Did you tie them up?
- S1: 52:05 Yes, yes. We didn't have to tie them up, really. There was enough--
- S2: 52:09 Did they have any guns?
- S1: 52:10 They had their personal-- Yes, they had guns. They had revolvers. They gave them up.
- S2: 52:17 Who was in the house at the time?
- S1: 52:19 In what house?
- S2: 52:20 It was in front of your apartment building.
- S1: 52:22 Well, there were many people around. But, you see, the headquarters for this section was very close by with a Czech officer who was the commander.
- S2: 52:32 So you brought--
- S1: 52:33 So we took care of that.
- S2: 52:35 Did you get one of their personal weapons for yourself?
- S1: 52:38 No. You couldn't do that. You have to give it to the commander. At that time, there was really nothing you could do. As a matter of fact, at a certain point, the Vlasov Army came in. This was an army of Russians that had gone over to the Nazis. And he actually fought-- he was the most effective force in this whole Prague opera, I think. Of course, the official Czech history doesn't mention it because Vlasov, of course, was a traitor. He went back. The Russians then executed him. He thought that if he turn around fighting the Germans, maybe that will save his hide. It didn't. He was the most effective force that he still--
- S2: 53:24 He fought the Germans in Prague?
- S1: 53:26 Yeah. Then, of course, most of the Germans ran away. The Russians started moving in [inaudible]. And then terrible things [happened?] and really, because the populous started burning the Germans and killing them. Of course, they killed the wrong people. But it's always so--
- S2: 53:48 Why do you say they killed the wrong people?
- S1: 53:49 Because you see, the Gestapo and the SS, they had ran away before. There was this armistice one day, which was arranged actually, by the superior commanders of the uprising and then most of the people ran away. Most of the people.
- S2: 54:11 So were the civilians were actually killing the German soldiers that had remained?
- S1: 54:15 Not soldiers, for instance, they took some people out of the hospitals and killed them, threw them into the river. They tied people up upside-down on lamp posts and put fire on them see, which is a very painful death because you see, the flames go upwards from your head. So your whole body burns before your face.
- S2: 54:41 Did you actually see this?
- S1: 54:42 Yes. I did see it. I did see it. Or for instance, they set up a shooting booth with live targets. Like you have on a fair, you shoot at targets. They had tied up some Germans and everybody could shoot at them. I didn't do that. I found this actually very disgusting. And mostly, who did it were people who were not in the resistance. They didn't do that. This was really the mob you see, which all sort of times when the

Germans were there, they probably were very poor German and very meek and very subservient, now they became the big hero's. Not in my book, of course.

S2: 55:27

Did you majorly go back to your Jewish identity after the war was over?

S1: 55:33

Oh, yes. Of course. Of course, immediately. I went immediately to the nearest police station where I lived and I said, "Listen, I need to re-establish my legal identity." Because I needed to get-- I needed it, I wanted to get an apartment. I wanted to get back into the university to inscribe myself as a student, I needed normal papers.

S2: 56:01

Were the Czech people really on the side of the Jews at all?

S1: 56:06

Well, you can't say they were on the side of the Jews. I think, by and large, they were let us say, anti-semitic up to a degree. Let us say the following, they think it was all right for the Germans to take the Jews and make them work manual labor because their opinion was that the Jews never worked. They are exploiters of others. They are only in business. They only know how to make money and it's a good thing that they should learn that you can live by working manually. But to separate families, that they thought, was going too far. And certainly not to kill people but to separate families. I remember that was a point because it was discussed with me by people who didn't know I was Jewish. So Jews were discussed. So we had discussions about it and then in many of these places, where I talk to the managers because I usually had dinner there or lunch, or both and you know, with the family. So they said, "Yes, that is really-- they shouldn't do that. The family is something sacred. You don't separate women from men and certainly not the children and what they do in the camps is certainly wrong." But the Jewish should not be allowed to be businessmen, lawyers, doctors, no. Doctors, they like Jewish doctors. Jewish doctors, they had confidence in.

S2: 57:45

After the war, was it a good thing to be a Jew? Was there a lot of sympathy for Jews after the war?

S1: 57:51

No. Not really. Because you see, again, I can give you an example from my own experience of course. They did not want the Jews to come back and again occupy prominent positions, which is what happened. So they didn't like this idea.

S2: 58:15

Well, there weren't that many Jews left to come back, really.

S1: 58:17

It doesn't matter how many they were. But you see, if for instance, somebody gave [inaudible] obelisk to a non-Jewish friend or to the super in the house where he lived and he came back after the war to claim them back, he didn't like the idea. He didn't like the idea. But I remember when I went to apply for a apartment. I wanted an apartment after. There was a big racket, of course, people bribed. I didn't do that. You had to find the apartment that was free, which was used by a German, it was free. And then you had to go to an office and get a sheet of paper saying that you can take it. They said that it had already been through some committee or God knows what. But I came to this office, which was called the National Council.

S2: 59:15

Did you find the apartment you wanted?

S1: 59:17

Yes, I did

S2: 59:18

how did you know where it was?

S1: 59:20

Again, people tell you, "Listen, I live in this house. There is another building free." You meet people. You run around.

S2: 59:27

So you went to the committee?

- S1: 59:28 I went to the committee and said, "I want this apartment because I have a right to it. I was persecuted politically, and I have a right to that." So he said, "You were persecuted politically? You were not racially persecuted?" Because Jews, usually they were sent by the Germans to camps, were racially persecuted. But I, actually in the underground, I went under the rubric of politically persecuted. I said, "No I'm telling you I'm politically--" So he said, "But you are not a Czech." He didn't want to give it to me. I says, "No, I am a Chinese." I told him, and if you don't give me the paper you will see what Chinese can do. He gave me the paper, which still there was some difficulty also.
- S2: 01:00:26 Was that an idle threat, or were you actually going to do something to him?
- S1: 01:00:28 Oh, yes, no. Well, if he hadn't done it I had some connections. Not too many. I mean, you see, this is typical of me, I must say. I had the connections, but I really never thought I should utilize them. All my life I never did that. To utilize connections was somehow not something my father inculcated into my head.
- S2: 01:00:57 So immediately following the war you got a new apartment?
- S1: 01:01:00 Well, it took a few maybe weeks. Well, first I went to the police to get my original papers. I talked to the police-- he was an officer, chief of the precinct. And I said, "Listen, where I had lived, the last precinct where I had lived as [Aaron Slinberger?] [inaudible] Limburger. I went there. So he found the paper, and said, "I can't give it to you." I said, "Why can't you give it to me?" "Ah," he says, "You see, there is an arrest warrant out against you." I said, "Would you mind looking who issued this arrest warrant?" "All right, it was issued by the Gestapo." I said, "Don't you think that such an arrest warrant is no longer actually valid?" He says, "An arrest warrant is an arrest warrant." I says, "And you're a horses ass." So he gave me the paper.
- S2: 01:02:08 Did the people start coming back from the camps?
- S1: 01:02:15 Yes. Yes. Yes.
- S2: 01:02:17 How soon after the war ended did that happen?
- S1: 01:02:19 Oh, very soon. Very soon. They come in a trickle. Immediately the Jewish community set up a center where you could go, and people wrote their names to see who came back and who did not come back.
- S2: 01:02:34 Did you know people who came back?
- S1: 01:02:35 Yes, of course, I knew-- as a matter of fact, since we had this empty apartment, we took in a lot of friends that came back. We let them stay there on the floor.
- S2: 01:02:45 What kind of condition were these people in?
- S1: 01:02:48 Don't ask. Don't ask. I met a friend on the street. I recognized him, and he was totally out of it. He couldn't recognize me. I told him "[Natti?]." His name was [Natti. Natti Friedman?]. I said, "[Natti?], don't you recognize me? It's me. It's [inaudible]." He said, "[inaudible]." He didn't know. He was in terrible shape. So I took him in, and I brought him to a place where they had doctor would check him out and later, he was okay. He was okay after some time. But there were some that were not in such bad shape because they had already been saved [inaudible] say a few months before in the camps which were taken over by the Americans, which are overrun by the Americans. So until they came back, they were already in fairly good shape actually.
- S2: 01:03:45 Were there a lot of Russians in Prague at that time?

- S1: 01:03:47 Full, full, full.
- S2: 01:03:49 How did they treat the population?
- S1: 01:03:50 Well, they didn't treat the population too well. They raped a lot of women. But of course, you really can't blame them 100% because they were starting driving through Prague in lorries and in trucks and in jeeps and in tanks. And all the girls came to give them cakes and they sat on the tanks and ran around with them. So, of course, these soldiers probably thought, "Well, listen, this is an easy hit." And it wasn't obvious. They took people's watches. They didn't behave in a very civilized manner.
- S2: 01:04:37 How long were they there for?
- S1: 01:04:38 Oh, they were there for weeks or months. But then when the commander [inaudible], the command structure was put into place, the Russians didn't misbehave because you could also complain. It was only in the first days there was total anarchy because there was no-- and people came from regiments that really didn't have anything to do. They weren't supposed to be there. They came to have a look at Prague. In the army, you hitch a ride. I had some, not the running with the-- actually, they once came to where I lived with Maria Nováková alias [inaudible].
- S2: 01:05:28 I thought her name was Helen Nováková.
- S1: 01:05:30 Yes, but her Hebrew name was [inaudible]. The Slovak name was Helena.
- S2: 01:05:35 What was her assumed identity name?
- S1: 01:05:37 Maria Novakova. So once two guys came up. It was a very interesting encounter. They came up and everybody was scared of them. I wasn't scared of them. I knew some Russian, broken Russian. They came up and they said, "Well, is this your wife?" I says, "Yes, that's my wife and you better not touch." I [inaudible]. "Well, no," he says, "We are civilized people." He says, "We are civilized people." Then they wanted my watch? I says, "Yes, I can sell you the watch." But I gave him a price that was much too high. So we stopped talking and they became very reasonable. Says, "You have any food?" I says, "Yeah, I can tell you we have potatoes. My wife can cook you potatoes. There may be some vegetables around." "But is this meat?" "No, we don't have any meat." They says, "Okay, wait. We'll get you the meat. Get all the people together from the house." And there was a courtyard. "Set up some tables there. We are going to have a big dinner. So they came back a couple of hours later with a pig. Not a very big pig, but still it was a pig. So we cooked this pig and we cooked the potatoes and not far away, there was a brewery. So they confiscated some beer there. And we had a very-- we had a very nice dinner and they were very happy. And they were very friendly and when they left they gave me about 1000 cigars and I don't smoke. I didn't know. I [inaudible], "No, I don't smoke." "No, no. You're a this guy here have the cigars and they were very friendly.
- S2: 01:07:24 Where did you know Russian from?
- S1: 01:07:28 I knew a bit of Russian, not really much.
- S2: 01:07:31 She didn't speak Russian in the house, did she?
- S1: 01:07:33 Well, she had all these Russian ladies once a month to come to speak. Three, actually. Two. Two. One was this Miss [inaudible], which I already mentioned. And the other was the wife of a white Russian general by the name of Birula, was her name. So they used to have a Russian tea once a month so I listened to it. I knew some Russian, it is

a Slevanic language. More or less, it was't very good Russian but I had some kind of knowledge.

- S2: 01:08:12 Did you try to go resume your medical studies immediately following the war?
- S1: 01:08:16 Well, I did try it but my spirit wasn't in it. I actually enrolled in the university.
- S2: 01:08:22 Why wasn't your spirit in it?
- S1: 01:08:24 I really don't know. I didn't feel like going back to study. I was married by that time. I remarried, married to Eva Lodska. I didn't feel that - although she was ready to work while I went to study - I didn't feel that I wanted to do that. I didn't really know what I wanted to do at that point.
- S2: 01:08:46 When did the idea-- had you, throughout the worst, thought of that when the war was over you would finally go to Palestine?
- S1: 01:08:54 As a matter of fact not because we thought that after the war, God knows what kind of paradisiac conditions would prevail in Europe, that it would be like a place for justice and human dignity and freedom and opportunities, equal opportunities for all. We thought that this will be a totally new kind of Europe.
- S2: 01:09:23 Was it?
- S1: 01:09:24 No, of course not. Nothing of the sort. And since it wasn't, then I revived the idea of going to Israel actually because this was after Israel became independent.
- S2: 01:09:42 So you lived in Prague for three years after the war?
- S1: 01:09:47 I lived in Prague until 49. That is 4 years after the war.
- S2: 01:09:57 So what did you do? What did you do--
- S1: 01:09:58 I worked.
- S2: 01:10:00 --after you decided that you weren't going to go back to medical school?
- S1: 01:10:02 Well, I looked for a job. And again, through connections, I got a job in the press department of the Ministry of Information where I dealt with the foreign press. I was dealt particularly with the Western press. It was divided up. The press department was divided into an internal press department, an external press department. The external press department was divided into sections. For the socialist press, that means the communist and the section for the western press. And I was in the section for the western press. Actually, it was fun. I see all these journalists came in from America, England, France - and I knew the languages - and Switzerland. So I had a job there.
- S2: 01:10:57 Were you a communist?
- S1: 01:10:59 Well, I was a member of the communist party, yes, because I really had no choice.
- S2: 01:11:04 How long had you been a member?
- S1: 01:11:06 Now, now, after the war, of course, they came and said, "Listen. You should be a member because, you see, it's good for your career. You were with the communist underground." But anyhow, you-- this is the thing to do. So I did it.
- S2: 01:11:26 Did you believe in the Communist ideas?
- S1: 01:11:28 I actually did not believe in it when I saw that actually they are not going to set up any kind of new regime, that all their interest is, is in getting into power and keeping in

power. That's all they wanted to. So I became very quickly disillusioned with Communism because at for some time, I believe that the Communists would bring about a real social revolution and institute a regime of social equality and justice. When I saw that this really didn't happen, I became very quickly disillusioned.

S2: 01:12:14

Did your wife become a member of the Communist Party?

S1: 01:12:15

No.

S2: 01:12:16

What did she think about it?

S1: 01:12:18

She didn't want to be a member of any party. She hated the Communists. She thought they were up to no good. And she was right, actually. So she never became a member, as far as I remember, I mean. You see, at that time membership didn't mean a thing. Anybody who didn't have any strong ideological opposition, like the Christian Party or the Danish Party, to whom I never-- to which I never belonged, of course, the Social Democrats were actually very close to the Communists at that time. So they said, "Okay, this is-- this, we have to put in, we have to create a new life, and that's the life we're going to do."

[silence] [silence] [silence]