

and I came upset home, she saw it on me and she said, "That's it," and that was it. And I never had time to go back after the war. How could you go after twar back to school when you had to look out for yourself?

Q: But it was still only '42.

A: That was '42 till '44. '43 was already bad.

Q: I know, but in these two years what did you do?

A: I was at home all the time. I was reading books. I was learning the German, as I said, privately, I had private lessons. As much as I could, I was learning with this teacher as well, who taught me in German, but not the Hungarian things, not much, just the language. And there was nothing much we could do at that time.

Q: What was the general atmosphere there?

A: Started to be bad, started to be bad. I, as a girl, didn't understand it yet, what was happening, but as I see it now, it started to be very bad. Completely changed atmosphere. The whole life changed. Already before the deportations it started to be... Amongst us we were scared to go even on the streets. We still went out, of course. I met my friends and we went, we got together, but it was completely different from what is was before. The calmness was gone. We didn't know what had happened. We were just expecting like a storm brewing. You know before the storm it is a bit calm? It started already like that.

Q: So you were expecting something to happen?

A: No, not what happened. We didn't expect that. But something was brewing. We knew that, we knew that. And then when the war came through already, you know, like war here, war there.

Q: Was this feeling based on some information or instinct?

A: We had already more information and as, I said, in school, the happenings that started to go on, from then on I already felt that something was coming, because of the school, because of the girls changing. The atmosphere was changing. The whole being, everything – like before a big storm.

Q: Did your father explain to you something?

A: I never asked. He was busy with the people.

Q: Which people?

A: With the people, the immigrants who came. He was constantly busy with them. He was trying to help them, he was trying to help them escape to Budapest, a lot of people, because if you got to a big township, you got lost there. Maybe they could survive there. And that's what I remember. He was trying to help them.

Q: You know what, concretely, he did?

A: He helped with money, he helped them where to go, addresses.

Q: In Budapest?

A: In Budapest, yes.

Q: Did they come to your house?

A: They were in our house as guests. They didn't have where to go and that's why he helped them to go on further. And that's when I knew already something was happening, coming, yes.

Q: You didn't have any part in this occupation of your father?

A: No. (end of side)

In 1942 we were very free. We went walking. There was one street – it was called the “Korzo” – we were walking up and down, we met people. People were free to go. Nobody was calling after us, nobody was running after us. We had a good time, we went to the theatre, to the movies. We were free, really free. That was in '42, '43 as well, but we started to feel already a little bit here and there, a bit of commotion, even in our house. The housekeeper there already started to change, she was completely different. She used to come up on shabbat to put our heating, some coal onto the fire, and lately she said, “Why should I come and help you anymore?” So we said, “What happened?” We paid her for it. “No, I don't have to come and help you. Help yourself.” And that's what started already. That's when we started to feel a little bit, but that was soon before the Germans came in.

Q: When you went to cinema in '42, '43, there was probably a journal, I mean, before the cinema started. Well, it was some documentary about what was going on. Do you remember, maybe, what they were showing?

A: Yes. One I remember very well was "Gone with the Wind".

Q: Not the picture itself, but before the picture.

A: Ah, the newsreel. Newsreel we had, yes. They didn't show much. It didn't come through, what is going on in the world, like what was in Germany happening.

Q: Well, probably not what was happening with Jews.

A: Not with Jews, but the war, that it started, no, they didn't show much. Propaganda, we would have said. No, no they didn't show. They showed only what was good things.

Q: For example?

A: Nice things like a holiday place, you know, there and there is a holiday place and there is something else. I don't remember exactly by details, but they never showed anything bad, that about the war, what was going on, or how people suffered. I never saw that. Otherwise we would have had a notion what was going on, but they never showed it. Always before a cinema was newsreel, yes, but not bad things.

Q: Did the attitude of the Hungarians change?

A: It changed very much.

Q: Yes?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: In which way?

A: They changed because they knew the Jews were starting to upset them, I don't know what, but I didn't understand why we upset them. So they said, "Everything is the Jews' fault." So we asked them, "Why is it the Jews' fault?" They said, "Why not? It is the Jews' fault." So it started already to change in the years '42, '43, but we didn't know that...the "Hungarians are anti-semitic" – that's what we called it. Anti-semites. They were alright. They were good people before and suddenly they became anti-semites, so whether they heard the news, what was coming through from the whole world, I don't know, I didn't know at that time.

Q: But officially, I mean, some anti-Jewish laws or something like that?

A: No, nothing, nothing, nothing came out. No. We were allowed to go to parks, we were allowed to go to skating, we were allowed to go wherever we wanted to go. To picnics. Nothing, nothing, till 1944. That's when we started to hear all the things, that's when they occupied us, the Germans.

Q: Well, maybe now a new chapter – how it started.

A: 19th of March, 1944 the Germans occupied us and we heard the boots and the uniforms. We saw them on the streets, we were running away like fire from them.

Q: It was very sudden.

A: Very sudden, very sudden. We didn't know what was happening, but I saw a boot, I was running away because they were marching like heavy....And I was scared like hell from them. And then I realized something was going to happen, but I didn't know what. That was in '44, March. Pesach we were at home, the atmosphere wasn't the same as it used to be on Pesach. After Pesach they came to tell us to leave the home, to leave the house in an hour. That was about two weeks after Pesach I would say. They started packing whatever they could take. My father said to me, "You run away," and he sort of just pushed me out of the house. "Run away," he said. Where should I run? I was always listening to my parents. If he says what he says, I have to do. I didn't ask him where or what. He said, "Go," and I went. On the street I was running and I didn't know where I should run. The first thing I thought, I'll go where all the Jews are, because we were amongst the first ones – what I heard after – we were amongst the first ones to be deported from the house because not many Jews lived there and the Germans wanted the house for themselves. So I was running and I went where a lot of Jews were and I was there, staying by a friend. And a woman was sent for me from Budapest. My sister sent down a woman. She found me at night and she took me to the station, that I'll go with her to Budapest. I didn't trust her maybe, but I

said, "Well, how do I know you mean it?" She gave me a paper from her daughter, she said, "That's a paper from my daughter, but if something happens on the way, on the train," – she bought a train ticket – "we don't know each other." So she was sitting in one corner on the train and I was sitting in another corner in the train. I was on my own. So I was sitting in a corner and then all the time the train stopped, stopped, stopped. A lot of stops. Each time the Germans came up, it was dark, it was night, and they had a torch in their hands and they lit the torch in my face, they took my paper. I must have stood my place because they said, "In this paper is not written that you are Jewish or not." I said, "I beg your pardon?" I must have stood my place and they said I am not Jewish and there is my name and what am I going to do in Budapest? "I live there," I said. "I was visiting here and I live there." So anyway, they lit my face and looks like I was alright for them because they left me alone and they went away. And again and again – that's every sort of stop, that train. We arrived only in the morning till Budapest and till the morning we had a few stops and so many people were unfortunately taken from the train. Their papers weren't right or they were running away without papers, I don't know, but there were a lot of people taken off the train. We arrived to Budapest in the morning...

Q: You were probably shaking all the time.

A: I was terrified. I can't explain to you what I was feeling, inward. And we arrived to Kalaty (sp?) Station. It was called Kalaty... (?) in Budapest. Every time was "ratzia", you know, the stopping you, they wanted papers again, papers again. I didn't show any papers because they didn't stop me. She was walking and I was walking after her, like we were not together, but I followed her, sort of that we didn't get stopped. She took me to her place and my sister came to pick me up.

Q: She was paid?

A: She was paid, yes. And I had two sisters then in Budapest because one sister went up for Purim and she didn't come back. The younger sister from the two, the younger one came to pick me up and to see that I was really there. You can imagine the joy that we saw each other. She was right, this woman – we didn't know each other on the way. She didn't want to be in trouble because of me, because of a Jewess. Anyway, she was nice, she was paid and I went to my older sister who lived there.

Q: You probably had to learn all about your new identity.

A: Oh yes, but this name didn't stay with me. I gave back her paper.

Q: Even for the trip.

A: For the trip, yes. I had to read it in the dark. Before she gave me the paper I had to read it, to know what was the name.

Q: Your father, where you were born, in which town and so on.

A: No, it wasn't written. It was just that I lived in Budapest. It was only an identity that I live in Budapest and a name. That was her daughter's name. So anyway, I was successful, I arrived to Budapest. But then my sister was still at home living as a Jewess. You know, in her place she lived, already ten years she was married.

Q: In Budapest.

A: In Budapest. She had four children. The baby was born a month after the Germans came, April 19th, and they came in March 19th, so she was lucky that it was born then and not when we went to live under Aryan papers. And Shavut we were still at home in her place. After Shavut we went to live with false papers. There was a Polish man who with his hand he was doing the stamps up, you know, the seals for an official paper. He could draw it beautifully. And he was drawing the seals, the stamps, and I could write what name I wanted, so I was Kovacz Edith. Kovacz is a real Hungarian name. My sister was something else, my brother-in-law and the children. And we went to live like that. We took an apartment in Buda and nobody knew us there. My sister was scared to go on the street because she lived ten years already. She didn't know who she will meet on the way. It was a very scary time. That somebody recognized her.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit more about how you got such papers?

A: These papers, this Polish man, he was writing them. He was writing them by hand. There were no machines.

Q: He was just in writing?

A: Just in writing, just writing by hand.

Q: Everything. He didn't have a form or something?

A: He wrote them out himself. He took a blank paper and he wrote it out himself. He was paid for it, but excellent. If they caught me or they looked at the papers, maybe it wouldn't have been excellent, maybe they would have seen something that was not right, but they never did. That was my luck. And they never caught us. That is why I survived, because they caught a lot of people.

So we went to live in Buda. We lived about three months there in one place, when they started "kolot" that it would be combing out the places where there were a lot of Jews around. That means combing, that they will comb. Anyway, we had to move from there. We went two streets away. A very nice older couple was there. Whether they knew who we were or not, I don't know. They never talked about it or we never talked about it. We were in Budapest from...like we came from the outside, because the husband was in the army, my brother-in-law was in the army and we wanted to be closer to him.

Q: That was your cover story.