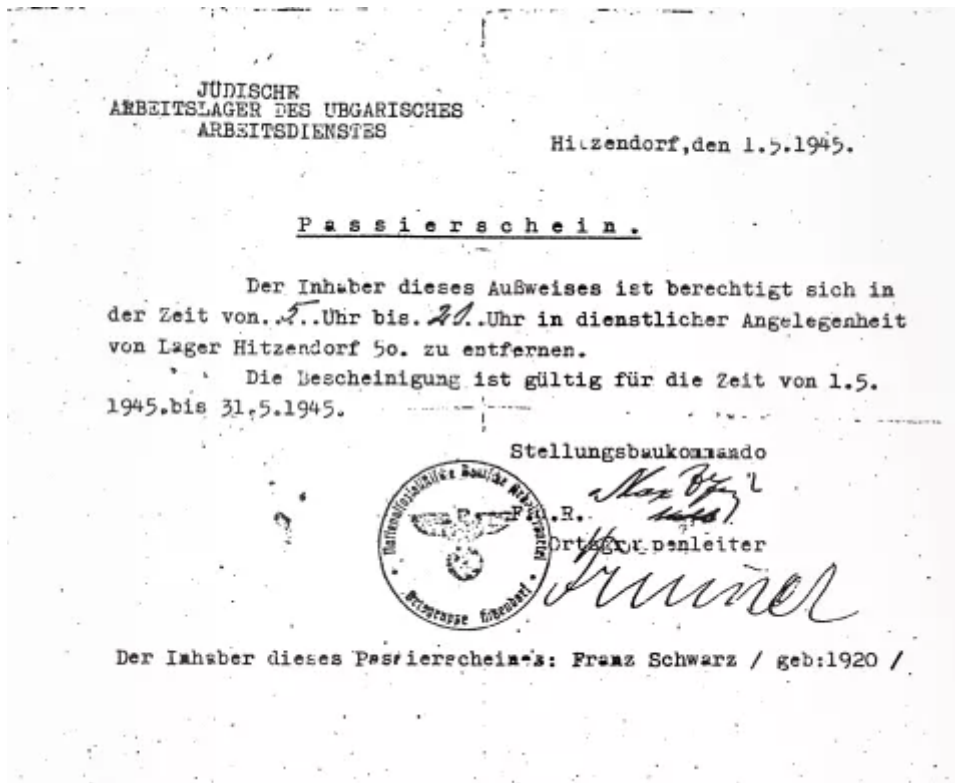


Ferenc Szabados Departure Permission



This was my departure permission, with which I could officially leave the grounds of the Hitzendorf labor camp. The permission was signed by a German construction manager, and was valid from May 1 to May 31, 1945.

I was drafted into the work service on October 13, 1941 into the V/2 kmsz. company in Hodmezovasarhely. From that time, ...they then took me to Korosmezo, in the Ukraine, where we built tank traps and bridges. In the fall of 1942, (probably in September) we returned to Hodmezovasarhely. From then on, we were put to work in various parts of the country all the way up to September of 1944. We were in Orgovany, Pahi, and Csengodo, where they made us build military training areas. In the beginning of 1944, we went to Szeged. When the Russian groups reached the city in September 1944, they [the Hungarians] marched us through Sandorfalva, Baja, Mohacs and Pecs all the way to Kormend. From Kormend in the beginning of October 1944, they deported us to Eberau, Austria.

They took us to work in a little village called Eberau, near the border. Technical troops watched us, not military SS. In Eberau, the Jews built tank and armor traps. So if the Russians come with tanks, they'll meet a big wall, and won't be able to pass. The residents weren't bad. They cooked for us there. We went for dinner, or some slop to eat. We were housed in a school, where Germans came. A one-armed German officer was in charge. They told us the sick would be taken to a place where Jewish doctors would take care of them. We were happy for them. Some among us were already getting weak, they couldn't handle the rigors. They were taken the next day. My buddy reported in sick. Some guys going to work had seen, from a distance, that they were making the sick dig their own graves, then shooting them in the head.

All of a sudden, they blew the warning siren, that we had to pack immediately. They took us to the road leading West, thousands of people, but they didn't take us on the highway. We left the village, then had to strike out up a mountainside. We went across this mountain for a day, and got down the other side, so we wouldn't have to go through other villages. It seems they didn't want us to be seen there. And they drove us, they killed them. When they took us towards the west, there was a camp. They wanted to bring us there. But the camp was temporary, they'd killed everybody there. By the time we arrived, the camp was empty. So then we went the whole way through the villages after all. There were SS-workers everywhere, they pushed us forward, further. Those who had taken us to the lager, suddenly just disappeared. At this time, the Germans were fleeing, they left in their horrible tanks, they were in trouble. They waited for the Russians to arrive. Many thought that the Russians liked the Jews. But they were taken prisoner.

One of the Germans was a commander, some assigned commander. Not SS, they'd just conscripted him and put him with the Jews. You could talk to him. He told us the situation was dangerous. He let us know that he didn't know what will become of us. He also told us not to go to him, because if they see him talking to us, they'll immediately transfer him, and we'll get a killer instead. We did our best to avoid him. That commander had some kind of plant, furniture factory in Hitzendorf, fifteen kilometers from his house. A boy from Mako knew where this village was, where the commander lived. When we arrived in Hitzendorf, this Hungarian soldier went to him, looked for him, and told him we were here. The arrow cross there, that is, the SS harassed him about where his Jews are. They put you with the Jews – they told him – so where are the Jews? Well, I don't know what he told them, what lie he said. He put us in his factory. We slept in the plant, but didn't work, there wasn't anything to do. But he took us to work from there, and the SS from Graz would come and ask "who are they?". He didn't tell them we were Jews. "They say they're work relief from Hungary, very good workers and good German friends." So the SS would leave.

But the Germans were already falling apart. I saw some German soldiers playing around when another armed gang appeared, and they shot them. At the end, the situation was completely chaotic, they were escaping in any direction, it didn't matter which. I was liberated, and neither the Germans, nor the English appeared, but we saw the Russians leaving. They never came into the factory, we never went out. And then we were liberated, we were in the factory for about ten days.