

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Gerhart Riegner
April 28, 1992 and May 11, 1992
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with Gerhart Riegner, conducted on April 28, 1992 and May 11, 1992 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview 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.

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GERHART RIEGNER
April 28, 1992

Q. Dr. Riegner, would you tell us your full name, and where and when you were born?

A. My name is Gerhart Riegner. Second name is Moritz. I was named after my grandfather. I am born in Berlin. I am a real Berliner, as Kennedy would have said. And I am born on the 12th of September, 1911.

Q. And could you tell us a little bit about what your life was like when you were growing up in Berlin with your family, friends, the climate, so forth?

A. Well, I come from a typical German Jewish family. And I would say that we belonged already -- as Kurt Blumenfeld would have said -- to the post-assimilationist era. It is typical that I am born in Berlin and that my two parents were also already born in Berlin. My grandparents came from very typical German middle-sized cities. One grandfather was born in Magdeburg. The other -- my grandmother was born in Halle. The second grandmother was born in Neubrandenburg. And the other grandfather -- here we come already to the frontier towards Poland -- in Niederschlesien, which is Silesia, the more German part of it. So I am coming from a long stock German family. We had in the family two traditions. On the one hand, a very Jewish tradition. My grandmother, my mother's side, was a Lewandovsky. She was a niece of Louis Lewandovsky, who was the creator of the modern synagogue music, and some of the most beautiful modern melodies originate from him. His son-in-law was the famous philosopher, Hermann Cohen, the founder of the Marburgerschule of the school of Neo-Kantianism. He was

one of the few full professors under the Kaiserreich in the old style. He came from very Jewish origins. He studied the Talmud. He went to the Jewish theological seminary in Breslau before he became a philosopher. And he is the author not only of great works and the reinterpretation of Kant, but also of religious philosophy, of work in religious philosophy, based on the sources of Judaism, "die Religion der Vernunft." This is a great man in my family, whom I knew as a child. And where -- every Sunday we went for lunch to my grandparents' and for coffee or tea to Cohen's. And in Cohen's house, which was very near that of my grandparents', every Sunday there was a great party, sixty, fifty, sixty persons. And the old man was nearly blind, was in the rocking chair, like Kennedy, with white, wonderful white hair, and the blue dark glasses, was presiding over -- what should I call it? Holding court, if you want. He was really nice to us children. He played with us, and -- but before all, I knew that he was an important man.

I see him still in the synagogue on -- Simchas Torah. 01:10 In 1917, I was six years old, when he walked directly behind the rabbi with the little Torah, very light because he was not so very strong any more. And he looked like an old Jewish prophet, with his fantastic great face, his white locks, and he gave the impression of a real leader of a religious movement.

Q. But you knew he was also an important man in the country in terms of his academic standing?

A. He was fighting anti-Semitism. And he spoke out from 1879, when the famous attacks by Treitschke, the historian, and Stoecke, the priest and the official Dompraediger of the empire, attacked the Jews. And he was himself, by the way, the victim of many anti-Semitic attacks, and was -- had never a call from another university -- this is also very interesting -- and was fighting

for his pupils to get appointed as professors, and had one defeat after the other in this respect. Even a man like Ernst Gerschieler, as great as his name was in this country -- was his most important pupil probably -- couldn't get in Marburg, the Privatdozenten, and so on. Now, this is the one -- and here, the one source of my Jewish background which was perhaps in myself stronger than in the family itself. And this was due to the general climate in Germany. My first anti-Semitic experience was on the second day of school, when I went to school in 1917, and somebody called me "ein dreckiger Judenluemmel," dirty Jew boy -- something. And I -- this was my first anti-Semitic experience. And I reacted immediately, not very intelligently. But I couldn't not react. And I replied "dreckiger Christenbengel," which wasn't very intelligent. But I did not accept the attack. My second experience was an experience of social anti-Semitism, in school, when a good friend of mine, who was also a son of a lawyer, never succeeded in inviting me to his home.

Q. You mean he tried, but his parents wouldn't allow it?

A. Yes. It was a tragedy with which I fought three years, each time finding another excuse why they didn't invite me, until I finally understood why. Now, all this happened in a Germany in which there was a strong anti-Semitic movement. I come to it in a moment when I speak about the political background.

Q. All right.

A. But I remember, for instance, the day on which Rathenau was assassinated, in 1922. I was not yet eleven years old. And I remember the day my mother was in the clinic and we visited her. She had some operation -- I don't remember what it was -- and it shook us to the foundations. This was the great German Jewish patriot, who, in 1918, at the end of the war, was the only one to suggest that the war was lost "Levee en masse" -- the popular resistance movement -- a Jew who had the courage to do this -- was the organizer of the whole economic administration of raw materials during the four years of the first World War, for Germany. A really great German patriot, no doubt about it, who had immense merit, from the German point of view --

Q. He was a very able man.

A. -- to have organized it. And he was, as a minister of foreign affairs, killed by "voelkische," racist people. I will never forget this. This -- and in this whole -- this whole movement, there were at least three, four, five others -- I am not speaking even of Hitler -- the first revolt in 1924. But in every election we had it, and you felt it, and you saw it, and we were very noisy. Now I come to the other side. My family was very interested in politics. My father was associated since 1910 with a member -- the socialist member, a prominent socialist who became a member of the Reichstag, who was during the revolution in 1918 a member of the provisional Prussian government, minister of justice, and who became one of the great fighters against the death penalty in Germany.

Q. Kurt Rosenfeld?

A. Kurt Rosenfeld, yes. My father was not a socialist. My father was a very socially minded democrat. Perhaps more social than the Socialist Party, deeply -- but didn't believe in Marxism, and so on, but he had a very great social conscienceness. He was a typical product of his time, where the idea of "allgemeine Bildung," universal knowledge, universal education, was the great idea towards which a great part of German Jewry attended. He was very close to Cohen, who considered him as his preferred nephew, who had no children, and, therefore, the close relationship. He was in reality very knowledgeable in German literature. When he died, I heard him -- and the last time I saw him and -- lying on his bed -- declaiming for hours verses from Goethe's Faust, from Heine's "Lieder," and so on. You know, this is human. At the end of the life, the souvenirs of the young years come out very, very strongly -- that remain, years full of German "Bildung." He was a great connoisseur of art. In his old years he even wrote books on art and articles. Where he didn't succeed to write about European art -- to publish it in America, I gave him the idea to write for a -- European publications about American art, and he published a series of modern American art. It was very appreciated. He was at home in many ways in many fields of human knowledge and endeavors. As I said, he was a lawyer. And he was even very esteemed amongst his colleagues. He was what is called a member -- elected as a member of the "Vorstand der Anwaltskammer," which is the chamber of lawyers, where all the lawyers elect their own disciplinary courts and instances. And he got in Berlin the largest number of votes amongst the lawyers, which -- for a man who was very modest -- and so this was quite remarkable. My mother was also active in politics. She became active in education of women and information of women as citizens of the country. She gave lectures and courses to -- in women's schools about the responsibility, civil responsibility of women. She became a very

active member of the Democratic Party and belonged to the enlarged Bureau of the party, went out taking -- making speeches at all elections, and so on. So you see here, there was a political atmosphere, both from my parents and from associates of my father. This was the other part. I was deeply interested in politics all my life. And I saw the disappearance, slow disappearance of the democratic republic. I had mentioned today when Rathenau was assassinated. I remember the day when the first president of the republic died. I took part in the 1925 -- I think, in the funeral in the Lustgarten with the hundreds of thousands of people. And I felt already then somehow instinctive whether we hadn't already buried the republic there. And all the more when Hindenburg, to our great disappointment, was elected president. And -- which was, of course, a terrible regressive step from the point of view of democracy. This all I lived very intensely and followed very intensely. And I saw with growing fear what was happening, and the great success of the racist and Nazi movements. I finished my school in 1929 with a very good examination. I went my first term -- I followed in the University in Freiburg im Breisgau -- was my first being outside the house and on my own. I continued in Berlin. I went again the next summer to Heidelberg, which was perhaps the greatest experience in my university life. This was the Heidelberg of -- where people teaching, like Jaspers and Anschutz and Ratbur and Gundolf, and -- you name it, Tibelius. This was really the summit of German intellectual life, and it marked me very much. Even if I have been forced to separate slowly from the identification with the German people -- and you were, by the rejection which you felt -- always more separating yourselves from this milieu, from this concept of belonging to the German people. This was, in any case, one of the great culminating points of my life, which I will never forget. And I owe very much to this cultural activity, to this expression of German culture, especially in Heidelberg. I am not speaking of the other place, of course. Berlin at that time, of the Weimar

Republic, was an enormously cultivated life, theater, opera -- I took part in all this fully, and I belonged to the Volksbuehne subscribers. I saw the most modern theater, plays, and so on, and so on. But I was very conscious about -- as I said, about the going-down of the republic. When I was a student, I joined the Association of the Republican Students. And this was not an accident. In Baden, where both the University in Freiburg and in Heidelberg were located, there were still student elections. In Prussia, these elections for the student representation at universities had already been suppressed because the Nazis had gained large majorities all over. But in Baden it was still allowed. And I took part in the student elections in my first term, in my third term, made speeches, organized, cooperated at that time with people -- very interesting people. Our patron was an old German professor, von Schuelze-Gevanitz. His son was later a consul in Zurich -- very important consul, by the way. Schuelze-Gevenitz was an economist, a sociologist, a very wonderful human being. And one of the students with whom I cooperated then was a man who became very famous, had a very sad life, was Schulze Baeusen. He had just joined the democratic movement, coming from the Jungdeutsche Orden. He ended as a Communist, was one of the founders of the Rote Kapelle -- the Red Chapel, which he organized from the minister of defense residence. A fantastic fellow, I must say. We worked together in the elections in 1929. I would never have expected that he would go so far to the right and to be so true to his ideals. Anyhow, you see that I was involved in this. I was also involved in Heidelberg. But there -- this was 1930. There I already separated somehow and visited regularly the Zionist groups. I never joined the Zionist student groups, but I had many friends there, and even raveled on some of their excursions, winter excursions in the mountains. I joined them, was skiing with them together. And I was very much attracted by the Zionist --

Q. Let me interrupt for a second. Would it be fair to say that as of roughly this time, near 1930, you are still balancing in your mind the dual loyalty of being German and Jewish and trying to figure out for yourself what are the problems and where does one have to come down?

A. Well, I came certainly -- I started certainly as a conscious German, but deeply offended as a Jew by what happened to the Jews. And was struggling first to defend it from inside, and then I saw more and more that this didn't work. And so my way of retreating from identification with the German nation became more and more clear. I think this is as far as I can get it, but I think this is the right description. And when I finished my studies -- by the way, I would say that here, also, I am far from being only a jurist, only legacy. I was deeply involved in all kinds of other things. I followed especially the historians, Ongden, for instance, in Berlin. I followed philosophers, Jaspers, Spengler, was deeply involved in all kinds of other art, history, and so on. The ideal of universal Bildung, which I learned, so to speak, with the milk of my mother -- in the family, it was deeply working on me. And I took it over from my father, from my parents. And I was never one-sided. Even in my whole Jewish career, you will find in my library sections on philosophy and history and on economy and you name it. And I used my university years to the full to get involved and educated in many other fields. Now, I finished my studies with the so-called "Referendar" Exam. This is the first great examination after three, three and a half years of study. And I got a very good result, and was then named in the first days of 1933 as "Referendar," which is a kind of assistant to a judge, if you want. It's really the practical years, where you use what you have learned in a practical way. You spend time at different tribunals at various degrees in the administration, and as a lawyer, and so on. And I was in the first stage of this. I was at the Amtsgericht Weding. It's the largest tribunal of the first instance in Berlin.

And I wrote the judgments for the judge, which he signed. And active in all kinds of legal assistance, and so on, wrote what was asked for in this position. Then came Hitler to power the 30th of January, 1933. And this, of course, gave us a terrible shock. All the more --

Q. You did not expect it?

A. Yeah. But here I would say, in the November elections, '32, you know, during that year, we had -- I don't know -- three, four elections. In the November elections the Nazi party for the first time had lost more than a million of votes. And it looked at that moment that it was not absolutely necessary. And the whole thing that he got into the place as chancellor was an intrigue started by the people around the president, Hindenburg, because of some of the scandals in the eastern Prussia. And then Papen and the other reactionary politicians combined in order, in a great miscalculation, to bring about the coalition between the Deutsch Nationale Volkspartei and the Nazi parties, believing that they would dominate Hitler, which was, of course, ridiculous from the point of view of political judgment. When Hitler came to power, I was very soon convinced that this was a decisive point in the history of Germany, and I was very soon convinced that they would not give up power, and that this would lead to terrible persecutions for the Jews. I was a little -- we come back to this -- a number of these Nazi manifestations, and so on, on the 30th of January, when he took power, and the 1st of April, and the Boycott, and so on. And I decided to leave Germany. We were under an illusion. We didn't know the world outside. We didn't realize how deeply the economic crisis had worked. We thought that first the younger generation should get out and then the older should follow. But the chance to build up a new

existence for the younger generation was practically nil. I would have liked to go then to Palestine. The Zionist ideal, as I already said, worked very strongly on me.

Q. Excuse me a second. Were there any specific events that precipitated your decision to leave, or was this just your general impression after Hitler had taken power –

A. Well, I think it was the general understanding of what was happening. Practically -- I will just give you an example. On the 1st of April, when I was suspended as "Referendar," as the functionary of the tribunal, the same day my father was suspended as a lawyer, the same day my older sister, who was a teacher at the Lycee in Frankfurt am Main, was suspended as a teacher, my youngest sister, who was still in school, was thrown out from school. So out of a family of five -- my mother didn't exercise any profession as she was a good housewife at the time. She was a teacher by profession, and she took on again after my father didn't earn any money any more. She became again a teacher in the Jewish schools and was teaching then. The existence of four of five of our family was completely put upside down. This was -- but this accompanied my reason. Of course, if I wouldn't have been thrown out the 1st of April, maybe I would have taken longer to decide. Although I was only suspended, and I could have waited. But I knew this was a definite throwing-out. So I didn't wait. I waited a little bit, because on the same 1st of April, in the evening, there was a -- we had rented a little house outside of Berlin because my father was not in good health at the time and the doctors had prescribed him he should be more -- in the fresh air and not running too much from one tribunal to the other. We had rented a house in the neighborhood of Berlin. And the evening -- and we were the only Jews there, no other Jewish family at all. And at ten o'clock in the evening that day, there was what they called

"Sprechchor," "Juda Verrecke, Juda Verrecke, Juden 'raus." This was an anti-Semitic local group of the Nazi party which made itself felt for twenty minutes or so. My parents were in town, visited some friends. And I was alone in that house with my younger sister. I was in the bath. I felt like Marat. What will happen now? But I didn't make any movements, kept quiet, and after twenty minutes they disappeared. But it incited me not to leave immediately, to wait whether there would be other such demonstrations. It didn't happen. And I left in the middle of May. I said I wanted to go -- would have liked to go to Palestine. I was very much attracted by it, but I knew you had to go to a kibbutz. And -- which was very beautiful, but not for everybody. And knowing that I was very individualistic, I knew that this wouldn't work with me. Two of my best friends decided it, and it didn't work. They went, and they left afterwards, and finally ended in America. And my judgment was right. And as I was a quite good lawyer and very interested in, especially the philosophical side of law, what's called jurisprudence, theory of law and state -- this comes and joins with my political interests, of course. I decided to continue my law studies. I went to Paris, and made my legal examinations again in Paris, Licencie en Droit -- of the Sorbonne. And but here, something which happened -- which I should perhaps say. A few days before I left, I got a message from one of the most famous professors of jurisprudence, of public law in the University of Berlin, Rudolf Schwent [ph]. It so happened that in my second term he admitted me into his seminar. Why he did this, I -- to this day I don't know, because ninety percent of the people who were there were postgraduate. Maybe he wanted a few youngsters who could make work and -- which he couldn't do. I don't know. In any case, I made a communication, and -- it was very interesting -- on "Die Wandlung des Rechtsstatsbegriffs". It's not an accident, by the way. "The changes in the concept of the state based on law." And this communication was an expose, as very well received. You know,

it wasn't very original. When you are in this young stage of life, you have two choices: Either you get a very bright idea, or you use your working capacities and work very hard. And as I didn't have especially a bright idea, I worked very hard, and I found out where the notion of "Rechtsstat" appears the first time in the 18th Century literature -- not in Kant. I forgot even the name. I have it somewhere. And this made a great impression on Schmendt because this wasn't known. It's, by the way, not known because it's never published. And he somehow learned through a cousin of mine -- my name is not so frequent -- asked what I be -- what I become, and so on. And when he heard I am leaving for France, he asked me to come and see him. And for three hours, two and a half hours, he tried to persuade me not to leave. "Das kann doch nicht so bleiben." "This cannot remain like this." "You know that I am a German nationalist. But with these people this cannot last. This is an episode. In six months --" Well, the young student -- or whatever you call him -- was more intelligent in this respect than the professor. I told him that I was convinced that this was the end, and I had to build up a new life and had to leave. It's interesting. This, by the way, I -- although we were politically and even philosophically really on the extreme different positions, I am a great adherer of -- that the theory of Hans Genz -- I will come to it in a moment -- who was just at the opposite end of theologic -- theopolitical concept. I nevertheless got a very warm memory of him. He is the only German who ever cared for me after I left. This is one of the things which nobody will ever tell you. I was twenty-one years when I left. I had friends, I had comrades in school, I had mates in the University, I have studied in three universities, I knew hundreds of people. I was active in several university student groups, and so on. Not one German ever wrote me a postcard after I left Germany. Not one German ever asked what I had become. With the exception of this professor. The lack of courage of the German intelligentsia was unbelievable. They didn't want to be

involved. A Jew is outside -- was already something like treason, and an act of revolt against the system. So they didn't want to have anything to do with them. But what humanly this means -- that nobody ever asked for you, nobody ever sent you a postcard, nobody ever gave you a sign of life -- is something which I will never forget. And Schwendt wrote to me because he wanted to publish this communication I had made in a seminar. He thought it was deserving of publishing. And as it was not possible -- this is also important to know -- to publish -- as a Jew to publish in Germany, you couldn't publish any more. He tried, but it was impossible, to publish it in Austria. This was before the Anschluss. He didn't succeed. But he tried at least. And I will never forget this. It's an interesting part of my story, but it is also a very sad part of my story. Now, I did go to Paris -- and we were allowed in Paris -- you hadn't to go to the lectures in the universities. We could present ourselves to the examinations. And I passed the three examinations as soon as I could. And when I passed the second examination in the beginning of '34, probably spring, March probably, the French Barreau, the lawyers in Paris, got terribly scared of the -- I don't know -- forty, maybe fifty, young Jewish refugees who took up the law in France. They were so scared -- but to a certain degree they were right. We were very good lawyers. We were a very good group. And only people who really meant and were involved and deeply involved in the profession went on with this. But after all -- thousands of lawyers in France. Forty or fifty Jewish lawyers would have disturbed their career? And they pushed through a law in the French Parliament which barred any foreigner from the exercise of the legal profession until ten years after naturalization. Now, as it took five years to get naturalized as a minimum, fifteen years meant you are out. And this was in the summer of '34 I was faced with what to do. And I decided -- I wasn't really -- very unclear there. In the summer there was -- at the Sorbonne -- one of them who was the most eminent legal philosophers of our time gave three

lectures in Paris at the Sorbonne. After the second lecture, I took my courage into my hands and went up to him and asked him for advice. I had corresponded with him as a chutzpadik young student twice. And he immediately remembered this, which I was very surprised. He was -- every great man wants to have pupils, you know, and is, of course, flattered. And said immediately, "Come to Geneva." So I said, "Well, it's not so easy, you know." I depended practically on the -- what an uncle of mine who was living in Holland gave me as a kind of contribution monthly to make my living. I was really proud that after a few months in Paris I got the first Bourse fellowship from the Alterad [ph] Universitaire Internationale. As a matter of fact, the only case where a man who had got a fellowship from the Alterad Universitaire Internationale, became later a president of the Alterad Universitaire Internationale. Anyhow, I told him, "It's not so easy." He said, "You can last four or five months?" I said, "Yes, I can." He said, "Come. And after four months, you had got -- four, five months, a good lawyer, know you, he get you a fellowship, and after a year, you renew the fellowship for the next two years. Nothing will happen to you." And this is more or less how it happened. I finished my examination. I went to Geneva. I got after four or five months a fellowship. And -- which was renewed and I had still -- I think thirteen months of fellowship, which, as a refugee, is an ideal thing. This is unheard of. You don't know -- that you don't have to be preoccupied with your future. So I was in Geneva, and here starts now the beginning of my career. I was not looking for any job. But while I was studying and doing postgraduate work, really, what it was, in Geneva -- Stephen Wise and Nahum Goldman decided to create in the autumn of or the summer 1936 the World Jewish Congress. And they turned to three professors, whether they couldn't recommend to them a young international lawyer. Because the program of the World Jewish Congress at that time was two-fold: on the one hand, to fight against Hitler; on the other hand, to

support and defend the interests of the large Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. Practically all disappeared today -- in Poland, in Romania -- three and a half million in Poland, there were a million in Romania. And all these eastern European countries after the Treaty of Versailles had to accept the minority treaties and the protection of minorities under the guarantee of the League of Nations. There was a whole procedure for these things, and the Congress needed somebody who could write the briefs, and so on, and know the procedures. And those three professors to whom they turned, they all recommended me. I don't know why. Especially William Rappard (ph), who was the director of the institute, member of the Mandates Commission, old friend of Weizmann, of Goldman, and so on, and with whom I had never discussed Jewish affairs, but he knew apparently that I was Jewishly interested.

Q. I am going to ask you more about the three professors, because they become later -- at least a couple of them -- become important later, but they're about to run out of tape, so let's take a quick break right here.

A. But it's all right?

Q. Yeah. I think we're --

A. I said too long.

Q. It will take them a minute or two to put the second tape on.

A. Or is it too long, too detailed?

TAPE #2

Q. Dr. Riegner, you were telling us about the events that led to your being hired as a representative of the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland.

A. Yeah. This is even -- too much said. I was asked to become the man who deals with the international legal problems under the system of the minority treaties at the League of Nations. Now, as I told you, the three professors who were approached all recommended me -- without telling me, by the way. And then Goldman approached me. He was at the time a representative of the Jewish Agency at the League of Nations. And there was a mandate system, as you know, but Palestine was one of the mandates. And there was a permanent Mandate Commission which supervised the application of the mandate provisions by the mandatory powers, and he represented the Jewish agency vis-à-vis this organ in Geneva. And he knew as such Rappard, who was one of the professors. Rappard was a very fine, liberal personality. He was teaching in Harvard in -- I think in 1911, a Swiss professor, who became a friend of Wilson. And it was due to his relations with Wilson that the League of Nations came to Geneva in 1919. He was a very important personality in Swiss politics, became later a Member of Parliament. But he was very respected as an international figure, one of the great international figures the Swiss had at the time, was presiding at the International Labor Conference, was one of the representatives at the League of Nations, and so on. And he was the first director of the Mandates Commission, of the mandates section in the League of Nations secretariat, and became later a member of the

mandates Commission, when he gave up this job and was a very great friend of the Jews and supported us against the White Paper of Britain in 1939, was a friend of great admiration of Dr. Weizmann. He represented the Geneva University at the laying of the founding stone of the Jerusalem University in 1925. He was there when Weizmann gave Balfour the great play on this occasion, and told us about it a number of times. Anyhow, he was a -- really a great liberal and a great friend of ours, and he -- in his institute, International -- the Graduate Institute of International Relations was one of the places which received refugees from Italy against the Mussolini Fascist state and supported them and allowed them to study there. And he did the same when the Nazis came to power. And we were in Geneva a large group of very gifted Jewish refugees and Italian refugees. And also, we had wonderful professors there: a great historian, Guglielmo Ferrero, the historian, was there as historian; there was Roepke, economist, a liberal economist who left Germany under Hitler; Weberg, who was an old pacifist who was teaching there; Kanzel who had taught in Jena; later, Rathenau, when he founded the University of Cologne and brought him to Cologne, was one of the first to be denaturalized by Hitler. And I could continue -- And there were at the same time a good number of students of this type which were supported by fellowships which came partly from Rockefeller and partly from the Swiss government. And in any case, it was an extremely lively and interesting institute which -- created really in the tradition of preparing people for positions in international life. Many went to various international organizations. Many went to the foreign services in their countries, and so on. Now, when Nahum Goldman approached me, as I said, I didn't look for any job. I was in a wonderful situation. And I really didn't want to change my outlook. I often said that I was very interested in public law, state law, state and -- normally I would probably, without Hitler, have aimed at becoming a professor of jurisprudence at one of the universities. I hadn't given

this up when I was in Geneva. But the group which Wise and Goldman headed -- and this I knew because it was a public knowledge -- was the only group -- Jewish group which was really fighting Hitler. This is, without contest, the only group. They had already called three preparatory conferences, the first in '32, before Hitler came to power. In the summer of '32, six months before Hitler came to power, is the first international conference of the World Jewish Congress -- before it became a permanent organization. And there were two other such conferences, and they had gotten quite important publicity and it was known what they were trying. So I was aware that this was the only Jewish group. And it was so much in the line which I was educated and brought up, that I said to myself, "You cannot refuse it. I will give this group three, four years of my life." That was the idea. But I happen to tell you, I got stuck with the World Jewish Congress. I am there now for more than fifty-five years.

Q. Sometimes three or four years can be a long time.

A. It's a long time of three, four years, yeah. And then, of course, I often ask myself, "Was it the right decision or not?" Of course, I often ask myself, especially when in such a position you have to do many things you don't want to do. You come here for the certain ideal. You come to do certain things politically, but you have to deal with this bureaucracy and this administration, and so on, which is not what stimulates you very much. So I often ask myself, "Was it right? Should I have not continued? Should I --" Well, of course, the fact that I remained is the answer to the question. I was fascinated by it and it didn't leave me. It didn't -- the characteristic of -- the most important aspect was that from time to time the subjects with which I had to deal changed completely. It was a fight against Hitler. There was the rescue effort in the war. There

was the rehabilitation of Jewish communities and the fight for Israel after the war. There was the problem of North African Jewry, who are completely outside of our normal considerations, which came then. And so a completely different aspect followed, the one, the others, and which all deserved support and great concentration of labor. And so I came from one to the others and couldn't stop. On the other hand, I must have -- could say, also, it gave me great opportunities even in the field in which I was educated. I worked with great enthusiasm as a representative of the World Jewish Congress at the United Nations and the Human Rights Commission, and so on, in the efforts for the elaboration of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. I contributed to some of the formulations. I worked on the formulation of the covenants on human rights, the two covenants, international -- on the international convention against racial discrimination, on the conventions of the ILO and of the UNESCO, discrimination in occupation and discrimination in education. I was part of the effort to redefine the whole new humanitarian law. I participated in Stockholm in the International Red Cross Conference, and it was prepared -- I was an observer and participant in the international conferences on the new international law, the Red Cross law, in 1949 in Geneva. I participated in the new efforts in the seventies. I presided at a commission of fifty international organizations to formulate a united approach to the revision in the new International Red Cross protocols, which were later adopted. And so I had hundreds of -- what shall I say -- occasions to use my knowledge and my tradition. But it was, of course, not the center. It was one of the things which I did. But I must have found sufficient satisfaction to continue, and, in fact, the work gave the answer to my question, which doesn't say that I don't regret that I haven't written this or that book which I was -- always been dreaming of. Now, I said I couldn't refuse this, I said. And I accepted and gave up my career. And then I am now for fifty-five years in this role.

Q. Well, perhaps you could tell us a bit more about your impressions of Stephen Wise and Nahum Goldman as you encountered them in 1936.

A. Well, let me put it this way: In the summer, Nahum Goldman hadn't to offer me anything. He just found out whether I was ready to. And I didn't commit myself either -- myself, either. Because he hadn't to -- he couldn't know anything. The organization had first to be established, and then they had to establish the executive, and then they could act concretely. So he asked me, though, to write for him a brief, wanted to see how I would do it. And he gave me some file, and asked me, "Perhaps you can write a memorandum about this, how you would put it." Which I did, and which must have been satisfactory. And we left that summer. And my family was still in Germany. And we met usually in the summer on the invitation of my uncle in Holland. And we went and spent two weeks in Noordwijk aan Zee, a very nice place, where I met my family. And one day I got a telegram from Nahum: "Come back immediately. We need you for the preparation of the Congress." Not a permanent offer, but -- so I took the next train and spent I think thirty-three hours in the -- still wooden compartment in the old European trains, and arrived in Geneva, where Goldman wasn't -- he wasn't on board. And there was another chaotic bureau which gave me an enormous dossier and asked me to write a brief, a memorandum for the assembly, the first World Jewish Congress assembly, which was to meet in a week's time. And they wanted me to give for the participants a memo -- outlining what policy, in my opinion, we should continue. It was on the German Jewish refugee problem, of which I was, of course, very much aware. But that doesn't mean I had specially studied these things from a legal point of view. And I prepared fresh from vacation in a few days a very -- a very, very good paper, which

I used myself years later to look up. When I finished it, they asked me to write two other papers about some other problems, the problem of Danzig, the problem of Upper Silesia. And then the Congress started. And nobody talked to me, and I was just there. And so there was great chaos, as always in such things, and I -- as a very orderly person, I tried to make some order in helping in the secretariat, and didn't mind whether -- to do -- they give us small things and big things, but -- they made me secretary of two great commissions, one on the German Jewish problem and one on the minority treaties and problem with international protection. And there I saw for the first time Wise and Goldman in action. Now, Wise was the Good great moral figure of the movement, a fantastic orator, a wonderful voice. I know people who went to his sermons only to follow -- to learn the English -- the beauty of his English. He was really a fighter not only for the Jews but for all great human causes. It's not an accident he supported the movement against child work -- what you call it? \

Q. Child labor?

A. Hmm?

Q. Child labor?

A. Yeah. Child labor. He was supporting the women's movement. He was supporting the Czech independence movement. He was supporting the Greek. He was really -- and the Negro. He was very, very active in fighting the fight for the equalization of the Negro -- the status of the

Negro in this country. He was really the great liberal, moral figure in the movement, and he was the first to have started the resistance against Hitler. When I was still in Germany, I knew -- he made headlines in the Nazi press. You can find a number of -- which I still saw in Germany. They called him the "Rabbiner Wiese." Wiese, not Wise. Wiese. He was really public enemy number one for them. Both in Goebbel's *Angriff* and *Voelkischer Beobachter* there were numerous cases where he made the headline on the first page. And I knew this. I had seen it. This was one of the reasons that I saw that he was really the one who was fighting against them. And he remained also a great moral figure. He never gave up the fight, even in the worst times. He was a man who -- of unusual patience, open to every Jew who had some complaint. He was sometimes criticized that he wasted his time in doing this instead of concentrating on -- but he couldn't. He loved -- not the Jewish people. He loved every Jew. It's something which you -- you don't find today anymore in this way, very rarely it is. He was very courageous. You know that he was a liberal rabbi, although in the end he came a little back, moderated some of his liberal convictions. I saw him officiate with a kippah in -- at marriages, and so on, which in earlier days he didn't do. It was a whole Hebraization process, and so on, in the reform movement. But he was, on the other hand, a man who had been the first to go to the Zionist Congress in 1989 -- in '98 sic. [Dr. Riegner means 1897] He quoted in one of the great speeches, the last speech he made to the Congress in '48, the year before he died, in the Montreal Assembly, when he recalled this encounter with Herzl, six weeks after the state was founded. And he quoted Herzl: "I will not see the Jewish state, but you will see the Jewish state," and so on. It was unbelievable when he quoted this. He was not a great intellectual. He was a great moral figure. The intellectual was Nahum Goldman, absolutely brilliant. And one of the greatest speeches he ever made was a speech at the opening of the assembly in 1936. You read it

today -- although it was even also a little bit censored because he couldn't -- you had to be in some ways careful with regard to certain diplomatic necessities. I finally formulated some of the corrections. But this is a great speech. So there he came out and made a formidable impression on the audience. He was, as I said, brilliant. And we've come to the problems of rescue, and so on. We'll have to come back to some of these aspects. He saw the essential. He could formulate the essential in very short sentences, but what he then extracted was really the essence. And he had -- I believe opinions that was later -- he was a maverick. He was provoking in the last years of his life -- intentionally in order to get reaction and to educate the people like that. The old rabbis of old -- he wanted to have this impact on the people, that they should think. But he was a very highly intelligent man, very brilliant. I have once written a piece on the occasion of the first Jahrzeit, where I called him the Renaissance Jew, a new Renaissance man. Renaissance, in every respect. A Renaissance personality, and was all what the Renaissance Mensch represented, and he was -- open and extremely wide interest, and so on. And on the other hand, a man of the Jewish Renaissance, of course, in the Zionist movement. He was the brain, and Wise was the conscience.

Q. You mentioned so far that you hadn't yet agreed to take a permanent job.

A. Yeah.

Q. When did you realize --

A. Well, as a matter of fact -- yeah. I will tell you the story, too. And as a matter of fact, I helped in all kinds of things during the assembly, and I was taken in -- there was -- this I felt,

there was a great movement born. And the people were quite impressive people. I mean, they are all dead today. And nobody knows about them. But it is astonishing how many great characters came to the movement and each of them had a history of himself. It's difficult now to remember them. I spoke at the 50th anniversary of the World Jewish Congress in Jerusalem, and I named a few of them. A man -- Rabbi Rubensteiner Willner, was a member of Parliament, with the Polish Parliament, very great Orthodox Jew, a very great personality. Take a man -- Anselm Reich -- Reich and Aldi Tartakover. They came from the labor movement. Reich pronounced in the -- or read in the Congress of 1936 on behalf of the whole Polish delegation a declaration accusing the Polish government. This had never happened before. Usually in Zionist Congresses, the Hungarians accuse the Poles, and the Czechs the Romanians, and so on, but this is -- distributed roles. But here was a man of enormous courage to do it himself for the whole Polish delegation. Take -- there were so many. I -- it's very -- really very difficult to name them today. The old people from Romania. The -- there were the -- from all the Baltic states, from -- but the Congress, the personalities was very, very impressive. But on the other hand, Western Europe was very underrepresented, and America was underrepresented, and we didn't succeed at the time to really have the majority of the Western European communities. The Bungdorf (ph) deputies of England decided with a vote of six, a majority of six, to refuse the cooperation of the Doily (ph). And this was, of course, a great tragedy. But here was a colossal potential. And they -- I think we -- it's unbelievable today that the unit of the Jewish people and the joint action of Jews is such a normal thing, that we have established it, how this was bitterly fought in the three years before the World War II started. And there the war has completely changed the attitude of the Jews. And the Jews in the Western countries followed their government. They followed the policies, the wrong policies of their government, the appeasement policies of their

government, and didn't stand up, and here was one of the great lost opportunities. I don't know whether we could have changed the tragedy, the events. But at least we should have -- should have tried. And while today, even a young youth doesn't understand it, this opposition, and the denouncing of the people who had the courage to stand up and preach for the united Jewish approach and the common fight against Hitler. Finally, when the Congress was over, the next day the executive met, which had been elected the day before. And there, the decisions on offices, and so on, came up. There Nahum Goldman proposed my being selected for the Geneva office. And very interesting: There was great opposition. All the people with whom I became very friendly later, other Jews -- the opposition was, "But he doesn't speak Yiddish." And Nahum Goldman apparently -- I wasn't at the meeting. I was told later -- he said, "Well, I need him at the League of Nations. There they don't speak Yiddish, either. They speak French. They speak English. And this he does." But this didn't make any -- any -- any impression -- and then the only German Jew who was there in the new, elected executive was Georg Bernhardt. Georg Bernhardt was a former member of the Reichstag, editor-in-chief of the Voelkischer Zeitung, which was one of the great German, liberal newspapers. He was a professor at the high commercial school, a university in Berlin. He had a number of other high positions. And he was the leader of the German Jewish immigration at that time in Paris, editor of the Pariser Tageblatt, and the uncontested president of the German Jewish immigrant society. And he stood up, and said -- as I was told later -- he said, "But he comes from a very, very, very good Jewish family." Now, that did it. There was no argument. Yiddish you can learn, but a good family, you can't -- you must have, or you don't have. And apparently this convinced the people. Very funny, but so it happened. So I entered the office on the 1st of September, I think, 1936, in an office which didn't exist really, which I had to create. And with no budget, with a lot of debts. And instead

the salary which I got was just a hundred francs more than I had as a student -- postgraduate student without having any obligations. And not only this, but all these great problems, financial problems, and -- and came the end of the month, I had sometimes to advance the money for the secretary, and the postage, and so on, and so on. And this hasn't changed. It has only grown in figures. They were smaller amounts, and now it's much higher amounts. And so I came in. And -- but in reality, when -- while I was selected because of my legal knowledge, and so on, I was involved in the whole movement immediately, and I took as much part in the anti-German fight as in anything else. And I must say, I said I didn't regret the fifty-five years. But there is, of course, the factor, also, which I should mention. Nahum Goldman was a fantastic chief, generous and -- as I said, he saw the essential. He did leave you enormous freedom. He discussed with you the line, but not every comma and point. He would discuss with you the general ideas. He would agree with you. He would make here and there a comment, "Perhaps this is too strong," "Perhaps this is too weak." And he would leave it to you. And he would leave you an enormous amount of freedom in the execution of your function and give you the feeling of participation. He never considered me as an employee. There was always the feeling of equality. He gave in the -- and I was what? -- about twenty-five years secretary general, first coordinator, and secretary general of the Congress. I gave the staff, the higher staff a position of codecision in the Congress. And because they knew, because they were underpaid, because they had something to contribute, and they shouldn't take the layman's opinion. They should contribute to it, and there should be codecision. And Nahum Goldman understood this very well. And this, of course, facilitated enormously my work. I really felt that I have contributed. Many things which have gone under the name of Goldman came in fact from me. I never resented that. We were working on a joint project, a joint work. And, therefore, this fact. I am not saying that

I hadn't a complaint. A complaint was, on the one hand, we were all very badly paid. We are really idealistic workers, but we didn't -- I often said -- once Israel Sieff, the great philanthropist, the Zionist in England, said to me, "You could become any moment administrator director of one of my 122 stores in England." I said to him, "This is very nice, the nicest thing." These stores, each of them, had more than a million pounds -- how do you say? --Umsatz -- turnover, yeah. So there -- at the time, I think 132 million pounds, which was not bad. And I said, "Israel, it's very nice what you said to me. It's perhaps the nicest thing. But if I wanted to make money, I would have become a banker, not a secretary of the World Jewish Congress." And this is it. This was real idealism. And I include practically all my colleagues in this. We all worked for the cause, not for the money. And we were deeply involved in the cause. We lived it and we developed it. It didn't exist as a scheme. And this was, of course, very attractive, and, therefore, I stayed.

Q. Things must have changed rather radically for you when the war broke out. I mean, here you were -- you were hired partly because of your legal expertise, your international legal problems.

A. Yeah.

Q. Now there was no legality. There was no effective League of Nations.

A. On the contrary. You had to learn during the war that everything which is legal is no good, and everything which is not legal has to be done. And the complete confusion of what is --

Q. How did you decide to do what you ended up doing, which was simply -- well, which was, among other things, to amass as much information as possible about what was going on?

A. Now, this was -- became -- this developed very naturally. The first days in the war we decided we had -- we have to deal -- there was an emergency, and the great -- the great danger is for the whole Jewish world. One of the terrible things [for] which I will never forgive myself -- was the last days before the war broke out, there was a Zionist Congress in Geneva. And everybody wanted to go home. And I helped hundreds of people to get transit visas to get home. Because I was the only one who had the relations with several of the consulates. And the French consulate -- one day worked the whole shabbat to get 150 passports or what -- stamped through. And afterwards, I said, "What have you done?" But, of course, nobody could foresee. No. But on the third day of the war, we, for instance, communicated to the International Committee of the Red Cross, that we had organized ourselves in a special little committee in which we are dealing with the world -- with the war affairs, and that we wanted to be in contact with them, and we were certainly the first to take this -- this initiative. We established -- and this was -- at that time not yet so important, but later it became more important. This committee, which was called a Relief Committee for the War-Stricken Jewish Population -- and it was abbreviated RELICO, which could be a Relief Congress or Relief Committee, whatever you wanted. It helped us to establish relations with the occupied territories. We couldn't work under the name of the Congress. The Congress was clearly an anti-German, anti-Nazi movement, and in order not to endanger the people, we used from -- from that September on, this second name. For several years I used practically only this name. The other side was diplomatic -- oh, yes -- to America and England. And when the war got to its end, I took out the "World Jewish Congress" again

and started writing on this paper. And this was, of course, very helpful. I mean, this was very important. And the situation -- I have recently -- I have it somewhere here, but in my --

Q. Luggage?

A. In my luggage. Statistics. How we became active in all kinds of services which nobody could render but we in Geneva, in a neutral country. We became a little Red Cross, a little Jewish Red Cross. We transmitted messages from one to the other -- thousands, not a few. In the thousands. In the tens of thousands. We made inquiries where people are. And we -- we transmitted money, so -- to relatives, to friends, and so on. There were hundreds of such initiatives. I have a statistic in -- for certain months, which is interesting. We had an enormous amount of purely humanitarian activities which developed by themselves. And you couldn't stop. You couldn't say "I won't do it." That wasn't possible, humanely not possible. And I have in my files letters where I plead with New York, "You cannot stop this here. There is so much human hope and need involved." And Nahum Goldman left Geneva in -- in May 1940, before the downfall of France. He smelled it. He knew what he was doing. He said, of course, he would come back, and he never came back. But he also knew that -- he was right, that he couldn't have done in Geneva political actions. He was right to decide to go to America. And then there was a moment where New York wanted to close the Geneva office. And there is a very violent correspondence between New York and me. And I just refused to close. I was right. They had great financial difficulties. Without Goldman, they thought, well, what -- what -- this is how our polling (??) -- and this -- Geneva. And I pleaded. And the statistic which I have taken from some of these correspondence -- I just refused. As a matter of fact, in the

terrible -- vielleicht [perhaps]-- one of the greatest things which I have done, one of the best things which I did -- in the terrible situation of the summer of 1940 -- and you cannot imagine what that meant, the downfall of France, for all of us. This was really the -- practically the end. And in Geneva, in Switzerland, it -- Fascist Italy, Austria, the Nazi Germany, all Nazi, now France, Nazi. Where was hope?

Q. And you were surrounded?

A. We were completely surrounded. You couldn't get out normal -- there was -- then the so-called non-occupied part of France, a little piece where you could get out, but -- this was really the most difficult. And there was complete chaos and mental despair. And the people didn't know what to do. They went to Zurich. People came to Geneva. Geneva people came to Zurich. In the offices was terrible confusion. What do you do? What can we do? And I decided with one of my colleagues, Fritz Uhlmann, who was in the agency, we leave the Geneva offices and go on vacation in the mountains and not be infected by this terrible depression. We have to keep our minds open. We have decided to remain. We have to stay where we are. This is more important than anything else. There have to be some offices who will remain and will be responsible for whatever still can be done.

Q. When you thought of keeping that office open, was your consideration primarily in terms of helping the people who needed help, or finding a place where –

A. Whatever. We saw that the information was essential for that. And we saw that we could do still very many things for the people inside.

Q. So it was both?

A. Both. Both. Both. And we just wanted to keep our heads free from the confusion and deterioration of the atmosphere. The atmosphere was terrible. People wanted to run away, and so on. I must say, Wise sent me in August, '40, a visa to America, one of the first emergency visas, which shows my personal relationship with Wise. He sent it also to Gugenheim, who didn't take it, and to one or two other people. But I -- I had still a German passport at the time. And I put it in the passport and left it in the passport. I didn't have any intention. On the contrary. When Nahum Goldman left, we foresaw all kinds of it. He bought me a Bolivian passport, which was from the real consul of Bolivia. I never -- this was for an emergency. The situation was so frightening and so unclear, I had at my home in -- a packed Rucksack, with shoes, and so on, to go into the mountains, if necessary, to disappear, that the World Jewish Congress office would be -- in case of invasion or what -- the first to be looked after was clear to me. I mean, the fact that this Rucksack was packed and the -- some of the things which you need when you are on your own shows you the atmosphere in which you were. Desperate. And we were really desperate. And I will tell you another story. We were in Switzerland. It was the center of espionage. Don't forget this, either. One of my best friends was a French vice-consul. When I came -- I had spent summer vacation in -- partly in Holland and partly with him in Brittany, where his family had very close friends really. He was married to a Jewish girl, Russian Jewish girl, and we were very close. Not only -- the whole group of young people. And

I remember the second day, his wife was still at the -- on the vacation, hadn't come back. And we ate in the evening together. He had a little car. I didn't. And he came to fetch me. I think must have been the 2nd or 3rd of September of '39. And he said, "Let's go to this and this restaurant, but I have to do two other things before." And he said, "And you can look at it." And he stops before a house, takes out the mail from one of the boites postales, the boxes, and puts it in his pocket and takes out of his pocket another from the day before. And so he did that two or three places. These were German officials, I think, journalists and officials at the international labor office, who were controlled by the French secret services. And he showed it to me, that I should know in what situation we were. And I never forgot this. I mean, I laughed. I smiled when I saw what the situation was. It was not gemuetlich, I tell you. And became always less gemuetlich. Now, so we moved in this field slowly from one to the -- then, of course, when terrible things happened, we organized ourselves to be involved and to be able to report. There were no direct communications of any kind. So we kept the relations, the correspondence with the Jewish community as long as we could. We subscribed to all the Jewish newspapers. I subscribed to all the official gazettes. I had I think twenty-three official gazettes, which regularly -- you can see them I think now in Yad Vashem. I gave it to Yad Vashem, or the institute gave it to Yad Vashem. I did this for the Institute of Jewish Affairs, which since '40 was here in New York. And we translated those into one of the languages that the Jews would understand, German, or French, English. I established a whole mechanism how to get information. And I was helped by, for instance, the League of Nations library. There was a man whom I knew very well, and so on, and he helped us. He knew what we were doing and was a friend. So I could take photocopies of some of these official gazettes, and we examined them each time and we found these -- all these anti-Jewish legislations and decrees.

And I made the files -- I don't know whether you have ever seen them -- at least of -- for Romania and for France and for Germany and for General Gouvernement, for Boehmen und Maehren, for Slovakia, and for Italy, and for the -- some of the especially established territories like Alsace-Lorraine or the Baltics where there was also amilitary government, and so on. With the help of some of the League of Nations officials then with the help of the book shop, they -- I subscribed, and I was "Monsieur Mondial," who got these -- all kinds of -- we really organized ourselves in order to be able to. And you know, you can obtain a lot of information on this. Especially -- there were -- under Slovakian file, I think there were at least 150 official decrees and communications which I had sent to New York and to London. They got it all. So we organized ourselves in order to be able to inform. This was certainly the most important thing. I felt -- we felt -- and I include Gugenheim, for instance. We felt that we were encircled, and political decisions would have to be made outside. Our judgment was not sufficiently independent. This, we accepted from that. That doesn't mean we shouldn't make proposals. We made a lot of proposals. And our judgment was often better than that of the people who were outside. I am not contesting that. But we never felt in these three years or four from -- I am speaking the years from '40 on -- that the decisions had to be made in New York and London. And, therefore, my most important function was to report. This was developed very, very -- it came from a political understanding of the situation.

Q. You can't make decisions unless you have good information?

A. Yeah. Yeah, sure. Now, I said, of course, we had reports from communities, and then we had reports from individuals. Some people appeared, disappeared. You know, some wonderful

figures. There was a -- a Dutchman, he was shot later -- Nijkeirk, wonderful man. He was a young Dutch who lived in Belgium and organized the Jewish youth and tried to -- you may have heard the name. Maybe it's not on there. He was later arrested and put before a tribunal and shot.

Q. Let me stop you there, because the tape is going to run out. I'm going to want to ask you on the next tape when you started to collect information from people as well as from published sources, and when --

A. This I couldn't tell you. This came -- you just -- you couldn't get enough.

Q. Yeah.

A. On the contrary.

Q. We can talk about some of the people then, but that will have to be on the next tape.

A. Yeah.

Q. Maybe they will give us some lunch now.

A. Yeah. All right.

TAPE #3

Q. If you don't remember exactly when you started to get it, that's fine, but let's talk about the people who -- from whom you got information.

A. Yeah. No. I spoke about this -- this Dutch Jew in Belgium.

Q. Yes.

A. Which -- this is the type of persons -- I mean -- there came, of course, others, but he was one of the finest I -- I remember. And he came by himself.

Q. Yes.

A. Of course, he knew that we -- there was the center, and we did things. And he came to Lichtheim, and he came to me, and -- there were all kinds of these -- there was a -- I had mentioned already Uhlmann, I think, with whom I went on vacation to save --

Q. Yes.

A. -- to save the -- the office, and I saved them -- you know, the offices. And we came back. It was quiet and functioned. And nobody wanted to run away anymore. Now, it was a terrible morale breakdown, of course. And one couldn't blame them. This was really a world which was

falling to pieces. But you had to have the strength of character that -- okay, this is a volcanic eruption. We have to wait until it's over.

Q. There was, after all, a real chance that Switzerland could have been invaded. They had considered it?

A. Sure. I told you, I had the packed Rucksack.

Q. Yes.

A. And I had the Bolivian passport, which I probably never could use, but anyhow -- whatever.

Q. Do you want to tell us when -- (Discussion with someone off-camera.) I'm sorry. I didn't realize.

A. Now we can start.

Q. We're on. Dr. Riegner, tell us more about some of the people who came in to you with information that you proceeded then to send out in your reports.

A. Now, I had spoke about this Dutchman. I will give you another example. All are not so -- it's quite some time ago. And my memory is not bad, but it has also lacunae. There is another

one, the Dutchman -- a Danishman. You may know his name because there was recently -- a book was published about him which is --

Q. Rottenberg?

A. Yeah, Rottenberg. Rottenberg -- you know, in -- extraordinary times produce extraordinary people. This I have seen time and again. Rottenberg was a Danish Jew, who suddenly appeared in our offices -- both Lichtheim and mine. We had on the same floor, the offices. You should know the same -- in the same building and the same floor. We didn't know how he came, why he came. We didn't know where he went. We found out that he had -- first of all, you are very suspicious -- a Jew, a Danish Jew who can travel in Europe. You know that you can trust him? He is a spy? Who knows? We find out -- we found out that he was somehow protected by the military establishment, defense. I was very suspicious at the beginning. But the man came with highly interesting information. I definitely remember that he gave us the first information on the administration of the Reichsbahn, of the German railways, sending the bills for the deportation of the Jews from Berlin to Riga and Lodz to the Jewish community in Berlin. They asked that the Jewish community should pay for the transportation of the deportation. For me this was the height ofchutzpa which the Germans had. I was absolutely flabbergasted. And I reported this, of course. The story is -- you can read it now in the book by a Danish Jew who heard me mention Rottenberg in one of my lectures at the Nahum Goldman fellowship. And I asked him afterwards, "Do you know Mr. Rottenberg?" And he, of course, never heard of him. And when he went back to Denmark, he inquired. The story which he has now written in the book -- it's very interesting -- that this Rottenberg was a German Jew who established himself -- I think in

1907, in Denmark, became a very successful businessman, had earned a lot of money, had a big villa and a good business, and at the end of the First World War was approached by the German embassy, if he, with the big villa he had, couldn't house provisionally some German officer who was in trouble. And they agreed to it, and the officer came to live with him, and they became very friendly. And he stayed months, several months with him. And finally, he left, and Rottenberg loaned him still some money. And then he wrote him a letter and the officer wrote him a letter of thanks, and said if ever he could do anything for him, he would do. Signed, "Goering." Now, in 1933, Rottenberg remembered this and wrote a letter to Goering, who in the meantime became Marshal -- Feld Marshall Goering, the second personality of the Reich. And Rottenberg had some family in southern Germany still, and he asked whether he could help him to -- to bring them out. And Goering invited him immediately to come to Berlin and gave him all the permits necessary, and the permit he left -- his passports without J stamp, and so on. And Rottenburg must have then felt that he had some influence and tried to do certain other things for the Jewish community in Berlin. I haven't been able to read all the book because it's in Danish, so I don't know the details, but I know that he was in contact with a number of Jewish personalities like Sally Meier, like Winfried Israel and Schwarz and -- all this I didn't know. But I knew -- and we -- we established -- the author of this book approached me in Geneva, "Have you -- what is written in your files about him?" I told him immediately, "You will not find anything. You will not find the name. This is the type which I wouldn't put down in writing. But you may find some of his stories." And I told him the story, for instance, about this -- the bills from the Reichsbahn to the Jewish community. He said, "But you have to tell me, what are the dates he visited Switzerland?" This I don't remember. So he produced the passports, the passports of Rottenberg. And we found the exact dates, and we looked in my files, and what

after such dates I wrote in reports to America or London. And the story about the Reichsbahn, about the railway administration is there. Exactly after -- there is no name of "Rottenberg;" "From a very reliable source, I hear this and this and this." And we found him several such stories. You see, such things happened, and whether he was able to find any to say -- to help some people to get out, I don't know. I cannot read the other chapters of the book. But I take another incident. One of the best organized communities and quite courageous was the Czech community. And we were in very good relations with them. And the -- my colleague, Fritz Uhlmann, who was in Lichtheim's office. He was working for the Keren Hayesod and for -- was in fact also a kind of "personne de confiance" for the Czech Jews and looking after their interests. And he knew all the persons, and I knew through him most of them. And Prague sent from time to time -- didn't send -- used employees of the Swiss consulate in Prague to commit messages. And the girl came to Uhlmann and had learned by heart a certain number of things which she repeated. Some extremely important things: about Theresienstadt, about some of the camps, about movement, about Slovakia. And this -- this type of initiative coming from the communities existed, too. And so you have a whole series of types of initiatives. Later we were in contact with some of the liberation movement. We were in contact, for instance, in France with the underground Jews. At a certain moment, one of the French Jewish leaders, Mark Yarblum, who was a member of the Congress executive, came to Geneva, from France. There came a number of messages which were sent to him or to me from his groups. My secretary, Vermilla Becker, who I had for nearly forty years as secretary, the daughter of an old Zionist, Julius Becker, was sometimes in the morning at six o'clock woken up by some French railway locomotive driver who brought her a message, a whole package of stories, reports, about what was happening. These were the other initiatives. Our names didn't figure. Vermilla Becker

wasn't known, of course, as a person -- so they came to her home in the morning at six o'clock and brought her a message, and such things -- a number. There were people who were active. Don't forget. We had, of course, in Switzerland, a number of Jewish refugees from various countries. And they -- we used them. And we had people from various nationalities who kept the relationship with their community or school friends indirect to the important people in their community. Well, say, Yugoslavia. I had one from Zagreb, and I had one from Belgrade. And I asked them, "Get me the information." I used them, and they produced it. We had people from , this is already later, Italy, Raffaello Cantoni_came -- who was the first president of the Italian Jewish communities after the war. He came in 1943, when Mussolini went down, and there was the whole group of seven thousand Italian Jews who came to Switzerland. I met him. There was the head of the refugee organization for the Jews in Italy, in Genoa, for the whole of Valobra (Ph). He came regularly to bring us reports. And not only on the Italian things. He had also reports from other countries. There was a whole network of people who brought reports or sent reports or caused that other people sent us reports. It's not -- it is -- not that you can plan this systematically, but you can produce the result in -- inviting people, and in this way we benefited very, very much. But, you see, the sources are very, very different. And you used everything. And you, of course, had to judge if what they say is worth nothing. I give you another source of information. We have to speak about the Red Cross. Here I will take one person, who worked in the Commission Mixe, the Mixed Commission for Relief, which was a joint enterprise of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of the League of Red Cross Society. There I had a good friend, a Baltic baron, from Riga, who -- with the knowledge of the others or not, I doubt -- I think it was his own initiative. Each time when the German Red Cross delegation was in Geneva or when was in Germany and brought report -- he called me. This was not official. This

was -- and he gave me detailed information what they had -- what they had reported in their private conversations, not only in official. And he gave me some advice as to what should be done and how we should push the Red Cross for more, and so on. But he also reported on some of -- of the atmosphere in Germany of the "Stimmung," of the way how people felt about the destructions, and so on, and so on. And these were very important factors to evaluate the situation. And you will find in my reports a number of such -- I am not saying from whom it came. I couldn't, and I wouldn't. But I said I have very good sources, and this and this. So there is -- I told you about the -- the written information, the letters came in. You know, in -- even in internment camps, people tried to convey to you something. I don't know if we will come to it. We have sent -- I don't know -- I believe 100,000 packages for -- to people in internment camps, maybe more even. And they all got a postcard to confirm. And I had tens of thousands of such confirmations. They are in Yad Vashem. You can find them. I remember there was a family which I knew personally, and there were several sisters. And they got some packages. Some were paid by family and some were -- we took a supplement, and out of the supplement, we financed gratis packages. And the administration, of course, we had, also. So in the receipts, in the postcards -- which, of course, was forbidden to write anything, but they wrote. And one of the sisters informed me that the sister had died. This was important, so -- and this wasn't the only type of information. They conveyed information which was terribly useful. So it -- this was a chaotic time. And a chaotic time needs all kinds of inventions. You had not to do the normal things. You had to do extraordinary things. My greatest accusation against the establishment in the Jewish world is that they didn't live up sufficiently to this extraordinary time, where we needed not the normal, but the abnormal. I give you an example. The famous report on Auschwitz of the two Slovakian Jews. It came -- the first copy came through the

Czechoslovakian ambassador to the League of Nations. The League of Nations had not recognized the disappearance of Czechoslovakia. There was no ambassador of Czechoslovakia anymore in Bern, but the one in Geneva existed. I used him very much, a wonderful man. And I trusted the Czechs more than the Poles and more than the others. When I needed communication with London which shouldn't be controlled, I used the Czechs. He got from the Czech -- Slovak underground these reports. Not only -- there came another report which is always forgotten from a Polish officer.

Q. Polish --

A. Yeah. Which also was a terrible report. Very, very reliable report from a Polish officer. I don't know who it was. And from these two Slovakian Jews who escaped and who had done this for the Bratislava people. By the way, I was asked later to get these two Slovakian Jews to Nuremberg for the trial of the BUNA. And I found them. And I delivered them. And they were -- this was done by me. They asked me, "Who were these people?" I didn't know myself who they were, but I found out in Prague immediately and everybody knew what -- where to find them. And yeah. And this report which came, as I said, to the Czechoslovakian ambassador, he gave it to Uhlmann, who was -- and said to give this to Riegner and ask him to make a summary for me. This was -- I don't know -- thirty, forty pages, I mean.

Q. A long report.

A. "I have to cable something, but I cannot cable forty pages. Ask him to make a summary." And I made a summary of three, four pages, which I gave to him, and which I gave to the

Americans, and I gave to the British, and which, by the way, then made the round. I saw it. It was communicated by the American ambassador to other people -- Winant -- and it's my report. Because I see that it was. But that's not what I am saying. I get the report and sit down to work. And it's a very interesting compilation, of course, of all of the whole situation of the camp, and then reconstruction, transport by transport, according to the numbers of -- two million, more than two million people. And I go through the list. And I find at a certain moment a group of people from Prague, from Theresienstadt arriving in Auschwitz. And a group of young people, under the leadership of a well-known Maccabee -- young leader, and -- arriving in Auschwitz for quarantine for six months. Now, we never heard there was quarantine in Auschwitz for six months. And a few lines after that, they were exterminated. And then a few lines again -- it's the second such report -- transport coming also for quarantine for six months. And I look at my calendar, and I see that the quarantine for the second group expires in five days. I stop my work. I take a taxi. I go to the Czechoslovakian minister and show him this. And in the taxi, I wrote out a telegram for the Czech government. They should day and night in the BBC speak about it, that we know, and so on, that this and this group will be -- perhaps we can't -- it's a crazy idea. It's not a normal idea. And Kubetzki (Ph), who is the name of the Minister ? -- has even a better way. He goes to the BBC representative at the British embassy, a lady -- Wiskemann (ph). I knew her, too. And he sends it to her, and said, "You should do this," and it was done. And they transmitted the message several time from London in Czech and -- Now, I never heard for years whether it had any effect. It was a crazy idea. It was in this respect, an attempt to save some people. Until one day I meet a man who was in Auschwitz from the Czech group, Kulka, the father of the historian. It was also written. And he told me, "Yes, I know." I said, "How do you know?" He said, "We heard this on the radio." I said, "You had radio?" He said, "Of course,

we had radio. And we were hiding these people." He said -- at that moment these people were not killed. Whether they were killed later, I can't tell you. Because they were distributed in other places. But now I am not taking any credit for this. It was a crazy idea, but this is the type of crazy ideas you had to have to work.

Q. Yeah. You had to try things that were unconventional because the situation was unprecedented?

A. Absolutely. Now, take another thing. I have mentioned this a number of times, but it's very typical. Yitzhak Greenberg, who was a head of the Hazalah in the Jewish agency in Jerusalem. Now, you don't know Yitzhak Greenberg, your generation. For you it doesn't mean anything. Yitzhak Greenberg was one of the great fighters for Jewish rights in the Polish Sejm (parliament) for the -- in the times of the terrible anti-Semitic events and persecutions in Poland. He was the one most courageous who stood up in the Sejm and attacked the government. And we had all enormous respect and admiration for the man who did this -- who had this. At that time he was in Israel -- in Palestine. He was at the head of the Hazalah department. One day I get a telegram from Yitzhak Greenberg, "Find my son." I don't know whether you have ever heard this story. And I said to myself, Greenberg? He knows what's important. How can you find his son? Crazy. And I think and think, and I couldn't sleep for two three nights. I said, What can I do to find his son? Finally, I took a crazy idea. I sent fifteen or twenty packages to fifteen or twenty camps, under the name of the son. And I found the son. It was crazy, and I sacrificed fourteen packages. Who knows what they became. Generally they arrived, you know. We didn't know this. But we took our list. And New York didn't want us to do this. New York said this was

against the blockade. And I said, "I'm sitting in Switzerland. I don't care. I help people." And whoever gets -- and I have the testimony of one of the people in the Unterstuetzungsstelle in Krakow who confirmed to me that practically all -- collective sendings, dispatches -- and individual, well, you know how the Germans are. They are correct. They are correct in bad things, and they are correct in good things. It was received. And it helped a lot of people. I know -- I sent, for instance, to my old teacher, Leo Baeck, the great Jewish leader with whom I was bar mitzvahed. When I heard he was in Theresienstadt, I sent him packages. He didn't know from whom it came. I spoke to him later, years after, in London, and I told him it came from me. He said, "Well, anyhow, we distributed it to some of our friends." But you had to -- this was the situation. It was absolutely irrational. And you had to do irrational things. And this is what most of the people didn't do. Now, let's come to the -- to the -- I want to -- to come to some of the major problems in the Holocaust, in the -- how I learned that -- what was done, what was not done, and why the people didn't -- didn't do. These are the major things which I haven't spoken at all yet.

Q. All right. Why don't we lead into that with the receipt of the phone call from Segalovitz and...

A. Okay.

Q. It is fair to say that this was the -- of all of the pieces of information that you received during the war, this was the one that made the greatest impact on you?

A. No. This was, of course -- this was -- I think we should start -- how we got the information, what we knew.

Q. Please.

A. When you raised the question of my famous telegram, I have to say, in introduction, that the world didn't begin with this telegram. I think I have given you already the impression that all what we did developed in the -- in an evolution corresponding to the political situation in which it developed. And each situation incited us to make another step. You don't plan all the -- you plan the first step. And then the number of steps follow. And that I said that we have reported on the situation. And it is fair to say that -- when you see the whole reporting, it's astonishing how well we were informed. Once a year, for instance, I sent -- together with Lichtheim -- a telegram to New York, the last on the eve of the Atlantic City conference, which is a resume how we see the situation in November 1944 with figures about the dead and the living and what we believe is still there and what is -- it's an astonishing document. It's practically what we found after the war. So -- but Emerson, the Director-general of the London International Refugee Organization, to whom I gave this in November or December of '44, asked me a year later when I was in London, he said -- he greeted me. "Yeah. You are the fellow with the figures." He said, "How did you -- how did you know the figures? This is in fact what we have today." And I say, "Listen, when you follow things in the way in which we followed, day by day, and week by week, and month by month, and year by year, you have a feeling. You have facts, and you have a feeling how things develop. And you come to certain estimates, and they -- usually they are based on information." So this is a whole process of information. We know very well and we

reported on all the terrible things which happened in '40 and '41 and '42. Based -- the whole ghettoization and the terrible situation in the ghettos, and so on, in Poland. This is all -- we had. But then comes the Russian war, the invasion that -- to us. And here is the great dividing line. From there dates really the total extermination policy. On the eve -- little earlier. I think May, '41. Maybe the decision made -- had been taken even earlier, not -- it's not very important, whether it's two, three months earlier or not. But anyhow, the decision when -- on einsatzkommandos, it's there in May of '41. And you -- and we hear during the year '41, practically three months after the invasion -- we hear all kinds of terrible things -- about killings here and killings there and ten thousand there and five thousand there and twenty thousand there. They are various names of cities, and so on. And in October, '41, which means three months later, three months after the invasion, I write to Nahum Goldman one of the letters -- didn't write too many letters, so this is one of the great letters I had written. I said, "The news from the eastern front are terrible. They're so terrible that I do not know how many Jews would survive this war if this continues." I don't know exactly what happens in Russia. We had no -- no possibility to reach over there. There was no -- even diplomatic relations in Switzerland with Russia, which is not known probably. But I do not know -- but west of Dnieper and the Bug, I don't know of how many Jews would survive. October, '41. And then comes March, '42, six weeks, about, after the so-called Wannsee Conference, of which we, of course, didn't know anything. Which is also not the decisive moment but it is the moment in which the whole extermination policy is now being carried out, supported by every administration of the Reich. Six weeks after we decide -- Lichtheim and I -- to go to the Nuncio, to the Papal Nuncio, and to appeal to the Vatican, at least do something in the countries in which the Catholic church had influence, where there are priests at the head of the state, and so on. And there's a very important

diplomat of the Vatican, Philip Bernardini, through whom many, many of the communications from the Vatican went to the western countries. And yet he received us very -- very fine. And asked us to write -- "Give us a memorandum." We give him a memorandum, in which we describe in the major Catholic countries or countries with large Catholic populations what the situation is. And in this memorandum you will find several times the -- a phrase like, "The aim can only be total liquidation." I don't think there were extermination figures, but total liquidation of the Jewish community figures, which means that we were fully aware that this was happening. And I add something more. Around the same time, in -- I would say partly end '41, beginning '42, come the first reports on experiments on the human body, injections, and so on. And the second is the gas vans. They experiment with gas vans in which vans -- in which people are being gassed in an Autobus and killed in this way. Not yet of camps and gas -- publics. And the first time you hear it, you are really skeptic. And the second time, too. When it comes from different places and different versions and different people, you start taking it seriously. So I am saying we are fully aware of the terrible things that are going on there. And then comes an end of July. The German man reports to his business friends in Switzerland, "I hear of the plan of the total extermination of the Jews of Europe." And the man, which -- now known, the man, head of the -- Eduard Schulte, a man who was at the head of a very big mining concern, Giesche and Company, who occupied thirty thousand workers for the war, who had access to the highest authorities. There was even the -- what is it called -- Wir -- it's an order, special title of -- Wir --

Q. Wirtschaftsfuehrer?

A. Wirtschaftsfuehrer. We were told he had access to Hitler's headquarters. And comes to his business friends, and says, "I heard in the -- Hitler's headquarters of a discussed plan of the

deportation to the east of the totality of Jews. Three and a half million to four million Jews should be, will be killed in the east. And they still discussed the means, but I hear of prussic acid." Now, while we are receiving this, this plan was in full execution. He comes back in six weeks later -- not even -- few weeks later, and says, "I now know that there is an order, and it is in full execution." This is always forgotten to be mentioned, but this is a fact. So he himself is now sure and knows.

Q. Tell us a bit specifically how you got this information, the other people involved.

A. Now, they -- the people involved is a Jewish concern of Jack Rosenstein, who was in -- a big businessman in Zurich who was during the war in New York. He was a friend of Nahum Goldman. He supported the Congress, Rosenstein. He was one of the financial supporters. He has a representative, Isidor Koppelman, who is in Basel and in Zurich. And Schulte is in relationship with this group for many years. And Schulte says to Koppelman, "You have to inform the Jews officially." And Koppelman was a good Jew, knows one of the Jewish officials in the Swiss Jewish community, a very fine human being, Benjamin Segalovitz, the type of -- the best type of Russian Jews, in the -- of the old aristocratic Russian Jewish type -- who lives in Switzerland for many, many years. In fact, the family resided in Switzerland since 1914, when the war broke out. And they established themselves in Switzerland. And Ben Segalovitz is the specialist in the Jewish community on anti-Semitism and fights and is the head of the press service but it's much more than the press service. He is really the man who is in charge of the fight against anti-Semitism with regard to the Swiss community. And very respected and very courageous. Stands up to his own superiors and attacks them -- publicly and sometimes -- and

Koppelman informed Segalovitz. And Segalovitz, without hesitating, telephones me. The story that he asked himself, Whom and what? It's not true. We were in constant contact. We spoke on telephone two, three times a week at least. What I was doing in the world scene, he was doing in the Swiss. We were in very close personal relations and great personal respect for each other. It was a little bit -- there is a certain veil on it that in the later years -- where he had a new girlfriend who was jealous of everything else and tried to disturb this very friendly relationship with which we had. And one of the reasons was in -- that Moos didn't mention his name in his book, which I was very sorry. I mentioned his name everywhere and gave the story and the -- it's not only that he deserves to be credited. He immediately brought this to my knowledge. But we did everything together from that moment on. And he is one of the finest human beings which I have been working with in my life. I really give the highest credit to him and to his integrity and his competence and his dedication to all Zionists and -- okay. He telephones me. He doesn't say what it is. He said, "We have to meet immediately. When can we meet?" Two days later in Lausanne. It was the first of August, national holidays. We are both free. And he wanted to go to a chess competition or something. And we meet in Lausanne, and in Ouchi. And we discuss for five or six hours walking along the lake and going into a restaurant or in a cafe and getting up again and walking. And he tells me a story. The first thing was, "Who is the man? Is he reliable? Is this a provocation? Is this possible? Is this imaginable? Are we a victim of some manipulation?" And we -- from this moment on we think together. I mean in the real -- the best way of cooperation. And for hours we turn around the argument. And I must say, there is another element which -- now, we -- he and I knew more or less the same things. I shared with him what I knew. And he helped bring about -- and people like him brought people who informed us. And I had in my mind something which had deeply impressed me. I blink

backwards. In Witzten (Ph), 1939, half a year before the war started, I had to visit another man with whom I worked together for several years who was a representative of the Danzig Jews. We were working against Nazis in Danzig. There was a question of principle, not only the five, six thousand Jews, but also this was a city under the League of Nations supervision, that if the highest moral authority in the world cannot stop this, we cannot take this without protest. And, therefore, we fought for -- very, very symbolically, also. But also really for the Jews in Danzig and Dresta (ph), too. And he was one of the two representatives. His name was -- I think Walter Gerson, a lawyer, one of the two leaders of the community with whom we had to do -- to deal. The other was also a lawyer, Rosenzweig, I think. Was it Rosenberg or Rosenzweig? We have to find out -- Bernard (ph). And he visited me in Witzten. We made a long promenade on the first holiday through the campagne (i.e. open spaces surrounding the city) in -- in Geneva campagne. And, of course, the situation was terribly tense. And we knew, all of us, that only a war can put an end to this. And we knew, all of us, that the war was a terrible thing. And everybody was split in his own feelings. What should one wish for? Without the war, Hitler would never end. With the war, terrible things could happen. And then, while we had this feeling, all of us, he starts telling me, "You know, when the war will come, what will be our destiny?" And he paints with an absolutely fantastic imagination the situation of the Jewish people if Hitler starts a war, where millions of the Jews will -- will be killed and disappear. Now, spelling out something which we all felt somehow but we never dared say it aloud. It shook me. I never forgot it. It was a kind of prophecy which, as I said, we felt it, but we didn't dare say it. And when people say the Jews wanted the war, it's all nonsense. The Jews were terribly divided in themselves. What can we help? What can we hope? While we go there along the lake, this comes back to my mind.

Q. Okay. So in a way --

A. It's one of the -- the things which have marked me really for my life, this fellow. One of the...

Q. The tape has run out just there, so let's stop there for a second. We'll have lunch, I think, and --

A. This you never heard.

Q. I'm sorry?

A. This you never heard.

Q. No. I hadn't heard that before. But I was going to comment on that, that you were prepared in a way when -- psychologically you were prepared when the message came.

A. I am coming -- I am coming now to the three reasons why I believed it.

Q. Okay. But save that for the next tape.

A. We stop now?

Q. I think so. I think we'll probably have lunch now.

A. But this is a terrible story. It's unbelievable. You have to tell me -- you have to remind me, that I say Walter Gerson. He was killed in the first ---?

TAPE #4

Q. What happened, Dr. Riegner, to this man who gave you a prophecy about the fate of European Jewry?

A. When I remembered this prophecy, I had to remember his very sad end. And the Germans marched into Poland in the fall 1939. There was shortly after a pogrom in Bromberg and in Poznan -- must have been in October or so -- where five thousand Jews were killed. And Walter Gerson, who had fled from Danzig to the Polish territories, was one of the first victims of this pogrom. I had not forgotten this. Now, let me tell you why I believed -- and I can I believe say also Segalovitz believed the truth of the story. There were three major reasons. The first was that Hitler had himself announced a number of times, usually on the anniversary of the day that he took power, the 30th of January, where there were usually a great manifestation. And already on the 30th of January 39, before the war broke out, he threatened the Jews, whom he accused to want to push for the war, and he threatened them that if -- one thing is certain, he said. This war, if it breaks out, will not end with the defeat of the German people. It will end with the extermination of the Jewish people in Europe. He repeated this threat a number of times, usually, as I said, on the 30th of January. And I remembered this. I was following this in '36

already in my office. And I was usually commenting on such speeches to a number of journalists in Geneva who followed together with me these speeches. And I said to myself, we haven't taken Mein Kampf seriously. He announced all what he was going to do. And nobody had taken it seriously. Here again is a threat. Nobody is taking it seriously. But now we cannot ignore it. This was the first reason. The second reason was -- we are on the last of July, the first of August -- and as I told you before, we knew, of course, many things which happened before. We knew of the deportations from Berlin, from Vienna, from Prague, from other places. But something was new. On the 14th, 15th of July, 1942, suddenly -- and nobody understood why -- tens of thousands of Jews were arrested, in all great cities of western Europe. In Amsterdam, in Brussels, in Antwerp, in Paris, in Lyon, in Marseilles, and so on. Suddenly, tens of thousands of people were arrested. And in the week before already the first trains of deportations left to the east. As I said, nobody understood why suddenly this happens. The report of Schulte gave the explanation. Behind all this there was a plan. Behind all what we knew about the starvation, the terrible living conditions, the ghettoization, the deportations, the mass murders -- behind all this was one decisive fact, a decision by the Nazis to exterminate the totality of the Jews of Europe. And the third reason why I believed it has very much to do with my own origin from Germany. I knew the Nazis. I knew their brutality. I knew their fanaticism. I knew that, contrary to all other enemies in history which we have encountered, we have here a group which is absolutely fanaticized, which is absolutely determined to live up to its aims and for whom the Jew was a personification of the devil, the personification of everything evil in the world, and that it was one -- not one, but the central aim of the Nazi party program. It is characteristic that in his first political letter to a comrade written in September 1919, long before he published Mein Kampf -- it's the first document of political character which we know of Hitler until his famous political

last will, the day when he committed suicide, on the 29th of April, 1945. In his first political until his last political document, the fight against world Jewry is considered by him his major aim. And he preaches this in 1919 as in 1945. I knew about their brutality. I have already spoken about my experiences as a student in the student elections. But I have seen it, also, in my experience, the day when they arrived to power, the demonstrations on the 30th of January, on the 1st of April, the boycotting. I knew about who had burned the Reichstag. When I left in May 19 –

Q. '33?

A. -- '33, I knew about the first concentration camps, in Oranienburg, and in -- other place which escapes me at the moment. I knew about the torture of his political enemies which took place in the building of the former Communist newspaper, the Rote Fahne. And everybody who was a little bit interested in the political affairs knew it. I knew about the violence with which they fought their political enemies. There was a famous story about the murder in a Polish -- German Polish frontier city, which -- in which they ruthlessly turned the facts upside down, and we knew that the German Nazis were full of fanaticism and did not know any ethical or moral limits to their exercise of power, that for them, good is what benefits Germany, as the Nazis understood it, was the essence of their doctrine. And in this, the Jewish question was the central point. Now, I did not limit myself to convincing myself that all these reasons made the report of Schulte very probable and very nearly convinced myself that it is an accurate report. I told so, also, the American vice-consul, whom I met. My idea after having met together with Segalovitz -- Koppelman, who confirmed what Segalovitz had reported to me, who told us a little bit more

about his relations with Schulte, his reports which he had brought before with regard to the development of the war. Amongst other things, he had rightly informed them of the date of the invasion of Russia. And a number of other similar reports turned out to be completely correct, which gave us the conviction that we had to do with a very serious source. And this --

Q. At this point you still didn't know his name?

A. At this point I didn't still know his name. I didn't want to see him, and he didn't want to see us. Don't forget: We are, after all, at war with Germany, and the whole situation was terribly tense, and -- but the reports about his reliability and his antecedence gave us a good measure of conviction that we had to deal with a very serious source. I decided to keep the whole story to myself, and only to consult Professor Gugenheim, who was our legal advisor. And when Nahum Goldman left Geneva in 1940, he asked me in very serious problems to consult Gugenheim as a major person with whom I should be in contact. I had written the same evening a long letter to Gugenheim. I told him what I found out and told him what I had intention to do and wanted his consent. And he spoke to me the next day on the telephone. He agreed to the plan. As a very careful, prudent, good, Swiss citizen, he moderated some of my phrases and introduced some cautious words.

Q. These were the phrases that were in the telegram you proposed to send out to the Americans and the British?

A. Yes. I made a draft of a telegram which I wanted to give the Americans and the British, and he moderated this a little bit, but the basic -- some people later have accused me, "But you didn't

believe yourself. You have put in some cautious words." But if you would see what I sent to the American vice-consul -- the consul was not in Geneva. He was on vacation -- and to the British vice-consul, you would see, and -- Mr. Elting, who was the American vice-consul, has written about this, given some information of it -- you will see that I was very strong in my convictions. And I told them, in spite of these words, that I was convinced that the things were serious, and I gave him all the reasons why I believed in it. Elting must have consulted his chief, Mr. Squire, a consul, whom I knew. Elting I had never met. And they agreed, and he sent the text to Bern legation, and that they should forward everything to Washington. I said, in fact, three things to Elting: "Inform your government, check the contents, what I tell you. You have the Secret Service. I don't. And three, give this telegram to Wise, the president of the World Jewish Congress, in Washington." And I said the same to the vice-consul of the British, and asked him to give the -- send the telegram to Mr. Sydney Silverman, who was the chairman of the British section of the World Jewish Congress and a very prominent member of the British Parliament. In fact, the two telegrams were identical, with one exception, and it's very typical, the exception. The telegram to Silverman said at the end, "Inform and consult New York." Now, as I had sent the other telegram to Wise, it doesn't make much sense, but it shows that I was not convinced that the Americans would deliver the telegram to Wise, and that I was convinced that the British, because of their parliamentary traditions, would not dare not deliver the message to a prominent member of Parliament, and my guess was true. It happened exactly like this. The Americans did not deliver the message to Wise and informed me so by letter from Mr. Squire, the American consul, on the date of the 24th of August, in which he writes that (reading) "I am informed that the legation at Bern transmitted the substance of this telegram to the Department of State for delivery to Dr. Wise in its discretion, but it is now in receipt of

telegraphic instructions from the department which indicate that it is disinclined to deliver the message in question in view of the apparently unsubstantiated character of the information which forms its main theme." Now, I don't know what I could have substantiated more. I know we know from some of the historians who have studied the files in the State Department that some people were afraid of Wise, and if the rabbi finds out, he will make a big scandal. But this is only the first instance of a very unfriendly attitude of the Department of State in this whole matter. With regard to the British, they delivered the message to Sydney Silverman, although it took ten days, and I never found out why. Apparently they looked for him in London, but the parliamentary session was finished, and so he was at home in Liverpool and -- but it's not clear why they couldn't find him earlier. Finally, they found him, but he didn't believe in the thing, either. And you study today the files which have been published -- after all, this is now public -- to a great extent, at least -- public property, you will see the marks in the file of the State Department: "These are wild rumors borne out of Jewish fears." For the first ten or fourteen days, or even more, nobody cared for the substance, what I had informed. They only asked, "Who is Riegner?" And my name was at that time completely unknown, for several reasons. One of the reasons, that my family was until the end of 1938 still in Germany, and I had asked all colleagues in the Congress to keep my name out of circulation and out from documents. So nobody had seen my name. And when they asked in London at the Jewish agency and some other places, they didn't know me, either, because I had nothing to do with them. So this was only -- slowly when other reports came in in the same direction, with the same content, they finally started to give some --

Q. Credence, believability?

A. Yeah -- believability to these reports. And I am -- some of the historians have shown that my telegram finally has completely changed the attitude of the British government in the case -- on the whole subject of war crimes and war criminals. Now, when the telegram was received by Silverman, he tried to telephone to Wise in America and was prevented by the War Department to do so. Finally, the War Department sent a coded telegram to Wise in New York, from Silverman -- and it is only when this arrived in New York, was fully informed. Now, the question about how did the Jews react to -- let's say the Congress people? This is something which I am, of course, interested very much, and I have three or four witnesses on which I can report. I asked my colleague in New York, Morris Bernzweig, who was the head of the International Affairs Department in New York -- who was British, but during the war he went to New York -- and asked him, "How did you react to this? You were present when the telegram arrived. Did you believe it, or did you have doubts? What?" He said clearly to me, "Nobody put this report into question. We took it. We accepted it." As a matter of fact, Stephen Wise, when he got it, wrote two letters, deeply -- which he is deeply worried, deeply moved, deeply in despair, one to Justice Frankfurter, and he writes in a few lines that he received this message, and that he is in despair. What could one do? And he asked Frankfurter to inform the boss, which means Roosevelt, which Frankfurter has certainly done. They were in very close relations. And he underlines -- and this is very funny for me -- that the report come from one whom he names "very conservative." Now, I have never been described by anybody as a very conservative person, but what Wise obviously meant, that I am very careful in my judgment, that I am not a "Schreier", and that I am known for my reliability and for my good judgment. It's interesting to see such -- such words to appear when you feel you are really not a very conservative person. But -- in this sense of reliability and not exaggerating, and so on, it is very accurate. The other

letter is even a much greater expression of despair, to his very close friend, the Pastor John -- James -- Holmes -- Hanes. What's the name? The pastor and the minister, the name -- you have to correct that -- the -- it's one of the closest friends -- a Protestant pastor with whom Wise was very close, and they exchanged the pulpit even, and so on. And there is in the letters which Foss has edited, an outburst of his despair, "What can we do?" And sees that he is absolutely shaken at his foundations about this report, and sees the catastrophe and takes it for serious, too. I mean, there is no doubt. He has known me in '36 at the Congress. He has known me on one or two other occasions when we met and had obviously great respect for my integrity and my reliability. And Wise goes to Sumner Welles and -- not knowing, of course, that the telegram is laying in the State Department -- and Sumner Welles forbids the publication. There are people who criticized Wise that he accepted this. I don't know whether he was right or he was wrong. But he agreed that they will make other inquiries about the reliability of the content, the veracity of the content of the cable, and has decided to ask the Vatican and the International Red Cross for their opinion. Now, the Vatican -- this I have described in one of my speeches in Cincinnati has a very strange attitude. Titmann, who was the deputy to the official representative of the president to the Vatican, insists a number of times to get information of the attitude of the Vatican on this information. And finally, he gets a wishy-washy reply: "We know, also, that there are very bad reports coming in about the treatment of the Jews, but we have no confirmation about the story of the extermination." And more or less this is the reply. Very strange. Because the -- I believe the Vatican was at least as well informed as we were. They had hundreds of priests who came -- traveled through Europe and came to Rome and informed the Vatican authorities. A man, historian, former priest himself, Franconi, Carlo Franconi -- writes about the hundreds of reports who came and -- from all over and how much they -- how well they were

informed. And in the documents which the Vatican has published themselves, there are a number of very important facts, where you see that a number of Nuncios had very clearly reported about what is happening to the Jews. There was a special man who was active, I believe, for the Order of Malta, who was pursuing in Poland some welfare activities, humanitarian activities, who writes a number of times reports already in May, and another in October, '42, where he -- one of the reports he says something like "There are two new things. On the one hand, the bombardment of the cities, and the other is the intensification of the extermination of the Jews. More than two million have already been killed." I mean, this information was there. Why the Vatican ignores it and doesn't tell it, I don't know. And the Red Cross didn't give any -- any concrete answer, either, International Red Cross. Now, we will come back to the attitude of the Red Cross at a later point, where I will say what I have to say about the Red Cross. Now, I see that one doesn't believe -- but doesn't believe, and there is now on -- two activities on parallel. The one activity is my own. I try by all of the possible means to find corroborating evidence from other sources. And the other is the activity especially of our British section, which was very active, was a wonderful group, of Lady Reading, of Silverman, of Baru(ph), of Alex Easterman, of -- a marvelous leadership group which was acting in a very fine, coordinated way. And they approach all the governments in exile, the British governments, and try to work on them. And an interesting story there is that one of their best friends was President Benes of Czechoslovakia, considered it a German provocation and didn't believe in it. And on the other hand, the only one who believed it, accepted it as fact, was Ivan Maisky, the Russian ambassador, who probably had known by his own experience that the extermination of peoples is possible, even by so-called civilized countries. At the same time, they tried to obtain some kind of a statement of the Pope, through a concerted action of the countries represented in London -- and

taking up an idea which I had already a year earlier suggested in one of my letters to Nahum Goldman -- there is an attempt to obtain a collective statement of the Allied governments on the extermination of the Jews. And this text is finally -- this is the real, immediate result of my telegram, is the declaration of the -- all the Allied governments -- which is of the 17th of December, 1942, where all the Allied governments and the French National Committee -- was not yet a government -- had solemnly denounced the extermination of the Jewish people, saying that this has been many times announced, threatened with, and now it is happening, and hundreds of thousands of people have already been killed, and they threatened with the retaliation -- with the punishment of those who are responsible. This is a great moment. Now the story is out. And it is published all over. And even in the very careful, neutral Switzerland, it makes the first pages in the newspapers. And one hopes now something will happen that something should happen. And now starts a discussion between the two major Allied governments which goes on for six weeks, and nothing is happening. You can read the pathetic appeal from the Archbishop of Canterbury in the House of Lords and this, where he accuses the governments of complete inactivity and of being responsible for their not undertaking any action. Even if you cannot do anything, you have to try at least. And finally, after two months practically, it is decided there will be a conference between the British and the Americans, and they decide to hold this conference in the Bermudas, in the Atlantic.

Q. Let me stop you there for a minute and back up for two things. One, the information that Washington and London were trying to get confirmed, in spite of the fact that the Vatican did not supply much information, the Americans did ultimately get additional information, including

indirectly some information from Carl Burckhardt, and I wonder if you could talk about how that...

A. Yes. I will come to this now. I have skipped one thing, and that the meeting with the American minister in October 1942. Let me first say, when I saw that nothing was happening and that everybody was skeptical about the reports -- and this you feel, and you see that nothing is happening I was never in my life as desperate as during these weeks, when you know that the world is burning and nothing is happening, and on the contrary, I am sitting in Geneva on this beautiful lake with my view on the Mont Blanc, and the blue sky, and you know --

Q. Which you could see from your office?

A. Hmm? I saw this from my office. I was having an office with a beautiful view, and already three, four kilometers around are the Germans and the Italians. And the whole world is in flames, and you see this beauty of the lake and the mountains and the sky, and it's a provocation to your existence. And I am waiting and waiting to any reaction positive, and nothing comes. So I am trying to -- to get information, other information. But on this I must say I was quite successful. There were four major confirmations which I obtained, direct or indirect. The first were some letters which were addressed to the Jewish relief organization of the Aguda in Switzerland, addressed by a man who lived outside the ghetto in Warsaw, and which was sent to Lucerne, informing them in a certain coded language, with Hebrew words and other words, of the beginning of the deportation of the Jews of Warsaw, which started -- and this we know -- on the 25th of July, the day when Czerniakow, the Judenaelteste, committed suicide. And every day

six thousand people were taken and -- from the Umschlagplatz to Treblinka. And they write in two letters in this kind of coded language that the people are being taken day by day to this camp. And the words are clear -- it is gayROOSH. It is complete extermination and killing, and so there is for the first time a confirmation even from Poland that this extermination is happening there. Number two, at the beginning of September, I believe, comes to Switzerland a young man who saw the extermination of the total Jewish population of Riga in November and December 1941. That means nine months or ten months before. A young man, a student of medicine, who escaped from Riga, worked for several months in a hospital as a non-Jew, and a hospital in Stettin, and finally succeeds to get a visa for Switzerland where he has some relatives. And when he arrives in Geneva, I am informed, and I have a meeting with him, and I question him for six or eight hours about what he knew, and he gives a very detailed report of how in two nights the Nazis -- ?, was military -- killed by machine guns -- I think thirty-six thousand or something Jews in two nights, among whom the very famous Jewish historian, Simon Dubnow, who was, by the way, very near the ideals of the World Jewish Congress and whom we revered very much. Nobody knew about this. For nine months the world was completely silent, that you can't kill such -- do such exterminations without anybody knowing. It showed that -- what was going on was terrible. The third was even more intriguing. One day I get a telephone call from a doctor in the Jewish -- in the hospital, a Jewish doctor in the hospital of Geneva, very fine lady, good friend of mine, said, "Come here. I have to show you something very interesting," and it's worth my coming. And I go to the hospital, and she receives me -- she's dead also now -- and says, "I have here a very strange patient. He is under police surveillance, and you are not allowed to see him, and you are not allowed to mention it, but I cannot begrudge. You know much more the -- go and see him." And I spent six hours in the hospital and take down what this fellow tells me.

And it's -- as I always say, in extraordinary times are extraordinary events. A young man who is taken in -- Antwerp or Brussels -- this I forgot -- in Belgium, in one of these mass arrests, and being sent to the camp in Malines, from where they are deported to the east. And he gives me the exact description on what happened every day in the process of deportation, from Malines in Belgium to Krakow, Katowice, up to Russia, where he finally ends up in -- near -- the front of Stalingrad, near Rava Ruskaya. And then he describes every station, what happened, and so on. Not only he tells me he was in -- put down, put to -- engaged in works for the fortification at the front. And one day, an officer comes and asks somebody whether -- who could drive? He needs a driver. And as he is a mechanic, working in -- was a Polish Jew living in Belgium, working in some mechanic(al) establishment, he offers himself, and he is taken. And he is -- ten days going with the German officer, accompanying him in his travels in the car. And he uses this opportunity to ask the German officer, "What happened? What happened there? What happened here? Why?" And the German officer, who is fed up with the war, lost already two of his brothers, tells him, "It's very simple. Those who are up to work, they take them to work. Those who are not up to work, they be exterminated. Those who are not any more up to work, they have the same fate." So easy it was. In three sentences, the whole tragedy of the Jewish people was described by this German officer. And the German officer, as I said, who was fed up with the war, decides to save this Jew. In an unbelievable story, he hides him in a train full of uniforms of people who fell in the battles around Stalingrad, and hides him in this train and gives him food and gives him occupation mark, and said, "You remain in the train until it stops. And then you can try to get out." And he leaves -- I don't know -- four or five days. He didn't know himself how long it was. And finally this train stops. Finally, didn't move any more. And he gets out, and he is near the Gare de l'Est in Paris. Now, you imagine from Stalingrad practically, or Rava

Ruskaya, to -- to Paris. And he -- he has some occupation marks. He finds his way, he goes to the Plaetzl, finds Jewish advice, goes to the nonoccupied France and finds the way. He comes over the mountains of Switzerland and is arrested by some of the soldiers, and as he is typical -- as for many people deported -- swollen feet and -- and bones and legs. They bring him to the hospital to be treated. And there he is. Unbelievable that such things are possible. But I questioned him. You know, I was a kind of a judge once -- inquisition judge in the proceedings which I had in the tribunal in Berlin. And I questioned him for hours and hours. Very simple person, straightforward, and there was no doubt that what he said was the truth. And yet he gave the whole story. From an eyewitness who had seen it. And then comes the fourth, the most interesting in certain ways. When we had the idea -- we had the report from Schulte. I suggested to Gugenheim that we should ask the Red Cross whether they had any reports which confirmed. And making it not too official, we decided that he should privately ask the vice president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Carl Burckhardt, who is a colleague of his in the institute which I spoke, the Institute de Hautes Etudes Internationales, and he should ask him in the professors' lounge -- not in a formal way, but in a more private, confidential way. And he does this, and -- somewhere in the beginning of September. And Burkhardt confirms to him that his reports are very similar, that he has confirmation from two German diplomats, the one from a member of the staff of the German foreign office, the other, a representative of the military establishment. He says "Defense Department."

Q. War Ministry, yeah.

A. War Ministry. It seems that this was not a very correct description, but it's clear that he meant the military establishment. And very interesting. He uses the words which are the key words in this whole process that means "Judenfrei", make the countries "Judenfrei." When you read the reports which Heidrich made to Ribbentrop, the regular reports about the progress of the extermination process in the various countries, in all of these reports, you see "Judenfrei." And Burckhardt knows -- says "Judenfrei" as he says, well -- there is no possibility of settlement or of emigration. It is clear that it means in reality the killing of the people. Now, this, of course, is extremely important. And Gugenheim was doubtful whether I should use this information. In any case -- I will come to it in a moment -- shortly after, we were invited by the American minister in Bern, Lichtheim and myself, to report to him what we knew about the whole process. This was suggested by Wise to Sumner Welles, and -- and we were invited by the American minister. And knowing what it was all about, because Wise informed us, put all what you have on the table to let people -- I saw they didn't believe us. Maybe now is the moment or never. And we write together a memorandum of about thirty-five pages, with a short introduction. And then we add all the reports which we have and some general evaluation of the situation in various countries, with all the annexes and the documents, including these letters from Warsaw, including the Sivian (?) report, including the report from the man who was in Rava Ruskaya and Stalingrad. All together it's about thirty-five pages.

Q. Stop there. Because they're about to run out of tape. We'll talk about your meeting you and Lichtheim, meeting with Harrison.

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. Save that for the next tape.

A. They have to change?

Q. Yes.

Q. Dr. Riegner, you were about to tell us about the information, the memorandum you brought in for the American minister, Leland Harrison, in October.

A. Now, I felt very seriously that this was the decisive date. Either they will believe us or they will not believe us. And, therefore, I was decided to tell all I knew, including the name of the person from whom the original report came. And we agreed that we would not pronounce the name, but we would put it on a piece of paper and give it to the minister in a closed envelope, and this is what happened. On the other hand, I also decided that I had to inform the minister that the -- about the Burckhardt interview of Gugenheim. I felt that this was an extremely important, positive support for our whole story, and I had to tell it. Gugenheim was not very happy about this. He felt it was more of personal information, and I disregarded it and told the minister the whole story. I said to him that I doubt that Gugenheim would confirm it in this way, but without naming the person, he may. It was -- the meeting with the minister was extremely interesting. He read -- I never had such a meeting with any diplomat in my life. When he saw that we had prepared the memorandum, he immediately took it and started reading it. We were in the room for probably twenty-five, thirty minutes without any word was spoken. When he had

finished, he started again and asked questions. What he thought of it, we couldn't guess. Lichtheim, with a good sense of humor, said, "Mr. Poker Face." And he looked like a poker face. But as a matter of fact, as we know today, we convinced him on that date. He didn't believe us before. But the documentation, it convinced him, and he obviously gave a positive recommendation. I don't know. You may have readed -- read what exactly he wrote. I have never seen it. But it is clear that from that moment on, he was on our side. He asked that Gugenheim should make an affidavit about what we told him, and he asked an affidavit from Sivian, and the name of the other fellow was -- whom I met in the hospital I didn't give him. I didn't want to make trouble for the doctor who let us in. But I gave it later in a special letter to the embassy so they knew, also, that the man -- and maybe they have approached him. I don't know.

Q. Sivian was the Latvian who described the massacres outside of Riga?

A. Yeah. But the -- the other fellow was -- not -- the name escapes me at the moment, but I have it if you want. And I gave him -- gave them the address, too. He was in the meantime in some of the internment camps in Switzerland. Well, then -- then something happened which I didn't know. He sent the consul in Geneva, Mr. Squire, to Burckhardt behind our back, and interviewed them, what he knew about the extermination policy and what he knew from the Germans. And as a matter of fact, Burckhardt repeated to Squire exactly what he had told us. There are two notes from Squire which Mr. Moos found in the files of the State Department and which he sent to me afterwards. It is exactly the same what he said to -- to Gugenheim. That -- the very strange fact remains that Burckhardt has never said these things to his own colleagues

on the International Committee of the Red Cross. Professor FalVAY, who had access to everything -- all the files in the International Red Cross, who has seen practically everything, confirms that there is no trace whatsoever of this. And the strange thing is that Burckhardt tells very proudly to Squire that there was a proposal of -- making a protest or appeal to the Germans on the part of the Red Cross, and he -- he doesn't tell him that he was against it and voted against it and stopped it. He presents it as if this was a great positive fact which he supported. Now, these are very strange things. And it's not very clear. I have my ideas about this, why he did this.

Q. Do you want to tell us what you --

A. I think it should really come somewhere else.

Q. All right.

A. It doesn't fit in in the story at the moment. But when we speak about the Red Cross, we can perhaps come back to it. So when this -- all these documents are arriving in Washington, in November, then everybody is now convinced that we -- we have a case and we are right. Three months or more have passed. Every day, thousands of Jews have been killed. And nothing has happened in the meantime. But now Sumner welles allows Wise to go public, and he does. Some people say it wasn't published in -- sufficient publicity. Maybe yes, maybe no. In any case, the matter is public. And this now leaves -- and here I made a mistake -- I went already to the Declaration of the 17th of December. Perhaps we can turn this around in the tape. We -- we

get to this Declaration which was published simultaneously in Washington, in London, and in Moscow on the 17th of December, and -- denouncing the extermination of the Jewish people and threatening the responsible with punishment after the war. In London, it is done in the form of a question in Parliament to the government, and Sydney Silverman asked this question, which Eden replies. And a very moving gesture: The whole Parliament stands up for two minutes to pay tribute, homage to the victims. And a man -- Eden himself says he was struck by the emotion which prevailed in the House. And a man like Lloyd George, who was the oldest member of the Parliament, said he had never seen anything alike in the history of the British Parliament. But this, of course, didn't make the people alive again. And we wait now for action. And as I said, there are negotiations, and finally it is decided to meet in the Bermudas and to discuss what action is to be taken. This is the moment where the Jewish organizations in America, everywhere outside in the free world, get very active and devise an actions program of what should be done and what can be done. And this program is being formulated and -- with fifteen points. We may be coming back on some of the points when we say what happened and what didn't happen. In any case, it's not true that the Jews were not prepared for action, but the governments were not prepared for action. That is the truth. And Bermuda is chosen so that the -- the public cannot follow too much what's going on. Nobody is allowed access to the conference. The whole thing is kept in great secret, and the great secret that only comes out very slowly -- the great secret is that they didn't decide anything. Now, when this becomes true, when this becomes public, when this gets out, this is the most crucial moment in the whole history of the war for the Jewish community. And the people are completely shaken. Yitzhak Greenberg, one of the very respected members of the Jewish community here, of the labor -- Jewish labor movement, writes a famous article, "Bankrupt," and at this moment, in effect, it was complete

bankruptcy. Now we come later back to the reason why nothing was undertaken. But here the most important thing is this: There have been attacks later against the leadership and especially against Stephen Wise and the Zionist leadership that they did not use their influence to push through a program. And they are accused of having sacrificed the rescue effort to the --

Q. Zionist cause?

A. -- to the importance of the fight for the establishment of a Jewish state. This is, in my opinion, a very unjust accusation. They -- one puts the cart before the horse. In reality, what has happened is that for the first time, the Jewish establishment understands that it cannot in this tragic situation count on our best friends. It's a bankruptcy of the effort of rescue, which puts everybody into the position that if we cannot count on our best friends in such a tragic situation, then we have to have ourselves some sovereignty so that we can act. It is not the sacrifice of the rescue effort to the idea of establishment of a state. But the establishment of the state is the aim -- the first aim in the Jewish war aims. It is the consequence of the bankruptcy of the rescue effort, of being abandoned by our best friends in whom we counted that they would do something. And it's very unjust to confuse these issues. And I think we have to correct this and we have to make this understood. Wise has always tried still. He was not the naive person many people want to see in him. There is a letter which he writes to Nahum Goldman in -- I think it's April 1943, just during the time of the Bermuda conference. And Goldman is -- for the Passover holiday somewhere in the countryside. And Wise keeps him informed in this letter and writes to him, "The things are as we foresaw, going very bad, and from bad to worse. Some people say we should publicly denounce the President. I believe this would be a mistake. He

can still try. If we attack him, too, it will deprive us of our last support, and it will only give great satisfaction to the Congress, which is a really anti-Semitic Congress -- in this country." Such letters -- and it should be shown in your archives here -- show that he was by far not a naive person whom people want him to be, that he was by far not blindly following Roosevelt in these things. The relationship between Wise and Roosevelt went up and down in various ways, and it's not so simple at all. But he had great admiration for Roosevelt. There is no doubt. And what Roosevelt did and what Roosevelt did not do I think is one of the points which we have to discuss also in the following discussions. This chapter, therefore, ends with a terrible negative despair. Nothing is happening, and we are attending, we are assisting at the killing of millions of Jews without any active counteraction. I did not stop making proposals and reporting. I was terribly pessimistic. But my feeling was, you have to try, and if you don't succeed, you have to try again and you have to try again. And I had enough energy to keep this through. My good friend Lichtheim was even more pessimistic than I. And he wrote lots of letters, description which are today very valuable because they show the situation as it was. I wrote much less letters. I didn't like to write open letters through the mail which I knew would all fall into German hands and through the German censorship. But I tried -- over again and again to get some ideas through and some rescue proposals. And there are a number of very important reports, which you will find in the files of the Congress, in January 1943 and later, and one of the most important is the report of the telegram of April 1943, in which I make again a number of very important rescue proposals. This telegram had also its special fate. In the meantime, the State Department had instructed the embassy in Bern not to transmit any more private messages or messages of private organizations. It is in reality meant against me. The reason was if we cut off the source, then the Jewish organizations in New York cannot cry and cannot push us and

cannot threaten us. It was a very simple way. But when -- in April, the consul in Geneva and the minister in Bern saw that I had very important proposals to make, they didn't understand why they shouldn't communicate this to Washington. They considered it very important. So finally -- they didn't tell me that they had these instructions. But they -- they said there were some problems. Finally, they came to a very funny conclusion, whether I was ready to pay for the telegram. So I was puzzled by this proposal. And I said immediately "Yes." It was the most expensive telegram I ever sent in my life. It was practically a full salary -- although my salary wasn't very high -- but nearly two hundred dollars it was. You can imagine for what I worked at the time. And I said, "Yes." In the long run, it was a very cheap telegram. It put into action --really, it led to the establishment of the War Refugee Board, of all the actions which were undertaken. And when you put it in relation to this, it was a very, very cheap, cheap telegram.

In any case, this telegram suggested two great actions. One was the rescue action in Romania. I had been informed by the Jewish community leaders in Romania through the Red Cross that there was a change in attitude of Marshall Antonescu and the Minister of the Interior with regard to the Jews and there may be possibilities of emigration from the Jews in Transnistria to Palestine. Now, this was sensational news, of course. And they asked -- but they needed funds for this. And the funds -- and there was a very original idea, that the funds would not have to be transferred to Romania, but could be put in a -- in a blocked account in Switzerland until the end of the war. Now, this was a very attractive and sensational idea. The second was the effort -- and this came from the people who were in the Jewish underground in France, Belgium, and Holland -- a concerted effort to evacuate as many youngsters and children from these three countries towards Spain or towards Switzerland. And that they needed for this money, they needed for this weapons, they needed for this all kinds of material. They needed machines to

falsify papers, identity papers, ration cards, and so on, and so on. And this was the second great proposal. When this telegram arrived in New York, they went to the Jewish authorities. The matter was brought to Roosevelt himself and to Morgenthau, and apparently they agreed with the plans. Although this was really going out of the normal ways. But April passed, May passed, June passed. In July, Stephen Wise goes to Morgenthau, and says, "What happens? Nothing has happened. Where are you?" Mr. Morgenthau says, "I don't know. We have agreed for a long time that this should happen." And there he charges two of his assistants, Bader (Baylor ?) and DuBois, to find out what happened. And there comes the famous report of the two Protestant assistants of Morgenthau after having approached some of the people in the State Department, and they find out that the whole -- sabotage which is taking place in the State Department all the time, from the beginning of the suppression of my cable, from the instruction not to send any cables to me, up to the sabotage of this great rescue plan. And they write a report for Morgenthau, which they -- to which they give. The report is published. Everybody can read it today. It's a terrible indictment against the Department and is -- they give it the title, "On the Acquiescence of This Government in the Mass Murder of the Jews." Now, Morgenthau agrees, but the title is, after all, a little bit too strong, and he calls it "Report to the President." But he is more clever than to give them -- him the report. He asks his legal advisor, Professor Cox, to prepare a positive proposal of how to deal with these matters. And he comes with the idea of a refugee -- War Refugee Board composed of representatives of the State Department, the reasury, and the War Department, which should be entrusted with the special task to deal with the problems of the victims of Nazi persecution and the help which can be given to them. Roosevelt sees that the report of the two assistants is dynamite and sees that something has to be done and accepts quite favorably the idea of the War Refugee Board. But in the meantime, Morgenthau is

clever enough not to antagonize too much the State Department and -- what's his name?

Secretary of State?

Q. Cordell Hull?

A. Cordell Hull. Cordell Hull.

Q. Okay. Hull was --

A. Yeah, yeah. And he makes some approaches, and Cordell Hull gives in, and suddenly something happens and nobody understands why. I am called on the day before Christmas, 23rd or '4th of 1943, to the legation in Bern, and say, "What? What have you done? The whole policy and the -- on the financial blockade and the food blockade, it's all set aside. What happened? What?" And I didn't know what happened. This was Wise's and Morgenthau's doing here. In any case, full of admiration, I get handed out a document, the first license in which the World Jewish Congress is authorized to send to me as the first amount, twenty-five thousand dollars for rescue activity in favor of victims of Nazi persecution. And one tells me that I can make proposals to change the text, and so on, and that it is only a first gesture, and if it works well, it can be repeated, and so on, and enlarged, and so on. But it is really a breakthrough, complete breakthrough. And what we know today is that in the last moment, the British embassy in Bern tried on the request of the Ministry of --

Q. Economic Welfare?

A. -- Economic Welfare to stop this thing. And it holds up the whole thing for two weeks, I believe. But it is finally accepted. So this was really a Christmas gift. And then they really didn't know what happened and how it got -- my shares went up very high in the embassy.

Q. Hanukkah came on Christmas that year?

A. It was. Yeah. It was on Christmas. And now, the -- the rules were very strict and unworkable, and I immediately said that this is not possible in this way. I made certain observations. After a few days, they -- they changed the rules and gave it a better formula and less strict, and then without my commenting again, a third text came in. And the third text comes in the day which the War Refugee Board is created. You see the direct link of this action with the creation of the War Refugee Board. And now we worked under this, I have to report, and it's very complicated. But it is a breakthrough. And the establishment of the War Refugee Board is really the one great positive decision which has been made. I am not saying it -- I am not saying it's -- whatever, the War Refugee Board was wonderful, but at least it was a serious effort to help. And from this moment on, we got support of all the embassies all over Europe, in Stockholm and in Bern, and in Turkey, in Ankara, and in Spain, and in Portugal. And we really felt the government behind us. And something which is most important, during the last year, from January 1944 to end of May, the end of the war, in May, '45, that twenty million dollars were channeled through the War Refugee Board -- Jewish money, not other money -- this we also have to talk -- were channeled to -- for efforts to rescue Jews, to help Jews and other victims of Nazi persecution. It is the one great thing which has happened. And I am very happy that this came out of my normal activities, and it was directly linked to these plans, the plans themselves,

the Romanian situation. It could never be reestablished. Antonescu changed his mind. It wasn't possible. The situation -- the whole plan fell through because it was eight months between when I suggested it and when it happened. The other question of the help for the rescue of the children and youngsters, and bringing them out to Spain and to Switzerland. It was -- was applied. This is one of the three great parts in the rescue efforts in which I took the -- a personal -- a personal part. But this is the -- really the story. It took eighteen months from my first report in August until something at all was done. And I tell you, it was one of the most terrible times in my life. I saw one report after another, full of gloom and disaster, and waiting for the world to react, and -- and nothing was happening. It was really the moment of our greatest need, and we were terribly lonely and abandoned during that whole period, and during this period millions of Jews were killed.

Q. Now, let me go back for a second to the Romanian situation. I know that the plan to have Jews emigrate from Romania did not work in part because of German objections and Romanian objections. But I was under the impression that that scheme of using money, money deposited in Swiss accounts, then was used to persuade people within Romania itself to lend money to keep Jews in Romania itself alive. Now, I don't know that the World Jewish Congress was involved in that, but --

A. No. There was something -- I don't know. I wasn't any more involved there. But Kolb one of the Red Cross people helped in this respect. The details I don't know. But the whole thing was this idea, to finance things and to be paid at the end of the war. It worked not only there. It worked also in France and other places. I know that we paid a lots of money later for what our friends in France had taken as loans, and we were presented with it, and the Joint, the same. This

was a great, great part. But there was a political change. There was a certain moment where the other -- Antonescu had greater power, I think, and that disappeared apparently afterwards. But the details I forgot. You know, something which doesn't work, you don't -- you are not so interested any more. You are interested in things which work. But I believe it's -- what I have now to say is what the -- thanks to the War Refugee Board -- functioned and what didn't function, and there are a certain number of things in which they have certainly helped. There is criticism they could have done. The greatest criticism, of course, is that it started in January, '44. Could have started in '42 instead of in '44. And this is one thing. But on the other hand, I must say -- I didn't say it until now -- my great hero is Morgenthau. Without him we would never have had this. He really pushed it through with Roosevelt. There is no doubt. His assistants discovered and disclosed what happened. This in itself is a great service. And by the way, when Morgenthau had his seventieth birthday -- no. When Wise had his seventieth birthday, Morgenthau made a speech and said he would never forget. And Wise and Jimmy, his son, came to him and showed him the telegram which I did. And then after the war, Wise sent me to Morgenthau. He would like to make your acquaintance. And I was with him for an hour and a half. He questioned me about the people, and so on. When I came in, he looked at me. He is a very tall fellow, you know. I am not so tall -- and looked at me -- the face, a little at an angle, said, "So, this is the fellow who changed my life." This was what he said to me. Which, of course, moved me very much. But he became back a Jude -- Jew. And this was very, very far away. But I revere Morgenthau -- not for the Morgenthau plan, which didn't function in any case, but also for generally what he did, together with the friend and assistant of the president -- in the White House.

Q. Cox or --

A. No, no.

Q. Hopkins?

A. Hopkins.

Q. Yes.

A. What's his first name?

Q. Harry.

A. Hmm?

Q. Harry Hopkins.

A. Yeah. They together supported the Lend and Lease. Hopkins. And Morgenthau supported him. Without Lend and Lease, I don't know whether Britain would have come through the war. This is a decisive moment, and it's not an accident, that in the general scene and on the Jewish scene, Morgenthau was deeply involved. Imagine for a moment what would have happened if Britain would have gone down. It would not be only Britain. It would not only be 400,000

Jewish in Britain being under Hitler. It would be the breakdown in Palestine and the Middle East. The 600,000 Jews in Palestine who are today the basis of the Jewish Renaissance and of the Jewish state. Imagine that the British government would have gone down and Alexandria would be open to Rommel, and they would have gone into Israel. The whole idea of Israel would have disappeared. You cannot even imagine it, what this may be, because we are living in this world.

Q. Well, the whole course of the war might have been different. It might have gone on years longer, with millions of more people dying who knows where?

A. Nobody knows. But that certainly -- that another million Jews would have been under Hitler. And the present situation of the Renaissance of the Jewish people would be wiped out, and no -- nobody can even imagine what this would have been if -- if Britain had been -- had gone under. And this is the part where -- where we owe gratitude to Roosevelt. He didn't do enough. He didn't do much to help us. But it is certain it prevented -- this additional catastrophe and this part of the war, too, which we shouldn't forget. And I, personally, with all my reservations and -- that the most decent person was Mrs. Roosevelt in this whole thing. She at least tried, but she didn't prevail upon her husband, either. I must say that this shouldn't be forgotten, either. And it wouldn't have happened without Hopkins and Morgenthau, who gave it from the beginning -- and this results very clearly from the Gilbert book on Churchill, the great part he played in this. I therefore, I said my hero in this whole story is Morgenthau. And -- my personal memory is very moved by the words with which he greeted me when I met him at the time. Now, I think we can finish here. This is a good moment to finish.

Q. How late do you want us to keep going? This is a natural break point. Can we possibly take up the next time right here? Do you want to stop here for now?

A. Well, I think -- what is it?

Q. It's about 4:20.

A. And we are already an hour late.

Q. I'm sorry?

A. We are already an hour late?

Q. Yes, yes. They'll put up with it somehow. I think we should stop here, Holly, and take up next time.

A. Well, I think -- what we have to -- there are three --

Q. We need to talk about still some things like the bombing of Auschwitz and some of the War Refugee Board activities, and then we need to go back and talk about your ideas on bureaucracy and the Allies, what should have been done, why it wasn't done at the time.

A. No. But we have to do what was done, positively. And why was not done -- why was so little done?

Q. Yes.

A. This is really I think one should start now, why was so little done.

Q. Okay.

A. And the reasons. And then what was nevertheless done? And then you can ask me some other question. I think we made quite a progress now.

Q. Yes.

A. Huh?

Q. We still -- I think we need to talk more -- at least about the International Red Cross, and -We should say something about the Red Cross, about the Vatican...

END OF PART I

GERHART RIEGNER
May 11, 1992

A: .in in...when I was in Budapest. This was still the Budapest under Communist regime. It was very difficult to have conversations. You were, of course, followed everywhere and you were under supervision everywhere and you had to be very careful what you talked about, and more was a delightful (laughter) subject which nobody could uh uh object to. And so I told one evening this story and and uh the dinner where I was invited and the major Jewish uh personalities of the various groups, they they...all through those communities, the liberal community, Zionist...they were all there and uh the result was that a few months uh weeks later, I got from the office of the World Jewish Congress in Budapest a letter, saying you told us this interesting...

BREAK IN TAPE

...and report what they lived through. And we have here about four thousand such uh witnesses and there are some which write and speak about uh the and the . Are you interested in these .. reports? Now I personally, of course, I was interested but uh the uh those who really needed it was uh the the international authority pursuing the the , so«I looked for an opportunity to get in touch with the people who were involved in the in the uh prosecution of the people and I wrote a letter and there was no uh personal communication since Germany was still completely cut out from the circulation, normal circulation, and uh and I learned that Kastner was asked to uh to go as a witness to Nuremburg and they asked him to take a letter to uh to Nuremburg and give it to the uh uh competent prosecutor. And he did this, and when he came back he told me the story which was very uh stranger He didn't...this was typical of Kastner. He didn't just give the letter (laughter) to to the prosecutor who was Mr. , the assistant...the former assistant of

of uh . He, by the way, has written a full book about the uh the prosecution about against and the and so on, and when he came to...when Kastner came to , whom he didn't of course know, he was there in order to give witness in the case against Baker (ph) and the people with whom he had cooperated, and when he gave the the letter, the prosecutor looked at the signaturea found my signature, and said something like, hum, very reliable. Very reliable. Now he was, of course, fascinated and flabbergasted... how does this man know my name with all, and (coughing) and asked him. Then he told him, you know, this is a long story. I can't tell you this now but if you have time in the evening, we can go have dinner together and I'll tell you the story. And so it .. happened, and it happened that he told him the whole story which you'll find them in Morgenthal's diaries which were published in Collier's a few months later. I heard this story the first time from Kastner. Was a little bit uh doubtful, but when I came uh uh a month or two months later to the United States, this issue of Collier's appeared, while I was there, and for the first time the whole story came out and uh I must say I was very impressed by by the . They are very fine uh uh civil servants and we owe them much that this sabotage will see uh State Department, they came out and and was acknowledged. There was a clear line in the State Department which really didn't want to be cooperative. I think the head of it was Breckenridge Long (ph), uh one of the higher officials in the State Department who was put there by Roosevelt because he or his family had given considerable funds to to the election...electoral funds of Roosevelt, but really the the policy which they pursued I don't think really were in the line of of Rooseveltts liberal attitudes. Uh Breckenridge Long really considered his holy duty to keep the Jews out of America. I think this can without reservation be affirmed.

Q:Uh there are those historians who say that uh Peter Berksen and his organization...

BREAK IN TAPE

A: This I have heard many times. I personally believe that this is highly exaggerated. Uh I believe one can argue very uh uh with with great justification that my telegram of April 1943 with all the proposals it contained, uh has led directly to the establishment of the of the uh uh refugee board. I think when when these proposals were submitted to Morgenthau and , and were approved by both, and nothing happened, and found out in July which means several months later that nothing happened and went to Morgenthau and complained, and that led to the decisive action of Morgenthau. One...in the asking of the report asking the two assistants the boys they paid to find out what really happened, and number two, he he he...really on the basis of this report he was able to go to the President and to complain. Thirdly, he was able at the same time, not only to present this famous report on the acquiescence of this government in the mass murder of the Jews, he was able to use this opportunity to come with a positive suggestion, and this positive suggestion he had uh prepared it with his uh legal advisor, Professor , and this was the idea of the War Refugee Board. Now uh I believe he has a direct line. As a matter of fact, uh even the way in which the matters proceeded, uh when I got just before Christmas the first license, and I talked about this already, and then the revised form ten days later and then another revised form uh making business easier. Uh had made all kinds of criticism of the strictness of the uh . Again, about two weeks or three weeks later, and the second revised form is really the day when the War Refugee Board was established and the facility of these licenses extended to everybody. Now here is a very clear line to show that this was really the outcome of these plans which I had submitted and which Morgenthau picked up and and used as the major uh material in order to ask the President finally to act. He was uh a great politician. He himself used some of the uh propaganda of Birksen (ph) to put it...to the disposal of his own policy. But he used it. It was not that they had really the decisive influence. There are uh for a long time plans from this extremist groups uh that they had decisive influence on things as they developed. I

contest this very much. I think that uh they may have had an influence on public opinion at certain moments to uh raise the consciousness of the the public, which I will not contest, but on the real action I don't think they had any decisive influence.

Q:Uh what were the most important actions of the War Refugee Board as you see it?

A:Well, let me say...I mean the War Refugee Board has also been criticized a number of times and said that certainly, rightly it was too late. It was much too late. It was...it came into force in the beginning of uh 1944. If it would have been established a year earlier or two years earlier, it would have been probably much more efficient, but nevertheless, it was mainly the only decisive action which was taken, and the whole situation changed uh all over. We had really the support of the American embassies and legatlons all over. In in Stockholm and in Lisbon .. and in and in Bern, and in Ankara and so on. And this never happened before. Here is really, and this you have to acknowledge even if you're perhaps critical on some of the actions he could have done more, but it was a decisive effect. Number two...during the period during which it was active, that means generally '44 to ,'| i May '45...this early the end of the war, uh twenty million dollars have been uced, Jewish money...I come to this later...twenty million dollars have been used in order to alleviate the fate of the persecuted, the Nazi persecuted victims, Jews and lots of nonJews, uh but the great majority, of course, Jews, and the the money was Jewish money. Now with this money, lots of things have been done but it was not only the money. It was also the determination to explore all possibilities by which Jews uh people...victims could be helped and and the uh action of the Nazis counter-acted. Uh my opinion, there were a number of things which were finally uh were obtained. Uh on the one hand, for instance, there were a few uh...which has nothing to do directly with the War Refugee Board but it has to be mentioned as something which has has happened...uh the exchange uh uh agreements. There was a number of of uh prisoners of war who especially wounded and

and heavily wounded who were exchanged as through the Red Cross, and there was a great number of Palestinian Jews amongst them. I saw the the train passing through Geneva. Uh these were important actions. The second is a certain...I'm not exaggerating...a certain alleviation of the situation in the neutral countries. Uh not direct guarantees were given, but they were encouraged and they were told .. well, we will help you after the war to distribute the people that not...shouldn't be only on on on your charge. This could have been much more energetically pursued, in my opinion (coughing) and it should have been. I believe that Switzerland could have taken in the double or the triple of of people which they they took in, and w they're they're not so many countries who can say they took as many as Switzerland did, but but...and this was the general situation. But this was important. Then the what I said referred indirectly of any..the end of the uh financial blockade and of the food blockade in favor of the victims. This is really a great decision, and I quoted how I was received in Bern when the first license came and they were very astonished because the British had blockade and so the ministry of uh..-I don't remember...economic warfare I think it was the name in Britain...uh tried to stop the license until the last moment, and in fact it was given to me several weeks after it was also was to be delivered. Now this was really important. Uh really there was no no uh lack of money any more. If you really wanted to do something, the money was available. Uh I wouldn't say that Sonny Meyer (ph) and others who disposed _ , they had some problems there. And we certainly had problems, uh couldn't raise the money in Europe at the time, (coughing) and the the food blockade. I mean I never...I think I said it already...I never observed a food blockade. I uh I disobeyed my colleagues and my superiors in America in this matter. They were not very happy, but ". I considered that I was in a neutral country and I could use uh and .\ should use whatever I could in helping starving Jews in the occupied territories and this would...but a great action. I think , it was engaged and food passes by the Joint through the International Red Cross. T think they gave them a million dollars or something like it, and this was done

now under in a in a very...in a much larger uh uh proportion as it was possible before. : . !
8 I myself...the the Congress...the World Congress office in Geneva has uh during the
war sent hundreds of thousands of of parcels, uh mostly from Portugal, small parcels but
uh which certainly have have helped thousands and thousands of people to survive.

Q:Let me stop you there for a second. They have to fix something in the room. They're shutting
off the tape. Just a few seconds....

Q:Dr.Riegner, you were telling us about the actions that the War Refugee Board took or made
possible.

A:Yes. Uh I spoke about the uh the big . Now uh the next point I would like to underline is the
support which was given to the activities of the underground uh in order to help Jews on
the spot uh to survive through uh thanks to false papers which were used in great masses,
uh papers of every kind uh especially uh ration cards which had to be renewed every
month uh could use in the tens of thousands and the hundred thousands probably. Identity
papers, false identity papers, uh baptismal certificates which were of course not , but uh
showed that the people were not Jews, uh uh working permits, uh every kind of identity
and uh identity cards and so on which could be used in very very large masses...uh
numbers and uh we had in France but particularly groups who were charged with this job.
And it was not only this helped uh tens of thousands of people to maintain themselves, to
hide and to somehow disappear under the general population. On the other hand, there
was a special service established in western Europe by the Jewish uh resistance
movement which tried particularly to organize the immigration of Jewish youngsters uh
towards Spain and Portugal and then the free world, or towards Switzerland. And uh these
groups uh were extremely successful They brought several thousand children to
Switzerland, a number of them with their parents. There were several hundred parents

also came. Uh there were a considerable number of youngsters accompanied by armed uh uh conduct to the Spanish frontier and uh then they came out to the free world. Uh this is...was one of the most successful activities and covered, as I said, thousands of people. Uh of course, you would have liked to do much more. It was directed outside particular by my colleague Mark Yahblume (ph) who was one of the French leaders who wrote from nineteen hundred and fortythree and nineteen hundred to the end of the war...was nearly end of the war in Geneva in my office, and we did this together. Uh he got money from the World Jewish Congress, from the Jewish agency, from the Joint, from the trade union movement, and uh altogether this was by the way one of the finest compilation and and rescue of of all kinds thanks to a person uh which was accepted in and which was...who was active in this and kept the uh contact with the groups in in the occupied territories. Uh this is one of the finest things I think uh which took place and I'm very proud to have been personally involved in this and have helped in this. Another very important action and this was the political . . . 10 action to save uh whatever could be saved of the Hungarian Jews in 1945. Uh here again something happened which is very strange. We knew uh and I was responsible to warn before the Hungary was even occupied. You can see in the files telegrams which I sent and and...several weeks before the actual started of the occupation of Hungary, and immediately when it was undertaken, there's another great telegram where I asked uh what should be done in order to counteract it and it should be made public counteractions so the medias or the radio and so on, through the free radio from London and the and the...it should be very...an action encouraging not to cooperate with the Nazis, encouraging the non-Jews to help the Jews, to hide them and so on. There's a whole program which uh they have suggested to the free world and which was uh I believe to a certain degree used in uh by the the media and so on. But uh | uh the strange thing which happened in the case of the Hungarian Jews was that uh from March to June uh 1944, there came practically no direct news out from Hungary, except what we read in the newspapers or in the legal gazettes and so on. So

what legally happened we knew, but that in these three months, half the Jews of Hungary were sent to to to Auschwitz. It was practically unknown. Uh here the Red Cross played a very uh un... ..

A:Unhelpful? |

Q:Unhelpful role. They kept some of the reports from as | we know now from Budapest and the Jewish organizations and didn't ! 11 deliver them to the people who who were uh meant to receive them. They are direct requests from the Jewish community to give these reports and we received them a month later when uh nothing could be done anymore.

Q:We need to talk more about the Red Cross and we need to talk more about Hungary, but I want to stop you right here and ask you something more about Auschwitz, because its its come up in aontext. Uh there is, of course, uh an argument from some of the scholarly literature that while the outside world knew generally what was going on in terms of the extermination camps and so forth, that it did not know about Auschwitz, Birken...not know specifically about the gas chambers and and crematoria at Birkenau, uh even up until the middle of 1944. Do you want to to comment on that?

A:Well, that's probably true, that we didn't know. Uh we knew that things were happening in all kinds of places, but the uh concrete knowledge about the gas ovens, where they were exactlyw uh came much later, and the the report of the two Slovakian Jews was certainly a revelation for for all of us. Uh they...there was .. also another report from a Polish officer which came at the same time. Yeah. And we are certainly also seen, uh but the the...also the...how the camp was organized, how the...where the gas ovens were placed, how the...around the the the towers, the watch towers, how this was...this was really the first time that we heard the I [[I; 12 ¢ real inside from this report which came terribly

late, in June | 1944. Uh and even this is very strange why it took so long to to I get out. There's a story that it was given to the in | and it never arrived or or took several months to arrive in [in Rome, for instance. Now we got this this report uh in two ways in Geneva. The first uh copy arrived through the Slovak underground at the office of the Czechoslovakian representative to the League of Nations with whom I very closely cooperated during the whole war, Dr. . Uh he had...I think I have mentioned it...he wrote very closely with one of his uh...with one...with one of our colleagues who was Czechoslovak, so . Dr. and when the the report arrived, he called and asked him to bring it to me and to...he asked me to make a condensation of the report, which I did. In four or five pages~..this report was...I don't know...forty pages or thirty pages, uh and this this condensed report I gave them not only to him who transmitted it to London, but also to the British and to the Americans and the condensation has been used many...it comes out in many...in many ways. I saw, for instance, the American ambassador in in London. He sent it to all kinds of people. It's exactly the same text in which I made. The second copy came uh...I .. I I would say a few...a few days or a week or ten days later, and arrived and came from the uh Budapest Palestine office, uh Mr. , and was addressed to the president's office in in Geneva. It came out through a man who died these days, . Uh he had some facilities as a secretary of a consulate, and 13 he used uh also Romanian and other couriers to bring these things out. Uh it was addressed to the uh Palestine of f iCQ but in reality, and here is a strange thing, Montello opened the the uh the envelope and gave it to uh in Switzerland who was the exchange telegraph agency or something. Uh the agency doesn't exist anymore...one of the uh uh telegraphic agencies which existed at the time. The fact that he gave this to telegraph agency was, of course, completely unauthorized and really not in order. On the other hand, it was very successful. It uh...for the first time, the swiss censor authorities didn't stop it, and this was not the merit of (laughter) of Montello but the fact that...it showed that the war had finally changed and the success in the war was on the other side, and to our great astonishment, the Swiss let

it go. Uh who has really the merit for this decision, I I don't know. I never found out, but it was a very important step which was then claimed by Montello as as his great success, but let me not touch this claim. Uh important was the fact that for the first time a detailed report on Auschwitz came out, and I would say that before this report, and this is a great merit for these two Slovakian Jews, uh that for the first time this came in the public. Also much too late, of course. Much too late. our understanding, of course, was clear. The the terrible things and the people were killed and so on, but the details in which...how this was...I would say, but of course, this was many years ago, and maybe some of it I forgot, but I would say that this was a decisive moment to give us inside knowledge of of how this thing happened. 14

Q:Well...I I, of course, will not quarrel with your judgment of uh decisive moment, but sometime you and I will talk about some of the earlier documents which came out about AuschwitzBirkenau. There are earlier reports, not so detailed...

A:No, no, no, no, no, no. I'm not saying that we we didn't know. Of course we knew and we knew also that there were uh uh hard labor and and and we were in contact, but uh there were documents, you could really accept as as as...this was really .

Q:Can you give us an approximate date when you received report, when you had to summarize it? Approximately.

A:No, noF There is...I have established this very clearly, because uh there is a detailed story in the report about the...a Czechoslovakian group which was in...transferred from Theresienstadt to Ausford...Auschwitz in quarantine. And this is the first time that we hesrd quarantine. And for six months in quarantine and afterwards it was liquidated and in the report also was stated that in a few lines under this what I just mentioned, another

group from Theresienstadt arrived for six months in quarantine. And when I...and this I discovered when I was writing condensed report, and when I saw this I looked at the calendar, 15 and saw that there was five days left for the second six months in quarantine. I stopped working...

Q:When was that? f

A:I this was this was *must have been the 13th of June, I something.

Q:OK.

A:I believe that received the report on a Saturday or a Friday evening, and we were informed on a Monday morning, and then I immediately worked on it and fixed the dates. When I saw this, that there were five days and a group of Czechoslovakian young people, mostly of , uh were certain to be exterminated in a in a few days, I stopped my work on the condensation of the report, called a taxi, jumped in the taxif and went to . And in the taxi I wrote a story for the BBC. The idea was the BBC should day and night tell the people that publicly, the public, that we know that such a group will be gassed within five days. Uh and when I came to , this this uh given the the draft (laughter) which I I wrote on on my personal note paper, uh uh is still there. We we found it. And uh immediately agreed, but he really didn't...he didn't send it to London, to his government. He knew that there was a representative of the BBC in Bern, a Mrs. _ , a very well-known uh l 16 journalist, and he addressed it to her, and uh as a matter of fact all these papers we we have today. We have copies and we see it, and , in fact, sent the the the the report to BBC and it was uh transmitted a number of times. When I told the story once, the one of the Czechoslovakian inmates of uh uh Auschwitz, uh he said yes, I heard it. I said how dld you hear this story. He said I was in Auschwitz. I said, you had a radio? He said yes, we

had a radio. This was the father of the historian Kolka (ph), Arthur Kolka. The the old man, he has a book, and uh he assured me...this is the astonishing thing...he assured me that this...on the basis of this report from the uh from BBC, they could manage to hide this this group in other barracks. I said...he said I don't...I cannot assure you that they survived. At that moment, we saved them. Whether they...later I cannot tell you. But it showed me what extraordinary (laughter) methods you had to uh use in order to save them. It was a crazy idea that I jumped in and stopped writing of the report and I sent this report to London. But you had to have and this is my, perhaps one of my greatest criticism uh with regard to Jewish organization, that they were too much following the normal routine in their work. You had to have extraordinary ideas, crazy ideas, ideas...T say it openly, in order to because it was an extraordinary situation. I give you another example which also uh uh I have sometimes told. In Jerusalem, the head of the Department of the Jewish Agency was Greenbaum (ph), a very respected man, uh particularly respected by us in the World Jewish Congress because E 17 of his past as a Deputy in the Polish . He was really the greater fighter in the inter-war years for Jewish rights in the Polish . Uh very courageous. Uh he left Poland, I don't know exactly when, and went to Palestine. He was a Zionist. He was was from the radical party, but a great fighter for human rights, for for civil rights and so on. Now one day, I get a telegram from Greenbaum in which he asked me to find his son. I have this completely confused. A man like Greenbaum asked me to find in Poland, son, and also what's going on. I couldn't sleep for several nights. I had great respect for the man, and I said well, after all, the son, the father, son...he looks...I have to do something. But it was crazy. How can I find a son who's in some camp, if he is still alive? Who knows. And I decided to try a crazy idea. I sent ten little parcels to ten different camps with the name of the son of Greenbaum, and I found him. Here shows...you really had to go ways and use methods which were not the normal. So I decided the nine packages will be lost, and somebody may get them. But I found it. I'm not...I'm just using this opportunity to show that you

had to use absolutely unusual methods, and it was...now let's go back to the action of the of the War Refugee Board and what was. .what was...can be put to a certain degree on on it's credit.

Q:You're talking about Hungary and how you knew very little from March to June 1944, but do you want to talk a little bit afterwards, what happened...? . » ! 18 0

A:Now, when when this when when this uh news came and I said the second copy of the Auschwitz report came to the Zionist...to the Palestine office, and there was added already the statistics of the Jews in the provinces who had been killed, who had been uh transported to Auschwitz and who were dead. Uh we...from that moment on when this was clear, and there was really > a very important, concerted political action to save what could still be saved of the Hungarian Jews, and uh at this...in reality F the only political action which was undertaken by the Allies in this respect. By the others and not only by the others . The F f irst step I think was undertaken by the King of Sweden. The Swedish section of the World Jewish Congress, had something to do with it. He sent an appeal to , the head of the Hungarian state. More important was the action undertaken by the American government, and that is a unique action really. They uh...the American government addressed a note to a country with which it was at war. This is unusual. It's really a break of normal methods, and uh warned them that if they uh...this policy of extermination would go on, the consequences they would have to bear and there was attached a special note, appeal by Roosevelt himself, a statement, in this uh request. And this was officially transmitted by the Swiss as intermediaries...they they were representing American interests in in Hungary and it was a direct note. This certainly made a great impact. The fact that the greatest state in the western alliance addressed such a very strong . I 19 uh note to the Hungarian government made a great . There was also an action by the Pope. It's the only time that the Pope addressed a telegram direct

telegram to to and of the Jewish . Uh and finally there's the action in which I was also involved uh uh by the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, uh in which was equally addressed personally to to . There is in the literature somebody has written about it said that the note was transmitted really very late when the action was practically over. That is not the full story in my opinion because because the the legation, the Hungarian legation in in uh Bern was fully informed about this, and they they made this appeal may have reached in direct ways already. All this together had a decisive uh uh result and and stopped for a certain time the deportations. Then later there was ..for months we fought against the attempt to to re-introduce the the old policy, and uh this is...these months are really very confused. There are all the time initiatives to uh continue the action to send people to Auschwitz, to continue to send them to labor and and put them into labor battalions and so on, and the , but as we know today, particularly the uh representative of of the Red Cross in in Budapest, two of the finest representatives, were very active and counter-acted these things all the time, 50 I cannot say it was a full success, but I can say there was a real struggle going on, a fight which lasted for months, and we denounced publicly all the negative uh uh features of this fight. In reality, all this...and we...very important was in this respect or 20 to the action of the World Council of Churches which was still in formation, but they had a very uh strong group there, _ and others, and the initiative uh uh was of the World Council with Mark was the president of the International Red Cross, was really done on my request, and I gave him all the uh the documentation and the arguments and and uh I've...we did the I used them too and they were, of course, more successful than we. Their status was... a very religious person and this is today often called the decisive thing which happened there. In reality this was a cooperative uh effort by them and us and uh very much based on the documentation which I gave them. Uh but uh...

Q:Let me stop you here because I think the tape is about to run out. OK. We've got two minutes left. Go ahead. . "

A:What uh happened finally there there was a very important action on the spot with regard to uh protection of Jews which the Red Cross and the Swedish and the Swiss and uh other diplomatic representatives undertook, and all together it saved practically the Jews of . Those who survived to a great extent owe this to this concerted action and I uh...this is really the only political effort undertaken during the whole war in which this was tried out from all uh sides. Everybody knows today Wallenberg and what he did. There are the same uh uh activity was undertaken by of the Swiss representation, and the Red Cross gave also protection papers. I remember very well one day Professor who 21 was Vice President, called me in and asked me uh...we are under terrible pressure we should give more protection papers, but the more protection papers we give, the less value they have. What's your opinion? I said give protection papers, Professor , this is not Switzerland. This is uh uh uh a land where law and order is not reigning yet right here. Give them...a Jew a chance to survive. How...how...see how the situation is. A man is in the street, and he will be arrested by uh policemen or soldiers, and then either he has a piece of paper, protection paper, or he has not, and if he has not, he has no chance. If he has a a...then it depends on the man with whom he has to deal. Either he is in a good mood or he is in a bad mood. He slept well with his wife last night, or not. They squabbled or not. It will depend on the local situation and and the human relationship. Give them a....give them a chance, and he gaue them the chance and he ordered that many more uh such papers would...protection

Q:They have to put on a new tape.

A: Did you read the story of Montello, that he saved a hundred thousand Jews, which is with the this uh uh nationality or certificates of uh of . I...between ourselves, I have never seen a man who has uh has been saved through this. I have asked many. I've seen many people who were saved by Swiss papers, by Wallenberg's papers, by other, but somewhere...that story of a F 22 hundred thousand Jews were saved by Montello. YOU know, there are more people have been saved

Q:...then were killed. Yes. Uh this is not for the tape but I brought you a couple of things on Birkhart if you... TECHNICAL CONVERSATION END OF TAPE 1

Q:...because they're ready for us. Uh we were talking still about about Hungary and the cooperation in Hungary for the first time in a political action. Uh cooperation..(inaudible)...

A:...until the end really it went and there were ups and downs all the time and the uh...you have probably seen the the record of uh Mr. who writes uh the story on the action of the Red Cross in in Hungary from day to day, and you see there also that I have been all the time involved. Practically every action which the Red Cross undertook was finally suggested by me. I didn't uh cease to to push them and to pressure them. Uh it had finally some result. Uh of course, there was also...this was not the only thing which I did. I published, for instance, in on Hungary five pamphlets, uh booklets with great uh documentation about what was going on, the taking out of Hungarian press and other things. This I published and sent around, published ; 23 anonymously~ to hundreds of people, press people, politicians and others. This was all known to the Red Cross too and uh I used it > for the for the churches. I used it with other people. We WQ we really uh...the the the report of the two Slovakian Jews. I don't . know whether it's known...I I had them translated into French. I printed a little brochure in it and it was sent, printed in five S

thousand copies anonymously because I couldn't (laughter) do it officially so it was illegally, it was printed and and and distributed in five thousand copies in all over Switzerland. (clearing throat) Uh this this was very important. I left out some of the names in order not to make it...but this kind of things I did too and I wasn't only a diplomat. I was...(laughter) also at different times in our pressure group if you want, uh but but what I want to say is that the the uh the the Hungarian example which was, of course, the last year of the war, and we benefitted from the fact that uh generally speaking people knew that the war was lost for Germany, but that doesn't mean that the Germans didn't...that their action was not as cruel and as determined as all the others. They didn't accept that they had lost the war. Not at all. I mean what the the action which the Germans took, Eichmann and the others uh in in Hungary, was one of the most cruelest and the most determined and the most quickest... quickest action of the of of of extermination which which happened in the whole thing.

Q:They had the years of experience too. I 24

A:.. Now uh...I spoke about this but then connected with this and we should perhaps speak about this in in this connection is the uh the action which became also possible thanks to the support of the War Refugee Board, that is the effort of the attempt to obtain certain...the liberation of a certain number of Jews by bribing some of the uh responsible people, who in the year of 1944, of course, were not so cocksure as they were before and they had their doubts whether the the the war would be won and they had their doubts what would happen to themselves, and they were afraid what would happen and there were all kinds of uh attempts to to save their own life, or at least alleviate... alleviate their situation. And this you see, I have heard, of course, of the various groups which were saved by such methods. There are the negotiations between Kastner (ph) and uh Baker, Sonny Meyer involved in a certain way. There's the action uh of and uh the the uh the Nazis to save

twelve hundred Jews from from Theresienstadt. There is the same kind of attempt made by uh of the World Jewish Congress in Sweden through the...through Himmler and through the the Dr. Kellsen (ph) who who treated him and finally , head of uh the Swedish Red Cross. All this uh liberated a few thousand Jews. Every Jew who was liberated in Sweden was was again...there's no doubt about it, but it was, of course, a very limited action. Now in the Kastner case, there was the great attempt to use this uh for for a real big deal of...between the Nazis and the and the Allied uh uh... 25

Q:A million Jews... |

A:A million or ten thousand yeah what was it? I

Q:What was your opinion? Could that conceivably have been done?

A:No. This was...I mean for for men...for somebody who followed this from day to day from outside very closely, I saw that...how even the the small concessions under the license...the license which I got from the Americans, it was really sabotaged by the British and it was a license for \$25r000~ I mean a ridiculous amount in reality. OK. They said if this is successful, we will give you more and so I don't uh taking , but when you saw how risky this these things were uh and there was a determination not to uh let the other side benefit from anything. Uh this was from ehe beginning for me a dream, that the the Allies would concede. This was was out of the question. I didn't object to their trying to negotiate and the whole effort was, in my opinion, rightly in in this effort to to drag on, to negotiate while Jews were still alive and could be talked about. This is, by the way, the same what happened in many ways in the ghettos in in in Poland and in in the Russian...uh some of the heads of the were very intelligent people and they they understood uh as long as they can put Jews to work, they are not killed. And they tried to

to 26 prolong these periods, and and and to offered Jews for work in order to spare their lives. This was exactly the same. The the war is going to its end. They saw this. They felt it. It cannot go...it was four years, four and a half years, and the uh came back and at once the armies, so every month we can keep people alive was was once again. This was absolutely normal and was very intelligent. It was a clear concept which some of the people in eastern Poland especially had and was was right. The same would be applicable to the efforts of of of Kastner and Brandt who who negotiated, but but there could come any decisive result was from my point of view completely uh uh .

Q:What about on the German side? I mean, you've you've implied that the Allies would never have agreed to supplying trucks and so forth. Do you think the high Nazi officials would have been willing to...

A:No.

Q:No?

A:No. My my...I have said what I think of the Nazi determination to disrupt the the one great thing which uh on which the regime was really united. There's no doubt about it. The the extermination of the Jews was one of the central goals of the of the Nazi regime, and that they would uh...individuals could make 27 concession and so this is another question, but the decisive, the leadership...no.

Q:You know that there's an argument that that uh going back to the winter of 1942-43, starting in Slovakia with the with with and Rabbi Weizmann (ph)...

A: Oh yeah. The whole thing is with Weizmann. But this is... Weizmann in uh his memoirs attacks me that I didn't support this. The the real reason is that I didn't know about it. This was kept from me. I don't know why. I've never see the Weizmann proposals until '45 when I was in New York and saw it in our uh in the files in New York. In Geneva it was never shown and his attacks against me is completely without foundation because I couldn't support anything which which didn't reach me. What I heard about this, ideas seemed to me wonderful and a man who...

Q: Yes. And Hitler would bargain over the the fate of remaining Jewry in 1943...

A: Well, I said something when I... when I told you why I believed in the fin... the plan for the final solution, why why I believed this was possible, and here is the American. The German Jew had seen the the development of the Nazi movement and and knew that they were... that this was their central object like 28 a part of their face, a center part of their face, on which they would never give in, and the and at the same time knowing their determination, their ruthlessness, their complete uh contempt for moral concepts and accepted what is useful to the German people as they understood and uh and this gives the answer. Jews in other countries who have been... have had a much more difficult life and history amongst the citizens of other countries than German Jews probably, uh had gone through difficult periods but had always found some way to come through, with terrible losses but somehow they arranged themselves. This was not possible with the Germans, and this only a German Jew who had learned, who followed the the Nazi movement from the beginning, could judge. The others had illusion.

Q: We haven't talked yet in detail about the possibility of bombing Auschwitz-Birkenau.

A: Well, let me let me perhaps before we come to this uh~..well we can take this now. I wanted to to take it in another...in another context but it doesn't matter. Uh this is one of the strangest things. For me, really I don't understand it~ I personally was involved in this~ I..very much. When the reports from Slovakia came out, of the two Slovakian Jews, and a few days later it came the reports from the Budapest Palestine office with the figures. At the same time there were already...I think in both reports attached the request to bomb the communication lines and I 29 Auschwitz. And both were done, was never done, and here I am before positive which I've never been able to sort...and I come and then speak about the why so little was done. Maybe there's one aspect in which we should come back on it. Uh the most important uh intervention in this in this case came from Weizmann, Chaim Weizmann, the first president of Israel, who was at the time the president of the Zionist World Organization, who did not interfere in any except in this case. In this case he wrote a letter to Winston Churchill. How important he must have felt about it. Uh he he kept completely to his line. He is not there for general Jewish uh interventions, affairs and so on. He is there to first the Zionist idea and so on. But here he made an exception. And he was successful in this exception. Weiman has has put this in a very good article which was published in commentary in which I have been consulted several times before he would, and it is absolutely clear that here something happened which is .

The...Weizmann's intervention was not the only one. We'll come back on this, but Churchill's impressed by Weizmann's letter and writes, let's try it. And Eden who was less than perceptive I believe toward our case, uh is impressed by Churchill's signature and adds his name, OX...let's try it. And then it goes to Sinclair (ph), up to to the the Minister of Air, who is a liberal, not a bad man, and from there it goes to the Chief of Staff, and from there it goes back to the Foreign... Foreign Office. And nothing is happening. And to us, and to me, to Goldman, so the deputy head of the extraditionary corps, the 30 the deputy of Eisenhower...I I don't remember the name...in America...

Q:McCoy you mean.

A:Huh?

Q:John McCoy.

A:No. It was not John McCoy. It was a general, a general. Uh I forgot the name. He he must...he mentioned it a number of times. I went to the British and the American Embassy. To the American Embassy, I gave them maps which I found in the in the League of Nations on the Upper Salasia in the twenties, early twenties. I said this was a popular boat, and there's . . . probably no better maps on this region than this, and I got with the help of the librarian of the League of Nations, I got copies of all these maps. I said this is the best you need, and I gave it to to the . This wasn't too easy to get such a thing. And they tell me it's not possible and they tell me it's too far and we cannot get back and they uh...it's too risky and we know today because not only they had the...in the year 1944, the Allies had the absolute air domination over the whole of Europe. Secondly, it's not true that they had no bombers that could fly. At the same time when we asked...by the way, this came up already earlier in in '43 or '4 that...not four, '43...someone...the idea l 31 came out _ , but it was...we made a concentrated effort in June '44. Uh at the same time when we asked, there were five bombardments of the camp of _ , five kilometers from Auschwitz. So why do they lie? Unbelievable...we cannot reach it and then they bomb at the same time. We know today that the air uh uh the photographs of the...

Q:Photo reconnaissance?

A:Yeah. There is in in London an office which has all these photos, detailed photos from the whole region, much better, of course, than what I could produce from the League of

Nations. But why did...but they lied to us. They said some people...I called _ . He was then the the General Secretary of the Congress in New York, and he had an idea not to bomb it but to send in commandos there and to makes an explosion from inside in order to reduce the number of victims, and then some historians said that was against bombing. (laughter) It was a more refined way of of reaching the same thing. But here this really leaves me without answer. And it particularly it shows the enormous role which bureaucracy has played. We have always discussed the Holocaust connection with Nazi bureaucracy. Uh we've seen how important the Nazi bureaucracy was in this, but here you see it suddenly that there's another bureaucracy which has played a very important role, a negative role, if men like like like like uh Churchill and Eden can give such instructions and nothing happened...because the 132 bureaucracy doesn't like it. This is a very serious uh aspect of the whole thing, and uh...

Q:Was bureaucracy then one of the basic reasons why the Allies did so little in response to opportunities between...

A:Let's let's do this in a more systematic way. But thi6 is one of the factors which have certainly played a role. No doubt about it. Now we have said uh we have made a survey of what became possible thanks to the support of the War Refugee Board, but we have left out one, in my opinion, very important aspect, and that is the preservation of the camp inmates at the end of the war. I must tell you that from I would say probably October nineteen hundred forty-four on, I was...I had an obsession, a real obsession. I was dread the fearing that at the end...it was clear that the war was over. It was clear it dragged on, the war dragged on but the the Germans had lost it, but the Germans who used children in the war effort and this was and I personally...maybe it's my education...I was afraid that the last effort in a kind of in Waggoner's context it's ...uh when everything is lost, they would at least see to it that the the rest of the Jews who were still alive, they would take

them with them. And I was absolutely obsessed by the idea that in the last moments they will make a slaughter of the three or four hundred thousand Jews in the camps which were . And I couldn't sleep and I told myself, what can we do in order to stop this And I had at a .1 1 33 certain moment the idea, alright let's make a great effort, a joint effort of everybody together, because everybody is in the same boat. The French had their inmates in the camps, and the Czechs and the Poles and so on and so on, and I took the initiative to mobilize all the Allied forces in Geneva in order to organize a joint action to prevent this~ It wasn't too easy. I was stateless too, without government. There was no Israeli government. There was no Jewish government. There was no supported, and I took the initiative and I...the first question is who is neutral enough or in good relations with everybody that he could uh play this role, and I decided on the Czechoslovakian government, and I approached the delegate from Czechoslovakia at the League of Nations, and invite everybody, the French and the Belgians and the Dutch and the Yugoslav, and the Italian was in the meantime...and the Romanians were also and the Greek, and he did. And we had our first meeting I think was in November '44. I was in uh in Bern that day and came a little late to the to the meeting, and I was very pleased to see all the representatives either of real government representatives or the representatives of the Red Cross Society offices, countries...they were all officials practically. It was the same. And uh and when I arrivedt he said the idea comes from Dr. Riegner. Let him explain to you what what he wants. And I uh explained to them that we we were all in the same boat and there was a great danger that this would happen, that at the last moments they would really suppress all the people in the camps and they were capable of doing it, and 34 we should do a last desperate effort to save this and to prevent this. And we discussed various ways, uh neutral countries or Red Cross and so on, and the idea...and there was very considerable support, but of course they couldn't decide. They had to ask their government, and uh we had several sessions. The last session was in in...the decisive session was in I think February. It went already in the next year because the governments

are very slow in replying, and there we all agreed we should ask the International Red Cross for a very special, high-level mission to the political authorities of Germany to prevent it. And it was agreed and then these governments, they didn't have all relations between themselves and some didn't recognize them, but they were all in agreement it should be done, and the idea was therefore not to sign a joint paper but to...that everybody should submit this identical appeal to the President of the Red Cross uh for this purpose. And I wrote the text, and uh everybody signed it, and at a certain day between ten and eleven, they all submitted the signed appeal to the Red Cross, and this led to the last great action of in Germany where he saw Carlton Brunner who was really the number two under Himmler. Now when called together all these people and then when he came back, he called them again together, and I questioned him very, very thoroughly and this is also...I didn't just take his (laughter) assurances for granted. It opened up a certain number of activities for the Red Cross but I think much more important, it gave to the German government as a clear understanding that the whole Allied, all the 35 Allied governments together were determined not to let this happen. And it has...while events precipitated and military and others developed so quickly that all the _ were uh by-passed by new events all the time, so that uh the agreements, the real agreements which were concluded between and the the German Nazis, the moment they were done really already by-passed and the and it's not so important whether they were implemented or not. The the...it it created a decisive fact, political fact, that the the governments did not allow this to happen, and with few exceptions, it didn't happen. There are a few camps where they tried to kill people, and they killed some of them, but relatively limited. The action was, on the other hand, supported by the activities of who acted in the same line with the on behalf of the Swedish _ and I was in contact, telephone and otherwise, with _ in in Sweden and we tried at least to coordinate and inform each other what was going on. I believe that strangely the uh people have dealt with the Holocaust and the...and so the people who got saved and were spared, nobody really

mentions this. I think it's one...I think this is...the War Refugee Board was supporting us very much on this. No doubt about it. The American government asked us to keep them informed and at later meetings, they were present. At the first meetings they were, I believe, not there. In the later meetings, the British government also was present. I mean, this was really...France and...was was a united front of the whole uh coalition of the Nazi question. And uh I can only say the the the result was that the life of most of the people 36 0 was respected, which I consider was not a matter which was going without . It was, by the way, not the only activity which this group undertook. We also addressed ourselves in the last days of the war to the Allies, and that they should allow uh columns of trucks with food and other medical and so to go into the camps and to see. They should be not kept out because of military or bureaucratic reasons. And we had...the the same group intervened with the Allied governments on on on these matters and probably the results were quite positive, the reaction on this. Now I believe uh that uh Winston's man like Weinman says that the War Refugee Board saved two hundred thousand people or something such a figure, I I believe this is very questionable. All these figures are very questionable. Uh what _ makes the real uh calculations. I believe that the saving of the people, the inmates of the camps in the last moment is is is one of the most things which we reached, saying this was also a collective effort but I I don't think I exaggerate because I was involved in this. I believe really this is...made quite a difference. Now let me say something about why so little was done and why...what shall I say...why so little was done and why we have this...

Q:...between November '42 and January of '44.

A:Yeah. Well, we didn't save...the the War Refugee Board took eighteen months until the first and the only real action was undertaken and how many millions of people were uh were killed in . I 37 the meantime. Now I, of course, have given more thought than most

people uh because I was so deeply involved and I tried so hard and why did all this not lead to greater action. There is a whole series of factors. And I'll may mention them, but I'll come to the end to the most important uh reasons. Firstly, nobody was really prepared for such a thing. And this shows really the uniqueness of the Holocaust. That's for sure. This had never happened in history, that a whole people including the babies and old people and and invalids and men and women, children, that a whole people was condemned to be executed. It hasn't happened. And with all the catastrophes which have come over Jews during the course of history ...in the course of history, nobody really mentions such a thing. I mean they're just not prepared for this. This is the first time. The second is uh the atrocity...atrocity stories of the 1st World War...(break in tape) ...this came up all the time. During the 1st World War especially during the occupation by the Germans of Belgium, there came all kinds of stories what the Germans did and after the war it occurred that this was highly exaggerated and a good number of these stories were not true. Whenever I came as my reports and so on, I was going against this war. they called at that time, and this was a very great handicap for . I am not trying to underrating it. Number three, the secrecy. In spite of everything, this was a so- called secret undertaking. Uh has rightly said that many many people were involved but officially this was a secret uh operation, and not only was it a secret operation, this was an 38 operation for which a special language was invented which said complete different things which they meant. Where the uh ...all this meant meant uh a lot of other words and we are...was invented in order to make it clear that it shouldn't have been clear. The the most interesting in this is the the famous speech by Himmler to the...in '43 to the heads of the SS or...where he said more or less he will never admit it and he action was a great national act of self-defense, but in which he said we will not leave any traces of it. I will never admit it.

Q:And yet it was being recorded as he was speaking?

A: Yeah. Now I have another letter such in my files by Himmler to Miller who was also one of the top people in the in the Third Reich security . Section 4. And this is interesting. .. Uh it's a very strange...a letter in which he refers to a report by Stephen Wise. You know this perhaps...

Q: Yeah.

A: ...of September nineteen hundred forty-two, in which Stephen Wise must have referred about my famous telegram and the report. We have never found really to what statement of Wise it refers. This is something for the for the scholars to to work on. And there's exactly...and he he he uh he speaks there as if uh of course the the the course of transporting so many people, of 39 course, many people die and so on. This is normal. And again, don't leave any trace also of the dead. It's clear and absolute deliberate effort to to hide the real facts and to eradicate any any traces which could be...it's a strange concept. If they are so proud, why...of their action, why why this secrecy.

Q: I wrote in my book on Himmler that Himmler was torn by this conflict between the need to conceal, on the one hand, and the need to keep orderly records on the other.

A: Yeah. Now then the next point is we have already talked about it a little bit but I think we should uh talk more about it...the anti-Semitism is the Allied camp. Now this is something uh perhaps at this moment where anti-Semitism is growing again in many places in the world and even in this country, but the generation the last thirty years, the American Jewish youngsters didn't suffer from anti-Semitism, and they don't...didn't understand that there was a very active anti-Semitic movement in this country in the '30's. Uh those who were feeling this movement were of course the Nazis to a great extent, but

you had also your your own people. The Nazis with the and their own organization of the which were were appointed in all the countries to uh develop anti- or Nazi activities and anti-Jewish activities all over. Uh but you had your own people. Uh there were the the Father Coffmann who who was twice a week I think on the on the on the radio. The television didn't exist at the time. There was K. 40 D. Smith, another such uh public anti-Semite who who influenced it. It was a...and there was the German propagandist was extremely ably led and they the German propaganda accused Jews of America...they pushed Roosevelt into the war. This was...uh first of all, it wasn't true, but uh the Jews...it it prevented really Jewish activities for two years in the war. You don't find any traces of anti-Jewish uh persecutions in the in the newspapers from nineteen hundred forty until nineteen hundred forty-two. Uh the going to war was not popular in this country. Generally speaking uh this was one of the greatest problems for Roosevelt. He he wanted to to stop the the Nazi Germany. There's no doubt about it. His whole policy was...but he couldn't do it because he...the feeling that America shouldn't be involved and the isolationism of America was was enormously strong. And to to to accuse the the the Jews...they pushing into the war, they are the the the war mongers. They are the the responsible for...it it...this was a terrible (inaudible)... and in fact it had its effect on the Jewish community. It restricted them. They were much...they were really afraid of this uh accusation and and and and therefore terribly restricted and restrained. So...and it was highly efficient uh action...way of of uh... _ uh uh extremely uh successful propaganda in favor of the Germans and the Nazis. Now uh...but we had it even in the government. We spoke about it. In fact the whole story of how my telegram at first was received, how instructions were given not to accept any more messages from private persons or private organizations. The the uh sabotage of I « 41 [the the rescue effort, the rescue uh plans after the April '43 telegram, uh these all...the whole question of visas. I know that our greatest problem as German Jews was the American visas, and there was a limited

number. I think twenty-four thousand or something for German...people of German...and we found out at the end of the war they were never filled. Why?

Q: You see this as more the result of anti-Semitism than the result of bureaucracy or a combination of the two?

A: I think both. But here I think the...I think the man who is responsible to a great extent is as I said Breckenridge, and he uh in my opinion, pursued the policy to keep Jews out of America.

Q: And there were a whole bunch of State Department people who...

A: There were others too. There were others too. There were others too, and uh I don't know whether Roosevelt was aware of it or not. In any case the lady who comes out very well is Mrs. Roosevelt who tried very hard but didn't succeed either. She she came in several times with schemes for Jewish children and so on that...but when you turn to...from from America to Britain, you have the same. There it has an anti-zionist flavor, that the whole time uh uh is valid both for the Foreign Office and the 42 Colonial Office, and you have a very good study by about this and it's pages and pages where you where you see what the bureaucracy did in order not to be helpful. There's uh...sometimes ...we haven't spoken about these little boats which were sent to Palestine from Bulgaria and and Romania with a few hundred Jews, and when you read the reports of the Foreign and Colonial Office people, you ask yourself, now who is the enemy. Is it the Jews or the Germans? And you definitely feel that it is the Jews. It's unbelievable I mean even when you read it today, but it takes takes the establishment of the War Refugee Board, the reports and the and the British Foreign Office uh...they don't say anything else that the

the establishment of the War Refugee Board is uh uh a method by Roosevelt to gain the Jewish votes in the election.

Q:And they were .

A:....that there could be a humanitarian idea behind it that you wanted to to help people who are gravely in danger. Nothing. I mean it's unbelievable when when you read it, and these are the people who who were on your on your side. They ran it. He was...there's no doubt that this played a great role in your , the bureaucracy and the anti-Semitism, the anti-Semitic bureaucracy was able to prevent. Now uh...but in in in...connected with this there is a...the insensitivity of high...of people in high position, and I am particularly mentioning the military. What what we have said about the effort to bomb Auschwitz, not to bomb 7.,~ [43 / AuschwitZ how this is possible. I said why did one write it. To all our uh arguments and how often did I argue, they...we always got uh they have to win the war. I said yes, but you will...you want to win the war in order to save the people who are threatened. Yeah, this is uh...we cannot make any any exceptions. Now they tell me in in in in Auschwitz when they bombed the , they couldn't have two or three uh bombs left for the for the gas uh chambers. Wasn't so easy for us to take the decision, but the...all fact responsible are this bombing would kill another number of Jews. Of course. But you would have stopped the extermination process. Every day six thousand people killed. So of course we had to say better to stop the the the the extermination process and even if it costs some lives, but where is thishow is it possible that all the high military people, that nobody even made some kind of an effort to understand this and to help. It didn't cost and didn't divert anything from the war effort. Is there something wrong in our moral...

Q:So is that a sort of bureaucracy as well, or is it anti-Semitism or...

A:No. I think...I don't think it is...no, I don't think it was anti-Semitism. It was insensitivity, and and concrete...you are a soldier. You have to do your job and so on. But as I told you, you can also have feelings. And if it doesn't harm your job, why why why can~t you do something. Explain to me that uh we know I 44 today that big boats came with soldiers over the ocean, with tens of thousands of soldiers, and they went back empty, and when we were asking for visas and for transport, they said there's no transport. They couldn't fill these boats. Why did they lie? come back to this. Why did they lie? There's no place...there were enormous space. This was empty. . But here is something wrong and insensitivity. I don't think they they ever thought of it, and this is the wrong thing. The soldiers and and the high officials in government, also , and there something was wrong. Question We'll stop here for a minute because the tape is just about to run out, and then we'll continue. TECHNICAL CONVERSATION END OF TAPE 2

A:All what I have said is...has influenced the situation. But I believe there are two points which are really decisive. The first is the complete powerlessness of the Jewish people at that time of history. It's very difficult for the generation of today to understand it. we have today a rather influential Jewish community in the United States. We have today a Jewish state which is uh has been very successful in the last forty years with militarily, politically, which has had great influence on many understand this, and not to compare the situation of today with the situation forty or fifty years ago. That has to be learned and that's one of the most important problems in Jewish education you have to understand. Today we are a different Jewish people. We have learned from the Holocaust. We have learned from our isolationism. We have learned that we can and decisive moments only count on . You cannot apply the ways or or position of organizing uh protests of 1990 and 1940. The great number of these methods were not available. There were certainly not available during the war. The police would have chased the protesters away from the White House or wherever uh in a in a minute, and the real thing is that we had no

influence at the time. This is . And the second uh third truth is that what happened was so terrible and so beyond any human understanding that people really couldn't believe it. And I'm saying this meaning both Jews and non-Jews. And concurs in one of his books in a very able way exemplified this point. To exterminate a whole people including babies and sick people and...is something, and and and to throw babies into gas ovens, burning the human beings alive and then...is something which we...goes beyond any human understanding and . And therefore, we have to distinguish between knowing the facts and accepting facts. After the declaration of the Allied governments in December of '42, everybody knew. And we thought now something will happen, decisively will happen. But in reality, the people who had under...had signed this declaration had great doubts whether this was really happening. And Jews themselves...I would ! : 47 say that many people who knew, who learned, who spoke about it, had in their inner hearts somewhere a reflection...I hope this is all not true. You cannot...this cannot be true. I give you a few examples. In nineteen hundred forty-three, I got one day from the Union of Polish Jews in America, a package with thirty thousand addresses in Poland to whom I was supposed to send packages. When I received this package, I got nearly crazy. This organization had its seat in the same building and I believe even on the same floor as the American and World Jewish Congress to whom to whom all my reports went. They must have read all my reports. I asked myself, they have still not understood it. But it wasn't this. They had read it and they had understood it, but they couldn't accept that their own families were included in the . It cannot be. None of these thirty thousand addresses were valid anymore. They people had been evacuated or had been killed already or had been in the in the camps. Not one was . But you couldn't sit 0 and do nothing. You have to do something. And you're excluded you own family. Alright. I know that many many people are sacrificed and killed, but not my family. This cannot be true. And so they collected that something has to be done, so they collected the addresses, and . They never got . I couldn't do anything but here you have the schizophrenic reaction. Knowing, but

not...somehow not believing or taking exceptions for yourself. The story of is well known. It has been often repeated. When when when he went to Frankfurt and and and and and uh I can't believe it, and then he said, you mean I am a , 48 liar. He said no, I didn't say that you are a liar. But I said I can't believe it. But this is one of the most respected Jews in this country. When wise got my first uh report, he sits down and the next day or two days later and writes to Frankfurt and tells him and and really shares with him his terribly despair. What can one do, but tell the the . He Frankfurt he probably did. I'm sure he did. Uh there's another story of uh which was given by Professor deYoung, who is one of the authors of the classic work on the uh deportations from Holland, and he was a young man and and and the government of exile in Holland during World war II, and was in charge of radio emissions, and he gets hold of some of my reports, and he reports in a lecture he gave in Washington...no, in Harvard, some time ago, and uh tells the story how he gave these reports to the Prime Minister of Holland, . tells...uh returns these reports a few days later to him and says, you believe in this stuff? But worse even, who I made mentioned before who was Secretary General of the World Jewish congress during that last period of the War, uh there was in 1944 in November a great conference called by the World Jewish Congress in Atlantic City which really sets out a post-War program of the Jewish people. It's a very important document. Uh it's really...it was the next twenty years what Jewish...the Jewish community in in the world has pursued as goals and so on is defined there. Astonishing how how good the document is, a very important contribution to Jewish planning and Jewish policies in the post-War. And goes to a number of ministers . . ' 49 with the delegation of the assembly in Atlantic City and he meets amongst other people uh the uh Vice Minister of the Defense, McLoy. You mentioned him before, and they submit the official documents and tell him to speak about it and so on, and McLoy, a very respected man in the government of this country and who played a very important role after the War as a high commissioner in Germany and so on, a lot of other important functions, asked _ to remain behind when the uh delegation

retired. And he says and there's a report by and it's been published...I don't remember where but I've read it and he said...so McLoy says to him, while now as we are alone you can admit this is all propaganda. This is December nineteen hundred forty-four, five months before the War was over and the number two man in the government on on the war effort doesn't believe it. Now this shows uh there was really the people didn't believe. This shows that it was so beyond any human (inaudible tape) human conditions, that you couldn't believe it. this was of course one of the most negative things and it cost us millions of lives. Now I'm not taking away the terrible consequences, that on the other end it's uh perhaps the most hopeful thing in the whole history of the of the Holocaust... ..

Q:In retrospect..

A:In retrospect. It means that man cannot live with absolute evil. You cannot accept absolute evil. There is some way E 50 the conviction that man is good, man is pure. Man is not condemned to the worst, and this...it's a paradox. When...many Jews do not like when I say this, because they cannot forget...I cannot forget either this , but the fact that man cannot accept this, and man could not accept it, gives you hope in the man of tomorrow. It is really the most positive conclusion you can have. In this world of darkness, you cannot despair of men.

Q:Let me ask you something about something that was not specifically on your list of things that uh or explanation provided for so little done. Uh you mentioned the insensitivity of high officials, but you didn't talk specifically about President Roosevelt. You probably know that uh some of the books on the subject, particularly David Weiman's book uh Single Out Roosevelt is is a major factor, perhaps the major factor. Tell us a little bit about your assessment of Roosevelt.

A: Well, it's of course very difficult for my generation to to make a final judgment on this. We work...we uh uh were educated in uh in a world and this was where it was the only hope, and later judge. Uh and of course the study of uh the war record of the American government shows that uh all kinds of opportunities were lost and were not used, and the political responsibility is certainly borne by Roosevelt to a great extent. But on the other hand, he is the only one who can say...uh could say that this policy has also prevailed, to preserve some Jews. I spoke of lend I ; 51 lease. Lend-lease has saved probably Britain and probably more than Britain. I think that this _ thanks to lend and lease and the...of course the resistance of the British people that they survived, and with this survival, four hundred thousand Jews in Britain have been saved from the invasion of of the Nazis and would have been victims. But another conservation is even more important. If Britain would have gone under, Palestine would have gone under. It was very near that the Nazis came into Egypt and Palestine. There are six hundred thousand Jews and much more. Can you imagine that the Nazis would have wiped out the Jews in Egypt and in Palestine in 1942 or '3 or '4. Our whole world...our whole Jewish world wouldn't exist. With the center of Israel today is a powerful factor for every aspect of Jewish life. That's also due to the Allied effort and Roosevelt had an important stake in it. That doesn't mean that I'm not...I'm defending and the inactivity. I think he bears a great responsibility but he and Churchill are the only ones who on the other hand have also contributed to the preservation of the free world, and that cannot be completely forgotten either.

Q: A couple of times we've mentioned in passing the role of the uh the Vatican and the International Red Cross. Uh it seems to be in this section about why was so little done, uh we need to come back to them and talk a bit more about . Perhaps what they did, but also what they could have done and did not do. 1 52

Q: Well, on the vatican I have once given a great lecture on the vatican and on the World

Council of Churches. Uh they have...there has been very little done. Uh I spoke, I believe, of the memorandum which we gave to the in Bern in nineteen hundred forty-two, and the only result of this was uh that some action was taken with regard to Slovakia and the deportations of Slovakia were interrupted, stopped for a certain time. This was a Catholic priest who was at the head of the government. Uh in all the...I have spoken on the action taken in in Hungary by the Vatican and here I believe that the vatican and the the Nuncio who was in Budapest has tried to and cooperated with the general effort to preserve the Jewish community, and even the local bishops and uh were influenced in this way. But generally speaking, the situation depended on this the personal courage and the personal determination of the leaders in the various countries. And you have examples of courage and determination and you have examples of complete uh laissez-faire. Some of the bishops and archbishops...you have beautiful examples in France like Cardinal of Toulouse, who went to the station where the deportations from where the deportations took place, and his presence was an act of protest. There were some other bishops...Bishop , Bishop .. , but there were also other cardinals who supported the vichary regime fully, and the Vatican never interfered even in the French anti-Jewish legislation when it was asked whether..of his opinion. the Vatican in my opinion, and there there are twelve or thirteen volumes of vatican documents what uh what they were doing 1 53 during the War, I believe that the real problem in the catastrophe of the...which happened to us was never taken seriously by the Vatican until the War was practically over, and I believe that there was no real realization in the highest uh levels of the Vatican bureaucracy, uh no real evaluation of the out...of of the the the dimensions of the catastrophe, and I believe that the Vatican was better informed maybe than we believe. There are hundreds and hundreds of priests. and we were not prevented from and there are books who report on this, on these reports. In the official documentation, it shows that some uh priests reported very clearly about the about the elimination of the Jews and the

killing of Jews. When prohibited Wise to publish my famous it was agreed that they should ask opinion of the Vatican and the opinion of the Vatican was very wishywashy. They said we have also reports but uh it doesn't...on on that treatment, but they didn't confirm the elimination. Astonishingly, because , the who reports regularly to the Vatican and who writes about the same time the new things are the bombardments of the state, of the cities, and the uh increased elimination and extermination of the Jews and there are already more than two million exterminations. So one cannot tell me they didn't know. Uh in some places, the local bishops helped. The action of the vatican centrally was practically limited to Hungary. There they tried a certain influence, but otherwise I would say there was no real great concern. And uh I often uh thought that my long conversation with uh with Monseigneur Montini 54 in 1945 when the war was over and I was asked to plead with him the Catholic authorities should help us to recuperate the Jewish children who had been hidden by Catholic authorities or Catholic individuals and when I argued with him...this was November 1945...and said that we had...we were very grateful to the Catholic Church for what it had done in order to save some Jews, Jewish children especially, but we had lost in the war one and a half million Jewish children, and we couldn't loose one more child. He questioned me, he questioned this statement and was absolutely astonished when I gave him the statistical background to my _ . For twenty minutes we argued. I told him, you know, there were in Poland...the birthrate...was a birthrate...a Jewish birthrate of sixty thousand every year. Multiply by 16, 16...you can...you arrive at 960,000 children, up to the age of sixteen. We should have in 1945 at the end of the War, found 960,000 Jewish children in Poland. Do you know how many we found? Something like 3,640 kids. There is a report by uh Jewish leader, Louis Seeger who comes back from Poland and brings these figures. take Hungary. Hungary with Transylvania, territories which belonged...we call to Romania, about eight hundred thousand Jews. There were about four hundred thousand in the Hungarian provinces. On an average, there should have been a hundred thousand Jewish children.

Maybe a little less...eighty thousand. When the war was over, how many Jewish children did we find? Eight children. He was shaken when I told him and I continued. I was well prepared to go on. He said they they they left. There was immigration. 55 | I said where was immigration. Perhaps a few hundred, for there I were still was to the mountains of Romania, but it's terribly difficult. Not thousands...for twenty minutes we argued. It was one of my most unsuccessful diplomatic _ in my whole career. I shook him, there's no doubt. He...for the first time he realized that six million Jewish dead meant a million and a half Jewish children, but if the number two or three in the uh...

Q:Hierarchy...

A:Hierarchy...the the Catholic hierarchy, had to learn from me to realize in November when it was 1945, what this meant, this shows that uh not very high priority was given to these problems in the Vatican, and uh the other example is I mentioned already several times. He went to the Vatican in August nineteen hundred forty-two...uh '45, supported by some very important Catholic uh scholars, including Jack who became later the cardinal, became the French Ambassador to the Holy See, a very important, very distinguished Catholic scholar, including uh the uh priest in in in uh who became a cardinal later whose name escapes me at the moment, who has written a very important book also in Catholic-Jewish relations, including uh a prelate of Egyptian-Jewish origin. A whole series of very uh distinguished Catholic theologians and they argued that this was a time for the Holy See to issue a Jewish on the relations with the Jews. There was no reply, and it took twenty years until vatican Council 56 II that the church really found that it had to issue a statement on the future of Christian-Jewish relations, a very important statement . It's a beginning of a new approach to the Jews, but you see here the.. all these indications show that certainly the Jewish catastrophe was not seized in all its terrible dimensions and it had certainly not priority in the considerations of the vatican at the time.

Q:What about the role of the International Red Cross?

A:The International Red Cross, you have today a very important study by Professor , uh the Geneva historian who has...is the only one who had access to all the files, and the result of this study is not very positive to say the least. There are two positive things which I have to say about the Red Cross. The one is the fact that uh , Vice President, concerned to us in 1942 that he had also news about uh the final solution and that he had heard from several German diplomatic witnesses that the final solution was in in execution. This was a positive, a very positive fact for us to determine and to inform the Allies that this was a reality. The second is the negotiations which I mentioned before with and certainly contributed to to help prevent the extermination of the people who were still in the camps at the end of the war, but apart from this, the attitude of the Red cross was uh not very helpful, and not very uh courageous. There was a moment when some of the members of the Red Cross really 57 felt they had to make an open protest against amongst other things the treatment of the Jews. Uh or at least an appeal in which these matters would be open...openly denounced but uh it never came to this appeal or public protest. It's...although I must admit there was a majority of the members of the International Committee who were in favor of such . But here the Swiss government intervened and prevented any such declaration. Uh I've been often asked whether this should have happened or not. In my opinion, there are moments for international organizations, welfare organizations, where you have to speak out, and I was asked by the Red Cross at the time...I clearly recommended and pushed and was very active in order to that such a statement of denunciation should happen, but it didn't happen and was prevented, as I said, by the swiss government which was afraid of the Germans. Uh but nevertheless, at certain moment our insistence of decisive action had some result. There was in 1942, in September '42, and the dates are very important because this is the moment where we

informed uh _ that we knew about the final solution and he confirmed to us that he knew too. Uh there the Red Cross sent a memorandum to their delegation in Germany in which uh they left it to the decision of the delegation if they should uh submit to the German authorities uh a request for the extension of the basic rules of Red cross protection to the intern...interned people in the various camps and not in the camps of prisoners of war and the other camps. Uh this activity, this action had no consequences. That was the most serious. They kept me in the belief for two I 58 years that they were pushing on this constantly and there were always new interventions in this sense. This is just not true. 's book makes it very clear that until the uh situation developed in Hungary in 1945 which we have described, practically nothing has happened, and this is in my opinion a very serious mistake and uh very serious failure of the Red Cross. Moreover, the book of _ brings out a number of very unpleasant facts. For instance, the Red Cross accepted without protest a request of the German Red Cross that...I think it's 1941...it could be '42...that in the future inquiries about people who are lost...who are searched for, should in the future be submitted separately for aliens and non-aliens. That they accepted this distinction is certainly a scandal and certainly not in the line of uh Red Cross principles, and there are a number of other such incidents which are certainly not very good and show also the the very limited courage which the Red Cross had in countering the Germans. There's a historian who has...a Swiss historian, Mr. Paul Stouffer, who has denounced this attitude in an article concerning the case of . The twelve thousand Polish officers were murdered by the...by Russians. At the time, the uh German government and the Polish government in exile both asked the International Red Cross to establish an inquiry commission in order to determine who was responsible for this act. Uh behind all this was the government...was the propaganda ministry and uh the Red Cross could not accept the proposal because the third party hadn't and the third party were the Russians, and according to the principles of ! 59 the Red Cross only when all involved could agree...could such a question could such an inquiry commission be established, but Mr.

Stouffer refers in this respect to the diaries of . Uh of course, the Germans were very upset that this inquiry commission didn't happen. Uh but in the diaries of uh he defends himself and says we couldn't make a big fuss about this case. We are much too much depending on the International Red Cross concerning our own interests with regard to prisoners of war and other other interned people in Allied countries and so on, which shows exactly that the Red Cross disposed of higher prestige and status in Germany when they believed themselves and all their hesitations not to insist too much with the Germans because of the overwhelming power of the Germans, uh it..at the time is here really contradicted by one of the greatest witnesses one could produce in which it said we depend on the good will of the Red Cross. This has never been taken serious and never been realized but by the responsible people in in Geneva. So the Red Cross today doesn't anymore really defend this position. For the first time under the new president there, , I saw recently articles in which they said yes, we didn't do enough at the time, but now we have another policy and so on so. And this is in a not the attitude uh of the deal on these matters much more in detail in my own autobiography. I was very much involved in the whole theater of Red Cross activities, and the book by you see day by day for how I pressured the Red Cross into action in the Hungarian uh case and uh also in 's book, there are I think 45 references I 60 to my activities uh but it was certainly a very important activity also from our side and some of it produced results but, of course, much too limited.

Q:We have a little less than ten minutes to go. I was going to ask you about uh relations with the Jewish agency and the Joint, but if you have something that you would rather say that has not come out yet, please feel free to take this time.

A:No, we can speak about the the the nations that say they cooperation of the Jewish organizations in Geneva. I'm not speaking now on the on the world. Uh there have been

very little described really. We were not very good. With the agency I had very good relations with the head of the agency in Geneva, , who was an old diplomat of the Zionist movement. He was even more pessimistic than I was, and so pessimistic that he really gave up doing things. He has written enormous amount of letters in describing his despair, which is...I didn't do this. I uh was afraid partly of the censorship. Everything which we wrote went through censorship and I didn't want the , but uh there was...cooperation was alright. There were all kinds of uh little offices between which there was a good deal of jealousy, but while I was at the time upset by some of these personal problems, when you see it as a whole and it didn't make any difference on the whole scene. Uh the the Germans were so uh powerful whether we would have _ a little better together or not, wouldn't have made 61 any difference. The Joint is another chapter. The Joint gave instructions not to cooperate with . Had instructions from the Joint in in , New York, not to cooperate with us which was due to the uh competition between the World Jewish Congress in the United States which pursued rescue activities on its own and based on the collections in South America and the Joint. My criticism with regard to the Joint is very clear. Until very late they did not see that this was not just a general welfare undertaking which was necessary but a special political rescue action. This they understood very ...and rescue and philotropic (ph) welfare is quite a different thing. The Joint even opposed Martin Goldman's proposal to the...Goldman was a man who had great ideas and great schemes. He had..in the war, during the war, two great ideas. The one was to approach the Allies and to take...to ask them to ask them that the Allies should offer to the German government to take the totality of Jews into the Allied camp, and to evacuate and the other camp would care for them. This, of course, was a revolutionary idea. It was probably the only great idea uh that could be conceived, but it was immediately rejected by the British . The other idea was the constructive idea of a basic joint effort to rescue, and he proposed five...a fund of five million dollars of contribution from America, five million dollars contribution from uh United...from uh

Britain and two million from the Jews. This was sabotaged by the Jews. The Joint was against it. The Joint was believing that they had a kind of monopoly on Jewish defense and and and Jewish welfare activities, . _1 62 and the government shouldn't interfere. It was an absolute basic mistake. When the war was over, our greatest asset was that we we succeeded in in convincing the Allied governments, the UN, to participate and take the responsibility for the surviving refugees. The was based was based and financed by the governments, not by the Jewish organization. The UNDRA effort was based and here the World Jewish Congress had an important role in in uh introducing this idea and this concept. The the fact that hundreds of thousands of people were in need was not the responsibility of private people. It was the responsibility of the uh world community, which had not conducted world affairs in the way which could have saved these people, and so uh both in number and both in the uh international refugee organization after the war, the responsibility of governments and the financial responsibility of the basic needs was recognized and we should have done it, of course, during the World uh World War II, but the the Jewish were not yet right for such a concept. Today it is absolutely obvious that private organizations, private citizens, can only contribute to it, but the the basic needs and the basic policies have to be financed by governments and international intergovernmental organizations in order to keep the basic needs covered. ..

Q: We have about a minute left. Two minutes...I'm corrected. Uh Hillberg was once asked to describe the most fundamental lesson of the Holocaust and his answer was anything's possible. In your opinion, is anything still possible? 63

A: Well, let me say this...I believe that history doesn't repeat itself. That's the first thing. But uh the idea it cannot happen here is also gone. And what we are at this moment and I'm speaking now in uh May ;992, witnessing in all.. END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE THREE ...brought together and energetically mobilized new waves of anti-foreigner, anti-Jewish

activities of extremist chauvinists, and extremist nationalists have to be overcome and only a concerted effort of the...of governments and of the Jewish people, of other peoples will be able to prevent it. It hasn't to happen, but you have to work that it shouldn't happen.

Q:Dr. Riegner, thank you very much. It's been a privilege to interview.

A:Thank you.

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