

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Arnold Einhorn
March 1, 1995
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PREFACE

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ARNOLD EINHORN

March 1, 1995

01:01:00

A: My name is Arnold Einhorn. I was born in Antwerp, Belgium, on May 1, 1923. My parents were not native of Antwerp; my father was of Polish nationality, my mother, too. One was Russian-Polish and the other one was what they call a "Galicianer," from Galicia, from Austria. But both of them came to--respectively one, my father, to Holland, when he was a young teenager and my mother as a young child, to Antwerp, before WWI. During WWI, my mother was in England and my father was in Holland and then they married in Holland and--where they had their first child. And we were a family of five children. My father at first had a delicatessen in Antwerp, a kosher delicatessen, and he also had a hotel on the seaside, but the delicatessen failed, sort of, after a certain time, with the depression; and then he continued his seaside hotel. He was a very Orthodox man, but not a bearded--he was a westernized Orthodox Jew, very traditionally Jewish. Antwerp had a--the entire population of Belgium, as far as Jews are concerned, is about 50 to 60--50,000. Then when the refugees came, after '33 to '39, I think, they went up to 60,000. The majority of the Jews lived in Antwerp.

01:03:30

They were a very separate community from the rest, I think. They had been lured by King Albert I, from Holland mostly, in order to start the diamond business. However, it became very difficult, even if you were born in Belgium, to become Belgian. There was a certain discrimination, as far as naturalization is concerned, against the Jews. And even when you were born there, you had to opt for the Belgian nationality actively. It was expensive, and it was very fastidious; it took time. I know that just before the war, when I was 16, I started opting and by the time the WWII started, I still hadn't gotten my nationality. And then Poland gave up the Jews and we all became stateless, even though I was born in Belgium and considered us Belgian. I was bilingual and I went to high school there. I went to grade school there--I mean grade school, not high school.

01:04:30

In general, the government was not antisemitic. Antwerp in particular had a Socialist mayor, Camille Huysmans, who was quite supportive of the Jews, but by '36, a very strong Fascist movement--two actually--one was the Flemish Fascist movement by Staf de Clercq,¹ who was virulent anti-Semitic; and the Rexist² movement of Degrelle,³ who

¹ Founder of National Flemish League (VNV) on October 1, 1933. S.J. Woolf, ed., *Fascism in Europe* (London: Methuen and Co., 1981), 290-1.

² Like the VNV, the Rexist movement was subtly fascist in its later stages although, officially, it called itself an authoritarian government. Rexistism reached its peak between 1935-6. *Fascism in Europe*, 284-285.

³ Léon Degrelle was the leader of the Rexist movement. *Fascism in*

subsequently furnished soldiers to Hitler. Degrelle and Staf de Clercq were virulently anti--they went into--I had been once--no--more than once, beaten up on the streets because they would occasionally raid. Groups of uniformed Fascists would come in the Jewish quarter and just beat up the Jewish boys and older people.

Q: What year was this?

A: It was in '38 to '39. I remember being--just coming in, and then suddenly they would, they would attack bearded Jews in the streets, and then if they saw somebody that they thought lived in that area, they would just beat them up, too. And that happened. That's about all, but there were a number of Zionist movements and even Revisionist⁴ movements, so that the Jews had quite a free life there. The government had no discrimination, officially. Of course, if you wanted to have certain jobs, then there were discriminations, so, in general, I would say Belgium had a certain enlightened attitude towards the Jews. We were not affected, other than by having those 10,000 refugees from Germany, by what was going on in Germany until May the 10th. When we woke up and Antwerp was bombed by the Germans and we discovered we were at war, we were invaded. It was very fast and the 13th or 14th of May they had already reached almost the sea, the North Sea. Belgium is very small and as you know, the king capitulated within a week, I think. Because we had a small hotel right at the sea shore, my father took a taxi and just left everything in our apartment in Antwerp and reached that place, but we stayed only there for one day, because we heard that the Germans had already occupied, were already reaching the sea, and so we followed the flow of those thousands of refugees that clogged the roads and occasionally were attacked by the planes, you know, just came down, swooping down and machine-gunned the refugees. And I had a small--my brother is 15 years younger, so I had him. He had whooping cough and I was just carrying him on my back and he was just having his spells on my back and vomiting on us. It was a terrible place because we used to be on the roads and then hide, jumping off the roads and just going by foot.

01:08:30

The French at first hadn't opened the, hadn't opened the border, so we were camping there for I think two days without having food or anything and then suddenly they opened the border and we could come down to France. Somehow I thought that--because everybody was going towards Arras and the northern cities near the border because they hoped that they would get to England. We--my father--found some kind of a private car and they brought us down to Paris. And we found later on that most of those refugees who tried to go to Arras were bombed at the station and killed. He managed to get to Paris, and we stayed there for one night when my father again heard that we had to register as refugees, especially if we weren't Belgian, and so he went to the police. There he--that's when he had--at first he was a very great admirer of the French, he thought they were--the French revolution was really the representatives of what a republic should

Europe, 284.

⁴ "...movement of maximist political Zionists founded and led by Vladimir Jabotinsky." *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1971), s.v. "revisionist."

mean--and a freedom-loving republic. And that's when he had--the first time, he asked, and he said that we would like to stay in Paris if we could, and the man said, "You dirty Jew," and hit him and said, "You better report tomorrow to the--" what they call the caserne de tourelles,⁵ which is a military barracks, where then we found that all the refugees were being channeled towards various parts of France. The second time that we realized how antisemitic actually police was, was in the train.

01:11:00

There were many refugees from all over, most Jews. And Italy was then a Fascist country and was just going into, was then entering the war. There was an Italian worker who was totally uneducated. The police was assigning to each wagon, you know, a person in charge, and I say my father was the most educated person in that place and he was a really respectable-looking man, but they took the Italian worker who was drunk and uneducated and put him in charge because, he said it openly, "I'm not going to put any Jew in charge of a wagon." So that was the thing.

Q: How long were you in Paris?

A: Only 48 hours I think--72 hours. Because we--they-- didn't want to have Jewish refugees in Paris, and so they evacuated and we went with other Belgian non-Jews into-- we ended up after a long ordeal on the train and buses in central France, in the Ardèche. It's a small state, a small department, which the capital had about 4,000 inhabitants and we ended up in a hamlet where we stayed for three months over the summer. It was a farm, I became a farm boy. As a matter of fact, I keep in touch with the farmer I met. I have been several times to this hamlet 50 years later. He's still alive.

Q: How did you connect with the farmer?

A: Oh, they put us up in a factory. They put us up in a factory that was--that only worked during the winter because they didn't have electricity and in the winter there was enough water to get the--to farm the--it was a silk, they were doing, something was just silk thread or something--and we were barracked there, at a village there. And within a few--when in June we came there in May, the end of May. On June 18th, I think, France capitulated and Pétain⁶ took over. The Belgian refugees who were non-Jewish were repatriated. There was also another Jewish family who also was--chose to go back to Belgium. The reason why is because rumor spreads very quickly that there were camps all over France, especially near the Pyrénées, Saint-Cyprien, Anjouleme, Corse, where the conditions were extremely difficult, and they said they were very harsh towards the Jews in particular, and so we heard about it. And as a matter of fact, we heard that the oldest sister of my mother, her husband, her daughter, and her grandchild were there, and there were conditions so bad that they also chose to go back to Antwerp. And when

⁵ Barracks turret (French).

⁶ Pétain, Henri (1856-1951); French marshal who corroborated with the Nazis and lead the French Vichy government during W.W.II. Bruce Wetterau, *World History* (New York: Henry Holt Publishing, 1994), 838.

another Jewish family in that little village called Saint-Julien du Corse, population including I think the animals, was 600 people; but it was spread over miles and miles. It's a hamlet. We chose to stay there, until the winter came, in which we then moved to the capital, which is Brive. And there we--suddenly on November, I think in November, were told that we had to report to a camp in Agde, the next morning, just to take the bare essentials, leave everything else and leave and go to Agde.

01:15:00

And that's in November '40. We then reported to a concentration camp. That was a real concentration camp.

Q: Okay, before--I want you to tell me about Agde, but when you were in this town, where you were working as a farm boy? Was there any poor treatment of you or your family because you were Jewish?

A: No, no, nothing. They didn't even know anything. I mean, they were very simple people and also, the inhabitants of the Ardèche in particular, it's the only province. It used to be a province of France, where the Huguenots used to hide. There are still caves in the mountains. They had a long history of religious oppression, so they had a tradition--there is a very strange population who understands oppression and that's why when we were in Brive--actually the assistant mayor, his wife was a music teacher--the assistant mayor was also I think a principal in the school.

01:16:20

Both of them were very flattered to have city people from Antwerp, and especially we were very good in Latin and Greek, all of us, the three children were so religious in school and my youngest sister was a musician, she was one of those--she had given in Antwerp a concert--the teacher four years. She was Wunderkind,⁷ I mean she was good, so they were very flattered to have these people, and they didn't make any discriminatory at all. They were very nice people and the farmers, they were just interested in us.

01:17:00

I must tell you, incidentally, that 40 years later I came to that village and went to the farm, and there I found my co-farm boy, who had become in the meantime the owner of the farm, and the first thing that I came in--the woman came in and says, "Who are you?" and I said, "I was a refugee here 40 years ago," she said, "Are you Arthur or David?" David was the other boy, and Arthur is my real name, actually. And she said, "You know, we recently watched a program on the concentration camps, and we were wondering whether you were still alive, or you had been..." So, they really were nice people. And I keep in touch with my farmer friend ever since. As a matter of fact, I was there six months ago.

⁷ Child prodigy (German).

Q: So you went to Agde, what--

A: In Agde, that was the first big tragedy because we had to leave again. Whatever little we had saved from Antwerp, which was very little, it's what we could take with us.

Q: Under what circumstances that--did you get rounded up? I mean what--

A: No, there was a notification from the police, "You have to report tomorrow morning to the train station." We were the only, I think, Jewish family there. There was a Luxembourg family, a Jewish family from Luxembourg who--I'm sorry, who was, who did not get called.

01:18:35

We got called and I think because we were not Belgian nationals--there, you see, that thing, that stateless Jewish status. We then had to report to Agde on a train and there a lot of people came from all over the various places. It was a terrible shock. Agde was exactly how we had seen pictures of Dachau or something like this. It's barbed wire. There had been people concentrated there for several months, including Czech refugees, you know, who had served in the army actually, and if they were Jewish, they were there. Also it had been for a long time a concentration camp for the Spanish civil war fighters, you know, who France had gradually betrayed--the first to come over and then Blum⁸ actually had made some deal. Those were exactly like the barracks that you can see from Buchenwald or something. These were platform--there were two tier platforms of wood, without--with--some straw which had remained from--it's full of lice and fleas. They gave each of them an old blanket--each of us. There was one--women were sent, women and children were separated in a different camp and they had a little bit of a better camp because they had some stoves in there, we didn't. It was very cold, it was windswept, it was a miserable camp. There was one faucet outside for--I think there were 14,000 people in there at one point--and then it froze. There was no water. We used to get one soup and a rather mildewed bread every day.

01:20:40

And then in the evening we used to get some other--if the thing wasn't frozen, if the faucet wasn't frozen--we had some cooking. It was a miserable camp. I remember we were freezing, we were mis--we were eaten by fleas and lice, and one or two of the people became actually crazy in there. There was no dispensary. The only places people were aiming is to try to get the job at the commandant's camp because that was a warm place and my sisters, one of my older sisters, because she was, she was I think trilingual, and she was taking shorthand or something. She worked for the commandant of the camp--commandant and also another family from I think elsewhere. Levine and these are the two families that were actually later on liberated. About three months after we were there, my sister obtained from one the--yes, that was when de Lattre de Tassigny(ph),

⁸ Blum, Léon (1872-1950); "first Jew and first socialist to become premier of France." *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1971), s.v. "Blum, Léon."

who was the préfet⁹--préfet is like the governor, but it was an appointed préfet--and he--I don't know what happened. Yeah, he was the "Préfet de Police" and he came and visited that camp and because there was some former Czech foreign legion of people, he got very indignant about the situation. He says, "I want that camp disbanded, I don't want it in my province." Instead of liberating the people, he just sent them to Rivesaltes.

01:23:00

Q: Now, what did you do all day in this camp, if you were there for months?

A: Nothing.

Q: There wasn't work, or--

A: Nothing. We just hung around freezing and waiting for food to be given and trying to escape. Well, as a matter of fact, one of my cousins, his name is Michael Brushkin, he was married to a cousin of mine. He lived in France, he lived in Theonville, and he served with the French army. And I know that he was very, very outgoing and also he had a big--he had a shoe factory, I think, in Theonville. And somehow it happened to move a lot of shoes or something, and he bribed people with shoes because we didn't have anything, and he came to visit us in the camp, showing his military paper and acting as, "I'm an officer of the French army." They let him in and he actually smuggled my youngest sister out on his bicycle. He came with a bicycle and just walked off with her on the back of his bicycle. He then managed, when my sister got a pass one day, after the de Lattre de Tassigny visit--the camp commander was a little shook up by the criticism he had so he gave her and also this other girl, Miss Levine, I think was her name--they got a pass and my cousin somehow must have known that there was a gentleman in the Montpellier prefecture by the name of Ernst I think was his name, he was a Alsatian, who was one of the early resistance people. He managed to fix some things and said, "If you can prove that they can live--survive--I can manage to get them out of the camp before it moves to Rivesaltes, but they'll have to live in a suburb where all the parolees and people who were on parole or former convicts who had no right to live in the city." And we were given--we were allowed to rent--a little shack there in that city. And we lived with these people were very nice and they had an advantage since they knew all the police and always warned us if there was something stirring if people were trying to get after us, and they sort of protected us. There's no antisemitism there, amongst the parolees. They were liberated in the--we were in during November, I think, by January or February, '41, no--yeah--'41. We were then liberated from the camp after three months in there and allowed to live there, and again I went to work in vineyards, etcetera. I also registered in school actually, but I didn't show up too much there because in school there was a lot of antisemitism.

Q: This is in Montpellier?

⁹ Prefect (French).

01:26:00

A: Yeah. I wanted to get my degree, my baccalaureate, my, you know, secondary education, so when I was working the farms, occasionally I showed up in school. I was registered officially, but I didn't like it because there was a lot of antisemitism there. Every time, for example, the name of a Jew came up--Bergson,¹⁰ for example, a philosopher we used to read--everybody was saying, "Jew, Jew, Jew," you know. And so, I didn't make--first of all I couldn't be there too much; it was six kilometers, or no, it was about 15 kilometers of where we lived so it was hard for me to get there and besides, the food shortage was terrible in Montpellier because Montpellier had only vineyards at that time. Jews also were sort of in line. We had special--we had identification cards stamped "Juif,"¹¹ and we also had ration cards stamped "Juif," so it was difficult sometimes to get rations, you know. That was the only thing we felt. On the other hand, individual people in Montpellier were just marvelous. For example, my father, he had some, he had quite a bit of, had acquired in Belgium some skills in jewelry, old jewelry or something, and in old books, because you don't always interest an old book and he got to know an antiquity dealer by the name of Leyvastre. I mention him because he really saved our lives two or three times and he just told him, "Whenever I buy something that you advise me, I'll make sure that you get some percentage," so that he helped us to live, on the one hand. On the other hand, every time there was some stirring up, where we heard that men for example were being drafted or Jews were--then he said, "Well, come and live with us. I'll--you'll--live with us for a couple of weeks," you know. He always had an excuse. "Your son is very smart in school; he can tutor my daughter, who's very shy, in Latin, and who flunked once the oral exams." And I tutored her a little bit and later on he acted as if I had done a great deal to his family, when he had saved our life by hiding us. We found out later that that daughter, that child daughter that I tutored, was one of the heroes of the French underground, and we didn't even know that. I mean, she was so shy and withdrawn, but her name was Jeanne Leyvastre. She married later her chief of the underground and had five children, moved to Bordeaux. I found this out later.

Q: Were there many Jews in the area, in that Montpellier suburb that you were staying in?

A: There were no--I think we were the--yes--there was one other family, unfortunately. There was an Austrian couple, those were the only ones, an Austrian couple who was hidden in the--not just a block away from where we lived, because that was the country, that was--now there are a lot of in that area that has been developed into an area where many of the Algerian refugees, many North African refugees, after it became independent, have settled in this very developed--and the vineyards have disappeared. I went there on one occasion, to visit it, and when we left there it was one of those desert, what they call the garrigue¹², which is a very windswept area with--it is very

¹⁰ Bergson, Henri Louis (1859-1941), French philosopher. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1971), s.v. "Bergson."

¹¹ Jew (French).

¹² Stony, sun drenched hills (French).

hot and it just has very low bushes. It's sort of a mosquito-infested; stone--it's a little bit like Israel sometimes, you know where--before it was settled. And so that's where they had these little shacks with people living there who had been in the jail or had been something.

Q: Did everyone know you were Jewish?

01:31:00

A: Oh, yeah. As a matter of fact, I had a neighbor who was, just, who sold me a terrible bicycle, but he was a real ex-convict, but he always gave us hints of what's going on. He said, "Watch out." I don't know where he knew about it. No, they were nice and there was another girl up in another--Nadalié--we used to come over and says, "You come and listen to...", he used to be gassed in WWI, "...come and listen to the radio from London, from the BBC" because we didn't have a radio. We were not allowed to have a radio. We didn't have anything in the house except a little old stove and five bedsprings, and that's all we had in that place and our water came from--was a cistern; it collected rain and when it didn't rain after November or something, I used to have to go every day and five miles with a wheel barrel that, again, my friend the convict Monsieur Durand had sold me, to get water.

Q: Was there presence of the Vichy¹³ police?

A: Oh, yes, there was. The Vichy, they were very, very active, that's what I'm trying to--the mayor, the mayor was a fellow by the name of Sudrier, who was a Vichy. He was, he was the one who was responsible frequently of telling the suppliers, the butcher, etcetera, not to give us, but to put as at the end of any line that we come in. He was always checking on us and unfortunately the person where the Austrian lived, they were Jehovah's Witnesses and acted very officiously, but the man was working in the, in the, also in the mayors office. He also was a former veteran of WWI, and they, I think, sold out again those refugees who were within the Austrian refugees because they were sent to Auschwitz, and they never came back. But that's all and then we lived there as best we could. I used to work in vineyards and go to school occasionally and then--

Q: Did you have a sense of fear or anticipation?

A: Terrible, oh, all the time, because the rumors were going and the rumor mill was going all the time, and for one year we were not bothered until the early part of July of '42, you see. We finally got there in '41. Even after the Americans got into the war, we were always trying to get to Marseille to try and get visas to America because we have a

¹³ Town in central France which gave its name to French government after France was defeated by Germany in 1940. Pétain was head of state. Vichy did not govern France since the end of 1942, when Germany occupied the southern French "free zone." Elizabeth-Anne Wheal, Stephen Pope, James Taylor, *A Dictionary of the Second World War* (New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1990), 500.

large family in America, but we found out later why, you know, when we saw the Holocaust museum, the Friar(ph) thing that the consulate in Marseille had the orders to stall the Jews and not to get them there. I don't know if you saw those papers. We realized it. And so we lived in tremendous fear, especially after the Americans got into war in December '41 and then by July '42, then really we felt, we knew about camps and I think the rumor had started that Jews are going to be shipped to sort of work camps and some of them may have been extermination camps. They didn't know that there was active extermination, but we heard about Dachau and I think Buchenwald. We knew about these camps, and we knew that people were starved there. We didn't know about the extermination, which had started then. That we didn't know, but we--

Q: How did you get the information about this?

A: I don't know, the rumor mills were just incredible. And everybody always--we used to have these code words like, we had a--we knew that, one or two things we knew is--one of my, as I mentioned to you, the oldest sister of my mother and her husband, their girl--daughter and their granddaughter had been near the Pyrénées in a camp and they were repatriated. We also knew that another sister of my mother, who also never came, went to Auschwitz and was--never came back. The third had been sent to Poland. That's all we knew.

Q: How did you know this?

A: Because the daughter, because the daughter of the oldest sister of my mother, she managed to get--to smuggle out with her daughter, to get from Belgium to the occupied area and from the occupied area to the non-occupied and because of that cousin of mine, Michael, who was in the army, everybody knew, had followed him. Because they went to Theonville and then they went to Nevers and then they knew that they were in Montpellier and she showed up one day in Montpellier--she had smuggled out. And then she told us that her parents had been told to report to Moulins. That's the way it was and they disappeared and the same thing the other sister, that she disappeared and then the brother of my mother, the younger brother of my mother also was reported to go to Moulins and we knew that the son of one of my--had also reported, and then one of the other sons, who is still now in Belgium, he jumped off the train--from the train--and came back to Belgium and told that woman, that daughter, and then she subsequently was deported from Lyon. So that's how we knew what happened to our family in Belgium, and we all knew that they were sent from Moulins to various places in Poland, so that's how we--but also the, there were some people in Montpellier that my father was in touch with, Jews, and not the French. The French Jews kept apart. They thought they were not going to be touched; it was only the foreign Jews. But the foreign community in Montpellier knew about it and the rumor mill went and you see when we had my cousin Hela, the one that came from Belgium, and she told us about all these people who had been deported. They always said they had to go to Moulins and from Moulins they were sent away and we also knew about that boy, my cousin, who was my age, just a little younger, that he had been--he jumped from a train when he was, and he came back to Belgium, where he hid. We had another cousin who's husband--who had just been

married just before the war--who's husband had been again sent to Poland, so we knew about those things, but we didn't know. I mean, we all had this picture of Dachau and Buchenwald, which we knew from before the war. The horrible things happened, the people starved to death, you know and they're worked, and also two of my cousins had been in work camps and again the one that jumped from the train told us about it, so we knew about it, but I can't precisely know how it happens. And then we saw Agde, and Agde was a horrible camp and we knew also that the majority of the people who had been sent to Rivesaltes had been deported to Poland, too. Again, the rumor mill knew about it. It's funny thing is--because I didn't hear from Rivesaltes after that and then I had a book here about the camps in France and they say the result is the major source of deportees of the zone libre¹⁴--non-occupied. All right? And we go on and then when we got in in July of 1942. My father and I were again summoned to go to Agde, to Agde, to the camp, not the rest of the family. I--but when I got the summons, I also had heard about--I was being, I was working. I had already registered with the mandatory rule group from-- as students. I was registered in high school. Actually I had, I successfully got my baccalaureate from there, which was a miracle, and so I had actually applied even to pre-medical school, was refused. I had that certificate that I was turned away because of--I didn't meet the quota of Israelites. And so I'd registered with all the students for mandatory work in France. I was working at that time near Montpellier, in a big communal garden, together with Indo-Chinese. It was the Indo-Chinese former soldiers that they had. It was called the camp of Nam Phong for some reason. Nam Phong: the five--I think Nam Phong means "the five provinces."

01:41:00

And I was there, working there, and fortunately I had registered with that so that I went to--when I came to Agde, I also managed to get some kind of a certificate from my father--a medical certificate that he was ill, so when they couldn't get me, the young guy, because I was, I was, they couldn't supersede the ruler, the government's rule of service. They let me go, so I didn't go to Agde, I went to Agde the second time, but they let me go and since they couldn't get me. They let my father go, too. But Agde then had just been a sort of a holding camp to send to Rivesaltes out again. And so I went back and I went to the mountains with my group. Did a stupid thing because I went without the pass, and when I was there working in the farm in the mountains, all the French boys gradually gave up because it was too tough, but I stayed there, so the farmer liked me. And I continued and then I got the letter from my family that they were in hiding because they had heard about--no-- they've come to be notified that we have to report and that's when the father said he wasn't going and he hid on the other side of the city. They all went to one room claiming that it was a woman who was renting out rooms for people who had patients in the hospital. It was near a hospital, Saint Eloi, and so they were hiding there, and I got a letter in the mountains that they were hiding because they were living there near the hospital because they were going to send them to where they send my Aunt Dora, which was the one that was sent to Poland. And so I came back, stupidly, because I came without the--I didn't have a pass. I had to have a--I wasn't with my group any more and I needed to have a pass, but I managed to get out of the station where I noticed that

¹⁴ Free zone (French).

there was a group of the black-shirted militia checking everybody on the train, and I had no pass, but there was a strange thing that the farmer had given me a chicken, a scrawny chicken, and you know, we didn't have food and I was bringing a chicken. There was a law at that time; France had still internal customs called an octroi¹⁵, and suddenly I said, "Well, I have to get that chicken through the octroi," and so I went to another exit where there was no black guards and that's how I got out of the station. I didn't realize at that time that that chicken saved my life and as I came out, I noticed a friend of mine, by the name of Jack--Jean--Ginsburg from Belgium and I said, "Do you know, by any chance, where my family is?" He says, "Yes, I know, because I helped them move." He was sort of--at that time he was dating my sister so he knew and he was a boy that I went to school with in Antwerp, Jean Ginsburg. And so he showed me where my family was and that's when I had this big idea, I said, "Oh, we can't be crowded like that," my parents said, "But you know there are seals on our house, we can't go back." I said, "Well, I know--I have, I know where the key is of one of the farms where I lived, I worked, and why don't we take my two sisters and myself?" and we walked to the other side of the city, about eight kilometers. I took my bicycle and we walked and so I crossed the city, crossed the cemetery and ended up--but I forgot to tell--there's a bridge again, the octroi, the internal customs and there was a militia man standing there and stopping us and saying, "I have orders to round up all the foreign people," and asked us, "Are you Jewish?" "Yes." "So I have to round you up." I have no--I think the Belgian people don't have to be--and I had only a--my ID was an ID from school; it says I was born in Belgium. It didn't say any nationality, but I had an older sister who was born in Holland and he didn't know the rules, so he took us in and we found out that that was the big round-up of Jews, French and foreign, that day. That was the 26th of August, 1942, where the majority of the Jews of the free zone had been rounded up by the French and all deported. And we came there and we found the police station was full of people and he came, it was after midnight, he says, "Oh, I've got one more of them," and that's when the person asked me, "Where..."--the policeman-- "Where do they live?" He says "That's why I caught them. I checked. They lived where they were caught, at the bridge," and he said he would be willing to go to my house and check and I said, "Don't," because I knew that the seals were there. He took us there and that's when we had this man sitting there. There was a commission sitting there, three people. One obviously was a German. I don't--the reason why I think he was German is because he used a strange word for our ID items.

01:47:00

The French used the word "coordonnée¹⁶," the Germans used the word "Personalien."¹⁷ and he used the word "Personalien," you know. He says, "Take that person out and let him go." And he asked me, "What is your confession?" I said, "What's a confession?" He says, "Your religion." I had a moment of hesitation and I said, "Jewish." He had a moment of hesitation, he says, "Well, since they live there, we know where to get them. Why don't you let them go home?" So we went, fortunately not directly home, we went back to that farm where I had the key to--slept there, which was about four kilometers

¹⁵ Toll-house (French).

¹⁶ Coordinates (French).

¹⁷ Particulars (German).

from where I lived. And in the morning I decided, since they had let us go, we probably are not looked for, and that's where I met our, my friend the convict, the ex-convict, he says, "Are you crazy? What are you doing here?" I said, "Well, we coming home because they caught us last night and they let us go," He says, "I have news for you, they must have made a mistake, because they used to have three policemen watching your house, today they have six." So we didn't go home and we kept being hidden for about two or three months until things calmed down. That happens all the time in France, you know. They make an action and then they forget about it. And after two or three months hiding we went--by that time it was I think September--no--it was October. You remember that man, that man in the prefecture by the name of Ernst, and he arranged again to get us a complete absolution and we can go home.

01:49:00

The seals have to be removed, we are no longer looked for, and then we lived there for another month until the Americans disembarked in Algiers. That's November '42 and suddenly, the entire occupied--the entire non-occupied became occupied, that's in November, '42. Am I rambling too much?

Q: No, not at all, no, but I just have a few questions.

A: Good.

Q: This is great. Explain the seals on the houses. I don't think that everyone knows about this.

A: Oh, the French commandeered--the priest came in, that guy Sudrier, who was the mayor, you know the guy with the militia man--he came down with the police. I wasn't there, but my parents said they ran away and then one of my sisters, you know--remember I may be what they call a Jewish stereotype now, looking Jewishy, but at the time I was blonde. I had a lot of blonde hair. I'm blue eyed. In the south of France, I looked more southern French than any of the--the French in the south of France looked more Jewish than I looked. So my sister--one sister's very blonde and blue-eyed, and she was not the Jewish stereotype the way they saw it, you know, they didn't take us as a Jewish stereotype. With age I became more Jewishy looking, but then I wasn't. And so one of my sisters went and she found that there were big locks, seals. You see, we had a little shack there, it was sort of a, a little shack--just one room and the kitchen and then a little room, two rooms upstairs, and then there was a little garden and a gate, a little gate.

01:51:00

That gate, they had put the seals on--wax seals--just like you put in a criminal thing, you seal the doors, so that you can't--if you open the door, you break the seals. It's the same as they do for example if there's a murder case in America for example, they will put the seal on the doors so that you can't open it. And actually that night, after we were caught, when I walked back because I said, "I'm going to come back to the house," and that

Durand, I hadn't met Durand yet, but I had run into Sudrier, the mayor and he says, "Where have you been?" And I said, "Oh, we were told that maybe they're going to deport us and so he says, "You see this is all British propaganda," I said, "I know because I was at the policier¹⁸ last and they freed us," he says, "You see?" But then that's when he probably called the police and they doubled the thing and that's when Durand, the neighbor, the ex-convict told us about it. That's the seals, see? And for two months nobody could enter that little gate we had. I have actually pictures of that little house now.

Q: So you had to stay put?

A: Yeah, we hid--I kept up--because they were torturing--the reason why I could stay at this gardener's home is that poor guy was actually a Cypriot. His name was Pascalis and he had been into--they decided a Cypriot is a British citizen, so they send him--the poor--the Pascalis, he was such an innocuous man, he was just a gardener who could hardly read. And so they send him as a British subject to a camp and interned him as an enemy alien, so his little garden--he had built a little house there, it was just a house--and he's even dug his own well. And so since he was deported, his house was closed. But I knew where the key was and nobody ever bothered us, so I kept on going with my sisters to that house, and my parents were still continuing to live near that hospital, that woman, and Saint Eloi until they moved officially the seals and then we moved back in that house. But we only stayed there for about three weeks because then I decided I will no longer ever say I'm Jewish. I will join the underground and when the Germans move in to the whole zone in November, and that's--

Q: Tell me a little bit about that, about when the Germans decided to occupy the southern--

A: They just moved in--they didn't bother--it was the, all this time, I must say, it was the French who bothered us, that was the French, as I mentioned to you over the phone. The French were much more zealous. The official French, much more vicious against--to apply the racial things, as far as the government's concerned, than the Germans. At that time they weren't there. Vichy France was very, very anti-Jewish.

Q: Were there other examples of things that they did to you or other people that you can think of? The seals--

A: The seals, the fact that we couldn't go to school, the fact that they stamped our ration cards and our identification cards "Juif," which made it difficult frequently, because if you dealt with those--for example there was a great food shortage in the south of France and when you start in line, people queue for four o'clock and suddenly you come with your "Juif" there, sometimes people just pushed ahead of you and you weren't going to say anything about it. It's like in the occupied zone, they had the yellow star we weren't yet to wear, but we had identity cards with "Juif" stamped on it which was annoying.

¹⁸ To bring country under one organized government (French).

Q: Were there any episodes of police brutality?

A: No.

Q: Nothing like that?

A: No, because we, unless we--yes--in the camp, yes. In the camp, for example, I was once hit by a guard because I was trying to get to--I was asking for a pass to go to my mother, to where my sister and mother were and he just hit me and called me "dirty Jew." No, those were instances, but you see we kept such a low profile that we didn't have any exposure and there was very few Jews in the areas where we were, or at least we knew about. No, that was sort of--Sudrier was the one and there was a lot of the newspapers were always attacking the Jews and if you wanted to be left alone, you usually had in your pocket one of the most anti-Semitic papers called *Gringoire*,¹⁹ which was like the *Der Stuermer*,²⁰ later the *Der Stuermer*, in Germany. That's the only way you were left alone is when you always affected not, being anti-Jewish, but in school, like I said, in school it was a very anti-Semitic people were screaming, "Jew! Jew!" every time there's a name of a Jew, but otherwise, no. I personally had no--except for Agde--that's what I'm saying, except for Agde, and the two or three instances where we were almost deported and the fact that they sealed us out of our home, no.

Q: I think that we're almost out of tape, is that...?

A: Well, there the Germans moved in. I joined the underground officially. I was sworn in by Toto, which was the name of the--actually his name is Otto Giniesky, but he was called Toto Ginot.

Q: This was in Montpellier?

A: Yeah. I joined them, but that was about all. I just--I just gave the oath and that's all and very soon after Germans moved in and so my parents again said we have to get out of this area, and we still was living with my parents and we go to--and the few Jews that were there, including my cousin, who once lived in Montpellier, we decided to go to Grenoble and my sister went ahead, looking for a place in Grenoble.

Q: I'm going to stop you now so that they can change the tape, and we'll pick up.

A: All right.

End of Tape 1

¹⁹ "...collaborationist paper of Henri Béraud, noted in the 1830s for its Anglophobia..." H.R. Kedward, *Resistance in Vichy France* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1978), 55.

²⁰ Publication edited by the Nazi's chief propagandist, Julius Streicher. William P. Varga, *The Number One Nazi Jew-Baiter*, (New York: Carleton Press, 1981), 455.

Tape 2
02:01:00

Q: Before we move on, we were chatting off camera a little bit more about daily life.

A: Daily life was miserable; it was a life of daily fear. You went to sleep, you didn't know if the next morning there would be a rounding up. We knew about people rounding up. We knew people disappear, for example, we knew--at one point it became so worrisome that remember, I told you one of my cousins, the one, the only survivor from that--the oldest sister of my mother--she managed to sneak out from with her daughter to the non-occupied and she lived with us. I forgot to tell you, she lived with us and her daughter, and her, because we were, we were such a large nuclear family. We were always raised together at Antwerp. And at one point they became so terribly--the rumor mill--that she decided she wasn't safe in Montpellier, and she went to live near Lyon in a small city. And that's when they, they reported--and the same time as we--the 26th of August or something--they rounded her up with her daughters, Helen and Dian. Their names were Helen and Dian. Her mother was deported and never came back. That woman who finally lived with us--and she left us because she didn't feel it was safe any more--she was finally rounded up. The reason why we know, it is her daughter who was put in a camp of children and what happened is, it's one instance where the, where a bishop or a cardinal in Lyon--I think Gerlier--there's a Catholic, there's called a Catholic organizations, they took a number of people, dressed them as police people and came in the camp and kidnapped all the children and placed them with families. The daughter and those people who adopted her notified us about the mother having disappeared and that Diane was alive and she was still with them, the Rosenstiels. She's still wonderful.

Q: How did you get enough to eat?

A: Oh, that's why I was working in the country. So we didn't--in Montpellier it was horrible. As a matter of fact, there were times when I would go out on the country side, on the side of the road, and get dandelion so we could have salad once a day. And then we--you know, dandelion's a terrible diuretic. It was a terrible problem, but no, we had very little to eat, that is--that was--a horrible thing. A change, I mean in Grenoble, that was a big change, because in Grenoble you had to eat, but in Montpellier it was very little and the only--the reason is that's why I worked in the gardens, and with the farmers, because that's the only way I could have eaten, and see when I worked with the vineyards, we would get wine as part of a salary and I would exchange the wine for food on the side. It was really terrible, and sometimes my sister would get up at four o'clock in the morning because she heard there was some carrots somewhere you know, and by the time her, by the time the shop would open at nine o'clock there were about carrots for 20 people and if you had stamped "Jewish" on them, they wouldn't give them to you, so it was nothing easy for life. But the food wasn't easy for anybody.

Q: One other question about when you saw there was southern Jews under Vichy: Did you have a sense of what the general attitude was about the Vichy administration and the general French attitude?

A: The French attitude was favorable to Vichy, very much. And I can tell you this was going on in general, except for individual people. Some individuals were absolutely wonderful, you know the old type of Clemenceaus, like the Républicains. But others would have a general attitude of anti-Jewish. All French have always been intellectual anti-Jewish anyhow, ever since Dreyfus, you know, Zola. But you have some people like Zola or others who, you know, those were individuals. I must say the French population in the south was very, very pro-Vichy. They approved everything and they were sort of, sort of giving that feeling, well, everything was the fault of Léon Blum and his popular front, that Jews Léon Blum and Daniel Mayer and all these guys, oh, there was an attitude. But individually, certain people are definitely against persecution and when they knew you were in trouble, they were ready to help you. It's a dichotomy. I mean I have people, they were just wonderful. Oh, like these people that saved my niece, she's not a niece, she's a second cousin, yeah, whom I see--she's in Paris. But those were Catholic people. She, the woman, was married to a Jew, Rosenstiel, but she's the one who instigated this whole, this saving of the children and kept raising the child as Jewish so she wouldn't forget her grandparents, because her grandparents were very religious. But the girl isn't Jewish any more, but she was. She tried. So these individual people are just sublime, that's what I'm saying. The sense of Vichy was extremely popular government. They were listening to them, there were very few who were actually for the British. It may have been also the hate of the British and the hate of the leftist movement, which identified with the Jews, especially Léon Blum. I don't know if you remember Léon Blum, who was the Prime Minister who instituted all these beautiful, liberal reforms, you know. Social Security and all this that France has, all the workers even now that they have, they owe it to Léon Blum and his government and yet they were so happy, "Oh, we got rid of all those Jews," etcetera. Yeah, there was a very anti-Jewish feel, but that's not just France. I can tell you later on, even when I got to Spain, I faced this from the Belgians, who were, the Belgians who were officially on the British side. See, when I wanted to volunteer for the Belgians they said, "We can't accept you," and later on I said "Well, I had no papers," and then when the other Belgian says, "But we never had any papers he says, "I bet you're Jewish," I said, "Yes," he says, "Well, yeah." We never had their attitude. He wouldn't like, even--the other people knew about it. So that's not surprising. And that's why we were always living in fear. Every day we knew something is going to happen. And it did, finally it happened, it happened, at a tremendous scale, which is a miracle that we escaped that. Never understood why.

02:09:00

Q: So your family decided to move to the Italian zone?

A: Yeah, and so my sister went out and found--as a matter of fact, she found a house at the outskirts of Grenoble. The Italians, who were making every effort to protect the

Jews, I must say that, they were wonderful. So, as soon as we knew about it, again the great, I knew it, and the only thing the risk was to get over to the Italian zone without a pass and she mentions to go back and forth and then our parents immediately went over there. And I stayed with my sister to pack whatever we had and there again is an example. When we finally get to the station, there was a station master, grumpy guy. And we said, "We want to ship our belongings to this--" "Oh. You can't." "Say why?" "Jewish?" "Yes." Then he says, "It's forbidden." I asked, "Since when?" He says, "Since today." I said, "But that's all we have." He says, "Fine. I just remembered, you shipped it yesterday." The man didn't know us, just an individual, that's what I'm saying. I have some very, very wonderful memories about individuals, some of whose name I don't even know. So we shipped our things, and by that time I came to Montpellier and discovered that my chief that I had--the chief of the Organisation Juive de Combat.²¹ It was first called AJ, Armée Juif,²² and then it was changed to--you have the paper there-- "Organisation Juive de Combat." And I accidentally ran in to him in Montpellier; I was looking for a group. But then we said, he said, "Before we can use you, you have to have French papers," and he says, "I don't know yet if I can trust them or you." And so he handed me over a discharge paper of somebody by the name of Pierre Louis Vignot. I was a little older and I looked extremely young then, I was only about, I must have been just 19, but I looked like a 15, 16 year old boy. I was a skinny little rabbit, I mean, not to say skinny, I was skinny. I was about 125 pounds or something, and he gave me that paper because the Asti Germans had moved in to the occupied, on the non-occupied zone, they disbanded the armistice army, and so somehow, either the piece of paper was real or it was beautifully manufactured, because it was a real discharge certificate of a person by the name of Pierre Louis Vinot, who was born in Béthune, and Béthune we found out later had been totally bombed. The city had been bombed and all the papers of anybody born there were destroyed. So that was convenient. He didn't tell me how to do it, so I just went to the mairie²³ or the city hall, where my parents lived, which was a big mistake because I wasn't officially living there any more. Yes, the underground--he had assigned me a room, a safe room that they had rented.

Q: In Grenoble now?

A: In Grenoble. My parents lived six kilometers or 10 kilometers out of Grenoble in Val d'Eybens. And I went to that mairie because I didn't know any other mairie and I remember being there and the man looking again--it was one of those militia people, an older guy--and he looked at me, he says, "Come back in the back here," and I said, "Uh-oh, he caught me."

Q: The last I remember, you were talking about you were going to the city hall of the--

02:14:00

²¹ Jewish Organization of Combat (French).

²² Jewish Army

²³ Town or city hall (French).

A: Yeah, and there was a militia, a chief of the militia, who was actually processing the--making identity cards.

Q: Okay, I remember, and the man said, "Come with me."

A: "Come in the back."

Q: [Referring to technical problems] Okay. Let's roll the tape. Oh, I'm sorry, I did pick up-- Oh, I'm sorry, okay.

A: Well, I went and I think there was a major mistake which could have cost--there was a major mistake because I went there. I had no address to give. When I went there I realized that the man in charge of the ID cards was a militia man, an officer, and he then went, after I filled out the papers, he filled out the papers, asked me to come in back and looked at me very sternly and I said, "There. I am caught," you know? And all he said is, "Eyes blue, hair brown." All he wanted was to have a look at me because he wants to give the details, and then he said, "Well..." and I knew that when you take an ID card, usually they fill out the papers and then they stamp it and you go home. He said, "You'll have to come back in two weeks from now," and I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, because this--we don't deliver cards any more. It's now very serious and we do it through the prefecture de police," and I didn't know what, and I said, "Fine," and then I left. And then I went to see my chief and he says, "That was a stupid thing to do, but now that you did it, he's either going to have--if you have the courage and you go there, you either--you'll be the only person in the entire region who's going to have an identity without an accomplice, which means--" and then he started to explain to me, because he says, "You're going to be assigned in the manufacturing of false papers and distributing false papers and bringing them over to various places as you can see on that certificate." And I said, "Where is it?" and then he gave me the explanation, he says, "There is virtually nobody who has what we call true-true-false papers--false identity--and if you get that prefecture card, you're going to have the only one with true-true-stamps. There's not going to be an accomplice, so you can never be caught.

02:17:00

The second thing is..." then he explained to me, "...some of them you're going to make and we have rubber stamps and we have forms that we buy," etcetera. "They're not going to be perfect and those are called false-false-false papers. Then there's going to be--you're going to have contacts as you're going on, you're going to work in mairies, and we're going to find some people who we can bribe and they're going to make it at the mairie and keep a record, but that's somebody who's not totally reliable--that's going to be the false-true-false papers. And then we're going to have--somewhere we're going to have a person that is one of ours in the mairie, he's a resistance. But he can be caught and under torture he can tell, that he's going to be again. And those are going to be true-false-false papers. So that's going to be the different categories of papers." And that's after he says,

“But we're only going to use you after you have your own papers, so...” I don't like myself in that picture, so that's, I look like my uncle.

Q: Let me ask you a few questions before we--

A: Did you pick that up, these categories?

Q: Yes, yes. Before we learn more about your underground work, I just want to understand, your whole family is now in Grenoble?

A: Yes, my whole family. I am the only one at that point who is not living with my family; they don't even declare me with them. And we know that there is a comparative safety as compared to Montpellier, where we were under Vichy, but with German, Germans looking down on them, and their tragedy. The Italians prevent this area under their control to be as mean as the Vichy and the German zone. As I mentioned to you until--you asked me if Grenoble, the trip of Grenoble, the only risk we took gravely is that we were traveling back and forth between Grenoble and Montpellier during this move, without the proper papers, which is, which could have led us direct to Auschwitz. You see, the trains frequently were in the control, were controlled by field gendarmerie,²⁴ together with the French police. This is one of the things that I was doing, too--later on--is traveling and knowing where to come up, etcetera. I learned that later, but at that time we just took terrible chances and you know the atmosphere of taking a trip like this and knowing that you are going to be caught, you have a 50 percent chance. It was a terrible ordeal, but we did it and that's what I'm saying. It's the only problem that happened.

Q: Now, when you decided to join the underground--

A: That was in Montpellier.

Q: Right. How did you know about it? How did you decide what organization to join? How did all of this happen?

02:20:00

A: I met a young man. That was a pure accident. I don't remember his name... Abie--his name was Abie, a little fellow. He used to be from Antwerp. He used to be the son of the baker, the man who delivered our bread. He met me once accidentally in Montpellier, astonished that I was there and then told me about the existence of the underground in Montpellier. I don't know what happened to him because he was not in Grenoble later on. And he told me, “You know, you should join. There is a new underground here,” and he is the one who got me in touch. We used to call him Abie the baker boy, you know, because he used to come in the morning and we liked him very much. He used to deliver bread in Antwerp to us. He was a Polish little fellow. And he is the one who talked me into--if I hadn't met him, I don't think I would have ever known about it and that's how I

²⁴ Total force of the gendarme (French).

joined the underground and then again, when I came to Grenoble--oh, no--I met him again in Grenoble. When I was in Grenoble, you know, it's--I happened to come down from--and there he is again. And I said "Abie, what's going on?" and he says, "You know, the same people are here," and then he said, "You met them in the dark, but I know you can meet them in the light." I don't know what happened to Abie after that because he was not part of our group later on.

Q: So there wasn't an agreement in Montpellier to meet with certain people once you arrived in--

A: No, no, because you see, it was only the--almost two days before I left Montpellier that I joined, it was a very secretive--and that's maybe why Toto, the chief, acted a little bit strange in the beginning, because it was such a secretive thing, you know. It was in the dark, you made an oath in the dark on a revolver. I mean it was--I thought it was a lot of--I was sort of a little cynical about it and maybe I acted a little bit supercilious or something because I think Toto told me in the beginning he was very sort of diffident, you know. That's maybe why he handed me that discharge paper saying the hell with it, he's not--I'm not going to do anything special for him, but when I got the real papers and when he saw that I have guts, because he said, "Now it's up to you," and I said, "Would you go?" he says, "The only thing I can tell you, if you ever get those papers, you have the best papers and you're going to be very useful to us. On the other hand, I'm not sure if I would do it in your place because there is a big risk involved." And I said, rather than-- "if I want to do a thing, I'm not joining the underground not to take risks." So I took the risk and got my papers.

Q: Was Toto also in Grenoble?

A: Oh, yeah, Toto was in Grenoble. I had an--I never met him except in the dark, that single day in Montpellier.

Q: So the whole organization moved?

A: The whole organization moved. He actually created, I think, the whole organization, and he and somebody by the name of Simon Levitte created--I think he must have been stimulated by Simon Levitte who was a marvelous guy--created the organization in Grenoble. They even rented a little chalet in the mountains called Le Michallons where gradually all those people started getting together, and it was sort of officially an area where young people got together to sing songs and things like that, but really it was the center. There were two centers at that time, one was in the kitchen of Miss Madame Latchiver in Grenoble.

Q: Who was she?

A: She was just a woman who--a Jewish-Frenchwoman--who was a widow with two children, who somehow got to know the--I think she knew the wife of Toto, and gradually everybody found it convenient to come to her, and she said, "You do whatever

you want,” and in her kitchen was actually the--in her stove was all the rubber stamps and everything was there. And we used to have these, all these sessions in her places and people who came from hiding for a day or two always slept in her place. She was the center of activity in Grenoble and the second place was up in the mountains in Michelon. That's where I got to be assigned of manufacturing and distributing papers. I wasn't the only one. I was one of them, and then later on in Grenoble the Italians had set up two in our area, two nice resort villages that because of the war weren't used. Where they concentrated Jews in various hotels, they called it résidences surveillées,²⁵ but they claimed that this would be that they felt that one day the Germans will push them out and then they will take their Jews to Italy where they're less persecuted, which isn't true, because they were persecuted.

02:26:00

I mean the Finzi-Contini²⁶ thing, you know, but they had--they meant well and actually I think Toto had, from what I understood, had connections with the Italians and had received their guarantees and that's why we left the Italians alone. There was never anything against Italians by the underground, at least by the Jewish underground.

Q: Well, in Grenoble, just the general scene, were there a lot of refugees there from all over?

A: I don't know, again, I was not in the main group. I was just with the underground. There were quite a few, yes, because in the underground we're all Jewish and we were quite a group there. But I was mainly having a small group of very active people, one of them is George Schneck who became--is now the president of the Jewish Consistory in Brussels, of the whole thing. Another one was Adolph, who went to school with me in Antwerp, who then later on became ambassador in Peru, of Israel, he was one of the Shin-Bet people, and there was Toto. There was a pretty large group but we didn't know much about them because we didn't want to know much about them in case we get caught. There was an infiltration of Communists, and I think earlier, when you asked me in the beginning was there ever anybody I didn't trust, I trusted them, but then became very suspicious about two guys, Joe and Max. Max later on became a big wheel in the French Communists after the war, and their girlfriend Charlotte. I think they were selling us down the road somewhere because some people got caught, and I wonder if it weren't those people. The second thing is the French underground had nothing to do with us. They wanted us, to use us only to get the money. They had this idea Jews have money. And we had very little to do with them. But you see, I had a very fine--remember I joined them in November--didn't see them until December or January and only stayed with them from January until August, with our group. So our group had definitive jobs for me. I was making false papers, I was distributing false papers, I was exploring because of my farming skills, I worked with farmers again, and I used to go out with George or others and look for hiding places, should we start, because we were preparing to become a fighting group. At that time we were not yet a combat group, but we were preparing to

²⁵ Supervised residences

²⁶ The title of this film is *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*.

become a combat group. And so I was going exploring with farmers, where we could have hiding places, where we could have strategically located places, and that was my job. In addition to that, I had to bring--once we had manufactured papers--I had to bring them to Saint-Gervais, to Megève, to Nice. I also was a sort of a liaison to Toulouse, which was in the occupied zone, because they felt I had been several times going back and forth without a pass, somehow I had an intuitive feeling on how to get people across, and so sometimes I was just sent over to look, to which they say, "the family's coming,"²⁷ just go in the train and watch what happened and when you go down and you feel that there's an inspection coming, just get down the train and stay, so I did it a few times.

Q: And what would you do?

A: I would just go, I would just sit there in the train while they were there and then when I would look out and I see there's a field gendarmerie. I would go down the train and they would go down the train, too. And then when I thought it was clear I would go back because I couldn't talk to them, you see. Once I--a funny story happened--there was a Jewish family who, they had good papers so nobody's--and then the Germans and the Frenchmen came in and there was a farmer, a typical 100 percent farmer. He was eating. He had a sandwich, he was eating onion, and so suddenly the French policeman said, "You must be Jewish," and there was this whole group of family who were Jewish, they had false papers, but they were Jewish, and they bothered this farmer because he was eating onion. You know if it wasn't so tragic, I would have laughed, because he says, "You are Jewish." He went to check him, brought him back later on, let him go. But these are the kind of things. I was bringing them papers, then, just to make sure that they get themselves out of the trouble, I would show them where to go down, where to go up because I traveled a lot and I knew where it was safe.

Q: Now as Pierre Vinot, you were just considered a Catholic French?

A: Yeah, well, I was living in that place, number 16 Grande Rue, above a bordello, and it was a safe haven because you see, again, they had picked that place and on the first floor there was a bordello, because there was a red light, and so they had picked up because you could go in and out. And then I had this apartment where this woman was living, and I had a little room there, and I wasn't there much either, because most of the time I was in the farms all around, so traveling a lot. Many times I was sleeping at Madame Jeanne, this famous Madame Jeanne Latchiver; she was a marvelous woman. That's where I got to meet all these people who later on were deported, like Marianne Cohen, Mila Racine--all these people who tried to get children over and they betrayed them. Somebody betrayed them, I don't know who--around there--Laubert(ph).

Q: Tell me a little bit about the process of making all these papers and distributing them.

A: That's what I explained to you. Number one, we had--somehow we had a printer, he was a Communist. He was Gregoire I think, he had a printing shop. I didn't have much

²⁷ According to the interviewee, this was a code phrase that the group used.

to do with him, it was Toto again. He would print us the forms, he would make us the rubber stamps, okay?

02:33:00

These forms--we would just get the pictures, have the form where they were just rubber stamps, because my papers had the watermark print, you know the--that was different. If, in an emergency where we had to have quickly some people come over from, yeah, families coming from the occupied zone who would send--I would go over there, bring them the papers, but we would make them. These were little cardboard kind of, kind of cardboard kind of forms. They fold and you fill them out and you stamped them, and they were given. They're worthless because if ever they would check--can I, can you stop one second? I have to blow my nose. See, they were worthless because if anybody checked, really, if the police would have any suspicion, they would get those people over, just make a phone call to a man, you know--there were no computers then, but just call and said, "Do you have any registration?" I would say no, so they were totally false. They were false-false-false papers. Also we had a few people in areas like Domène, etcetera, where I didn't know what the difference was except that I used to go and pick them up. I sit in small city halls. I call them mairies, you know that's--we used to have either employees there, who are accomplices because either they were doing it for money or they were resistance. I didn't know the difference between them, but they would say "Today, go to Domène..." for example, "...Domène, and you pick up a bundle of things." These were registered. In other words, you had the background papers there. If the police called, the guy would say "Yes, they are here, these people," but you had a weakness--they had an accomplice. That accomplice could be somebody that we thought was trustworthy, in which case they were true- false-false; or where there were two true-false; or the guy could be trusted, in that case they were true-true-false. I mean we had all these things, and I would pick them up and bring them over. Now there was always a danger there, either a person was caught and somebody was waiting for me to come and pick them up or the people was a double agent or something like that. It never happened.

Q: Were you afraid constantly that it--

02:36:00

A: No, I was only afraid that if they would stop me I would become nervous and I would show that there's something wrong. I was never--that was a strange thing, not even when I, the most difficult part, even the day that I was conduct--I don't know was. I think it's the youth, the fact that our life was so tense all the time, that these things seemed to be sort of a relief. I don't remember, looking back that I was afraid, except, for example, I remember one day coming back from Saint-Gervais, where I had just given all these papers to the people, distributed them, came back, had nothing, and suddenly there was big, ID check, I'm sorry, ID check. The police was there, the militia was there, etcetera. I wasn't afraid for me, because I had the--but I was afraid that I might not look relaxed and that they would see I'm nervous and then they would start asking them and then I, I might

betray. I was much more afraid ever to be nervous and to betray people, but otherwise I wasn't. And so this was about the life, I was also the liaison person with Toulouse at one time. Toulouse was the other, was the real big center. We didn't--I didn't--know that, but that's where Polonski, who was known at the time by the name of Pol, was running a big operation where most of the people after I left of Grenoble moved to, and Toto moved to Grenoble, to Toulouse, because that became the big center because at one time when the Germans, when the Germans occupied even the Italian zone, there was no more reason to have two centers. So a small group was left in Grenoble. My two sisters, who before I left joined the underground, became much more active than I, because then they had become more of a--they started using the places that I had found. They also were much more active in the false papers business. And I think one of my sisters even got hurt at one point, you know.

Q: Did you have much sense of the overall organization or did you really operate with a few people?

A: Very little sense. I think the organization was still very disjointed. Our operation was one operation and we thought it was all. I only got an inkling later, in Toulouse, but I didn't realize that Toulouse was the major center. I only got--when it became--when I became, I wanted to tell you, after a certain time I could not use--I could not stay Pierre Vinot because as Pierre Vinot I was born in 1919, four years older than I really was.

02:39:00

There was suddenly--the French had suddenly made an order that all people born after--before--1921 had to report to go to Germany. You had to go, mandatory labor, for Germany. At least you had to register, and so I could no longer be Pierre Vinot, and I had to become Arthur Vergnaud. I think it was still Pierre, I have to remember. I don't remember because they weren't exactly good, there was not longer any good for anyone it was one of those little cards made by Domène. I remember the mairie, at which point, one morning, I--I used to sneak in very early in the morning at six o'clock in the morning to my where my parents lived to chop the wood and bring them sometimes the food that I had collected in the farms. And I come there in the morning and there is a little girl, Fischer, she was a neighbor, and she came to me, and she says that--she came to the streetcar and she came up with a little milk thing and she says to me, "You go and pick up the milk," and I couldn't understand this little girl. She was maybe nine years, 11 years old--nine years. She says, "Police," and so I knew I couldn't go home, and so I went. Later on I discovered they got my poor father and my sister, took them all the way to somewhere, and they grilled them all day long by saying, "Where is your son?" and he says, "My son is only four years old." "No, no, no, the other one, the one that's in the resistance, the one that worked there on this farm and there on this farm and he's in the underground and he distributes flyers," and they didn't know what I was distributing so they thought I was distributing propaganda, you know--he's in the underground. And so I knew that somebody had betrayed me because they didn't even know my name, they just knew that I existed and they knew how I looked, and so at which point, when I told this to Toto because he didn't know about it, he said, "Well, I can't use you any more, but we

can use you now because we do want to have more liaisons to Toulouse and we would like to make a channel and you be the guinea pig with whoever you want to recruit to go to Spain,” and I said, “But I thought that Spain is impossible.”

02:42:00

He said, “Exactly. That's why we want you to try it,” because nowadays nobody had crossed to Spain for the last year--smuggled in, because you have a border area. You have 50 kilometers which is zone interite.²⁸ If they catch you, they shoot you, if you don't have a certain color pass, and so it's almost impossible to get over, but we have a passer who we want to use and Toulouse is looking for volunteers that are desperate and then ultimately we'll set our goal that you should then try to get to Palestine at that time because--I forgot to tell you that the, at that time the AG, or the OGC was very Zionist. All wanted ultimately to get to Palestine, and so that's what I'm saying was so--it was such a comedy because they kept on saying, “You go to Toulouse and then you try it and then within 48 hours you have to report to Barcelona, to our agent in Barcelona and they will get you over to...” That was nonsense because it didn't exist, this whole channel was sort of just a trying field. So the first time--I then went with George Schneck, my best friend, we were buddies and, you know, brothers, and I went to Toulouse again, without a pass, without, but I, then I was where I knew. And I got to Toulouse. We were hidden at that time and we were trained for weeks by--in the home of Madame Knout. Her name was Rachel Knout, K-n-o-u-t. I mentioned to you she was the granddaughter of Scriabine, and she was not Jewish but she was married to Knout who was a big wheel in that organization and--oh, no--he was deported, I think. Yeah, Knout was deported, yes. And Rachel Knout, she was a wonderful woman, with her children there, she reminded me of that Madame Jeanne because she had about four or five children. She had the little--and everybody was hiding there, and she was active. She was shot later on, on the 28th of July, 1944, she was shot. There was also another guy by the name of Gerard and he also was shot, later on. And then they send me and George to Nakache. Nakache was a Olympic champion of swimming--swimming champion of 1938 or something like this. He had opened the gymnasium and he trained people physically for the underground.

Q: He was Jewish?

A: Yeah, Nakache was a, Nakache was a--but they didn't know that, see, Nakache was an Algerian Jew or a Moroccan Jew or something like this, Nakache. And he trained us you know, etcetera, and then what happened it--George's family, his mother was, she was from Russia and she was absolutely against him continuing because she said she knows the nihilists, and we're probably going to be--because they did train us how to jump from trains and things like this and so she, I don't know, George decided he wasn't going. So I had to go all the way back to Grenoble and try to recruit different people, which I wasn't, it wasn't such a good bunch because George and I were really idealistic and these other guys, they just wanted to get out. I got five people, one I didn't know, he was from Megève, and I had Nick, Charles and the brothers Levine. And in Toulouse they gave me another guy that was from Antwerp, Armand Herchkowitz, he was the sixth

²⁸ Destruction zone; from “interitus,” meaning “death” (Latin).

guy. So I got six guys and the French underground gave us five more people and I became in charge of this group.

Q: You said the French underground gave you more people?

A: Not me. Yeah, the French underground, like I said, they did not work with us, but Pol Polonski and Jack Roytman, who were the two guys in Toulouse, told us we--because the French underground apparently furnished--supplied--the passer. The Jewish underground was financing it, see that's where we--

Q: But there was a relationship?

A: Oh, yes, there was a relationship, but it was not the real--it was sort of a--you could feel a sort of contempt: "You provide us with money," you know. There was no other interchanging except that I was told in Toulouse, "You're going to get whatever you get. There are going to be five guys and you're going to be responsible for them, too."

Q: There was no sense of a common enemy?

A: Yeah, but that way, like I said, in '43, the population was still very, very pro--not real pro-German, but anti-British, anti-Jewish, and I'm not sure that the--and I had the feeling that the French underground was had only started, the major, the most strongest part of the French underground were the Communists. They were really anti-German, because they were anti-Russian, not for any other reason. They were very unconcerned with what they did to the Jews, and they couldn't care less. The Jewish underground was simply because they felt, otherwise they would have been part of the French underground, but they felt that there was discrimination against the Jews.

Q: So their goals were different?

02:48:00

A: Their goals were different. The Jewish underground, the way I knew it, both in Toulouse and--had an aim to get the Jews as much as they could, either fighting the Germans or getting them to Palestine. That was at that time--the Jewish resistance was very Zionist-oriented. The Communists that infiltrated them tried to switch it differently, made them Communists. The French sort of ignored them except when it came to--at least in my time. Now later on, I think towards the very end, they were working together, but you see the French resistance, no matter what they say, was Johnny Come Lately, you know, all those people that you see in movies, etcetera.

A: Even the second D.B.²⁹ friend, who went through the same place without the French underground, went the same passage and he joined the French army in Algiers, he also said that was, first of all, he could have done without us, secondly they were so

²⁹ Division Blindée, (blind division), (French).

antisemitic in these, in the French army. The French army of liberation, de Clercq and all these people, were terrible antisemites. So I got to Toulouse, I was hidden once in M--by Rachel Knout. I got the training, I went back, I recruited five people, they gave me a sixth one, then after a couple of days they, Pol and Jack, they gave me instructions how, what to do. We got to some place which--it was my memory, I have such a great memory, I can't remember that place--and there we were hidden in the barn. We got the five Frenchmen with us, the five non-Jewish guys and we--and then--his name was Bertrand Borde, yeah, he came. He was about seven foot tall; no secret that I'm a pretty short guy, and most of the people except one Frenchman, one, he was a law student, was the only tall guy. All the others were relatively--I mean my size or even shorter, and he took us for two days in the mountains on a absolutely incredible tempo. Then they abandoned us in the mountains, and then we had another two days without food in the middle of storms, etcetera, and we finally got to Spain.

02:51:00

Q: Now, tell me a little bit about that journey to Spain. Was this a fairly easy crossing?

A: Oh, no, this was a horrible crossing. As a matter of fact, the team--the team after us I think lost three people. Two died and one broke his leg and they had to abandon--they don't know what happened and the next team didn't make it at all.

Q: Why was it so horrible?

A: First of all it was--you start off almost in open thing--in fields where there are German villages, for example. Whenever you crossed, you crossed towards dusk because at night you couldn't see, and when we passed any of those villages, for example, there were Germans in there. And you have to remember, when we passed I had to start--let's see--no, I was always the last one because the guy before that, the passer would go, and then when you hardly see the passer. The next one would go, and by that time it became dark. Then you had to get into fields that go up like this where the people who work in those fields are attached by cords to work in the fields, you know, with a sickle. Then you start, then it became so bad that you have to do it in daylight, and you're absolutely a target there. If they see you, they shoot you. You don't have a pass. The terrain is terrible. After the fields you get into the most horrible rocks and you know the mountains goes up and it goes down. It's north of Honduras and, for example, in the mountains, when you are on the top and you want to start going down, you don't realize that when you go down let's say 100 feet, there's nothing underneath and some of our people almost died this way. There was this guy that I got from Megève, he was the most undisciplined guy ever, and he would just go down there and then he would stop because he almost fell. These were extremely dangerous and then there were paths where you had about, I don't know, this much to slide on the side. I couldn't do it now, it just how we did it. It was just horrible and at times the guide did us--made us do it in the middle of the night, and when I found out what we were doing with the morning when we woke up because then he

would stop, and he would fall asleep because he drank all the time. And then he would say, I would wake up and I says, "Ready to go?" He says, "That." I said, "We did that in the middle of the night?" He says, "You wouldn't have dared to do it during the day." It was physically one of the most dangerous mountain climbing things that you can imagine, besides even if it was August there were patches of ice, and you don't realize it in the mountain, you're seeing sort of a, seeing some snow and you think "Oh, well, that's just snow, that's a patch of ice," which in the mountain looks like if it's a yard and it's 10 yards and you slide down. And once you slide, you go. So there was a dangerous--it was dangerous for two reasons: number one, it was the most impractical thing; that's why he picked it and he knew his way, he was a professional smuggler. The second thing is you were in open; at night it was too dangerous physically, you could kill yourself, and people killed themselves. Secondly, during the day, you were exposed to anybody who saw you--shooting, you know, and the Germans were patrolling. It was a terrible thing to do. I went back there, 1990, to look at the other side. I couldn't believe it. It's the most awe-inspiring mountains that you can dream of. It's north of Honduras. It's a terrible place.

02:55:00

Q: Did the training that they were giving you in Toulouse--

A: Yeah, terrible.

Q: --help you at all?

A: Oh, yeah, because I don't think I could have done it and also the fact that I lived in the mountains of Grenoble and my job was to go all the time in the mountains. I was away sometimes for two days in a row just climbing mountains and looking for things. That was also good training, and I must say in Grenoble, too. I forgot to tell you, Toto had organized a gymnasium there where we would get training, too.

Q: Where you were crossing, did you think you'd make it?

A: No. Once we started, no. After the first day I said, "I won't make it, definitely not." But we had no choice. You remember when you don't have a choice? When you don't have a choice, you can do it. I was with my brother, who is 15 years younger, in 1990, he says, "I cannot believe you did that," because even on the side, on the Spanish side, where it looks much less forbidding, it looks horrible. On the Spanish side. And once we were on the Spanish side, we just went down. It was all the way down and it was fine, but the French side, in the beginning where we started these villages, where we saw the German patrols, I mean we saw the Germans and when that crazy guy who was drunk all the time, he had a big bottle of--he had two bottles, one we brought, because they told us, in the mountains again--the French have this thing that if you don't have calories, drink alcohol, it gives you calories. So here we had sugar and they said take a bottle of wine because when you feel cold in the mountains. So Bertrand took it from us and he

had one himself, and he just kept on drinking. But obviously he knew his job. And he walked at a terrible pace and for example when I started seeing those villages that we crossed and that 11 people--no there were 12 and the passer--we had to go every time to those villages, yes. Those villages that were--I thought we couldn't make it because we're going to get caught. Then, where we passed those villages and I started, he started showing us that we have to go in this open thing and I said, "But we're targets," and he says, "That's the way to do it. Ah," he says, "It's too, so dangerous, the Germans don't venture here," which he probably was right. Then where they abandoned us, and I started realizing, when he said, "You know, you see there's a round lake and there's a long lake.

02:58:00

Once you are out to the long lake, you are in Spain." And I realized that this is--you can see it, but before that you have to climb down and up and down and up and that these are some, some absolutely impossible places to climb up, you know? You go down and suddenly you see that you're over a 300-400 feet drop and that the only thing that you have is a little path going along this thing, and then one of my boys lost his glasses, you know, in a bush and so I had to give him my glasses and I'm--then I became near-sighted you know. I'm not--he was terrible, he was blind like a bat, and so I had to give him my glasses, so you understand. It was a horrible thing. I was sure we wouldn't make it.

Q: Okay. Change of tape.
End of Tape 2

Tape 3
03:01:00

Q: Okay, so you made it into Spain.

A: Yeah, we made it into Spain. It was the--now, you asked me about the sixth that I recruited, the one from Megève was apparently from Belgium. I don't remember his name because he also--I blocked the ones that gave me trouble. He was from Brussels and was supposed to be in the Betar³⁰--which was a Revisionist thing, you know, the Jabotinsky³¹ group--and he, oh, he was a way back. He was big Zionist, you see, but he was sort of very volatile and never listened to anybody. The two, Nick and Charles, they were from Paris. They claimed to be Zionists, but Charles was very subdued. He was just--I think they wanted to get out, and so--because they never joined the army. The brothers Levine, Ira and Simon, they were true Zionists because I think they were from Belgium and from Brussels and they really wanted to join the army, so they were just regular guys. And when we came to Palestine, they joined the army, too. So I think Nick, Nick--he was no good. The other one also joined the army as a matter of fact, so they were real. They weren't the biggest, they weren't my kind of guys. I would have wanted to have George and Ado, you know, who were really hot stuff, but they didn't go. And then the Frenchmen, I didn't know, and--except I had a lot of respect for the law student because he seemed to be the real stuff, and I had an impression that the farmer was the real stuff.

03:03:00

I didn't like the barber at all, I think he was a pimp who just was trying to get out, and I don't remember the other two. They were just, probably just very dull figures and, you know you had, you're so concentrated on what you were doing in the mountains and trying to stay alive every single second, and I was more--I was not afraid. I sure was sure we won't make it, but again if you ask me if I was afraid, no, but I was very, very, very concerned that, because of me, all the others are going to get it, too. That was my only concern.

Q: Didn't you have to trust the people you were traveling with?

A: Yeah, well I trusted--I had no concern about not trusting them, no. No, I trusted them completely. I was very disappointed in the one that I thought was the nicest, Nick, who, as we got in the trench, started holding me responsible for not having cigarettes, for example, and I mean he was a pain. I was a little disappointed also in the fact that, what's his name, the other one from Megève was not very disciplined. I think he should be

³⁰ Vladimir Jabotinsky's Zionist youth movement which peaked during the 1930s in eastern Europe. Cecil Roth, ed., *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971), s.v. "Betar,"

³¹ Jabotinsky, Vladimir (1880-1940), Zionist activist, founder of the Jewish Legion during W.W.I, and head of Betar and Revisionist movements. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971), s.v. "Jabotinsky".

more--he was a Jabotinsky fellow, you know. He should be very disciplined and poor Armand, he had to get out, he had no idea. Armand was the one I got in Toulouse, he was from Antwerp, and he just wanted to get out, no motivation.

Q: So, what happened, there you were in Spanish territory?

A: In Spain, yeah. Suddenly, suddenly--after we got all this ordeal, we were so exhausted, at one point we got to sort of the top of a mountain--about where mountaineers communicate, and suddenly we looked down. First of all we found shreds of identity papers, and so we made a big mistake--we shredded our ID papers, too. We said, "Now we don't need any more French papers," and then I decided I'm going to explore, and I went down because I saw some person. We were so exhausted. We had no more--we hadn't eaten for four days. I went down and I saw a guy and I speak to him and I said, "Where are we here?" and he says he doesn't understand, can I speak Spanish. "Oh," I says, "so we're in Spain." I said, "Is this Spain?" "Oh, sure, España." And so I went to--we went all down. We went to the first village which is called Alos, which is now a ghost village, Alos.

Q: [Interviewer speaking about technical difficulties]

A: Who's doing this? Sorry.
[Technical difficulties]

A: And then I went down and I asked the guy where we--I couldn't care less, we were so desperate. We hadn't eaten for four days, except for the sugar that we still had and I was rationing it and then I saw this farmer. It was a shepherd. He said he couldn't speak French so I said, "We must be in Spain," so that--I said we were right, those ID's meant we were at the border and then we went down and I went to the--and again Nick drove me crazy--he says, "There are bananas here, I need to eat. You're responsible for us." And so I went to the market here, there was a little place called Alos--tiny, little--now it's a ghost village. I went back there. And there was a little place there and there happened to be a little market, and I went there and I said to the woman, "Those bananas," and she looked at me, smiled and she said, "Wait a minute." She went in the back and called the police, and I never knew why. I didn't understand why, because you know, they'd given me instructions--I have to bring these people within 48 hours to Barcelona, and there's a guy by the name of Steinhorn and he's going to be our agent. It's ridiculous because you couldn't get there in 48 hours, you get caught by the police. The reason why, apparently in Spain, in that area of Spain, bananas are called "plátanos,"³² and I said "bananas," she knew I was a French illegal, and see, I was considered French then. And so some guardia civil,³³ you know, the Napoleon guy with an old musket that must have been from the 1870 war, he says "Alto!" and then he put us in a little, local jail and there they kept us for another day without feeding because everybody wanted us to sell, to give our watches, etcetera, against food. Those guys were nobodies, they wouldn't do it--they hadn't seen a windfall like that, 11 people. Nobody has crossed the border for

³² Bananas (Spanish).

³³ Civilian guard (Spanish).

a long time. Then they took us finally to a place called Sort, put us in another jail there for two days, then they took us to Lérida, where they jailed us in a place called Seminario Viejo,³⁴ which says the “Old Seminary,” and there we stayed for a couple of weeks and they shaved us and now it's not terrible, but believe me when you're 19 years and they shaved your beautiful hair, I had a lot of it then, you feel terrible, especially everybody can see you're a convict. And then they finally shipped us over to Barcelona--oh--first they put us in a camp called Miranda and then they shipped us to Barcelona.

Q: How long were you in Miranda?

03:08:00

A: Not very long, that was only four days, because--

Q: What was that like?

A: It was just--that was funny because, that was funny because they had us divided in--everybody's Canadian, see everybody was Canadian, Canadian-Belgian, see, because the government of Spain, Franco, had made an arrangement that he's not going to repatriate anybody who is army age and is Canadian, so everybody is saying--we all said we were Canadians, and so they knew better and so they said, “Yes? Canadian? Born where?” And then you know, there were Belgian-Canadian, Polish-Canadian, Czech-Canadian, but I didn't stay there very long. They decided to ship me to Barcelona because I was French-Canadian. I didn't say at that time that I was Belgian, okay? I was Belgian, but I certainly wasn't going to say that I was, how do you call it, no nationality at that time. And so I went to--they had given me an address to see a guy by the name of Sequéra, who is the head of the Joint in Barcelona. He's a Portuguese guy, a Jew. And we woke him up and he didn't want to--it was on a Sunday--he didn't want to come to see us and then I said, “You have to,” and then he said--and then I gave him a password, which was the name of a person. I didn't even know what it was--a name of a person who was apparently a very important person in Switzerland--Jeff Roytman. It's a Frenchman, but as soon as I said “Roytman” he opened the door and then he found out that we weren't--I said I was French. “Can't take care of you.” The only people who he could take were stateless people, so I should have said, “No, I'm stateless.” “No, you have to go to the French.” The French wanted to take me right away and send me to Morocco, but then I didn't want to go, no, to Algiers, because at that time the French government had appointed a general, Giraud,³⁵ who was a turncoat--only two weeks before he was being a Fascist, so I said, “Oh, no. I just remembered I'm born in Belgium, I'm Belgian,” so they shipped me over to Madrid.

³⁴ Old Seminary (Spanish).

³⁵ Giraud, Henri Honoré (1879-1949), French general who resigned from his co-presidency of the French Committee of the National Liberation after experiencing differences with de Gaulle. *World History* (New York: Henry Holt Publishing, 1994), 434.

Q: What was the--how did you get from the Seminary to Barcelona?

A: Because they bused me.

Q: But all of a sudden the Spanish authorities released you to the Joint?

A: Yeah, because--there must be intervention--because at one time I was released even in Lérida for a little while, because I think the various embassies and I think the French embassy got us out. I don't know how because one day I found myself in a hotel in Lérida. We didn't ask any questions. We were so happy because, you see, in--that was terrible, there in the Seminario Viejo. You couldn't get close to the window because they would shoot you, you know. They were sitting there, the guards, and they were playing around as your shadow came, okay, I'm going to shoot, because they would get 50 pesetas or something if they could shoot the prisoner. And so we--we're sitting in this filthy place. You couldn't get close to the window and it was hot like hell--that means it was I don't know, August, September. Clearly, it was very hot. Then one day we were released to a hotel and we stayed there. Then one day they shipped us over to Miranda and then four days later they called us up and they shipped us to Barcelona and I didn't know why. Then I went to the French, to the French Consulate. They were very happy. They were going to register, and then I said, "Where are you going to send us? I want to go to England." He said, "No, no, no." We're going to Algiers. I said, "But this is Giraud. I want to go with de Gaulle." "No, you can't." I said, "But he only last week was still a Fascist, he still was helping them round up the Jews." He says, "Well, now he's with us." So I said, "My memory just came back, I'm born in Belgium." "Oh, now we can't take you," so they sent me to--"Say, oh, you can join the Foreign Legion." I said, "No, not for me," so I went to Madrid, and I arrived in Madrid, and I went to the embassy. I said, "I am Belgian." He said, "What's your name?" "Einhorn." "You got papers?" I said, "No." "Oh, then we can't. Then you have to go to stateless, but since it's the weekend, we'll keep you here over the weekend," and then I met all my other Belgian buddies and they said, "Why didn't they take you?" I said, "I don't know, I'm born in Antwerp." I said, "I speak French and Flemish, as you can see." One of them didn't even speak French. He says--so one of them says, "By the way, are you Jewish?" I says, "Yes." He says, "That's why. They are basically fighting the same on the side of the English, but they're just as antisemitic as the Germans." And so I said, "Fine, if they don't want me, I'll manage" and so I went to the stateless, stayed there a little while until there were and then tried to get to Portugal, we got caught and came back to Madrid and from Madrid then I heard about that boat that went from Cádiz to, Portuguese boat. And there were other refugees and so I went.

Q: But you were staying in Madrid with a number of other refugees?

A: Yeah, there were lots of them, but they had been there a long time. They had been there a long time. You see, what happened is--that's why everybody was so suspicious about me, because for a long time, people had not managed to get to Spain. The people who were in Madrid, there was a large colony of Jewish people who had been there since

'41 or '40, you know, when it was still--before the Americans got into the war, there was some kind of a pipeline, but after--definitely after '42, once the Germans had occupied the whole thing, nobody had passed, so I was a newcomer and everybody was so eager to know everything. But at the same time they wondered if I wasn't being a spy. And that's what happened again when I got finally to Haifa. For three months I couldn't join the army until they cleared me. And then when the CID cleared me, I could join the army.

Q: So you found out about the boat from Cádiz?

A: Yeah, it's called the *Nyassa*.

Q: And where was it headed?

03:15:00

A: To Lorenço Marques, in Mozambique. Lorenço Marques. But it stopped in Port Said and then it stopped in Haifa and so we disembarked in Haifa.

Q: Was there any problem in getting on the boat?

A: No, no, no, no, no, no, no. The Joint Distribution over there, with the American Friends and Joint Distribution, the Quakers and the Joint were working together and they were trying to get refugees out of there, so they heard about the boat. I didn't hear about the boat. They asked the people who wanted to go and I was, well, of course I want to go. As a matter of fact they asked us if we wanted to go to Port Said or Haifa or Lorenço Marques. Some people chose Lorenço Marques.

Q: Tell me about your arrival in Palestine.

A: Well, for me, it was an emotional thing. I saw it and I--that's what I wanted, and they put us in a camp called 'Atlit. 'Atlit, which is now, I think a prisoner camp for the Arabs or something, but 'Atlit was just a camp, it was--and there people were trying to either make you join the army or go to a kibbutz or free and then a lot of family came. I had family but they for some reason didn't come, and then I finally got--after a few weeks got liberated from there. I was one of the last ones, because apparently, I found out, I was investigated and then I left and went to see the relatives I had, stayed a few, went to a kibbutz for a little while, then when I was ready for it when I met with Eliahu Golub and he told me, "You should join the army, we want people trained for later on for the Haganah."³⁶

Q: What were your first impressions of Palestine? What was it like?

³⁶ "...the underground military organization of the *Yishuv* in Erez Israel. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1971), s.v. "Haganah."

A: It was, if you didn't have the emotional attachment, it wasn't very attractive then. It was--Tel Aviv was two major streets. Everybody said, "Doesn't it look like a little Paris?" I said, "No it doesn't," you know. There's a lot of sand. People would show you a little tree that was that big, "See, this is a tree." And I said "Yes, but I came from a country with trees." You know, it was--you had a feeling that something, the Kibbutzim were very interesting. But in the cities I felt that they weren't that motivated at that time. There was a lot of, there wasn't much work; people were struggling a lot. It was really a struggling country. I'm very glad I saw it then, because they used to tell me compared to what it was, it's great and I can tell you, compared to what it was then, that country now is an absolute marvel. I don't understand, I think the Jews were wrong; they should have waited another five or 10 years and nobody would have wanted this country, you know? The Arabs was leaving, there was virtually nothing there for the Arabs. The Arabs were miserable. The British didn't let the Jews help the Arabs and they were selling dirt, I mean, rocks for nothing, for huge amounts. The people who owned that land weren't those poor Arabs, those were the rich ones sitting in London, in Switzerland, the big guys who were selling the land for, there was nothing there. I tell you now, when you see how nice and fertile, what they made of that country, it was--the only thing is, Galil was nice, it was green, but most of the country was just rocky, sandy. It was people struggling.

03:20:00

Q: What about the energy of the people?

A: They were very--they had to be energetic; there were no choice. That was a tough country, you know, the sands. I worked in kibbutz. I mean--and these guys were such idealistic people. Then it was, now they are different because they're a normal country.

Q: How did you relate to it?

A: Well, I had trouble with the language. You see, I knew--I was from a religious family, but I only knew the biblical Hebrew, you know. I thought the people were very nice, the young--you remember I was young then. It's not--when you're older you don't make rapport, as a young person, I made rapport, but I didn't stay very long as a civilian. I went to the army and in the army it was a very, it was different people, some of them were there because they couldn't make it in civilian life, you know, and others were there because they believed in it and others were there to become--because the Haganah told them to go and they go in the army. And I had two good friends with whom I still have relations at this time. They were really motivated guys and one is still a farmer in Nahalal.

Q: So you decided to join up?

A: I joined. Well, that's because that's what I did. That's what I left the underground for, it was my aim then. I had--I'm now in America, but my thing was, "Never again."

03:21:00

I had seen people and I remember. I was subjected where the--I was in the subway--once was in the occupied zone and it said the Jews can only be in the last wagon of the train. Here I saw these other people with the yellow star. I wasn't wearing one, but I've seen them. You know that's not... I don't think that in the last 50 years black people have been discriminated, in this country, as much as the Jews have been discriminated. I'm not talking about when they were slaves, but the discrimination against the Jews was awful and I didn't want to have this and I said, "Never again." I was the first one in my family that said, "Never again." It just turned out for professional reasons, finally, I didn't go back to Palestine, but my sisters did and my brother.

Q: Okay, so tell me about the early experiences.

A: Early was a regular--the army experience was we were not treated very well by the British because we were Palestinians.

03:22:00

They prevented--there was an infantry group that they sometimes--first the early part of the war, before I was there, there was some real combat troops that got prisoners in Greece and everybody fought in Greece and in Tripoli, etcetera. Then they decided--well--became very concerned about us because the Haganah. And so they assigned the infantry mostly to guard duties in the desert, etcetera. Then most of us found out about it, so we all joined--most of us--the Royal Army Service Corps, which were the truck drivers, because they were really suspicious about these, so they shipped them to Egypt and Italy, so I was--I, by accident, got into the Royal Army Medical Corps and I was only a high school graduate, but when I enlisted it seems that the colonel, the recruiting colonel, knew that Montpellier, where I had my baccalaureate, had the oldest medical school. I wasn't allowed to even join it. So he put me in the Royal Army Medical Corps, and I was then shipped to Cairo. I wanted to be a combat soldier so I asked for my transfer to the infantry, which they did, and they thought I was crazy, so they retrained me again as a combat guy and then they shipped me finally to Italy as a driver. I had to learn to drive in Italy on the fields, the mine fields. I had to learn how to drive trucks. And that was my experience. So we moved from the south of Italy up to the north; we were combat troops.

Q: All Jewish troops?

A: All Jewish. And then while I was there, in Italy, the Jewish brigade was formed, and so I asked my transfer from where--from my company to the Jewish brigade, which they gave me, and I became part of the Jewish brigade, and I was in the 178 company, which I was very happy, because our company was the major company who smuggled kids out of the camps and illegally brought them to Israel and that's why we were disbanded. And I suppose yeah, we were disbanded because of that, because they caught a ship that was filled with--by--our troops. We were the famous 178 and 179 company who did the marvelous job, including the truck drivers, and so illegally we went into

Austria, etcetera, where they had just the displaced persons and many of our soldiers remained. Not me because I was not the Sabra³⁷, you know, but they left many of our soldiers in Germany, brought out the illegal ones and under the name of--for this discharged soldier. They entered Palestine and then the papers came back and all the time like this. They also did a marvelous job, our company, in smuggling and, yeah they were disbanding troops and they were--they used to have--driving the trucks with weapons into the camps to discard them and drove out until they got caught in France and Bordeaux. One day, they did this stupid thing, they did this in the middle of an election day and suddenly they saw trucks and trucks of Jewish trucks, with the star, going through Bordeaux and they got caught. That's why we got disbanded.

Q: What were your responsibilities in the Jewish brigade? Where were they?

03:26:00

A: We were just--a private. I was a private. I was trained and then I became a Royal Army medical orderly in the medical corps and I was assigned to a hospital, a field hospital in Egypt, and then I was retrained again to the infantry and then I was sent to Italy and I was just--I was just driving people, transport, yeah. We went through mine fields, etcetera. I mean, I saw people blow up behind me and in front of me, but I wasn't fighting with a rifle. I had a rifle, I had actually a tommy gun, but--

Q: This was as part of the Jewish brigade or before you--

A: Both.

Q: Both?

A: Yeah, because before the Jewish brigade, I was just a regular army--I mean I was an enlisted man. I did what they told me to do.

Q: Was there an excitement about being part of this?

A: Yes, very much so. Yeah, that was--I mean I applied it. I still have my--I didn't bring it--but I have my application. As a matter of fact I, they subjected me to psychiatric examination because they said, "You are in the most privileged corps in the British army." I had such a low number, you know. Everybody has six numbers but there was so few foreign people in the medical corps, they thought I was crazy. People would give an arm to be in the medical corps and there I am in the medical corps and I ask to be transferred back to the Jewish, to the infantry. I said, "I came to fight here." And I remember I went to see a Major Griffith. Major Griffith, he was a typical you know, tall, handsome, not too bright, you know, that's what they said, typical of the British officer. And I went to see him, I said, "I'm here in holding camp and I came here to fight." He

³⁷ Native of Israel. Jeffrey Wigoder, ed., *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Facts on File, 1992), s.v. "sabrah."

says, "There's nothing I can do about you," and two weeks later I was shipped out to Italy. But I mean, you were, I was young, I had come to join the army, not as one of the guys for the--because you couldn't find a job or something. As a matter of fact I was, in the three weeks that I, three months that I was a civilian in Israel, I first was in a kibbutz, but later on I was even a diamond polisher for two and a half months because everybody was convinced being born in Antwerp, I must know how to polish diamonds. I had a job.

Q: While the war was on, you were primarily in Italy?

A: Egypt and Italy.

Q: Egypt and Italy?

A: Yeah. Also in Palestine because I was in Serafand. I was trained in Serafand, then I went to Egypt, then I was retrained in Serafand, then I went to Egypt again, and then I went to Italy and then as the war finished, we moved up to Belgium, Holland, France.

Q: Where were you when the war finished? What was happening?

A: The war finished, I was in Tarvisio, near the Yugoslav-Austrian border. We were ended and we walked there. We used to go to Austria, Klagenfurt--that's when nobody ever had been a Nazi, nobody ever, they didn't even know what you were talking about if you asked them for the Nazi. All 64 million Germans were amongst the 65,000 anti-Nazi's, all 64 million of them. And then we--but they didn't let us be at all long there, they moved us immediately up to Belgium because they didn't want to have the Jewish troops in Germany. We went straight to Belgium, stayed in Belgium for a little while, Leuven, and then Antwerp, and from Antwerp we went to Breda. From Breda went to Scheveningen and from Scheveningen went to Calais and then they caught our company in smuggling these things so they disbanded us and sent us to Qassasin, in Egypt, at the border near Suez, and then they kept us there for about six weeks to two months.

Q: When was this?

A: Probably at '46, I think. It was just a year after the war, you know, because we were--I was in occupation for a year, yeah.

Q: Where were you as the war was finishing?

A: That's what I said, Tarvisio.

Q: You were in Tarvisio?

A: Yeah.

Q: Were you fighting?

A: No, we were--yeah--we were driving. Yes, we were fighting, I mean, they had very few fighting jobs actually, the Jewish. I had two of my friends got wounded; we were on patrol sometimes. Yeah, but I was in the, you know, in the army--only a very small number of people actually on the front line. I was on the front line. I was a combatant, but not in, within the transport service.

Q: How did you learn the war was over?

A: Oh, we learned the war was over. We were there, we were--somebody came and said the war is over, I mean we expected it any time. I mean, an officer, I think Captain Gileladi, came in and says, "The war is over," and we got drunk. Did I get drunk! And I hadn't, since I was the youngest one in my company. They put me on guard duty. I didn't know where my rifle was I was so drunk.

Q: And the people in this community didn't know Nazis, I mean, basically, after the war?

A: Tarvisio, the Italians, no Italian, you know. We respected the Italians because many of the Italians had helped the Jews. Oh, we were very fond of the Italians and we were in Italy and the Italians were really not racist, there was a small group that has done a lot of harm, just like in Holland, you know. A lot of people in Holland died, but it wasn't because of the people, there were quite a few, you know Holland wasn't all that kosher about the Jews, but in Holland a lot of Jews, disproportionate amount of Jews, were deported. In Italy, also this problem because there weren't that many Jews in Italy and a lot of them were deported and died, but that was because at that Graziani, that, you know, after Mussolini's, Mussolini's downfall, you notice a group of die-hard Fascists that suddenly applied very much the rules and that's where in Italy. But most of the Italians we felt had helped the Jews and so the population, we believed them when they said they weren't Fascists, but we didn't believe the Austrians.

Q: What did you do about it?

A: Nothing. Absolutely.

Q: When you were in all of these places--

A: Oh, were we watched, they never let us out, I mean, even the week that we traversed Germany, we were just kept in our camps you know, we knew they wouldn't.

03:33:00

Q: So in this year after the war, nine months after the war, where you were moved around? What were you doing?

A: I was a soldier.

Q: I know, but the war was over.

A: Guard duty. No, we did, a soldier--what do the soldiers now do: we trained; we transport things; we have guard duty, just like--and in the military, you know, people think that military's spend their lives fighting, even in the America, even in Desert Storm, maybe 10 percent of the people are actually joined the fighting. The support group is, even in the underground--the combatant were only a small group. See, when I was in the underground, my major thing was liaison, smuggling, providing false papers--even occasionally bringing over some weapons that they had, some poor old rusty weapons or something, which I used to carry in the violin case, you know. The army was not in tremendous experience, nothing to it. I just wanted to join and I would have liked to be fighting, but very small numbers did.

Q: So after you were disbanded, what were your plans? Where did you go?

A: I went immediately back to France to study medicine.

Q: Did you go to find your family?

A: Oh, my family. I had found my family. Oh, I'm sorry. See, my family, after I left, there was an agreement that my sisters would join the underground and that if things were too rough so that they couldn't continue to care for my family, they would be helped to go to Switzerland. So my parents and my two younger siblings, one was about five, yeah, and the other one was 10 or 11, they were smuggled over to Switzerland, where they were interned. You know it now, but those Swiss weren't all that right. The Swiss have turned back many, many Jews, more than the Spanish, and fortunately my brother was little because you had to have a child with you who was less than five years or four years, or you would turn back to the Germans. And I had my, if you ever saw that picture, "The Boat is Full" or something like this, horrible what the Swiss did. But anyhow they were in Switzerland. My sisters, after the war, moved back to Paris. When I--but we had a good arrangements for years, I wrote to my--when I was in Spain even, I corresponded with them in France through the General Post Offices. We had this arrangement always to write to each other through General Post Office, so I knew what was happening to my sisters and then I knew that my parents were in Switzerland because they communicated with their brother in Palestine, they had a brother in Palestine. So I knew that they were in Switzerland and then I knew what--my sisters could write to Switzerland. Even from the underground, you could write.

03:36:00

And so I knew where they were and then I found my family. At first I found my sister in Paris, and then when the war was over, immediately my parents moved back to Antwerp and so I saw my parents, my father first, when he joined, when I was with the Jewish Brigade in Belgium. So I saw my father and then later on I was stationed in Antwerp, and my parents were living there, and I helped my parents get to Israel and they left. They

didn't want to stay in--because my mother saw all those dead people, you know, when she walked in the street for her--this street, her brother, who was no longer there, her sister, her brother-in-law, her nephew, I mean, she only saw ghosts and she had a lot of people of her family that were killed so she didn't want to stay and my sisters, who had done such a beautiful job in the Jewish army, had become very Zionistic and so they went to Israel and they stayed there.

Q: It must have been wonderful to see your parents again.

A: I can tell you, that was something. And my brother who was so little had become a fair eight, nine year old. It's been good, the feeling that this family was totally intact. That was the--because none of the families who had stayed had been intact. I mean, one of my aunts, Dora, and her husband and two of her children, one never came back, one came back from Buchenwald, but he was very disturbed. One was in Buchenwald and one never came back. And the second one never came, my brother, the brother of my mother, never came back and the older sister plus her daughter never came back, so that, for my mother, we all used to live within two or four blocks of each other and the only ones that were saved are the ones had a brother, for some reason one of the brothers of my mother, he was a Mexican. I don't know for some reason he was Mexican, but he was Mexican, so he got out of the country with all his four sons. And the second one, she managed, also before, as soon as the war was over, she was gone. Oh, that's the one with--the mother of the people in Nevers. So those people were saved because they left before the war.

Q: So your feeling is that your family, by basically running away, was able to save itself.

A: Not only that, and the fact is that we joined the underground and that I still feel that we Jews were much too passive. And those who weren't passive, either they died for a cause or they didn't die. That's my feeling. That's why I never feel that appeasement works and I still don't understand why, when everybody knew they were dying they didn't make something like the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw. If you have to die, somebody has to pay for it. And that's why, I mean, right now I get afraid of--occasionally, I get worried about things, but then I wasn't, because it wasn't because I was a hero. I was not, I was just a meek, little fellow, but the thing is, I kept on saying, "We're going to die." I was sure we were not going to make the war, because that was the feeling. Things were, you know every day you would hear. You had no news except that Europe was shrinking, taking Russia out of this thing, you know, Russia was disappearing. England was bombed for 76 days in a row and you know when you heard the BBC, whenever you used to hear the BBC, and then you wouldn't hear. We're going too, we lost there, we lost Tripoli, we lost Benghazi, we lost this, nothing happened. You were just going to Toulouse and then you had an impression that they were negotiating and you had the feeling as a matter of fact, you had a feeling it can't happen. It can't, we are going to be lost and I didn't join the underground because I thought that we would liberate. I thought I joined the underground mainly because if we going to die, we must be dying fighting. I was convinced, just like I was convinced when we went to Spain that we're not going to make it, but at least I tried.

I'd always this feeling, you have to try and you know I'm a little bit always looking back and I said, I don't understand why, when you knew you were going to die, you were lined up near the stove, near the crematorium, why didn't you turn around and kill a German? You can't be deader than that. You're going to be dead in half an hour in the oven. That was my feeling, and I think when looking back those years, I don't think I was a hero or anything, I just lived. And I was surely going to die and if you're going to die, it's almost like sometimes I feel, somebody asked me what would you do if somebody told you in six months you are going to die, then I would like to know what I'm going to do for the next six months. And I think all this war I had always this feeling, I'm not going to make it, nobody's going to make it, no Jew is going to make it, but we have to make them pay dearly.

Q: What do you think about your background and your growing up gave you this edge or this conjecture? That it had made you feel this way, when a lot of people, as you said, were more passive?

A: I don't know, because I, no, I--maybe yeah--when I was in Antwerp, I joined a Zionist organization and it was not the Betar, but it was an organization which felt also, don't give an inch. But I don't think that did it. I don't know, I have the impression it's that feeling that we were a very close family and we used to discuss those things and my father had this attitude, don't trust anybody. And he had this, he said, like Einstein, antisemitism is like a shadow, it follows you everywhere, so you better be prepared and when he showed me, you know he always repeated the notion: "No, I'm going to be a Belgian and I'll be an equal," and when it came out, we started saying--my father came back and smack in his face and he says, "You imagine, a Frenchman hitting me and calling me dirty Jew when we are having this fight against the Germans." And the same thing happened again. I started thinking he was right. And then when I start getting occupied and we heard about all the shrinking of the free world, said, "We don't want to make it." Now, how we going to make them pay?

03:44:00

That's, I think it was not my upbringing that made it mostly. I think it's the desperation.

Q: When you were living in Antwerp originally, you were a fairly religious family. During these war years, did you pay any attention to religion or to holidays, or to anything like that?

A: Oh, yes--we didn't--no--during the occupation? No. As a matter of fact my father allowed us--he didn't eat trayf³⁸, he never ate--I mean, he ate meat, but it had to be beef, etcetera. He let us eat anything we wanted, when we could find it. Remember, for a long time we could just eat whatever we found, sometimes dandelions on the streets.

Q: Was religion important to you at all during this period, psychologically?

³⁸ Non-Kosher food or drink (Yiddish).

A: No, it has never been, too. I'm more religious now than I was. No, I think I was rebelling a little bit against my father's religion. I was more ethnically identified. I was starting to rebel a lot against religion. I like much more the tradition. I was very, when I heard traditional praying, etcetera. I--it was more like I can go to a church now, I love to go to cathedrals. My wife says, "One day you're going to convert because you love so much the cathedrals." I like the liturgy, etcetera, but I wasn't religious then and during the war. I went, after the war, through a tremendously anti-religious feeling, because I felt if God had permitted that, it isn't possible that we had the right religion or something. And until this day I can't understand what happened, as far as religion is concerned.

Q: Did you resent being a Jew during the war?

A: No. Never. That's one thing I felt, no, no. As a matter of fact, until--it took me a long time and until that day that I was caught by this--and I still say I am Jewish--feeling now I am ready. All I had to say was no, and they would have accepted it, because I had the papers saying Belgian born, etcetera. They didn't know any better.

Q: Another thing I want to ask you about, and it'll just be a couple more minutes, if you had any impressions of some of the underground leaders in Toulouse that you want to share?

A: No, I met only Pol, and I met the one that later on became a relative of mine, Jacques. I had the impression that they weren't organized well. That gave me the impression that they took chances, and as a matter of fact, I think Jacques, two weeks or three weeks after he got my--we wanted, we kept--was caught and sent to Buchenwald, but I could have said that he would be caught because he looked--he wasn't really acting like somebody who is relaxed, and I had the impression like when they sent us over to Spain, gave me this thing, 48 hours after you arrive there you have to be in Barcelona and report to Secera and then you will meet a fellow by the name of Steinhorn.

03:48:00

Steinhorn didn't even know he was the agent. And then he gave me another name of somebody--Croustillon--and I remember Croustillon, he didn't. He also didn't know he was a liaison and they were both very, very unimpressive people, the ones that I saw. But Pol apparently did a nice job, I just didn't know him. But my impression then is probably wrong, because they did have a good organization, but not when I met him. See, I was a guinea pig, remember. They had time to organize themselves, to solidify themselves, to polarize; but when I was there it was a fledgling organization.

Q: Just trying to get a sense of what kind of people some of those leaders were--but you didn't know them well?

A: No, he was a, I don't know, he was a very short fellow, a very small fellow, with a heavy Polish accent; and Jacques was a very energetic, very strong, mysterious guy, but he acted mysterious so that you could pick him up and I was very fond of him. He died

recently of cancer, but he became one of my dearest friends. There were some people like Maurice Jourdan, Ado, George, they all had it, but I think they were not yet organized.

Q: Anything else you want to add?

A: No, simply if you want to see maybe the thing of this. [displaying photo]

Q: Yes, we do want to.

A: This shot here, this was the Organisation Juive de Combat.

03:50:00

Q: [Speaking to cameraman] Can we get this?

[Technical dialogue]

You know what, we're going to have to do this--I do want to do this-- do this. I want, I do want him to show, I want to make sure that he can see them. You tell us what they are.

A: That's the certificate of the--this is document attesting my activities and describing it during the war in the organization. I mainly show it, show you the name of the organization which is Jewish--Organization of Combat, which was referred to as OJC. This is signed by the--this is not the station, by the commander--whether you, now you can show it--by the commander of the Jewish underground and Toulouse captain Loeb and countersigned by the command, the French command of the army of the region. The other document, you want to see this one that she has asked me to show you, is my discharge from the Jewish Brigade; and this here is the paper that I received when I was--that points out that I'm an illegal, that I have entered illegally Spain, and this was a paper that was stamped, every single day we have to report to the commander here, see, because we were illegals; and this was after I was discharged from jail, so every week we had to go and have this stamped at the commander; and this here attests that I have entered clandestinely, clandestinely.

03:51:00

It says, "clandestinamente."³⁹ This was the paper, it says, "clandestinely entered Spain"; and then finally, here is a certificate issued to me that I had tried to register--to register at the pre-medical faculty of sciences in Montpellier, but was rejected because I did not meet the Jewish quota of people admitted to the university, for racial reasons. And that's about it. Thank you.

Conclusion of Interview.

³⁹ Clandestinely (Spanish).

