United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Saul Kagan
March 20, 2007
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PREFACE

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SAUL KAGAN
March 20, 2007

Beginning Tape One

Question: Good morning, Mr. Kagan.

Answer: Good morning

Q: Welcome to Washington, and now Virginia. It's nice to see you.

A: Thank you. Nice to be here.

Q: Your name now is?

A: Saul Kagan. S-a-u-l K-a-g-a-n.

Q: Is that the name you were born with?

A: I was born -- except in Yiddish it is not Saul, but it is Shaul, which is with an S-h in -- in Yiddish. But --

Q: But it -- but Kagan was your name?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: As a matter of fact, it is essentially all the c -- all the Jews who was [indecipherable] name was -- was supposed to be Cohen, and lived under the Tsarist rule, ended up being Kaggen, Kogen, Kaganovic, because the Russian alphabet does not have an H.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: If you pick up a Russian map of New York City, the river is not Hudson River, but Kudson River. It's it --

Q: That's right.

A: -- it literally is so.

Q: Yes.

A: So as you know, Poland was dismembered at the end of the 18th century. The part which under the control of either Prussia or Austria, th-the -- the Jews there are Cohens, with a C-o-h-e-n. All the ones who were on -- on the eastern end of it, which is most of what used to be Poland, eastern Poland and so on, ended up as Kaggans, Kogens, Koganovic's and so on, but --

Q: So that's how you got your name?

A: And that [indecipherable] name is, if you'll open up a f -- and -- the Manhattan phone book, or -- you'll find a lot of K-a-g-a-n's, and so that -- that's the name.

Q: So when were you born?

A: I was born in 1922, in Wilna.

Q: And what month?

A: July the 20th.

Q: July the 20th, in Wilna, and it was then Poland.

A: Poland. It was -- if you look at the pre -- pre-World War II map of Poland, the only time Poland existed as an independent country was from 1918 to 1939, after which it was dismembered again. And prior to that it -- it -- it wa -- there was the independent Poland since 1790-something. That's how we ended up with Koshchensko and Pulaski highways around here. They -- yeah, they were running from -- they were fighting for i-independence of Poland. Poland was being dismembered, so they had to run. Where did they run? They ran to a country which -- which was trying to -- to -- to liberate itself, or -- or -- or to become independent.

Q: Right.

A: Anyway, there was no independent Poland really, for -- from the end of the 18th century until 1918. And in 21 years it disappeared again.

Q: Right.

A: And Wilna was the northern -- th-the north -- the largest city in the northeastern part of Poland at that time, and it bordered on Lithuania.

Q: And was it called Wilno, or Wilna?

A: It was called Wilna in Polish, and Vilna in Yiddish.

Q: In Yiddish, oh.

A: And it was a very active center of Yiddish life. There were 60,000 Jews in Wilna, but they had a very active organizational institutional. For instance, the one scientific institute focused on the history of central European Jewry, and the center for the study of Yiddish as a language was established in Wilna, it's called the YIVO.

Q: Right.

A: It is today in New York on -- on -- on West 16th Street. And -- and that was established there and it was there until at the end of it, the -- the -- the Nazi [indecipherable] the Rosenberg's team took over the yu -- the YIVO and -- and to some extent they -- they salvaged a good part of it, and the YIVO has it now in its archives.

Q: Right.

A: The U.S. army found it in -- yeah.

Q: Do you know what the overall population of Wilno -- you said sixt --

A: Two hun -- 200,000 at that time.

Q: And 60,000 were Jews.

A: 60,000 were Jews, and y -- and [indecipherable] probably around 120 or thereabouts [indecipherable] were Poles, and I -- I may be off by, but I mean it was -- and -- and a small number of Lithuanians, Ukrainians and so on. But -- and it -- it has, as far as the Jewish community is concerned, it has a very well developed communal intra -- infrastructure. It has

day -- Jewish day schools, both Yiddish day schools, Hebrew day schools. And it -- it had, as I say, it had a hospital, it had -- it had a very famous library, one of the oldest libraries, Jewish libraries in Europe called the Strashun Library, was located in Wilno. And of course the gowan of Wilno, who was the -- was the great rabbinical authority and scholar, and he lived in there latter part of the 18th century, and to this day there is the -- the -- the home of the Gaon. Gaon is the sage of Wilna is -- is there, and he was actually the -- the spiritual and the -- and the theological head of -- of the [indecipherable] movement which is the one he -- he considered that H-Has-Chasidism to be a -- actually a -- an aberration.

Q: Right.

A: Because -- because, as you know, the basic Jewish theology is based on interpretation of books and of -- of commentary, etcetera, etcetera. I'm not autho -- an authority on it, but I'm simply pointing out that Wilno had that tradition.

Q: Right.

A: And in the post-war period, in some ways, if you like analogies [indecipherable] in a sense like -- like Berlin in the Weimar days, in this very short period between Versailles and Hitler, it was -- was really a center of -- of a lot of culture, and [indecipherable] in the Jewish world really was it. Between '18 and -- and '39 in this [indecipherable] period, it was a lot of young poets, you know, K-Kovner and all -- all kinds of others, and -- and writers, and -- and idealogues of all kinds, I mean it had every political movement from -- from the Agudas Yisroel, which was the very -- the very Orthodox political movement, and it was a political movement alongside to the -- through all the variations for Zionist movements, up to and including the Bund, which was a -- a social democratic labor movement with -- with very strong trade unions and so on, with a very active political life because, for instance, the boards of [indecipherable], the boards of the

communities were boards that were elected in political -- in political campaigns. There were five parties or six parties, or whatever it is, throughout Poland. And -- and so th-there was a very lively, active -- active youth movement of all kinds, and -- and --

Q: So your life was a very full one when you lived there?

A: Absolutely.

Q: What was -- what was your family like? What did your father do?

A: My father was the head of the j -- of the single -- of the one Jewish hospital in Wilna. And our apartment was on the top floor of that hospital. So as a child I would -- I would look out in the windows and see -- and see patients walking around in the courtyard [indecipherable] and --

Q: Did every religious group have their own hospital? Why was there a Je-Jewish hospital?

A: No, no, no, defin -- no, besides, you should know that Jewish communal life in contrast to this c-country was an organized -- the Jewish kehilla -- the Jewish community was an organized, legal entity, like in Germany, for instance, the Gemeinde was an entity under public law, and it -- and it had the border directors, or -- or wa -- the equivalent, which was elected in these political elections.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And dic -- and dic -- and the kehilla and the co-community had institutions; it ha -- it had orphanages, it had -- it had all types of institutions. The hospital in-interestingly enough was created, I guess, and born as a Jewish hospital, I don't know how far back. But it was a -- a hospital which was also a municipal hospital. In other words, it was under the -- the -- the Department of Heath of the municipality. But it was known as the Jewish hospital.

Q: Was your father a doctor, or -- no. He was -- administrator.

A: No, he was -- administrator.

Q: And -- and did you mother work as well?

A: Not -- not by the time I was born. She was -- she was trained as a teacher. You also have to re-remember that my parents were a generation that was educated in Russian schools. Their -- their language of, let's say of academic education or professional education was Russian. Think about it. until 1917, Ru-Russia, or [indecipherable] whenever it was, until let's say, the -- the end of 1916, the beginning of 1917, when the -- the revolution started and the Russian armies were pulling eastward, Wilna was -- was under Russian rules for -- for -- for over a hundred years.

Q: Right.

A: Goes back to the [indecipherable]

Q: Right, right.

A: -- goes back to the end of the 18th century.

Q: So what language did you speak at home?

A: Mostly Yiddish.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Although my parents would have a tendency naturally so -- also to -- occasionally to fall back into Russian, but -- but Yiddish was -- Yiddish was really the language of that -- of the population.

Q: Right.

A: Of the Jewish population [indecipherable]

Q: And what was your father's name?

A: Solomon.

Q: Solomon?

A: Yeah.

Q: And your mother?

A: Leah.

Q: Leah.

A: Leah, L-e-a-h.

Q: And you -- you had a brother who was older or younger?

A: I had a brother who was much older than I was, and --

Q: Much older?

A: Yes, well, he was eight years older than I was, and -- and that was it. There [indecipherable] there were two children the -- the -- the f -- it was -- what was -- what do we call it now, a nuclear family?

Q: The nuclear family of four, right. And were most of your friends Jewish? Did you live in a Jewish neighborhood?

A: Yes. I would say that -- I would say that I hardly had any non-Jewish friends. I mean, I have known non-Jews because people in th -- in the staff of the hospital, and -- and nurses and doctors and so on. We had very good and friendly relations with -- with people, but -- yet they were not social relations, they were essentially sort of -- I mean, I was the son of the -- of the boss of the -- the hospital and there, of course, as a kid, I -- I -- I moved around, and the -- the people around and everybody was -- certainly the people were -- of course we had the -- we had the maid and we had the cook and we had whatever.

Q: You did?

A: Oh yeah, they were -- these were non-Jews.

Q: So you were fairly well off, or was this typical, to have a maid and a cook?

A: Well, I would say by today's standards, I would say it was upper middle class. I mean, it was not where -- it was -- it was not businessman's wealth.

Q: Right.

A: I mean, he was a salaried person, but, fact he was relatively well, by the standards --

Q: Standards.

A: -- of the time, compensated, and -- and the apartment that we had was an -- was an apartment which -- which he had as part of -- of his job. That was on -- it was part of hospital property.

Q: I see.

A: It was the top floor of one of the wings of the --

Q: Was it big? Did you have your own bedroom?

A: [indecipherable] yes, of course, we had three -- we had three bedrooms and we had the living room, and we had the sa --

Q: Two bedrooms or three?

A: Three.

Q: Three, so ea -- s -- uh-huh.

A: And we had the [indecipherable] which was going -- which was going, I would say 18 hours a day --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- but I grew up with -- with [indecipherable] which was -- which came from an old fashioned [indecipherable] with the essence of tea on top.

Q: Right.

A: Which was as black as black ink was. But was hot water which was there all the time, and th-th-this charcoal that kept it going. And you turn on this thing and you break a piece of the sugar and throw it into --

Q: And throw it in? Did you have favorite foods when you were growing up? You don't re -- you don't remember.

A: I don't -- I don't remember th -- I was --

Q: Did you like school?

A: Yes.

Q: Where'd you -- what -- what subjects did you like in particular? Do you know?

A: Well, th -- I like languages, I like history. I was not a -- I was not a -- a gr -- a great [indecipherable] but I -- I s -- I -- I actually did very well in school, I mean, I was no, in that respect --

Q: So you were serious as a kid?

A: De-De-Dead serious.

Q: Dead serious.

A: That's true.

Q: Were you close with your family, with your mother and father?

A: Oh yes, yes. We were -- we were a close family and there -- remember with -- in a family where -- where you have a -- an -- an eight year interval between the two children, the youngest child almost ends up growing up as a -- almost as a child by him -- by himself.

Q: Yeah, yes.

A: I mean, the big brother -- I -- I mean, if I was five -- when I was five he was already 13 or 12 or whatever it was. I don't think the [indecipherable]

Q: So it was a big gap between you.

A: So that, you know, so the parents -- at a certain point, parents concentrate on the baby when the baby is a baby.

Q: Right.

A: And I -- I was -- I guess it was kind of natural, maybe because of the environment, because I don't know what the notion was, that -- that I was to st -- to study medicine. That was the notion.

Q: That wa -- but, was that yours, or that was your dad's?

A: I don't know, I th -- I sort of -- I sort of soaked it up as --

Q: Being in the hospital, I guess, huh?

A: I guess so and -- and y-you should know that Poland had a serious institutionalized anti-Semitism as far as higher education is concerned. It had what was almost officially called [indecipherable] clauses. A quota system. I don't know why I should complain about, Harvard had a quota system too, as -- as you know.

Q: Right.

A: Otherwise Brandeis and -- and -- and Einstein School of Medicine probably don't be ex -- in existence. But it was very sharp, and it was sharp at the point that, you know, Poland has a tradition like Germany [indecipherable] this student associations with -- with -- with their hats and their going back to [indecipherable] there, they were called --

Q: With capes and stuff, right?

A: Exactly.

Q: Yeah.

A: And they were very militant anti-Semitic student groups in Polish universities, who were trying to compel -- particularly after Hitler came to power, in the 1930's, which was the time

clause that -- if I was born in ’22, so my -- my high school period, or gymnasium, as it is called in Europe --

Q: Was -- right, was that --

A: -- and in Poland was -- was in the 30’s, obviously, in the middle 1930’s and -- and so on, were -- were pretty openly and aggressive anti-Semitic, and they were trying to compel the students to sit on the left side of the classrooms. And the Jewish students obviously [indecipherable] rebelled against it, and ended up standing in the back of -- of lecture halls for hours and so on. And middle class and upper middle class families that wanted their -- their sons and daughters who -- I guess primarily sons maybe, but sons and daughters to get academic education, particularly in medicine and other things, would send these students abroad.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Students were sent to -- to Bologna to study medicine. It-Italy was quite apparently open in that respect, and -- and so on and so it -- it --

Q: Did you stand in the back?

A: I didn’t. You have to figure out in -- by 1939, I was only 17 years old.

Q: Right, so you weren’t at the [indecipherable]

A: I just -- I just --

Q: Yes. So it didn’t happen in the high school? In the gymnasium?

A: The gymnasium was a Jewish -- was a Jewish run gymnasium.

Q: Uh-huh, right, right.

A: It was -- it was under the public school system, in other words it had to meet a proper series of -- of subjects and examinations which had to be taken in order to obtain what was called a matura, which was called the certificate of graduation of -- of the gymnasium.

Q: Right, right.

A: Matura [indecipherable] Latin terms o-of -- of maturation.

Q: Right.

A: And I think it's still called matura if I'm not mistaken, in --

Q: I think so.

A: -- in those parts of the world.

Q: I think so.

A: And -- and that was k-kind of -- eventually the equivalent of -- probably of junior college here, or something like that. A-Anyway, so it -- th-then the war broke out in September of '39, and Poland was -- was divided that like all in three parts within two parts.

Q: Two parts, right.

A: And Stalin took over everything east of the Bug river, including -- including obviously, eventually Wilna and -- and --

Q: Right.

A: -- and the Baltic states and -- and it was at that point that Wilna was shifted onto Lithuania, going back to its historic roots and so on, we don't have to lose time on that at the moment.

Q: Was -- did your father retain his job?

A: Yes.

Q: After the war? But --

A: This -- this -- the -- my father retained -- retained the job and I was still there in -- only in a -- in a transitional peris -- stage, because [indecipherable] a few months after the end of the war, my family and so on decided that -- that -- that I will not be able to pursue proper education and

so on, and -- and we had family and relatives in this country, and then -- and we were able to -- to arrange for me to be able to -- to get out.

Q: Did you want to leave? Do you remember?

A: Did I want to leave?

Q: Yeah. I mean, you were 17 or 18 years old, right?

A: Yeah, I mean, there was -- there was -- I mean, there was the fa -- the family -- the family thought that -- that you know, this is gonna be a -- a period of time we're in -- let you put it this way, I grew up in the -- in the atmosphere where people would go to -- to -- to Italy for [indecipherable] difference about going to the United States and Italy, but the idea that -- that you went to -- to get your professional education abroad, in Jewish middle class families was not such a very strange concept.

Q: [coughing] Excuse me, but -- excuse me, but Italy is much closer.

A: Oh, of course, yeah [indecipherable]

Q: You were going to go to the United States --

A: Remember, it was also -- these were times of war, we didn't know. It was a very un -- a very un -- unsettled [indecipherable]

Q: Right, right.

A: -- the whole time. Was not an easy decision, but it was made.

Q: It was made. So how did your f -- but, did your father have to get permission for you to leave?

A: At that point you could still -- it was still under -- if you look at it there was a -- a very limited time period where Lithuania was still a -- a sort of -- th-the Soviets didn't completely at once move in with -- with full blast. The -- the -- the embassies and the -- and the consulates and all this were still around, and -- and you could travel eastward.

Q: But not westward, obviously. Westward was --

A: Westward you certainly didn't travel.

Q: Right. So you -- you were going to take a huge trip.

A: Right.

Q: Yes?

A: But I wasn't alone, I mean, there were -- there were other people, not -- not -- not thousands, but there were people who -- you know, I wasn't the -- the only Jew with -- with relatives and -- and -- and visas to -- to get out of -- of -- of Wilna, or of -- or of Lithuania.

Q: And was that fairly easy to get the visa to come to the United States in 19 -- this is 1940, yes?

A: I mean, it was -- it was it -- that the tail end of '39 there, it was the early part of --

Q: Of '40.

A: -- of '40. I cannot tell you exactly the -- you know, the -- the -- the -- the mechanics of it, but --

Q: Right. Did you travel with any of your friends? Did you know some of these people?

A: No, I mean I -- I've go -- you know, you meet people --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- you meet people on trains and so on.

Q: Right, right.

A: And I moved along with -- I got to know people, and it's just a long trip. Y-You see, you go -- you go on the trains, eventually you go on the Trans-Siberian railroad and so on.

Q: And then you went to Japan?

A: To Japan.

Q: And then to the United States.

A: By ship.

Q: By ship

A: Was that ship. Took quite awhile.

Q: How long did it take you? Four weeks, three weeks, five weeks?

A: No, I had to wait in Japan for th -- because, you know, ships, I cannot tell you, I -- I have -- I didn't do any research, I only know that I had to wait for awhile. Maybe there wasn't much passenger traffic, or maybe there was traffic and there weren't too many seats and so on.

Q: Right.

A: But eventually I -- I -- I got -- I got -- I went by ship to -- to -- to west coast, I'm trying to think now which it really was kind of strange, I think it was San Francisco.

Q: You think it was San Francisco?

A: Yeah.

Q: Probably was.

A: Yeah, yeah. And then of course I went across by railroad to -- to New York.

Q: And that's where you had relatives?

A: Sure.

Q: And were these relatives on your mother's side or your father's side?

A: Father's side.

Q: Your father's side. A brother?

A: No, these were -- these were actually -- these were actually cousins and but they were -- they were close, very close and it was very wonderful for me because I was really received with --

Q: You -- you were welcomed.

A: -- with open arms, and --

Q: Yes.

A: In the Bronx.

Q: In the Bronx.

A: Right.

Q: That was quite an entry I can imagine.

A: Oh, the Bronx, remember the Bronx in those days was. if you still go to the Bronx, if you know New York --

Q: Yeah.

A: One of the major area, which is as -- as big as the Champs-Elysée or Broadway was called the Grand Concourse.

Q: Right, right.

A: And the Grand Concourse was a Jewish middle class s-section of New York in the -- in the 1940's and the 1930's.

Q: Right.

A: That was still a time when Harlem was -- had a -- had a sizeable Jewish middle class population. Yeah?

Q: We have to change the tapes.

A: Okay.

Q: I'm sorry.

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: When you came to the United States, did you speak English?

A: No.

Q: No. So did you speak Yiddish with your family?

A: I spoke Yiddish.

Q: And how long did it take you to learn English?

A: I don't know, I -- I th -- I th -- not -- not too long, certainly took -- to -- to communicate. I think that I have an ap-aptitude for languages.

Q: Right.

A: I -- I -- I ca -- I seem to be able to absorb it because subsequently when I was in the Air Force, and there was a sign down there, and that was specialized training for to -- to study Russian for -- for eight months. I loved it and I to -- and to this day we employ a lot of -- of Russian refugees and -- and I have no problem understanding them. I speak -- they tell me that I -- that I speak rather freely and so on, so --

Q: Huh.

A: It's --

Q: Did you start school fairly quickly?

A: I'll tell you where the -- what -- what happened was, first of all I wa -- by the time I arrived it was already, I guess mid -- mid-1940 because I -- there was a layover in -- in -- in Japan for awhile, and def -- for quite awhile, for a number of months, I was simply with -- with the family and -- and just -- just -- just finding my way, in a sense, and that was very good because I didn't -- I didn't have to -- to -- to worry about, you know, about what just -- by just surviving, or living, or whatever it was. And for awhile during the -- during a period where I was sort of, in my mind

th -- th -- and also in my mind of the -- of the relatives, the idea was that -- that I should have a year or more just to -- to get command of the language and so on and not be plunged into a -- and it was interesting, I grew -- you know, I graduated from a school where Yiddish was a -- was one of the major languages in Yiddish literature. And they -- I got to know people in New York who had -- and there were -- there were si -- Yiddish Sunday schools in the Bronx and in areas like this. And somebody introduced me to some of these people, and I started earning a bit of money by -- by teaching kids in the -- you know, th-they had these -- just as they have Hebrew, quote, Sunday schools, which are not always Sunday schools, sometimes they were Wednesday and Sunday mornings.

Q: Right.

A: And I started just making some little money out of this, you know, just to -- when at the same time, of course trying to develop my -- my English language skills and so on. And that, believe it or not, dragged into ’41. It ki -- dragged into -- it was a period of actually about -- it ended up being about 18 -- 18 months or so. Then ca --

Q: Uh-huh. And during this time you’re living with your relatives?

A: Yes, and then came Pearl Harbor.

Q: Right.

A: And shortly thereafter I -- I went into service.

Q: You -- so you enlisted?

A: Yeah. I was -- I’ve -- I’ve also -- you also have to know that by that time, June 21, 1940 wa -- one occurred.

Q: Right.

A: An-And the -- the Germans invaded -- attacked the Soviet Union, which means they -- within -- within a week they were in Wilna. And they were [indecipherable] cut off.

Q: So that must have been very scary. Had you been receiving letters from your parents before?

A: Yeah, I mean, there was a ki-ki-ki -- mail was -- mail was still going -- going across from -- by that time -- I mean, that part was already under Soviet control, but that doesn't stop a postcard which would -- which essential -- essentially would come in Russian to my -- to my aunt, I guess it would be, to my fa-father's cousin.

Q: Right.

A: Wh-Who also grew up in Russian, you know, i-in Russian schools, you --

Q: Right, right, right.

A: She came to this country, let's say in -- in -- in 1912, or something like that, so she -- so whatever education she had was -- was in Russian.

Q: Right.

A: So she would get postcards in -- in -- in -- in Russian and sometimes it would come in Yiddish and so on.

Q: So it -- th-the postcard would make the same trip that you did. You went up --

A: Yes.

Q: -- it went to the east [indecipherable]

A: -- a-and don't forget it --

Q: Right.

A: -- after a -- after awhile it came with Russian postage stamps.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: And wi-with s-sa -- with -- with s -- s -- S-Soviet stamps.

Q: Why did you decide to enlist, do you think?

A: [indecipherable] I remember by -- a day, it wasn't very long after -- after June, July and so on, of -- of '41, that -- that -- that there -- there's a lot of -- a lot of the ugly th-things began seeping out, and -- and it looked like Hitler was just going to -- to rule the world. It was after the London blitz, it was after all kinds of things, I mean, I cannot -- it ca -- ca -- ca -- ca -- cannot [indecipherable] it was -- anyway, I don't consider myself a -- what shall I say, a great hero in that sense, I mean it was -- if I would have -- I would a -- I assume if I would have waited a-another six months, I would have probably been in -- drafted anyway, but I mean, th -- I'm not trying to -- to -- to -- to make anything special out of it, but it was in some way to me it was very clear that -- that I cannot just si-sit around in New York, and -- and -- and go into a -- into university and -- and -- and -- and so on, like -- like -- like where I came from didn't matter any more.

Q: Right. Were your -- were your relatives upset that you enlisted, or were they supportive, do you think?

A: They were supportive, I mean --

Q: They were.

A: -- I mean, it was -- it was -- I would say -- I was going to say it was always a matter of course. Of course, nothing at this stage was a matter of course.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: And it was actually, I mean, between -- between -- it was in -- I guess by the -- by the time all the -- from relatives and everything else, it must have been the -- the late spring of '42, or be June or somewhere like that. And -- and then you know, starts basic training, and --

Q: Right.

A: -- and combat conditioning and on and on and on and on. But one nice day something very unusual happened to me.

Q: What?

A: I was pulled out from whatever my unit was, I was in -- in Missouri somewhere, in -- in covert conditioning training, which is -- which was just great fun. You get into a foxhole and you bend your head and a tank rolls over you so that you would get used to it. And -- but anyway, I was pulled out and given orders to report to -- to a unit in the campus of Syracuse University, period. I arrived there, and the -- and I reported to a unit that was a s -- an office with a -- a small office with a junior officer and a sergeant over there, and there were another 14 or 13 or 14 young men, and we were assigned to an army specialized training program to study Russian. I had no idea why. It was under -- it was under the auspices of the Air Force. And we were -- everything was done in the army formation, where we marched into a classroom, the door opened up and the lady walked in, and she said, my name is Ekatarina Yavonavapastrahova, and this is the last English word you'll hear from me. This was the beginning of the army's total immersion program, what the Israelis now call the [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: Or what Berlitz calls whatever, total immersion. What turned out subsequently, because I didn't know exactly where -- where it was leading to, but subsequently, I think in Averell Harriman's memoirs or somewhere -- he was our ambassador to the Soviet Union, there is that whole business of the U.S. Air Force wanting to get permission to land our heavy planes from southern England into Poltava, into -- into the Ukraine, so that there could be deeper penetration into Germany. And Stalin being his paranoid dictator as he was, resis -- resisted it very much, he

didn't want. Every foreigner was a spy by definition, including half of his [indecipherable] was a spy as well as, you know? He killed them off one after the other.

Q: Right.

A: But what we -- we were being trained, obviously, to be the liaison unit on the -- on the ground. And for eight months it was a fantastic experience to this day for me, because she was a first rate teacher, she was the wife of a white Russian diplomat of the League of Nations, they were in -- after 1917 they were in, you know, from -- from Russia. And they ended up in -- in Geneva, with the League of Nations. By 1940 I assume things got uncomfortable for them, so they made their way to the United States and she got a job with the army, teaching -- the army taught languages of every possible language. The army taught -- taught Filipino dialects and so on be-because that's to enable -- but in our case it's was a -- we were supposed to be an underground liaison unit and it was a very interesting experience because in addition to the language and in addition to subjecting us to have to -- to learn the bible of the Soviet political party, which is called the history of the Communist party of the -- of the USSR, as they called it, which was in [indecipherable] Russian, she taught us literary Russian, and she taught us Russian history. So a -- a-after 18 and a half months, one nice day the door opened up and this lieutenant told us the program is finished, no explanation. In wartime in the army you get no explanation, you get orders. We were shipped off to a -- to s -- north -- G-Greensboro, North Carolina, as a -- Greensboro is either in North Carolina or South Carolina, you'll have to correct me on that one. And this was a big staging area and we was shipped off to southern England and by the beginning of May of 1944, I was in southern England with probably close to a million or so of other American troops, getting ready for the invasion. And as I was in the Air Force, I was lucky, I never got my feet wet.

Q: Yeah.

A: On -- on -- on [indecipherable] three I was flown over from southern England to Normandy. And I was assigned to a -- what was called a fighter bomber unit, which is a -- a u -- a unit of planes with a single pilot. One pilot wou -- cou-could dive-bomb to give close support to infantry. So we were always 10 kilometers behind the infantry people, who were --

Q: Were you flying?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: I was, I gather because of my language training and so on, I must have been classified in there for s-something to do with Intelligence.

Q: I see.

A: So I was assigned to the Intelligence unit of that particular fighter bomber unit in th -- in -- in the Air Force. And my job was to brief the pilots every morning on whatever missions they had, and that was it. And y-y -- don't know when [indecipherable] airfields and we had at that time still a segregated army. The black engineers were there 24 hours ahead of us, and they leveled off the [indecipherable] of Normandy. And later on a temporary airfield consisted of heavy metal rolls, and which -- which gave traction to the -- to the planes when they landed. But of course, Normandy is also -- has a lot of clay, so when it rained the metal would sink and our planes would flop over, but we always had enough trucks and [indecipherable] and so on, that that wasn't -- anyway, we were -- we -- I was from -- from [indecipherable] three onward with -- with the -- with the whole invasion of Normandy, and we -- we had some experiences, but that's -- I am n -- I am not -- and I don't belong to the war veterans, who are busy talking about their -- their army exploits. Anyway, it was -- I went through the whole business and we had some tough

times because in the beginning the Luftwaffe still was very strong, and they would -- they would try to bomb the -- the beaches, because in order to be able to supply the forces, the beaches had to be lit up 24 hours a day, but they had tremendous anti-aircraft protection. But we were -- but we were -- be 10 kilometers behind, deeper into the country. We did not have all this protection, so whatever they couldn't drop on the beaches, they dropped on us. But -- but obviously I -- I survived, and most of us did. The pilot -- the pilots is another story. And -- and then we -- we broke through and we went through France and through the Battle of the Bulge and saw all these other things that you can read in the -- in the history of that period, and we -- then we inc -- w-we got into Germany, and -- and we went all the way, as I said you, to the Elbe river, waiting for --

Q: Directions.

A: -- directions to come.

Q: Right. So were you actually fighting in certain areas, or were you just -- not just, but you were vulnerable to being bombed?

A: Well, I'll tell you e-exactly that an Air Force unit is in the airfield with planes, which are being fueled up and maintained --

Q: Right.

A: -- all the time. They go out on missions. Their missions are to provide support the infantry which means they -- they have to attack whatever moves on the other side of --

Q: Right.

A: -- whatever the front line is. And they come back, and they have to report on what they doing, these reports have to go back. We are also being the most forward th -- A-American airfield who are on the receiving end of all the big planes that were coming back with dead and wounded on it.

Q: Mm.

A: Because th-the -- the -- the -- I'm sorry, I can't -- I can just that I can tell you I don't want to talk about it, it -- basically the heavy bombers, they were huge planes with four engines and they had maybe eight -- eight or nine crews of -- per -- per plane. And they would fly in -- in -- in waves of several hundred at a time, to protect each other and so on against fight [indecipherable] against the Luftwaffe and so on. And they would go into German cities and factories and whatever it is, and -- and bomb them, that's what they did. When I eventually -- after the war I had to fly in from Frankfurt to Berlin, I could look into the basement of every building.

Q: Yes, right.

A: Cause we managed to -- to burn through every -- every -- now, of course they, many of them would have to go back damaged, for when the aircraft and the people wounded and dead over there, it is probably the nearest air -- airfield, so it is -- they would come back, they would put out flares, and we would know whether we were dead or wounded or whether there's a serious mechanical problem. They would land at our airfield because we were the closest. We were not the only ones, all of these close report fighter units were along the front lines in these places, part of which I was to debrief them and so on.

Q: I see.

A: During the Battle of the Bulge, we were physically attacked by the Luftwaffe, this -- this was [indecipherable]. And we had to, of course, protect ourselves as we did in s -- and then they were shot down and I had to be involved in the interrogation of them and so on, but this is what you did.

Q: Cause you were fluent in German also?

A: Oh, that helped.

Q: Yeah, yes.

A: A -- very --

Q: Yes, if you were going to do interrogation, right?

A: The funny part of the -- of the German was in -- in that particular e-episode, which is a very famous one if you read the -- the history of the Battle of the Bulge in December, that was the last attempt German General Rundstedt would try, they thought they could really break through and go to the -- and they gave us a rough time, and it was -- you -- you'll -- you'll read about it if you read that history. They surrounded a -- wa -- one of the famous paratroop units, 101st airborne and so on, and we were -- th-the unit was totally surrounded, you can read all about it. And th-the German general send the -- a unit with the right flag to talk to the -- to the general who is the head of the airborne th-that th-th-they should surrender, and the great joke was, and that's a fact, h-he -- he said -- he told whoever was on our side, he's -- who was only a German, he said, tell him in English, nuts to their offer. And the joke was literally that the -- th-the -- the Germans went back and translated that into nusa, meaning nuts are to eat, and they didn't know what the hell he was [indecipherable] was, but -- but basically what I'm trying to tell you basically is that that was -- that was the grimmest part of it.

Q: Right.

A: And they dropped paratroopers in American uniforms, consisting of -- of American high school graduates whose parents were part of the German American Bund.

Q: Right.

A: And in the 1930's they were -- you know -- you know, there were rallies of the German American Bund, 20,000 strong in the -- in the ca -- Madison Square Garden. And some of them -

- and some of them emigrated to -- to Nazi Germany, and took their teenage children with them, who spoke fluent -- they were am -- American kids, they --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- they have no accent, nothing. Some of those were mobilized and put into American uniforms by the Germans and dropped as paratroopers behind our lines and did a lot of damage.

Q: Hm.

A: We had among our people German Jewish refugees with German accents as thick as -- as a knockwurst, and -- and th -- and the MP's who became aware of this business started stopping Jeeps along the way, and suddenly they would pick up somebody with a heavy German accent, so that they would take him into an MP -- military police stockade, and we would get a call, telephone call, do you have a Hans Rosenfeld in your unit? If you do, then you better come and bail him out. But that was all part of -- of the -- that was the last big episode that -- we had some casualties obviously, but then the war came to an end.

Q: Were -- were you during this period hearing about what the -- the Germans were doing in occupied territory with Jews and with others, that there was mass killing?

A: Oh, we were totally dependent upon something which was the -- the -- the aring -- the army newspapers.

Q: The "Stars and Stripes"?

A: The g -- "Stars and Stripes", and the radios. And they reported whatever was reportable, but what we saw, of course, was moved into Germany, and we began liberating, you know, these towns and so on, we begin to see people out of the labor camps, and then walking on the streets with -- with -- with people who -- who -- who turned to us and -- and -- and so on, that we -- we knew. We -- we -- we saw what was going on, plus -- plus a -- obviously th-th-thin -- the "Stars

and Stripes" had quite a few reports. I di -- I knew one thing which was very important to me personally because my father was the only member of the family who -- who survived, and he survived by a fluke. He survived by ending up in eastern Russia.

Q: Mm.

A: And -- and from time to time he was able to send a postcard to my aunt in -- in New York, and she would forward it on. So I knew that -- I knew that he was alive, but totally cut off from Wilna and cut off from the rest of the family. That -- that I knew.

Q: And that you knew at the end of the war.

A: That I knew even after -- after the Normandy landing [indecipherable]

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Remember the army delivered mail --

Q: Right.

A: -- APO?

Q: Right.

A: Army Post Office [indecipherable]

Q: So you were pretty sure that your mother and brother were -- were probably not alive at this point? Or you -- or you weren't sure? You didn't know? You didn't know.

A: I mean the -- if you look in retrospect, there are people who survived Auschwitz.

Q: Yes. Right. So who knew? So you're in Europe -- you're in Germany when the war ends, is that correct?

A: Right. And the U.S. State Department comes across -- comes around with a mission to recruit young foreign service officers for American military government administration.

Q: And you say okay?

A: They obviously also must have had some kind of list. Whether it had to do with -- with my background by now, I have no idea, but I -- y-you know, if -- it's r-really peculiar, I -- I don't recall the precise incident. It was at the point where it was maybe the end of -- maybe beginning of June, something like that.

Q: 1945.

A: Right.

Q: Right.

A: And the question was, you know, to -- this was the beginning of d-do you -- do you get shipped to the Far East? After all the war with -- with -- in -- with Japan was still on, if -- as you know, until the middle of August. One didn't know at that time when the war will end, anyway. Or whether one will begin to begin to be sent back home for -- to be demobilized or whatever. And I was approached and I said yes. There was -- there was nothing at that point for me in a sense, in a sense, to go back to.

Q: Right.

A: All I knew is that my father was somewhere in -- in the depth of Asiatic Russia. I was -- I had to -- to assume always the worst as far as the rest of my family is concerned. And in the United States other -- other than obviously the -- the -- the warm friendship and so on, of -- of my family, I was a -- a lone ranger.

Q: Right. And now we have to stop the tape.

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: Did you get discharged from the army when they gave you this job?

A: Yeah. I was -- I was officially discharged from the army, assigned to military government administration and I was -- and I had to travel to Frankfurt to report to a unit of the finance division of the office of military government, U.S. for short OMGUS, O-M-G-U-S, that was its official name, and all of the documents and so on. And I was assigned to a -- to the -- to the unit within the finance division, who was supposed to do res-research on the German banking system during the Nazi period, for two purposes. One, because the United States military government came in with a program of decentralization and -- and decartelization of the whole German financial and economic system because that was, of course, also the -- the interlocking directorates of the banks and big industry and so on is a concentrated for -- element and force in -- in -- in helping the Nazi regime to -- to -- to prosper and to -- and to the military to be able to. And then of course as an instrument subsequently of -- of looting the occupied countries of -- of Europe.

Q: [sneezes]. Excuse me.

A: Bless you.

Q: Thank you.

A: And -- and the other part of it is to develop whatever material could develop to send to the -- to Nuremberg for the worker's trials, which had economic elements to it. I mean, the head of the Reichsbank, Mr. Schacht, and the Chief Economics Minister Funk, and the others were part of that -- of the Goering trial, and so on. And it was at that point where I began to develop working contacts and working relationships with the prosecutors in -- in Nuremberg, whi -- that led later

on to a very close working relationship in connection with the first restitution program in the American zone.

Q: So is that when you met Ben Ferencz?

A: Ben Ferencz, of course.

Q: Right.

A: I mean, in that context --

Q: Yes.

A: -- where we got to know each other.

Q: Yes.

A: And we -- there -- there were massive records in a place called Offenbach, which was about eight kilometers from -- from the heart of Frankfurt. My first office in Frankfurt was in the building of the Reichsbank branch, which is like the Federal Reserve bank. In Frankfurt that building is still there, and of course the great luxury that I acquired and from which I didn't want to part was a -- was a rocking chair. After -- after a couple of years of army service in a tent in other places, the rocking chair was something special anyway. But that is what we did for several months, and that was also during the period when the Soviets, as you know, would not let the American forces into Berlin. Although officially, according to the Alta agreement, we were supposed to be in Berlin practically from the beginning, the Soviets needed a couple of months to -- to loot, rape and whatever. And -- and so I wer -- I worked out of Frankfurt until the beginning of January, by which time already the military governor of -- was -- our military governor was -- was already in Berlin. His name was General Lucius Clay. And all the other military governors were sitting there, and there was, at that time still that instrument which was supposed to be the coordinating instrument, using the Russian term kommandatura, spelled with

a K, and that had to be -- that was part of our of-official vocabulary, and -- and I was then directed to move from Frankfurt to Berlin, and I moved there in January of 1946. Berlin was in a shambles, of course. It was a very cold winter. The U.S. army did some lovely things for the civilian population. Had tents on crossings and little islands with army potbelly stoves that were going all the time so people could go in and warm their hands, which I thought was -- was proper humane thing to do and -- and -- and we did it. In any event, I was then assigned to the Intelligence division of the finance department, and my first assignment involved the writing of a report on the largest of the German banks, which was called the Deutsche bank. The Germans had three major banks. They were called the gross bank and the giant banks, that was the official German terminology. And that was the Deutsche bank, the Dresdner bank and the Commerce bank. Deutsche is deutsche in German and Dresdner is based on the city of Dresden, and Commerce is commerce. And they were in -- in that order in the size, and of course once we -- we got into their -- their records and -- and we interrogated a lot of people, and the picture was very clear, they -- they -- the first step was the -- the [indecipherable] of the banking system, ri -- right after January 30, 1933 when Hitler came to power, started the removal of -- of Jews from leading positions in the banking system, both in the -- in the board of directors, which was called the [indecipherable] and the board of management, which is called the Vorstand. In this way, by the way, is -- is with a V, written as a V and pronounced as a V. Vorstand, V-o-r-s-t-a-n-d. They removed the Jews, there were -- there were prominent Jews as bankers, and prominent Jews on -- on the boards of directors and so on. That was the first step of elimination. Then the banks proceeded to Aryanize, to take over control of -- of many of the private banks which were Jewish owned. Germany had a -- a -- a whole series, starting with the Rothschild banks of course, but over the years private banks quite well known, Mendelssohn and -- and Aufweiser and etcetera,

etcetera, and Oppenheimer and so on. [indecipherable] up and down, and with the Aryanization of those banks and became instruments of the Aryanization of Jewish businesses. And that they did very effectively and very e-e-efficiently between then -- ’33 and -- and -- and ’38 - ’39. And then as -- as the war broke out, and particular it started first with the anschluss of Austria in March of 1938, the Deutsche bank moved in and took over the largest Austrian bank. The Dresdner bank moved in and took over the second largest Austrian bank, called the Lander bank, the first one was the [indecipherable], I mean, I -- I won’t b-bore you with all this, but yeah, this is now what, ’46, we did all this. And -- and so -- and so they went when th -- when -- when Sudetenland was taken over and subsequently Czechoslovakia, the Deutsche bank took over the largest --

Q: Largest.

A: -- Czech bank and so on, very systematic, very orderly. And there was even a sort of a -- became almost like a little rhyme, it -- it rhymes in German. Zuerst kommen die tanken, first come the tanks, and then kommen die banken, and then come the banks. That rhymes in German, obviously, the tanken and banken rhyme. But it was like [indecipherable] the same thing applied to western Europe. When they moved into Belgium they took the control of the major banks, they di -- took control in -- in Holland, etcetera. And so the first report was the report on the activities of the Deutsche bank, and simultaneously the Dresdner bank w -- very -- it was a -- where they -- a special unit, and I was part of it, and somewhere along the way I -- I was given more responsibility and -- and in some of the subsequent investigations, I was the chief investigator of it and so on, and in any event, the objective of these reports was that th-the -- the military government had to establish a policy on what is -- what kind of a bank is this [indecipherable]. One thing was very clear, that A, we will not allow a -- a intermingling of

banking and industrial corporations, because the German system, particular the -- the Nazi period is that the major banks ended up being the -- providing the chairmanships of the main major industrial companies. It was a real intertwining of interlocking directorates, it is called in the decartelization world. And in addition to that, we came with a tradition of decentralized banking in this country. In the state of New York at that time, believe it or not, Chase Manhattan had no right to have a branch in Buffalo.

Q: Really?

A: The state of New York was divided into banking districts, and if a bank was in Manhattan and in the Manhattan district of banking, it could not be in Buffalo and it could not be in Syracuse in those days. So the whole idea of -- of extreme decentralization of banking, very important [indecipherable] anyways, but in this case it was important not to allow the reconstitution of -- of the instruments which were important instruments in the whole Nazi program of -- of -- of -- of control and -- and -- and centralization of economic power.

Q: So the research that you and your colleagues were doing were absolutely essential --

A: Of course.

Q: -- to -- to being able to make a decision like that.

A: Of course.

Q: Yeah.

A: A-And we -- and -- and then of course, in this process was -- was more than that. These people were responsible for -- for economic war crimes. This was -- this is called spoliation. This is a concept in -- in international law. And -- and Aryanization, which was taken -- was carried out, financed with the major banks involved the periodic arrests of the Jewish owners into Gestapo jails and say, you know, you either sign or -- or you gotta spend the rest of your life over

there. And all of this was [indecipherable] it was -- it was made possible with the funding of -- of the banks, of the -- the -- of the banks. And it was not only confined to the big ones, there were smaller banks and so on. In any event, subsequently I was assigned and -- and I became the -- the chief of financial Intelligence of the U.S. military government for Germany, at -- at a rather tender age, but anyway, this is --

Q: Yes, you were what, 23 years old, or 24?

A: No, I was -- I was [indecipherable] by that time in 1948, I was an --

Q: Oh.

A: -- old man of -- of --

Q: 28.

A: -- of -- of 26.

Q: Six, 26, right, a real old man.

A: Look, i -- nothing was known in those days.

Q: No.

A: The army had a rule, I -- I don't know whether the rule applies still today. You get an assignment, they throw you in the water. If you swim, then you -- then you swim and then you move. And it makes no difference, you're 26, you're -- you're -- you're 36, if you sink, you're out.

Q: Right.

A: Anyway, somebody -- somebody decided that -- that I didn't sink. And that -- and in the meantime, of course, other things are -- beca -- became very important. The -- in conne -- in connection with the whole process of Aryanization and so on, there was very serious

negotiations on the part of the Jewish organizations in Washington. With the -- the -- remember, military government was under the -- under the War Department.

Q: Right.

A: Not the State Department --

Q: Not the State.

A: -- the War Department.

Q: Right.

A: Although the State Department had a senior political officer, there was General Clay, and there was a senior State Department official as the political officer. But General Clay was here. And -- and then negotiations were going on for property restitution, the -- there was an organization that had to be -- the Jewish organizations properly advanced this whole issue. And the major battle, and that was -- that was one of the great, basic, historic developments, which was historic in the whole international law. In the normal, civilized life, if I die tomorrow in the state of New York without heirs, the state of New York inherits me. You can go back to the [indecipherable] of 2,000 years plus, and you will find the principle intended for normal, civilized societies. The Jewish organizations came to the U.S. government and said, that is not acceptable after the extermination of six million Jews. The successor -- the successor state of the Third Reich cannot become the beneficiary of the efficiency of their extermination program. I mean, you can go back to the -- to the old Biblical expression, you cannot mur-murder and inherit. And -- but that was a difficult battle, because the battle had to be th-the battle with international lawyers who said, too bad, this is ironclad concept and it cannot be a-any other way. And reparations -- remember historically, if you go back to World War I and so on, it was

always an issue between states. The -- the victorious state could exact reparations from the -- from that state wa -- which was defeated, but it was always interstate dealings.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Here obviously we were coming with -- the organizations were coming with demands for restitution programs to individuals, regardless of what their nationality may be at the -- at the moment that [indecipherable] had to be done, but most importantly with respect to the heir list, and unclaimed Jewish property, and to the property of Jewish communities and organizations that were obliterated by the Nazi regime, that -- that it -- it could not [indecipherable] is the legal expression is to this -- to the state in which the property was located. That took a long time and a long fight, but the Jewish organizations prevailed, and the U.S. government agreed, and the first property restitution law was enacted as a United States military government law number 59, in November of 1947. And in that law there is a provision which says, unclaimed property of victims of Nazi persecution as defined in the beginning of the law, shall accrue to a successor organization, which shall use the proceeds for the benefit of the class of persecutees.

Q: Hm.

A: And this was a genuine revolutionary concept and development in international law. And it is to the everlasting credit, as far as I'm concerned, of the United States government, that stood up all by itself, because I'll tell you in a moment for how long it stood up all by itself. The British and the French did not go along initially with this concept, and enacted this as valid for the Americans [indecipherable] of Germany.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: There was no central government in Germany until the fall of 1949. Between '45 and '49 there was no central government. Every military governor was the absolute ruler of his zone of

occupation and this sector of Berlin. And there were municipal governments, and there eventually were state governments, you know, Bavaria and Hassen and whatever. But there was no central government until four -- for over four years. And in November of 1947, this law was enacted in the American zone of Germany. American zone of Germany to give you an idea in present day -- day Germany was cities like Frankfurt and Munich and Nuremberg and -- and Kassel and Bremen as a port, and Stuttgart and etcetera, I mean it -- it was sort of the center of the -- the British had th-the -- the industrial heart of Germany, the whole -- the Düsseldorf and Cologne and the coal mines and the steel mills and so on, and Hamburg. And the French had the most western part, bordering on Alsace, and -- on Alsatia and Alsace and -- and then -- and on the lake area and so on, and the Black Forest, the Schwarzweld and so on, they had -- they had nice countryside, but that -- they, of course, were the smallest of the -- of the zones. When that was enacted, General Clay wanted the British and the French, his counterparts to enact a similar law -- laws for their zones so there would be a single property restitution law in West Germany. The Soviets you could forget about, they were not interested in private property, they were not interested in the whole concept of compensation and restitution and so on. There was nothing to talk about with them. The British and the French would not go along. Th-This was not in their -- the military governors obviously ca -- don't make these decisions, the decisions go back to the governments. And in the case of the governments, it of course goes to the foreign office in London, and to the [indecipherable] in Paris. The international lawyers over there said, no how. So General Clay went in and -- and promulgated it in the American zone, and the Jewish organizations established in New York the first si -- Jewish successor organization called the Jewish Restitution Success Organization, or JRSO for short.

Q: Right.

A: That was created almost at the same time when the law was enacted, it was in the last November of ’47, but it didn’t come into real operation until the late spring of ’48 because -- and that is very difficult for us imag -- to imagine today -- you could not create from the outside any kind of an operation in the occupied parts of Germany unless you were somehow hooked up to military government. You couldn’t get housing, you couldn’t get access to food, you couldn't -- you -- you could not function, ordinarily. So the -- the Jewish organizations, primarily the Joint Distribution Committee, which was -- had a massive operation in Germany because they were running the Jewish Displaced Persons camps. My s -- first contacts with the Joint were in the spring of 1946 in Berlin, because within a month or so when I came to Berlin, I discovered that there was a Jewish Displaced Persons camp in the American sector of Berlin called Zehlendorf. So of course I ber -- I marched myself over to Zehlendorf and I br -- and I met my JDC friends from that point on. And I would go to the army post exchange and buy cartons of cigarettes at a dollar -- Camels at a dollar apiece, 10 cents a pack, and schlep it to the -- to the DP camp because that was the currency, the reichsmark didn’t --

Q: Right.

A: -- didn’t mean very much. I had to deliver the [indecipherable] she was the happiest woman, she would get two ca -- two cartons of Camels a week. She was a rich woman in Berlin in those days. Anyway, so if -- the JDC then was very much involved in establishing the JRSO, so they sent the general consul to the -- to -- of the JDC to two people, to Ben Ferencz in Nuremberg who had just finished being the prosecutor of the Einsatzgruppen. And I don’t have to tell you the Einsatzgruppen was the most organized killer organization that went -- that went right behind the ar -- the German army after June 1941, and every day would telegraph a report, so many Jews and so many Bolsheviks, and of course they did [indecipherable] and a few other nice

places like that. And -- and he just finished his tour of duty -- I mean his -- the -- the -- the Einsatzgruppen trial, and by the way, hi-his was the only trial which sent the largest number of SS officers and generals to the gallows. And we -- Ben -- Benny and I know each other from -- already from before in terms of -- of the -- of my -- my feeding them material on the -- out of the economic records. At that point we were blockaded by Stalin. In the spring of 1948, Joseph Stalin thought that the moment has come to try and push us out of Berlin as the beginning of pushing us out of Germany and western Europe. The Communist parties of France were powerful. The Communist parties of Italy were powerful, and it was -- economic conditions were terrible. Marshall plan was just beginning to -- to -- to get into full gear, and Stalin thought this was a good moment. So he cut off rail access to -- to -- to West Berlin, and water access, you know, there were canals and so on that would go into Berlin. And there was -- if you -- if you go into the histories, you can read and find that there was serious discussion in Washington as to whether or not the U.S. and the western powers should pull out of Berlin and give him -- give him -- and give Stalin [indecipherable]. It was Clay who went to Harry Truman and came up with the idea of the airlift. And from that -- and that coincided with something else, I mean that's the reason I say to you that -- that some of the historic context of how some of these things that we are talking about [indecipherable] today were born, have not been properly and in depth researched and put in the proper context. Simultaneously, in order to begin to rebuild the economy of -- of West Germany, the allied powers [indecipherable] when they talk about the allied powers, you ca -- have to assume the U.S. being in the lead. The U.S. was in the lead miles ahead of everybody else. We were strongest militarily, economically, we were [indecipherable] as a country, we -- you know, the British and -- and the French and so on were -- were physically

and otherwise exhausted. And a -- the decision was made to in -- to introduce the deutsche mark, the idea being that you introduce a new currency and you build a new economy base.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And the new currency was introduced in June of 1948. [indecipherable] it takes a year for such a decision to be implemented. The first deutsche marks were printed by the American bank note company in the United States. I mean, if you have to project yourself to -- to this whole time --

Q: Right.

A: -- who -- who would anticipated in the spring of ’48 that Stalin will decide to blockade us in Berlin and we would have to protect the new currency from falling into the wrong hands. There was no Berlin wall at that time, and the Communist party of West Germany was swimming in reichsmarks. There were Bavarian villages that never in the Weimar Republic ever had the Communist vote, that had a small Communist party office, because when the Soviets moved into east Germany and so on, they cleaned out every German bank that was there, Reichsbank, and so on, and they had railroads full of reichsmark. And although the reichsmark didn’t have great value, but mountains of them would still some value, and we introduced the mark -- the deutsche mark and there’s -- and there’s -- if you read the papers from that time, the hens began laying eggs overnight. Suddenly, suddenly goods and things began coming up and the economy began to -- to -- to develop and so on, and the Soviets were trying desperately to -- to -- to lay their hands on this currency. And we had to -- we had to run an economy of the western sectors of Berlin with a majority of the va -- population unemployed, with airlifted coal and airlifted goods, and to keep the -- this economy going, and to protect our currency from -- from being depleted. And suddenly I found myself as the chief of financial Intelligence of military government to be

responsible for doing things that nobody has ever been taught in the -- in the economics school, and never probably taught again.

End of Tape Three

Beginning Tape Four

Q: May I call you Saul?

A: By all means.

Q: When -- when we were talking in between the tapes, you started to talk about the fact that you thought you were talking too much about Saul Kagan, about yourself, and not about the issue that was most important to you. So tell me what you think is the really important issue here, with respect to this interview.

A: As I see it, and it -- and you can say eventually it is subjective because of -- of my own immersion in this -- in this whole area. But as I -- as I keep thinking over the years that there is one area which in my judgment is that had been fully and properly researched and -- and examined, and that is what were the particular forces and elements in the -- in the lil -- late 1930's and the early 1940's that -- that made it possible for organized world Jewry, and I use -- I say organized because unless -- unless something is organized, unless there is some sort of an instrumentality, then it is a lot of conversation. Maybe conversation is important, yo-you -- you may not come to the -- to the action before -- be-before you -- before you -- you -- you contemplate the problem, but nonetheless, for the first time -- and I'm not a professional historian, so I say it with all these caveats and reservations, but I think it's the first time where the organized Jewish community in this global sense has -- has decided, in response to -- to in-incredible tragedy that has befallen the Jewish people, to -- to confront the perpetrators or -- or their successors. Because if I go back, at least to the extent which -- and I have spent obviously, time going back to -- to periods of -- of disaster and catastrophe in Jewish life, there was an event, or events of -- of persecution and of -- and of physical damaging injury and -- and murder with the survivors ultimately going into some kind of exile or into some -- away from wherever

it is, leaving behind all their worldly goods, basically, and building a new life and a new existence and new communities in hope that -- that it will not be destroyed or damaged again. And you see rip -- that repeatedly but frequently enough, whether you go back to the destructions of the temple, the -- the temples of the -- of the Babylonian period or -- or s -- or subsequently in the -- in the Middle Ages, the pogroms and the Crusaders and the period about -- which Barbara Tuchman described in -- in -- in some of her books and so on, what you saw was, the Jews picked themselves up from the area where the Crusaders and so on persecuted them. Fortunately the kings of Poland wanted -- needed craftsmen, and that in -- created an open door, and the Jews were moved from the Rhine area into Poland, etcetera and a new chapter in Jewish history opened up [indecipherable] Jewish community in Poland, in eastern Europe and so on. And -- and -- and then subsequently came all kinds of -- forms of persecution, some of them -- obviously 1492 in Spain, and again the Jews ran and left everything behind and build new lives and -- and those who were caught by the Inquisition of course, perished. And -- and then came the whole si -- middle -- middle of 17th century with the [indecipherable] pogroms. Again the same -- the same phenomenon. Persecution, murder, exile, escape, flight, whatever. I am obviously not going into the intricacies, but [indecipherable] that -- that's the picture. And -- and even as late as -- as the beginning of the 20th century, with the pogroms of [indecipherable] and what was the response there? The massive migration out of Russia to -- to -- to the United States. The roots of the vast majority of American Jews today are the -- the gr-grand -- the grand or gr -- or great-grandparents of those who ran from the pogroms of -- of -- of Tsarist Russia. No-Nobody dug in their heels and said, we were -- we were driven out, we were hurt, we were damaged, we were persecuted. S-S -- this -- this government, or this successor government cannot get away with this. Now you can say that -- that -- that the [indecipherable] and that

Hitler and -- and -- and the Third Reich and the industrialized, massive, incredible industrialized persecution and -- and -- and annihilation of -- of six million people in -- in five years was so earth-shaking and [indecipherable] earth-shaking. Sometimes I ask myself -- I don't know, is it -- was it for the days of the [indecipherable] pogroms for -- for the Jews at that time as great a horror as -- as -- as Kristallnacht? I-I don't know, I can't -- I can't judge it. Or -- or -- or the [indecipherable] of a whole people out of the Iberian peninsula? I mean, that certainly was not a -- a local -- a small local event of -- of some people in the village of [indecipherable] getting cr-crazy. Now, the other possibility is -- is, of course, maybe by the 1930's, there were things around us at the world at large that -- that established some kind of precedence, in other words of -- of some forms of collective response to something. I -- I'm not sure. The one thing that comes to mind for instance was the -- was the Armenian -- the persecution of the Armenians by the Turks in 1915, the World War I. I haven't researched that for myself well enough to know whether there was, first of all on the part of the Armenians outside of Turkey, some organized effort to attempt to confront the Turkish government with it. I'm not sure, at least I'm not aware that it was of such open and -- and strong [indecipherable] fashion as I think happened finally in -- in the early 1940's with respect to -- to -- to the human and material consequences o-of the Holocaust. And that -- and that -- I mean, I share a result of -- of a layman's perception of a feeling that something extra historically, certainly, in my opinion, in Jewish history, historically something extraordinary happened, and then so on. And even -- and e -- and it, to me it would be that even be necessarily confined to Jewish history alone. The question of a -- of a persecuted group which is not represented by a state, that does not have an army, that does not have the -- the -- the basic indices of -- of -- of power, has somehow developed first -- first -- first agreed or begin to -- to -- to find this -- this whole approach, and then -- and then ended up building, if you

will, the infrastructure to -- to -- to -- to -- to carry it forward and to -- and to turn it into something tangible, for the benefit of the victims, for [indecipherable] th-the victims themselves. And -- and -- and that -- that has to be analyzed. One has to analyze the elements of American Jewish history i-in -- in the -- in the 19 -- in the 1930's, in Palestine, in -- in -- in -- in how -- in how the German Jewish community reacted. In what it ca -- what it carried with it when -- when it began en masse to -- to leave. What is connected with it, of course, I mean I -- I'm drifting, but I'll get back on the main track, is also where were the fi -- where were the -- the failings? The failings being did the organized Jewish world after 1933 sufficiently analyze where the Third Reich and -- and the Nazis and Hitler were leading? After all, of the 600,000 German Jews, 300,000 remain in Germany. Now, again, I make a statement like that and it sounds again like an exaggeration an-and unqualified. I realize that among the 300,000 that stayed may have been tens of thousands who would have been -- who wanted to get out and the world wouldn't take them in, including this country. But nonetheless, there were large numbers of people, some of whom I've known among -- among German Jewry and subsequently Austrian Jewry and so on, who thought, you know, this is a passing business, and now we're -- and now we're -- good Germans will -- will take care of this upstart over there because in other words, where th -- I f -- I forget about the world, but where -- where did the Jewish leadership? And I am not trying to be ac-accusatory, I'm trying to -- to save what -- what did we f -- when I say we, I'm talking in the broad, historical [indecipherable] sense, failed to see as to where it was going. Now you can make the argument I ca -- I talk to myself, you know, I -- yo-you -- you can make the argument on the other side to say there was no precedent for this type of -- of -- of organized massacres, although there were massacres in history. What follows from it? Had we -- had we really, collectively, deeply analyzed where this was going? Maybe we could have done more than we --

than we did to get people out. To protect, to save, to -- to -- to d -- I don't know to do what. So to -- to me, as I -- you know, being -- being immersed into this -- I don't know, up to the -- the tip of my head or whatever it is, or beyond it. I -- I say to myself, this -- this has to be more profoundly examined. I don't know how else to [indecipherable] sometimes I am at a loss for words. But -- and -- and I think this is -- this is subjects for philosophers, this is subjects for ethicists, this is subjects for historians. The Jews -- the Jews would not be -- were not alone in this world. As a matter of fact the Jews were -- were more intertwined with the world than maybe any other people because they were -- because they were scattered and because they had to survive always as minorities. So -- so --

Q: Let me ask you something. Yo-You -- you were in Lasinar where -- where the --

A: Of course.

Q: -- where the Luxembourg agreement was signed, yes?

A: Of course.

Q: You knew all these people at the beginning. You knew Nahum Goldmann, you knew Blaustein, even Ben, in ger -- in Germany with the JRSO.

A: Yeah.

Q: What is it about these people? You were there, you're one of those people. What is it that you think made them do this in a way that was so different? Were they different than people you had known? Was there something special about these people?

A: I don't know I -- I want to say special. I think we knew that we couldn't remain either silent or passive. When I was approached in the middle of the Berlin blockade in the summer of 1948 by the general consul of the JDC, that I should take together the [indecipherable] and airlift myself out with -- with my pregnant wife out of -- out of Berlin [indecipherable] I think what

people were telling me at that time, at beginning of a promising career in -- in foreign service of the United States, which interested me immensely intellectually, I mean this is -- you know? I can tell you to this day that -- that -- that my few months in the Berlin blockade is -- is something that I have not yet in a similar way personally duplicated in a sense. Because it was a -- such a confluence of -- of -- of incredible historic events in which [indecipherable] found -- maybe I find myself as a -- as a small pawn, but a pawn in this -- in th-this particular moment. And of course I s -- I saw enough of the DP's and I saw enough of everything else. And -- and by that time I have seen enough also what has been done economically and so we talked about in the -- in -- in -- in war crimes, etcetera. And -- and I said, I cannot say no. Simple. Am I a great hero? Nothing, nonsense. I said one thing. I said the Berlin blockade was to me like another act of war. And I said I was quite deeply involved in -- in dealing with it in -- in one aspect of it. I said, I will request one year leave of absence from General Clay, saying very clear for what purpose, for the purpose of helping to establish or implement a program of which he was the [indecipherable] sponsor. It was part of that military government law. But it meant, if you will, removing myself and my family from the front line. The Berlin block -- they blockaded Berlin was the front line. Every night the lights were off like in -- like in the blitz Berlin -- the bl-blitz London, literally, okay? And then I got permission. The [indecipherable] leave of absence still continues, but --

Q: It still continues?

A: I mean figuratively speaking.

Q: Right.

A: But Benny -- for -- for Benny after -- after -- after the -- the -- the p -- prosecution of the Einsatzgruppen, to do something for the survivors, to -- to establish certain principles [indecipherable] the international law. He still -- he is still up to his eyeballs, he is older than I

am. He is still up to his eyeballs in the -- in that international criminal court and the acceptance of aggression as a war crime and up and up and up.

Q: Right. You're talking about Ben Ferencz.

A: Yeah, I'm talking about Ben.

Q: Right.

A: I -- we talk to each other every week, 10 days, whatever it is. He says you -- you -- I know I have a few more years left, I got to -- I got to put aggression through as a -- as a -- as a -- as a war crime and so on. Okay. And --

Q: So did you s -- you s -- did you stay in Berlin?

A: No.

Q: No, you left Berlin during the blockade?

A: I left -- I had to leave Berlin because --

Q: Right.

A: -- Benny was -- remember I told you who -- you couldn't do in Germany anything unless you had -- under the umbrella.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: As the worker's trials were coming to an end in Nuremberg the -- the U.S. army could give us space, the U.S. army could give us housing because the Nuremberg trials were being [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: Okay?

Q: Right.

A: So Benny grabbed this, he was right there as executive council of the subsequent trials, there -- there was the first Nuremberg --

Q: Right.

A: -- killing trial and then there was the subsequent trials, led by General Taylor. The first trials were Justice Jackson, who -- who [indecipherable] if you followed it historically, you know what I'm talking about. So we had to get out of Berlin.

Q: And so you went to Nuremberg?

A: So my pregnant wife and my dog and I went to Berlin -- went to Nuremberg, and that's how it started. And -- and that's how we -- we built an organization overnight. We filed -- the law had -- had, from our point of view, a terrible limitation. By the 31st of December 1948, we had to file claims. Any claim that would not be dated by th-that date is [indecipherable]. What did we do? We hired every retired clerk from a real estate registry, and s -- and remember, it was right -- the deutsche mark was just coming in. We had deutsche marks, Benny was able to negotiate a loan from General Clay. Money -- we had no money to -- you know. And -- and we had these people. We told them, any change of -- of title, after '33, if a name sounds Jewish -- in Germany as you know, you can be Alfred Rosenberg [indecipherable] when you can be Robert Alfred Rosenberg, literally. And Schneider and I have to tell you and -- and [indecipherable] and Hamburger and whatever and whatever. I'll tell you what -- one episode which is really very funny. And within five month we filed 163,000 pieces of paper because we knew that on the first of January we can tear up anything. But if it didn't have a stamp of 31 December, 1948, finished. This is older -- old -- today too. All the property restitution laws -- by the way, you should know that what we have today in East Germany, the former East Germany, which started in [indecipherable] is

based practically word for word on everything we drew in -- negotiated out in '47, and subsequently. And these are the foundations.

Q: Right.

A: That's what people have to take a look and see. It didn't come, you know, like a -- as my Latin teacher used to say, like there was [indecipherable] from somewhere or -- or whatever. Or -- or -- who jumped out of Zeus' brow? I forgot.

Q: I forget, too.

A: In Greek -- in Greek mythology. A female. Venus.

Q: Oh, Venus.

A: I think Venus jumped out of Zeus' brow. I be -- I better look it up when I go home. But -- a-and so it -- it comes from something. And -- and that's what we did. And you know, f-for us, for Benny, for me, with the first money that we were able to realize from the recovery process, we helped the Jewish agency to buy prefabs and [indecipherable] so the DP's who were sitting in old British army barracks in 1949 and in 1950 in [indecipherable] in the -- in the transit camps and so on, could be taken out and put into decent housing. That, to him, to me, to us, I mean it -- by that time -- by that time we had the whole army. We had an office in Frankfurt and an office in Stuttgart and an office in Kassel, and an office in Munich and up and down, we -- because how else --

Q: This is the JRSO had all those offices?

A: Yeah, sure. American zone of Germany.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: It was only in 1949 when the British and the French, but pri-primarily the British because we're put on in a enormous pressure in the British parliament. When -- when the -- when th-the -

- the foreign office refused in 1947 to elect a parallel law to the American military government restitution law, we cranked up pressure in Britain. And the British Jewish organizations started storming the -- the British parliament. And the British came around two years later, okay? As the Germans say [indecipherable] wasn't so simple. You know, these -- we had to -- we had to blast out. But, I wouldn't even say it was the hostile, it was just -- it's not done. You know, [indecipherable] you c -- you -- you -- you cut out a -- the holy -- a holy principle of -- of -- of law and succession and whatever and whatever. So --so -- oh, we have to stop?

Q: We have to stop the tape, yes, I'm sorry.

End of Tape Four

Beginning Tape Five

Q: So are you going to tell us a funny story about --

A: Out of --

Q: JR -- JRSO?

A: I'll tell you what the funny story was --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- we told all these clerks from the real estate registers to register any transfer of title which occurred after 1933, involving someone with a Jewish sounding name. So we get a claim by a man called Alfred Rosenberg, who has sold a villa in Berlin. Until we -- and so it was a proper claim filed, you know, with a restitution agency. When we finally came around to investigate it, because each claim had to be substantiated eventually. You had to establish that there was a forced sale, you had to establish that these people were Jewish. You have to establish that the proper consideration was paid, etcetera, etcetera. We started digging into the antecedents of Alfred Rosenberg, it was the ideologue of the Nazi party, whose villa in 1937 was not good enough for him. He sold the old villa and then proceeded to buy a new villa. So -- so we filed a claim for the -- for the restitution of -- of the villa of -- of Alfred Rosenberg and the -- and it was under -- for years it was pending because, you know, with 163,000 pieces of paper, it took awhile until -- until it all got processed. And this -- this -- this is not a made up story, this is a true thing.

Q: But it got processed?

A: It got processed, we had to withdraw it, we had to tear it up. He was -- he was not a Jew, nobody persecuted him. And he, by the way, we talked in the car about looted art. He was the mastermind of the massive campaign of -- of looting art, and building the museum to the extinct

race. That was Alfred, these are documents, memos that Alfred Rosenberg was going to build it. And he needed all -- he needed -- he was going to do it the way he would have built the museum of Gr-Greek antiquities. Everything from Torah scrolls, to ceremonial objects, to -- to -- to rabbinical [indecipherable] to whatever would establish the -- the artifacts and the -- or the evidence of this -- of this strange, evil tribe that -- that polluted the -- the wor -- the -- the human race.

Q: But when you and Ben were doing this work together, you were in a sense making up things, because there was no precedent for any of this, am I correct? There was a law, but there was no precedent.

A: As far as we knew we had to improvise, or --

Q: Right.

A: -- or -- or develop simply the -- the -- the system, the methodology, the -- for instance, I'll give you an example. These funds had to be -- we -- we -- we -- we -- we wanted to raise money as quickly as possible, to help the resettlement process. At that point there were still survivors in DP camps in Germany, particularly camps like Fernwald or so on, where the -- were the DP camps wh-whom other countries, except Israel were not willing to take. People with tu-tuberculosis, people with m-mental problems and so on. So, pra -- to -- to generate funds claim by claim, claim by claim, claim by -- to develop the technique of bulk settlements, we turned to the state governments and we said, look, we got 10,000 claims in -- in -- in Bavaria. At this point the -- the German owners of these properties are not very happy to see us. Nevermind how they acquired it, but they -- they -- they been sitting on it, in some cases for -- for 15 years or whatever. They got used to that. And you buy up our claims and you settle it with your own citizens at your own time in [indecipherable] and so on. There's no precedent. We developed a

technique to generate funds quicker and -- and -- and to -- to -- to make it -- th-the funds were -- went primarily to the Joint Distribution Committee, and to the Jewish agency, which were the two major organizations resettling the Holocaust survivors, the Jewish agency in Israel and the -- the JDC with HIAS and so on throughout the world, and then rebuilding the Jewish communities.

Q: So you did not give out the money directly. You funneled it through these two primary agencies, is that correct?

A: Plus -- corre -- 85 percent of our -- of the -- we're talking now JRSO?

Q: Yeah.

A: Not Claims Conference?

Q: Right.

A: JRSO's formula was 85 percent to the two big agencies of which the JDC -- of which the Jewish agency got the larger part of the 85 percent, and the other 15 percent was smaller grants or projects sponsored by the Council of Jews in Germany, after all these were assets of -- of Jews -- of German Jews who didn't survive.

Q: Right.

A: And so on, and they have special projects. And the Leo Baeck Institute received -- was born in 1955 with money which we helped -- which came out from the JRSO. I can take you to Queens, and you will find one housing project after the other, for elderly [indecipherable] victims run by [indecipherable], which came out of this money and so on, and in -- and in Israel, and so -- so we had to -- obviously we had to, as I said to you earlier, reparations as such were always done state to state, even today. If tomorrow Cuba -- Castro disappears and Cuba and so

on, there would be a Cuban government which is likely to negotiate with the United States government on behalf to th -- of the American citizens who have Cuban descent.

Q: And that -- but that's typical.

A: That -- that was --

Q: Right.

A: -- that is pre-history.

Q: Right.

A: I think, by the way, in part, our experience by now, which government's a hundred percent -- remember, we always represented tens of thousands of people of different nationalities. When we have now made payments to Jewish slave laborers who made it to fre -- in 44 countries today, okay?

Q: Did -- did the experience in the JRSO that you brought with you when you came to the United States and joined the claims conference, yes?

A: I was asked --

Q: To come.

A: I was asked to come to -- to -- and I continued, you know --

Q: With the JRSO --

A: I -- oh sure.

Q: -- yes.

A: I -- I'm -- I'm -- I'm still the -- the -- I -- I s -- I still am -- although the JRSO is now th -- dormant and been dormant for years, but to go back, the j -- the experience of the JRSO obviously was the forerunner of -- of what the Claims Conference had to build.

Q: Right.

A: That was absolutely --

Q: That's what I was gonna ask.

A: -- clear.

Q: Yes.

A: It was, however, the component elements, the -- the principles were there. Structurally it had to become much larger. If you will look at the incorporators of the -- of the JRSO, it is maybe 10 organizations. And you will find it basically, with th -- with the exception of the Jewish agency, these organizations based in the three western countries, which were the occupying countries, U.S., Britain, France, and of course, the cons -- the -- the German Jews, in Germany, outside of Germany, because of the origin of this and because we had to deal with Germany. When Germany, in 1949, when the first central government was established in West Germany and Konrad Adenauer became its chancellor, and the fir -- and the first attempts were -- begin to make the first attempts, believe it or not, were addressed to the four powers. The government of Israel, in the winter of 1951 addressed a note to the four occupying powers

Q: Is this pi --

A: -- the Soviets [indecipherable]

Q: -- this is -- this is Weitzman's letter, or memo? Oh, right --

A: No, Weitzman came earlier, no --

Q: -- uh-huh, okay.

A: -- W-Weitzman came earlier.

Q: Okay.

A: You're quite right, Weitzman came earlier. But then subsequently the government of Israel --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: By the way, if you want to check that to be precise, is if you'll find, probably in the library, the book by Nana Sagi --

Q: Yes.

A: -- on the negotiations.

Q: Right.

A: Because that book is exclusively devoted to the negotiations. And so the -- the first formal approach by the state of Israel was to the four occupying go -- powers. The Soviets ignored it. For the British and the French it was -- but the Americans by that time said, you got to talk to Konrad Adenauer, you got to talk to the government.

Q: Right.

A: And again to the credit of the U.S. -- at that time Clay was already gone, it was no longer a military governor, it was a United States high commissioner. And then -- and this terminology is -- has real significance, because it was past the stage of a military government occupying, it was the follow-up of a military occupation to the -- to a representative of the United States and Britain and France respectively negotiating with the first central West German government for the removal of all -- of all elements of occupation from the new Germany. It was a gradual process and it found its full expression in something that was called contractual agreements. Periodically, step by step, the western powers would negotiate with the Adenauer government. These prerogatives of the allies are gone, these prerogatives are gone, and we were in the middle of it, insisting and the -- and the federal government -- German federal government took it over -- had to take it over, by they way I -- in all fairness to them, I don't think they necessarily resisted it, or it has to be checked because I'm quite sure it -- that the principles of the allied -- of the American military government restitution law became German federal law.

Q: Right.

A: In other words, they had to --

Q: Take it on.

A: -- to take it in and over.

Q: Right.

A: Th -- we -- we could -- we negotiated and we could not allow a situation that the removal of powers which the occupying government's had, that the rule of that would mean the elimination of this type of legislation. And that has been preserved, including the principles of the successor organization, so that when in 1990 -- now you go back, and you go back to -- to -- to -- nearly 50 years or so, when the 1990 unification took place, the unification a-agreement and the unified Germany said this lil -- this property restitution legislation or the principles will be incorporated in the so-called re-privatization law, but the succe -- the original successor organizations were still listed as -- as potential successor organizations. And if they would not come so that they present themselves, then the Claims Conference became their successor organizations. By that time they're all [indecipherable] successor organizations were dormant and -- and so on. But th -- what I'm trying to tell you is -- is that these principles and concepts were -- were integrated --

Q: Right.

A: -- into the West German, and subsequently, I would say after 1919 to the --

Q: East [indecipherable]

A: -- unified Germany.

Q: Right, right.

A: And that was one of the things that we were deeply involved because we had to make sure that all this does not get tossed out by virtue of the fact that the allied powers have relinquished their -- their rights and prerogatives in Germany.

Q: Did Britain and France finally agree to that, or it didn't matter any more?

A: No, they agreed, I mean --

Q: They did.

A: -- I'll tell you, in all fairness, once the British and the French, in 1949 enacted parallel legislation --

Q: Oh they did, okay --

A: Oh yes, in their zones --

Q: Oh, yes.

A: -- and subsequently in the z -- respective sectors of Berlin -- remember Berlin was cut up in four sectors, like four zones, American, British, French and -- and Soviet, so that the same laws and so on applied in --

Q: Right.

A: -- in the western sectors and the western zones. From that point on, the allies, the British and the French were going along with the Americans, and -- and from that point on it was a -- a tripartite process. And --

Q: So there is a -- a history to which the Claims Conference, right --

A: Now y -- if you want to go now to the birth of the Claims Conference --

Q: Yes, but what I -- I guess what I'm asking is is that there -- that there is a history on which the Claims Conference bases the possibility of what they're going to do, because the JR --

A: That -- that is -- that was -- that's absolutely correct.

Q: Because it doesn't come out from nowhere either.

A: No. One -- once it became clear that the answer lies in a negotiation with the new first post-war German government for West Germany, of who -- from here on if I talk until unification --

Q: It's West Germany, right.

A: It is the [indecipherable] Republic, it's the Federal Republic of Germany, but it was West Germany, obviously. From that point on, there -- the whole effort to -- to be -- to -- to ca -- to reach s-s-some kind of an understanding with this government, and the United States helped us a great deal. John McCloy as the high commissioner was on good terms with Konrad Adenauer, and -- and McCloy encouraged Adenauer, but it wasn't only -- Adenauer was not a -- a passive little nobody whom somebody could push around. Adenauer and -- and part of the post-war German political establishment saw two things. One, cold, if you will, cold -- cold calculation, if -- that if Germany is to enter into the family of western nations, it cannot ignore this chapter, it has to do -- do something with this -- with this problem. And I would say for both Adenauer himself, and people like Kurt Schumacher, who -- who -- who is the head of the Social Democratic party and -- and himself a concentration camp inmate -- remember from '33 to '38 the German concentration camps were populated by non-Jews, by German political opponents of -- of -- of the Nazis. There may have been some [indecipherable] Jews among them, there may have been Jewish Communists, Jewish Social Democrat, Jewish Trade Unionists, whatever, but they weren't -- not until -- not until the burning of the synagogues in November of 1938 were there rarge -- large round-ups of Jews who were placed in concentration camps. People forget about it.

Q: Right.

A: I used to remind my colleagues and some of my Jewish friends, you know, who used to say every -- every good German is every dead German, you know, that type of thing. And I used to say, don't forget -- don't forget there was Oranienburg and Sachsenhausen and so on, between '33, and November of 1938, and they were populated, and they were populated by non-Jews. Okay, that's a different subject that somebody should also look at, the whole attitude of -- it wasn't easy.

Q: When you heard Adenauer speak about this, or when you read what he said, did you believe him?

A: Yes.

Q: You did?

A: Adenauer was the mayor of Cologne when Hitler came to power.

Q: Right.

A: He was thrown out by the Nazis. I mean, they didn't lock him up or anything else, but he was thrown out, closed the offices, and so on. So he had no particular love, although he was a -- what the Germans still liked to call a [indecipherable] you know, a -- more than a pragmatist, I would say. In -- in many ways he could be a -- a cold calculator. One of his chiefs of staff, a man called Gropke was as a lawyer the one who -- who drafted some of the Nuremberg laws in the Ministry of Justice of the Third Reich, but by the way was very helpful to us later on in the course of the negotiation. You know, you can -- you -- you can --

Q: Who knows?

A: -- you can write plays about it --

Q: Right.

A: -- or -- or -- or psychological essays. And -- but th-there was no doubt about it that Konrad Adenauer was also a devout Catholic. I can tell you that on the 10th of September 1952, when the agreements were signed in the old rathouse of Luxembourg, and all the signing was over, and it was very solemn and very tense, I would say, and there were three documents that were signed, Adenauer with Moshe Sharett, the first one is so Israel and the so-called [indecipherable] agreement of the -- the German -- the German Israeli reparations agreement -- the word reparations was not used. Somebody invented a very nice word called collective recompense. You can write it down, it's a -- a term attributed to that particular thing, because there was no state of Israel during the Hitler period, etcetera, okay. And then the two documents that were signed by Nahum Goldmann as the founding president of the Claims Conference, and Adenauer, after all this was finished, Mr. Adenauer got up and went into the chapel, which was in the rathouse of -- old rathouse of Luxembourg and closed the door, and was there for quite awhile. And I always thought that that was genuine. That that was now -- there was no question in my mind about the c -- [indecipherable] was subsequently very critical of Adenauer and Adenauer's party because Adenauer could not deliver 100 percent of his -- members of his party to ratify the -- the Luxembourg agreements.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Schumacher delivered all the social democrats, every one of them. Adenauer si -- delivered the majority but not -- but not all of them. Anyway, that's part of politics, but it is the -- but -- but what became clear is that when finally Adenauer appeared in September of '51 in the Bundist [indecipherable] Rosh Hashanah and delivered that famous statement about unspeakable crimes were committed in the name of the German people, etcetera, and extended an invitation to the state of Israel and to representative the world [indecipherable], and wanted to create an

instrument of voluntary agencies, which would be as broad and as representative to be a proper negotiating party to a government. All this was unprecedented. And Nahum Goldmann then convened the 23 member organizations in the Waldorf Astoria in October of ’51, and that’s where the Claims Conference was born, first of all i-in -- initially, A, to provide worldwide backing to the state of Israel is -- in its ne-negotiations with -- with the German Federal Republic, and then to develop the programs of claims and demands on behalf the Holocaust survivors wherever they were. And -- and if you’ll take so that the -- the JRSO as such had too narrow an institutional base at that time. [indecipherable] these 10 -- 10 organizations. And it had to be as broad geographically, ideologically and philosophically. And if you take a look at the membership from -- from ’51 to this day, you will find geographically the Canadian Jewish Congress, the major American organizations, the leading Argentinean organizations, the leading Australian organization, the leading South African organization, the Jewish agency for Israel, the -- the leading French, British, the German, the world organizations. [indecipherable] Israel world organization on one hand, and the World Union of Progressive Judaism, who were fighting tooth and nail each other philosophically, clear. This is fire and water, theologically.

Q: Right.

A: And it was -- it was, I think Nahum Goldmann’s genius ability, but also the -- the -- the maturity and the responsiveness of all the organizations who recognize this, on this issue, we all have to come together. Like in the old days of -- I don’t know, of the -- of the court of King Arthur, all the swords had to -- had to be left in the -- in the anteroom, because we, within the parameters, we were established. We had to be united and representatives and we were. Organizations that continued to fight each other philosophically and publicly, I mean the American Jewish Committee and the World Jewish Congress were -- were philosophically at

loggerheads much less su-su-subsequently. This whole Claims Conference experiment turned out from the -- this is another aspect, turned out to be from -- from the Jewish communal -- the development of Jewish communal structures. A tremendous experiment with -- consequently would have never had a president's conference in the United States today if the Claims Conference would not have been there before. Because these -- these divergent organizations discovered that they could sit around one table, had a clearly defined agenda and clearly designated parameters. In the Claims Conference, neither Nahum Goldmann as the president, from October -- from 1951 until his death in August of '82, [indecipherable] as the top professional whatever [indecipherable] the board of the Claims Conference on any issue which was other than within the clear parameters and confines of the Claims Conference mandate. Otherwise it couldn't --

Q: Be discussed.

A: -- it couldn't function.

Q: Mm. We have --

End of Tape Five

Beginning Tape Six

Q: I understand that at the beginning of the Claims Conference, when you all went to -- how do you pronounce the name of that town, Visenar?

A: Well, Wassenaar.

Q: Wassenaar.

A: It's really a suburb of The Hague, it's --

Q: Uh-huh, okay. So, near the --

A: -- it's near the -- near The Hague, it's th --

Q: There was -- there were people who were against getting any money from Germany --

A: Oh, that, yeah.

Q: -- isn't that correct? Wasn't there a --

A: There were more than that, the -- the -- that --

Q: [indecipherable]

A: -- [indecipherable] people, there was a m -- in Israel itself, this became a -- the most explosive issue that if -- that the Ben Gurion government, which was the first government of Israel faced. Menachem Begin led the opposition to the Ben Gurion government on all kinds of issues, and this became one of the major issues in his battle with Ben Gurion. The argument was when we should take th -- we should not take any blood money, and -- and the -- it -- it took the form of demonstrations, it took the form of -- of such serious demonstrations that I think for the first time in the history of the state of Israel, the Kenesit had to be surrounded by police, maybe by army too, but when Ben Gurion went in January of 1952 to the Kenesit to rec -- to receive a majority vote for Israel entering into negotiations with Germany. So that controversy was partially philosophical, or partially moral if you will. I mean, there were people who -- who really, out of

genuine inner convictions, and there were people who -- who mixed the opposition with -- with direct political -- this was a -- a -- a very strong issue, you have to think about it. Th -- by that time there were several hundred thousand survivors already in -- in Israel, and it was a -- a v -- a very controversial issue, and it -- it took the form of -- as I say of -- of -- of very major demonstrations in Israel. In the United States, in New York, we had one really serious episode. And that is, we had one day a meeting, after the original meeting in the Waldorf, in another hotel in New York, and a group of a young -- there was a youth o-organization of the -- of Begin's party, and -- and they -- that organization was called Betar. This is -- today it would be the youth movement of the Likud in Israel, the -- the -- the -- the logical political extension of that movement. And they came into the hotel where we had the meeting, and they had a -- a sit down strike. They sat down in the hallway blocking the access -- exit and the entrance to my meetings, and we had to get -- after, when the meetings were over, we wanted to get Nahum Goldmann and other of the people out because you never know if you get, particularly that this was -- Betar is a -- was a pretty militant group anyway, but in New York -- in New York they were -- I mean, outside of Israel there were f -- people ideologically, philosophically, there are people today who say they're not going to go to Germany to visit, or I will not buy a German product and so on. I mean, even today, to this day, but certainly in -- in -- in those days. And it was -- it went so far, for instance, that there was one group of -- of Holocaust survivors who organized themselves generally, and those were the people who came out of Bergen-Belsen, of the Bergen-Belsen camp. And although the -- the chairman of their group, a man called Joseph Rosensaft was actually helpful in connection with the negotiations, his organization and these people would -- would -- they would not want -- they did not want to become members of the Claims Conference because they couldn't bring themselves to negotiate with the Germans, regardless of who the

Germans were who were negotiating partners. Anyway, by January of ’52, Ben Gurion got his approval of the majority of the Kenesit, the Claims Conference was ready to go, and we had internal discussions between the Claims Conference and Mr. Sharett in preparation for the negotiations. But that -- we were -- one thing at that time was clear, none of us would go to Germany for negotiations. So this -- the -- the government of Israel had to find a neutral country that was willing to host us. And that was not so simple because it required security. We never knew whether neo-Nazi elements or any other elements were going to -- to cause problems. The Dutch government agreed and made available to us, a chateau. A medieval castle with a moat and a drawbridge, literally. You can still see it, it’s now a conference center. And the German delegation, headed by 20 Nazis and the Claims Conference delegation and the Israel delegation were all housed in the same chateau, in different wings and so on, in the same place. And the negotiations were, as a rule, in the morning between the Germans and the Israelis, and in the afternoon between the Germans and the Claims Conference, and in the evenings and in between, of course, the Claims Conference, and the Israeli delegates were together, obviously together [indecipherable]. And there were, of course, crises, and periods when we had to interrupt the negotiations and go over there to f -- had to fly from Paris to -- to Bonn to negotiate with Adenauer on the contentious issues and to find some kind of compromise. This happened several times. I personally had to shuttle more frequently, because as the executive director of the Claims Conference, our negotiations policy committee was sitting in New York, of the top lay leadership of the Claims Conference, and I would -- and first of all the Claims Conference as an organization had to function. So I would sh -- spend a couple of weeks in -- in negotiations and fly back to New York and -- and we -- the organization go back and forth. But we also had periods when the negotiations were suspended because there were serious differences of opinion.

The negotiations lasted from the 22nd of March -- as a matter of fact, a day after tomorrow will be -- 207 -- 52 -- 55 years.

Q: Really.

A: Exactly. I ca -- didn't think about it. 55 years since we landed in a separate runway in -- in -- in Amsterdam. We were flown in because Dutch security didn't want us to c -- to come in with the regular business. So -- so they landed us on a -- on a secluded -- and packed us into cars, and brought us to the Kasteel oud Wassenaar, the castle of old Wassenaar. Had one great vir -- virtue as far as I was concerned. Was withi -- within the walking distance of a beautiful museum which has a fantastic Rembrandt, and that is called the Mauritshuis House, the house of a man called Mauritshuis. And there is "The Anatomy Lesson" by Rembrandt which is as big as this wall. And after 12 - 14 hours, I would run a -- run away from the chateau with a Dutch security guard who hated museums passionately. Probably as a kid he must have been dragged by his hair to a museum and I would say to him, you can sit outside and smoke your lousy cigarettes, and I'll give you a piece of paper if anything happens to me inside of the museum, it's my responsibility. And that -- that then, after awhile I thought that these characters from the -- from the painting will start talking to me. I mean it -- this is a fantastic painting, it's still there. Anyway, and we were there with intervals for -- until the third week of August, more or less.

Q: Really? So long?

A: I mean, but there were intervals.

Q: Right.

A: Sub [indecipherable] delegation had to go back and we'd come back and -- and they were very complicated issues, they were issues of -- that overlapped, because we negotiated compensation agreements which affected all victims of Nazi persecution, whether they were

Israeli citizens, or American citizens, or Australian ci -- or [indecipherable]. And -- and there were overlaps. The German delegation, by the way, was headed initially by two anti-Nazis, one a Professor Burn, a professor of civil law from Frankfurt University, who I believe was -- was towards the end of the war in a Gestapo jail. And a man called Dr. Otto Kirsten, who was a leading Protestant pol-politician o-opposing the Hitler regime. He was a lawyer in Stuttgart, and -- and there was a t -- an issue a-and they were our negotiating partners. Of course, they would receive instructions from the Adenauer government, and at times there were issues where -- where we knew that -- that they were communicating to us positions that they personally were not necessarily in favor of. And this was the time that we instinctually would call time out and get ahold of -- of Nahum Goldmann in Paris and tell him to -- and ask him to fly to -- to Bonn to negotiate with Adenauer. And -- and Goldmann was fantastic in that respect, I mean. This i -- this was a man with a broad intellectual horizon, a broad western intellect. Although he was born in -- in -- in a small town in -- in what would be Lithuania, I think, today, but his parents early went to Germany, and he was a product of Heidelberg and I don't know what other universities. And during World War I, believe it or not, as a very young academic, I think he worked for the -- for the Kaiser's foreign ministry on some -- you know, routine job over there, it is -- was -- the reason I mention all this is -- is because his -- his cultural roots -- I'm talking -- I'm not talking about the Jewish cultural roots, I'm talking his general roots. His academic roots were, to a very great extent, similar to the -- to the people -- the policy makers of the new -- of the new German -- of the new post-war Germany. I mean, he and Adenauer would -- would -- he would go to Switzerland to -- to -- to spend hours and hours with Adenauer on issues that had nothing to do with us. Va-Vacation issues, the -- whatever. And -- but this was a man with a -- with a very

broad political, international, diplomatic talents, and a man from whom I learned a great deal. He was old enough to be my father. He was born in ’95, and I was born in ’22.

Q: Right. It’s a big difference.

A: And I’m right, he was -- correct. And --

Q: Did -- did -- did you have sympathy with those -- with people like Begin and those people who were against getting money? Did you -- did you underst --

A: [indecipherable] put it this way first. I’ll be very precise on this point, because I wrestled with it. There were individuals who had an inner moral, ethical, personal inability to face anything or anybody which reminded them of Germany. Then there were politicians, who -- about whom I was not always sure where the political consideration, that this is a hot issue under which I can -- I can undercut my opponent, or whether there was -- this was a pure moral issue. So I -- I -- I di -- I do -- I don’t tend to pass judgment on it, but my view is completely different.

Q: And what was your view?

A: My view was and is and always will be, we were there demanding what is rightfully ours, and we were demanding it from those who were -- who had responsibility. In many cases who even controlled the assets and -- and overall who had the moral, legal, historic responsibility to make amends for what their predecessor government had done. The f-first post-war German government said very clearly and unequivocally, it is the succe -- for better or for worse, it is the successor state of the Third Reich. He didn’t play games like cur -- like [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: So to me, we -- we were not there seeking charity, or pleading for -- t-to be nice to us, or to have mercy on us. We were there demanding our rights.

Q: Right.

A: And in the individual basis, what will I say if -- if -- if somebody injured me bodily and -- and -- and the person will be -- we will go to court, I will refuse to confront him? I mean, to me that -- to me this was -- w-was -- was a clear cut issue. I always felt -- well, now we're not talking about I -- I would say we collectively felt -- after all, this was not an individual --

Q: Right.

A: -- exercise. We collectively felt that A, there had to be an acknowledgement of responsibility, whether it was Konrad Adenauer's statement, or whether it was at the time when -- when it -- the year 2000 we signed the agreement on the slave labor business, the president of the Federal Republic of Germany in the year 2000, on the day when we signed the agreement establishing the slave labor fund, delivered a clear, unequivocal statement acknowledging responsibility, even -- he went even emotionally asking for forgiveness, etcetera, and he certainly was an anti-Nazi or whatever it is, but he was the head of the successor state of the Third Reich, and they were dealing with the consequences of it. Don't get me wrong, I don't say that everything that -- that was already accomplished is all that should have been accomplished, and so on. There will never be what the Germans call [speaks German here]. The term [speaks German] means to make whole.

Q: Right.

A: What has been done can never be made whole. I'm not talking, obviously about six million dead human beings that can't -- even the material losses cannot be made whole. The -- the full amends cannot be made to anybody who survived a concentration camp or a ghetto, or -- or -- or who lost somebody who was -- who was near and dear. But -- but it -- it -- we a -- we -- we approached and [indecipherable] properly, as a matter of right, seeking the acknowledgement

and then negotiating some forms of -- of -- what's -- wh-what I would say simply, a measure of justice. That's the best I can say.

Q: Right. Well, let me ask you about the Israeli government at that time. As -- and I don't know whether you see it differently than the Claims Conference as a group of people, but the Israeli economy was in horrible shape at that time, and they had already accepted -- what were there, 300,000 or 500,000 survivors. So they were in a very difficult position financially.

A: [indecipherable] know that the whole basis of the negotiations were -- they had -- there was a clear distinction of the foundation of the negotiations between the government of Israel and Germany, and the Claims Conference. The government of Israel requested or sought 1.5 billion dollars on the basis of the cost of absorption of 500,000 Jewish victims of Nazi persecution, first in the [indecipherable], first in the Palestine and subsequently in the -- in Israel itself. And it was this one billion 500 million dollars which was the basis of the negotiation. The settlement was then -- a portion of it was roughly half of it. But -- but that was the basis. The Claims Conference basis was compensation for depravation of liberty, for loss of provider, for damage to health, for interrupted --

Q: Education?

A: -- occupation. For assets that were confiscated, lost or destroyed. For communal institutions that were obliterated, and on and on and on. If you will take a look at our documents, they had two protocols. The -- the -- the legislative protocol is pages and pages and pages not of laws, of commitments to enact laws.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: The German finance ministry published at its own expense, seven thick volumes on the specific implementation of these agreements. They're innumerable -- they are basic laws, they

are regulations, they are court rulings. I mean, this is a massive legislative, administrative body of work that has -- that has evolved out of this.

Q: Right. Now why --

A: Now, for Israel --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- their -- the repar -- the -- the [indecipherable] agreement was vital for its economic development. You also have to bear in mind something which you -- which sounds incredible today. The German government at that point was not in a position to settle this claim for money, so it ended up working out an agreement with the provision of goods and services to Israel, with a limited monetary component for the purchase of petroleum from Great Britain. It was a time when the state of Israel -- when the agreement was signed, the state of Israel was four years and -- and four month old, and in those days it couldn't get a letter of credit in a Swiss bank for love or money. The first bank that really opened up to the state of Israel, believe it or not, was the Bank of America, which was created and established by -- by an Italian immigrant in California. If you look into the history of the Bank of America, it was established -- the name will come to me in a minute -- and the American banking system in those days was -- was run by WASPs, by good -- by good -- you know -- but Bank of America was created by [indecipherable] like -- I mean it -- it-it'll co -- anyway, the first real strong foreign bank that was ready to do business with Israel was the Bank of America. Now I -- I say all this to you because the -- the -- a good part of the infrastructure of Israel was -- was established as a result of this agreement. The first merchant marine, the Zimlines as they were called, were -- were ships built in -- in Hamburg and in other -- and in other port cities of Germany. The port of Ashdod, which is the second port after

Haifa was built out of German reparations money. The -- a good part of the electric grid of Israel. So -- so for Israel, this was a -- a very important agreement in its practical --

Q: Now, the arrangement also was that the goods and services would go to Israel and then 20 percent would come --

A: No, th -- the -- I'll tell you exactly. The claims -- the total agreement was three billion 450 million deutsche marks. In those days it was the equivalent of 712 million dollars. You -- you take the sum, divide it by 4.2. Th-That was the ratio. Can you imagine? Today the dollar is a fraction of -- of the Euro, but -- so --

Q: Can you hold that? Cause we have to change the tape --

A: Okay, and I'm gonna --

Q: -- and we'll start right -- right there.

End of Tape Six

Beginning Tape Seven

Q: S-So I'll give you a sense of -- of the people. You wanted to go back to --

A: Yeah, I wanted to go back to, because you asked me earlier about who -- who were the people involved in -- in this whole process and -- and I think I -- I -- I didn't answer it as fully as I th-think I -- I want to and I should. But as I say, whatever has been accomplished i-initially and since and now and I'm sure going forward, is a product and the result of a collective effort of a group of individuals who are involved in a professional lay capacity that depends upon which individual and what phase and at what stage o-of -- of the various processes. When I -- when we spoke earlier about the a-antecedents of all of these programs in the immediate postwar period, and th-the -- the main issues had to be negotiated with the U.S. government as the most powerful of the -- of the allied victorious powers, there were essentially four Jewish organizations that worked together in that effort, and that was the American Jewish Committee, the American Joint Distribution Committee, the Jewish Agency for Palestine at that time, and the World Jewish Congress. And -- and these were essentially, as far as the -- the Jewish agency for -- the Jewish Agency for Palestine were the American representatives, and of course Nahum Goldmann, who lived in the United States at that time and was the chairman of the -- executive of the Jewish agency in addition to being the chairman of the -- executive of the World Jewish Congress and so on and I -- I may be off by a year or two [indecipherable] the titles, but in those two organizations they played a leading role already at th -- at the -- at the end of the war. And -- and of the two American organizations, of course, they were domiciled in New York, and -- and th-their -- particularly the American Jewish committee had a -- a legal council in Washington, a man wh-who was also at times with the State Department, his name was Seymour Ruben. And -- and the American je -- th-the Jewish agency on these issues was represented by their American

council, a man called Maurice Bookstein, who was sitting -- who was living in New York as an American Jew. And -- a -- a -- and then of the -- the World Jewish Congress, there were two brothers, Jacob and Nehemiah Robinson. They both came from Lithuania. Jacob was already an international lawyer of some standing in the -- in the 1930's in -- in Lithuania, and Nehemiah was a outstanding scholar and he headed up the World Jewish Congress, created an institute of Jewish affairs it was called, it's official title. It was a -- a research facility, a research organization which Nehemiah led and directed. And in many, many ways he was -- he was the co-conceptualizer of -- of a lot of -- of what we developed subsequently as our specific programs for demands, etcetera. In addition to that, and of course in the -- in the -- in the Joint Distribution Committee, they had the co-council in Europe as well, a man called Jerome Jacobsen and -- and people in -- in New York in the headquarters -- oh, for God sakes. Come to me in a minute. Eli Rock. E-l-i R-o-c-k. And of course, Mo-Moses Levitt is the -- as the chief executive in -- in the American Jewish Committee, the head of the -- their international department was a prominent European lawyer of Polish origin called Si-Simon Siegel. And his deputy was the father of the recent -- of Alan Habershi. Would you believe? His name was Eugene Habershi, he was a Hungarian diplomat and the son of the conservative chief rabbi of Hungary, okay? I be -- I met Alan Habershi -- Alan Habershi when [indecipherable] would bring him to the office at age 15 or whatever. So anyway, I g -- I -- I give you the -- the -- the players at that point, because although they came from different corners organizationally and so on, and there were no previous structural arrangements for cooperative activities, around this issue, these people and these individuals were closer together and very, very, very effective. And of course by the -- by the time it came to 1952, or fi -- or '51 and -- and '52 negotiations, by that time of course, Ben Ferencz and I were involved out of the operation in Germany itself of the successor organization,

and we worked with all these people because the American Jewish Committee and the World Jewish Congress. And -- and the American Joint Distribution Committee, and whom did I leave out? And the Jewish agency were founding members of the JRSO.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Every year when we would elect officers in the g -- in the j -- JRSO, one year the chairman was a g -- a JDC designee, and the next year was a Jewish agency designee and so on. So by the time the Claims Conference came into being, there was already a -- a group of -- of experts, professionals plus laypeople in these respective organizations, who were involved in the subject matter. And the delegation was expanded in The Hague because we brought in people from England. First of all it was important, remember, we had to make sure that the principle, western powers were -- were there, and it was important also to us. So a -- a man who was a member of parliament, whose name was Alec Easterman, who was member of our delegation, at least that he -- he didn't sit all the time in The Hague, he had to be an -- an MP in -- in London, too, but -- and what was important, the German refugee organization called the Council of Jews from Germany was headquartered in London. And Rabbi Leo Baeck, after whom the Baeck Institute was named subsequently, was, so to say the -- the spiritual and the -- and the -- a-and the sort of leader of -- of this whole movement. So we -- we brought in -- in -- into the delegation the then executive head of their organization, a man called Goldschmidt, first name will come to me in a minute. And he was also, of course [indecipherable] familiar with German law. Remember, we had to negotiate ultimately, German legal commitments, etcetera. And th-this was -- this was the professional team, together with Jerry Jacobsen, who was council of the JDC sitting in Paris. And then of course, the Claims Conference leadership itself, the -- wh-which was supervising the negotiating, laying out the policies, because we couldn't have 24 organizations being in

permanent session, whereas Jacob Blaustein, who was -- obviously Nahum Goldmann as the president, Jacob Blaustein as the senior vice president, he was the head of the American Jewish Committee. A -- by today's standards he would be one of the billionaires. In those days he was a multi-millionaire [indecipherable] Baltimore oil company. Amoco, American Oil Company, that was the Blaustein family. And then Israel Goldstein, the head of the American Jewish Congress, Rabbi Israel Goldstein, a leading conservative rabbi with a large congregation on the west side of New York, and a leading member of the Jewish agency executive. I mean, these are people [indecipherable]. And Moses Leavitt who was the -- today would probably be the executive vice president of the American Joint Distribution Committee. And as I told you, became the chairman of our delegation in The Hague. And Bookstein [indecipherable] and a man called Adolph Held, a president of the Jewish Labor Committee. In those days, a much more str -- a stronger organization than the Jewish Labor Committee is today, they are still an organization covering a segment of Jewish life, but you have to know, particular for our negotiations, during the Nazi period, the Jewish Labor Committee in this country brought some of the German social democrats, some of the German trade unionists, even if they were in Sweden and in exile, they would raise money and support them financially. They had a close, ongoing personal relationship with the second largest political party in Germany after the war, the Social Democratic party. And Adolph Held himself, came from the trade union movement. He was a senior official of the International Ladies Garment Worker's Union.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Of Mr. Dubinsky's union, if that means anything to you. And so it was Adolph Held, Jacob Blaustein, Israel Goldstein, Nahum Goldmann, Frank Goldmann, who was the president of B'nai B'rith, which was very important to us at that time. And then from Britain was Sir Barnett

Janner, who was the chairman of the board of deputies of British Jews, who is the oldest Jewish communal organization in Britain, I think going back to -- to the end of the 18th century or something, anyway, or maybe -- or maybe the beginning of the 19th century, anyway, one of the -- I think the oldest central organization still exists, still a member organization of the -- of the Claims Conference. They all are. Different leadership and so on, but the -- so --

Q: You're saying that it's not one or two people or three people, it's -- it's a hu -- a rather large group, and a wide group?

A: Obviously as the -- a good -- a good deal of the -- of the nitty gritty and of the really the day to day and night and day type of work, it always had to co -- to come down to a smaller number of people who had to devote all their time to it. Nehemiah Robinson and -- and then -- and myself and Ben Ferencz and I for -- I shou -- I mean I -- I took it for granted that Ben Ferencz was part of it, although Ben Ferencz would shuttle between fur -- between Nuremberg and -- and -- and The Hague, because he -- the -- the -- the -- the -- the WJ -- the JRSO had to continue to --

Q: Right.

A: -- to operate at that time. We continued to operate much past '52 in -- in -- in Germany.

Q: What was --- what was your role as what -- what were you supposed to be doing in this? What are the kinds of things you were doing?

A: I mean, first of all, I was the executive director of the Claims Conference, which means I was the chief operating officer of the organization per se, because in addition to everything else, it had to be a functional organization. It had to have meetings, and it had committees and it had the board. And the moment we got money we had to haul out our location apparatus. We -- we were allocating 10 million dollars a year, which in today's purchasing power we -- was at least a hundred million plus.

Q: Lot of money.

A: Somewhere between a hundred and 150 million dollars. So we had to build another machinery for the allocation of funds and so on. And then I continued to be the executive director of the WJ -- of the JRSO, parallel function and so forth. And a-as I say, it was -- the negotiations themselves were of course a time limited operation. After we signed the agreements, this group dispersed.

Q: Right.

A: And -- and we then continued to carry this Claims Conference. We established immediately an office in Germany, headed by f-former German lawyer, with -- as we always -- we were always teased our Israeli friends, the first Jewish embassy in postwar Germany was the Claims Conference office in Bonn, because diplo -- believe it or not, diplomatic relations between Israel and the Federal Republic were only established in 1965, 13 years later. The Israel government had a purchasing mission, sitting in Cologne, we tracked it as a [indecipherable] embassy, but it did not have a full status of -- of an embassy. And -- and we then -- our objective then was to see that all these commitments were being implemented and we had an agreement with the Germans that any draft legislation would come to us first for comment before it would be -- be presented for a vote to the Bundestag. And for decades there was a compensation committee of the Bundestag as a standing committee, called in German the [speaks German here] Ausschuss. Ausschuss being the German word for committee. And then w-we worked periodically, I would go from New York for periodic meetings with them, and -- but our representative would -- would be in daily contact with them.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And all of the li -- the laws that followed, and they were not one time pieces of legislation, there was a first compensation law, and there was an amended compensation law, and there was subsequently the regulations, and there was a property restitution law, Germany, on top of the military government restitution law for a certain type of assets which were not covered by the initial legislation. And then -- and then -- so --

Q: So the law becomes more complex --

A: Of course.

Q: -- and changes over time, right.

A: When I said to you that there were seven volumes --

Q: Right.

A: -- you can come in my office and see, they are like that. They are volumes covering the law and their implementation. And then th -- remember, there was a major judicial machinery. A claim for -- if somebody filed a claim for a compensation for imprisonment in the ghetto and the concentration camp, it went to an administrative local regional agency. In any of the -- of the [indecipherable] in any of the states, they had f -- various jurisdiction claims to Israel were processed here, and claims from the United States there and so on.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: That was first. If they approved, then the matter was finished. If they rejected, it could go to a -- to an appellate party to a court of [indecipherable] citizens. It could go to an appellate court, and there was a Supreme Court, there was a high court s -- exclusively on issues of compensation.

Q: But these claimants had to go through the Claims Conference first --

A: No.

Q: -- or th -- they didn't?

A: No.

Q: They could go separately, as individuals?

A: Everything until 1980 was the individual filing a direct claim with the German compensation agency. We created an organization called the United Restitution Organization --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- which provided legal aid.

Q: Right.

A: And at the peak of its activities, it -- it had a hundred thousand claim -- it represented a hundred thousand claims in 15 countries. Today the URO is a small operation --

Q: Oh, that's right.

A: -- residual operation in Israel, Canada and -- and the United States and Germany.

Q: So then, explain what it was that the Claims Conference was doing. What kinds of claims were you getting then?

A: The Claims Conference negotiated the legislation.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Monitored the implementation.

Q: Right.

A: Financed the legal aid services machinery and -- and continuously fought for expansion improvement, correction and [indecipherable]. I'll give you the example, at one point the processing of the claims were exceedingly slow, and we brought about something that never happened in Germany before and since. We had the chancellor convene the minister presidents, which would be the equivalent of the governors of all the states of Germany, it's like the

president of the United States would bring together the 50 governors in a two day session, because the governors were responsible for the initial administration of the laws. In other words, the operating local agencies, the agencies of first administrative were state agencies. And Nahum Goldmann addressed that gathering and laid out all of our complaints and so on, and -- and cr -- and obtained secured commitments on -- on how to accelerate the process [indecipherable] the claims. That was the claims end of it. On the allocation part of it, the money was given -- we had an agreement under which -- from The Hague days -- the Luxembourg days under which we received money for allocations. We had to furnish annual reports to the German government as to what we did with the money, and how it was done and so on. And we had some difficult issues with them as well, particularly issues wi -- about which we could not write very much about, because we had to use -- we found that we had to use some of these funds to assist Nazi victims behind the Iron Curtain.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And that was verbote -- not verboten so much from the German side, but the Soviets were -- were violently opposed to it, and so on. And we had to do it in such a way that we couldn't make it public, and we had to get the consent of the German government to do it, etcetera, I mean, we can talk about that one day, but then in some of those were the ways is written up in the book by [indecipherable] Zweig, Ronald Zweig on -- on our location.

Q: Mm-hm. But let -- let me ask you this. There was a period of time, and maybe it still goes on, that when you gave a fair amount of money so that i-it would help Yad Vashem. Am I correct? That it was established --

A: From -- from day one.

Q: From day one. So there -- there are allotments of money that you -- that the Claims Conference was giving to certain --

A: Oh, absolutely.

Q: Right? But you're saying that individual claims did not come through the Claims Conference?

A: No, the individual claims -- initially the individual claims based on the legislation that was approved, based on the agreements which were approved in Luxembourg, wherein the form of individuals filing claims direct --

Q: Right.

A: -- from the German administrative agencies, and subsequently, if need be, carrying into German courts.

Q: Right. Okay.

A: It was until -- it was not until 1980 --

Q: With the hardship fund.

A: -- when the hardship fund was created --

Q: Right.

A: -- and when we came to the Germans prior to that and said, you have to open the filing deadlines for the benefit of the Holocaust survivors who are coming out of the Soviet Union, and who were barred by -- by these laws from filing claims because the -- the geographic jurisdiction of the f -- ger -- of the German compensation laws which came out from our Luxembourg agreements, were limited to -- to -- to the western world. It did not penetrate the Iron Curtain.

Q: Right.

A: Okay?

Q: Yeah.

A: We did not, as I told you in the car, we did not prevail with that. Nahum Goldmann's traveled for four years. He and -- and -- and our colleagues in Germany, I mean, we had extraordinary representatives in Germany, outstanding people. There was a man called Aroz Kashenstein who was -- who was our representative in Germany for nearly 30 years, I would say. Then there was his predecessor, another German lawyer. His successor, a Czech lawyer and so on. They -- they were our fulltime negotiators on the spot. And th -- it was only at that point when the Germans said, look, we finished the [indecipherable] we -- our administrator apparatus is finished. We don't want any more our courts to be loaded, because they had to -- they had the whole judicial structure. From the courts [indecipherable] instance through a Supreme Court. Germany, even today does that every single Supreme Court on those subjects. There's a high in-institutional court, there's a high social security court, there's a high labor court. They have for each major area the equivalent of a Supreme Court. In this country everything goes to one court. And Karlsruhe is the seat of all of these parallel high courts. So if you go to Karlsruhe you can go from -- from one high court to the next high court. And there was for years and years a oberster -- he's a good [indecipherable] a high compensation court.

Q: And that stopped eventually.

A: In any event, so only from that point on, we were very reluctant to do it. And I can tell you obviously why, because it wasn't the pi -- part of money which said here you have at your discretion, you decide the criteria. We had to negotiate under great -- under intensive negotiations the criteria to this day on various programs, and then we are committed to apply these criteria. And the --

Q: And it's not yours.

A: -- and the German -- and the German -- the German co-controller general equivalent can come at any time and inspect our records.

Q: Right.

A: And we kn -- we knew -- I'll give one si-simple [indecipherable] example. We have a program under which we pay pensions, under a so-called article two program, which was established after the unification of Germany. One of the criteria is you had to be six months in the concentration camp. And if you were five month in the concentration camp, you were out. And for a Jewish organization called Conference of Jewish [indecipherable] Germany to send a letter to somebody who was five month in the concentration camp, you -- your application for compensation is rejected, is a minor pleasure.

Q: Yeah. We have to stop the tape.

End of Tape Seven

Beginning Tape Eight

Q: Saul, in 1971 this was a quote from you, “Any time a survivor complains that compensation is inadequate, they will never have an argument from me.”

A: That’s correct.

Q: And you still believe this?

A: That’s correct. Particularly in the area of -- of personal suffering and personal injuries. How can one put a dollar number on psychological, emotional, and on -- and also physical consequences? We always say, and I’m not alone in that, that what -- what we succeeded to some extent is to provide a measure of compensation, some degree, combined with what I said to you before, which is not tangible, but wh-what -- but to me extremely important, and that is the basic acknowledgment on the part of either the government or the entity or the agency that provides compensation, that it had responsibility, legal, moral, but responsibility. And on the other hand, among the hundreds of thousands of survivors, not everybody was able to make the kind of economic to build a new existence for oneself, economically, professional, business-wise or otherwise that -- that the compensation that they obtained for that -- for many it has genuine economic significance. For people for whom -- who as I said to you before, whether it is in the depth of Brooklyn or -- or in the -- or in the resettlement towns of Israel, or -- or in eastern Europe, or wherever it is, when the compensation coming as a result of our negotiations and so on, may equal and exceed old age assistance or Social Security, or whatever it is, and it makes a difference between marginal existence in a late stage of people’s lives, and a sense of -- of some acceptable minimum with a -- with a minimum of -- of -- of dignity and of -- and of self respect in a sense that an individual can have, that is of great importance. And -- and particularly in this stage where the vast majority of the survivors are 80 and over, remember anybody who was born

in, let's say who was 10 years old when World War II broke out in Poland, okay? Born in 1929. That individual today is 78, okay? This is a child survivor. There are organizations of child survivors. Kindertransport people, okay? This is the young end of the -- of this population. And particularly in the western world, with progress of -- of medical care and so on, people live longer. I say people exist longer, you know, to me there is a great distinction between those two words. But people are there longer, in mo -- requiring much more care and attention for their medical needs and so on, with a greater strain and s -- on -- on their financial resources. So in a -- in a strange way, some of the compensation benefits today for the people who ended up retiring on a -- on a very modest basis and in some parts of the world on a below modest basis, or in a non-existent basis, th-this compensation is -- is truly meaningful, and is of great importance. We negotiate periodically cost of living adjustments on the pensions. One of -- I think one of the brilliant things that we did in the -- in The Hague, is we wrote in a clause that the pensions, that the compensation pensions will be adjusted on a cost of living basis as the pensions of civil servants of Germany, because we knew that the civil servants of Germany have a powerful organization and they will fight for cost of living adjustments. And we got the Germans to agree that the compensation -- we knew it is the compensation pensions will be adjusted cost of living-wise in the same percentage as those. So I say that to illustrate that the -- the economic impact for certain categories of survivors was and is important. And as I say in some -- in some strange way, becoming more important now for those who were to retire in a -- on a -- on a very limited basis.

Q: Can I ask you if -- the description that you gave towards the end of the last tape, when there are certain regulations that you had to follow on the hardship fund because those were -- those were regulations made up by the German government. Do you --

A: When the [indecipherable] we have to be more precise.

Q: Mm.

A: Every agreement is a compromise.

Q: Right.

A: Even when the United States won the war on an unconditional surrender, it couldn't force upon Germany all that it may have set out to force upon Germany, and then think of -- any agreement is a compromise.

Q: Okay.

A: And a compromise means that after X efforts to negotiate, if you agree on a settlement, that is what you have agreed.

Q: Right.

A: And you have to have the -- the -- the moral courage and the -- and the honesty to say in the best judgment of this body, like -- like a congress, like a legislature or whatever it is. In the best judgment of this body, this agreement had to be accepted in the form in which it was finally negotiated out.

Q: Right. But this is my question. Did you ever get discouraged?

A: No.

Q: No? Not in all these years?

A: Wh -- what do you mean by discouraged?

Q: Discouraged that you --

A: To say gave up? I'll give you a classic example. In 1974, the two Germanys, East and West were admitted to the United Nations. Following that the United States established diplomatic relations with East Germany. We assisted and we had the support of the U.S. government, at that

time the assistant secretary for European affairs was Mr. Hartman, telling the East Germans that the United States will not enter into diplomatic relations unless the East Germans will agree to negotiate with the Claims Conference concerning issues of compensation, something like that. The Communist East Germans resisted it v-violently. They are a state and they are not negotiating with some non -- non-governmental agency, or something like that. Finally, th-they -- they knew that they couldn't get around it, so they created an anti-Fascist committee to be our non-governmental partner. And from 1974 to 1989, we negotiated with the bloody German -- East Germans, and w -- and we were getting nowhere. We were periodically going there every year at the time of the general assembly of the United Nations. The foreign minister of East Germany would come here, and on Park Avenue [indecipherable] we would meet. Ben Ferencz and Israels -- and Israel Miller and Saul Kagan and whatever, and in 1987 I think I told you we had -- they officially invited us as their guests for negotiations with them in Germany, and they wanted that we should deliver to them most favored nations status in the United States so they -- and then maybe they would consider doing it. At one point Benny went for a meeting with the anti-Fascist committee and totally unexpectedly was handed a one million dollar check to -- to the Claims Conference that we should, with a million dollars, help needy Nazi victims in -- in the United States. Within 48 hours the check was sent back to the German -- to the German Communists, and believe me, through this whole period, people in our board were telling Israel Miller and Ben Ferencz and Saul Kagan and a few other people, stop banging your head against this wall, nothing will happen. We never let up. We didn't accomplish anything, but we never let up. We -- there were poi -- there were moments where the -- where they were making offers to us which we -- of the cali -- cal -- caliber which -- which were unacceptable, but you can get really discouraged, you know? You go back on the back -- even with the west Germans, as I told you,

between 1975, when détente came in, again you see, you got to relate that to [indecipherable] development. Détente, Helsinki, negotiations between -- between President Ford and the Helsinki agreements, and the great pressure with the Jackson-Vanik pressure to let Jews out of -- emigrate from the Soviet Union. Among them, I don't have to tell you, hundred -- tens of thousands of -- of vict -- of Holocaust survivors of -- of -- of the most horrible persecution. Th- The survivors of the [indecipherable] group, and I mean I -- with you I can talk it [indecipherable] than that. We came back to the Germans and said, you have to open the filing period of the compensation laws. These are not people who were lazy. It was forced [indecipherable] they were barred by your laws and by your provisions from f-filing claims. We could not get the opposition, we could not get the government to agree. We dismantled the machinery, we cannot do any more. We couldn't get Willie Brandt, who certainly was a -- Willie Brandt who went to Warsaw on his knees, you know, a -- ap -- apologizing on behalf of Germany for what has been done to -- to the -- in the Warsaw ghetto to the Jews of Poland. Couldn't budge him, couldn't budge the -- the chr -- the Christian democrat opposition. Couldn't bud -- budge his successor who was Helmut Schmidt, another Social Democrat. Finally, after five years practically -- and believe me, people are now, and -- and I don't -- I -- I'm not being critical of anybody -- you know, if you come to meetings a few times a year and whatever it is, and you -- and you hear the same -- the same sad song about we met with this one, we met with that one, we met with this parliamentarian, and that politician. We were here and we were there, and we had the press conference, and we did this and that. And what have you got to show? And when finally, finally they came up with this hardship fund one time payment and you, Claims Conference, administer it. And Nahum Goldmann turned to me and said, "Now you gotta set up

an organization." Which as I said to you before, you -- an organization which would have to tell some people no. Without judicial recourse, by the way.

Q: Right.

A: So -- but if you believe that -- that there is something that -- that you cannot leave -- that you cannot put aside, then you do as long as -- as your institutional strength is there, as your physical strength is there, as your emotional strength is there. Not easy. Not easy at all.

Q: You said a long time ago this wasn't a job to you.

A: Ah.

Q: This is something else, right?

A: This is not a job you -- this is something that -- that -- that you do because -- because within you, you have no alternative. For yourself. You don't get rich in these jobs, I can assure you. And -- but ultimately, you -- you know, took very personally. Ultimately each of us has to live with his own self.

Q: And you couldn't if you did -- if you didn't do this.

A: I don't think so.

Q: Yeah.

A: I c -- I c -- I will tell you this much; I could not divorce myself voluntarily from it. I could visualize myself being in a lay capacity.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I could visualize, I don't know, the organization decided to retire me, I mean, you know, the old gray mare it ain't what she used to be, you know, so -- but they haven't yet reached this wise decision, so -- but -- but [indecipherable]

Q: Do you think there were any mistakes made?

A: Of course mistakes. I mean, th-the -- the answer to the question of whether it would have been possible to achieve more --

Q: Right.

A: -- I would -- I have to be the last person, or those of us who were -- I mean if Nehemiah Robinson would be today alive, if -- if all of my colleagues or -- or -- or [indecipherable] and -- and -- and -- and my -- in -- in our new -- in our current professional leadership, I cannot answer that. We think that we tried to do our utmost.

Q: Right.

A: Is our utmost good enough? Could somebody accomplish more? I would be the last person to say no.

Q: Right.

A: It would be presumptuous, it would be arrogant. And you know, there are elements beyond -- beyond real -- real objective determination. There are moments where we -- when we broke off negotiations. And we had to decide, are we going to go back to it or not. And -- and it -- and it was always -- and it had to be a compromise. The reality in life, whether it's Jewish organizational life, whether it is American public life, whether it is -- is anything else, ultimately it's a compromise. There are people who consider this a dirty word. I've never considered this a dirty word. I consider this a fact of life and the issue is always a determination which is very often a subjective determination as to what is an acceptable compromise. That's where the issue lies.

Q: Right.

A: Now, these kind of speeches, or these kind of statements will not get you elected to the -- as the chief dogcatcher over there, because u-unfortunately political life, and I'm sorry to say at

least maybe -- maybe it's a sign of we're ge -- of we're getting old, but by the standards of political discourse, from -- from the days, let's say in th -- in American standards of the New Deal to today is by and large a record of ever lower -- of ever lower -- lower sinking levels and standards of political discourse.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And that is heartbreaking to me. If you stand up and make a sober, intelligent statement, this is political poison. Correct?

Q: Correct. Well, there -- we could stay here for at least another 10 hours and at some point we have to stop.

A: Sure.

Q: So there's endless questions I could ask you, but I want to thank you so much for being willing to take the time --

A: Look, I'll tell you this much, what you -- what you can do. First of all, I want to know whether I -- I -- I know a -- a transcript comes alo -- comes late, but I hope that a -- a copy of the [indecipherable] tape can be available eventually, or the --

Q: Oh yeah, yes.

A: The other thing that I have to think about and you have to give me a little bit of time that -- not very much, is what is for general public consumption, what I'm not sure that [indecipherable] I told you that's a very -- you can tell me it's a personal hang-up.

Q: No, it's your personal decision.

A: No, I t -- because there are people -- there are people who -- you know, whose personal life is something that -- that they have no problem sharing with the world, or displaying to the world, or even -- or even enjoying doing that.

Q: And you're very private.

A: I -- maybe unfortunately even for me, belong to the people who mourn in private, literally.

Q: Yeah. Well, for that reason --

A: A-After midnight.

Q: After what?

A: I say, after midnight. You know, we all have characteristics, good or bad.

Q: Right. Well, I thank you for even being willing to try this.

A: And what I -- what I say to you is also seriously, because I think of you as I think of it right now, is you'll try to put things together, there will be some kind of holes or gaps, or simply things that have to be connected. Just pick up the phone, send me an email, or whatever it is, I will --

Q: Okay, or I'll come to New York and visit with you. How's that?

A: By all means, by all means. I said it to somebody here before that -- I said -- doesn't apply here at all, but I am, particularly in the last 10 years, I am very often approached by young historians, by -- by people writing Ph.D.'s and so on, from this country, from Israel, from Germany, by the way. You would be amazed how many young German historians are seriously studying the Holocaust. Seriously.

Q: No, I know.

A: With a great inner commitment. We have an office in Germany now that -- that has been in operation since 1952, that's 55 years. The vast majority of our staff was German, German German.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Not German Jews, German German. We had -- we have some Jews, obviously, and we had people and have people who are deeply committed to what we are trying to do.

Q: Right.

A: Inner commitment.

Q: Right.

A: In some -- in some cases and in some ways more intensely than a Jew would do. And I don't say it critically of the Jew. For -- for the Jew it is -- for -- for -- let's say for a Jew particularly somehow related to or exposed to Holocaust survivors or something like that, it's almost sort of matter of course, if you will, or ho-how else. But young Germans who feel very deeply the responsibility. I mean, one of -- one of our best lawyers, he really battling our battle, he is a youngish -- or -- or at least by my standards, he is around 50, c-close to it, young German lawyer with -- not only with that he is a brilliant lawyer as a lawyer, but -- but with a real inner commitment to this thing. So it -- to -- to go back, and what I was -- wanted to tell you s-simply is that any Ph.D. student who calls me or sends me an email or wants to see me, I ac -- sometimes go to Germany and I meet somebody seven o'clock in the morning because that's the one hour I can spend with them.

Q: Right.

A: And so to me this aspect of it is of in -- tremendous importance.

Q: Right.

A: Because not only that -- that the -- the hi -- the history of the period, the teaching of this period, the -- th-the -- what I call the broad lessons of it, human lessons, not only in Jewish life, but in the -- in the -- in the world at large, are crucial to go past the lifetime of the -- of the survivors.

Q: Right.

A: And -- and the only place to look to that are the teachers, are the academics, are the -- are the governments, for instance there is now, as you know, the international task force on Holocaust education, I think it's a fantastic, tremendous development.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: To introduce that subject matter into the -- into the public school systems of the world, and of Europe in particular, is -- is -- is a tremendous goal and objective.

Q: I think we have to stop the tape.

A: You can stop it, it's -- doesn't --

Q: Do -- do you want --

End of Tape Eight

Conclusion of Interview