

Images are displayed during the presentation

- Brandy's saying, come to New York. It's beautiful here.
- Oh, is she online?
- That's Brandy, so we'll see you soon. No, no. It's Brandy.
- Brandy, oh.
- [Judi] Brandy in New York.
- All right, bring us all over. I got no problems. We don't even know where we can travel to when we can travel. Yeah but we are lucky. We're very lucky.
- Hi Ruth. I'm just saying hello to those that are posting on the chat while we are.
- What are they saying?
- This is just, hi.
- Lovely.
- Hi, hello.
- Judi's in an exceptionally good mood today.
- It's very sunny and warm in Toronto as well. Thanks for that. Hi, Razel in Toronto. Judi, I think we'll give it two more minutes and then I'll hand over to you.
- Yes, thank you.
- But Marion in Los Angeles.
- What she saying?
- Hello Vivian. Just hello from Los Angeles. I've got Hi, hello Vivian.
- They're putting in where they come from as well I hope.
- Some of them are.

- Because remember we were going to start that.
- Yeah. Dallas is overcast, thanks Carol. Amsterdam.
- This is a really wonderful bird's eye view of the world. It's fantastic. Have we got other people in Europe though? That's what I'm wondering.
- We've got Marion in Amsterdam. It's a lovely day. Hi Michael, he's in Israel. Hi Barbara.
- [Trudy] Yeah.
- Montreal. We got Canadians today. There's loads of Canadians.
- Yeah, the Canadians are our most vocal group, I think.
- Miami.
- Oh fine. Give it one more minute and then I'll start.
- Hello from Worthing.
- Worthing? Who's in Worthing, is that William?
- No, that's Jerry in Worthing.
- Because that's where, Worthing, England?
- Yeah, I hope so.
- That's where William lives.
- Hello, Norman. Says hi from Norman, the Greek in Santorini. Hello Norman.
- Oh, fantastic. That should be gorgeous.
- Nikki in Johannesburg.
- Okay, shall I start?
- All right, Trudy, I will, so welcome everybody. And Trudy, over to you.
- Right, well good afternoon from grey London. And before I start, can I just say that I had a

phone call from a friend of mine whose friends were listening from the bunkers in Ashkelon. And please be assured that our thoughts are with you all.

And now I'm continuing on the whole very problematic story of the Jews of Czechoslovakia. And what I was doing in our last meeting, I was talking about the life of Jozef Tiso, who of course was the president of Czechoslovakia, president of Slovakia. The way we left it is Slovakia has now been recognised as a sovereign state by the Germans, the Hungarians, the British and the French. The Munich Agreement has happened and Moravia and Bohemia are now annexed into the Third Reich with Heydrich later becoming the protector of Bohemia Moravia and what is going to be the destiny of the Slovak part of the organisation.

Now, let's talk a bit about the Jews of Slovakia. Unlike the Jews of Prague and the other big cities of Czechoslovakia, the majority of Slovak Jews consider themselves to be of Jewish nationality. We're back to that old , which really dogs Jewish history. What on earth does it mean to be a Jew? There were over 15,000 in the Zionist movement. Now, Slovakia allies itself with Germany, and in fact it was the original discussions, believe it or not, were when Tiso went to a Eucharist conference in Hungary back in 1938, a conference on the Eucharist. Remember, he's a Catholic priest to discuss the whole issue of what they should do and what he remember, what he wants is a one-party state.

So on the 3rd of November, 1939, the new president meets with Eichman, who of course is the head of the central office for the Jewish question in inverted commas. By the 3rd of November, 1939, if you remember, Eichman had already set up an immigration bureau in Vienna at the end of '38. And then in Berlin at the beginning of '39, his purpose was to get the Jews out of Germany as quickly as possible. To get them out of Austria and to steal from them. But by the 3rd of November, 1939, war has broken out. They still haven't made the decision. But the point is, this is when the deliberations happen. It's obscene when you're talking about these kind of things and using ordinary language. And then of course you have to deal with the quote of Adorno. There should be no poetry after Auschwitz, which he recanted on. So we have to tell the story because it happened.

Anyway, so on the 3rd of November, Tiso has a meeting with Eichman, and on the 4th of November, he ordered the deportation of all Jews without citizenship or property to what they called no man's land. This is the cold of winter on the Hungarian Slovak border, and it was carried out by the Hlinka Guard and voluntary defence squads. So important to know that the first group of Jews are deported. These are ones who do not have Slovak citizenship and it's carried out by Slovaks. On the creation of the state, radical anti-Jewish laws are introduced. And you have the first deportations. Seven and a half thousand elderly Jews, pregnant women, and 570 children under 16 were deported. And in the Salzburg, in July the 28th, 1940, a meeting was established by Hitler and the Slovak leaders. And the idea is we are creating a national socialist state. We are coming along with you, the kind of state you have created in Germany is the kind of state we want. And this is when Dieter Wisliceny, who's already come into the story, he comes in to discuss, be an advisor on Jewish affairs.

And just to recap on Dieter Wisliceny, because he later gave evidence at Nuremberg. And important to get a picture of these kind of characters because one of the myths I am really trying to once and for all finish is that it was an uneducated rubble from the gutter of the earth. Look, Tiso was a university graduate who had studied theology and was a monsignor in the Catholic church. Dieter Wisliceny, whose dates in 1911 to 1948, he was the son of a very wealthy landowner. He studied theology, he then left his studies, he was unemployed and in 1931, he joins the Nazi party. 1934, he joins the SS. Same year he joined the Gestapo, he became Eichmann's deputy in World War II and he is going to be a really venal character. What he's interested in is money. We met him before when we looked at what was happening with the Hungarians. And he was more concerned with money than ideology. That is actually a comment from Yehuda Bauer. He was less fanatical than Eichman and I'll talk about that later.

This man after, in Bratislava, just to talk about what happened to him. I know that there are people on the chat who lost family in Solanica, the terrible, terrible destruction of Greek Jewry. He was then sent on to Greece where he introduced the yellow star and prepared deportations and was very much instrumental in the destruction of Greek Jewry. And then in March '44, he joined Eichman in Budapest. He was a terrible snob. He came from the lower rung of German nobility. He liked to be addressed as Barron. And ironically, he was a witness for the prosecution at Nuremberg.

And this is the quote it was to him that Eichman allegedly said, "I would leap into my grave laughing because I had the feeling that five million people are on my conscience and that is a source of extraordinary satisfaction." He did not get off. Wisliceny was actually then extradited to Czechoslovakia. He did stand trial in Bratislava and he was executed in 1948. In 1941, units of the Hlinka Guard were reorganised on SS lines and what they were then going to do is they're going to take over. You see it's not the Germans operating in Slovakia, there are German advisors. So who are Hlinka guard? Because I've had Slovak students over the years, and I've been told by them the family memory of the incredible brutality. They were the militia of the Slovak People's Party, the party of Tiso, which is now in power.

And they grew out of something called the Rodobrana, which was the national defence. And of course, back in 1937, under the benign rule of Czechoslovakia, it was dissolved. And it, on the 29th, 1938, it's back. Now this is a Slovak state. You've had Munich and it was allowed. And the army came in to give these paramilitaries military training. And it's made up mainly of recruits from all walks of life. The leader was a man called Alexander Mach. And he retained the post until 1945. He was another character that I want to bring up because I sometimes think as we remember the heroes. And last week we talked about great heroes. We need to remember the demons too.

When I use the word demon, I'm not dehumanising them. They are human beings. He was a brilliant rouser nationalist politician. And he played an important role in orchestrating the violence that's going to fall on Slovak Jewry. He was head of the Slovak office of propaganda,

then interior minister. He was the one who dropped plans to establish Slovak concentration camps. And he, in the end, after the war, he fled Czechoslovak yet for Vienna. He was arrested. He was tried by a Slovak court. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison. He was released in 1968. The majority of these characters, unless they found themselves under Soviet justice, had shorter sentences. And he actually died on a state pension in 1968.

Okay, another man I want to bring to your attention is a man called Ludin. He was a Nazi party member. He was a German. He joined the party, he was in the SA, but survived the Night of the Long Knives. And he was the ambassador to the Slovak Republic. Now, the reason I'm bringing him in is that his son has made a very interesting film on Prime, which you might want to see because it's how his family, his mother, the man who made the film, his mother and his sisters dealt with having a monster in the family. And it's a fascinating documentary for you to watch on Prime.

So let's now go back to what is actually happening on the ground. So you have the Hlinka Guard, you have Mach who is running it, and there's also interior and propaganda minister. These people now have the trappings of government, the authoritarian one party state. So, 1941, units of the Hlinka Guard reorganised on the SS model. Jewish males were then drafted into labour battalions into the sixth Slovak brigade. Thousands of them died. They then established under this Wisliceny, a special department to facilitate anti-Jewish policies. So Jews, what the Nazis took, it took the Germans five years to Nazify Germany. It took them a few months to Nazify Austria.

It took a few months for the Slovak fascists to completely Nazify Slovakia. So Jews are ousted for the economy Aryanization. Can you just imagine what that means? Bank accounts are frozen, everything's taken away from you. Jewish assets were actually valued at \$120 million And within a year, over 10,000 Jewish businesses had been transferred to Aryans. And of course it's the seller's market. So the whole community is being impoverished. The Slovaks then set up a just as the Nazis did. Jewish leadership who will obey our orders. In the summer of '41, the Slovaks really enter the war with Germany. They start fighting the Soviets.

And this is when the policies escalate. Whilst the Soviet alliance held, if you remember back in 1939, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which Hitler of course was going to break, but he doesn't break it till the summer of '41. And this is when the Slovak army is committed to fighting with the Germans. So from now on, wearing a yellow star, all Jewish apartments are to display every Jewish document, any document, if you think of the documents you have in your life, everything has to have a yellow star. Jews are forbidden to intermarry. They are forbidden to have sexual relations with Aryans. If that's found out, then of course there's a prison sentence. Jews are forbidden to congregate, which means no worship. Everything has to be underground.

And what is fascinating is just how much underground things did go on. That despite the orders, people did come together, people did manage to somehow show their humanity. They were obviously excluded from all rights. The children are excluded from schools, students from

universities. So that meant any kind of education had to be underground. And on May the 29th, 1941, the Slovak government agreed to supply 20,000 Slovak labourers to Germany.

Now it's at this stage, the head of Jewish affairs said, "Well, let's provide Jewish labourers to fill the quota." So this is, remember before the beginnings of what is euphemistically tragically called the final solution. At the Wannsee Conference, it is announced. Hitler said, "It is interesting how this little Catholic priest will sell us Jews." Because in February, 1942, just a recap, with the beginning of the invasion of Russia, operation Barbarossa, June, 1941, following the German army into battle with the Einsatzgruppen and this is of course when the murders begin.

Look, before that, up until 1941, you had horror and many people died of starvation, were shot randomly. Now you have a plan. In February, 1942 and this is, and remember the Wannsee conference is January the 17th, 1942. So February '42, Slovakia is the first ally to agree to deportations. More than that, the Slovaks are going to pay for the Jews to be taken away. They're going to pay 500 Deutschmarks for every Jew who was deported. And on March the 27th, 1942, the first train load of Slovakian Jews were sent. And tragically the majority of them were young women.

Now the Nazis said it's going to cost you 500 Deutschmarks for inverted commerce vocational training. On June the 23rd, 1942, the Slovakian government, this is a government agreement, agreed to pay \$1.8 million, provided the Jews would not be returned to Slovakia and the Germans would make no further claim on their property. This is a Slovakian business. So between March and October, 50,000 Jews were deported either to Majdanek, Auschwitz or to the Ludlin area. 58,000 between March and October. And this is when the property was either confiscated by the state or it was distributed free to keep the population happy.

There was a resistance movement, I'm going to talk about it. But in the main, the majority Catholic population with Tiso, the priest at the head, basically, they went along with it. The propaganda ministry advised by the Nazis from Germany was doing brilliantly putting forward the image of the Jew as blood sucker. And we know only too well that when society's under threat, it does seem that people want a leader to follow. Slogans are enacted. And tragically because of our rather strange position in history, the Jews are the perfect scapegoat. You see, if you are a communist, the Jews are capitalists. If you are a capitalist, the Jews are communists.

But underlying it, and I'm going to overemphasise this point now, there is that 2,000 year old history of the deicide. Now I'm not insane, I do not believe every Christian believes Jews are Christ killers. But it's so deep in the culture that it whips up an atmosphere, particularly when things are bad in an authoritarian state, right? And it's at this stage, something fascinating happens. The deportations halt.

Now can we have a look at some pictures, if you don't mind, Judi. That's actually Tuka.

But what I'd like to go onto is Rabbi Weissmandl, thank you. You've seen him before. Now of course, in the midst of all this horror, there was a Slovakian working group that was actually set up to find out, what can we do about the deportations? What on earth can we do to try and halt them? And it was mainly the brainchild of two incredible people. One is Rabbi Weissmandl and I have talked to you about him before because of course he's going to be, he was so involved later on in the Hungarian story because he's the one of the main people to warn Hungarian Jewry as to what was going on.

So just to recap, he was born in Hungary, but he lived his life in Slovakia. And he moved in 1931 to study with Rabbi Shmuel Ungar and married his daughter. He came from a very deeply religious, very honoured rabbinic family. He was a great scholar. He was an expert at deciphering manuscripts. And he was invited to the Bodleian Library because they had some problems with some manuscripts. And he worked later on in the September '39 with Rabbi Schonfeld in London. Rabbi Schonfeld through Rabbi Weissmandl brought over Yeshiva students from Slovakia. And of course the wonderful stories of Rabbi Schonfeld going around the east end of London or going around the religious areas in Stamford Hill and saying to families, take a child, take a child, take a child.

There were many heroes. But he decides to go back to Slovakia. That is his duty. He returns and what happens is the Nazis, remember it's 1939, nothing's been decided on the final solution, they gathered 60 rabbis from Eastern Austria and sent them to the Czech border. They refused entry. And this is when another very righteous man, William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury interceded. So these 60 rabbis were allowed into Britain. And that's when Shaunfeld came over. That's when he'd already been to Oxford. But this is when he came back and dealt with Rabbi Shaunfeld. But he then goes back to Slovakia to the horror of the deportations. And the working group was actually an underground organisation that was sort of an adjunct of the and Rabbi Weissmandl and an extraordinary woman called Gisi Fleischmann.

You have the religious Jew and the Zionist activist. This the Bratislava working group. They tried everything to save Jews. And what is fascinating, and this is Gisi Fleischmann, and I'll talk about her in a minute, but what is absolutely fascinating, it's going to work. Now let me just finish with Rabbi Weissmandl's biography, and then I want to tell you about Gisi Fleischmann, because I want these people honoured. And how do we honour them? If I can tell the story to every one of you online, there's a chance that maybe you'll go on and tell these stories because they are important.

So what happens is he and Gisi managed to negotiate, and I'll be talking about that negotiation in the minute. And what is going to happen is that there is finally going to be a Slovakian uprising in 1944, but it is suppressed. And the deportations, which stop in 1942 because of the work of the Slovakian working group, it's fascinating. But then they commence in autumn of '44 and Weissmandl and his family are put on a train for Auschwitz. He himself managed to escape. Tragically, his whole family, his wife and children died in the gas chambers. He jumped off the train, he broke his leg, he went into hiding in Bratislava and was finally, he was saved and he

made it onto Kassner's train for Switzerland.

Later on he went to the USA and in Mount Kisco, many of you Americans will know a lot about this. He reestablished the Nitra Yeshiva. Nitra, of course, was a very important Slovakian Jewish centre. He reestablishes it, he marries the daughter of Rabbi Teitelbaum. You should know who he is. He's the who also escaped on the train. He had five children. His memoir 'From the Depths.' He died in 1957. It was published posthumously. He was very, he was very bitter. He was bitter, he was very critical of the establishment of Israel and very critical of the Zionist movement. And I'll talk about that later on, where these criticisms come from.

Can we now have a look at Gisi if you don't mind, Judi? Yes, Gisi Fleishmann, a very beautiful woman. Her dates 1897 to 1944. She was very much a Zionist activist. She was the leader of WIZO in Slovakia before the war. What an extraordinary organisation, WIZO is. And I know that there are people on board who are listening who know an awful lot more than I do about the organisation and my love to all of you. But it's an extraordinary organisation. And that's what she did in Slovakia. She was part of the working group. And she is head of the aliebet. Now she's trying to get as many young Jews as possible out to Palestine. What are they facing in Palestine? They are facing the British blockade.

One of the things they were doing under a cover for Zionist activities were agricultural training and vocational training. Remember, a lot of ships are being run illegally to Palestine. Europe, as I've said to you many times, is porous. You can get out if you are incredibly lucky, but you're having to face the blockade and you're having to face complete indifference from the Allies. She managed. She aided 326 Jews from who'd been interned in a camp in Slovakia, in Poland, beg your pardon. And they'd fled to Slovakia in early 1940. And she managed to persuade the Slovak government. She was extraordinary to allow them to stay while she searched for a haven.

Here she worked with Richard Lichtheim from the Jewish Agency representative in Geneva. You see, Istanbul, Geneva, Lisbon, Madrid, neutral Sweden, neutral countries. And it's mainly the Zionist organisations and the joint, the joint was unbelievably helpful. But the problem the joint had, after America came into the war, they tightened. You could couldn't get money into Europe because what was needed was money. And if you remember when I was looking with you at the Hungarian tragedy, even though the Treasury Department finally gave the go ahead for money to be transferred in '43, it wasn't until '44 that some money got through. So many of these organisations were centred in Switzerland. So if you have money, you can bribe, you can feed.

And this is one of the other tragedies that the Allies were reticent in any money getting through to Europe. Now, from their point of view, they were terrified that it will be misused for purposes that will be contrary to the Allied war effect. So basically she, amongst those, amongst those 326, many of them actually did manage to get to Palestine before the deportations from Slovakia began in 1942. So she's quite a heroine. Now it's at this stage that she and Weissmandl will enter into negotiations with Wisliceny. You see, he was Eichmann's aide, I've

talked about him. He was completely venal. She did this through Nathan Schwab of the joint in Geneva. And what they managed to do was to bribe Wisliceny.

What happened was she managed, she and he managed to bribe Wisliceny with \$50,000 to begin the stopping of the deportations. And it held. It held for two years. That is what made them think that it was possible to do exactly the same thing in Hungary. Now, after what then happens, of course, and I'll talk about it in a minute, you're going to have the Slovakian uprising. And after this, she then goes to Becca begging him to stop the deportations. Her comrades who loved her, they begged her and she had comrades on the non-Jewish side and they begged her to be hidden and she refused.

And on September the 28th, 1944, she, along with the most members of the voluntary working group, were arrested and in October '44, think how late it is, she was in one of the last transports to Auschwitz where the railway lines had been built right up to receive Hungarian Jewry and she was gassed. Now, there was another not such pleasant man, another Jew, a man called Carol Hochberg. And he played both sides against the middle. No, you haven't got a picture of him. Judi, for some reason we couldn't find a picture. He was a double agent. He was responsible for organising the census of the Jews. And he didn't, basically during the Europa negotiations, he was arrested but for bribery and corruption, he had an illegal account. He was imprisoned in a labour camp and he was finally, he was finally killed by the partisans, but he was a bit of a shadowy character who was instrumental as a go between, between the fascists and the rescue committee.

Okay? So that is Rabbi Weissmandl and Gisi Fleischmann. But what it was called, it was called the Europa Plan. So let's be really clear about the Europa plan. This is their plan for saving the Jews of Slovakia. And it made them think that perhaps they could save the Jews of Europe. So remember, Wisliceny had wanted \$50,000. Now was it his wish alone? Was it his bribery that led to the stopping of the deportations? This is a very argued historic point. The points though, for you to take away with, is that the Slovakian working group, Weissmandl, Fleischmann, they believed it was money and bribery that had stopped the deportations. It was also that there was getting a lot of, Slovakia was getting a lot of criticism and there were other factors in play.

But it's important to remember that this is what's going to lead to much of the bitterness because they had it in their heads that if enough money could have been raised, they could have saved the Jews. Carol Hochberg had worked out a plan and he'd informed them that to save the Jews of Europe they would need between two and \$3 million. Now these negotiations go on for over a year until Wisliceny had enough, he didn't believe it would ever come through. And of course, in the negotiations, remember he sent off to to Greece and they tried very hard to save Jews and to establish contacts with the SS. They were doing everything possible to try and save people.

And they were convinced that was because the funds were not provided by the Jewish community. Now, this is one of the tragedies of powerlessness. The replies from the Jewish organisations in Switzerland, in Istanbul, they couldn't get the money that the transfer of funds to

access countries were prohibited. And this today is still a subject of huge controversy, but in the end, I'm going to go with when I'm not sure I always go to the great, to me he's the great guru. And he said in the end, you are dealing with powerlessness. And it made Zionists realise just how little power they had. Wisliceny was bribed.

There were other reasons, but that's the reason they had, they latch onto there. They had it in their heads that between two and \$3 million could have saved at least the Jews of Greece. And, of course, in German documents bear out that Wisliceny, and Hanz Lubin, who I mentioned to you who was the German ambassador, met with the Slovakian MP Tuka, prime minister. And he told him that 35,000 Jews were vital to the economy. So these are people who could be bribed, remember, Wisliceny, and Lubin, he could also be bribed. And they're telling the Slovak head of state, we need the Jews for the economy, so don't deport them. So there is something in it.

And Bauer also believed that Himler might well have given his consent for the negotiations to go on. Because remember, he's playing two games. He's playing two cards against the middle by this time. And this is what Weissmandl later stated, and this is where you move into the realm of fantasy, but whose fantasy is it?

"Apart from the money, they wanted to get in touch with the Jews in America for political reasons that were more important to them than an extermination. He also reported that when the first \$25,000 were paid there was seven weeks respite. After that, three more transports were sent to Poland because no way was found to assemble 25,000 more. When it was delivered, the deportation stopped until 1944." And that is a summary of Weissmandl.

Now, what on earth was Himler up to? May I please take you into the realms of fantasy. Even though Himler, head of the SS, the most fanatical Nazi, in many ways, it was he who had made that terrible speech in 1943 to the SS, where by the way, the good Nazi Albert Speer was present, where he said to them, "You know what it is to murder a thousand and you have remained decent." But he was a total theorist. He really did believe in Jewish world conspiracies. This is the man who went sent expeditions looking for the Holy Grail. This was the man who set up the SS, like a Knight's temple organisation, believe it or not. He still believed in the power of world Jewry. And he believed that the joint was an agent of world Jewry and that the joint could determine the fortunes of America.

So this is Bauer, remember. Bauer once said in a very interesting interview, that both antisemites and philosemites believe in what you consider almost the occult power of world Jewry. Look, if you're rational, what is absolutely obvious, what is obvious, you are rational. The Jews are being murdered. Who has all the power? The Nazis and their allies. What is happening to the Jewish people? And yet the fantasy of Jewish power, Jewish money, Jewish communism, Jewish capitalism, whatever, it still exists even in the minds of a man who is in charge of the SS, in charge of the murders. But now we come really into, I suppose, the most painful area of all. And that is what I've already touched on. And that of course is Hungarian Jewry because it's at this period of course, that when Hungarian Jewry are attacked, what

happens is that Rabbi Weissmandl and Gisi Fleischmann, they get in touch. And not only that, there are reports sent because people escaped from Auschwitz. And I suppose the most famous escapee was Rudolf Vrba.

Should we have a look at some of the pictures? If you don't mind, Judi. That's Dieter Wisliceny who of course was later executed. That's Rudy Vrba. I had the honour of meeting him. He was an incredibly clever, charismatic, attractive man. And his wife died quite recently. I heard that from one of our students, his first wife, somebody online. She died in Highgate in North London. She wrote a book about her experiences.

His story is incredible. So I'm going to tell his story because this is another hero. He was born in Slovakia, his family name was Rosenberg. His family owned a sawmill near Tanava where they lived in 1941. You see, if you think about Jews in more agrarian areas, what do you think they were doing? You've got a peasant society and who were running the industries in the main Jewish families. In 1941, as I said, the Slovak had already made it impossible for Jews to go to school, to study, et cetera.

So what happens is he can't go to school. He's excluded from the gymnazium in Bratislava, where he was a brilliant student. He found work as a labourer. He studied at home, he studied particularly 'cause he wrote his autobiography. That's why we know so much about him. He studied English, Russian, and chemistry. That's when he met his future first wife. It's in February '42, remember the Slovaks begin to deport thousands of Jews to reservations and I've already talked about how they pay. He's a young man. He decides he's going to make it to London to join the Czech army. And he had the equivalent of 10 pounds from his mother. And he set off for the border with a map, matches, and 10 pounds from his mother.

Well, of course he's arrested, he escaped, he's arrested again, and he's deported to Majdanek. This is where he tragically saw his brother for the last time. His brother and family have been deported to Majdanek and he sees his brother, and he of course encountered the capos. He was a big, strong boy. He managed to get a job as a labourer. And he was then transferred to Auschwitz. He was helped by a capo and who assigned him to work in the SS food store.

I think when you're dealing with characters like Vrba who manage to stay alive, there's always this survivor guilt, I think with characters like him. I'm not a psychologist, but when you see so many of your people and family going to the gas chambers and you manage to survive, oh, it's so complicated. It's important that we keep our eye on the ball and remember who the perpetrators are.

And he talks about Himmler visiting on the 17th of July, 1942. He talks about him watching a gassing as he put it. And the inmates were told to prepare for Himmler's visit that everything had to be spotless. The insanity of it all. In August, 1942, he's assigned to Canada. Now what is Canada? Canada was the land of dreams. It was the department in Auschwitz department where they sorted prisoners' possessions. The good stuff was sent back to Germany because I

remember a Hungarian friend of mine saying, in the end, what were Jews worth? It was their property. It was their residual property. Judi, we've lost the picture.

- [Judi] I know. Do you want it back on again, Trudy?

- Yes if you don't mind, if you don't mind, darling. If you can't do it, it doesn't matter.

And this is what he later said. "And the whole murder machine could work on one principle, that the people who came to Auschwitz didn't know there where they were going and for what purpose." They knew that panic would slow everything up. Now he planned an escape and he had a lot of help to do that escape because there was an underground in Auschwitz. This capo was part of it. Even in hell, those of you who've been to Auschwitz, it is huge. There is the prisoner of war camp. And because he was in Canada, the place, Canada seemed to be paradise because you had a little more food rations and you were finding possessions. He actually found a child's atlas.

And on the 29th of June, 1942, he was deported on the 29th of June, 1942. He escapes in April '44. That's how long he survived. And he escaped with a man called Alfred Wexler. What they did was they had been given tobacco, but because they were on work detail in Canada, which was outside the main extermination camp, there was a perimeter fence and then, which was electrified, then there was a sort of no man's land and another tent. There were another fence. There were huts along the no man's land, the between the two perimeter fences.

A Russian prisoner of war had informed him that very strong smelling Russian tobacco dried would deter the dogs because the minute someone went missing, the dogs would be sent. And they hid in the hut, under a hut for three days. And then they managed to make it out of the camp. They walked out and by following the river somehow, and they were aided on the way, they were aided by some righteous Poles. This was an underground network. They finally made it to Slovakia and the main message from them was that the railway lines are being laid almost to the crematorium, because remember what Vrba said? He had been told and he realised that, just imagine at the end, between 12,000 and 15,000 people a day are being murdered if there's a panic.

I saw him interviewed and he said, "If you know, at the end of a journey, if a mother knows her child is going to be killed, she will go crazy." She will make so much trouble that it will panic the guards as well. And what he wanted to do was to create the master panic. And when they get back to Slovakia, they dictate the memoirs. And he believed, and more or less, and remember, Rabbi Weissmandl had already alerted them to the fact that deportations could be stopped. And also he'd had this report and another couple had already escaped, had escaped as well. And in the Vrba report it was more or less 10%, one way or the other, the number who've been murdered.

It's extraordinary because remember, he's a highly intelligent man. He had access to the

underground, he collated information and he had an encyclopaedic memory, and he got it all down. And there was an underground in Slovakia. daughter-in-law helped with the translation of the document because the document had to be got out. It got out to remember when I looked at Hungarian Jewry, it's got out and in November '44, it's actually published after a long delay by the War Refugee Board and the headline in the New York Herald Tribune, "Most shocking document ever issued by an American government agency."

And remember, the mass deportations of Hungarian Jewry begin on the 19th of May, 1944. Vrba claimed until the day he died, that the deportees had they have been warned what awaited them, they might have refused to board the trains, or at least it would've been disruptive enough to stop the deportations. Now, from late June until July '44, so much material appeared in the newspapers. It was open now. It was particularly in Switzerland where you had the joint, the world Jewish Congress. Now, by the time the deportations finally halted in Hungary, never forget over half of Hungarian Jewry had been murdered. And to the end of his days, Vrba blamed Kasner who had the report by the 3rd of May and had a copy of it when he visited his hometown of Napoca. Now, as I said, when I covered this terrible affair with you, what, to me, it's all about his powerlessness. Yes, in the end, who had the power to stop it? And I think this is a lesson, we've talked in the past about .

This is one of the most terrible lessons, and it's important for you to really understand that the terrible bitterness, what can I tell you? Wexler himself wrote his autobiography "Escaped From Hell." What happened to Vrba? Oh, just I should mention, 383 articles about Auschwitz appeared in the Swiss place between the 23rd of June and the 11th of July, 1944. We know that Otto Komoly gave the report to Geisler Suss, who was member of the Hungarian independence movement. And through her, it made its way to Hungarian church officials. So before May the 15th. So there were good people in Hungary who were being alerted. And the Jewish Chronicle on the 16th of June, 1944, the headline "Bomb the Death Camps."

This was a story from Isaac Grundman of the Jewish Agency in Palestine. On the 10th of June, 16th of June beg your pardon, '44, the BBC World Service reported on the murders and this is what it said, "In London, there's a precise report on the mass murders in Bergenal," they use the term Bergenal. "All those responsible for this mass murder will be held responsible." 26th of June, the Jewish Telegraph agency, hundred thousand Jews murdered. The Manchester Guardian published two articles. BBC Home Service begins to mention Auschwitz as an extermination camp. 7th of July, 400,000 Hungarian Jews sent to concentration camp.

Later on, Vrba, he stays in Slovakia and he joins the the Slovakian partisan operation. I'm going to talk about in a minute. He moved to Prague, he graduated in medicine and then in chemistry. And what happened to him then? He got his PhD. He had children, he went to Israel, but he decided it wasn't for him because he felt so bitter that his own people were not saved. And he actually finished, he went back to the UK. He became a British subject. He wasn't called to testify at the Eichman trial, but he did contact the Daily Herald. And his story was written in five instalments.

The headline, this is 19 February, 1961. Those of you who were around will remember the incredible coverage of the Eichman trial and the headline of the articles. I warned the world of Eichmann's murders. He testified at the Frankfurt trials and he wrote his memoirs. They were called, "I Cannot Forgive." The problem with Vrba, he's a controversial figure. He did minimise the role of the other three escapees. He also, his view of Zionism personally is not one I will go along with and much more important than me, Bauer and the majority of historians don't go along with it.

In Canada, he resumes his career, became a Canadian citizen. He was a research fellow at Harvard. And his last important testimony was at the trial. Many of you'll remember this in 1985, at the trial of Holocaust denier, Ernst Zundel, Raul Hilberg the great historian testified with him. So the other thing before I go on the Slovak uprising, as a response to the report, the Pope actually issued an encyclical. Now this is fascinating. I want you to listen very carefully.

"We are being besieged in various quarters to do everything in our power that this noble and shiverous nation, the suffering is already so heavy endured by a large number of unfortunate people because of their nationality or race must not be extended or aggravated." That's the 25th of June, 1944 from Pius the 12th. And I promise you later on I will be lecturing on him. But you will mention, and maybe this is my bias, there is no mention of the word Jew.

Now, I don't want to leave it there because I do want to quickly talk about the Slovak uprising because between August the 29th, 1944 and October, 1944, there is an uprising. It's planned by several groups. The Czechoslovak Aryan party, Gregarian party, beg your pardon, the Communist Party, various estranged Czech nationalists and a group of army officers. They set up the Slovak National Council. And the Army officers said they would accept the authority of that and also the Czech government, because remember, Slovakia is broken away. It still Czechoslovakia.

The problem was they had differing aims. Some of them believed in a united Democratic Czechoslovakia. And the Slovak faction of the Communist Party believed that Slovakia should go into the Soviet Union. And unfortunately, the differences did lead to a lot of infighting and weakening. The plan rested on the fact that the Soviet army is advancing. And what they hoped was if they could induce an uprising. Now, the majority of those involved in the uprising were long Catholics. They were Protestant or Orthodox. It's fascinating this, and before the uprising, by the spring of '44, those of you who have been to Slovakia will know of but beautiful Tatra mountains. Their mountainous and the partisans were already fighting in the mountains. And to forestall the partisans going any further, the German army invades Slovakia without, of course, the Slovak government nominally independent, but allied to Germany doesn't put up any interference.

Now, the revolt actually managed, the partisans managed to capture quite a large area with a population of about 800,000 people. And in this liberated area, they proclaimed a Czech

Republic and a government established. The point was the Germans had far superior manpower. There were 60,000 rebels, of which 16,000 were partisans. Unfortunately, in the end, of course, it fell. But they held out, remember, they held out for quite a long time. They held out from the end of August till the end of October. Another reason it didn't succeed is interesting. The Allies didn't give it any help. The Western Allies, because they felt it's the Soviet sphere of influence. And the Soviets didn't help.

Remember what had happened with the Polish uprising? They wanted a Soviet state. They didn't want a Slovak state. Now, there was a lot of Jewish participation in the Slovak uprising. I've mentioned already that there were three Jewish labour camps in Slovakia. And they'd already had their underground group and they'd already been established, young people offering, really offering resistance to the Germans. And a contact was established between the resistance groups in the camps and through a communist Jew, a member of the Slovak National Resistance. And Jews were included in the strategy. And of course they wanted to fight for it because if the Slovak uprising succeeded, it meant that the further 20,000 Jews of Slovakia so far untouched because of the deportations would be saved.

Now more than 2000 Jews actually fought in the uprising. 10% of the partisan forces were Jewish. 500 of the Jewish fighters fell in battle. And 17% of those, that's 17% of the partisans, the 200 man Novaki cell. This is one of the camps felt, was under the command of a communist Jew, Dr. Mulber Milan, but it had a commissar, a man called Spritzer. He was the Jewish commissar. And they fought as a separate unit. Now, it was during the uprising. The one thing the British would do was allow parachutists in. You would remember this great story of Hannah Szenes. Four Jewish parachutists were sent into Slovakia. Three were killed to help with the uprising.

One of them Hein Hemish survived and continued fighting till the end of the war. But as the Germans began to retake the area, the horror for the Jews began again. Nearly 5,000 were captured, mainly civilians. Along with the 19,000 partisans, the Slovak partisans that were captured. More than 1,500 Jews were murdered in a small village called Kremnica. By March '45, 13 and a half thousand Jews have been deported to Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen or to Ravensbruck.

One of the problems of deportation to Auschwitz, one of the problems inverted commas, was that the war is coming towards its end and the Nazis are thinking of pushing the Jews back into Germany. But because it was so late in the war, about 10,000 Slovakian Jews actually survived. They've survived the camps. And a further 5,000 actually survived, hidden by the Slovaks. Good people and quite a few hundred survived in the Tatra Mountains, still fighting with the partisans.

The end of the story, Tiso fled to a Capuchin monastery in Bavaria. He's arrested by the Americans who returned him to the Czechs. He insisted being tried in his canonicals, the accusations that he was responsible for the breakup of the Czechoslovak state. He was

responsible for creating a totalitarian fascist regime, from '42 remember, he took the title of leader. He was responsible for the implementation of quote unquote, the radical solution to the Jewish question. He had founded the Hlinka Guard and the Hlinka youth, the fascists, the destruction of democracy, torturing, imprisoning and killing 3,000 opponents of the regime, damaging the state finances, inciting anti-Jewish hatred. And not only approved the deportation of Jews, but paid the Nazis for it and delivered Allied prisoners of war to their death. He was found guilty of treason. He applied to Benesch, of course, back in power for clemency. And it was denied and wearing his clerical outfit, completely unrepentant, he was hanged on April the 18th, 1947.

Under communism, 'cause later on, of course, the communist regime took over in Czechoslovakia. And I'll be talking about that later on in the series. He was denounced as a clerical fascist. So that is the, another extraordinary story, the story of Slovak Jewry. So let me have a look at the questions and I don't think I can spend too much time because of course we have, we have another important, am I correct Judi, we have another important lecture tonight.

- [Judi] We have another in an hour, Trudy?

- [Trudy] Yes.

Q&A and Comments

- [Judi] I see on the chat there's a lot of questions they're asking about the name of the documentary you mentioned at the start. Can you just mention that again please?

- Oh it's Martin Rudin. If you go into Prime, put in Martin Rudin, no, not Martin, Mattie Rudin, R-U-D-I-N and it will come up for you.

This is from Susanna. "My little town I come from is about 50Ks from Bratislava. My father used to say that even though he never moved house, he still lived in Hungary, the Austrian Hungarian Empire, Czechoslovakia the Slovak protectorate, and again in Czechoslovakia."

Q: May I ask why you chose to speak about Slovakia?

A: I chose to speak about Slovakia because basically the Slovaks deported the Jews and paid the Nazis for it. And it always intrigued me this kind of home bred fascism. I could have spoken about many countries and I will be having a meeting with Wendy. You've got to bear with us because there are so many issues, ways that we can go with these talks. And so bear with us and as I said on a previous talk, those areas we won't cover. I promise you a very good bibliography.

And this is from Judi. "Thank you for the words of support, Trudy and Judi. Much appreciated by us in Israel."

Yeah, and this is from Catherine. "I recommend the film "The Man with the Iron Heart." That's about Hydrick. It is a brilliant film if you can take it.

This is from Linda in Toronto. "The recent study says that three quarters of American Jews say that remembering the Holocaust is essential to being Jewish." There's a whole issue on that, Linda, a debate another time. Do we... It's marked us. There's no doubt about it, but is our whole Jewish identity to be built on such negative consciousness? It's got to be on positive Jewish identity too.

This is from Henry. "On September the fourth, 1940, my cousin and wife belonged to a group of approximately three and a half thousand Jewish refugees from various countries who set up from Bratislava to Palestine in four ships. The journey took a long time and was very challenging. The ships were overcrowded. There was a constant shortage of food and fuel. The crew behaved irresponsibly. Across the Danube, the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean, the ships finally arrived at the port of Iver. British were detained. The British detained us here, who deported most of the refugees to Mauritius, where they lived in prison, despite strong protests and the Haganah bombing of one ship, which claimed more than 200 lives. Only the survivors of the ship that were bombed were allowed to stay in Palestine. Most of the Deportees had to stay in Mauritius until the end of the war. 126 died there. Him and Frieda Barielle were among the deceased."

Henry, there are so many terrible stories. I have looked at the issue of the illegal ships and this is the problem. We know the Nazis did it and with all their helpers, but it's also the closing of the doors. Almost closing of the doors to Palestine caused so much misery. And you can make the case that it did, in the end, if the world doesn't want Jews, then what recourse will the Nazis have but to murder them? It's such a painful, controversial issue. The irony is that the foreign minister of Slovakia is an Israel to show solidarity.

Jonathan, what can I say to you? The Austrians, the Slovaks, look, it's such a strange story. Will the day ever come where we are not headline news? Luckily in London tonight, we were not headline news because the BBC has been completely, and this was the BBC I was listening to, has been completely wrapped over the coals, over the Princess Diana interview, so. Wisliceny Betty Lowenstein, W-I-S-L-E-C-E-N-Y.

Q: Why were the Slovak so different from the Czechs?

A: Ah, I hoped I'd explained that last week. I think it had a lot to do with leadership. You had Mazare and Venish and tragically the great Slovak leader died in a plane crash in 1990. Also, Slovakia was less educated in terms of, and you had this Tiso who was a brilliant rabble rouser. They were less educated in the belief in democracy.

The name of the documentary, I can't remember, I'll give it to you next week if you can't find it.

What is the film on Prime? Yes a lot of people, put in the name Mattie Rudin, R-U-D-I-N. A lot of

you want that. It's a fascinating story, "The Children of Survivors." And just for your edification, one of the things that we are doing later on is that Philippe Sand. You may remember those of you who listened to his interview with Dennis, Judge Dennis. He's going to be in conversation with Nicholas Frank, who is the son of Hans Frank the governor of Poland. So, and he's completely repudiated his father. So, and of course Phillip Sanders has written those brilliant books. "East West Street" and "The Rat Line." So we're going to be dealing with it then.

This is from Shani, "My father's family lived in Bratislava during the war. Kalish is the name. No one else could get out. Martin and my father's sisters were deported in '42 on the first transports. My grandparents and other family members, may they rest in peace." Oh my goodness.

This is from Shirley. "What is the name of the document..." Yes. So many of you want that name.

Batter got all the Jewish doctors who worked in the hospital out of Slovakia. They worked in Batter shoe shops until they were able to work with Doc. Yes, that was an extraordinary story of people who did rescue. Look at some of the industrial complexes and what they did. Look at the record of those who worked with the Nazis and those who tried to save.

This is from Sonya. "My mother's family, initially all girls and children were forced to leave to load the train, destination Auschwitz. She lost 32 members of only one brother and she survive." I mean, this is so immediate to so many people who are listening today.

This is from Sonya again, "I never had the pleasure of family. Growing up in Bratislava learned to speak Slovak, Hungarian and German. Also had to sit in a Slovak next to the children of former Nazis." Yeah.

This is from Ruth. "Very proud to be a member of WIZO for 37 years."

This was from Ellie. "Rabbi Weissmandl had huge charisma. My parents knew him, and Gisi Fleischmann." Thank you for that, Ellie. You do know that when the website's up, so many of these comments with your permission will go online because we are creating an incredible resource of your memories.

This is Barbara, "Rabbi Weissmandl taught my uncle at the Yeshiva in Nitra before the war and my first cousin lived in Mount Kisco for many years." Wow. Yes Ellie, I do know the story of Grun Hartau who chartered a ship for Jews. Yeah. There's lots of stories. This is the trouble, we can only really skim the surface. Nitra is pronounced Nitra. Thank you, Ellie.

As I said to you, I am so English and I'm so bad at, I'm so English in one way, I'm very bad at foreign languages.

This is from Simon. "Could you discuss the fate of the Jews in the Hungarian speaking part who

were, they were only taken away in '44 by the Hungarian Police rather than the Slovak." Yes, yes. That was part of Hungary. And of course, that's one of the tragedies, Simon, this is so late in the war.

Q: Did the Christians other than Slovakian Catholics help Jew?

A: Robert, a lot of Protestants helped Jews. A lot of secular people helped Jews. If you want to look at rescuers, it's a fascinating area of study that there is not enough work done on it. That's who we should study. What creates a rescuer? And there's no rhyme or reason. It's, some are religious, some are communists, some are rich, some are poor. Men, women from all walks of life. But what they did tend to do is to have rather reckless personalities. They're angry and most of them were pretty secure.

This is from Kathy. "My father was in Galanta, a town outside Bratislava, while he escaped to Palestine and was interned by the British. His brother was taken as part of the Jewish labour force. Sadly, his wife and children probably perished fellow members of my family." I'm so sorry.

Muriel, "Is one a hero if they escape and leave their wife and children on a train heading to extermination? Weissmandl then marries the daughter of Rabbi . Again someone who leaves his people on escape to freedom. I don't condemn someone in their position, but I certainly wouldn't call them heroes." Muriel, this is so dark. It is so, so, so dark. I would not... Where I think he was heroic. How he went back to Slovakia in 1939. That I would say was heroic. He didn't have to. Look, we are in hell. And don't forget the great Primo Levi called it the grey zone. I would not presume to pass moral judgement . It's complicated. This is also the world of the ultra religious, and it's a world that I don't have enough knowledge of to be able to comment for you. But I know it's, what I would say to you is I try and focus my anger or anger on the perpetrators.

This is Mary Richmond. "Vrba also asked my father to escape Andrew Middleman. But my father declined. He survived three years in Auschwitz." My goodness, what a story you would have to tell.

This is from Jillian. "Rudy was fascinating, debonair and charismatic." Yes, he was all of that. He launched our annual Holocaust series in Edmonton. It was privilege. Wexler died in 1957.

Q: Did local partisans try to sabotage the railway lines?

A: It was in completely the wrong area, Joy.

Oh, this is sweet, Hillary. "I hope your amazing knowledge will be passed down to our grandchildren." This is what I said to you. If anything, Wendy and I have discussed this, if anything, and I think what's happened with lockdown, university for me, and also for Wendy and my colleagues, it's your incredible stories that are coming out. Can you imagine what it's like for me who teaches in Britain to have the opportunity to meet all of you from all over the world? And we have a shared interest. It's a great and humbling experience. What I'm saying to you is we

have got to give our children knowledge. I totally agree with you, how we do it. Look, I, under my desk, have an AO level in modern Jewish history. We have got where, however we do it, we've got to make sure that a lot of Jewish kids go to Jewish schools that Jewish history is taught properly in Jewish schools. And we've got to do everything we can so that it's taught in the outside world. Because you can't just teach the Holocaust out of the context of Jewish history. Don't get me too passionate. I get crazy on this.

This is from Sonya. "My father was in an underground group as a typographer, issuing false documents, hundreds and served, many saved million in Israel." Now you see these incredible memories.

Q: How many Slovakian Jews survived in hiding?

A: About at least 5,000.

This is from Elli, "One of my best friends was born in Slovakia and hidden the forest for a while. She and her parents managed to escape to Montreal." Fabulous. It was Rudy Vrba who escaped who came finally to Canada.

Myrna is recommending "The Choice" by Edith Eager.

This is from Rochelle. "Gosh, I hope Lockdown University won't end when we're out of lockdown." Wendy and I don't want it to end. So hopefully if you listen, we won't end.

Jennifer. Brilliant as always. Oh brother. I like compliments. But don't go too crazy. We all have to learn and learn and learn. But thank you very much. It's painful giving this kind of lecture.

The classic film on Aryanization in Slovakia is the "Shop on Main Street." Thank you for bringing that to our attention, Kathy.

Please watch "The Denial." Esther, that's on Netflix.

- [Judi] Trudy?

- Yes. I think we have to stop. I think we have to stop there. Except, can I say that regarding Mauritius, there's a movie called "The Atlantic Drift." One of the survivors living in Toronto was part of the history. Marilyn, I know the documentary on Matti Rudin is available on Prime in England. That's all I know. Should we stop there, Judi? 'Cause they've got a very important lecture next, haven't you?

- [Judi] Sorry, Trudy. My internet seems to be going down so I keep losing you, so-

- Should we stop now because we've got-

- [Judi] Yes, we have another lecture starting in 45 minutes.

- Okay I wish all of you well, and this is an important lecture. I think that it's Robert Fox and I think it's going to be a very important lecture. So bless you all and I will see you I think on Tuesday.

- [Judi] Tuesday. Yes. So thank you everybody. Thank you, Trudy. Stay safe everybody, and see you all soon. Bye-bye.

- Stay safe. God bless.