

Mr. Ahrend, we'd like to go back a little bit. And perhaps you can tell us a little of what you heard from Europe at the time after you left, regarding your family and people that you knew.

As I said, my parents were brought out to Belgium. A sister of my mother and her family, they managed to get out just in time. Friends of mine, their three daughters were already in America and they had worked feverish to get their parents out. So finally, they came out. They and their sister's family came out with the last ship which left Germany to America.

One sad story is the-- a cousin of my mother, her husband, and two daughters lived in a town, in a city in Bavaria. The eldest daughter came with the children's transport to Israel in '36. In '37 her father visited her.

And two of his cousins and families were already there. And they all pleaded with him, Jules, please stay here. You go back into hell. You never know if you will get out. Please, stay here. He would listen. He said, I have an obligation to my family. And he was cantor and teacher of the Jewish community. And I have an obligation to my community. And went back.

Unfortunately, his wife and his young daughter died in the concentration camp. Because most of the closest family were able to get out, but some close relatives I've never heard of, we found out later they died too.

What about your own parents?

My parents, as I said, they were brought out.

They were bought out.

Brought out, as I mentioned before, by a confidential man into Brussels. My father was sent first to Saint-Cyprien. Then I sent a package there. And then I got a letter from the big camp, Gurs, which was one of the main camps where Jewish refugees were sent. And after the war, a cousin of my mother and her husband, who were fortunate to get out of Germany, they said they met my father in Gurs. That was in 1941.

Late in 1942 I got a letter from my father. I didn't get the letter-- I had sent a letter to my father and it came back much, much later. Stamped on it was deported without address. And that mean that's the end. Of course, nobody knew at the time what was going on.

You heard reports. You heard-- you read papers. But I have to say the American media purposely suppressed the news. And Walter Lippmann, the dean of the press corps, in particular, I say was much responsible for it.

And Jewish people in the limelight, they were afraid to touch the subject. They didn't want to stir up any controversial reaction. Because there was still depression. And they were afraid if they would admit Jews, then the American people would say, listen, we are without jobs and you leave these people in, take our jobs.

A lot could-- see, not only to Jewish people, but the whole government, and not only the American government, the whole world was-- is responsible. There was silence, indifference, and apathy. They could have done many things. They could have saved thousands of Jews, but they locked the doors.

They could have bombed the railroads to Auschwitz, but they bombed TerezÃn, the TerezÃn force, of no significance. I'm not sorry that they bombed TerezÃn, but there were much more strategically important centers in Germany to be bombed than TerezÃn.

How do you feel now when you think about how much attention, and it's obviously good attention, the Holocaust receives? Do you-- does it make you a little bit angry or resentful that more wasn't done then? Or does it-- are you gratified to see this response?

It's good to see that they pay attention to it, that they see to it that it should not be forgotten. Unfortunately, in America,

America forgets very quickly, no matter if it's Holocaust, if it's the killing of the Marines in Beirut, if it's the hijacked jetliner. For a short time, it's headlines. And we will repeat it again, and again, over radio, TV, and so on. After a while, gone and forgotten.

Unfortunately, this is the concept of the American people. And the American people as a whole, including some Jews, they say, for Heaven's sake, it's happened more than 40 years ago, why all the fuss about it?

And when, for instance, certain people were arrested after they found out they came to this country illegally under false names, and they found out they participated in the Holocaust, actively, at certain concentration camps. And the people of the neighborhood where they live right now say it's impossible, these are such nice people.

Yes, they said about the German people as a whole, oh, such things cannot happen. And people with such high intelligence, high people who have-- to point out, for instance, Goebbels, one of the top leaders of the Nazis, he graduated from college from university summa cum laude. But he was the devil in person.

As a matter of fact, they make joke about him. They say it's-- the folklore in Germany says the devil has a clubfoot and Goebbels had a little club foot. If you didn't know, you hardly did see that he was limping a little bit. But he was the devil in person.

He had a well-moderated voice and was able to convey the poison and hatred to the masses of people. And if you combine the intelligence, the knowledge with the satanic and perverse mind, the result will be something so awful, so horrible, it's hard to describe.

Did people want to hear what you had to say? Or did you want to talk about your experiences once you came to this country?

People had different troubles and different worries. They knew about it. And some of them said, why stir up the wounds? Some people-- certain people ask, how is it that people go back to Germany? I, myself, I couldn't go back to Germany. I would be haunted by the memories. I might go back for few days just to visit, but that's all.

But unfortunately, there are people who are-- I don't know. A cousin of mine, he was in Israel. Two of his brothers and his sister in Israel too. And he was a member of the top delegation which was sent by the government of Israel in 1954 to West Germany to initiate that talks about restitution by the state of West Germany to the state of Israel, not the individuals one, but just from state to state.

Nation to nation.

Nation to nation. And he was one of the top officials. After three years, he got in conflict with some of the persons of the Israel government. Got mad, left them, and stayed in Germany. He works for International insurance company. And he's very happy. I cannot understand it. And his sister and brothers cannot understand it. I just got a letter from one of his brothers that said we still are very sad that Richard doesn't go back to Israel.

And I was told by people who visited Germany, they are most, I have to say, the overwhelming majority of the Jews who are now in-- live now in Germany are from Eastern Europe and some of them from Israel.

These people are-- their mind is money, money, money. And they don't care where they get it. And they are the people of Israel who go to Germany to certain spas.

Are there any closing thoughts that you would like to--

Closing thoughts-- as I mentioned before, it is something so unique in the history of mankind. I mean, there were pogroms. There were the persecution in Spain. There were the crusades. There were other slaughters, mass slaughters of non-Jews, but none in such an extent. The enormity, brutality, and perversity of this particular event cannot and should never be forgotten.

We have to remind future generations of it. We read in the Torah, "remember Amalek," and we should remember Holocaust.

Thank you very much, Mr. Ahrend.