

Good morning. I'm Bernard Weinstein, director of the Kean College Oral Testimonies Project on the Holocaust. It's my pleasure today to interview Rabbi Judah Nadich, who was General Eisenhower's liaison to the displaced persons of Jewish faith at the end of World War II in 1945. Rabbi Nadich, I'd like very much to welcome you to our program, and I'd like you to begin by telling us a little bit about your background, how you happened to be in a position to get this great job to do.

Well, it happened that I was the senior Jewish chaplain in the European theater, the first Jewish chaplain ordered to Europe, and therefore, later, the senior Jewish chaplain in the European Theater. During the year of 1944, beginning with the liberation of Paris in August of that year, I was at American army headquarters in Paris and serving the Jewish soldiers in the American army in Paris and throughout France.

And in 1945, after the concentration camps were captured by the American army, during the summer of '45, in August to be exact, I got orders telling me to proceed from Paris to Frankfurt, to the American army headquarters there, where I was told that my job was to be Advisor to the Commanding General, that is, General Eisenhower, Advisor to the Commanding General on Jewish Affairs in the European Theater.

And I quickly learned that the job had to do with my visiting the displaced persons camps regularly in all parts of the American zone of Germany to come back to our headquarters in Frankfurt to report, cutting through red tape, directly to General Eisenhower or, in his absence, to his chief of staff, General Walter Bedell Smith.

Did General Eisenhower or his staff recognize that there was a difference between most of the other prisoners or most of the other displaced persons and the Jews?

In the beginning, they did not because the actual situation had not been foreseen. As one might understand, the American army had made all kinds of plans long in advance as to what would happen when the American army would defeat the German army and then establish civil administration over a defeated Germany, what would happen with the survivors found in the German concentration camps.

The plans were very simple and straight to the point. The plans directed the American army to return the survivors found in Nazi concentration camps directly to their home countries, and that part of the order was carried out rather efficiently by the American army. That is, non-Jewish French, and Greeks, and Belgians, and Czechs, and the rest, within 90 days after the capture of the concentration camps were sent back to the lands of their origin, to their home countries, where they wanted to go.

Nobody had foreseen in the American planning some years earlier that there would be, among the survivors in these camps, Jews, Jews who would have no place to go back to. Why not? Because whether these Jews came from Poland, as most of them did, or Lithuania-- many of them came from there-- they knew full well what the Nazis had done together with their willing assistance from among the native populations in Poland and Lithuania, what had happened by these people to their own families.

Their families had been destroyed. Their businesses had been taken over by others. Their homes were now occupied by their erstwhile neighbors, and the Jews now surviving in the Nazi concentration camps were even afraid to go back to their towns, and cities, and villages in Poland and Lithuania.

They were afraid of what would happen to them if they went back because their former neighbors, who now owned their homes and their businesses that had belonged to the Jews, would certainly not welcome them back and would even, perhaps, attack them and kill them if they returned.

That did happen to some Jews who did go back, so the result was that in the camps, now DP camps, no longer concentration camps-- the army had moved people out of the concentration camps to displaced persons camps. There were left in those camps tens of thousands of Jews who had no place to go back to, and the army planning had not envisaged this kind of problem. So in the beginning, these people were not being looked after.

Now, what happened? Why was there a situation created that resulted in my being appointed to the position of Advisor to the Commanding General on Jewish Affairs? War reporters, foreign correspondents, had been tipped off about the condition of the surviving Jews in the DP camps. They visited these camps, and they sent back horrendous stories that appeared in the American press, New York, Chicago, elsewhere. And these stories did not reflect well upon the American army and its administration of affairs in conquered Germany and Austria for that matter.

So the President of the United States was aroused, President Truman, and he sent a commission to inspect the DP camps to find out whether or not the stories of the war correspondents were true. The commission was headed by Earl G Harrison, who was the dean of the law school of the University of Pennsylvania. He was, fortunately, ably assisted by Dr. Joseph J Schwartz, who, at that time, occupied the position of European Director for the American Joint Distribution Committee.

And the commission studied the situation in the DP camps where Jewish survivors were now living, the others having been dispatched to their homes, and came back from America and wrote a report. Dean Harrison submitted his report to President Truman, and the report painted a very black picture. The result was that the Secretary of War, Mr. Stimson, and even before him, General Marshall, who was the commanding general of the American armies throughout all World War Two-- General Marshall sent a cable to General Eisenhower to warn him of what Dean Harrison's report was going to say.

And then Secretary Stimson sent him a cable and set forth the major findings of the Harrison Committee. And it happened quite by coincidence that, before these findings reached-- the day before the findings reached General Eisenhower, he had been requested by Rabbi Stephen S Wise, who was visiting London for a Zionist conference, the first after World War Two to be held-- Rabbi Stephen S Wise in London had been told by a number of American Jewish chaplains who took the opportunity of visiting London and the Zionist conference coming from the continent-- they told Dr. Wise what was happening to the Jewish survivors in the DP camps.

He sent a telegram through the American embassy in London to General Eisenhower suggesting that General Eisenhower appoint a Jewish chaplain to coordinate relief efforts on behalf of the Jewish residents of the DP camps. General Eisenhower replied immediately saying, no, he wasn't about to do that. The very next day, he got the findings from Washington.

In the Harrison Report?

The findings in the Harrison Report that had been sent to him first by General Marshall and then by Secretary of War Stimson. And Eisenhower sent back a cable to Washington that only yesterday he had turned down a request by Rabbi Stephen S Wise, but today he changed his mind, he said. He was going to appoint one of the American army Jewish chaplains to the post of advisor to him on Jewish affairs. And whoever this chaplain would be, he would be the person who would visit the DP camps, come back to Eisenhower, tell him what was happening, and make recommendations.

And that was when I got the call in Paris to come immediately to Frankfurt because, since I had been the first American army Jewish chaplain ordered to Europe, I was consequently the senior Jewish chaplain in Europe, and Eisenhower ordered me forward to accept this position.

Had you, yourself, been at the liberation of the concentration camps at the end of the war? Did you see any of what the first American ground troops saw who went to those camps?

No. When the camps were liberated in May of 1945, I was still in Paris. Indeed, I didn't come forward to Germany until August, but I did see Dachau, of course, many weeks after it had been liberated. But it still had not yet been cleaned up. It was, of course, empty of its former hapless victims, but the concentration camp was there in its full horror.

I saw the dog houses where dogs had been kept who would be sicked onto the inmates of the concentration camps. But more, I saw gas chambers, and I saw the crematory. And in the gas chamber-- I remember to this day-- the door on the inside that was, of course, slammed shut whenever the gas chamber was filled with victims-- I saw the door completely covered from top to bottom with scratches, and I realized they were the scratches made by the victims inside the gas

chamber when the gas was turned on, scratching at that door, trying in vain to get out as the gas came in, suffocating them.

And in the crematorium, I looked inside the furnaces where the bodies were taken from the gas chamber to be burned, and in the corner of the room, I saw a sack that looked like a sack of flour from a distance. As I got closer, I looked into the sack, and I saw there were bits and pieces amidst the dust. And I realize that what I was looking at was what had been cleaned out of the bottoms of the furnaces in the crematory. And I plunged my arm deep down into that sack and ground the ash in the palm of my hand so that I would never forget that sight.

The ash being the ashes of the cremated--

The ashes from the victims. I forgot to tell you that, on the front of the sack, I noticed later that was printed in German the word "fertilizer." This ash was to be shipped out, as I'm sure hundreds of sacks had been done, to be used as fertilizer for German farms to enrich German soil to produce better crops.

And Dachau was the only camp that you visited?

Dachau was the only camp I visited at that time.

And this was on your return-- on your trip to Germany from Paris?

No, this was on my first trip to Bavaria to visit the DP camps in Bavaria.

I see.

So I made a tour from Munich up to Dachau, not too far away, to visit Dachau to be able to better to understand the people whom I would be meeting in the DP camps who had come from Dachau.

In your book you describe your visit to Frankfurt. I remember there was a chapter about the tragedy of Frankfurt. What were your feelings? What were your memories when you--

Well, Frankfurt, of course, in Jewish history had been a large, thriving cultural Jewish community which had boasted famous scholars and rabbis. Indeed, the German Orthodox renewal of the 19th century had centered in Frankfurt.

And when I came to Frankfurt immediately after my having been ordered to come from Paris to American army headquarters in Frankfurt, I thought it would be good to find out what had happened to the Jews of Frankfurt. And out of the tens of thousands of Jews of Frankfurt, some 600 now remained. Most of them had been in hiding, or they had been in camps and were lucky enough to have remained alive when the war was over and had returned to their native city.

I called upon the one rabbi who had survived. He had been in Theresienstadt, and luckily he had not been forwarded from there, as had happened with most of the residents of that camp, to Auschwitz. He had survived the war in Theresienstadt, and now he had come back to Frankfurt. He was the only rabbi left.

And I called upon him to pay my respects and to find out what the situation was like in Frankfurt. The high holidays were approaching, and I found that a large synagogue that had been one of the principal synagogues in the city was still standing, luckily, because of its geographical location. It was near the opera house. And instead of burning down the synagogue, as had happened with so many other synagogues, the Germans had kept this building, had emptied it of all of its contents, including pews and the like, and had used the synagogue as a warehouse for the scenery and props of the opera house.

So one of the first things I did upon my coming to Frankfurt was to order the local German administration to paint and repair the building and to bring back all of the pews which still existed in a warehouse, to bring them back, clean them up, paint them, and affix them once again to the floor. And the work was finished on the very eve of Rosh Hashanah of

1945 so that services could once again be held in what turned out to be, once again, a beautiful synagogue. And it was my privilege to preach there during the high holidays of 1945.

Approximately how many Jews were there?

Well, as I said, there were some 600 Jews who were local Jews, but in addition, the synagogue was pretty well-filled by American army soldiers who were Jews.

Did you have any chance to talk to the surviving Jews of Frankfurt when you were in Frankfurt?

Yes, I spoke to the Jews of Frankfurt to a number of them. And I lived in Frankfurt, you understand. I lived in Frankfurt from the time that I was first ordered to come from Paris to serve under General Eisenhower, and I lived in Frankfurt until I was ordered to leave, to go back home to the United States. So I met a number of Jews in Frankfurt. I even had the privilege of officiating at a marriage in a synagogue in Frankfurt of an American Jewish soldier with a local young woman of the Jewish faith.

Their stories were so much like the stories I was to hear from the Jewish survivors in the DP camps. How did each one survive? Well, each one told a story that seemed incredible, and each one's story was different from the next story. Each one story was the relating of a series of miracles that had happened with each individual that had resulted in that person's remaining alive after the war was over.

Were there any families that survived intact, or were they all individual--

I don't recall meeting any families. I don't recall meeting any children in Frankfurt. These were either single adults or, in rare cases, a husband and a wife. But in most cases, they were single adults.

Of about what ages?

The ages varied, but principally they were middle-aged people if you define middle age of the 40s, 50s.

Can you describe the conditions in some of the DP camps you saw? Were the conditions uniform in all of the camps you visited, or were there camps that were, quote, "better maintained" or worse maintained?

Well, when I first came to Frankfurt, I spent the first few days in reading many reports, among them the Dean Harrison Report, which by now had arrived that Eisenhower's headquarters in its entirety. And in the report, Dean Harrison had praised the camp at Feldafing as being the best of the camps, and so it was my determination to visit Feldafing first to see what the best of the camps was like. And then when I would visit the other camps, I could measure the other camps in comparison to Feldafing.

I went to Feldafing, and to my amazement, I was not pleased with those conditions at all. And I couldn't understand how that could have been described by the Harrison Report as the very best of the camps. The people there were living under terribly overcrowded conditions. They were getting insufficient food, and they had all kinds of complaints to give me.

I met with the leaders of the Jews in Feldafing that created a camp committee of people whom they had elected to represent them, and they spent hours telling me of their complaints, among which, for example, was the complaint that their camp at Feldafing was surrounded by barbed wire. And they couldn't leave the camp, except that 20% of them-- and no more-- could obtain passes that would enable them to leave the camp for a brief while and to come back.

And mind you, this was very damaging psychologically. Under the Germans, under the Nazis, they had been in camps surrounded by barbed wire. Now they had been liberated by the American army, and they found themselves once again in the camp surrounded by barbed wire. And they could look out to the road nearby and see the Germans, who had been the enemies of the Americans, walking free on the roads, going where they liked whenever they liked.

They were not behind barbed wire. They didn't have to ask for permission to walk on that road or to go where they

wanted to go as did they, the surviving Jews who had suffered at the hands of the Germans, the enemies of the Americans. And here it was the American liberators who were subjecting them to such conditions.

But I understood why it was that Dean Harrison had praised Feldafing. In a number of the other camps, there were not only Jewish survivors. There were non-Jewish people as well. Who were these non-Jewish people? They fell into one of two categories. They were people from Eastern countries or Central European countries that had quickly been conquered by Germany at the beginning of the war, the early part of World War II, some of whom had been brought to Germany as slave labor to work in German industry.

Many of them, however, belonged to a second category. They had come of their own free will to work in German factories because they sympathized with Nazi aims. They were Nazi supporters. They wanted to help the Nazi war effort, and of course, they would be remunerated for their work in German factories. So they, too, had come to Germany.

Now America, the Allies, had won the war, and they were on German soil. So they claimed the right of displaced persons, and they were put in DP camps together with the Jews. But you can imagine what the result was. Number one, there were frequent fights between these non-Jewish workers in German factories-- formerly in German factories, now in the DP camps-- and the Jews.

But perhaps even more important-- no special treatment could be accorded the Jewish residents of a camp when that were, at the same time at that camp, large numbers of non-Jews. Yet the truth required that a demarcation be made between the two because those who had been German factory workers had been well-fed and well-treated, had never been subjected to the kind of imprisonment and torture that had been the fate of the Jews now living in the DP camps.

Why the barbed wire? Why this sense of imprisonment?

I must say that General George Patton, who was the commanding general of the Third Army, in whose territory all of the DP camps of Bavaria fell-- General Patton was not too sympathetic to the plight of the Jewish survivors. Naturally, the man he put in charge, a Major Schaefer, who was at his Third Army headquarters in Munich-- sensing how his commanding general felt about the situation, Major Schaefer wasn't too interested in improving the lot of the Jewish survivors. So that's the way it remained.

When I came back to Frankfurt, having visited Feldafing that time and reported on the barbed wire and the pass system, an order went forth immediately from General Eisenhower to General Patton to remove the barbed wire and to abolish the pass system.

Well, I came back to Feldafing a week or so later, and to my surprise, the barbed wire was still there, and the pass system still existed. So upon my return to Frankfurt, I reported that. A few days later, I came into the anteroom to General Eisenhower's office one morning at 8:00, and to my surprise, I saw General Patton sitting there, waiting to be called into General Eisenhower's office, sitting there with his shiny helmet and his ivory handle pistols, one on each side, and the shiny boots.

He looked at me, and I looked at him. And he knew that I was the reason for his being called there, and I quickly turned around and left that office as fast as I could. Later, I was told by General Walter Bedell Smith, General Eisenhower's chief of staff, that when General Patton came into the office, after the opening courtesies, General Eisenhower asked him, George, why aren't you doing something for these Jews?

And Patton, remembering his long friendship with Eisenhower-- they had been friends in the United States Military Academy at West Point-- and thinking that he could be jocular, said, why the hell should I, whereupon Eisenhower lost his temper and said, well, God damn it, if for no other reason than because I have ordered you to.

Now, shortly afterwards, General Patton was relieved of command of the Third Army and was assigned the command of the 15th Army with headquarters at Bad Nauheim. But the 15th Army was a paper army that existed only as a headquarters with no troops assigned to it. Of course, that was a signal demotion for General Patton.

The story generally is and the story is reflected in the movie about General Patton that Patton was being punished by Eisenhower because he slapped--

--a soldier.

--an American army soldier in a hospital in Sicily who he thought was a malingerer. Patton thought the soldier was a malingerer, and he slapped him. But I've often wondered, why did it take so long for Eisenhower to punish Patton if the reason was Patton slapping an American army soldier a long time before?

In my own mind-- whether it be absolutely true or not I don't know. In my own mind, at least there is some connection between patterns open violation of an order directed to him by a superior, General Eisenhower, that that played some role in Patton's demotion. And thereafter, the barbed wire was quickly removed, and the pass system was abolished.

Was this everywhere or just at Feldafing?

I saw it at Feldafing. It was removed from Feldafing. When I visited other DP camps, I did not see barbed wire. I don't know whether it was because there never had been barbed wire or whether it had been removed.

Again, I come back to the fact that Feldafing had been singled out in the Harrison Report as the best of the camps because it was a camp that had Jews only within it. Therefore, measures could be adopted to improve their condition without antagonizing non-Jewish residents of the camp because there weren't any in Feldafing as there were in other camps.

Now, General Eisenhower, in an order of August 22, I believe, ordered that DP camps where Jews were residing should become camps for Jews only. Other residents should be taken elsewhere, to other camps. And as a result of my recommendations to him after my visits to the various DP camps. He improved the number of calories. He increased the number of calories that were to be given to each Jewish resident of a DP camp each day.

And again as a result of recommendations by me, housing conditions were improved so that the camps should no longer be crowded as I saw Feldafing was and, indeed, the other camps. And in that connection, a new camp was opened, Foehrenwald, not far from Feldafing, to which Jews from Feldafing were brought in order to relieve the overcrowded conditions in Feldafing.

Incidentally, in that connection, I was there the day the Jews were asked to move-- some of them-- from Feldafing to Foehrenwald, and they refused to move. And the American army soldiers were ready to enforce the order, to compel them to move, to drag them on trucks to make sure that they would go, and I was afraid that there might be bloodshed.

I quickly went to the commanding general of that local area and told him there might be bloodshed, and it would be very bad for the American army if that were to happen. And he empowered me to return to Feldafing to tell the commanding officer, Lieutenant Irving Smith, not to have his soldiers use force. I suggested that we take a small number of the Jews on a visit to the new camp at Foehrenwald to have them come back and report to the other Jews in Feldafing what they had seen. And then if what they had seen was good, other Jews would agree to go, and that's exactly what happened.

And so Foehrenwald became another new, much better camp than camps generally. But I shouldn't dwell on Feldafing and Foehrenwald. I visited many other camps, and I refer particularly now to the camp at Landsberg. Landsberg, not too far from Munich--

Was it the same place that had been a concentration camp?

No. Landsberg had in it, as did other camps in Bavaria, Jews who had been in Dachau, had been removed from Dachau to Landsberg to Feldafing and elsewhere. But the interesting thing about the Landsberg camp was that there was an UNRRA team there as well as military administration, and they permitted workshops to get started under the very able leadership of Jacob Oleiski, one of the Jewish residents of Landsberg who had been the art supervisor of the workshop

program in Lithuania before World War II.

And so by sheer coincidence, there was found in Landsberg this man who was a veritable genius in setting up workshops, and the Jewish residents of Landsberg were very quickly put to work, learning new trades or practicing old trades that they had forgotten during the years of the war.

Was the morale at Landsberg discernibly different from the morale in other camps?

Absolutely. When the residents were put to work, they didn't have time to stand around and talk with other people about how bad the conditions were and to complain, as was true in other camps, so that another one of my recommendations was to create workshops in different camps such as obtained at Landsberg and to make sure that whatever was required for the workshops, tools and implements of all kinds, whatever was required, should be taken from the German population and put into the DP camps. And that was done by General Eisenhower's order.

And this was carried over-- the model of Landsberg of creating workshops was carried over to other displaced persons camps?

That was carried over to a number of other camps. In addition-- I hesitate to say all the time "through my recommendations," but that's the way it happened. You couldn't expect American army headquarters to know, for example, that it would be a good idea to get sports and athletic equipment into the camps, but I recommended that because a number of the people wanted to play what they call football, what we Americans call soccer.

They wanted musical instruments, many of them. Many of them had played these instruments before the war. They wanted to practice once again, and if possible, even to create little orchestras in the DP camps. And again, the army supplied the instruments, the musical instruments of all kinds so that the DP residents of the camps could make use of them.

All of these things helped toward building the morale of the Jewish DPs. One of the biggest boosters of that morale was the arrival of David Ben-Gurion in the American zone of Germany.

You met with him personally, didn't you?

Yes. It happened that I was permitted to go to Paris for a day to receive the Croix de guerre that was to be given to me by General de Gaulle at the Hotel [PLACE NAME] in Paris. I knew that David Ben-Gurion was in Paris at the time because, prior to that, it had arrived at Eisenhower's headquarters a request by Mr. Ben-Gurion for permission to enter the American zone of Germany.

I had been asked who this gentleman was who had requested this permission and my recommendation on the request. I supplied the necessary information that David Ben-Gurion was the head of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, that he was, in ordinary words, the designated head of the Jews living in Palestine, and that it would be desirable for permission to be given him because his very presence in the DP camps would elevate the morale of the people.

Well, knowing that he was in Paris, when I came to Paris to get the medal from de Gaulle, I went to his hotel, chatted with him, and by coincidence, he had gotten permission to come that very night on the American military train from Frankfurt-- excuse me, from Paris to Frankfurt. I was to be on that train, too. I made up that he and I should meet on the train platform.

I arrived earlier, and I saw that I was assigned-- because I was then a field rank, I was a major, I was assigned a bedroom to be shared with another American army major. And I went back on the platform, and I waited for Mr. Ben-Gurion, who soon appeared. I asked him where his ticket showed that he was to be, and he said his ticket showed that he was to be sitting up in the coach all night long.

I looked for the train commander, who was an army captain, and fortunately, he was a Jewish army captain. I asked him, and I pointed at David Ben-Gurion. Do you know who that man is with that shock of white hair? And the captain said,

no, and I explained who he was. I said, you can't let him sit up all night in a coach.

He said, what do you want me to do? Sir, I said, well, in my bedroom there is another major. You tell him that there is a distinguished guest of the American army who is traveling on the train, and the mistake was made, and he wasn't assigned sleeping quarters. And you just tell that major he would have to get out of that bedroom, which he did, and then Ben-Gurion I brought into our bedroom.

And we spoke together until 2:00, 3:00 in the morning. He wanted to know about the displaced persons. He wanted to know whether these Jews were a people who were battered, broken in spirit, poor human material, or whether they were people who potentially could become settlers in Jewish Palestine.

I assured him that these people were not the kind he had feared they would be, that they were strong people. Had they not been strong, they wouldn't have survived. There were strong both physically as well as psychically and that he could be confident that they-- in time, when they would get to Palestine, were most of them wanted to go, that they would make good citizens of that country.

So when we arrived the next morning in Frankfurt, I took him to be registered and to have breakfast, and then I brought him to General Eisenhower's offices. The general was out on a field trip, but I introduced him to General Walter Bedell Smith and said something to the effect that, if there were a Jewish state now, I would be introducing its prime minister. And General Smith was very cordial.

And later, general Smith told me that when he introduced Ben-Gurion to Eisenhower after Eisenhower's return from the field trip, Eisenhower was very much impressed, very much taken by David Ben-Gurion. He had asked Ben-Gurion to make a tour of the DP camps and to come back to him, to Eisenhower, with his recommendations, which later happened.

I took David Ben-Gurion that same day to visit his first DP camp at Zeilsheim. The Zeilsheim camp was not too far from Frankfurt. I brought him into the camp, and he sat in the back of my army vehicle. I stepped out and chatted to a few of the Jewish residents of the camp. They were accustomed to my coming there quite often.

But one of them happened to look into the car, and he saw something that he couldn't believe. He looked again. He saw this familiar face, familiar from pictures, but he suddenly screamed, Ben-Gurion! And the other Jews talking to me ran to the car, and they looked in. And they began to shout.

And when others not far away heard the shout, they came running. And I was afraid that there would be a problem, a riot perhaps, so I yelled to the people, this is David Ben-Gurion, and he is going to speak to you. But you must first show him the discipline of which you are capable.

You quickly run around the camp. Tell all the people-- there were now about 6,000 people in the camp. Tell them that David Ben-Gurion is going to speak to you in the assembly hall, and have them come there.

Well they quickly dispersed to do that. I drove up to the assembly hall, and I took Mr. Ben-Gurion into the rear area behind the stage. And within a short time, that assembly hall was packed to the rafters. All seats, all standing room was filled. The windows and the doors had been flung open so that the hundreds of people standing outside could hear what would happen.

I led Mr. Ben-Gurion out on the stage, and the crowd of people rose to its feet. And the people began to sing "Hatikvah," as did Ben-Gurion and I. And in the singing of the Jewish national anthem, the people broke down and wept. And I do not hesitate to say that Ben-Gurion and I sobbed as well.

And when the "Hatikvah" was over, Ben-Gurion spoke to these people, and in his speaking to them, he told them that the day was not far distant when they would be able to join their brothers and sisters in Palestine. And they continued to weep throughout his talk because all during the hellish years of Nazi oppression, they had one dream, that perhaps they might remain alive, and go to Palestine, and join their brothers and sisters there. Perhaps one day there would be a



majority of Jews in that country. There might even be Jewish self-government. It would be a place where they would no longer have to be afraid of persecution.

And they had this dream of going to Palestine, and all of a sudden, Palestine was there in their midst in the form and the shape of David Ben-Gurion. And for the first time, they knew that they were liberated. For the first time, they had hope. They believed that they would have a future, and that's why they wept.

It was an unforgettable experience for Ben-Gurion, and he mentioned it to me in later years when I visited him in Israel when he was prime minister, unforgettable for him, for me, for all of the hundreds of thousands of people who took part in that experience.

Do you remember or do you do you know the date on which Ben-Gurion visited?

I can't tell you the date exactly, but if you look up my book, Eisenhower and the Jews, you will find the exact date of our visit to Zeilsheim because that book was based on my diary that I kept each day.

I see, yeah. About what percentage would you say of the DPs at Zeilsheim, just to use that as an example, emigrated to Palestine? Do you have any records on that?

How many actually emigrated?

Or how many went there, landed there?

How many landed, arrived in Palestine?

Arrived, arrived.

I don't know, but I would venture to say the overwhelming majority. The reason I say that is, before I made my first visit to a displaced persons camp, when I first arrived in Frankfurt, one of the things I did after reading all the material was to prepare a questionnaire that I would fill out when I would visit each camp about food, and housing, and all other conditions pertaining to the camp, and an important question whose answer I wanted-- where did the Jews in each camp want to go? Where did they see would be their ultimate destination?

And I calculated the statistics afterwards. Approximately 75% wanted to go to Palestine, and the remainder wanted to go to the United States, to Canada, to Australia, to South America, perhaps to France, to England, to Belgium. But 75% wanted to go to Palestine. That's why I say most of them undoubtedly got there and are citizens of Israel today.

This was largely as a result of his visit, or it was the result of general--

No, no, no, no. Their answers to the questionnaire I got before Ben-Gurion came to Germany.

There were a lot of marriages and births in these DP camps, weren't there?

There were. It was as though the desire for life was very strong among them, precisely because they had witnessed death daily in the Nazi concentration camps, because they knew so many of their own families had died that they wanted to preserve life. And they married, and they had children.

As a matter of fact, I even saw some children who had survived the Holocaust, who had been born in concentration camps or just prior to their parents and they being brought to concentration camps. I saw a full hospital ward of them at St. Ottilien, a Jewish displaced persons hospital run by Jewish DP doctors not far from Munich. The head of the hospital was Dr. Zalman Grinberg, who had been a physician in Lithuania.

And he took me through the various wards of that hospital which had-- before, that been a hospital for the German Air Force. And at the very end, he saved for the end my visit to a ward of children. And I looked around at the various beds,

and I saw children bandaged in various places, skulls, arms, legs, bodies, eyes. And he said to them in Yiddish, children, we have a visitor, an American army officer. He is a rabbi. Won't you welcome him?

And they sang a Hebrew song to me. They sang "Shalom Aleichem." And then when I asked Dr. Grinberg, how could these children have survived, he said, well, each one of them survived through some extraordinary way, that no one will believe the story that each one could tell. And then he asked the children to sing another song for me, and they sang an additional Israeli-- what is now called an Israeli song but which was a Hebrew song, and I'll never forget my visit to that children's ward at St. Ottilien.

Have you, in any sense, followed the lives of any of these children since that time?

Well, I once lectured years ago at a Holocaust center in Brooklyn where Dr. Yaffa Eliach is the head.

The Center for Holocaust Studies?

The Center for Holocaust Studies. And when my lecture was over, she said to me, do you know that I was one of those children in that hospital ward at St. Ottilien when you visited there? And she remembered that visit of mine. So that really was a startling piece of news.

I will send her a tape of this. I think she probably would like to have that.

Let me just-- maybe we can pause at this point. There are a few other questions I would like to ask you, but we've almost run out of time. And I think you'd have to interrupt your answer to-- so if you'll bear with me--