

English Transcript of Giza Alterwajn de Goldfarb Testimonial

Interviewee: Giza Alterwajn de Goldfarb

Interviewed by: Dr. Giovanna Urdangarain

**Interview conducted in the home of Giza Alterwajn de Goldfarb
Montevideo, Uruguay in January of 2019.**

Giza: It is a pleasure to receive you and I am at your disposal.

Giovanna: Thank you very much. Could you tell us your full name, your date of birth and place of birth?

Giza: Yes, of course. I was born on November 7, 1940 in the Warsaw ghetto. And my name is Giza Alterwajn.

Giovanna: Thank you for sharing the link and the information on how to access the documentary that allowed us to learn about your story. We would like you to briefly share with us... Well, we know there are already two books about your life story and a very interesting reunion that took place about ten years ago, more or less, with a very important member of your adoptive family in Poland, let's say. There are two books, there is a documentary, could you tell us a little bit about the process of creating the books and the documentary?

Giza: Of course. The first book was written by Dr. Cherro, Miguel Cherro. It was the result of... Most simply, at one point, there was a film series screened here in Montevideo, put together by several journalists about violence, racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and they chose several films to be shown in different parts of Montevideo, so that the public could see them.

Giovanna: What year was that, Giza?

Giza: That was... Good question. A few years ago.

Isaac Goldfarb (Giza's husband): Yes, around 2008, something like that.

Giovanna: Was it prior to your reunion?

Giza: Yes, much earlier. No, I didn't even know that I was going to

have the opportunity to be reunited with my Polish family. Yes, yes, it was long before that. We received the schedule for the films and the information on where they were showing them. And I saw that one of the films that was chosen was *Despite Treblinka*. That film was made by an Uruguayan filmmaker, Stawksy at ORT University and it was a documentary about conversations with the survivors of Treblinka and their life stories. And all the stories were more or less similar because the subjects were all the same age. So the suffering and what they went through in their lives was similar, more or less. But my story wasn't. That's why the filmmaker tried to convince me to be part of the documentary too, which I refused because at the time I was not talking about it. Like most survivors, we don't want to talk. We block it out, as a form of self-defense... So we didn't talk. There was no way to convince me until, after so many times, helped by my husband, who urged me saying, "He's a good man, why don't you give him a hand?" Of course. My story was completely different because of age. I had just been born in '40. At that time the others were already young people. They were already fighting or hiding or... Their stories were completely different. And I was just a baby. And I was part of that movie too. And then, when I found out that the film was chosen to be shown in a school, in the Seminary, which is a Catholic school that I didn't know about. I was interested in seeing it. Not just the place, but also the audience, to see what interested the Uruguayan audience about those kind of stories. Well, my husband and I went there to sit in the seminary to watch the film, but the film could not be shown because of some technical issue. Don't ask me what, but it could not be shown. And the organizers of that event saw that I was in attendance, and that I was one of the... a minor protagonist of that story. So they asked me to come up and speak. Think of how uncomfortable of a situation it was for me, because I had never opened up about it, I had never spoken about it. I had no choice but to go up. I went up and little by little I started to let it out. Little by little I began to talk, I began to speak. As I always say, I repeat it and I do not like it when people repeat things. But I repeat this because it is the reality. I didn't speak with reason. I spoke from my gut, and it is clear that it had an impact on the panel that was there. I had not even realized that there was a panel with three people above me on stage, one of whom was Dr. Cherro who was specialized in psychiatry.

Isaac: Psychiatry.

Giza: Psychiatry, and he specialized in childhood, early childhood and adolescence. And there was also an anthropologist, a wonderful person who I later met again in a school. Monseñor Isasa, where he coordinated a lecture. And Dr. Antonio Turnes was there. I did not know any of the three. But with the anthropologist.. I didn't feel well at one point, because of all of the emotion. And I said: "I do not feel well." And he ran to get me a glass of water and he held me up. And

I remember that to this day, because it was like a breath of fresh air that helped me to continue. Aurelio Gómez is his name, the anthropologist, a black man. And well, the next day or two, three days later, I remember because it was July 18, so it was a national date. I was at home, I was not working, it was a holiday. I got a call from one of the organizers of this film series. He said that Dr. Cherro had been impressed by me and he wanted to meet me in person. I said, "I don't know, if you think it's a good idea. I don't know him." "Look, he is more respected abroad than in Uruguay. I recommend him to you because he is an excellent person." So from there, I got in touch with Dr. Cherro and we started chatting. He would write and I would chat and as the good professional he is, he started to bring out my story without me realizing it. That is how he wrote it down. When he finished, it was around December. He said: "Well, I am going to Las Toscas on vacation to my little house. When I come back I want to publish the book." I said, "No, Doctor, no way. I told you about it, but it's not for publication and even less with the name of Giza. This is a small town. There aren't two Gizas. They'll know who I am." He said: "It is important that it is published and it is important that your name is on it." And he convinced me. And that's how the first book was published. We made a small batch, I think 300 or 400 books that sold out on the day of the presentation in the community center, because the community center was full. I think there were more than a thousand people there. And everyone bought it as a gift, to send it abroad. And then other editions had to be printed. But of course, it was not for commercial purposes.

Issac: Should I bring you a glass of water?

Giza: All the proceeds went to help those disabled in the community.

Giovanna: Was that something you discussed with Dr. Cherro from the beginning? What was the goal?

Giza: No, never!

Giovanna: That was something you both decided, you decided?

Giza: Me. We decided and he supported it. He gave his okay. We argued when I didn't want it to be published. We discussed the title because I wanted it to be published with any other name they made up for it, not my name.

Giovanna: What was the process like? Or I don't know if there was an editing process. He was writing, but then you reread it?

Giza: Yes, of course. I crossed out half of the book, because I told him one thing, and something else is published.

Giovanna: You were telling me about the audience's reaction and how it sold out. How long after that did the second edition come out?

Giza: A few months later. But since it was only available in that community center, many people didn't even know there had been a prior edition.

Issac: Three editions were completed.

Giza: Then it was over.

Issac: Because we paid for everything ourselves.

Giza: It was out of our pocket.

Giovanna: Of course.

Issac: It was to donate money to support those with disabilities, it was thousands of dollars but...

Giovanna: Where was it edited, where was it published?

Giza: In the Rumbo newspaper.

Issac: The last one. The previous ones were not in Rumbo.

Giza: No. Ah, you're right!

Issac: Giza...

Giovanna: This is the third edition?

Giza: No, this is the fourth.

Giovanna: This is the 4th edition.

Giza: This is the one that went to all the bookstores. This was the first one that was done from a commercial point of view that went to all the bookstores.

Giovanna: Can I ask you if after the book reached so many people in Uruguay, did you learn of any other similar story? Or is your story the only one with these characteristics that's known in the country?

Giza: No, there are several stories. Look, one is from a great friend of mine and a great person Charlotte de Grünberg, the Executive Director of ORT University, who did...

Giovanna: She did the launch... I saw on the ORT website that she did the book launch, right? Of one of the editions if I'm not mistaken...

Isaac: The person who wrote the book... who put it together...

Giza: The person who did that for her story was Ruperto Long. The writer.

Isaac: He distributed it in the United States, he took it to Italy. In Italy it became a bestseller, it was at the top of sales for a long time because there was an Italian involved in the story, so that made an impact there.

Giovanna: I see.

Isaac: They took it to Israel, I'm not sure how it did there. It was in the US, all across Latin America, of course Argentina...

Giza: Chile...

Isaac: Centroamérica, Chile, Centroamérica, todo... We have the book somewhere here, if you are interested...

Giovanna: Yes, no, I have it, I have it.

Isaac: Ah, you have it?

Giovanna: Yes, yes.

Giza: *The Girl Who Watched the Trains Leave.*

Giovanna: Thinking about what you were talking about... That this process has a positive and a negative side to it, how was that process for you after sharing all this and seeing the first publication? What was it like? What were the first consequences?

Giza: The first consequences... It was like I had changed, like I had become a different person. It wasn't just that I had told my story, it wasn't like I was no longer silent, but if they did not call me, many schools called me, many... And I had a fantastic experience with the Jubilar school, which is called John Paul the Second, who is the Polish pope. And when I was invited there to give a talk... It's a high school for those in crisis. The reception was spectacular, the warmth of all those kids. It was so beautiful, such a beautiful experience that when I came back from the talk, my husband told me: "Look, the kids are already sending emails with their thoughts."

Giovanna: Giza, how do you prepare for a talk with young people

about your story?

Giza: You know what?

Giovanna: And what did you tell them?

Giza: My husband, as a good lawyer and as the good person he is, he has everything in order, he tells me, "Giza, you have to make an outline. You have to plan how you start, how you talk, what subject you talk about." I don't. I go on, I go forward, backward. And as they ask me questions, however I can go on, I let it all out. You know that I did very well.

Giovanna: What do they ask you? We're talking about high school age kids, 12 to 18 or so, right?

Giza: Yes.

Giovanna: And what did they ask you?

Giza: Well, they asked me how, how I felt here in Uruguay when I arrived in Uruguay with a different language and without the Polish family, without.... How I felt as a human being, with everything new to me.

Giovanna: How old were you when you arrived in Uruguay?

Giza: Seven years old. I had just turned seven.

Giovanna: Do you have memories of those early days of your arrival in the country?

Giza: Yes.

Giovanna: Do you have a mental image of that arrival? Yes, my arrival in the country, I remember perfectly. What I have no memory of, which is what Cherro always asks me, is my stay in the house of that Polish family, nothing, absolutely nothing. Even more, in the talks I had with Cherro, I told him: "Look doctor, I think they treated me badly because I don't remember anything. Besides, for sure they had hidden me downstairs in a basement, because if any neighbor found out, they would kill them all. So why would they keep me in sight of all the people?" And Cherro said to me, "You are very wrong, Giza. They displayed a lot of warmth toward you." And obviously Cherro was right, because tell me, in which house, in which family, in which home are you capable of looking for a relative of yours who is not even a biological relative, but who was in your house for five or six years... And you look for them for 65 years? That is not normal. If I were her, I wouldn't do it. I'll be honest, I don't do it. It was just a stage in life, and that's it. But not for her! And that's what makes her so special.

Isaac: I think it's in Dora Bruder that Modiano says it takes a long time...

Giza: To bring to light what was buried for so long.

Giovanna: Yes, yes, of course.

Isaac: I think it's in Dora Bruder. That's why I was looking for the book. And that's the essence. If it's something so profound...

Giovanna: Yes.

Isaac: It may never come out. If there's no one that... And some facts start driving you in that direction...

Giza: When I arrived, when I talked to Danusia on the phone and she told me, "You will see when you arrive, I will take you where I took you to ski and to all those places that you will know, that you will remember." Nothing, nothing, nothing. First of all, Poland is now a modern country. It is not the Poland of 1940. It's western. And second of all, I remembered nothing, nothing, nothing. And well, that's why it's called *The Suitcase*.

Giovanna: Of course.

Giza: Because Cherro gives it a double meaning: The suitcase, as what I have inside here that never comes out. But on the other hand, the suitcase was the way I was smuggled out of the ghetto.

Giovanna: Of course. In the documentary you said that you arrived, you began to study at the Chile School, which was a wonderful experience.

Giza: Wonderful for me!

Giovanna: Do you remember other children in your, let's say, in your generation that were also from the Jewish community? How was the experience of integrating into Uruguayan society? You were young, so I guess you didn't think of it in those terms.

Giza: But I didn't think about it because at that time, all the kids in the neighborhood were friends. We didn't even know each other's religion, nor did we even ask about religion. Those were other times. We played in the street with our friends. Nowadays, no. Not in the Uruguay of today.

Giovanna: When you arrived you did not speak Spanish, do you

have any recollection of how long it took you to learn the language?

Giza: Very fast. I arrived in November and in March I started school. If there was one thing I learned very quickly, it was Spanish. And you know what? My best subject was Spanish. And they sent me to write the essays for August 25th and July 18th to read them on the national holidays. That's why I loved Chile Elementary School so much.

Giovanna: At that time, of course, you were living with your aunt and uncle.

Giza: With my biological aunt and uncle.

Giovanna: How was the adjustment to the new, to the new country for your aunt and uncle? In linguistic terms, in terms of...

Giza: It was more difficult because they were adults learning a language, it was more difficult but... When you go through war, learning a language is nothing, when you go through terrible things.

Giovanna: Now, Giza, you mentioned this thing about children playing and not wondering what religion was practiced, etc. Was your family observant and practicing?

Giza: No, we simply practiced the new year and the day of forgiveness and nothing else. No, it was not Shabbat, no, no, Saturdays were the same as Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

Giovanna: And did that continue to always be the case in your own family afterwards?

Giza: Yes.

Giovanna: How did you identify yourself at that time or now, in terms of nationality? As an Uruguayan, as a Jew, as an Uruguayan Jew, did you consider that?

Giza: Sorry, but being Uruguayan and being Jewish have nothing to do with each other. You can be... Religion and where you were born have nothing to do with each other. We are all Uruguayans.

Giovanna: It's interesting because I have talked to young people in the last few days who identify as Jewish, but not as Uruguayans.

Isaac: What?

Giza: As Jews and they were not born here?

Giovanna: They were born here.

Giza: And they don't feel Uruguayan?

Giovanna: They feel Uruguayan, but if they have to identify themselves, they identify themselves as Jewish first and not necessarily as Uruguayans.

Isaac: That's odd, I've never heard that before. Giovanna: Me neither.

Giza: This is the first I've heard of it.

Giovanna: Yes, I didn't expect that answer from someone very young, in his 30s, 32.

Isaac: Many people?

Giovanna: No, no, two or three cases, but...

Giza: They must be very religious.

Giovanna: No, and he does not practice religion either.

Giza: Ah, I understand nothing anymore.

Giovanna: Yes, but it is interesting. That is exactly why I asked. It's actually a question that came from my colleague Rona, because she is the one who was... It had not even occurred to me to ask that question, to be honest, but she did wonder about it. I don't know if it's because in the United States maybe some people have also thought of themselves in terms of that dichotomy.

Giza: In the United States, I do know that it is very important to have a religion, that is what I have heard.

Isaac: This is a secular country. We have a state unaffiliated with the Church, to any Church, to any religion.

Giovanna: Yes, I don't know. That's why...

Isaac: If I don't think of another nationality...

Giovanna: Yes. But it's interesting, isn't it? That she raised that

question and when we started to formulate it...

Isaac: I have this singular trait, I am Jewish. I was born, I am a descendent... I once had to explain to a young man in my law firm, a Court runner, a very smart guy who came from outside the capital and ended up working with us. He asked me, "What is it to be Jewish?" Well, it's a heritage. I am going to explain it to you in terms that you understand, an old man over there, Moses, who says that God came down to the mountain. Take it for God, take it as you want, take it as I take it, that simply the people had gathered from their experience in Egypt a lot of knowledge of Egyptian princes, they applied it, but someone came out to say something and established a law that is practically the key to the culture of the West. That is the heritage. Now I am obliged to uphold it, because that is where I come from. Now, if it was the result of a mixture, if there was a Cossack who slept with one of my grandmothers or great-grandfather or great-great-grandfather.... I don't know."

Giovanna: Yes, this is an interesting case, because this is a young person who, even though they don't practice a religion, they don't consider themselves practicing, they prioritized that identity. And that's why we incorporated this question into all of the interviews, even though I could sense that your answer would be like it was. I still wanted to ask you, I wanted to bring it up.

Isaac: What I say always emerges from my singularity, yes, if I claim my Uruguayan nationality I expect others to respect it, and I respect others. Everyone chooses something to set them apart as a way to live, or they accept it as heritage, as I explained to the young man. And he didn't understand and well, I can't think of any other way to explain it. If you're Argentinean or Japanese I would say the same thing.

Giovanna: Yes. You confirmed to me that yes, you define yourself, of course, in both ways, and you do not see a separation between the two identities.

Giza: No, one has nothing to do with the other.

Giovanna: I was thinking about this reunion... And of course, in the webpage where we put today's conversation, we will also include a reference to the documentary. So I don't want to repeat questions that you were already asked in the documentary. That's why I told you... That we look at it prior to the interview. So I wanted to ask you, in the process.... Well, first you told your story to Cherro and then again, later on, as part of the documentary, right? When you have told the story, when you've had each opportunity to, has anything opened up in your memory, have there been changes or have you remembered things that you didn't remember before?

Giza: No, no, but there is a detail that I will tell you, which is the suitcase. I have no memories of that time, none, but when my first daughter was born, we were wondering what to name her, And I had the idea of naming her Estefanía. My husband said: "In Uruguay, Estefanía? No!" We ended up naming her Deborah. But why did I come up with Estefanía? My Polish name is Stefanía Szymkowiak. You see, that came from the suitcase.

Giovanna: But you didn't remember that at all.

Giza: Never.

Giovanna: When did you recover the information on that Polish name?

Giza: When I met Danusia again.

Giovanna: How many years later? How old was your daughter already at that time?

Giza: My daughter is now, she's going to be 50 in June and, well, and it's been ten years.

Giovanna: I was thinking about the transmission of that story. Your daughters didn't know your story either. Or had you told them? No, I didn't want to talk, I didn't talk at all. They knew that I was an orphan. They knew that I came here with my biological uncles. They knew... But nothing more.

Isaac: Sabían la diaria.

Giovanna: Sure, they read the book and then they asked you questions?

Giza: No, no. That happened with the interviews, that's when it all happened, they experienced it all with me, together. And my granddaughter, who was only months old, was on the frontlines.

Giovanna: What conversations do you have with your grandchildren today about your story?

Giza: With the youngest one, none, obviously.

Giovanna: He is seven years old, you told me.

Giza: Yes, he turned seven in September. But Camila is very... She's a child that... How can I describe her? She has a very special feeling for others. If somebody else is hurting, is suffering or is ill, she suffers. In other words, she is very empathetic and has a very, very profound sensitivity. And when they talk to her, she is in the street or in another environment, or they talk to her about what happened in the war, she says: "My grandmother! May I bring my grandmother?"

Giovanna: Have you been to her school, to talk to children?

Giza: Yes. Not with her age-group, but with the high school students. She is in elementary school.

Giovanna: And those talks are very interesting to me, as we are talking about the dialogue that is established with other generations. In the U.S. they also do this and they invite survivors to visit schools and talk to students. While having these conversations, do you follow the model that you mentioned to me before, which is that they ask and you answer? Or do they access your story first through the book? How does that work?

Giza: In the first talks I gave, the documentary was not yet available, so I had to introduce myself and when I introduced myself, I told my whole story. After I finished sharing my whole story, I felt exhausted. Then came the questions from the children. When the documentary came, then I started going with the documentary, the documentary is shown on the screen and then the children ask me questions, which is not so tiring.

Giovanna: What kinds of questions have impacted you most among the ones you are asked? Because we are talking about kids from different institutions and with different backgrounds.

Isaac: Well, recently you gave a talk with the Shoah project, talk about that.

Giza: Ah, yes. That was interesting.

Isaac: It's also interesting because of the meeting with Zerbino.

Giza: Ah! That's the cherry on top. The Shoah Project, I don't know if you know about it?

Giovanna: Yes.

Giza: The young people behind the Shoah Project called me at the end of the year, to ask me to help them close the year with my presence and my story. And it seems that I communicate well with young people. Better than with adults, I think. Last year I was approached by a young man who is in the project. He is not Jewish and was a student at the Jubilar school and he knew me from the Jubilar High School.

Giovanna: Where you had been... how long ago?

Giza: More than once.

Isaac: More than once. We contributed to their scholarships too.

Giza: Well, for me this was something amazing that I never imagined would happen. And look what the young man had done with his life.

Giovanna: Did the Shoah project invite... How did they advertise the talk? Is it open to the public?

Giza: No, they send... Because they work with the whole country. with all the departments (provinces in Uruguay). So they have the database of all the departments. So when there is an event like this, they send the information to their database, for everyone to register. Because not everyone can, they cannot all attend.

Giovanna: Of course.

Giza: Then those who registered come, And it's, I don't know, 100, 150 kids, it cannot be more than that. They can't accept more in the room where they have these events, it's a small space. Even less than that.

Isaac: There is also a selection process.

Giza: They select them also on the basis of their interests because some of them want to come to Montevideo just to visit the city.

Giza: To figure out what the real intention is.

Giovanna: Of course, the real intention. Was there ever any question that surprised you...?

Giza: So the first thing they ask you is how I felt at Chile school. And I told them, "Look, I can tell you right now, not only was my time at Chile school one of the most beautiful times of my youth, of my childhood, but also now, reading the newspapers, I see that history

repeats itself because now in the Chile school, there are many Venezuelan children, who are in the same situation as I was when I lived there. After so many years, the Chile school serves the same purpose, to be the receiver of immigrants, because of the area where they live, where we used to live. I lived two blocks away from the Chile school, on Andes and Canelones. And, well, the activity ended and a little girl came crying, hugging me. She was a Venezuelan, a student. I had talked about Venezuelans. She said, "To think that my parents and another couple, friends of ours, went to Venezuela... and we came back with twenty-two people." From Venezuela to Uruguay. Another meeting that I had that was very, very interesting... It's a very nice friendship that I have very little contact with, but when I do it's very nice... It's with Gustavo Zerbino, one of the survivors from the Andes.

Giovanna: From the Andes plane crash.

Giza: It turns out that they had called me last year. Well, two years ago. It's January now. Two years ago they had called me... around winter time, June, July. They had invited me to a... I usually don't like to go to private homes to tell my story because it's just for them to have tea while I talk in the background.

Giovanna: Of course, it's not a teaching event, it doesn't have the pedagogical purpose like when you talk to young people.

Giza: Exactly, it's not my thing. But a lady from Carrasco called me, she had a very large family and she had children coming from abroad, etc, and she had heard of my story through someone else's. And she asked if I would be so kind, if I could go to her house to give a talk. And well, at first I said no, then they pressured me, I said yes, but in the end I got sick with the flu. They had dinner all ready, everyone there. And I didn't go because I had a fever. In winter, in Carrasco, I wasn't going to go. I didn't go. I felt horrible. I thought, "I hope they understand, I don't even know them." How embarrassing! Then last year they called me back, and I thought, "Good, at least I can make it up to them. I'm going, I'm going because... It's not that I want to, but at least they can see that I'm not a rude person and that I didn't stand them up, and my eldest daughter Deborah accompanied me. And I went with the documentary. I showed the documentary. All the lights went out. When the lights come on, I saw someone in front of me. It was someone with a familiar face. I didn't know who it was. It was Gustavo Zerbino, who was not a member of the family, but since the event had been put together by the son of a friend of his at that time... He had just got off a plane because he is constantly traveling around the world... And this guy had told him, "Tell your dad to not miss tonight. It's a story that he will like, that will be useful for him." And he showed up there. And well, he started asking me if I believe in God. He who is a believing

Catholic, even more since he survived the tragedy of the Andes plane crash. And I had my doubts. But he left me his little card when we said goodbye and he said, "Here is my card. I would like to stay in contact with you." That was it. Days went by. I didn't call him. One day, I receive some photos from him on my cell phone. After a few days, at my husband's urging, I called him on the phone, "Look, you asked me to call you. I've called you, but I don't know why, just to return the courtesy. You were very kind." He says, "No, the truth is that it was very important for me to meet you. It was a great joy. Your life story impacted me a lot. And I am going to give a talk that I was asked to give for the 100th anniversary of the Rotary of Uruguay at the Movie Center. I am going to be the speaker. So if you can, I would like you to go." I went. I bought my little ticket because everyone has to buy a ticket to donate, and I sat in a corner.

Isaac: It was to donate to the...

Giza: Of course, to the relatives of the disappeared in the Andes. And I brought him the two books. In case I saw him, I brought a little bag with the two books, as a gift for him to read. And he was right at the door of the Movie welcoming people. He saw me, he was happy that I went, he was happy that I had the books. And then, when he began to talk about his story, the history of the Andes, and then suddenly the background screen changed to a photo of Danusia with me at the airport in Chopin (Warsaw) of the first time we met again. And I said "What is this?" I don't know where he got it. And I know that the people who advised him took it down and got rid of it. And he tells the entire audience that I am present. I guess I told my husband, "Look, I'm sure I am the only Jew in the room." Because they were all from Carrasco and I didn't know anybody. But it was very moving. And a few days later I received pictures on my cell phone from him. He said, "Look, I just arrived from Córdoba. I went to give a talk and when I finished giving the talk I was approached by Mr. Edgard Wildfeuer, who is a survivor of the Shoah." He is an engineer who was there for the whole talk, he was 90-something years old, he was there for the whole talk and when the talk was over he approached him and said, "I want you to meet my family." And he invited him and he came by, I think it was a Saturday. On Sunday he spent the whole day at the house of this gentleman from Cordoba and he was a great man, like all the people there, they are charming. And he says, "Do you realize? I had never met a survivor of the war. I didn't even know anything about the topic. And in a short time, I had heard two stories."

Giovanna: Did the announcement say that they would mention your story, and that's why the man attended? Or was it pure chance?

Giza: No, the talk was about the Andes experience. And from the photos he sent me of this man's house... I got his contact information too, so I sent him the books by mail and he thanked me because we could stay in contact, the family and us... And he sent me a photo of a fork, a very special fork. That fork has a story. This survivor, Edgard, when he escaped from the last camp he had to live in, he stole a fork from the kitchen or from somewhere there. He took it. A fork that still had the initials of the Nazis on it. SS.

Isaac: A silver fork. The Nazis were the ones who stole it in the first place. He simply took it back.

Giza: And throughout his life that fork accompanies him at the table.

Giovanna: Giza, over the last few years, after the reunion, after having written these books, how has your position on telling your story changed?

Giza: Ah, I feel the obligation. The obligation. Because the world is getting worse and worse.

Giovanna: That's why you feel the responsibility to tell your story, as you said.

Giza: To tell, to tell, to tell them that somewhere they have to believe and they have to look for other solutions, so that human beings respect each other, and live with dignity and respect. It's the only way to live in peace.

Giovanna: Have you experienced anti-Semitism in Uruguay?

Giza: Yes, yes. Yes, yes. And more than me, my eldest daughter. My eldest daughter who, through her work...

Isaac: You've encountered both: great respect in some moments and anti-Semitism in others.

Giza: That, I did not expect.

I didn't expect it,
they had it hidden.

Thanks to Giza and her husband, Isaac