

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Hans Meier
November 7, 1990
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Hans Meier, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on November 7, 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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HANS MEIER
November 7, 1990

Q: Okay. The camera's on now, finally. Would you tell me your full name please?

A: My full name? 5, 4, 2...

Q: No. Your name. Just tell me your name.

A: Meier. Hans Meier. H-A-N-S M-E-I-E-R.

Q: Thank you. Where were you born?

A: I was born in Zurich in Switzerland.

Q: And when?

A: 1902 on the 9th of March.

Q: Uh...Tell me about your...your family. Where...where did your parents come from? My father came from a very poor farmer's family in...outside Zurich. And they died from tuberculosis without nourishment. And he was able to make a training as...came as mechanic with his uncle in Zurich, the town of Zurich. And then he got an employment, with the federal railways for locomotives. And he became a...a fireman and locomotive driver. And he therefore he was a bit better off than his family. And he wished to...to put me higher even, and he gave me the opportunity to study electrical engineering at the University of Zurich.

Q: Okay. Let's...let's...before we go into college and university, tell me what it was like growing up. Did you have brothers and sisters as a child?

A: I had one brother, Fritz, and no...no other sisters or brothers. And...uh...we both...we were two years apart. He was born 1904. And I remember my first memory was sitting in the little carriage seeing a house. That's all. And then later, we went very often on a bridge which crossed the railway tracks near the station in Zurich. And we tried to spit into the chimneys of the locomotives which was passing underneath the road. And very often it happened that at that moment, the locomotive flew back our wet spital and into our own faces. (Laughing) And my father knew that I was on that bridge and he fetched me and had to wash me first before he could take me home. That was my...my childhood memories. And then I...we were living in the workers' quarters of Zurich, not in a...not in the rich quarters, near the station. And I...I know my father got better food than I and my...my mother was looking and she came from a poor family in also...but from a cobbler's family.

Q: What?

A: Cobbler...cobblers. And...uh...I spent all the holidays there and...uh...but he let me study to see that.... I went 8 years into the public school and then 4 and a half years in to the high school and then for 1 year I was in a...in a repair shop of locomotives to learn auto mechanics and so on. And then I studied for 4 and a half years electrical engineering and then I tried to get employment with the federal railways. They just changed at that time from steam to electric. That was just after the war. But I have to say first what I experienced during the war. Uh...I...when the war broke out, I was 12.

Q: Now, this is the first World War?

A: The first World War. Yeah. And my father was a socialist. That means at that time it meant...uh...idealism for peace and for justice. That was socialism. And he was a delegate at the International Socialist Peace meeting in Basel, 1912, and he returned from Basel, and told me, "Boy, from now on, no more war because when the government declare war, we socialist internationally strike. We don't...don't go. We strike." And 2 years all went...the German Socialists went and killed the French Socialist and the English Socialist and the American, and in addition we experienced that the CHristian churches did the same. They sent their people in the name of Christ to kill many of them. From Germany, from France, Italy, Austria, England, American. And we say this man, Christ, must be a murderer because in his name they sent the young people to murder one another. That was what we thought in our youth. And then Switzerland...and now we experienced in Switzerland the exchange of prisoners of war. Cripples from between France and Germany for instance, crippled prisoners of war who were no more able to go to war. And we saw in this way thousand of people, young people like we are who had been sent to war to kill one another coming crippled back into the fatherland after having been sent by the churches to kill one another. And Switzerland, what did they do? They made ammunication for both sides and made a lot of money. I say do it safely, making help on both sides. So that even a man in Switzerland, the very famous writer suggested that in the propaganda for Swiss produce, they should put out the ammunication which they made for the Poles and the photographs of its victims.

Q: What were you doing during all this?

A: And we were protesting against the whole injustice. We were youths and...uh...you experienced here in the 68s...how the youth protest against the hypocrisy of the old generation.

Q: How did you protest? What form did you protest?

A: We...we protested. We heard for instance that the Christian czars in Russia exploited their country. We heard that the Russian czars were saying they were Christians, tried to compel youth...Jews to become Christians. When they came to the army, they baptized them and kept them under water because they protested so that they drowned. And we said, is that Christian? This Christ who says that must be a murderer. We say that in the youth. And we red ting on the side that we stand for that and we had heated discussions about this in the

school. And in addition, I visited because my father was a Socialist, I visited the so-called Socialist Sunday School. And we heard there _____. They were refugees in Switzerland and they were sent in 1918 by the German government in the same railway wagon from Switzerland to Helsinki to make revolution against Kirinski who tried to continue the war while Lenin promised to stop the war if he should come to power.

Q: Okay. We need to bring this back to your story, to Hans' story. Did you tell me...did you hear Lenin speak? I heard Lenin speak, but I heard more Trotsky speak than Lenin because Lenin couldn't speak very much German. Trotsky could speak much more German. And I mean I only have it in mind that I saw Lenin in the Sunday School. That's about 80 years ago. (Laughing) 70 to 80 years ago. But I have...I must have seen him all the Russian refugees in Zurich...you know. Lenin, Trotsky, Appolovof, and so on and so. I have seen them all because they came all to visit us in the Socialist Sunday School. So we were as a youth ____ We were really challenged. We were seeking truth and this was not the truth. What the churches represented not the truth, but the fatherland represent not the truth. What the Socialist represented was not the truth because _____. You know, so we were left by everything. And they were seeking independently the truth. And we were seeking as on a human basis...on the idealistic basis. Yeah? Not on the faith basis or Jewish or Christian faith basis...on idealistic basis, we were seeking simply the truth. And in seeking that I felt I can't do military service in Switzerland because military service I would learn to kill and not to keep alive people. And this brought my father to a great anger. He said, "How do you do that. I have given you the money to study and now you don't and you lose every possibility of a career. And so he asked...uh...a friend of his who was a Freemason and a colonel in the army to speak with me. And this man called me and said, "Look here. Would you like to kill your father with your rejection of military service because this would mean they can caput the whole career...destroy the whole career as a electrical engineer?" I was at that time assistant professor of the University in Zurich for electrical engineering. And as such, we were often invited by the physics...physics...uh...professors in their symposiums with Einstein and Boler. So I got to know them as well (Laughing) as a...as a assistant of the professor. And here he said, "Would you like to make that all...destroy all the things by refusing to do military service." "I offer you," he said, "to...to go to the medical...to where they don't have to kill." And you...and so I accepted that also reluctantly. And I did 3...I did boot camp in Basel, and then three repetition courses. In Switzerland you do when you are 20...20 to 30 weeks boot camp, and then until you are 35, every year repetition course of 2 weeks to 3 weeks. I did that three times after boot camp in Basel, but I made always people...uh...laugh at me because I...I made...I spoke out quite clearly what I thought about the military and...uh...they said, "But you are quite right, but you are...you serve in the military, so you are a hypocrite." (Laughing) You speak against the military, but yourself are in the military. And so after 3 years I also refused to do that. And I was accused of refusing to do a good work for the people in the military because I could not help any wounded soldier. I said, "I'll help the wounded soldiers but not because you order...not because you order me to do that. Out of my free will! I do not wish to be only the last wagon on the train which is built for killing." And so they said I...we would like to give you 2 months prison, but because you are academic we give you 3 months prison. You give a very

bad example. So I was for 3 months in solitary prison in Switzerland. And in this 3 months I got the old testament _____ edition of the old testament _____ I got to read. Because a friend of mine gave it to me to read. I read it as history of the Jewish people and...uh...it didn't make a great impression on me, but...uh...I still have it in mine. And then when I came out, I had no possibility of any employment in Switzerland because when in Switzerland when you are prison, especially I was told that I should not expect any employment in Switzerland after I had refused the most...uh...best service you can do to Switzerland. So I had to go out of Switzerland. And my idea was first to go to Russia. I learned Russian. I still know a few words. Uh...I learned Russia and because Switzerland had no diplomatic relationship with Russia, I had to go to Berlin to get the visa for Russia. On the way to Berlin which I went on...on bike, all on bike because I had no money to travel by train. So I visited a quite few free communities on the way. For instance, at Bruderhof, I was invited and...uh...but the Bruderhof, I was 3 weeks in all, but there were two Christian for me (Laughing) after what I experiences in Christian churches. And then I met...uh...in Holland, I met a _____, who according to the bible had given away his whole property. He was a rich man and he had given away all the property to the poor, but he said, "To whom should I give it? If I give it away to the poor, I'll make the poor rich. So what's the difference?" And therefore he gave it back to the workers, who had worked for the riches, and they did not accept it. They made a foundation from the man which they gave back to help poor people, poor children, poor . And he said, "But now, it's not sufficient only to give away property. I have to work." Therefore, they started to live in community because community...uh...made it clear that everybody gives what he has and everybody receives what he needs. That is community.

Q: What did they call this community?

A: _____. But this community had disappeared after 4 or 5 years because they couldn't get united as I tell later. Then...uh...I went to Berlin.

Q: What year is this?

A: That was 1928. And...uh...I wished to go to Russia to find out what happened there, because we didn't have any clear...clear news about Russia what happened there. As _____ had just died and _____ was not yet completely the dictator he became later on. So I wished to go to Russia to find out myself. And when I arrived in the Russian Embassy in Berlin, they said, "Look here. We need electrical engineers very urgently for the building up of the country. But. (coughing)

Q: Do you want to stop and take some water? There's plenty of time.

A: It's not the water. I...uh...

Q: There's kleenex and there's water. Take your time. You okay?

A: (Coughing) Yeah. They say they need electrical engineers very urgently, but we do not

have...wish to have any conscientious objector in Berlin, so I didn't the visa for Russia. So I had to leave to work...to seek work in Germany. In Switzerland, I didn't get any work. And in Germany, there was still the Weimer Republic, which had been forbidden by Warsaw to have an army. There were only 100,000 people...soldiers for police. And so I...when I had to report...reply for the police for...uh...for...uh... education in Germany, they asked me, "Have you been in prison?" I said, "Yes." "For what?" "For military purposes." "Oh, that doesn't bother us," they said, "because we have no such question." So I got in Germany permission to radicate.

Q: To what? I'm sorry.

A: Germany.

Q: Uh huh.

A: Permission to radicate...to...to settle. And...uh...then ...uh...I got work by the seaman _____. Seamen's is the biggest General Electric Company in Germany. (cough) And what did I have to do? I had to improve technically the productivity of the individual worker. And I made hundreds of people unemployed by this. You know, if I...I show you why I have example...I was in...uh...busy in a spinning mill. In the spinning mill, they had...was a big factory, and they...uh...made spin...spun thread. And the thread is then put on the spool. And the...the...the speed of the spool going around depends how speeds how big the speed is of the stick. Well, when the spool got thicker, how the spool get the same revolution, then the thread gets quicker, therefore it gets thinner and breaks more often. Therefore, they had too, for each spinning stole, they have to two girls to observe the spool. And if...uh...uh...thread broke, they had stop the machine and put the threat together again, let the machine run. We made a technically the thing so that the speed of the speeding was always the same. That means that when the spool could double the size, the speed of the turning was half. And we put electric motors on it which varied its speeds according to the size of the spool. And then they had much less breaks and the...and the quality of the thread was better. But they only needed 1 girl per stool. They had 200 stools in the factory. They got 5...200 girls got unemployed. And I was invited as an electrical engineer by the director of the factory for many times, and I asked him there what do you do with these 200 women back unemployed. He said, "That's not my business." That's their business. So I made 200 girls unemployed. When they asked him what should they do now, and he said they have to seek their own income. And if they're...you're nice girl, they can find their income through prostitution. But he saved me, so I was in a dilemma. I was as a electrical engineer, I was improving the productivity of the individual worker and made with that lots of people unemployed. And my wife and I we were considered what should we do? What should we do now? In Switzerland, we don't get any work. In Russian, they don't wish us. In Germany, you make so many people unemployed? What do we do? My wife was same youth movement and she had the same question, and so we were working with the Socialist Youth Movement in Germany, but we saw no results. It was not better. And I know at that time when the talk came on Hitler, people everywhere laughed. Hitler impossible. Hitler is not even a German.

He's an Austrian. He is an illegit and a chld. He's only...he's not a studied man...he's only a house painter. And he has a grandfather...illegitimate grandfather who is a Jew. Do you that he ever gets to the power in Germany? No. Everybody laughed. And 5 years later he was there in democratic fashion, because according to democratic rules, he...he became chancellor.

Q: Let's...let's stay with you.

A: Not... and knowing...the people knew exactly what he represented. In any case, we stopped the work and after 2 years in...in Germany, and we started ourselves a community in Switzerland. And because we said how is it possible that people...the whole humanity can become socially just and in peace. We have to do it ourself before we can expect from the others. We have to experience it ourselves whether it's possible. And...and secondly if we represent that people can only believe us if we do it ourselves. So the question is always that we don't expect from the others to do things, but we do it ourselves first of things. And so therefore this reason we started to live in community, idealistic community like the kibbutz from idealism and peace and justice that we represented that we lived that. (clearing throat) But then we made experience that there were as many ideas as there were idealists, and we couldn't come to common unity as community expresses, and we were looking around. Where is that unity that we found? And we found it only in the will of God. Only if we all do the will of God, then we become united. And so we after 3 years, we joined the Bruderhof in Germany who represented that. Christ...Christ for us...Christ is not the founder of the Christian churches. The Christian churches do exactly the opposite of what Christ said. (Clearing throat) For instance...

Q: No. Please. Stop for a moment. Take some water. Take some kleenex. Take your time.

Q: How long...you...you joined the Hutterian Brotherhood. Was it called that at that time?

A: It was so. 1930 we started in Switzerland to live in community, (clearing throat) and there right in the beginning a pastor came to us with a family of four children. And he said, "Look here. Can I join you? Because I preach but I don't do. I don't live really a brotherly life. I have a nice house as a pastor and I have nice (coughing) income. Can I join you?" And one of our...we were three families, three couples who started...who came from the same youth movement. And...uh...one family was more Christian than we. And they said, "Look, go to the Bruderhof and learn there how to live in community. And then come back and teach us." And they went and stayed...1930. And then the Bruderhof was always concerned because they felt very much that we were seeking that unity, fighting for it...uh...struggling for it, but didn't find. And therefore when the second family wished to go away...the second...another family who was one of the founders of our community...they wished to go off the same. We don't find unity. It's finished. And they were given the advice also to go to the Bruderhof first.

Q: The Bruderhof?

A: The Bruderhof had already 10 years or 12 years proven that they have...could fight through to unity the whole time. And so they went. And they also remained in the Bruderhof. And so then they Bruderhof came more and more interested in our community, and tried to help us. And then they sent a letter to us...1933 in January, challenging us. And on this my wife said, "That's the thing which we need." I said, "I'm...I'm not quite sure about that." And I for the first time in my life was asking God... start to say, "What do you think? What should I do?" And I got somehow a confirmation that I should go at least to find out what is on the Bruderhof. And so I come with my wife and a son. We had Klaus, who was at that time 10 minutes old. And then...in the Bruderhof I sat, so to say, in the corner and looked through like an ____ you know what...what's the matter here? And then I found out that the true Christ is different from the Christ of the churches. That the true Christ fulfilled really what the Tennah said. It's not so that he was against the Tennah, but he ____ but the Christians prosecuted the Jews. That's a contradiction. So on the Bruderhof, I found the true Christ, not the Christ of the churches and a community, and therefore I joined. Now at this moment, Hitler came to power. And Everett Arnold who had been...had been judgment of the war had also been led to live in the community, he told us the following. Look here. Hitler came out of power, and here he comes in at the Holocaust because the Hitler prepared the Holocaust so to say. And he said, "Look here. This Hitler is preparing murder, deaths. We have to give a witness. We have to give a witness of life. Everybody that may cross our lives if we give that...everybody who does not wish to give his life should disappear. And those who wish to give their lives for the truth should stay on the Bruderhof. And we stayed. A few left, and a few stayed. About 120 stayed on the Bruderhof when Hitler came to power. And then we had ...soon had the raids of six police by the Nazis but they couldn't...they...they...couldn't still distinguish between Christian Socialism and Christian communism and political communism, because we are accused of being communists, you know like today. (Laughing) You know, the finest accusation. And...uh...because we were living community, we were communists. And we were told that if the communists come to power, we will be the first to be hanged on the trees outside the Bruderhof.

Q: The communists told?

A: The Communists that if they would come to power, they would...we will be the first to have...be hanged, because we represented another communism which is not...uh...uh... political communism. The Christian communism...you know ...you know, the first Christians in Jerusalem were all Jews, and they lived in community. They shared everything they had when the spirit came. (Laughing) So we say the spirit made them live in community, not they themselves. Not their ideas, but the spirit of God made them live in community as brothers. And so therefore, we represented that. We said also we have only one leader. That's Christ, and not Hitler, because Hitler was calling himself the leader. We didn't say Heil Hitler. And we refused all the persecution of the Jews and everything and we wrote that to Hitler. We wrote a personal letter to Hitler and challenged him to not to shed innocent blood. And in the end we said, "Look here, Hitler, what we wish you from our hearts is that you become of a...tool of the life of God...a tool of the life of God." And we never got an answer

to that letter. But we heard later that Hitler was asking when he was at the headquarters of a maneuvering nearby whether we live up there on that place. So he knew something about us. And we read...we sent also letters to the Gestapo to...to the Governor, to the Hinderburg, to Hitler, to...oh...to everybody in the thing, saying quite clearly where we stand. And then...uh...came the _____ which Klaus already spoke in which Hitler asked the people in Germany whether they agree with his politics. He had just left that League of Nations and...uh...we did not say neither yes nor...nor no, but we said, "Look here. We have to go a different way, and we challenge you. We have to go a different way. The different way is to the way of Christ and not the way of...uh...what you suggest." And on this 5 days later or 4 days later, we had 150 men with revolvers storming the Bruderhof. Hundred fifty SA, SS and people storming the Bruderhof, and we greeted them...said, "Good Morning. How are you?" (Laughing) And they couldn't understand that. They found it...uh...uh...cheeky. They couldn't understand it, and they did not know what to do. And because they expected resistance, I asked them, "Why do you come?" They said, "We were...we were called up to raid communist nests, and now we found no resistance." And so they...in the end of the day, they took all the books with red covers from the library as proof that you were communists (Laughing) and they left and said, "Look here. We forbid you to...uh..." No, I asked one of the Gestapo, "Look here, why do you come here?" He said, "Look here. You represent community and we represent community, but you represent community in another spirit than we. Therefore, it's impossible for you and we forbid that you take any guests in." We were forbidden by the Gestapo to take any guests. And...uh...so then...uh...but we didn't...we didn't obey. (Laughing) We just...any guests we warned from that point, we say, "Look here." If a guest came, we say, "Look here. If you are here, staying here, you are commit a danger because in Germany, you say, ____ caught with us _____ if you are caught with us, you will be hanged with us. And so those who were fearful left, but those who meant it seriously stayed. And then secondly, they tested the children that they found that the children had no national socialist education, and they said, "We wish to educate your children nationalist socialist," and we said, "No. We can't do that. We don't let you the children go." And then we had adopted a lot of children of people in poverty or who...who father or mother has died, and they tried to...wish to take them away from us. And we did everything to keep them. And...uh...for this reason, I was sent to Switzerland, to find a place for...for the children because the children couldn't stay in Germany. And in Switzerland I knew from the time we lived there in community and other community in French Switzerland community, the _____, and I went there to ask them and they first wished to educate the children themselves. And I said, "No, we educate our children ourselves." And then in the end, they agreed but said that they'd only take our children if the government is in agreement. And so I went with one of their members next day early to the government in Lausanne and in Lausanne they said, "Oh, that's not our business. That's the business of the federal government." And so we went to them and they asked, "Why do the children wish to leave Germany." And we...I tried to explain to them quite clearly what it meant. And they were...they said, "Look, why can't the children obey the government, the Swiss government?" And then he said, "Who are you? You speak Swiss-German. You are a Swiss? Who are you? And when they found out that I was a conscious objector, they said, "Of these of your children we wish to have no nothing." It's illegal for your children to come to Switzerland. And then I went to Prague...uh...to find

out whether there's a possibility for...in all Bruderhofs of the 16th century go in case we are no more tolerated in Germany. But...uh...I have the recommendation letter to Masserick, Tomas Masserick, the President of that time. A very good recommendation or letter from Switzerland from a friend of his, but he was sick and...and his secretary...press secretary helped me very much. And they found out that all the old places were under the protection of the...law which protected _____ history. And but they offered us lands. Luckily, we never had to accept that. I went back to Switzerland and I had no news for a fort night and I didn't know whether the Bruderhof still existed. So I went first to the Umslatz and I tried to find out and nobody could tell whether the Bruderhof still existed. And so in the night I sneaked up the Bruderhof to find out that the Bruderhof still is there. And it was still there. (Laughing) And I told my experiences, and on this a teacher...this ____ left the children for Switzerland illegally.

Q: You went back to Germany to see whether it was still there?

A: Yeah. Yeah. And find out that they're still there. And then we were sent to Swiss, to Berlin, to find out what the Gestapo has in mind. We went to the...to the top...uh...directors of the Gestapo in Berlin and they...they found out that the cheeky, cheeky, to tried to find out of the Gestapo what they have in mind. And the man who had the whole thing in his hands, he read the minutes which he...which they took...uh...while they were waiting the Bruderhof, they took the minutes with them, and I brought the other minutes to Switzerland by the way to bring them to safety not...the Gestapo asked for. And there he read to us, "Look here. You represent publicly that the present state of Hitler shows most clearly the character of every state as the beast for the ____." "If you still think we are the beast and we are this and represent that, I close you down immediately," said the Gestapo. But I cannot only close you down if the government is in agreement. And the government was not in agreement. You know why? We found only out after the war...after the war. They tried to find out...no one of our members in North America married the daughter of an employee of the State Department here, in Washington...uh...Nelson. And he visited us and I asked him, "Can't you find the archive of Hitler, at that time about this?" "Why." He said he gave us the address and telephone number and I inquired here in Washington, and they didn't have anything, and they referred us to _____. But they didn't find anything in ____ communist country. It's in east Germany. Now we heard after the war, the following. That a man in East German, a pastor, a methodist pastor, made the doctorate in churches to me. And he wishes to make a _____ about the three churches to Hitler in the time of Hitler time. And for this reason he got the permission from the communist government to go through the archives of Hitler which are in _____. As he went through the archives of Hitler, not knowing about us anything, and he found there correspondence between the Gestapo and the government a thing about us. And he found there a...he got so to know that we existed there for the first time and on this he got in contact with us. And through him we found the following. That the government...the government said, No. No. We can't...we can't dissolve the Bruderhof because they have a lot of friends in North America. And when we dissolve them, they can spread the rumor in North America that we...Hitler, persecute Christians. We can't have that. We must find another reason. So the Gestapo found the following reason. Because we did

not resist them when they visited us with the 150 armed men, we must have taken cocaine.

Q: Must have taken what?

A: Cocaine. Cocaine.

Q: They said you have must have taken cocaine because you didn't resist them?

A: Yeah. Yeah. Because we were friendly to them, whatever...for refusing. And so you must be drug addicts on which the governor says everybody knows this is a swindle. We can't do that. We have to find another reason. And the other reason which the governor suggested was to...to take over all our houses and lands for military purposes because the Americans do the same. They can't say we are persecuting Christians. You understand? And they...Hitler at that time did not wish to have a bad impression of Germany in America. He wished to have a good impression. Not that he persecutes Christians. And therefore it went forward and backward between Gestapo, them...

Q: What were you doing during all this period?

A: What? What?

Q: What were you doing while all this was going on. This is what? 1937?

A: We're building up. Building up. And we had to build up in Lichenstein. Oh, yes, in Lichenstein, we found the children couldn't stay in Switzerland any longer, so we had...

Q: I need to stop a minute if I can. Let's pause. I need to know what Hans was doing? Where did you go? You had gone back to Germany. You visited the Brotherhood. Now what?

A: I visited there. I visited Berlin, the Gestapo. At the same time we visited also the founder of the Confessional Church in Germany, but the _____ and the leading...uh... leading man from the Mennonites, _____. And both said, "We have nothing to do. You are not obedient to the government because you refused to do military service."

Q: Why were you doing all of these travels?

A: Because we wished to make as a witness against...against Hitler, to give a witness of what the CHristmas are because we said I represent positive Christianity.

Q: Did you get support as you traveled?

A: Only from very...very...

Q: And who this was?

- A: Very....practically nobody. Not even the Jews. We have two Jewish family among us, and we brought them to the...uh...Lichenstein to be out of the country that they were not persecuted. And...uh...and the question was this. We represented that, but nobody was listening.
- Q: When you went to Pasteur Neumueller, what did he tell you?
- A: And he told us, "Look here. You I can't _____ you together. I can't give that witness what you give because you are disobedient to the government because you don't want to do military service for them." I would do military service if the government ask me to do it. But I would not be obedient if the government would try to hinder me to...to
- Q: Move your hand away. I can't hear you. Okay.
- A: If the government would hinder me to sermon...to do a sermon on the pure word of God. And we told him, "Look here. The pure word of God doesn't exist here, only of _____, but of _____. And the _____ means that you should love your enemy; that the revenge is in God's hands and not in our hands as the prophets say. The prophets say the whole time again and again, "People don't revenge yourself. Leave the revenge to me." Yeah. The Prophets say that the whole time. And we say we represent that. And they said, "No, we have to obey the government." And then you know, he was...he had that sermon in Berlin against the persecution of the Jews and he was accused. And then the church had no law against that and let him go free. When Hitler heard that, he put him into concentration camp as his personal prisoner.
- Q: Pasteur Neumoller's story is very familiar. I need Hans' story. I need your story.
- A: Yeah. And then...then...my story is the following. Uh...At the same time as we were put into prison later, 1937, he was put into concentration camp because he refused to preach for...against the Jews. And he was for 8 years in concentration camp and the prison wardens tried to tease him the whole time by executing prisoners before his window.
- Q: Let us...
- A: And then he said each time these criminals, these swine and really saw one man who said, "Forgive them. They don't know what they do?" And then he changed his attitude. And from that moment on, nobody listened what_____That was the fact.
- Q: Let us come back to you. You had been doing all these travels.
- A: Yeah.
- Q: What year was that?

A: That was 1933, 1934.

Q: At the end of these travels, you had been going to see these people trying to get help. Uh...When...when you got finished traveling, what did you do?

A: Oh, I worked in the garden.

Q: You...you came back?

A: I came back and worked in the garden or in the cow stall or where it was necessary. We are ready to do any work which helps the whole community. For instance...

Q: What were you...I need to ask. What was life like for you...uh...in the _____ in let's say 34, 35, 36. What was your life like? Okay?

A: Poor. Very poor.

Q: Okay.

A: Because we had to build up a Lichenstein Bruderhof. In 1936, we had to build up a English Bruderhof because you have heard what Klaus said? No? You haven't heard. What Klaus said...

Q: We need your story.

A: In the meantime, I always worked in the garden or in the cow stall or where it was necessary. And I was also making journeys to Holland and...uh...selling drinks and books to get some money in...and then we got...uh...a letter from the Burgenmeiser of Berlin _____.

Q: That's okay. Just summarize it. Just tell it.

A: The letter he said the Bruderhof protests against that we have forbidden them to sell their books. I have the following reasons. Their propaganda in all their books is against Hitler. It's dangerous to the state, enemy to the state. They have brought all their military people to Lichenstein where they were called up. You know, the young chaps who were called up military service, they brought to Lichenstein. They have tried to save them from military service. You have refused to persecute the Jews. You have refused to contribute to the community...community of the people as they say in Germany. You have worked against it. Altogether, you ever...you never used the greeting Heil Hitler. You publicly declared that you never become national socialist and I can only say all the books and all what the brotherhood does is against the state of Hitler. Therefore I forbid them to sell their books, sell their produce.

Q: Okay. At this point, we're going to stop and pause and change tapes.

A: Yeah.

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

- Q: So the...the tape has started. We're back on tape. The Bergermeister had sent this letter. Uh...You weren't allowed to sell your books. Uh...What did you do?
- A: We never sent our books. I went myself on bikes _____ full of books, and you know what the experience on the way. We couldn't go to people who knew that the police was persecuting us. So we could only go to nice people who would not denounce us with the police. And then we knocked at the door. The door opened and the people said, "Oh Heil Hitler. Oh, you are coming from the Bruderhof. Please excuse us. If we don't say Heil Hitler, our children are despised in school. We lose our house. We lose our job. Forgive us that we say Heil Hitler." And we told them each time, "Look here. The...the saying give Heil Hitler, you give the devil the small finger which soon has your whole hand." (Laughing) That's what we said. We...we sold our books in spite of the..the permission. (Laughing) And then it was so...I was sent to Switzerland to sell the books. And on a Saturday afternoon in 1935, in Basel, I was just walking across the marketplace and I suddenly saw in a...in a big window, a handwritten, big announcement that Hitler just had introduced military service for the whole of Germany. On this I phoned immediately the Bruderhof to inform him, and Everett Arnold came on the phone. And he could not speak on the phone openly. We had to speak in code. And we spoke of the weather. And he asked if...how the weather is in Switzerland, and I said, "Look here. The weather in Switzerland is good, but in...in...uh...in north...north," I said, "the weather is brewing together to a storm." And our friends from Berlin have invited our young people to come to Berlin. And he immediately knew what it meant because he had been forewarned by people in Kassel about the whole thing. And then they had that Brother...brotherhood. No...and he...he told me, "Look here. Try to come home tonight and bring some money because we have to...he didn't say that, but I could...uh...imagine it, we need some money to send all these 15 brothers to the _____. And so I...uh...I the same night, there were two things. One thing was the brotherhood in...in Germany in which they decided that they would not...uh...put the life of the young brothers into concentration camp but rather for the building up of the Bruderhof in Lichenstein. And said because if they refuse to go they would put...put into concentration camp. And so they...they left the same night and there because we have not enough money to give them all, had to go just blind all arrived in the Bruderhof.
- Q: And they fled over the border into Lichenstein?
- A: Right.
- Q: Okay. What did you do during this time?
- A: I...I went...I...I asked friends for the youth movement in Basel to come together the same evening, and asked them for help. And they...I...they gave me altogether about 500 francs help, and with the 500 francs in my pocket I went back to the Bruderhof. And I arrived the next morning and the 50 brothers were no more there. The 50 young brothers. And then they

had two _____. When the Germany without the children and we got the 15 guineas...Germans, only Swiss and Danish. Others were there, and so it was a very ___ division. And then...then the Brotherhood, then I went back to...to Germany and worked there again the garden and so _____. And then I take because many had to go to the other Broderhof, Lichenstein, I had to take over the stewardship, the many business of the Bruderhof. And I...there was now the following. We had bought three dilapidated farms which supported perhaps 20 people altogether. And we built it up to for 150 people with school house, laundry, bake house... uh...farm houses necessary for cattle...more cattle, and all the things which and I put into the barn sheep. You know, the barn sheep. I put all the cattle in which you put in. We also improved like agriculture with lime.

Q: I need to interrupt enough to ask...we need to move it up, move it a little faster.

A: Yeah.

Q: Can you tell me what happened?

A: Then happened the following. The...the young chaps went to Lichenstein. And then the Lichenstein government told us in confidence, "Look here. Hitler has already asked for these chaps. Go..go that we...because we are too small a country to resist Hitler and take away the young chaps. And so had to found the Bruderhof in England community. And we had to send them there. And I...now it happened the following. At the same at just at that moment, France closed its frontier for all Germans because Hitler with his illegal army had illegally occupied the Rhineland, and France in its anger closed all of France, and so how should we get...get the young chaps from Lichenstein to England?

Q: What did you do?

A: The borders not through France, not through Germany. In Germany, they would have take...be taken immediately to concentration camp. And so they sent me with three which were most danger to find our way to England. And the steward there gave me 120 francs and said, "Here. That's all what we can give" what I have in my pocket...my person. Look how you get there England without...and then we went to Italy.

Q: Excuse me. I need...I need to stop this. Hold it. Can we stop the tape please? I'm getting a cross feed on here. I can't...I can't keep anything in my ear and it's too loud. Can you stop the tape? Okay. Alright. We're back on. Uh...How did you get the brethren to England.

A: I mean we went to Italy because there we did not need any visas. And we tried to get the ship from Geneva, but there was no ship to England from Geneva because the League of Nations had put an embargo on Italy because of the attack on Absinia. And therefore we had to sneak across the frontier. And we went along the Riviera to _____. and the weather was very nice because there was...uh...mist all over the Alps and we thought we can sneak over. And we were caught by the police, by the Italian police, as spies. And we were threatened to be

transported back to Geneva as spies and to be delivered up to Germany. And I asked this man...this police...Italian policeman, "Look here. You know that you have no spies." And they said suddenly, "Who are you? Are you a Franciscan?" And I...because I tried in my Italian to explain to him how we missed...and I told him in my poor Italian how we missed the community, and he said in the end, "Look here. I believe you that you are no spies, but I can't cross both eyes. I...but I close one eye, and push you over the frontier." (Laughing) Just what we wished. And he paid even a stranger to the frontier and then they pushed us over the Italian frontier into the France. And then they put their stamps all on the last pages of our passport, and when we arrived at the French frontier the man was only looking for the Italian stamps and didn't see that there were German passports and let us go. And then he accompanied us to the police and said you have to announce to the police and the police neither discovered that they were German passports. Let us go through! Then we arrived by...the last minute we gave to the express train to Paris...Paris. And we went through from...uh...Nice to Paris where we ride express train and arrived in Paris without money, without visa. And then we phoned to England and they sent us some money telegraphically that we could travel on. When we arrived in _____, the man French man said that look here. How can I put the leave taking stamp in your passports when you have no entry stamps? What should I do? I can only deliver you to...to Germany?" And I begged him and said, "Look here. We just leave now France. Have a bit of patience." And in the end, he put the entry stamp before his out stamp in the passports and let us go. And then we arrived in England and the English man said, "Do you wish to come in by the back door when you have been thrown out by the front door?" Because one of the three with whom I traveled had been by air to London and refused entry into England because he was not fetched and counted by an English brethren, and he didn't know any word of English. And so he...and the end one of our brothers who fetched us in...in...uh...in Liverpool...in South Hampton, could convince the English man that we are innocent and he gave us 2 months of...of ... uh...stay in England.

Q: What did you do while you were in England?

A: And then we arrived on the place which was later the _____ Bruderhof, and they were just collecting the last money for the down payment and they just arrived 2 days later with all the money what down payment that we could start the ___ Bruderhof.

Q: Could start what?

A: The _____, the English Bruderhof. And then I went back to Germany there...from there. And then we were more and more poor. I mean because we had deported some people to England, some to Lichenstein. And we were concerning what there should we do? And then on the...in 1937...then we got this letter from the Gestapo.

Q: You had...you had gone to England before the letter from the Gestapo came?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Go ahead.

A: And then returned to Germany. And...uh...I took over the stewardship there and was...uh...and I put in...in the... in the...uh...in that bookkeeping the capital which we invested in the Bruderhof. In 1937, the Gestapo was stronger than the government, and they dissolved us against the government. And...uh...they confiscated everything. And I asked them...they came with 150 men armed. I asked them, "Why do you come?" They said, "We come to dissolve you. Everybody goes home and the Germans come to do military service." And we said, "No, we don't do that. We just left home to live in community and our mili...our Germans don't do military service." So they were flabbergasted and then they discovered that two Americans were there, just by chance...so called chance. And they said, "These Americans can't go back to North America and say that Hitler persecutes Christians. That they can't have. Therefore, they have to find...they have to find another reason. And they found the following reason. They said, "Pay your debts." And I told them, "Look here. After you confiscated everything, with what should I pay my debts? If you give back what...what they have taken away, we can pay it." Then they said, "No. We don't do it." And they went to creditor, and he signed under their pressure a letter which he accused us of swindle because didn't pay..pay him the debts. Although I have told the Gestapo I have to recuperate that they gave back, what they have...and shortly before we got the...the visit of a ...of a group of people, experts. They looked at the houses and the land. They said, "Look here. We buy all this and pay you the whole price and you have that for military purposes." And so I had in my hand...I had the promise that they would get the money for all..for all my debts.

Q: What happened then?

A: And then they said, "You committed falsification of the balance sheet because you put in...uh...much higher value than the balance sheet for what is there than what it was." And the thing was the following. The Gestapo confiscated everything and then put it on auction. The whole...all the things. And he was only offered say 40,000 marcs instead of 180,000 marcs. And so they said because they are offered only 40,000 marcs...only valued 40,000 marcs, you put a wrong number into your balance sheet. You understand?

Q: Yes.

A: Is it clear?

Q: It's quite clear.

A: Under this...and now the thing was the following. They...they asked us...the...the commission or the directive commission...or they forced them, the directive commission of their association official, they asked us to come to the governor and to consider what are they going to do now. And we said, "Look here. If you throw us out, we would like to go to our communities in Lichenstein in England and all of our military people can go there. And they

had to agree to with that because they knew two Americans were there observing them the whole time and therefore they arranged that...that the the Americans had to promise to pay to journey in case we would not pay the journey. And so they advanced the money for the journey to England and to Lichenstein for our people. And then when the whole thing was ended six policeman showed up and took us into custody of security. Not...not because we are falsified...uh...they accused of...lot later...because we had falsified balance sheet, but for our own security. You know, the security...and put us into prison and only after a fortnight, the judge accepted the accusation of false... false...uh...balance sheet, swindled balance sheet.

Q: What happened to you? What...where did you go?

A: And then we were...we were taken to prison. And then the prison was changed from security prison into criminal prison.

Q: You were charged quickly.

A: We were charged with that, and then the judge had to trans...to investigate that this was true or not. And then the Gestapo took our fingerprints and photographs and everything and we protested. We said, "Look here. The whole thing is a big swindle. Uh...It's not true because the whole thing is much more value than what you think...uh...people offer. And...uh...you know, that's all a swindle." They laughed. They laughed. They said, "Look here. You are enemies of the state. In case the church lets you go, we fetch you to concentration camp." And so we sat 3 months in prison with the promise of the Gestapo to fetch us to concentration camp any day. And the judge let us go. And the judge must have had some...some...uh... qualms in his heart because he let us go 2 days before the Gestapo knew about it so that we had 2 days advance. And the judge the week before, our German member...we were two Swiss and one German, our German member was called into military service. And we said, "No." And as the commanding officer to whom we wrote that letter was not present, they said, "Go back to prison where he can't escape us. We'll fetch you next week from prison where you can't escape us, and to go to military service." And just the same Saturday, the judge let us go. And he told our lawyer and our lawyer told a friend of us with his car to fetch us from prison and he took us away from prison as quickly as possible, as far as possible. And then they came...I had no passport because the Gestapo had my passport. How do you get out of Germany? You could get anywhere, but not without passport. So I went to the Swiss Consulate in Frankfort and asked him...uh...to give me passport. And they gave me a passport without any papers. Nothing. Just because they knew me that I was conscious objector. And...uh...and then I...we sneaked...we had to sneak across the Dutch frontier because the...the Germans...the Germans could only go...leave Germany with the permission of the military, which you can't...couldn't get at that moment after you had been called up to military service. And therefore we had to sneak and I with my new passport was sent across the frontier immediately to prepare that the Dutch people wouldn't reject a German. And the two went into the woods to cross the frontier and missed the way. Came out on the German side again and only at midnight started again on the foot path to the woods to cross the frontier, and then they were caught by the border police, the German

border police. And they looked round whether they saw any officer. And when they didn't see any officer, they showed our brothers the way to Holland. German border guard. And told him to where should they go in Holland to find a taxi to go to _____ to meet me. You can say...I mean God led the way all...all the time. (Laughing)

Q: What about you. Where were you at this point?

A: I was in Nijmegen.

Q: Where? I'm sorry.

A: What?

Q: Where were you at this point? While you were waiting for your friends?

A: In Nijmegen, in Holland. And then we came to...to Rotterdam and there we were taken in by a family...a Dutch family that they have about four sons. And I visited them after the war, and one of the sons was shot on the spot by the police because they tried to help Jews not to come into concentration camp. And they...and they...the police searched all the youths who tried to help the Jews for weapons. And those who had no weapons they let go. But those who had the revolver or a knife, they shot on the spot. And he had a revolver in his pocket. Was shot on the spot. So I mean we had to...we had always contact with the Jews on the whole way. We tried to help and we tried, but...uh...it was...I mean many Jews didn't believe that Hitler would act this way. They trusted Germany.

Q: What about you now? You are in Holland. What did you try to do next?

A: I mean we tried to help to find a way which God has given.

Q: How long were you there?

A: And I...I think I am contact with the...you know, we are... we are in contact with the Jews since Monty Bouver. We knew Monty Bouver personally. I knew him personally. And he gave us _____ into German as a gift. and in his translation, he says the 10 commandments of the St. Sinai are not lost but in case not...you should not kill, you will not kill, then you love God. That's...that's the 10 commandments. You will not do that if you love God. And so we can only say how we can only challenge all people to the will of God and then there is peace and justice. But how can we challenge people if we don't do it ourselves? Therefore, we have to do it ourselves. Therefore, we try to live and therefore we try to seek with everybody, with Jews with non-Jews, with everybody, we try to find the way of truth.

Q: How did you try to help Jews? You said you had tried to help them? What kinds of things did you do?

- A: You know, there were Jews coming to us to find refuge. And we told them we'd take them in, but we have to warn you in case we are hanged, you will be hanged with us. You are caught with us together. If you have courage, you can stay. If you don't have the courage, go. We have to say the same to the...the...we can't invite people to come and share with us if they're not prepared to give their life for that. Understand?
- Q: Did people stay? Did Jews stay with you?
- A: And there are people who stay and people who go.
- Q: How did you hide the Jews?
- A: Huh?
- Q: How did you hide the Jews among you?
- A: Oh, we didn't hide them. We just...either we sent...uh... the one Jew we sent to Lichenstein or to England. I don't remember. And the family...his parents who never joined but we had them in the community gave them...gave them a house to live in...in England, and they later came to the States. They have, by the way, a son...uh...what was his name? Hans...uh... __. He was...he was a famous ...uh...man in the theatre in
- Q: Okay. What...uh...how long did you stay in Holland?
- A: Oh, I didn't stay in Holland long time, only just 1 day. But my family was thrown out German when I was in prison.
- Q: Alright. Where was your family sent?
- A: My family had to leave the second day after _____ while I was in prison.
- Q: Where did they go?
- A: They went first to Holland on the way to England. But they couldn't go straight to England, because England asked for a guarantee of security and we...until we had that, they had to stay in Holland, but they were looked after by Mennonites in Holland. How long were they in Holland?
- Q: How long were they in Holland?
- A: They were there for about 2 months in Holland.
- Q: And then what?

A: And then they proceeded to England, to the community in England.

Q: Okay.

A: And my son, Klaus, they found the first time in Holland radio because we had no radio. And there was a radio box...

Q: I'm going to...excuse me. I'm going to interrupt you. And I need to bring you back to you. I need your story. Not Klaus's. Okay. Uh...You came to Holland. You were there very briefly. Then what did you do?

A: Then we went to England to join the community there.

Q: Okay.

A: And then I was sent back to...to...from there I was working again in the garden and then no...especially in England, we have no electric power. I installed as an electrical engineer electric power in England in the whole community...uh...our own power, generator and power, DC. And...uh...so I did do that there. And then I also went to Lichenstein where we had to dissolve. We had to give up Lichenstein and bring all the people over to England, 1938 when Hitler occupied Austria. So I had to bring them over. And I...I had to pay all of that in...in Lichenstein with a...uh...with...uh...my inheritance which I got in Switzerland. —

Q: Okay. So you brought the Lichenstein Brethren over to England.

A: Over to England.

Q: If the year is 1938...

A: 1938.

Q: Okay. How did you live? What happened to you then?

A: And then I was working under for the power station for the Bruderhof for the community and then 1930...39, the war was declared. And then happened this...I heard Klaus say it this morning, they threatened to burn down the Bruderhof immediately.

Q: Who threatened to burn down?

A: The population.

Q: In England?

A: In England. Yeah.

Q: You tell what you remember, because Klaus was really telling it secondhand.

A: Yeah.

Q: Tell me what happened?

A: A Quaker came to us on the way to Paris, where he was going to visit the...the _____, the King from _____. And he spent...uh...took a cup of tea and coffee in I think _____, village nearest to us. And there he heard that the people were going the same down to burn down the Bruderhof.

Q: Why?

A: Because we were Germans. Half of them Germans and half of them were the objectors of military service, defense of England. And there were Germans and we always lived together in peace. That was really suspicious to the English. And I experienced for instance before the war that the declaration, when I went to the village I was invited everywhere for a cup of tea. From that moment on, the doors were closed because the people were fearful to give us hospitality. From that moment on! And we were accused of all I think every things. For instance, we were accused of...uh....disturbing the blackout and giving signals to the German bombers because you know we had the other blackout and sometime a child, pull...pulled...put away the curtain and then a light came out and then we were accused that we gave signals to the German bombers to how...how to fly. And secondly, an English girl married a German brother. In this time, and we were all classified since...since the war as...uh....neutral aliens and, of course, the English were...were not classified. And the moment he's married...the German, he was classified as an enemy alien and was put into internment camp right there. _____. Exactly the same. It was a real psychosis in the whole population against everything which was not pure English. (Laughing) And then the home guard came and said put six brothers on the wall and put the guns against them as if they were shooting them. And we protested all the things, but then the government they didn't tell us, but it was so that we...the government had to put all the Germans into internment camps to save them, save their lives. The government was much more liberal than the people. And...uh...and this case, they...we had the fear that all the Germans were put into internment camp and we suggested to the government, "Can't we immigrate? It's before we are...before we are separated?" And the government said, "Yes. You can take everything with you during the war time. Money and everything if you need." And then we were looking for where could we go? And there we came to...I was sent with a Jewish boy who we...oh yes. In the ___ time, we had Jewish people (coughing)...you know, and...and that quick...tried to help us. And he opened an office to help Jews in Vienna. And they asked us to help him. And we took in about a dozen Jewish families who came from Vienna, Jewish families. And they were living with us until they found a place where to go. And they sent also about 10 to 12 young...young children to us whose parents had been put into concentration camp, and so we had...uh...this group of children with us. And then one of

those children remained and came with us to Paraguay and she is now mother of a family. She married not a Jew, but...uh...but we have no...no difficult with marrying Jews and that's because we don't see a difference there. And...uh...and then another boy, his parents suddenly turned up. They could escape from the Gestapo and went by Rome, France to Venezuela and they suddenly wrote to us and said look here. They would like to have their boy. How do you send a 6 year old boy in the wartime from England to Venezuela. And so we offered that we would accompany him in the hope that to accompany him that we have so much time in North America to prepare the immigration for us here. And I got all the papers from the Jewish committee in London for Al Fisher was his name...all the papers to accompany him. And when we arrived in New York, the man...the immigration officer said, "Are you a Jew?" I said, "No, I am not a Jew." "How does it come that you accompany a Jewish boy?" Something suspicious there. And so he...he put us into a room on the ship, let us not the ship until the Jewish community New York integrate...investigated the whole thing. And the man came from the Jewish committee in New York, on the ship and looked all my papers through and he found everything in order. He said, "I can't accuse you of anything, but we take the boy from you and bring him ourselves to Venezuela." And they put him on Ellis Island and we visited him where was supplied very well and nicely. A 6 year old, 7 year old boy. And then he was accompanied by a Jewish nurse to Venezuela to where we got the news from his parents that he arrives safe. And we were 3 months free in North America to help try to put our immigrations. And there I think you know that story.

Q: Tell us...tell us briefly what happened.

A: And then...then the thing was this. I was...we were two...two there, we were accompanied by Fisher. And they were taken from us in _____.

Q: Where? I'm confused. You was taken from you where?

A: From us? From our...our guardianship and the Jewish Committee from New York let him accompany to Venezuela by a nurse.

Q: No. No. Let me...let me rephrase the question. You had now left the boy. He is on Ellis Island.

A: Yeah.

Q: The 3 months you lived in New York.

A: No. We lived here in Washington.

Q: In Washington. You came to Washington.

A: We...we try to foster our immigration this time. And we came to...we first came...we had only enough money to go to Lancaster where we knew the MCC, the Mennonites Central

Committee. And that's again a story behind it. You know 1936...

Q: No. Excuse me. We don't have time for the stories behind it unfortunately.

A: At any case...at any case, through him we got the contact with the Quakers in Philadelphia and they brought us into contact with the State Department here in Washington. And with their international student home, I think, New Hampshire Avenue where they offered us to stay for \$1 dollar a night, a breakfast. (Laughing) You know, from the Quakers. And then we tried first to get immigrations through our from _____, the Assistant Attorney General of Roosevelt ...uh...because he was a relative of the Arnolds. He was _____. Perhaps you have heard his name. He was a lawyer here in Washington, and he was a Attorney General... Assistant Attorney General in Roosevelt's...uh...government.

Q: Okay. So you went to various people to get help?

A: Then we...he said, "I have nothing to do with you because my Department of Justice is a Department of conformity and you are nonconformists. I have nothing to do," and put the telephone down. And after 2 months or a month and a half, he phoned us up and they interrupted the student home and said, "Come quickly to me." And we visited him in the Justice Department...to pay for the taxi 25 cents at that time, 1940. And then we went to his room by the FBI accompanied, and he got up and said, "I'm glad that you didn't come barefoot (laughing) cause my FBI told me you are non-conservatists." And we had a good talk with him and he said, "Are you Amish...Amish Mennonites." I said, "No, we are not Amish, but...uh...we have certain roots together in the...in the 16th Century and then I told him about our attitude in Germany. He said, "I'm proud of my relatives here. I will try that they get immigration in the United States as soon as possible." And he took one phone after the other and said, "I am personally interested in the...in the immigration of these people." But nothing came. And then we came to Pendle Hill. Do you know Pendle Hill. Uh...The Quaker Center. And he...this Clarence Speaker told us that he had been suggested by Roosevelt who was his friend to go as Ambassador to Berlin because Hitler would only listen to a Quaker and to nobody else. And he's ready to...he doesn't feel to be a diplomat, but he's ready to if he can serve peace, he serves peace, but he never was called to do that. At any case, he arranged a meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt and I had with her breakfast in New York, in her hideout on the 42th Street.

Q: Tell us about that breakfast

A: It was very nice. She was there...uh...with me, was Sky Johnson, a English man and...uh...she was there with her secretary, Thompson. And...uh...he was very nice, very informal, and she said at the end after we told our story, "I'm very much in favor of your immigration because here in North America, we have not proper democracy. We look down on the black people and we need people like you who represent a different attitude. And so I am for it very much," and she...in my day, on that day she recommended our immigration publicly. And then in the...when they took leave, I said, "Greet your husband and my colleague nearly fell

down the stairs and said, "My God, you don't say your husband. You say Mr. President." (Laughing) But she took it very, very, very good. Very good. But she said at the end, "Look here. I'm not the President myself. I have not the power to declare it, your immigration." And then we were told by confidence...confidential that they would have postponed our immigration until next year because that was the year of the third...third re-election campaign of Roosevelt. 1940! And they did...couldn't let in 300 pacifists at that moment. This would disturb the re-election campaign of the democrats and therefore they would have to postpone it. The thing was the following. Our brothers in South Dakota gave an affidavit of support which was not accepted because that they said it's a collective of ____ and association can form tonight and decide affidavit and dissolve the next morning so there it's not possible. On that the...the Senator for South Dakota, Muntz, he said, "I'll bring in a private...who knows, I know the brothers. I know that they keep it, and I bring in a private bill to recognize that affidavit." But then it was said that we can only bring the Bill after a certain...after re-election of Roosevelt. And so...and now in England, they couldn't postpone until next year, so we had to leave. And here the Mennonites come in again. They offered us immediately to go to Paraguay because and we visited Paraguay Ambassador in Washington, and he said, "If you wish to go to Paraguay, I have tomorrow the permission to go. I ring up my father-in-law, who's President of Paraguay, said the Ambassador here, and you have the permission to go to Paraguay. And so we got the permission for Paraguay immediately. And for this we needed trans...transits permission by Argentina because Paraguay is land locked. It's in the middle of South America and doesn't...have no harbor. So we have to go through Argentina or Brazil to Paraguay. And Brazil, Argentina asked for \$7,000 deposit as guarantee that nobody stays in Argentina. And they asked here in Washington...the Quaker, whether he could give us the money, and he said, "I give you money immediately if I have the safety that the money is paid back. And I go to ask him...ask the Ambassador...we went together with the Ambassador here in Washington, and the Ambassador was angry that somebody doubted that he...that his money...that he would pay back the \$7,000. And so he...he said, "I'm not sure," and he didn't wish to give the \$7,000, so we had to look somewhere else.

Q: So where did you get the money from finally?

A: We got...I don't know, because I had to go immediately to South America to prepare the first group and the ____, I think he got it from the brothers in South America, South Dakota.

Q: So you then...

A: And we got the money back.

Q: Okay. You now went to Paraguay?

A: Then I went to Paraguay. But for this I went first on the Good Friendship...uh...of thirty three thousand tons which was between New York and Buenos Aires to Rio de Janeiro. And I learned on the way Spanish because that Spanish was official language in Paraguay.

(Clearing throat) I had to find out how to get to Paraguay. And I went to the Pan American Union here to inquire and we found the Paraguayan agent...we found the timetables and all the thing.

Q: Alright. I need to cut this short a little for the tape, because I think we could go on for a long time. You've been through a lot. How long did you live...how many years did you...did you live in Paraguay finally?

A: Well, we lived for 20 years in Paraguay. You had...you built up a whole community there?

Q: Yeah. Yeah. Three communities in Paraguay. One in Ascunio, and one in Uruguay. And then there came an inner weakening. You, as Klaus declared. Yeah. Uh...We compare the community with a lantern. And the lantern has a shell and a light. Yeah? If the light is not burning, what is the shell lantern? The lantern has only value with the light. Yeah? And we had a shell, but no more the light. That means the *shalom*, no more the unity. Unbrokenness. Shalom means unbrokenness. And we didn't have anything more of that. Therefore, the whole community went to pot, like the kibbutz today. Like the kibbutz. It's the same question of the kibbutz. And the question is the following. I put that thing to the kibbutz. I said...I wrote to them...we don't wish to tell them what they should do because they ask us, "Why are you able to live in community? What is the secret behind it?" Because we need it because the community with us falls fast. And so I answered them, "Look here. We don't...we can't tell you what you should do. We can only tell you what we experienced, and you may learn from that. And the question is that when the Christians tried to christianize the states, it was not so that they were able to Christianize the state, but the state corrupted them. And you have to be careful that it doesn't happen with you the same way." And then...then...uh...

Q: When did you...when did you come to this country finally. With all of this happening, when did you come to the United States?

A: You know...you know the thing was this. When this whole spiritual battles started, I needed to...to take a distance. And I was for 12 years in Buenos Aires, independent, to think about it. And then I went right back to the community in North America...uh...experiencing the following. You come together when each one of you takes the beam out of his own eye first before he tries to take the splinter out of the next. That's a fact. And this I...this is simply what I experienced. I can only say for here...uh...I found that the Bible is right. I do not say because the Bible says that, you should do that because the Bible says that, but I found out that the Bible is right. That's the whole point. That's just a fact.

Q: Thank you. Okay. And on that note, I think we end. I cannot think of a better place to end the interview.

A: Yeah.

Q: Thank you.

A: That's just a fact.

Q: Okay. Thank you.

A: God is right. (Laughing)

Q: Okay. That's it. Alright. Thank you very much.