

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Theodore Feder
June 2, 1995
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PREFACE

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THEODORE FEDER

June 2, 1995

Abstract

Theodore [Ted] Feder was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on February 21, 1914. His family was originally from Stolbtsy [Stowbtsy], but, before Ted was born, there was a pogrom in the area and his family moved to Milwaukee. In college, Ted's sister Sara befriended Golda Meir. Ted was surrounded by Zionism; his sister and Golda headed a Polish Zionist group in Milwaukee. While Ted was working at Fort Knox, during World War II, as a warrant officer adjutant, he decided that he wanted to go overseas to see if he could help rebuild Europe after the war. He applied to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration [UNRRA] and was put on a ship with 400 other men on the day the atom bomb was dropped. After landing in England, Ted made his way to Germany and was involved with documentation and keeping statistics about where people were repatriating to. After six months, he left and joined the Joint Distribution Committee [JDC]. As part of the JDC, Ted was involved with the distribution of supplies and other necessities, such as psychiatrists, to DP camps. He was also involved with creating employment for residents of the DP camps. Although the UNRRA was in charge of supplying the necessary materials, that was only the bare necessities, and the JDC was the organization that enhanced the diets and lifestyle of those in the DP camps. He met his wife, who (at the time of this interview) does research at a New York hospital in White Plains in the field of geriatrics, while working for the JDC, and has three children, a son in England with two boys and two daughters in New York, both with two children. While working with the JDC, Ted also met Oskar Schindler and gave him money, through the JDC, to start another factory in South America. In the final tape of this interview, tape four, Ted explains what is happening in several pictures he has of his time in Europe.

Transcript

Interviewer: Ted, I need you to begin by telling me your name, where you were born and your date of birth.

Theodore: Okay. I'm called Ted, but my name is Theodore D. Feder. I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And I had two sisters and a brother, and a mother and dad.

Interviewer: The year of your birth?

Theodore: Pardon?

Interviewer: The year of your birth? The year of your birth?

Theodore: Must I? February 21, 1914.

Interviewer: Why don't you tell me a little bit about your family and personal background; reconstruct it?

Theodore: Let me start in the place called Stolbtsy [Stowbtsy], S-t-o-l-b-t-s-y, formerly White Russia, now Belarus, where a family was growing up. The family had a hotel, which was

used as a way station for Jews going to Palestine. This was a tense century. My two sisters, not my mother, she was a very strong-willed person, were influenced by a man called Zalman Shazar, who later was president of Israel. With the pogroms in that area, they moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and there the family had a delicatessen, a grocery. The two daughters went to grammar school and high school. And in college, one of my sisters, Sara, Sara Feder, became friendly with a woman by the name of Golda Meyerson -- I have a picture to prove it -- who later became Golda Meir. And there are pictures somewhere in my archives about Golda taking me to kindergarten. Now, it isn't that I was influenced by Golda at that age, but I was in a grouping where, as a youngster, I was sort of pulled in. And that was in Milwaukee. There was a Polish Zionist group, headed, of course, by Golda and my sister. And so I can't say that in my mother's milk I was given Zionism, but I certainly grew up with it and I had a great love for my sister Sara. I followed her around like a little dog. And slowly, all of this began to come to a point. Now Golda, after World War I, decided to go to Palestine. She told her husband, "I'm going. Do you want to come? Do. If not, stay here." He went. When it came to my sister, she said the same thing to her husband, and then stopped. And so my sister didn't go to Palestine, but was one of the founders of the Pioneer Women Organization in the United States, where for close to 25 years she was one of the leaders. Throughout all this period and also during the war, when I was in Fort Knox, anyone who really wanted to know knew what was happening in Europe. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency had all kinds of information, speakers coming to the Louisville YMHA because I was at Fort Knox, which was near Louisville, and as a warrant officer adjutant I also read documents that had information, not too much, about the struggles that were going on in Europe, mainly from a military point of view. All of this decided me that what I really wanted to do for my life was to go overseas, when it was over, and see if I could be helpful.

Interviewer: What year are you talking about when you got -- started getting information about the Jewish situation?

Theodore: This was after the war started, 1941. I was at Fort Knox from 1941, and I ended my stay there on a day that a document came through from General Marshall, and I even have a copy of it, in which the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration [UNRRA] was asking for staff to be allowed to leave the army and come overseas and work for the United Nations. I immediately put in. Maybe one of the reasons that I was able to get in was that I had had a small association with the United Nations at Fort Knox when one day we were asked to pick 30 drivers about the same age, same height, and I did it. And there were commendations from the commanding general about how well we did it. And when I put in my application to the UNRRA, I put that in as well. And I think that may have tipped it, when I came overseas with the UNRRA, and that was a saga too, because it was on a ship with 400 people that had left the army to go into Europe with the UNRRA, and we left on the day that the atom bomb was dropped. So everybody on that ship was unhappy because they would have been discharged if they stayed, but they went along. We landed in England, and something happened there that was important, as far as my knowledge of what was happening in Europe. At the headquarters of the UN, the UNRRA in Washington, they were very adamant that we, as members of the Armed Forces, and the UN, should not get involved in the black market.

Don't take hard currency, take traveler's checks. You can't get into the black market. I thought it strange that that was something that was being talked about. When in London, I needed some pounds. The only place I could go to was the US Army Finance Office. When I got there, I saw a long line of 300 or 400 men, officers, G.I's. I got in line. We -- I was dressed in an officer's uniform, with a tab on my shoulder saying UNRRA. None of them had ever seen anything like that, so I was a curiosity. And after I answered their questions, I asked them questions. I said, "What are you doing waiting in line?" At which point, a fellow put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a stack of, I don't know how many tens of thousands of French francs. He says, "I'm going to change these French francs into dollars, and I will have made \$25,000." I was startled. And sure enough, all these men were bringing money in. Whatever they sold, I didn't ask, whether it was Army stuff or whatever, cigarettes in the PX. But when I got to the front of the line, I threw my \$100 in traveler's checks, the fellow there says, "What do you want to come to me for? You're going to get legal right. You go around the corner and you'll get 30 percent more." Now, I tell the story because this element was very important in war-torn Europe. When I finally got to Germany and I was in the headquarters of the United Nations Rehabilitation Relief Administration, and I was involved in documentation and statistics and so on, I felt very uneasy. I felt very uneasy because I saw many things that were happening that were certainly not something I wanted to be associated with. Namely, the UNRRA took on as refugees, ex-Wehrmacht, even some of the soldiers who had been SS, and it was a very curious mix. And in addition, they were repatriating. The Russians came in and took their Russians. The Poles came in and took their Poles. The only group not touched was the Jews. And that was of great interest to me. And I -- on the side, I kept statistics separately to see just what it was. And I was always talking to Herb Katzki, whom you have been talking with. And incidentally, I got my job -- Herb doesn't agree -- but there were two of them, Harry Beal and Herb Katzki -- I had a hot water heater in my building in Elsen [village in the city of Paderborn], Germany where the headquarters of the UNRRA was, and they didn't. So they took baths in my place and that's how I got in the JDC. Within six months I decided I wanted to get out. And I came to the JDC, and they said, yes, they'll take you. We need people in Munich [München]. And I left and came on staff with the JDC in Munich [München].

Interviewer: Let's backtrack a bit, now that you talked about the JDC. Did you, with the UNRRA, did you have a specific role or responsibility, and was that based on training you had had before, education that you had had before?

Theodore: What was important for the UNRRA at that time was to have a cadre of people who knew the Army, because the UNRRA was under the aegis of the Army, and you had to talk militarize, old buddy sort of thing, and that's why I was in the U.S. zone. Also, the fact that I had a major in psychology and public administration gave me a background, certainly not my Jewish background, for the work that they did and the fact that they put me in the headquarters of the entire UNRRA, who at that point had close to seven million refugees. However, there were only about 40,000 to 60,000 Jews, only 40,000 to 60,000 Jews in West Germany, Italy, and Austria, very few.

Interviewer: At that time.

Theodore: At that time.

Interviewer: What was the nature of your work there?

Theodore: Actually, it was called reports and statistics for the CEO, which meant that we had to keep our pulse on the vast movement of people in Europe at that time. Who were all these people that were moving? Trains were coming daily into West Germany from Romania, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, dumping the "Volksdeutsch". Those were citizens who had a German background and who certainly during the war didn't give much help to the government that was supposedly theirs, and they were all thrown out. And, of course, as it turned out, that was a very plus for West Germany because the people they were sending were highly skilled farmers, people that later helped Germany in their rise to power economically. But we were in constant consultation with many areas apprehending people. The truth of the matter is the data that we got was way off, way off, because there were more people getting on these trains than were on the books, so to speak. And I recall now, my interest in JDC and the fact that there were involved in all of this, Jewish Army chaplains, G.I.'s. As a matter of fact, when I came to Germany, I was housed in a town near Frankfurt called Hochst [Hochst am Main], which you've heard of Bayer's Aspirin. Well, it was a tremendous complex for manufacturing, at that time, of medication for venereal disease. And when -- there was one evening, a G.I. came up to me and he says, "I know you're Jewish." I said, "Thank you." He said, "Would you help us?" I said, "What is it I'm supposed to do?" He said, "Well, we're trying to help Jews. We're trying to help Jewish refugees come in from the East." So I said, "Well, how are they coming?" And he told a story of all this great movement of people, hundreds of thousands, that there was an underground, moving people out of Eastern Europe, staffed by what was called the Brikha, which were Palestinian Jews, it was a brigade stationed in Italy. And what Palestine did -- what the Jewish agency did was to draw out of the ranks from the brigade and establish this organization and bring from Palestine others to replace them in the brigade, so that the British Army didn't know that there had been a movement. So there were dozens and dozens of these Palestinian Jews, all picked for what it was they had to do. And with all the trains coming in, there would be additional box cars added at the end with Jews in it, Jews who wanted to flee Eastern Europe. And it was especially in rows after the Kielce pogrom, dozens of Jews in Poland were shot, the exodus started. And so this young man said, "Look, we're going to have to pick up some people who are coming in and they're at a rail center outside of Frankfurt. We're going to have a truck and we're going to go get them." I said, "I can go along." And that evening we got in the truck; there were three trucks. And we drove to this area, and we stopped in front of a bunker. It looked like a bunker. He says... actually the top was all bombed because it was a railroad station. He says, "In this bunker we're going to find Jews. On the other hand, there are going to be many non-Jews there." I said, "Well, how do I tell the difference?" "Oh," he says, "you say two words. You say 'Joint' and you say 'Amkhah' which is Hebrew for friend." And we walked down about twenty stairs into this bunker and it was a tremendous area filled with people. It was dimly lit and you could hardly tell, children were crying. You could hardly move through the people, and both of us started from both sides and saying "Amkhah, Joint." And it was as if the words were magnets and the people were made

out of steel. Slowly they got up, didn't ask a question, and followed us out. I was so overwhelmed by those two words and the experience; I wanted more than ever to get into JDC. And eventually, I did.

Interviewer: That's quite a story. You started to talk about this mass movement of people across Europe, and you mentioned, at least some of them were. Can you expand on that a little bit?

Theodore: When our people were freed from the camp, their first impulse was return home. And it wasn't difficult because trains were moving. They got a ride, just like my wife, and she was in a group who were walking towards Dresden, and when the war was over she also decided to go home. So you had tens of thousands of Jews moving back home. But when they got there, there wasn't much. The homes were bombed. None of their friends were back.

Interviewer: You're talking about the movement of people across Europe in 1945. And I'm trying to get a sense of who those people were.

Theodore: First of all, you must remember that the Germans had taken hundreds of thousands of people as slave laborers. They weren't Jews. They were just criminal -- no, I shouldn't say. There were a few criminals. They just took anybody. Or they took certain skills, and picked them up and put them to work, Hungarian farmers, Romanian tailors. They had the best system of being able to move people about for their purposes. And they moved them. And they used them. Schindler's, after all, those people in there. So you had those that were moving westward to their homes, and, from among those in Germany, they were going eastward back to their countries. But let me get to our people. Because of this, because there was no control, because the police and the military couldn't care less if another train -- Jews were able to come out easily into Western Germany. Why Western Germany? Because there were the camps. There were a lot of camps that had been set up and, indeed, were beginning to close down because of the movement, the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of people.

Interviewer: You're talking about a displaced person's camp?

Theodore: Yeah. We had, even in the early days of my UNRRA experience, people responsible didn't understand what was happening. They didn't understand that there was a movement taking place that they had no control over, because -- and, also, because of the friendly officers of the UNRRA who wanted to be helpful, especially because the commanding general was Eisenhower, and he had seen how unhappy President Truman was when we complained about the bad accommodations that Jews had in Germany as compared to what the Germans had. And there was a group headed by a fellow of the name of Harrison who came and said it's true. The gentiles were living much better than the Jews who had come out of the concentration camp. So we were able to bring all these people in them. I'm talking about the Brikha. So that the 30,000, slowly, in the period of 1946, and 1947, and 1948, rose to about a quarter of a million. Now, the general opinion is that those that we were serving had all been in camps, had come without anything, and were sick. They needed nourishment, it was true. Those who

had been in camp needed that. But what this movement was bringing was altogether different. You were getting Jews who had lived in the underground. They called it uboat [?]. There were Jews who were in the partisan, hundreds of Jews. There were Jews who were fleeing from Poland and Bucharest and Hungary. And then the last group and the most important group were Jews from the Soviet Union. Jews who deserted the Russian Army. Jews who had an opportunity of leaving and they took it. And so, therefore, the group we were working with were not those who couldn't take care of themselves. On the contrary, those who came brought strength to the -- those who had been in camp. For example, we decided very soon -- it could very well have been that they decided it for us -- to set up a self-government. Many of the Jewish army chaplains were very much involved in that. Now, the chaplains were into Germany earlier than we were. We didn't come in until the middle of June. They were there before the war ended. And some of them were very aggressive and saw immediately the need for self-government and a self-government was set up. The chairman at that time was a man by the name of Blumowitz who later became the Surgeon General of the Israeli Army. We're talking about people with capacity. There was a man by the name of Retter who later became an aide to Golda Meir. A Mr. Piegoch [?] became a number two person in the Mapai party. So we were dealing with people who were responsible, who were able to act, who did what we couldn't do. We could come into a camp and we had our people in camps. But when it came to running the camp, they were running it. They -- we must forget about it being a camp. We thought of it as a village. There was a mayor. There was a police force. There was a fire force. There were kitchens. There was garbage collection. They were all Jews. So what we were dealing with, really, were people who were responsible. And as we brought in our supplies in those early days, the division was made directly to the camp. They made the distribution. They were our armed knights.

Interviewer: Question, just for the record, who are we talking about now when you say we?

Theodore: Talking about Joint.

Interviewer: Okay.

Theodore: That Joint. And so there is another element. For example, I noticed in the document the Museum put out recently about the history after the war. I noticed that it said that on June -- or in June, the JDC was admitted in order to set up a welfare program. That was true, but it didn't go far enough, because the history of the DP camps has never really been told. How to come to grips with a group who have been through the Holocaust, lost their families, were living in, the best I could say, in substandard housing in the camps, even though some of them were villages, how could they come out of that trauma? What -- how could they get up every day, having lost their families, living in these wretched conditions? Okay. They were given food, clothing, and so on. It was mind boggling that they did so well. For example, we brought in three psychiatrists and sent them to the largest camp, which was in Pocking, where there were 14,000 Jews in one camp. And we brought them over for a purpose. We weren't sure what did we need for Palestine. What did they need in order to care for the possibility of large-scale mental breakdowns? Because after all, there was a lot -- we knew were going to

Palestine, then Israel. What would they need? What would we need? We -- and I'll get to our program in a moment -- and after a month there, they came up with the following. They examined about 400 people. And they came to the following conclusion, that the percentage of people who would break down or who would need hospitalization would be no different than in a normal society. That was it. And that was true. We had a few, a few dozen out of a quarter of a million having to be hospitalized, but the majority wouldn't. Whether it was because of the strength of anyone who had survived, but it was also a point that we came to the conclusion that something was happening. It wasn't that we were talking to all the people or it wasn't that the central committee, which was our group, and incidentally, the army gave them a liaison officer. They had a full colonel as a liaison officer from Frankfurt who didn't speak a word, other than English, and so we were very good friends. What was the name? Colonel Sivers, from the South. And suddenly -- it was sudden -- one day we said, you know, there's something changing completely. The social workers began to talk to us about the paring-offs that were taking place in camp, looking for new life. The result was something that we will never forget. At one point -- well, first of all, we brought in wedding rings, sent a jeep down to Milan. They bought wedding rings. Everybody got a free wedding ring. Number two and most important was that we said, look, we better get as many diapers as we can because we're going to be full and need it. And I recall in early 1948, we had a -- someone made some statistics. They said that every woman between the ages of eighteen and thirty was either pregnant or had had a child in the previous six months. This rebirth, this -- the rose growing in a garbage can, people who looked so unfit were changing. And so there was a miracle. There were the children. And with children, you had to change a lot of programs. We had doctors, and never mind the question of diapers, special foods, and the whole gamut. And the camps changed completely, because with the children, what else did they need? The people in the camps to have a village. Papers, there were at least a dozen Jewish papers that were published. And also, the -- there was no Yiddish type, so they were phonetically English words. In the book I gave you, you'll see. Kindergartens, new thing. They opened up kindergartens. We were involved in a very famous Jewish actor by the name of Yabakoff [?]. I noticed it in the paper the other day. The comedian, we brought him in. We brought in Yiddish -- there was one place that had a lot of Yiddish movies. We brought that in. We brought in all kinds of athletic stuff for the people. Most important, one I can't forget, that it was difficult for the Army to understand the Jews. After all, in dealing with the military government, dealing with the Germans who were clean, precise, and work on time, who would say, "Yah," every time the question was asked. Our people never said yah. They were independent. And it was hard for the Army to understand, they had to be responsible, but they couldn't. And so there were all kinds of rumors that the Jews were lazy. They didn't want to work. That they were just eating -- doing nothing, forgetting -- forgetting that not one of our people wanted to stay there. This was the bloody earth of Germany. And they were there by sufferings. And the minute they had an opportunity of getting out, illegally or legally, they went. But the commanding general said, look, these people are doing nothing. So we set up a work. It was called produktiveassersia [?]. A word for us. We brought in material. We had so many tailors. The ORT expanded. I must say that with the tailors, we had a funny experience with one group because we had some very bright people; after all there were Jews from Łódź, an area where clothes were made. And so we found that

you figure out on a piece of material you can make so many suits, different sizes. And we found, much to our dismay, that this one place was making only small sizes and keeping the rest of it, making big sizes and selling it for the committee to be used in the religious activities. But we thought that was fine. So we put people to work. And all during this time there was the underground going to Palestine. We were involved. We were involved. The number of gallons of gasoline that somehow or other went out of certain trucks to other trucks, made it available for them to move down to Italy and to France. And there was, the UNRRA knew about it. The British wanted to stop it, but it continued. It was the only thing that kept the spirits of the people, knowing that they could leave. And it was our responsibility to carry on this vast program, not just welfare, but from the cradle to death. And the committee ran everything.

Interviewer: The central committee.

Theodore: The central committee, which incidentally was established based on the political schlüssel , political key, as there was in Palestine. And you had the Agudath. You had the Mapai. You had the Mapam. You had the political methodology, which permeated all the way into Eastern Europe, because those that went were out of certain political parties, and they found that they could organize groups coming out by having this additional tie. Well, we certainly tried to do what we could in order to help them. Besides the food, we were also a good tie to the military. For example, when the state of Israel was founded, then there was normal immigration to Israel, except for one thing. The British Army insisted that there should be no one of military age sent. Cruel. Terrible. I don't want to –

Interviewer: In 1948?

Theodore: Yeah, sure. The British had their hand in everything. After all, the heads of the UNRRA and the IRO were all British generals, and who were they talking to? They were talking to their home office who, of course, didn't want immigration to Palestine and even to Israel. And there was one time, I don't want to mention who was involved, but I talked to some of the people, others did as well, that how cruel it was to separate families at this stage and this period after the war. And the result was very interesting. The person who said he was going to examine the train, said, I will only examine the left side of the train. I want all the women and children there. What you put on the right side -- I don't care. I'm not going to look at it. Because I have to certify that I have seen this train and only women and children have gone. And so there you were. The person examined the left side. And on the right side, of course, were the husbands and the wives -- the husbands and the kids of military age. And it went. And then finally when IRO closed out, they decided that everyone could go. The -- let me talk about the ship *Exodus*. You remember, the ship that was sent back to France, came to France, and the people didn't want to get off. They were on a hunger strike. It really wasn't, because at night, Herb would know, boats were sent to put food on, and the people ate. The ship was sent back to Hamburg. And all the people were offloaded and sent to a camp called Bergen-Belsen. Within one month, every person who had been on the *Exodus* was on his way back to Palestine in the underground. British, no British, the valor of the people who were handling this was tremendous. But let me try to give you a picture of what it was

like, what it was like sitting in the office in Munich [München], a ----- of three, across the street was the central committee and they had a very fine villa which the Army had given them. And next there was a long street nearby called Mohlstrasse. The area was a very fine area of homes which had been taken over by the Army and so on. There wasn't a day that there wasn't an incident, either with German police, our people were in black market. We couldn't blame them. After all, they had been victimized. If they had a possibility of making a few dollars, let them make it. We, also, were in the black market. It cost two cigarettes for a box seat in the Wagner Opera House around the corner. The director was a man by the name of Solti, the present Sir (Georg) Solti. So this -- this is how things worked. The committees had their purpose. It didn't always parallel ours. For example, they were so strong, they felt that the tremendous warehouse we had with millions of pounds of food and clothing and cigarettes ought to be under their control. You know, if you're a political group, you don't stand still. You try to go forward by seeing what you can gain, like politicians anyplace. And the former director, a fellow by name of Leo Schwartz, who is an author, he was willing to turn it over to them. And we thought that would be unpalatable, then we would have no control. And so the contract was signed by them, and then sent to Germany. I took one look and I put it in a safe, locked it up, and I called Herb, and I said, "Herb, we can't sign that, because that would be giving over to the committee things that our board certainly wouldn't want." And sure enough, that's what happened. We never gave it to them.

Interviewer: I need to ask you a few questions.

Theodore: Sure.

Interviewer: To clarify this for people who don't know exactly what your role is and there are certain terms, like the central committee that you sort of explained, but I think that we need to be a little more specific sort of for those who might watch this. When you went to work for the Joint -- the American Joint Distribution Committee, what was your role and what was your function? You keep, also, referring to Herb, so I need to -- some of us need to understand this.

Theodore: Yeah. I was brought on as the deputy director for our program in the USO in Germany, which means I was the number two man in this program. I had specific tasks. From an administrative point of view, with personnel, with administration, I had a responsibility for liaison with the UNRRA and the leader of the IRO, and for liaison with part of the military. I also visited the camps to observe and to report where we might find things easier to do, and to determine that our food and clothing was properly distributed. We had a problem at the outset because it wasn't -- we came in, in 1945, but by the time our supply lines -- yes, we sent trucks up to Sweden and brought back food, but that was a fly in the bucket. You needed large -- in order to take care of a group of a quarter of a million, you needed a large warehouse. You needed a lot of trucks. You needed a lot of staff. You needed security. We had -- the Army gave us two dozen rifles and told us to train our own group for guarding our supplies. Also, not only security, but there was a great deal of thievery -- couldn't blame them. After all, if you put one carton of cigarettes and try to hide it, you were ahead \$50. So this was a constant problem we had of security. Also, in setting up the program we had a lot of new people coming in,

and I was responsible for placement and for all of the factors that go in to have a running organization. It was -- Leo Schwartz, he's written a number of books, was busy. The director is busy. As director, you had to be constantly perdue [?] with the committee and with the Army and with the UNRRA, and he took over that role. We were constantly thinking of new programs to be helpful to our people within the needs that were demonstrated. We also were doing our best to save money. We did. The archives will show that one of the most important foods that we had was cigarettes. We were able -- not we, but there were some over at the central committee, they could tell you the number of calories a pack of cigarettes would buy. The Army in its infinite wisdom allowed the G.I.'s APO privileges. They didn't tell them they couldn't bring in cigarettes. So millions of cigarettes were coming in through the Army. The Army knew about it. And finally, eventually, only in 1948 did all this end, so that was three years, when they had what was called a currency reform. They took the Reichsmarks, which were about 500 to a dollar, and converted it to Deutsche Marks. At that point, Germany opened up. Instead of keeping hidden what had been manufactured and not sell it for the cheap Marks, they were willing to sell it for the Deutsche Marks. And it was true; the Deutsche Mark did get strong. It was as if from one day there were no flowers, and the next day there were peonies all over Germany. And we had to be very sensitive to all of this in what we were distributing during that period. And we were able to -- I'm sort of walking through one area that I was involved with. We convinced the Army that we ought to have a distribution of cigarettes to the workers, because their salaries were small, and they certainly were smoking. We always talked about smoking. And I'm sorry I didn't take a copy of it, but the Army put out a directive in which we were mentioned about the distribution of cigarettes to working mothers, to workers. And what developed was that instead of spending the budget, we didn't. And the money that was saved, and it was into the millions of dollars, were used to help buy the ships that took people to Palestine and Israel. And so we were a very integral part of that whole picture. I must also say a personal thing. When I told my sister that I was -- my sister, Sara, who was the head of the Pioneer Women, that I was going to go to work for the Joint, her immediate reaction was, "Ted, how could you go to work for a non-Zionist organization?" I said, "Sara, they've changed." She says, "If you tell me so, that's fine." And we did change. We were more involved in these areas. As a matter of fact, in 1948 we opened up an organization in Israel that took over the responsibility from the government of Israel of all the handicapped, the elderly, and sick children that were immigrating to Israel. Just think of it. We had a caseload. We've built hospitals. If we hadn't, people wouldn't have moved out of Germany. So it was important for us to establish these institutions and run them, run them. We took it off the back of Israel. Eventually, in 1955, they took it over. And so, getting back to what I was doing. I rambled a little bit there. We were always on the alert for two things, protecting our people from the Army. It sounds strange, but, you know, if you have a military government and you have military police, and you're responsible for security in an area, and you have these lovely Germans who don't fight, who don't make any trouble for you, who say yes, and who go about their business, and you have these hundreds of thousands of DPs who want no part of the Army, who don't think that they should have to be disciplined by the Army, but the Army said if there's black market, we're responsible. And there are always a lot of people who felt, well, if something goes wrong, it's probably the DPs down the road. It wasn't true. And to our people who

were there in such an important role, to explain exactly what was happening. And I think we were successful to that end. But if it hadn't been for President Truman with his directives, we would have had a much more difficult time. And this was constantly one of the things that concerned us all the time, because people coming into the camps, they were coming in illegally, and the Army doesn't like illegal things. They don't like that -- the border between Czechoslovakia and Bavaria is porous, as far as the Jews were concerned. So this was always a problem. And incidentally, because of the realization that it was a problem, the headquarters of the Army in Frankfurt, under urging by many agencies in the States, had an advisor in Jewish affairs, the commanding general. Some very important people were there, Judge Leventhal of Philadelphia, Rabbi Bernstein, and they were a buffer between the Army at the top level where there was probably more interest and more willingness to be reasonable than down at the lower level of the GI who has a fraulein who keeps talking about how the Jews are getting so much more than we poor Germans and he's in the military government, and he has no love for the displaced persons.

Interviewer: Explain to me something about this hierarchy that the U.S. Army was basically in charge of the zone.

Theodore: Yes. There were four zones. There was a French, British, Russian, and American. There were no DPs in the Russian zone.

Interviewer: Then how did the UNRRA, the Joint, all of these other organizations fit into the structure in terms of the possibility in working with the camp?

Theodore: The Army -- well, not really the Army, the United States authorized the UNRRA to work in Germany. That's why they sent out that original document to look for staff, because they knew that the Army could never, could never be responsible for taking care of civilians, especially this difficult group. And they needed help. And they wanted the UNRRA. And they were very pleased when the UNRRA went ahead and built their agency quickly and took over because the Army was not able to. The Army, from a medical point of view, was magnificent. You know, everybody -- they would make sure that typhoid and so on and so forth, everybody was powdered. They could set up medical things. But when it came to looking after the people, caring for them, the needs that were demonstrated, they knew they couldn't. And, therefore, the UNRRA came in. The UNRRA was given a mandate. There had never been an UNRRA before. The Army had never had to work with a civilian organization. And a lot of them didn't like it, which was probably one of the reasons that the picture I showed you with the six generals, all of the UNRRA, that's the brass that was there in order to intercede. And so the UNRRA was given responsibility of looking after the camps, maintaining the camps, getting the food -- couldn't swim. You think of trying to feed Army, the ten and one ration to children and to women. It was too much, really. But that's what they had at the very outset and that's one of the reasons we brought in as much food as we did. Then the military was also responsible for security. Now, security, anything. They raided camps and were very much upset that the people were smarter than they. They didn't know one DP from another. The Army, for example, rations, that's a good Army way. There's a camp, let's say Wolfitzhausen [Wolfratshausen?] had 2,000, men,

women, children. They need rations for a whole month. They need so many gallons of this and so many tons of this. And that was it. But when it came to the utilization of the food, the Army didn't have any kind of know-how. They couldn't send in their own side. So this was UNRRA's responsibility and UNRRA had to know everything. [End of Tape One]

Tape Two

Interviewer: We were talking about the structure in post-war Europe and you were explaining about the U.S. Military and the U.S. Zone and the UNRRA. Then, now that we've established that the UNRRA needed to carry out a lot of what the military could not, how does the Joint fit into the picture?

Theodore: Well –

Interviewer: We should say the American Joint Distribution Committee.

Theodore: American Jewish Distribution Committee. Let me talk a little bit about voluntary agencies and the dilemma they have in carrying on programs in disaster areas. It's always a mess. When you have a disaster, no matter how well trained the people are, somehow or another there are so many different groupings, the government, the Red Cross. It's a caritas. Coordination is so essential. In Germany there was the army, sacrosanct. They had a responsibility because they were carrying out -- they were running the Germans, the military government. Their responsibility was to get them on their feet. They called in the UNRRA because they realized very quickly back in early 1945 that something had to be done and they couldn't do it, or they didn't want to do it. That wasn't their job. That wasn't why you became a general, to look after some people. And so the UNRRA came in and was given responsibility for running the camps with the backing of the army who brought in medical supplies, who brought in food and so on, and they set up a system of distribution, and then, of course, hung around the camps. Every camp had a committee. Ours were Jewish committee. We fostered the central committee. We were allowed to come in –

Interviewer: Now using the term "we" again, and I know you were with the UNRRA and you were with the Joint, so we need to be clear here.

Theodore: I'm sorry. I don't want to say we with the UNRRA. I'll say we with the Joint. The voluntary -- the JDC is a voluntary agency. We were working in many areas in Europe before the end of the war. We were into Italy. We were into France and Belgium, Holland. However, there was some concern for whatever reason for bringing the JDC and other voluntary agencies into Germany. The UNRRA had to ask permission from the military and it wasn't until June that we came in, for whatever their reason. They had many reasons, communication. They were afraid, still, that there may have been an underground. We were told when we were riding in the jeep, never ride with your front glass down, keep it up, because the Germans had put wires across and so on. So there was the danger aspect, overexaggerated, but military has to, you know, security is security. And finally the UNRRA had to put into motion a portion of their organization

to look after us. Not that we were so terrible, but we needed housing. We needed uniforms. We wanted to be part of the PX and, of course, that's where the army, rankled with civilians, was going to the PX. What I'm saying is that at the outset all voluntary agencies had a difficult time getting in. Once we came in, we were there as agents, as part of the UNRRA. There was a department. We reported. We got everything through them. They looked after all of gasoline, for example, permission to bring in trucks and so on. So, this is where we stood. They knew our people. They worked with us in our planning. They were protective of us because they weren't having an easy time. And the fact I keep coming back to the generals. The generals did a lot of scotch drinking with the generals on the other side to help smooth the way for us to come in and work. Once we were in there, they left us alone. We got our PX card. We got gasoline for our trucks. We bought jeeps and trucks from the army for -- they were giving it away, after all. And so this was how we were there.

Interviewer: What did you -- what is the work that you -- that the Joint did, how was it differentiated from what the UNRRA did?

Theodore: UNRRA had basic responsibility for feeding, for clothing, medical, but there was low standard. The average caloric menu was about 1,200 calories a day. That is not much. And they were bad calories, as I told you. They were giving us the ten and one ration that the army put out, which are numbered ten cans of Hungarian goulash or whatever, the cigarettes, in these boxes. And so the level of food was very low. And, therefore, we made provisions for bringing food in. They probably used their cigarettes for purchasing, which is all right. The army didn't mind that, because whenever our people were doing were peanuts compared to what the army was doing. So, you know, they didn't make too much noise about it. But we went closer to the people. We went closer to the people. Our representatives in the big camps sat in with the central committee every day in the problems of running a camp and how we could help them, what were those things that they didn't have that we had or could get. So we enhanced the diet. We had a large number of TB's. We were the first to bring penicillin into Vienna and into Germany. We were supplementing because the UNRRA was unable -- they didn't speak the language, let's put it bluntly as that -- where our people would speak to us. We could get to know more about what was happening than any UNRRA person. And so we were sort of the cushion between the people and what they were supposed to get from the UNRRA.

Interviewer: What other ways were you able to supplement, other than giving them food?

Theodore: Well, food, medicine, clothing, a great deal of clothing, cigarettes.

Interviewer: Did you get involved in education or vocational training or --

Theodore: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: -- with this activity?

Theodore: We even printed a Talmud. Yes. Yes. We had Rabbi on our staff, two rabbis, as a matter of fact. We had an educator on our staff. We brought teachers from Palestine to the schools. Now the question is where in 1947 were you with children that needed education? Well, that was a miracle. These were children who came from the East, who had lived underground with their families, or were Russian and came in. So we -- as a matter of fact, I think we had twenty teachers brought from Israel. One thing they had to have, Yiddish. If they didn't have the Yiddish, they weren't good teachers. Every part of their daily living we, in one way or another, touched. And, of course, when we set up our immigration in 1948, we helped tens of thousands of people to immigrate. They used to have a term; the Joint is "unser Vater." The Joint is our rescuer. But that didn't mean that they looked at us and we were living fairly comfortably. We weren't paid big salaries. I remember my salary was \$7,000 a year. It was a good salary at that time. But they weren't jealous because they knew that when they needed help, we were there. We would protect them from the military government. We had lawyers on our staff. We brought in surgeons for the TB hospital for operations. We filled the camps that the UNRRA couldn't do. On the other hand, we were always aware of the fact that a number of workers, that everything was functioning, and that the people deserved better pay, or cigarettes, and we kept their spirits high. We were there. And that they knew that the Joint could deliver. Many of them knew Joint before the war, where we had operated in Eastern Europe for so many years, immediately after World War I. So it wasn't like we were new. We were Jews, Jews. And they -- and I think we were pretty good Jews, because we understood what it was that was moving them and what it was that they wanted and what they wanted to do. And we, in our own way, helped. We were a direct line of the committee who were functioning. If the Joint had had to run our program with our own staff, we couldn't have. Where would you get the thousands of workers in these camps who were paid, who were functioning, who were delivering services? If we had set that up, first of all, we wouldn't have had enough money. And many other voluntary agencies were never able to figure out how we were able to work so well, because they came as strangers to whomever they were helping. But when it came to our people, the word Joint was something symbolic with their people being rescued and helping towards their future of moving out of there. And when we told them about immigration, they saw our involvement with the underground to Israel, I don't want to say they behaved themselves, but they understood what was happening. Not that they weren't critical of us, but never mind. That's a love-hate affair.

Interviewer: How large was your operation in Europe, in Germany?

Theodore: Well, on that, I'm going to give you exact figures because I knew you were going to ask it.

Interviewer: Well, there were a lot of camps. I wonder how many of them you were able to become involved with.

Theodore: Personnel, in January of 1946, we had 44 employees. In January of 1947, we had 294. And in January of 1948, we had 560 employees. But that does not include all the workers in the camp. These were people who were responsible to us, who were our

channel to the people. We had -- let's see, in 1946 we had 38 employees who were from the United States. In 1947, we had 86. And in 1948, we had 110. That was our staff.

Interviewer: Where were the rest of them from?

Theodore: Pardon?

Interviewer: Where the -- you mean the rest of them were the people from the camp?

Theodore: Yeah.

Interviewer: I can't imagine you going in with 44 employees in 1945. That's not many.

Theodore: Well, that -- we had decided soon on that recruiting in the United States was very difficult. And we made a plea to many people about servicemen who wanted to work overseas. And we got quite a few that way, like myself. And any -- you know, in the beginning there were only about 30,000 or 40,000. Our supplies hadn't started coming in. The best that we could do is work with the committee who were there. We found -- we didn't found the committee, we found them. And they were there. And they were important. Without them, we couldn't have carried on our program, couldn't have.

Interviewer: Were you able to work with most of the camps, or just the larger ones?

Theodore: Every camp. Every camp.

Interviewer: Every Jewish DP camp?

Theodore: Yeah. Wherever -- yes.

Interviewer: And there were many.

Theodore: Yes.

Interviewer: Just for the record, when you talk about the central committee, you've referred to it in many terms.

Theodore: Yes.

Interviewer: There were also committees at each camp; is that correct?

Theodore: Yeah. Let me talk about how they functioned. As I say, we found them there. They had been helped to organize by a number of Jewish-American Army Chaplains. And they accepted their role. They were serious. As a matter of fact, in 1946 Ben-Gurion visited, and he was their guest. And it's interesting that someone was willing to put forward to Mr. Ben-Gurion that the city of Stuttgart, if he felt that he wanted all the Jews to inhabit that one city, they thought they could work it through with the military government and

the army and the Germans. He got so excited and so mad. How dare you bring up such a thing? No Jew will remain here that should be in Palestine. But this is the committee. They were thinking how can we? After all, there were buildings, there were factories. This would be a good place and so on. The committee saw their role as a part of us, and as a part of us. We met every day. We -- I shouldn't have said that. We met -- generally the committee liked to meet at night, because during the day they were busy. And they also knew that when it got to be about 12:00 or 1:00, we got tired. And it was at that point that they would bring up some of the requests that they felt they couldn't pass early in the day. But by the time we got tired, we'd say okay, another thing, another thing. There was a mutual respect on their part, realizing, even though most of us had never been in the Holocaust or the Shoah, yet they understood how we were working, how we needed to function in order to be able to have our committee in the United States accept what we were doing. And when they began leaving, things began getting more difficult. We had to take more responsibility.

Interviewer: Were they responsible to committees within each camp? Were there also committees within each camp, self-government?

Theodore: They weren't responsible. The committees in the camp were responsible to them. That was the channel.

Interviewer: But each camp had a self-governing committee.

Theodore: That's right. All of them tied into the central committee. They didn't always agree. There were arguments and so on, but it was a normal kind of reaction that they had to each other. But when things got tough and when people began being moved around, the committee was very important. Because at one point, the army or German government said we would like to consolidate the camps, because after all, there was a lot of all these people coming from the east that were living pretty badly and they wanted to have these. And that was also a point where Jews were moving out. By 1948 and 1949, American immigration had set up -- or it began, based on what was called the Truman Directive, that anybody who had been in camp would have a priority in immigrating to the United States. So, that was the atmosphere at that point. The committee, of course, would like -- would have liked them all to go to Israel, but not all the people wanted that. They had -- many had relatives in the United States. They had friends who were not Zionists. But when it came to committees that visited the camps, they were all united. They all wanted to go to Israel.

Interviewer: So was the primary goal of the central committee to work with you and other aid organizations to get what they needed for the displaced people?

Theodore: Yes.

Interviewer: I'm just trying to understand.

Theodore: Yes. We felt that -- not that we didn't have our own experts about what it is that we needed sent to them -- but we relied on their data and on their forthrightness as to

what were the priorities. We listened to them. And when we made a distribution, we worked with them. So it was well financed by us. We felt it was important. We gave them status. After all, they had status with a colonel from the U.S. Army who came over every day, couldn't talk to them, although few spoke English. He would come over and schmooze with us as to what was going on. And when there was something really desperate, we did call the colonel. There were incidents once where some fellow decided that the black market on Mohlstrasse ought to be done away with. And instead of coming with the military police, they came with German police, armed, armed. It came to us about five minutes after it began. One person had already been shot. And instead of the military government pulling these police out, someone says clear the street. It was two very long blocks. And they were right around the corner from our office. And meanwhile, a crowd of probably 500 had gathered at the other end of Mohlstrasse, at which point my colleague, Dr. Kahane, who died the other day, and I ran out. And not knowing what to do, though we certainly didn't want to go to where the police were, and when we realized that the group was slowly walking up the streets, 500. Nothing in their hands, no stones, no sticks. And the people looked at me. I looked at them, and said, "Let's go." So down we ran to the group and we walked with them. By that time somebody with a little more sense had decided that they weren't going to start a third world war, and withdrew the German police. And it never happened again. And that didn't make us exactly heroes, because we were stupid, but it happened just that way. And so the army knew what was happening. All the black market we knew, we weren't involved. It wasn't our responsibility, and the central committee status was raised by the fact that they had brought about this reaction to the use of Germans, because this was 1947, late 1947, early 1948. And it made headlines in the United States. The military government was told in no uncertain terms that they had done wrong. So this was the committee.

Interviewer: When you started working with the Joint in 1946, what was the situation in the camp? Were they pretty well organized at that point?

Theodore: Yes. They certainly were organized. We had not yet come to our full capacity of bringing in supplies. Now, it was very difficult. You can only land in France or in Hamburg. And for the army, for some reason, only landed in Hamburg. So we had to set up warehouses, and there's pictures in this thing, because what we had we couldn't make a full distribution to everybody. So we had to make decisions as to who got what when, and that wasn't very easy. It was very cruel. But it was the best that we could do, except that we did have cigarettes.

Interviewer: How did you make those decisions?

Theodore: With the committee. With the committee. We tried to assess, because not every camp was the same as far as the UNRRA supplies they were getting. And so we knew that there was some not -- just better supply officers in one camp than in the other. And we knew just what was happening, and we made the decision on that.

Interviewer: Where did you get your supplies from?

Theodore: We bought cigarettes in Switzerland, some food, but it was all -- there wasn't enough. So we had to bring it in from the United States. So that time in 1947, we really started to get our supplies, and by 1948 there was a constant movement of supplies.

Interviewer: And was this mostly privately funded?

Theodore: All, all. Anything we brought in was funded by the JDC through the United Jewish Appeal. As a matter of fact, yes, we got some money from South Africa, but this was all JDC money.

Interviewer: Did you have specialists on your staff who knew how to procure supplies and do all of this kind of stuff? I mean, it's a big job.

Theodore: Oh, yeah. Well, that's where the local people were so good, because they -- as I mentioned before, the Germans weren't sitting by idly. The Germans were producing, but they didn't want to sell. As I say, the Reichsmark had no value. You would light -- kids lit cigarettes with 100 Marks, and so on. We had some very fine people on our staff and who knew where some of the stuff was and negotiations would take place, and we would get it if it was -- and they also knew that we were willing to pay in dollars in the States or wherever. And in every area there were eggs and butter and chickens. And so each camp had its own channel of where to buy things. There was one story of the first United Jewish Appeal mission to Germany, and it came in February of 1947. It was the first airliner to fly into Munich [München]. There were no steps so they came down a ladder. There were 40 men and women, all dressed as if they were going on a hike into the mountains, you know. Winterclothes and so on, and they came to see the programs. And the leadership looked aside and said, look, we know what we're doing, but the people ought to see what the UNRRA is giving. So, we again used a camp called Feldafing, and we talked to the directors and said, we want the people to see the menu for that day as published by the UNRRA, and we want them to eat dinner and breakfast based on the UN nutritional menu, and don't deviate one iota. Give it to them. Now, we knew that generally for dinner they would get two or three slices of bread. They might get small butter. They might have one slice of cold cut. And they would have tea. That was dinner. For breakfast it was black bread and butter and a little jam. That was it. And he also said, we want to live like some of them live. Well, show us where they're living and set up a place and ten of us will stay overnight. Fine. And it's true that there was barracks [for] living there. So we took one second floor barracks, which was a military barrack, and the bathrooms were a dozen sinks and so on. And we set up their beds with mattress filled with straw, which the people -- but we did give them a lot of blankets. And, of course, the windows we covered over and so on. They understood. The morning that they were to go out there, I sent the fellow who wrote the document. I said, "Go out there and see if everything is set." They don't want what we're giving them. They don't want any trace of it. Just what the UNRRA is giving them today. Half-hour later he said, "Mr. Feder, I'm here, but a terrible thing has happened, also a nice thing." The committee felt that if they were going to greet and entertain the people who were helping them, they ought to give them a nice meal. What's there? He says, "Well, I tell you, it's a nice meal. There's chicken and there's even a piece of pork." I said, "Get it out. Bring it over to the hospital and put it in their kitchen." "But they're

going to argue with me." I said, "Don't argue. Tell them we won't give them their next month's ration if they don't." I said, "Let these people see what the UNRRA's giving them." Well, it was the most successful mission in the history of the UJA, because what they saw was honest. They saw what the people had been living. And then they also saw a difference between what they had and what the people were eating, based on what we had done for them. As they came to the camp, people were sitting outside. The bus pulled up and these ten people walked out. Our people had never seen people dressed that way. They thought they looked like bums. And when they were introduced, these are the people from the United States, they looked at them, and they kissed them, and they said we would never have recognized you. There's also a story about Yahudi Menuhin and Leonard Bernstein. Yahudi Menuhin, very little guy, made a terrible mistake; although, in his way of thinking, he was right. He came to Germany too early. He came in early 1947 and gave a concert in Germany. Our people were roused. They were angry; and the Jews should come and play for the Nazis. He asked -- let's see, there's a military government, if he could visit a Jewish DP camp. And I said yes. And they called and our people were there, and as they came up, they were booing him. They were shaking their fists at him. No one did anything to him. No one touched him, but he had a great fear. He saw it. When he came to Frankfurt, he told the story to the then advisor on Jewish affairs, Judge Leventhal of Philadelphia, told a story, and says, "Why are they like this?" He said, "Look, I'm not going to answer you. I'm going to show you something." He took him over to the Federal Depository, and took him in the basement in a --- where it was locked. He says, "Come look." And what was there were gold fillings that were Jewish. He did say a word except, "Mr. Yahudi Menuhin, that's why they did what they did." Leonard Bernstein was another thing. One day, it must have been in 1948, the phone rings and a man says, "My name is Leonard Bernstein. Is this the Jewish Joint?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I need help." "What is it?" "Well, I'm here to conduct the Munich Philharmonic and there's a strike and the orchestra can't come to rehearsals. Is there any way you could help us?" So, Sam Haber, the director, said, "Sure. How many people are there? Let us speak to persons arranging." So it wound up that we sent ten trucks to ten different places, brought the musicians in, and they rehearsed.

Interviewer: When he wanted to conduct the Munich –

Theodore: Yeah.

Interviewer: -- Philharmonic.

Theodore: He couldn't get the orchestra, because there was a strike. So we made available trucks to pick them up at various points and bring them to rehearsal.

Interviewer: These were German musicians?

Theodore: German musicians. We decided, you know, by now he -- I can even remember one of the pieces was a Ravel piano concerto for left hand, and he conducted it. Conducted it. And after it was over, I said, "You know, we've been very helpful to you. We want you to be helpful to us." He said, "What can I do?" We said, "We have a small DP orchestra

in Wolford's house, and would you conduct them?" "How many?" "Eleven." He said, "Sure." We brought him out. He was in his tux. The hall was full, and thousands of people gathered outside, the great Leonard Bernstein. I think it was "Poet and Peasant" that he conducted. And I was sitting inside watching him, and his hands got so wet from the tears, that he barely stood up he was so emotional. And "Poet and Peasant" never sounded like "Poet and Peasant" ever was played. And it was over, and they applauded. He came back. He pulled himself together. And we said, "You know, a lot of people didn't hear you. Would you do it again?" He said, "Sure." And everybody moved out. Some more moved in. And there he was, still crying. It was beautiful. So, when it was over the people gathered around and kissing this man, hugging him. He didn't want to leave. And he stayed there for another hour, walking about, talking Yiddish. And that night we took him to dinner at the officer's club, which was in the Haus Der Kunst, which was a large museum Hitler had built for the new German art. And the army always takes the present. So, there we were, and it was rather obvious, an American Army mess with an orchestra of ten people, a meal cost 25 cents. The director recognized him and came over and said, "Am I being too forward? Could you play us a piece?" "Oh," he said, "sure." He said, "Any Jews here?" [laughs] The director didn't know. He said, "Yes." It was 10:00 PM. At 2:15 in the morning he finished. He was getting out of himself all the built-up frustration that that day had brought him. I'm not talking about how good a Jew he was, but he certainly wasn't involved in Jewish affairs, and yet that was Leonard Bernstein. That was beautiful.

Interviewer: I need to ask you some more questions, which may be a little bit more mundane, but I think they're important for information purposes. You mentioned the prevalence of the black market in postwar Europe. Were you at the Joint able to make that work for you?

Theodore: Whatever we did was something that the army allowed us to do. We would have never set up the program of distribution based on working and so on with a minimum to every family, if the army and the UNRRA had not allowed us to do it. They knew we were doing it. So, in effect, it wasn't black market. I mean, we just didn't take a boxcar and say, here. A boxcar would have been a quarter-of-a-million dollars profit. We had a case like that by someone, too. No, we didn't condone or allow or be part of it. What they wanted to do was their business. We weren't there to police them for the Germans or the military government. If the military government wanted to arrest them, fine. But that was a gimmick, not of our making. The goal of all the people were to leave. The number who were left behind finally in 1955, 1957, were small. They had problems that they couldn't immigrate. Maybe they had a little business or whatever, and that was our goal. The military government knew that if they were arresting people, putting it on the record, they could never immigrate. And black market didn't seem like a major crime in the world about us. So, they were very lenient on it. Occasionally, they would have some, but nobody was kept from immigration because he did a little black marketing.

Interviewer: I'm just looking at perhaps, if you were -- needed more supplies or different supplies, there had to be ways to get those, other than waiting for them to come from the United States. I don't know if you were able to -- you, as the system, for your own purposes and your own goals.

Theodore: Well, we didn't deliberately, but certainly it took place. If a camp that got their supplies decided that they would enhance the menu by fresh fruit and it cost them a carton of cigarettes, they used it. We didn't stop them. But they were doing it. And that's how the system sort of worked. But, look, the military were wonderful. At one time in Frankfurt, in the main center of the city, the army set up a great big store, with two entrances. One entrance was for the GI's and officers who could come in and be given points for chocolate, cigarettes, soap, whatever. They got points. The other door -- now this is the American Army -- the other door was for the Germans who could come through with whatever it is they wanted to sell, Meissen [porcelain], china, cameras. They brought it in. They got their points. The Germans took their points for their cutlery or whatever, walked over to the other side and used those points to get what the GIs had brought in, the chocolate and so on. The GI took his little points and went around the other side and bought his Meissen. That was army sponsored. So the army knew, but didn't know how to control that issue. But it wasn't considered such a terrible thing.

Interviewer: Now when you talked about your involvement with the Brikha and that you were able to help them get soap, or able to help, I guess, get some money to them to do what they needed to do, was that official policy or unofficial policy?

Theodore: It had to be official. We didn't do it on our own. Our people, as a matter of fact, our director at that time -- I showed you the picture -- was Doctor Joseph Schwartz. He was a great man. And the policy he had agreed with by our lay leadership in New York certainly was from that end. We worked very closely together. I wouldn't have been able to get tens of thousands of gallons of gas if I hadn't been told go ahead and do it. I didn't steal it. We just weren't using all our trucks, and they gave us so much per truck. The Army, deep down on a high level, understood, understood what our motives were. They knew exactly what we were doing. They knew every aspect of it. And they were sympathetic to it, because like that, they could have stopped us. And so we didn't set it up. We didn't always condone it, but it was there. And in the final analysis, it was of great help to the people.

Interviewer: Was it important to be resourceful in maybe not breaking the rules, but bending the rules to accomplish what you needed to accomplish?

Theodore: It's a very nice statement. I agree one hundred percent. I have a story. One day I received a call from the colonel. And he said, "I have a question to ask, and I'd like your opinion." This was around Passover. But, you know, the Orthodox on Passover must cleanse the house of the -- not of the khometz because you can't have it around. And at some point if you have a store, your rabbi agrees with you to sell it temporarily to a gentile. And so he said, "We raided the camp and we found three floors of ration food. And the committee states the following: That according to Jewish law, no Jew must have khometz in his home during Passover and, therefore, they brought all of their khometz to this warehouse and checked it in, in order to come within the ruling. My question to you is, is it true that for Passover, an Orthodox Jew must rid his home of khometz?" And I said, "Absolutely. I do it, too." Dead silence. "Thank you very much."

Now, just think of what I did. I didn't say anything but give him a direct answer to a question he asked me because he wanted no part of it, either. I could have said it seems impossible that a thousand people would give their food into one warehouse. And obviously this is a warehouse for -- I knew it was a warehouse for the camp where they had food in it. But I didn't say anything but what he asked me. So that's when you talk about being resourceful. Then there's a funnier one even. It had to do with a cow in a warehouse. And the military had been told that somebody brought a cow into the camp. And so they were, after all this is rationed food. They came in and were looking for it. And they came to the warehouse. They went through the first floor. Not there. The cow was on an elevator. It was on the third floor. So when they went to the second floor, the cow went to the first floor. And when they came down, the cow was brought up to the third floor. And that's how they had cheated the military government of a cow, mobile cow. So resourcefulness was very important.

Interviewer: I assume it also was with the illegal immigration to Palestine.

Theodore: Oh, yeah. That was an experience which had so many edges to it. From Austria, the quickest way, and there was any number of children institutioned, they had to walk through the mountain about a mile, and they did it, children, women, men. And on the other side, there was a truck that took them. But most of the movement was handled through border checkpoints, through friendly border checkpoints. Also, the Brikha coming eastward -- or westward went through Russian checkpoints. And they weren't stopped. But somebody had been there before and had made a distribution of vodka. You can just imagine the kind of planning you had to do and the resourcefulness of the people who were involved to know that a train carrying a few thousand people coming through. And they made check -- spot checks. When ours came in, they didn't. So there are all kinds of stories of the resourcefulness of the Palestinians, now Israelis. And it was -- the head of it was a man by the name of Chaim Hoffman, his Hebrew name was Yakhiel [?]. He died. And I remember a month before he died, I had met him in Israel. And he said, "You know, Ted, no one knows what happened there more than I. No one knows what you guys did." Because one of the jokes about the Brikha is that everybody was in it. And it's true. A lot of people were in it. But basically they were able to function with the funds that they received from us. You know --

Interviewer: I'm going to stop you here, because we're out of tape. [End of Tape Two]

Tape Three

Interviewer: You were talking about the Brikha and the spirit in everyone --

Theodore: Sure.

Interviewer: -- that had been involved. Now, were you, as representative or deputy director of the Joint Distribution, directly involved with these efforts? How did you --

Theodore: Well, not really, because what we tried to do is to not -- and they felt the same way -- become too involved with the people who were functioning out in the field. So our

office was in direct contact with the top person, who was this man Chaim Hoffman. And whatever it was that he needed or wanted, he would come to us; we to him. I don't want to say it was like an army, because the people were functioning on their own out in the field. And they all came to this point. It was about a half-block away from us, he, who held all the wires in his hand. And we moved directly with him, for good reasons. We were American. We shouldn't be involved in this. After all, we were in there for an altogether different reason, to bring help to the people in the camps. We weren't there to send people underground to Palestine. So we always -- our name never appeared on anything. But their needs were covered directly between our office and his office, whether it was money, whether it was gasoline, whether it was trucks. Although technically, he was in officially, because the Jewish Agency -- remember I told you about bringing teachers in -- they came in under the aegis of the Jewish Agency. So the IRO, at that time, had him as part of a voluntary agency, with the Jewish Agency, for Palestine wives [lives?]. And so he was there legally, and functioned from there with all the communication that was available. But, you know, we knew where they were. We knew what camps they were in. We made an effort to be a little more generous to them. And they were generous to us. They liked to try to pull wool over our eyes, as any committee has a right to. If they don't, I would throw them out. If they don't want to argue with us and if they don't want to bring up plans that we might buy, gee, what kind of committee are they? But there was one that we wouldn't take. We had a children's home right down on border near Birches Gaden. And one day there was a request that came up from children. The request was to build a ritual bath. I took that into Mr. Haber. I said, "Sam," -- he was as religious as I am -- "do you think that children need a ritual bath?" So we said, well, you know, they're asking about that, about \$4,000 for it. So we went over to Chief Rabbi and said, "We had a request for mikveh at this home. Do you see any reason why, or are there people living nearby who need a ritual bath?" And he looked up at me, and he smiled. He said, "I can't tell you that there isn't a woman down there who may need a ritual bath. But I want to tell you, if there is one, I'll do everything I can to bring them up to the next camp where there is a ritual bath." So it was not all fun and games, because sometimes there was danger in moving these convoys through, because at one point there were some scattered shots going through the French Zone of Austria. That was cleared up. But the majority, there was never any real danger with all the movement of these tens of thousands of people.

Interviewer: Did you have good working relationships with other organizations, other aid organizations that were involved?

Theodore: Yes. Well, with ORT and HIAS and the Jewish Agency, there were no problems. We cooperated. We saw eye to eye. We had the same goals. There was never any competition. And no one else was doing what we were doing. However, we had a very fine contact with the non-Jewish agencies, and there were many. The Catholic Relief Services, the World Council of Churches, the Quakers, International Social Service. There must have been fifteen or twenty.

Interviewer: They were in the Jewish DP camps?

Theodore: No. They were in Germany. They were working in Germany. They were working in other camps. And we knew each other, after all. And one day, and I don't know whose idea it was -- I know it was the guy from the World Council of Churches -- he called up one day and he said, "Ted, we are going up to Frankfurt to talk to the military about an issue dealing with something with the camps." And he said, "I'd like to take a lot of us along." I said, "I'd be happy to." He says, "I'm even going to put on my big cross, which I usually don't." And we went up and we saw Lucius Clay, General Lucius Clay. And they presented their problem. And he was sympathetic. And the issue was settled. And as we went back on the train, we were talking. And suddenly he said, "Why don't we have a voluntary agency set up, an agency of all three agencies, and meet once a month? They have similar problems. And, if we want to go together, do it." And thus was born a council of voluntary agencies that had a lot of clout. You know, it's easier if you go in with a lot of agencies with different religions, rather than going alone. And so we set it up and we were very careful to keep it on the right level, that we would all see eye to eye. And I remember when I moved to Austria, we set up a volunteer agency there. Whereas in the United States, the kind of kindredship and cooperation between these agencies mostly was nil. But over there, suddenly, the importance of religion didn't come into it. We were fighting a cause. And as volunteer agencies, we said it. We set it to a commanding general or to an ambassador, that we are a voluntary agency. We obey the laws, but we're carrying out the policy that those who have contributed to us want us to do. We will not be in conflict with the government or the military. But if we have a policy to carry out within the rules, we'll do it, whether they like it or not. And so, you know, they didn't mind that because they were also a little concerned about how things were going in these camps. The military government liked the fact that there was peace in the Jewish camps.

Interviewer: You were talking earlier about almost a resurrection of these people in the camp, and how their lives began again.

Theodore: Sure.

Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit more about how that came about and how long it took? There's a whole sort of besides the physical rebirth, almost, of a lot of these people weren't well. Had there been a spiritual rebirth?

Theodore: Sure. Well, let me start with right after the war. Everybody, I told you, there was so much movement, so everybody was moving, looking for their relatives. We, on our part, in all our offices painted the walls white for people to put their names up. And so we had steady streams of people coming, looking. What I'm trying to get at is that there was something in them that they had to look, that they might find, and there were few who did find. And when they did, you would know it because it ended always in screaming and shouting. That was a period, a period of unrest. They didn't know where to go. They -- the organization wasn't ready for them. They accepted to be put into facilities by the UNRRA, the underground was go to Landsberg, wherever, you'll get in. And that was a period of bewilderment for most people. Where am I going? What am I going to do? Despite the fact that he was living on the bloody soil of Germany, he was very fortunate. He had a chavura. He had friends. He had fellow Jews. He had JDC

trying to help him, and he was helped. He was able to eat. He was clothed. He was even given a job. But it was all temporary. They didn't want to continue. They didn't want to stay in Germany. I hate to tell this story because it's a little off beat, but I must say it. There was a commanding general in Heidelberg, who had been approached by an UNRRA social worker, talking about the trauma of the DP's, all DP's in camps. And what could the Army do from a recreational point of view? Bring a band in once a week to give a concert, and this was an old general. And he says, "Tell me. You got men in those camps?" "Yes." "You got women in those camps?" "Yes." He says, "So what do you want? What more do they want?" And he continued, which I'm not going to say. Which is -- was his opinion that somewhere, somehow, the normal reaction of people being thrown together might end in something positive. That's one opinion. And he was absolutely right. He was a dirty no-good so-and-so, but he was right, because the camps -- whatever we did. We brought in movies. We brought in players. We organized every part of their life, education. And also there were people with children that had come from Russia; that had come from various areas. And we were to set up schools and so on. And the chemistry began to take place. There was no matchmaker. And as I say, it suddenly -- we were blind to it, fortunately not too late -- when the committees began to talk about the fact that there were pairings off. And the Rabbi was telling us about the number of marriages. And he said, "There's no rings." And that's when we sent somebody to Milan to buy gold-plated brass rings.

Interviewer: At what time did this renewal begin?

Theodore: 1947.

Interviewer: 1947?

Theodore: 1947, because by 1948 we had these thousands of babies all over the place. And you'd come into a camp -- where they got baby carriages, I don't know, because we never bought -- but somehow they got baby carriages. And they'd come in the camp and you'd see a dozen women pushing. And finally we said we better find out just what is this all about. And we didn't get very far. The committees were noncommittal. And said, look, they haven't anything to do. They see so much about them that's beautiful because that part of Germany was absolutely magnificent. I hated it. I went over the border to Switzerland, the same thing on that side. It looked good. None of our social workers -- it was after babies were born that they had problems. Our social workers never reported about what was permeating in the group, or who were getting married. We never were able to figure out those who had been in camp and those that hadn't been in camp. But my own feeling was that a great number who had been in camp also married.

Interviewer: I'm wondering; a lot of the young girls who had been in the camp feel they lost their adolescence in teenage years, all of a sudden they were in the DP camps, and I assume also having babies?

Theodore: Yeah.

Interviewer: I wonder if this was a difficulty that your social workers and psychologists had to help them, and I don't think these people were necessarily prepared for adulthood in that way.

Theodore: No, now if we think about it, it could very well have been a defiance. The German down the street two years would kill me. I'm having a baby. I'm coming back. It's funny, I never thought of analyzing it or why. See, I've met people who were born in camp, and I asked them what -- what did your family tell you about their life? They say very little, very little. They don't want to talk about it. As a matter of fact, you know, there's a whole organization of children of survivors who have problems -- not problems, but if they wouldn't have had a problem on this issue, they might have had another problem, a normal family problem, that might be. Of course, my wife is victim, and my daughter and her thesis at NYU wrote, as a child of a survivor, in which she disagrees with the premise of so many of them who had written about the problem of dealing with parents who had been in camps. We also had Merita's [Merica's?] mother living with us, and they were freer to talk about what experiences they had, which was quite unique.

Interviewer: Tell me how you met your wife. You're mentioning your --

Theodore: Well, we have only the Joint to thank. In 1948 and 1949, the JDC in its infinite wisdom found in Hungary a group of Jewish medical students, about a hundred and some odd, all of whom had a year to finish, to get their degree. The policy of the JDC had always been immigrate, get out of here, don't go to school, don't hang around Germany, Austria, Italy. It's no good. But for some reason, this was such an unusual group, they decided to give them assistance while they finished their year for their medical degree. In the case of my wife and a friend of hers, they learned that the Munich University Medical School would give them more credit for their -- for what they had had in Budapest. And so my boss, Mr. Haber, was persuaded to take these two girls to Munich [München] where they would finish their medical school in Munich Medical College. And I -- there was only two, so I was made the social worker. And I remember exactly what we gave my wife. We gave her a carton of cigarettes, ten boxes of skinless sardines, a kilo of cheddar cheese from Missouri, and a hundred francs. That was it. And so something unfortunate happened; that her mother who had tried to come through the minefield had been arrested and was in jail.

Interviewer: Through what minefield?

Theodore: Pardon?

Interviewer: When you say through the minefield...

Theodore: Oh, I'm sorry, between Hungary and Austria. This was my wife came through that minefield. And she was in jail, and she had no news. She didn't know what was happening. She came to me. And I, through a number of people in the Joint and the Israeli Embassy, was able to get to her mother, and to help her in food, reading materials, and so on. So we became friendly. And before her mother came out, we were married in Munich [München], Army chaplain. She always says that the best thing

the Joint did was give her a husband. And I, vice-versa. We have three children, a son in England with two boys, two daughters here in New York. Both have two children, and that's -- oh, yeah. I made sure she finished medical school and got her degree. And she is doing research at New York hospital in White Plains in geriatrics. She also worked in Switzerland in a geriatric hospital.

Interviewer: The -- share the aftermath for the DP.

Theodore: Okay. During this entire period, starting at the end of 1947, 1948, there was the legal movement to Israel. The United States came through with a new immigration act specifically to help displaced persons from Germany, Austria, and Italy. If you were a DP, you could get a visa very easily. So -- and also people were moving to other countries like Canada, Australia, and in this period, we were also involved in immigration, the movement was taking place. Camps were closing out. We come into the early 1950s, where I think there may have been three or four camps. And then you come into the 1955s, and during that period, 1952-1955, the Germans, the Germans wanted to be as helpful as possible. I must also mention it was the period where there were negotiations between the Jewish organizations and the government of Germany on restitution. So there was a lot of involvement of Jewish causes.

Interviewer: Were you involved with that?

Theodore: We are part of it, yes.

Interviewer: Did Ben-Gurion call you?

Theodore: No. Moe Levitt, our director in New York, was the secretary of it. Wherever the group came and I was, I was involved. Like we were on our wedding -- first, in 1952, and they got to Sweden when I was called to come back because restitution was starting up in Austria. And so the government was interested, really interested, because they had been there so long, by making facilities they could get them out. And the government was very cooperative. And they had -- there was a lot of building all over Germany. So the few, by that time there was 500 or 600. So we began to move up. They were given apartments. They were given pensions. And by the end of 1950, they were all out. So that's how it ended.

Interviewer: What -- how important was the DP experience in Europe and your efforts to help them in terms of establishing foundation in Israel?

Theodore: Well, curious that the JDC's first program in its history was in 1914, when, let's see, there was Ambassador Morgenthau, father of Roosevelt's Morgenthau, who had cabled that because of a conflict that was taking place, or skirmish, or war, that Turks were making it very difficult for the Jews. And the first \$50,000 that we raised went to Jerusalem, and we've been there ever since. A program that was set up eventually, Malben, was set up -- I came to that program in 1963. I helped close it down. But the JDC was responsible for setting up and staffing and financing the programs for all of the elderly, indigent, and children.

Interviewer: So the camp experience in helping people rebuild their lives and the development of community again, how did that play into your future?

Theodore: Well, I think that the experience in the camps of these people was a good fundamental grounding in what eventually they found in Israel, because the importance of the political parties, the importance of free elections, the importance of a central being, state of Israel, never been the state of Israel. That -- the experience, whatever it was, it had its effect on the people. And the fact that many of them, the minute they came there, went right into the Army. It was coming from living in limbo, which it was, living in an area that they wanted no part of, where they couldn't put their roots down, and coming to Israel was a blooming for their lifetime. As far as my experience is concerned, I certainly learned a great deal about mess and housing and kosher food. And the first thing that hit me when I was sent to Vienna, was right after the Hungarian Revolution, about 25,000 Jews came across the border and came directly to our office, waited in line. There were a few women who had dead children they were carrying, and within a very short time that problem was well handled by us with the know-how that we had had. And, of course, there was also another thing there that changed history. I haven't mentioned that immigration was not an easy thing. Medical, you couldn't have TB or other debilitating diseases. You had to take a security examination by CIC. Did you ever watch a Communist Parade? Why? And it was not easy. It was easy to go to Israel, but to go to the United States was a terrible time. And something happened in that they didn't change at all. In 1957, a guy by the name of Nixon was sent by Eisenhower to look at it. And he saw atomic scientists, and he saw highly professional people who any government would take quickly. Look at what you save in having well-trained professional people. And so Nixon suggested and found a loophole in the immigration law where people, without going through the security -- although they had a slight medical -- could be given a temporary entry visa immediately. And then the security check will come later. People would go to the American Embassy and in a week were in the United States. Waiting for visa under the old rules took months or years. This was an exclusion. Other countries in Europe were also quick on the draw, would bring in buses down to the border and take everybody that came from Switzerland or Holland. And Nixon broke the immigration standards and allowed immigrants to come in easier. That was at that point.

Interviewer: That was very late, though.

Theodore: No, no. That wasn't in 1957. So he has one plus somewhere.

Interviewer: I understand that you -- when you were with the JDC and you had had contact with Oskar Schindler.

Theodore: Oh, yes. Well, you must understand at that point in the late 1940s there were many Germans who said they helped Jews. There may have been. And there were a few. But there were a few students in the White Rose uprising in Munich [München] who were standing up and helping. And so we just didn't live with them. We just had as little contact as possible. And one day at our office in Munich [München] in Sebra Strasse 3

[?], the receptionist came in to our director, Mr. Haber, and said there is a German who wants to see you. Tell him to see Feder. This German walks in the door, tall, rather good looking, and was wearing the usual Bavarian lederhosen. He had pants, hat, feather, a vest with little flowers on it. And when I get up, put out my hand, Feder and Joint, Schindler. And I said, "What can I do for you?" As I uttered the word "you" the door to my office opens, one of my colleagues comes in, a displaced person, takes one look at Mr. Schindler, screams, drops to his knees, kisses his pants, and begins to cry. And he was incoherent. Now, I want to tell you, I had never seen anything like that before, never saw it since, and I knew something was up. After he began -- stopped gasping, I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "This is Mr. Schindler. He saved my life and 140 other people." He smiled. He says, "Well, what he said is true. And I come to you because I need some help." I was still speechless. I went in to Mr. Haber, and I said, "Sam, here's one German you're going to see." And I quickly told him what happened. He said, "For God's sake, bring him in." And he sat down. And it appears we had received information about him, that our committee in New York was discussing what they wanted to do for him. So we knew we were speaking with a man that was going to be helped. What could we do for him? And, well, he needed help right away, because it wasn't that he was starving, but he was in pretty bad shape. Well, we sent him -- he came from upper Bavaria, Regensburg, I think -- no. We sent him home with a good care package, and told him to be in touch with us because something was going to be coming in on him. And it did. And it was very simple. It says the JDC has made a grant of \$15,000 to Mr. Schindler. Now, \$15,000 in those days and today, would be tenfold. And he wants \$5,000 in Germany, and he wants his \$10,000 when he goes to Argentina where he and his wife, who was an agronomist, are going to set up -- not a mink farm, but a nutria farm, going into business. And he said, "I'd like to get the \$5,000 to pay off my debts and maybe buy tools. And I'd like to come in periodically." Because I was ready to give it to him at that time, he said, "No, don't give it to me." Well, I didn't want to argue with him. Had I given it to him, he would have been so much ahead because the value of the Deutsch Mark then was pretty low, at about twenty, and when there are twenty Deutsch Marks to a dollar, and when he finished up about six months later, it was down to ten. Okay. So, he kept in touch and came in, discussed nothing ever personal about his wife, his son, his plans. He was always planning. And finally he got all the money. And after about four months, decided to go. Then he said he's taking his wife and he has a family he'd like to take with him. It was a couple and two women. Okay. I went to the general, and there weren't that many ships going to South America. And he finally got down there, got his money, started a factory. Nothing went right, nothing. Anything he touched. Two years later Mr. Levitt was there. He came and asked if he could get another \$5,000, and if he did he could get this and that. Mr. Levitt said yes. One of the oddest cases we've ever had. Anyways, by that time the restitution was taking place in Germany. He made a choice. He said, "Look, I was also hurt by the Nazis. They took my factory eventually away. I had invested a great deal in it." And so we didn't -- hadn't an answer for him. We gave it to the restitution people. And they were fascinated by it. You know, one case of a righteous German, and they -- I later said you guys -- this went on a caprice -- you wanted to see all of his documents, which he drew the buildings and one thing and another. And the result of all this was, all kinds of important Germans, but more important all kinds of Germans, that didn't like him. He got next to nothing. And he asked if he could come back to Germany to fight his case.

And we said we'd pay for his ticket. When he got there, he said, "I have a possibility of really getting into something in building. I can get a concrete manufacturing machine," or some bloody thing. And at that point we gave him some more money, that, too -- And his lawyer helped him. That, too, went down. The only joy he had, and he went on a number of times, was to go to Israel. There, those whom he had helped treated him royally with hotel, food, liquor. He was with them. And they adored him, after all. But there wasn't anything for him to do. He came back to Germany. And then he got into real heavy bouts of drinking. And that's the end of the story. When he was buried, he asked to be sent back -- not back, sent to Israel for burial.

Interviewer: In your dealings with him, what kind of man was he? What kind of personality?

Theodore: He liked to talk. He liked to talk. And he had so many ideas in the business field. It was fascinating to listen to him. In some ways, I didn't want to say it, I had a feeling he was a first-rate conman. And perhaps that's what was necessary to save those Jews. Or maybe the Lord put him on the earth for one reason, to save 160 Jews, and then the Lord left him alone. That, incidentally, isn't my idea, but it was told to me by the fellow who played -- not told to me. There was an interview with him, who played in Schindler in the picture, the -- what's his name -- Scandinavian.

Interviewer: Liam Neeson. [?]

Theodore: Yeah. And anyways, that was his story. And I felt comfortable talking to him, but I just couldn't see him, because when you think of what he did in pulling the German Nazis by their nose and keeping those people, no one -- no one could ever understand what was the chemistry that drove him, or was able to keep him alive with all these murders that he was dealing with. It beggars description.

Interviewer: Let me ask you a question. Your experience with the DP camps in Europe, did this have an impact on you after that period that remained with you? Did it change you in any way?

Theodore: The experience with JDC changed me. When the DP period was over, and I was sent to Vienna, at that point it wasn't certain that the JDC as such was going to either continue or expand, and the possibility of disbanding. And so I tried making contact with other organizations, working in the social service relief field. And then, of course, fate had it that there were plenty of emergencies that JDC had. And I was able to build a family, and wherever we went, the family was with me. Working in Tehran, my background was very important, because we were dealing with a poor group of Jews living in the ghettos, without running water, without toilets. And we had to set up a program for them. My experience in Germany was positive, very important. I could look at the 34 kitchens in the schools and determine whether they were functioning or not functioning. We brought in staff to establish a substantial medical program; experience there. Dealing with the people, which was the most interesting, because they were the most stubborn people in the world, still are, taking after their brethern, doing my best to organize the committee in Tehran, all of my finesse in Germany was called into play. I didn't win all of them. But it was very satisfying to be able to do as much as the JDC did

in a community where eight years before there be a line on Friday in front of the hospital of a dozen or more mothers with born dead [stillborn] children who had to be buried. That ended. We cleaned up cemeteries where Jews who were Jews used to live. So the experience was very positive and then eventually I was transferred to Israel where all our programs were going, and it was exhilarating. And then finally back to Geneva, where the headquarters. I was a deputy to Charlie Jordan for all of Europe and North Africa and Israel. And 25 or so years ago, he was murdered in Prague. And by whom, we don't know. They were trying to get documentation. They knew what happened to him. They claimed that he had drowned himself. He was there with his wife and nephew. Charlie Jordan, drown himself? It was more of being drowned in a bathtub, which is one of the favorites of certain groups, and then thrown into the river. And when we asked to be present at the autopsy, they said sure. The autopsy was done at 7:00, and the chief doctor of the Zurich community and our doctor arrived at 11:00. They did not see the autopsy. We did ask for some of the internal pieces and brought them back, but never could -- he was obviously murdered. There was a book written by an escaped security officer, Czechoslovak, in London, who said that the Czech police had watched through night of glasses, how he was carried out of a home and thrown into a river. But it has a peculiar ending. This doctor whom we brought in, the chief pathologist, this was August, was found frozen to death in a park in Zurich. Now, that's enough to push memories. Never found out. They insisted it was suicide. He was drunk.

Interviewer: What do you think the greatest success of the Joint was, in your stay at the camp, not in all your experience?

Theodore: I'd hate to pull one out. But I would say that our work in Israel, as probably the jewel in the crown, because we in our way have done so much. We built the school of social working. We established all of the buildings, and we had built half-a-dozen buildings in this program of Malben, were all turned over in working order and was part of the whole medical programs of the state of Israel, all of these hospitals. Yeah, I think --

Interviewer: I'm trying -- what do you think your greatest achievement was in the DP camps in Europe prior to that?

Theodore: That we were there. Even if we hadn't done as much as we did, the fact that we were there, that we represented something that they hadn't had for years, that we showed them that Jews in the world hadn't forgotten them, wanted to help them, and that their lives in the future would be more or less what it was before the war. And, you know, how often in that period, walking into a camp, not that, you know, people were running up and kissing their hands, on the contrary. I use humor with our people. And I represented something so solid. And I was a big guy, too. And that we listened to them. We didn't tell them. We listened to them, and were part of them. And I suppose that giving courage to so many people might have been the greatest thing the JDC did. There's, in that respect, there was the leader of the Jewish camp in the British zone of Germany, it was Bergen-Belsen, and the leader was a fellow by the name of Rosenzaft, was his name. And they spoke a little English. How he learned English, I don't know. And so they brought him in 1945 -- after all, here is a man that came through and he

was present -- DPs and everybody's interested in him. And they brought him. And Stephen Wise had him speak to a large group. So in the midst of the group he said some unkind words about the Joint. When he was over, Rabbi Weis jumped up -- I think it was Wese -- and says, "This is terrible. We're going to have to get the Joint out of there. We're going to have to get another organization." Rosenzaft is listening, jumps up, "Why do you want to do that?" So he said, "But you just told us about how inept (they are) with the the problems." And he says, "Rabbi, you didn't understand me. I was talking as if they were part of the family, and you have a right to be critical of your family. But if you do one thing against the Joint, you're going to have trouble with me." Now, what did that mean? That's it. He knew that we were there. He liked arguing with us. I remember once meeting in an airport, and he always smoked cigars. And he had this cigar, and he says, "I sent one cigar to your boss, Mr. Haber. If he would have been a good guy, I would have sent him a whole box." So, there it is.

Interviewer: We have a few minutes left on this tape, and then I'll put in a new tape for the pictures. Is there anything else you want to say here that sort of concludes this part?

Theodore: Well, I think that the epic period of the displaced persons in Europe has never been adequately reported, and put on paper. It was a glorious page in history. If there had been no Israel, which focused the eyes of the Jewish world, what took place in Germany would have been known by everybody. And it was; it was a real valiant page of history of Jewish life. No one expected that it would end as well as it did. Maybe that's another thing. We worried with them. We cried with them. We wanted desperately to get them out, and they felt that. They had never had anything like that before. And sometimes we were stuffy, but at all times we were there to help. And they realized that. And unlike most people who are getting help, they're ashamed, and they weren't. They said, yes, we have a right to it. We were set upon and we're very grateful. So -- and I met many people since who had been in the camp, and many who hadn't, whose life was touched by the Joint. And it's amazing how they remember, how Elie Wiesel remembers the blanket that the Joint -- I mean, that is true. Another woman, the other evening I spoke to a group of women who had been helped by the JDC. And four of them got up and said, "If it hadn't been for the Joint, I wouldn't be here. I wouldn't have gotten my medical degree." So I said, you know, "It's been a long time ago." She says, "Yes. I didn't really know where to go to say thank you."

Interviewer: That must be very rewarding to you.

Theodore: Pardon?

Interviewer: It must be very rewarding for you.

Theodore: Yes. Or we have a tremendous program today in Russia, and some of our people get overwhelmed by being told by elderly people that their first meal after World War I was through from the JDC. Or someone had been a farmer in the Ukraine who fled. The farm had been paid for by Agro-Joint. Everybody remembers us. Fine. Although we must have made plenty of mistakes. [End of Tape Three]

Tape Four

Theodore: This is a picture that appeared in the Milwaukee Jewish Chronicle in 1916. It is a group of young Pole Zionists and there are two women in it that are my folk. The woman on the left end is my sister, Sara Feder, who later was part and parcel of establishing the Zionist Labor Women's Organization, The Pioneer Women. There were just two women and seven or eight men. And the last person on the picture is a lady by the name of Golda Mabovitch. Actually, that's Golda Meir. And she was the mentor of my sister and friend of the family, and occasionally took me to kindergarten.

Interviewer: You can tape it.

Theodore: Pardon?

Interviewer: You can put a -- attach -- I mean, just year.

Theodore: Okay. This is the "War Room" in quotation marks of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in Germany. And it's an enlarged map of Germany, showing the hundreds and hundreds of camps where DP's and refugees were living. At that time, there must have been about seven million refugees and DP's, who were eventually repatriated or immigrated out of Germany. The tall fellow is a fellow by the name of Feder, and Mr. Eisner to the right. And the lady is British, and her name is Miss Rogel [Rugul?]. And every morning this map was visited by various members of staff to bring it up to date and the fact that there was such movement taking place. This is a picture of Golda Meir and Sara Feder taken at Columbia, Missouri. Golda was on vacation from Palestine and came to visit her dear friend, Sara Feder, who was a doctor of psychology at the University of Missouri.

Interviewer: The year?

Theodore: This is 1933. This picture is unique in the sense that it contains at least six or seven British generals who were the head of the United Nations operations in Germany and Austria and Italy. The British that took over leadership role for many reasons, maybe to give them jobs or because they were fearful of the possible trend of Jews going to Palestine. The person at the head of the table is General Frederick P. Morgan, who was one of the planners of the invasion and was at the final ceremony for surrender. He turned out to be somewhat of a problem, because in a news interview that he gave a few months later, he claimed that the Jews were fleeing Poland, coming with gold and platinum and money and rich. He was thrown out after a couple of weeks by our own Fiorella LaGuardia.

Interviewer: Why are there so many generals?

Theodore: Yeah, they were generals. This is a very unique picture, taken in Munich [München] in 1947. And it contains the leadership of the JDC in Europe and in Germany. From left to right is Herb Katzki, who is still with the JDC. Next to Herb is Doctor Joseph Schwartz, from Baltimore, Rabbi Schwartz, a great person. Edda Doych was in charge of our social

service program. And Leo Schwartz, on the end, was our director. He had been there for a year. When he left, he wrote three books. And I'm next to Mr. Schwartz, Leo. [Transition to next picture]

Theodore: There I am, and my favorite truck, a Bedford. He has a left-hand drive -- no right-hand drive. And this was taken in Normandy. And I'm sorry I couldn't show you who's in the open truck, because it would be of interest to the fact that one of the women was from Norway and later became minister of social welfare. Any of us who could drive, were told to drive, because they had to get all these trucks out of Normandy into Germany. It was a great ride. I was thinner then, too.

Interviewer: What year was that?

Theodore: 1945. [Transition to next picture]

Theodore: This picture was taken in 1946. The person on the right -- it was in a displaced person's camp. I'm not sure if it was Feldafing or Wolfitzhausen [Wolfratshausen?]. The man on the right with the glasses, I think was Frank London or Louder, who was a columnist with the New York Post. He was visiting the camp. And we walked -- there were more kids in this one, but he was taking because he had the longest payot (Ph.) of any of the other children. And his teacher, the man on the left with the payot, was asking him to recite from the Talmud, and he was doing it. Now, the question is: How fast did the payot grow? Because here it was 1946, weren't even born. I must admit at that time, I didn't ask him. But we assumed that he was in hiding in Hungary. And that camp also had over 250 children going to school.

Interviewer: It's amazing that he was able to be in hiding and yet maintain --

Theodore: Sure. This is a visit by General Frederick P. Morgan. He's in the center there with a white belt. And he's in one of the feeding assemblies. And you can see how everybody is feeling very happy, primarily because the man he is talking to spoke English. He had come down because of "we," the JDC, had protested about the bad housing in this camp. And he was the gentleman who later was ousted from his post as director general because of his comments about Jews coming out of Eastern Europe with gold and diamonds, platinum and money. This is a memo to the leadership of the JDC, Mr. Beckelman in Paris, and Mr. Haber in Munich [München], signed by Oskar Schindler, that he had received from the JDC \$5,000 for needs in Germany. But in addition, there was a sum of \$10,000 that the JDC would give him when he went to South America to establish a project there. [Transition to next picture]

Theodore: This was the receipt that Mr. Schindler signed each time he picked up money. You notice, the name on the top is the name of the director of the Joint, Mr. Beckalman. And then all of the signatures on the right are his. We tried to give him the money all at one time, but he said, "No, I want to take it out in seven installments." And these are his receipts.

Interviewer: Okay.