

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Stephen Dachi  
November 19, 1990  
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## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Stephen Dachi, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on November 19, 1990 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview cannot be used for sale in the Museum Shop. The interview cannot be used by a third party for creation of a work for commercial sale.

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**STEPHEN DACHI**  
**November 19, 1990**

01:00:24

Q: Would you tell me your full name please?

A: My name is Stephen Frank Dachi.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Budapest, Hungary, in April of 1933.

Q: Uh, tell me about your your early childhood.

A: Well, I was a child of a couple of doctors. My father was a dentist and my mother was a pediatrician and uh in 1936, when I was not quite three years old, my father passed away in a sort of a medical uh mishap and uh then my mother died shortly thereafter, so I was left to be raised by my grandparents, uh just before the war started, and my grandparents were living in Timisoara, in Romania, so that from Budapest uh I ended up uh going to Timisoara and that's where I went to school and lived until uh after the war in 1948 when we left.

Q: What was Timisoara like for a young child? What was your family life like, friends, that sort of a thing?

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A: Well, uh that small city of about a hundred thousand people was a little bit out of the mainstream of the worst of the war and uh life was uh was fairly uh fairly quiet, but uh there were plenty of periods of danger and excitement uh during the war that is, when uh...there were uh lots of bombing raids because Timisoara was on the railway line and uh when the Allies were bombing the Ploesti oil fields in Romania, they were also bombing the uh railway tracks that were leading the oil away from the area. And then uh once in a while uh German troops would come through. Uh there weren't any occupying forces there normally. Of course, Romania was fighting on the side of the Axis uh powers during the war, but occasionally uh some Nazi contingent would come through and uh uh come into town. I remember once uh one of their commanders made a speech from the main theater saying that that night there was going to be a Jew hanging from every second window on the main square, and uh they did round up and take people away. I, I remember in uh going to school in the morning sometimes and having my classmates tell about how their fathers were taken away in the middle of the night uh almost always never to be seen again. So there was plenty of tragedy, plenty of stress and excitement.

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Uh we...our family was not Jewish but we were nevertheless uh uh always in danger anyway. My grandparents uh were very conscious of having this small boy to raise and my grandmother was always talking about how she had to somehow live uh until I was twenty-one to uh fulfill her responsibility that she assumed when my parents passed away, but I know uh because they told me that uh, you know, they lived in dread of that knock on the door in the middle of the night also, and they kept a couple of vials of poison on their bedstands, because they told me that they were not going to be taken away, that if the Germans came to take them away, they would commit suicide. Uh I don't know what would have happened to me uh but in any case that did not happen. Uh and we uh we lived with that until finally the Russian troops came through in uh in...sometime in the spring or summer of 1944. The Germans were pushed back and uh then we had to start worrying about about the Russians. Uh I was uh I was a Hungarian citizen living in Romania and at the time Romania had switched sides and was now fighting on the side of the Russians. Now they switched sides just as the Russians reached the Romanian border, so uh there was not that much destruction in Romania. Uh but Hungary put up very stiff resistance because the Hun...uh the Hungarian Nazi uh government was one of uh Hitler's firmest allies. Admiral Horthy...

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Q: Excuse me...if we can save some of that and let the historians give that kind of a background...I'd like to stick with your story...you have a particularly interesting one at this point. Uh what happened to you when the Russians came in?

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A: Well, because I was a Hungarian citizen and the Hungarians were still fighting on the side of the Nazis, uh the Russians were rounding up Hungarians to take them away uh and so one day a Russian soldier came to our house and uh said that I was going to go with him, and my grandmother uh who was a Romanian citizen and was not involved in this so they didn't uh ask any questions of her...uh said "Well, you're not taking him away" and he said "Well, we are, so you better give him a winter coat because he's going far away where it's going to be cold." So my grandmother, bless her soul, she thought that if she refused to give me a coat that they wouldn't take me away uh but of course they did. So then uh we uh...I was taken to this basement of a police station where the people on that particular day where being rounded up, and I recognized some of them and I know that subsequently uh, you know, none of those people that I saw there were ever seen again because we were uh scheduled to be taken away uh to Siberia, but just as uh this round-up was in the...going on and we were in there in the basement, the German bombing raid came and there were bombs flying around all over the place, exploding right around us and uh glass shattering and uh door frames cracking and people...guards, prisoners, everyone was uh was uh lying down on the floor with their heads...hands covering their head and uh, you know, I was eleven years old, so I thought this was the time for me to make a getaway so I just climbed out the window

and ran down the street without worrying about my safety or life...I mean there were bombs falling right on the street where I was running. Craters would open up in front of me and I had to get around, but I managed to somehow uh get away from there and then I ran to a synagogue uh some distance away and there uh a rabbi took me in and hid me in the basement for several days until uh the the round-up seemed to abate and uh he told me that because during the war so many people had helped save Jewish lives by hiding people...that was done somewhat more in Romania maybe than in Hungary...uh that he was uh reciprocating a little bit, taking some people in now that uh the tide had turned and uh so he he kept me there for a few days and then eventually I went back home uh but decided no one will ever get me again, and uh uh, you know, we always uh slept and sat, whatever, with with a getaway path in mind in case someone came in to get us. To this day, in in any restaurant I go to, I always sit with my back to the wall and facing the door, because deep in my subconscious I'm still on the alert for somebody coming in to to get me, so these things stay with you forever.

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Q: You are...you had escaped. You're now with your grandparents. Tell us what happened.

A: Well, uh afterwards uh ...

Q: You were liberated or...the Russians had come in. Did they leave you alone after this or...?

A: Yes, they uh...the Russians uh didn't come around again to get me, at least, and then the war ended in '45. I had uh I had a uh an aunt who with her husband had moved to Canada before the war, and so in 1948 we managed to get papers and uh uh got out of there, uh bribing the authorities and having all of our earthly goods taken away from us in exchange for a passport and an exit uh visa. Uh we couldn't get our papers at the same time, so I had to uh travel...I went first. I went by myself from Romania all the way to Canada and then later uh my uh my grandmother followed. My grandfather had already died. In those three years, from the end of the war until 1948, uh we found out how a few of our family members had perished.

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Uh almost all the members of my family died during the war, one way or another. Uh my sister...I had a sister who was eight years older than I was who when my parents died chose to remain in in Hungary and went to live in a convent, and uh during the war the Nazis sort of seized this convent and used the women for housework and uh whatever else...sewing and Lord knows what what else...and then when uh during the siege of Budapest, they uh...when the Nazis were fleeing Budapest eventually...this was in the winter...uh they took my sister and all the other women in the convent with them. My sister already had uh an advanced case of TB they call galloping consumption and so on the truck uh when she got too sick uh on the road to Austria, they just threw her out on the roadside and left her there to to die in uh the snow, and we found out about this because uh another woman who was on the truck

with her who survived came to visit us sometime later to tell us the story, and, you know, that was a common thing that uh many people who survived the Holocaust or the war in some way...at the end of the war they made a special effort to go and visit whenever they could the families of people that that died next to them or that they saw, so that they could recount the circumstances. That happened a lot and we had two or three such visits about other relatives as well as my sister. So that was one act of human solidarity that the few survivors tried to do as a good turn for the relatives of those who had perished.

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Q: How did you then...you were in Canada...you got to Canada...what what did you do then as a young child. You were now thirteen, fourteen...

A: Fifteen...yes. I was fifteen. Well, when I got to Canada I finished high school and my uncle and aunt had helped me get there, and then I went to university and eventually in the '50's uh I studied dentistry in at the University of Oregon. That's how I first came to the United States. And then when I got my dental degree in 1956, I did some advanced uh work, graduate work and I got a graduate degree in uh oral pathology, uh specializing in diseases of the mouth and the face and the neck, and then uh I went into uh academic life and was one of the founders of a new college of dentistry at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, where five of us started a new school, really from a from an empty cornfield and at the end of that period when the first class graduated from there in 1966, I decided to uh to look for let's say new horizons and like so many people uh looked toward a second career. So in 1967 I left the school, left the university and uh initially took a leave of absence and uh joined the staff of the Peace Corps and I uh worked as a Peace Corps Deputy Director and then eventually as a Country Director of the Peace Corps, first in Columbia, then in Venezuela and finally in Brazil and uh that turned out to be a very good and uh wonderful learning experience and so I, I uh resigned my professorship...can't stay on a leave of absence for ever

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...and uh then I was recruited into the Foreign Service and I became a Foreign Service officer with the United States Information Agency, USIA, which uh has the press and cultural sections of American embassies around the world, and they call it USIS...so I worked and stayed with them from 1972 until now and I've had a series of assignments around the world including being uh Cultural Attache in Hungary in uh in the '70's, and then on loan to the Department of State as Consul General in Sao Paulo, Brazil in the mid-'80's.

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Q: So you were in Brazil in the mid '80's and something rather extraordinary happened.

A: Yes. Something...something very extraordinary happened. Uh I remember the day it all began very clearly. On June the 6th 1985...it was only about three months after Lee and I,

my wife and I, had arrived to Sao Paulo to take up my duties as Consul General and uh the phone rang in the morning and it was my press attache, Jim Dandridge, who was calling me to tell me that he had heard on the radio and was watching on television at that very time, that there was an exhumation going on uh for the alleged remains of Josef Mengele and that he thought I should uh know about that. And that was quite a...quite a startling way to start a day which was the first day off, the first holiday that I'd had since I'd arrived, and all of a sudden all of these dim memories came into my mind because I, I really hadn't followed the story of Josef Mengele as closely as perhaps many others had, but it all came back to me in a in a flash about a half a million people whose death he was involved with and uh all of the many times that he had been sighted or thought to have been found before. Uh but I didn't have too much time to to think uh you know, long thoughts because uh things, events began to cascade uh you know, at a very rapid pace.

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Uh I started getting uh phone calls from the Embassy in Brasilia, the capital, from the State Department in Washington, from television, from networks, from newspapers, uh from everywhere because uh, you know, there had been so many times when Mengele had been found and it turned out to be a hoax or false news that uh, you know, if this if this was going to be the real thing, there was tremendous interest everywhere, and more specifically as far as our government and the Department of State and the Justice Department were concerned. Uh there had been an agreement signed only recently between the German, Israeli and American governments that we would coordinate and cooperate on any further Nazi hunts and here uh there was this going on and the U.S. government knew nothing about it, so they were anxious to find out very quickly. And so I began uh right away to to look for my German counterpart, the German Consul there who was very busy uh with all the events going on, but I insisted that he meet me and uh he uh he was not anxious to do it, but eventually uh I didn't...I didn't uh let up and so about midnight that night in a restaurant we finally met and he told me the first part of the story,

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that a few days earlier German uh police had raided the home of Hans Seidlmeier, who was a manager of the Mengele family enterprises in Günzburg what was then West Germany, and uh had found some papers, notes, letters with some addresses on them indicating that uh uh where Mengele either was or had been, so without any knowledge as to whether he was alive or dead, the German authorities immediately came to Brazil, contacted the Federal police and had staked out this house uh whose address they they gleaned from this information, but after a few days of staking the house out and not seeing any any old man who looked uh he would possibly in uh Josef Mengele's category of age group or whatever, they raided the house

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and uh and uh came upon this couple, Wolfgang and Lisalotte Brossert, uh who were German Brazilians and who uh quickly admitted that they had had a role in in uh sheltering and protecting Josef Mengele for the last few years of his life according to the story they told and that when he died by drowning on the beach...he was with them at this beach...that he had had a stroke while he was uh...this is what she said...that he had had a stroke while he was swimming there in this beach town of Bertioga, and uh that uh he therefore drowned because he couldn't get out of the water, and Mrs. Brossert uh decided right there that she didn't want to expose and reveal the whole story of of Mengele's hiding and so on and their role in it most importantly, so she went to some length to bury him under a false name and by bending some rules about the identification of the dead and so on, buried him there some uh five or six years before and uh now took the authorities there for the exhumation and was quite uh forthcoming with information. Uh...

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Q: Who persuaded her to take the authorities? How did they convince her that she had to do this?

A: You mean to to give the information now?...Well, I think she thought the game was up. I think that uh it was uh...she had to make a choice as to whether she was going to try to uh keep up with a whole new package of lies and deception, and I think she probably decided right away that that would be impossible and it would be too complicated and that uh that she couldn't get away with it so I think uh from the beginning she decided uh to cooperate. In other words, she made a decision to bury him under false name, hoping that somehow uh that would do it, but once once she saw that the game was up, one one of the things uh she said when they first raided her house apparently by...according to press reports, was uh "I didn't think it would take you this long to uh to get here."

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So uh...but in in the house there, aside from the various uh uh stories that she told, they also found some photographs. They found a diary that was allegedly that of Mengele that was taken away by hand-writing experts, and uh and some other memorabilia and then she told many stories about Mengele's son having come to visit both when Mengele was still alive and after he died, he came to retrieve some of his possessions, including part of the diary, but she didn't tell him about another part that she kept, so the diary ended up being divided into two two parts. Uh in any event, uh when they exhumed these what were essentially were just bones, then the big project began. Is it him, or isn't it him? And how do you, how do you identify a set of bones that have been buried not too many years ago archaeologically speaking, but quite a few years ago, five or six years. So uh there there were a lot of a lot of sensitive factors involved. First of all, this exhumation took place in Brazil and the Brazilian government and, to some extent, the Brazilian medical experts were very eager to prove that they were fully competent to do such an examination and uh and the Brazilian government



was very eager to prove that they didn't need any foreigners interfering in their internal business, so at first they said that they wouldn't give any visas to foreign specialists to participate in the identification and I received a call from Washington that day telling me that I'd better go in quickly and speak to the Chief of Police uh to to see if we could persuade him to change his mind, because uh these people had to come in, so I went uh the very next morning to call on uh a man who now is has a very widely-known name around the world....Romeu Tuma, who at that time was the Chief of the Sao Paulo Police.

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Now he's the chief of the Federal police for all of Brazil. And I had met him before. I didn't know him well. As I was riding down in the car to see him and I was thinking just what what would I say, you know, so I got there. He was a very...he's a very decent, nice man. Uh a very unusual human being. A very unusual policeman, and I said to him, Dr. Tuma, I uh I was born and raised in eastern Europe also and most of my family perished in the war and in the Holocaust, and this man that we're talking about here, uh is responsible for the death of at least 400,000 people. Four hundred thousand people. And I said that relatives and the survivors and all of their kin, all of the human beings who have shared this terrible historical tragedy, are scattered all over the world and their wounds in many, many, many cases haven't healed yet, and they never will until they know what happened to that man, and even then those wounds will only heal very superficially.

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But Dr. Tuma, all of those people around the world have a right to be present here when we go through this process. They have a right to be witnesses, to be present at the most important identification that we could do in our lifetimes, any one of us. They deserve to be here and these specialists coming from other countries are coming here on their behalf. They're coming here on behalf of all of mankind that suffered this horrible tragedy. And to Dr. Tuma's great credit, he immediately sensed and understood this, and he immediately said yes and the the little mini-crisis was over and the people came and we could begin a more thorough approach of international cooperation in solving this vitally important puzzle,

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So several groups came. There were quite a few specialists who came from Germany to join those who had been there initially who were mostly policemen. And then there was a group of forensic specialists who were contracted by the Justice Department which uh in the last, in the previous few years had inaugurated an Office of Special Investigations, specializing in uh pursuing Nazi uh war criminals and Nazi questions. I think that office was established during the presidency of Jimmy Carter. And uh the U.S. Marshall's Service and the Justice Department also sent uh fingerprint experts and hand-writing experts and other such specialists. And then the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles who retained the services of an independent, private group of forensic specialists, some of whom who had played very

important roles in the identification of the disappeared Argentine citizens after the dirty war there in the '70's where several thousand people disappeared without a trace, and also the Justice Department specialists were very experienced in in these world famous cases, so these uh people all began to to arrive and showed up and the Israeli government sent an observer whose name was Menachem Russek<sup>1</sup>, who I think worked for their Justice Department, to follow events,

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and I remember vividly the first meeting that Dr. Tuma had with all of these newly arrived specialists and their Brazilian counterparts, trying to organize and plan how this process would be done, and I had already met most of them but I hadn't met Mr. Russek, so at the end of the meeting as people were walking out, I followed Mr. Russek and I went up to him and he was a short man with with silver hair, very ruddy cheeks and quite a spring in his step and he was walking out the building and I was sort of walking behind him, and I introduced myself. I told him who I was and I said to Mr. Russek, I said, "I hope that uh we can do this whole process well enough to reach a satisfactory and scientifically acceptable outcome. I know how much that means to you and how much it means to all of mankind." And up to then he'd been sort of walking along and when I said that, he stopped and he turned and looked me in the eye and he pondered the matter for a moment and then he said, "The first time I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Josef Mengele in person was in Auschwitz in 1945 and I certainly hope to have the pleasure to meet him in person one more time," and with that he stopped and turned again and walked right out, but to me in those few words, the whole drama, the whole tragedy, the whole sensitivity of this case came to life in such a powerful way that uh, you know, that the feeling that people have, the need that people have that somehow justice should be done...now you can't do justice with a man who's killed 400,000 people, but you can do the close...closest thing to it no matter how distant. You can somehow close the circle, and if this man in fact died of a natural death without having been brought to justice, then at least let's be clear about the fact that he really is dead and close the circle in that small but very important way.

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Well, uh then the work began. Now I was still only an observer at the time, although uh people knew that I had been an oral pathologist uh at that time I was still the Consul General following events for the U.S. government as part of the agreement that existed. And the specialists went to work uh doing those things that can be done. Now the two basic ways in which remains can be identified are fingerprints, which of course don't exist when only bones remain, and dental x-rays, but in order to use dental x-rays to identify remains, you not only have to have x-rays taken from the skull of the remains but you have to have x-rays

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<sup>1</sup>Menachem Russek, an Israeli police superintendent charged by the Israeli government with the task of tracking war criminals.

from the person known to be the one we're seeking to identify that were in some authentic file prior to his death, and by comparing the two you would have one of the most accurate and reliable ways of identifying remains that are currently known to medical science. Unfortunately, there were no such x-rays available in Mengele's Gestapo files or anywhere else. The only thing that was available in those files was a dental chart which uh from my standpoint as a dentist and with a with a knowledge in dental charting of of the 1980's was uh extremely incomplete. The only thing that chart had was an indication of which teeth that Mengele had examined at the time he entered the SS in uh 1939, which teeth were present and which teeth were absent. That was the only thing on that chart. Now had a tooth in the skull...had there been a tooth in the skull that was present in the skull which was marked as missing in 1939, it would have been proof positive that this was not the skull of Josef Mengele, but there was no such tooth. Uh and other than that one feature, the chart was of no value because he obviously lost quite a number of teeth between 1939 and whenever he died or whenever this skull was being examined, but that was of no value in comparing it to the chart,

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so uh the specialists on these teams went ahead and did some various anthropological examinations that showed that these bones belonged to an old man, that he was a Caucasian male and not of some other racial origin, that his height was extremely close to the height that Mengele was known to have had, and uh there were a number of other examinations carried out on the bone bones, that were consistent with with Mengele. But the the really very important examination that was done was was a procedure called craniometry, in which which is a also very accurate procedure. It just hasn't been around long enough to hold up in court the way dental x-rays would but nonetheless is very uh very accurate in which a number of features of the face, angles and sizes of ear lobes and the corner of the nose, the angle of the bridge of the nose and the lips, the chin and so on, are measured. And then with a scientific measurement can be compared to an overlap and uh this was done with great care there, and it was shown by comparing the photograph of the young Mengele from the SS files with the photograph of the old man that was found in Mrs. Brossert's house, that all of these features matched perfectly and then by superimposing these same features on the skull, which is part of this technique, it was shown that all of these measurements and features coincided between the photograph of the young man and the old man and between both of these photographs and the skull. So between this very powerful positive identification evidence, the other things, the measurements that were taken on the bones and the fact that many things matched with what was known about Mengele, all of the specialists there uh agreed that there was more than ninety-five percent chance that these remains were definitely those of Josef Mengele and uh the American specialists in particular said that with their extensive experience in court testimony, that that evidence was completely sufficient in any American court of law, it would be considered conclusive proof that these remains were that of Josef Mengele.

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So based on that, they decided to call a press conference and announce the results and I remember very vividly a meeting that was held just before the press conference in which Dr. Tuma had gathered all of the people involved in this procedure, and at the end of this whole process and he said "Now I would like each of you individually to stand up and tell me what your findings are." And he went around the room and each individual stood up and said "Dr. Tuma, based on the examination that I've performed and the data that I have seen, I believe that these are the remains of Josef Mengele." And each one in turn stood up and said that in front of all the others, in front of Dr. Tuma, including the American specialists from the Simon Weisenthal Center and the specialists from the U.S. Department of Justice. And I was sitting next to Menachan Russek again who was taking notes uh but was there as strictly an observer, and uh I didn't know what was going through his mind and I don't want to speak for what may have been going through his mind, but I did ask him, "How do you feel now at this moment, Mr. Ruseck, in light of what you said to me before," and he said with that wonderful Jewish sense of humor, he looked at me and he said "Well, better I should stand on his grave than he on mine." And so at the end of this, the press conference was held.

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The results were announced and the news went out all over the world. And then there was a brief period of sort of silence on the world screen. I mean a lot of people were very skeptical at first, who had to re-examine their their feelings in light of this powerful evidence that had come out, but there were...there were others who who had a hard time reaching that point. Frankly, uh, you know, I don't claim to have been through the Holocaust the way uh the survivors from the concentration camps have because I don't think anyone can have that kind of a painful and unbelievably cruel experience that they've suffered but uh even from the little bit that I did, I can certainly see and understand how someone who went through that experience could never accept that in this life a man capable of perpetrating such unspeakable cruelties to their fellow human beings as well as to them, could somehow be allowed by by fate to die a natural death and not be brought to justice. That anyone who can't accept that because of what they've been through because they can't believe that such a thing could occur, I can certainly sympathize with. That's quite different from looking at the evidence and looking at the facts because there are many things in feelings that go beyond facts and conclusive evidence and so on.

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In any case, not too long after that, people started to file their reports from these teams of specialists and in those reports there was another item that occurred while these examinations were going on that I was involved in, because as we were looking there at the photographs and uh people were projecting on the wall the drawings of all these features of Mengele's face from the photograph and the superimposition with the skull, I noticed in a photograph of the old man that there was a scar right here on the face, and I noticed on the skull that was also being projected on the wall, there there was a hole in the bone in roughly

the same area, and I was reminded of the fact that the woman...there were two...you know there were two couples who had protected Mengele. The first one were the ones who hid him for something like fourteen years, because he was in Brazil from 1961 until 1979, and the first fourteen years of that he was hidden by this couple of Austro-Hungarians called Geza and Gitta Stammer, and then when finally they split up, that's when the Brosserts came into the picture as his second set of protectors and uh Mrs. Stammer had recounted that for many, many years, Mengele was afraid to leave the house at all. He wouldn't go to any doctors or dentists, but that he had a number of times a badly swollen face from an abscessed tooth. And because Mengele had been a doctor, of course...uh, you know, I shudder to even say the word because, you know, a a sub-human being like that shouldn't use the word doctor even if he earned such a degree in school, but in any case he was a physician and so he lanced these boils inside of his mouth a number of times in order to to treat the abscess without having to go to a doctor, and because I'd been a professor of oral pathology and the head of the Department of Dental Diagnosis at the University of Kentucky and Kentucky is a poor state in which in eastern Kentucky particularly, and in the days that I was there in the '60's, there were hundreds of people who who suffered from a lack of dental treatment, even in emergencies, and who would who would have these infections that normally in this country nowadays are treated automatically, uh they let them go for months and years at a time and I saw many patients who who would have abscesses that came and went and they never even had the tooth pulled where eventually the infection would break through the bone and enter the sinus above the teeth, you know, the sinuses we have in our head, and uh set up an infection inside the sinuses and then through that hole it would periodically drain, either inside the mouth or out, outside on the face, and so because Mrs. Stammer has said that he had several episodes of swollen jaws and face and I saw on this picture being projected on the wall that there was a hole in the bone in about that place and that there was a scar on the face on the spot where this what they call a fistulous track, the track where the infection drains out would have occurred and there was similar to what I had seen before with patients in Kentucky, that uh that may be a an important link.

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And so the uh the American specialists said well, that's very interesting. Why don't you...why don't you come and uh take a look at the skull itself and see whether you, whether you still feel that way, so that's when I uh first went into the room where they had the bones and, you know, I held this skull in my hands to to to look at it, and holding that skull in my hands I was transfixed. I I drifted off into into another state of mind that uh, you know, I had never experienced before and all of a sudden I saw myself standing in a railway station where 400,000 people were lined up on both sides of the track, standing there with their tattered, torn clothes and their their badly beaten appearance, and I took that skull and I walked down those tracks showing, showing it to everyone there and saying "Here, behold this skull." Here we are, all of us, from different worlds at this time, being present at a what...I don't know...this this vision didn't go beyond this. I didn't know the answer, but I showed that skull to everyone of those 400 people in the few seconds that it took, in my mind, and then the vision passed and I was back with the skull and I saw the hole there and I suggested that this

was indeed very much like a maxillary sinus, a sinus of the upper jaw infection and that I thought this was consistent. Well, this was an interesting piece of evidence matching what someone said who had harbored Mengele, with the actual findings in the skull, so the Americans all thought this was very interesting. They all accepted this although none of them had really seen a case like this before. It's so rare nowadays to have people who will let something like that go for months and years, that uh even these forensic specialists really hadn't encountered it,

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and uh here I have to tell you another little story that uh uh was to me has been a very moving one. But that evening I went home and I was talking to Lee about the fact that, you know, I have some cases, and I had some slides of people just like that of uh people who had sinus infections draining to the face and that these slides were part of my teaching slides that I had used at the University of Kentucky and here it was almost twenty years since I've used them...eighteen years and wouldn't I love to have those slides so I could show the specialists that uh that uh, you know, there was some basis in fact of what I was talking about. Well, these slides were all...I had several thousand slides...six, eight, ten thousand...I don't know how many, and they were all stored in the basement of my mother-in-law who lives in in the greater Washington area, or lived in the greater Washington area and I thought to myself, "How am I going to get these slides. How am I going to get the three or four slides I need from these ten thousand." So I called my dentist in Washington, a friend of mine, good friend of mine. His name is Jay Slotkin (ph). He's a periodontist. And he's Jewish and I called him up and I said "Jay, this is what's going on. I wonder if you would mind going to my mother-in-law's basement and getting out these ten thousand slides and going through them and finding these slides that I need and sending them to me." I was calling him about seven thirty or eight o'clock in the evening, and he said "Well, I'll be glad to do that." He says, "When do you think you would need that." I said "Well, tomorrow morning is when I would need them." So he sort of sucked in his breathe for a moment and then he said, "Alright" and we made arrangements and he went out to Springfield, Virginia, to the basement of the house where my mother-in-law lived and he got down from the top shelf all of these boxes of slides, and he got a colleague friend of his. The two of them went back to his office and that entire night they went through all ten thousand slides that I had until they found the four or five that I needed and the next morning a courier picked them up, gave them to the Pan Am pilot and they flew them down the next day so that I could show them to the specialists as convincing that uh that uh you know, that I knew what I was talking about.

01:58:32

Q: At this point we need to pause. We'll change tapes.

01:58:35

Tape #2

## TECHNICAL CONVERSATION

02:00:25

Q: OK. We're on. We're back on camera. Uh you're uh dentist friends and colleagues had found these, these slides that you needed...tell us what happened when you received the slides, and if you could repeat the question.

A: Well, uh when uh...you know, what happened when I received the slides? Well, uh the slides by that point were just a very important sort of final detail that made the American specialists accept the validity of what I had said about the hole in the skull. Uh but then that was just one more thing and the press conference went ahead as I said earlier and uh everything was closed, but I always felt that I wanted to be sure that Jay Slotkin knew and appreciated how important the role he had played in this case because I knew that it had meant a great deal to him. Uh but this was in 1985. I didn't get back to Washington until 1988, and uh during that time, very sadly Jay uh began to fall ill and has developed a uh this rare disease called A-myotropic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's Disease. It's the same condition that uh Senator Jacob Javits had not too many years ago. It's an awful thing because gradually all the muscles become paralyzed and a person eventually has to live in uh in uh what amounts to a total iron lung, and be uh be maintained on life support systems, and their mind of course stays perfectly clear, and uh this has happened to Jay and uh at the end of 1990 he is stabilized but in a condition wh...and he's being cared for with a wonderful uh group of professionals, but he is completely paralyzed, but when I came back in 1988 uh...

02:03:04

Q: Let's let's stay with this if we can. I need to stay with the with the Mengele search sequence, if that's all right.

A: Do you want me to finish the story about Jay or not?

Q: All right. If if we could make it brief, yeah. Yeah.

A: Well, I don't have to. It's up to you. Well, I was going to say when I came back through arrangements with his friends and family I went out to his home and uh it was a very moving experience in telling him this story that I'm telling now as he sat there uh paralyzed and listening to this, so uh, you know, we were all in tears when we finished but I felt uh the satisfaction of knowing that I could at least tell him it first hand, the story of what role he had played in this case, and it was the first time that I learned the uh meaning of the Yiddish word uh mitzvah, which people were telling me that I had done and uh I felt very good about that. Uh but to get back to the sequence of events, uh by the fall or late summer of 1985, it uh started to become apparent that there was a discrepancy in what the German and Brazilian

doctors had written and what the American doctors had written about this hole in the skull and about the about the possible sinus infection, because the uh the Americans were the ones who questioned me about it, and it was the Americans who who accepted uh what I had to say, but because it was marginal to the uh...back in June...to the process itself, the Germans and the Brazilians never really paid much attention to this little dialogue and in their report they simply wrote that there was an unexplained hole there that uh must have been caused by something or other, possibly after the death of the individual, so when this discrepancy began to show up in the published reports, it was apparent that it had to be resolved right away. Otherwise it would forever leave a vast gap for people to say that well, there's still unresolved questions and so on.

02:05:49

So uh they called me from the Justice Department and they said that we'd better go ahead and do some pathological studies on this hole to see whether it was something that was caused before death, or after death, and of course that can be done by pathological studies because you can prepare tissue from the bone to be examined under the microscope and any evidence of infection that obviously had to be there before death would still be seen in the bones, whereas if it was just a fracture or some other break that occurred after the bones were buried or the body was buried, then there would be no evidence on the microscope of any signs of infection or inflammation or any other healing process that might have occurred, so it's very easy to tell the difference. So I contacted the uh Brazilian pathologist who worked in uh association with the coroner's office and uh then I put on my hat of the pathologist instead of the Consul General's hat, and then the two of us went ahead and in his laboratory with his techniques and procedures, uh tissue was prepared from uh the skull in this particular area around the hole. It was examined under the microscope and it was quite clear that there was a lot of evidence of bone infection, of what some people call osteomyelitis uh that had occurred around this hole and uh then we prepared the photographs and so on and I was able to to advise the Justice Department that indeed uh this was something from a dental infection and not something that occurred after death.

02:07:54

Well, this was so important that the Justice Department then reconvened as many of the specialists that they could co...get, to come to the Smithsonian and this was in about January of '86, the year following all of these events, and I came up and I put on a little seminar to the specialists who were there, showing the slides and all of the evidence that I had worked up together with my Brazilian colleague who had done the laboratory work and uh based on that, everyone who was present...the German specialists as well as the American...agreed that this was evidence of a bone infection of osteomyelitis in the in the jaw skull and that uh both the Brazilian and Germans then modified their report to show that. So that closed a small gap, uh but it still left the big issue open. I said earlier that the specialists at the end of their first set of studies said that the probability was more than ninety-five percent, based on the evidence they gathered, that this was Josef Mengele. And that's good enough for courts of



law and it's good enough in almost all the cases, but Josef Mengele is not one of almost all the cases. Josef Mengele was very special, and if somehow that ninety-five plus percent could be moved to a hundred, we still had an obligation to try.

02:09:44

And when I was up here at the at the Smithsonian conference, the people at the Justice Department, and the head of that office is Neil Scher<sup>2</sup>, uh pointed out to me that the diary which had been found in the home of Mrs. Brossert when the original police raid occurred at the time in June of 1985 when Mrs. Brossert led people to the cemetery<sup>3</sup> in Embu for the exhumation, that this diary was taken away and was examined by hand-writing specialists from the two countries, I presume, but that there was quite unanimous agreement by these specialists that this hand-writing in the diary was the hand-writing of Josef Mengele, because that could be compared with samples of his hand-writing that was available in the SS files, which had been guarded in safe-keeping by the Office of Special Investigation at the Justice Department, so we had an authenticated diary which hand-writing experts agreed about that. And in that authenticated diary, Mengele had many references to visits to both physicians and dentists and the one and and so they gave me uh the information about a number of visits to doctors that eventually after he dared come out of hiding at least on those occasions when he had to go to a doctor or a dentist which was in the second half of his eighteen years in Brazil, uh that he would make notes in this diary. His diary spoke nothing about the war or his personal views about the Holocaust or anything else. His diary was just a sort of a mechanical writing down of whatever happened to him on any given day to keep him...presumably to stave off boredom. There was no substance. There was no thought. There was no meaning in these diaries. It was just a little hour by hour log.

02:12:17

So in uh...they asked me if I could, if I could ask the Brazilian federal police to track down the doctors and dentists to whom references were made in the diary and I did that and the police was very cooperative and they uh did find a number of these people, some of whom uh remembered having treated someone like Josef Mengele uh but of course had no x-rays to go by it. Uh others didn't remember. Others had died or couldn't be found, but the most important key person was the man who according to the diary had done a root canal treatment on Mengele in uh 1968...excuse me...1978...right, in 1978...and about that

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<sup>2</sup>Neil M. Scher, Department of Justice, Director of the Office of Special Investigations, Criminal Division. His final report was published in 1992, entitled In the Matter of Josef Mengele: A Report to the Attorney General of the United States.

<sup>3</sup>The remains of Josef Mengele's body was exhumed on 6 June 1985 from the Nossa Senhora do Rosario Cemetary in Embu.

particular case, Mengele had written in his diary "...I went to see Dr. Gama<sup>4</sup> in Sama" ...S - A - M - A....that was what he wrote. "I went to see Dr. Men...uh I went to see a dentist by the name of Dr. Gama in Sama to have a root canal done and he did this root canal on my upper first molar, upper tooth and I paid him two thousand cruzieros on the first appointment on December uh December the 6th, and that uh I went back for a second appointment on December the 9th and paid another one thousand cruzieros for a second appointment." He kept close track of how much he was paying people. And so we asked the Brazilian police to find the Dr. Gama also because that might be a person who would have these dental x-rays because you have to take x-rays to do a root canal. And if we could find an x-ray at...with a dentist whose name came from an authenticated diary on which everyone agreed was really that of Josef Mengele, then you would have solid, irrefutable evidence, a chain of evidence. Uh but the police interviewed a Dr. Gama and uh this Dr. Gama didn't remember anything whatsoever about the case, and that was as far as the police investigation went uh with these various doctors including this one.

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So then Neil Scher asked me if I could take this a little further, given that I was a dentist and I was down there and and go a little bit further with this Dr. Gama to see whether he might remember something, or maybe looking at his charts we could discover some evidence, so I went back and with the agreement and cooperation of the Brazilian federal police, uh I went to see Dr. Gama, who in fact was uh very cooperative, and he told me that uh he didn't think that he had anything to do with Mengele because for one thing he didn't do any root canals, but that he referred his root canal patients to another specialist whose name was totally different, but in any event he went to see his specialist friend and he retrieved from him all of the charts of patients that he had referred to him in 1978 and 1979 for root canals, and he brought me the charts to look at and there were thirty-five, forty of these, so I went through those uh very quickly to se...and it was obvious that none of these uh remotely resembled anything that could have been Mengele. If you take forty charts of people who've had root canals, first of all uh over half of them were women. Then of the remaining half uh, you know, half of them had root canals done on their lower teeth, not on their upper teeth, and then of the remaining few and many of them had root canals done on their front teeth, not on their back teeth, so we only had three charts left of people that this particular Dr. Gama had referred for root canal treatment during the time period in question that matched the diary, who had root canals done on their upper back teeth, and all three of those people were still alive and existed in that community and could be found and so that pretty well definitely ruled out this Dr. Gama on a variety of different grounds.

02:18:08

So then the question came up uh well, there must be other Dr. Gama's around, and this is

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<sup>4</sup>Dr. Hercy Gonzaga Gama Angelo.

where I began to get really exercised about this case and seeing what I could do to to to take it a little bit further, so together with my assistant uh Vice Consul by the name of Fred Kaplan, we began to to...well, first of all, uh pour over the diary. It was in German and it was kind of hard reading. His hand-writing wasn't all that good, but I was trying to get more information out of there and at the same time trying to find out if there were other Dr. Gama's in the area, and then we had the, really the top question was what does Sama stand for. He said he went to see Dr. Gama in Sama, but there is no town called Sama in the area of Sao Paulo and uh there was abundant evidence to prove that Mengele didn't wander very far away from his hideout, so he wouldn't have traveled two hundred miles to see a root canal specialist. He would have had it done somewhere close to where he lived, so we uh went to all of the different dental associations and uh so on and uh with the help of a dentist uh friend of mine in Sao Paulo, we put together the most comprehensive list possible of Dr. Gama's in the state of Sao Paulo. The city of Sao Paulo has a population of about sixteen, seventeen million people, and the state of Sao Paulo has about thirty-two million people. We are talking about a big area. So we put together this list and we came up with about eighteen dentists by the name of Gama, of whom one, of course, was the one I'd interviewed and already ruled out, but of the remaining Gama's, most of them had graduated from dental school after 1979, at least a majority of them had. Uh one had died. One had moved away from Sao Paulo immediately upon graduation. Uh to make a long story short, there was no Gama left who could remotely fit the situation that uh we were trying to to clarify.

02:20:58

So at the same time I was pouring over this diary and saying now what could Sama stand for. What could Sama stand for? It's obviously not the name of a town. There is no town by the name of Sama. And by reading the diary over and over again, I realized that when it came to names, Mengele was using a bit of a code. When he didn't want a possible reader of his diary to know who he was referring to, he would use an abbreviation of using initials. The first initial of the first name, and the first one or two letters of the second name. And so I noticed that there was a repetition of this pattern throughout the diary, and then I started to think of Sama in terms of how I could interpret that word as a possible abbreviation. And it finally came to me in a in a flash that Sama could very possibly stand for Santo Amaro, the name of a suburb of Sao Paulo where I was living, and where he was known to have lived with the Brosserts and the Stammers. And so I got very excited at this thought, so Fred Kaplan and I went back to the Consulate and we picked up a phone book with yellow pages in it. Now in Brazil, the yellow pages are not used very extensively but it was the first thing that was in my way, so I picked it up. A lot of people have unlisted numbers and so on, but uh in any case we looked under dentists in Santo Amaro and there was the name of a Dr. Gama that hadn't turned up on any of our lists before.

02:23:15

So we made a test phone call there to ask for an appointment and the assistant told us that Dr. Gama specialized in root canal treatment, so I immediately got back in touch with the

Brazilian federal police and they gave me an officer to come with me when we went out there. And we went to the office of Dr. Gama who uh, you know, we told him why we were there, and he, of course, remembered the Mengele case from the press uh the year before, but he didn't remember having treated the man six years earlier and of course normally one would not expect him to remember that, because at the time he treated it, there was nothing unusual about the matter. The unusual thing was six years later, but that doesn't help you remember back to a routine case. He had no reason to dream that he might have been involved. So he said...well, he said he had eight thousand charts uh but we we said we would like to go through those charts right then and there. It was the police officer and Fred Kaplan and I. And I said to him, "Now we are looking for someone on whom you did a root canal on his upper first molar on December the 6th, 1978, and got two thousand cruzieros, and you had a second appointment and got a thousand cruzieros," and he said "Well, you're welcome to go through these charts." Now it was a lucky thing that he still had them. Uh in in modern medical and dental practice, of course, it's routine to keep complete records. But years ago it wasn't so routine and then less advanced countries as far as medical care is concerned, some people still don't keep records, particularly since there's a there's a tendency not to pay taxes and uh so it was a pleasant surprise to see that Dr. Gama had complete records for all of those years, and he had complete charts.

02:25:40

So we started going through the charts and it was very easy to go through quickly because he happened to write the date when a first...when a patient first went to him in the upper left hand corner of this six by nine cardboard, uh you know, index card, so by looking just in in that corner, we could go through very quickly and eliminate all the people who went to him after January of 1979 when Mengele reportedly died and then we were looking for the other date. And after about thirty, forty minutes, we came across a card that had those entries...December the 6th, 1978, first molar, two thousand cruzieros...December the 9th, so on. And then we turned the card over on the other side and we saw that the name that was written in there was Pedro Hochbichler, which was the known alias that Mengele had had used when he was hiding in Brazil and the address on Estrada Varenga was the same one uh the house where he lived by himself for a number of years when the Brosserts were helping him and protecting him but not harboring him in their own house.

02:27:14

As a matter of fact, I I ran into a lady when I gave a a talk in Sao Paulo about Mengele who told me that she had lived in the house next door with her parents and that they used to see this man going for walks every day in front of the house. It looked just like the pictures and so on and at that address, but he never spoke to them and he wouldn't greet them back when they said hello and the father wanted to invite him in for coffee or something as a neighbor, but he never accepted and would never speak to them. So here we found this chart. So then, uh he was flabbergasted, of course, and fascinated, but he still couldn't remember anything about the man except that the handwriting on the chart was clearly his and he said, "Yes,

that's my hand-writing so, you know, if that's what you wanted, I treated him." So we said, "What we really want is to see if you have any of the x-rays," and he said, "Well, no I don't because I always send the x-rays back to the dentist who referred a patient to me" and we said "Well, who referred this man to you." And he looked on his chart and he said, "Well, and that was Dr. Tutiya<sup>5</sup>." Now that's a Japanese name but there are over a million Japanese Brazilians living in the Sao Paulo area. It's the largest Japanese community anywhere outside of Japan, and there are many, many professionals in the health professions and elsewhere who are second, third generation Japanese, born and living in Brazil as Brazilian citizens. And in questioning...this is a flashback...but in questioning Mrs. Stammer and Mrs. Brossert about whether they knew of who had been Mengele's dentist when he finally started going to one again, swore that they couldn't remember the name but that he was a Japanese dentist.

02:29:52

Uh subsequently the Justice Department satisfied itself uh by way of its investigation that uh the women were indeed telling the truth and they did not remember the name, but uh definitely they remembered that Mengele was referring to a Japanese dentist and once said that he wanted to go to a Japanese dentist because since all Japanese look the same to him, he assumed that Japanese couldn't tell the difference between one Caucasian male and another, which is perfectly consistent with the kind of mentality the man had. So I asked Dr. Gama "Where is Dr. Tutiya" and he said "Well, he's just a block and a half down the street." So we thanked him very much and the three of us walked out of there and crossed the street and, you know, the adrenalin was just pumping like crazy and there was a record store there that was playing, you know, loud music on a loud speaker for the street and that sort of enhanced the sort of trance-like or movie-like atmosphere as we were, you know, brimming with excitement walking the block and a half involved to get to the office of Mr. Tutiya, Dr. Tutiya. So we got there. We knocked on the door and uh yes, he was in. And he saw us and the police officer showed him the photograph of Mengele, one of the photographs that had been found in Mrs. Brassart's house, and he said "Oh yes. That's the man with a hat." And the reason he said that is because in Sao Paulo, it's extremely unusual to wear a hat. People don't wear hats in Sao Paulo, but Mengele wore a hat because many years ago, his first wife still in Germany who subsequently divorced him, but when he was leaving to flee Germany and went to Argentina, she said "Oh, they're going to find you because you have such a high forehead that you're going to be easy to find all your life." And so in Buenos Aires, according to records that I read, he actually tried to have a hair implant done of the high part of his forehead, try to shrink that down, but of course that didn't work. You can't grow hair on the part of skin that never had hair, so then he started wearing a hat in order to to reduce the size of the visible part of his forehead, so he always wore a hat and these photographs were taken with him wearing a hat and this dentist immediately recognized that.

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<sup>5</sup>Dr. Kasumasa Tutiya.

And we asked him if he remembered something about it, and he had a vague recollection but but uh we said "Well, do you have any records of Pedro Hochbichler." So he said "well, just a moment." And he went in a little room in the back and opened the drawer. ...I could see him from the front room...went through some envelopes and charts and pulled out a chart just like that and brought it out and showed us that he had done a great deal of dental treatment for this man, including two partial removable dentures and a lot of other dental treatment, and so we said, "Well, do you have any x-rays." And he said, "Well, let me go back and check" and then he went back in the room and opened another drawer and was in there for what seemed like an eternity but finally came out with a little brown envelope, opened it up and six or seven dental x-rays dropped out on the table and that was a very moving and very emotional moment and uh we uh took the x-rays and the other records with us. Of course, this was legally sanctioned by the police officer who was with us, and uh the dentist, of course, was also perfectly willing to cooperate and uh I immediately called Neil Scher in Washington and he had an associate who worked on this case for the whole time, a very fine professional called David Meyerwell (ph). I called them and told them what had happened. Of course, they knew that we were doing this, so they were very excited to hear the results and it was Neil Scher who started me on this process.

02:35:17

Uh and then I also called Dr. Lowell Levine, who is an American dental forensic specialist who had been down on the original team in June in Brazil in '85 and did the dental specialty work, and he came back immediately and uh then we had these x-rays which were located only through the decoded information from an authenticated diary of Josef Mengele. There was no other way to find these x-rays. I used the diary found there. It was authenticated by hand-writing experts from Germany and the United States, used the information I gleaned from there, broke the code in which it was written, and using only and exclusively information from that authenticated diary, found the dentist and these x-rays. Therefore, these x-rays could be taken with absolute certainty as belonging to Josef Mengele. Then it was only a matter of Dr. Levine coming down and matching those x-rays with the x-rays taken of the skull which had been found in Embu at the time of the exhumation and when there was a hundred percent coincidence in all of the details of those x-rays, that allowed the case to be closed with a hundred percent certainty that should lay to rest in a scientific way the fact that Josef Mengele is dead.

02:37:09

Q: Dr. Dachi, thank you very much.

A: Thank you.

02:37:19