

All right. We're continuing. OK, fine.

Yes.

All right. Sorry.

Sorry.

Technical thing. All right.

Right. OK.

So [GERMAN].

So now, I was unable to obtain any information from my cousin, Hans, about what happened or what-- yeah. What happened to [INAUDIBLE] when the war was ending or ended. What I do know is that in the mid '40s, the office moved, and I believe that it moved to Switzerland.

How-- well then, in the mid '40s, Switzerland being neutral, that's really weird. Because who knew that Germany would have had the possibility to move such a [GERMAN]. That's weird, don't you think?

It is. And if you don't mind, I just want to take a look at my notes to be sure.

OK. I'm sorry to pressure you, but we have five minutes left.

Oh, Ina?

Yeah?

Yeah, I misspoke. When the institute became part of the Reichsministerium under Rosenberg, it remained in what was then Breslau.

OK.

And that would explain the fact why it was destroyed largely from fighting. So yeah, what I said refers to the post-war period. So I wanted to add quickly and parenthetically that during the pre-war period, my uncle wrote on many topics, including the history of the Lutheran Church in Poland, which as you probably know is largely German.

And as a matter of fact, my great great grandfather was a pastor of a Lutheran church within Poland. And he also wrote about the history of the first German gymnasium, which you probably know as high school.

Mm-mm. That's right.

In Lodz. And he and my mother attended that school as a matter of fact, but that's parenthetical.

OK.

So the last documented work I can find by my uncle, the last two books and monographs that he wrote had to do with-- and the word in German is ambiguous. And I found so many dictionary translations that didn't jibe.

But if you don't mind, I'll just give it the English name as best I can, which was the expulsion and/or-- depending on the semantics, repatriation, voluntary or not voluntary in other words, of ethnic Germans to German territory. In other words, as you know, they were kicked out.

Yes, but he--

--or left voluntarily.

So did he write about that after the war or during?

He wrote about it in 1940-- in 1946.

OK. But no longer-- the institute, I take it, no longer existed, and he was in West Germany.

The institute was destroyed in '45, I believe, towards the very end of the war.

Mm-hmm. Was the German word [GERMAN]?

I believe so, yeah.

Yeah. [GERMAN] has many meanings. Deportation, expulsion, and so on. But usually not voluntary.

Yes. OK.

Yeah, usually it means that it was-- yeah.

I'll mention this only as a subjective reaction to having read with my limited German bits of those two last books I mentioned, because my father actually retained copies of them.

Did he?

And there's a sense of-- not surprisingly, I guess-- resentment on the part of my uncle as to what has happened.

Mm-hmm. Being expelled from Poland. Yes, of course.

Right. And also having the defeat of the Germans, because there's a thread which I wanted to emphasize. And again, there's a certain subjective element on my part. But there's a thread that given how he persisted with the institute, even when it became completely dominated by the Nazis, that he stuck with it. But that doesn't mean that much, because maybe he just couldn't quit.

Well, it's an ambiguous position. He could have been one of those who was shaking in his shoes because the [GERMAN] is not something to be fooled around with, and they can be watching you.

He could have been-- and apparently, according to Heydrich, probably was. And he-- yeah. I mean, he could have been accused of treason for all we know.

Yeah. Or he could have been one of those who really steps up to the plate.

Right. He didn't either, actually. But given the fact that his extreme right politics persisted well into the '80s when I last talked with him, my guess is that he did not become converted to the other pole. No pun intended.

Yeah.

So let's see. I would say that-- that was all I had to add about him.

But you know, it's very I mean, it is very interesting and so challenging. I can't imagine how challenging it is when both of these histories are part of what make you up. You know? And are coursing in you. And they had their tragedies. I

mean, I believe, if I remember the statistics, that two million Germans died during those expulsions.

That's what I gather too.

Yeah. And so not innocent as well as guilty were targeted and suffered as a result. And at the other end, I mean, this was still very much that institute, so much part of the Nazi structure in its very heart.

And you have a grandmother and relatives who perish in Treblinka. Your grandmother does not, but nevertheless, that other history, which is the history for which this museum is set up to capture. What does it say to you? What does it say to you not historically, but you personally?

Well, that's a complex question. And I would say without being at least consciously dramatic about it, I think it has had a very profound influence on me. And I hope we have a couple minutes for me to give you some details.

Sure. We do. We do.

Number one, there was a concurrent event to my, let's say, awakening or burgeoning awakening to wanting to learn about the war. It started with an interest in battles and how the war was conducted, and eventually moved to the political arena when I was maybe 12, 13.

But at the same time, I was completely split between a self-perception as a British kid, since we had just emigrated to the US, and my attempts to become an American. And that was very, very difficult, and I vacillated between the two.

That's just the preface. The main thing is that although it hasn't happened that recently, I have been split in a very simple-- well, a simple kind of division between my admiration for the capabilities of the German army, a great love for the German language, contrasted with, not surprisingly, horror and continued horror at the destruction and loss of human life wreaked by the Nazis.

But I also, to add to my ambivalence, have read materials. Much of-- these were not even books. These were papers written by various historians or even private individuals that my dad had collected, addressing how many Poles-- again, I don't have percentages, and it probably wasn't-- they say it wasn't high. But as you probably know, quite a few Jews and Poles were ready to turn Jews into-- other Jews by the Jews and Jews by the Poles to save their own skins.

Yeah. Yeah.

Sometimes they would get rewards financially, and life was difficult. You know, I'm not-- I feel it would be unfair and I wouldn't like myself if I took a patronizing kind of, oh, I wouldn't have done that, because I don't know what I would have done.

But the bottom line is that-- and I have to say this-- I believe that in our first interview, I mentioned the incident in the elevator where a Jewish neighbor accused me of saying, I am not a Jew. My father is not a Jew, and I hate the Jews.

Yes.

You remember that?

Yes, I remember that.

I did not say that, and I know-- I remember mentioning to you that she may have picked up on something. But around that same age when we came from England, I had some vague anti-Semitic feelings that I couldn't quite put my finger on, and so far in the distance that it's hard. But I think some of it came from the neighborhood I lived in--

In Britain.

In New York. When we moved to New York, it was a largely Jewish neighborhood. A lot of Black people and Puerto Ricans, but a lot of Jewish people. And a couple of the incidents involving Jews like the one where my father ended up yelling at a shopkeeper who addressed him in Yiddish.

That's right. I remember that.

And my also being caught shoplifting a book from a-- what was called a candy store, you know. Shoplifting a book that had to do with sex and getting caught.

[LAUGHS]

And my father coming to talk to the proprietor who happened to be an Auschwitz survivor with a tattoo, and talking him out of calling the police.

Mm. What neighborhood was this?

This was the Upper West Side. We lived on 99th Street between West End and Riverside Drive.

So you weren't up in what was the German-Jewish neighborhood--

Oh, that's where I am now, and it's no longer that. That's Yorkville in the east '80s.

No, no, no, no. I know, that was one. But it's the one where a lot of post-war refugees went. And it's not-- it's Heights. Something Heights.

Washington Heights.

Washington Heights, yeah.

Yes.

You're lower down than Washington Heights.

I lived in Washington Heights also, but it was already at a time where the population was mixed. But it was mixed black and white with only a few very elderly Jews left.

OK.

And this was years later than when we lived on the Upper West Side where I believe that-- this is very hard to say and admit-- but I believe that I encountered so many damaged, crippled, mentally and physically Jews on the Upper West Side that they started to engender-- and I know this is not uncommon-- a little bit of contempt on my part for their misery.

I mean, Freud or somebody beyond Freud would probably have something to say. But I'll give you a couple examples. One is a woman I may have mentioned who was Jewish, and I helped her walk across a street. And she kept asking me to pray for her death. And there were several psychotic Jewish people walking around who were obviously-- completely had been destroyed I assume by their experiences. And I also found the candy store owner to be very crude.

It brought up elements of snobbery-- or not snobbery or class consciousness on my part. All these kinds of things. I resented the fact that a supermarket a block away, the same one where my father yelled at the grocery store clerk, was called The Brod-- B-R-O-D-- dash vay-- V-A-Y-- Grocery.

[LAUGHS]

I'm sorry, but it's funny.

Believe me, you know, it intuitively-- it made me-- it gave me negative feelings, you know? What nerve to co-opt a supermarket and turn it into a quasi-Yiddish-sounding--

[LAUGHS]

I mean. but anyway. So the bottom line is at some time during that period, my father asked me, to my best recollection-- and this surprises me, but I'm pretty sure it actually happened. My father asked me in terms of my religious direction that I was thinking about, would I-- do I have any interest or inclinations to be Jewish.

This is after you discovered that you are. Because you know, you told--

I had already-- I had already discovered it. And all the phenomena that I mentioned to you regarding my reactions to people in the neighborhood, the conversion of misery into contempt, some form of contempt, all that happened when I already knew that my father was Jewish. It all happened at the same time, more or less.

Wow. Wow.

So my father asked me, do you want to be Jewish or not? And I said something like-- and rather rudely I said, I don't want to be Maurice Goldberg. That's exactly what I said.

And is that the name of one of these people that you--

No. I just came up with the first Jewish name I could come up with.

I see.

Well, actually, no. They may have been a friend of mine. It's a common name. There may be some Goldbergs, but I'm not even 100% sure it was Goldberg, but it was a very common Jewish last name.

The interesting thing is that your response is not at all religious. It is-- a religious one was, I don't want synagogue or I don't want something to do with the Torah. It has something to do with far more secular and identity.

I would say that was true. It's true. But part of the reason for that is that I was, due to my upbringing, convinced I was Protestant. Went through all the way almost up to confirmation as a Protestant through Protestant religious training, and I knew next to nothing about a Jewish-- the Jewish religion and its trappings.

But I'll say one thing that's been a thread through my entire life is that I have an intuitive dislike of any elaborate ceremony that's tied to religion, whether Catholic, Episcopalian, you name it. I get turned off, to put it in the vernacular.

Mm-hmm.

I'm not sure why, but I do. I think it's because, number one, I'm an atheist and I feel or I felt and feel that it isn't worth all this fuss. Because at age 15, I went to a service. I can even pinpoint the church, the name of the pastor where he gave a sermon that particularly annoyed me because I said to myself, this guy is talking as if he personally had lunch with God, with such certainty.

And it's that kind of thing that became an element of my desire not to be affiliated with any church, particularly one with a lot of ceremony and pomp and circumstance. And then any religion altogether.

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

And the last church that I attended was a French Calvinist Protestant church in New York that had no-- you know, as

typical of many Protestant subjects or sects, no ceremonial aspect.

Yeah. Yeah.

So I don't know what all this means, but--

Well, it's-- I thank you for-- I thank you for your honesty. I mean, some of it is not politically correct.

Absolutely-- absolutely not.

But it is something that you experienced, and I appreciate your forthrightness with it.

Well, I thought-- you know-- well, rather than say what I was going to say, I thought about how much to reveal, how honest to be. But I felt that I would be betraying myself and others who read this. And the people who might ever read it or have access to it amount to about two people in the whole world now.

[LAUGHS]

Everybody else is dead. But I felt that even though initially I thought that you would prefer me not to get into the psychological realm too much-- and I know that you emphasized my experience in a circumscribed way-- I decided that at least I would be frank about this, because Jack, my second cousin, the son of Michael who my father had the hatred of--

Yes, you mentioned him.

--he made a heavy-handed effort to get me involved in Jewish affairs just a couple years ago by inviting me to various gatherings. And I politely declined, because he is an ultra Zionist.

You realize that this is-- that what we're talking about now, though, is part of what we would not edit. It would go out on the web like your first interview has.

Yes, that's fine.

OK. OK.

Could I say one last thing?

Sure.

Because it's symbolic as well as a statement. Well, I'll just say it. I have always admired the World War II German military steel helmet, because-- not so much because of what it symbolized or symbolizes, but because from an aesthetic viewpoint, I think it almost would belong in a museum of modern art in terms of good design and attractiveness. And I actually purchased a reconditioned one, which I keep in my closet.

Wow. Wow. [LAUGHS] Wow.

But it has no significance. I don't put it on and say, I'm going to march into some other country.

Of course. Of course.

I just love the way it looks.

Yeah.

But I think there's something to it, but I don't know what it is. It's mostly an aesthetic admiration for the neatness of German troops, the Hugo Boss designed uniforms, and all that.

And yet, you see, you called us because you wanted to give your testimony to us, to the Holocaust museum whose purpose is to remember all of this, to make sure that it's not forgotten, to make sure that people in future generations have the possibility to gain some understanding, hopefully, though all of us grapple with it.

Right. And--

What--

I'm sorry. Go ahead.

No, I mean, my question is, what motivated you there?

What motivated me was a reaction-- it's not in a particular order of importance, but what comes to mind is a reaction to the fact that so much of my heritage-- not culturally, because my father often lets-- or didn't let slip, but told Jewish jokes, Jewish stories even before I knew he was Jewish, because I associated it with Polish humor at the expense of Jews, or things like that. But I felt that I had been cheated of a significant part of my heritage.

Yeah.

I also have-- I know I've emphasized certain politically incorrect things. I stated them. I would not dare to say them to anybody that I encountered on the street or to a friend, or particularly my Zionist cousin. But I have to underscore the fact that another motivator for my wanting this to be if possible recorded in some way, literally and figuratively, is that my personality is very multifaceted. I'm not saying that to brag.

No, no.

It has not helped me. My first wife said, you are so many people rolled into one. I still feel that way. I still feel that I have the mentality of an expatriate who-- [CRYING] Excuse me.

It's OK.

I don't know if you can record this.

If you don't want to, we will try to--

I don't want it.

OK. We will edit it out. But--

I don't know. I'm not even sure right now.

We're just going to make note of the minutes. We'll re-- part three. OK.

I mean, I don't mind your making notes, but I--

Yeah. Can we stop?

Can you give me--