

Good evening. My name is Toby Ticktin Back, and I'm the director of the Holocaust Resource Center of Buffalo. This evening we have a very unusual and interesting story, as will be told to us by Moritz W. Friedler, who is originally of Vienna, Austria.

Moritz, would you take us into Vienna, when the Nazis came in 1938? Will you tell us what happened?

Well the day is of special significance, not in the context of the history of the Holocaust, but also from the point of view as Austria being the first country that has been, by force, occupied by Germany. So within one minute practically, the trap was set whereby a foreign power took the right to occupy another country without any warning. And for the Jews, the Holocaust really started at this moment.

The unfortunate situation occurred for very simple reasons, that nobody, no power in the world stopped Hitler or made any effort to force his withdrawal from Austria. And in reality, the trap was set. And within minutes after the German Army crossed the border, most of the Nazis in Austria, who were illegal at that time, were able to come to the surface. They donned their Brown uniforms and tried to-- not only tried, but did-- smash every Jewish store in Vienna.

Every Jew that was caught on the street was beaten. Some of them were brutally murdered. And even more so, every Jew or everyone who was known to be an enemy of the Third Reich was forced to scrape and wash the pavements of the street in order to clean it from the very slogans which have been put on the pavements in Vienna welcoming the German Army.

In reality, very few people realized how strong the Nazis were at that time in Vienna. And from this moment on, it was the Austrian Nazis that demonstrated to the Germans how you can treat people and how you can treat Jews without having to fear the intervention of anybody, whether it was the local population or any other country in the world. And as I said before, Austria was occupied and nobody, nobody raised any sound.

With the occupation, which was at the beginning of March, immediately all the Jewish institutions were closed. Everything was outlawed. And businesses were taken away, expropriated. And this was the beginning of the end.

Moritz, excuse me. Did you not have any advance warning? Did the newspapers give you any indication of what might be happening?

No. The only warning that had occurred is-- because two days prior to the occupation by the German Army, there was supposed to be a plebiscite in Austria, where the Austrians were given the right to choose Austria yes or Austria no. If the majority vote would have been Austria no, that means automatically the population of Austria would have decided to become part of Germany. So Hitler forced out this plebiscite by marching into Austria two days earlier and just taking the country by force.

And basically, I do remember the various events from, not only from that moment on, but even earlier in the history, because I myself considered myself, and perhaps still am, an activist and have been deeply involved in Jewish activities from my earliest youth, which take me back to 1935, 1934, when perhaps I was only 13 or 14 years old. And in this connection, I had the unfortunate-- how should I say-- opportunity to meet some of the people who later became some of the most infamous Nazis and one of them who had been even convicted to death at the Nuremberg trial.

Who was that?

His name was Kaltenbrunner, and who was the chief deputy of the chief of the security department of the Gestapo and the one next to Himmler.

Now, how did you get together with him?

Well, as a matter of fact, we were in a summer resort in the Austrian Alps. And in 1934-- and we resided in his home. As a matter of fact, it was an old castle. And on a particular day in July of 1934, he said to us, well, I really don't want

you to go out in the streets today. And he didn't give us an explanation why. But what really happened is that, on this day, there was the first attack on Dollfuss. There was a chancellor of Austria, and he was killed at that time.

Now the one who had warned us, Kaltenbrunner, he had to escape. And he went into Germany. And he was the one who formed the first Austrian brigade of the Nazis in Germany. And they were the ones, too, who afterwards re-entered Austria when Austria was occupied in 1938.

Why do you think he would want to protect you, a family of Jews though?

Well, this was very difficult, very difficult to say because, in the very beginning, when you go back into the political history of Austria, many of the parties, of course, were illegal too, like the Nazi Party, Social Democrats, or even the Communists for that matter. So their behavior in the very early days, going back to the middle '30s, was still a little bit within the context of a democratic kind of behavior. Whether they themselves knew already at that time, based on Hitler's writing of *Mein Kampf* and so on and so forth, that once they are going to be part of-- let's say, when they will take power, whether they will be able to function in the way they afterwards did, this is, of course, only something we can project.

I personally do not believe that they really knew that they will be able to go as far as they did because, very simply, they were always afraid that the outside world or the world conscience will not permit this to happen. But it happened. And Hitler was very, very astute in this respect, that every move that the outside world did and did not protect, whether it's the Jews or people per se, he moved one step further.

And quickly.

Until-- and that's right-- until he was able to accomplish what he want. Now to come back to the trap really, which was closed on this day, we have to recognize this. There was no way out for anybody, legally or illegally, from Austria. If you were a Jew and you had a passport, you couldn't cross the border. If you wanted to go illegally, you couldn't go. You couldn't cross any border whatsoever.

England had been closed-- or not England. Palestine had been closed to us because of various political events that took place. And the number of people that could emigrate were just minute. The United States government did not open its doors at that time, and the same goes-- because there was a quota system. The same was true for Great Britain and all the other countries. So therefore, at that point the Jews realized that there was no way out unless they took matters, to a degree, into their own hands.

Now, 48 hours after Hitler marched into Austria, I have to give great credit to the leaders of the Jewish Agency of Palestine, who have sent two of their delegates to Austria. They crossed illegally into Austria, and they helped us to reestablish the Jewish Agency in Austria. Or in other words, they told us what the legal ways would be to obtain permission from the Nazi Party, built on previous experiences in Germany, how to establish it.

And also, the other organization which was made legal again for the one purpose only was the Jewish Community of Vienna, which originally had closed down for a short time. So basically, you were dealing here with two major organizations who suddenly were faced with the problem of looking after 200,000 Jews out of a population of 2 million. It was perhaps the largest Jewish community in Europe at that time.

Now again, Austria was one of the first. The name Eichmann is known to everybody. Because he and Hitler saw how well they were received in Austria by the population, he was given the authority to establish the first Jewish department of the Gestapo. This is where it really happened in Vienna. And every Jewish activity of fear, anything that took place, had to go through his department, which was one of the Gestapo. And basically, it was dealing with immigration. And then, of course, later on it took on additional dimension, where similar offices were set up all over Europe, going into Poland and Russia, and also taking charge of the, unfortunately, of the extermination of Jewish people.

And how did the Jewish Community Agency and the Jewish Agency work with this Eichmann Gestapo group?

Well, in the beginning they were interested only in one thing, for the Jews to go, to leave, to get out. But they knew, too, the very same token, where would they go? Because nobody opened their door. There was a famous Aryan conference, which took place in 1938, where all the major powers of the world met. And there was no decision made which country would take, let's say, so many Jews or whether they would force or whether they would even force or use moral force to persuade Hitler to let people out.

So therefore, again, to give you an idea of what can happen from personal experience, so where did we go? We had to make use of whatever we could. My own father at that time was arrested. He was a businessman-- which was still a few months before any of the mass arrests took place. He was arrested because of some denunciation by one of his customers, whether true or not. And we had no access to him. And we didn't know.

This was 1938?

That was in 1938, in September of 1938, which was still fairly early in the days. And in a way, to our surprise, we discovered that one of the people who was one of our suppliers was an illegal Nazi before. And as a reward, he was made the district commissioner of the police department in Vienna. And my father was arrested in that region where he was the director.

Now, no Jew really ever wanted to go voluntarily to any police department or, let's say, into the Gestapo headquarter because most of the time when they entered there was no way that they would be leaving alive. But we had no choice. And my mother had decided that she will take the calculated risk, and she will ask for an appointment with the police commissioner.

Well, in a way he showed some decent behavior. But at the same time, he did expose his utter belief in the ideology of the Nazi Party. He told my mother, look, you know my position here. He pointed to his swastika and to his uniform and everything and heil Hitler and so on and so forth. I can do only one favor. Since you are not Austrian Jews-- we were Poles, Polish Jews-- what I can do is I can deport your father across the border into Czechoslovakia. Because he's a foreigner, we don't have to go to trial. We don't want to bother with Jews. He's a foreigner. I will do you a favor, and we will put him across the border.

Moritz, excuse me. On what grounds was your father picked up?

Any-- they arrested anybody for any ground. As soon as any Aryan or anybody could say, "this Jew did something to me," there was no question of evidence, there was no question of trial. Either you were arrested, you were killed on the street, or you went into a concentration camp. That was all in the beginning. I mean, later on it became much more organized.

So my mother was very grateful to him. She told him, if he has a chance to go to Prague, my father, he will be able to pick up a certificate to go to Palestine. Whereupon he said to her, really, don't think that I'm that nice and I'm doing you a favor. We don't mind if all you Jews move to Palestine and you all get there. And as a matter of fact, we are going to help you. If you want to go to Palestine, be my guest because one day we will be in the Middle East. And we will occupy Palestine, and we will have all the Jews in one spot.

Now this statement, which was told to me by my mother is really something that haunted me all these years, and especially the time, as everybody remembers, when the German Army, under the leadership of Rommel, cut through North Africa. And they really were at the doors of Palestine. And this came back to my mind constantly.

So the prediction was that--

But unfortunately, my father didn't make it. He was arrested in Czechoslovakia and placed in the concentration camp in Slovakia, in Vyhne. And unfortunately, a few months before the end of the war he died in the camp. Now, what was tragic, too, in a way is to show you the impossible situation, and there was no door open to escape is a fairly large percentage of Jews in Vienna were Polish citizens, still from the time when there was the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. And some of them have opted to remain Poles instead of taking on Austrian citizenship for all sorts of reasons.

And you would think that, at a time like this, the Polish government would have wanted to do something humane and at least to issue passports to the people so they would have had a chance to leave. No. There was no way. You submitted your application for verification of citizenship and all, the red tape went on and on and on. And not one ever received a passport. So even this door, as a foreigner living in another country, could not escape.

So most of the people-- so actually, what we're remained with are the emigration to Palestine or anything related with Palestine went through the Palestine office of the Jewish Agency. And all other activities relating to this aspect of Jewish life were organized by the Jewish Community.

Excuse me. Let's go back to the Palestine Commission. How many Jews went through that vehicle, and were there difficulties?

Now here again, too, as I said in the beginning, we are talking about Austria was the first in many ways. As a matter of fact, the first organized illegal movement to Palestine started in Vienna. This was one of the ways that we could find an open door to escape. People-- there were boats chartered that went along the Danube into Palestine. And some others went from Italy, from Trieste, to Palestine too.

With the permission of the British?

No, of course not.

No.

However, a not so large number was given visas to go to Palestine in accordance with the Palestine policy of the British government. And those, of course, could leave legally. But the number was comparatively small. There might have been, perhaps, 1,000 that went under Youth Aliyah. And there may have been hundreds. I don't think there were more than, perhaps, an equal number of people that went with legal immigration visas to Palestine.

Now, other countries, again, accepted people only on a person-to-person basis. Most of the time, if somebody could afford or had, let's say, a substantial amount of money on deposit in a foreign country, then Shanghai, where many people went to, provided a visa. There were some South American countries, if you were able to provide a baptist certificate, and you had enough money. So on this basis, individual Jews were able to save themselves.

And of interest too, that the one part of the population that suffered most-- and this is one of the few things that is on my mind too-- were those who changed their religion long before. They choose who, for one reason or another, went through the process of assimilation. And sometimes the first and second generation were already Catholics or Protestants or whatever they are.

They were the ones that really suffered the most because the Palestine office for the Jewish Agency was not their place. They weren't Jewish. The Jewish Community wasn't their place because, according to Austrian law and German law, they could only cater to those that were Jews and had certified and were known in this respect. The others were only Jews according to the Nuremberg Law that Hitler established it. Because according to the laws of Austria, they were whatever religion they had chosen.

And the result was, because of their hopeless situation, a high number of them committed suicide within the first weeks that Hitler came to Austria. This was one of the most devastating aspects of it because, at that time, Jews were still hoping somebody is going to help because nobody could realize that this will end as tragically as it did.

So coming back, another first was the illegal immigration to Israel. And one more break we had-- and this was at the time when an agreement was signed between Chamberlain and Hitler that part of Czechoslovakia, where the German's lived, will become part of Germany. And because England has agreed to that political appeasement policy, they have provided immigrant certificates for a very substantial number of young people, especially Jews, and others who were willing to go into work camps in England.

And in addition, that was as far as Jews are concerned. But all non-Jews from Czechoslovakia, who lived in the territory where Hitler came in, if they did not want to live under the German flag, they got permission, too, and visas to enter England. Now, at that time the Jewish Agency for Palestine opened a new department. In addition to Youth Aliyah, we had the department which selected the youngsters that were permitted to go to England.

Excuse me, Moritz, before you get on to that. These people who had converted perhaps a century or two before, you talked about a large number committing suicide. What happened to the other ones?

Well, to a degree, if it was third generation and so on, even according to the Nuremberg Law, there were certain circumstances that they did not pay attention to it. Besides, the Nazi party took it upon themselves too, or Hitler-- I think Hitler was the one who said-- had the famous saying, "the one who is a Jew, I'm going to determine," so that sometimes there was a certain leeway. And just by remaining an ordinary citizen, not wanting to be part of life under Hitler, they did not-- they were not persecuted to the same extent.

The one other exception that made it a little bit easier were those, although they converted, but they were married to a non-Jewish partner. But even so, the number, comparatively speaking, was very, very small. But again, here we were dealing with 200,000 Jews.

Now, and one more tragedy-- and when you talk about Holocaust, you talk about people in concentration camps, you talk about what happened, the Final Solution. But even in those days, if I recollect, parents coming to the office and begging us to take their children to England or to Palestine, where they themselves knew that they had no chance to emigrate or to get out. So that was-- their move was--

It's a separation of the family.

--first of all, to save the children. And perhaps that was the last time, if they left for England, it was the last time that they were ever able to see their children. And this is actually what happened in my case too. And again, sometimes it is, when you reflect, you really see what went on. This is the one, perhaps the one reason that-- and I have to be quite frank, that I told you, that I'm willing to talk about it, is because it is only in retrospect that you really can see what has happened and that we do have an obligation, a moral obligation because we survived, to tell what happened.

We may make hundreds and hundreds of political decisions, but to tell, this is our obligation. Because this is the reason that our parents let us go. And this is the reason why many of us survived. So that should never be forgotten.

Now, I was lucky too. And why? I don't know. Many people--

Moritz, I think we'll have to continue the next time here.

So we have to continue.

Yes.

And this is where we will continue.

We'll continue from this point.

--against Germany. So whatever they had promised they will do, that they will fight for the integrity of Poland, they really lived up to their pledge, which was something that hadn't been done in a long time in the political process. A few days later, we were evacuated to North Wales, about--

You and your cousin?

No, no, no. We were in that hostel, you see.

You were in the hostel with the other Mizrahi children.

That's right.

The children and [INAUDIBLE], which also, by the way, included-- we were about 200 that were evacuated. And among those was rather a very interesting personality. There was a young-- sometimes, you know, to underscore the-- how I should I say-- the human interest in this, there was a very young man about my age, who came from Vienna, who had spent a lot of time at our home. We belonged to the same youth movement and everything. And he came to Vienna about two years or two, two and a half years before Hitler came. He was a little carpenter coming from Lvov, no formal education. But he was a good carpenter.

He had only one ambition in life. He wants to go to the Academy of Art. Everybody said, you're crazy. I mean, you have no formal education. What can you do? I can do anything you want me to with lumber, with wood-- anything. So he showed us some of the inlay work he could do that really looked like paintings. If you didn't know that this was done in wood, you would think it's an oil painting. And he was accepted without any formal education or anything, was accepted by the Academy of Art in Vienna.

And he wanted to emigrate to England. He couldn't get a visa for all sorts of reasons, because number one, he was a Pole, and he didn't have his permanent residence in Vienna, and you name it. One day he went to the English Consulate. And the visa officer there was supposed to have been a very strict lady, who had not too much of-- how should I say-- liking for many of the refugees that applied for visas, which-- considering it's just tens of thousands that tried to do it. But anyhow, he went there.

And he said, I came to get a visa. She looked at him and said, what do you mean you want a visa? What can you do? Who are you? So he had a nice portfolio, and he pulled out a nice piece of art and showed it to her, what he can do. And I think that was the only case in the history that I will ever remember in those 50 years where somebody got a visa on the spot.

Through Vienna?

To England.

I wonder if he survived.

Oh, he survived. We're still corresponding. So anyhow, we were evacuated to North Wales, a beautiful setting in an old castle. And I don't think anybody has lived in that castle since it was built, which must have been a few hundred years old. The people were extremely nice, but they were Welsh nationalists. So here we were. We didn't know English. They didn't want to teach us English. They wanted to communicate only in Welsh. But anyhow, we became, all, very good friends. And there was a wonderful relationship.

But it didn't last very long. Aliens had to register. Some were detained. Some were sent abroad. And many of the aliens-- and this is what they hold for a long time against Britain, that in spite of the fact that they knew that they were Jewish, they were classified as enemy aliens. And they could not really move away for more than five miles from their residence. And if they wanted to go somewhere else, they had to ask for permission.

Even the little children who were taken over in transports?

No, no, no difference. That was true. And of course, you can't-- sometimes you can't blame them. It was soon-- it's the time of Dunkirk and so on, where were afraid of fifth columnists and so on and so forth, which brings me to another interesting story when we talk about here detaining Jews as enemy aliens and here, on the other hand, you have-- I met a person, a woman who came to our hostel, to that old castle. And she introduced herself as Irene Harrach from Vienna, and who was a very well-known name. And of course, we should have been impressed by her being in our neighborhood.

She lived not too far from us. And she came to say hello to the refugee children. That's right.

Were you in charge of these children?

Well, I was in charge of one particular program, the catering and purchasing part of it. And this is where I learned English and Welsh together. I didn't know anymore what kind of language I was talking.

How old were you now? About 20? 21?

I was just about 20, just going to be 20. But again, we had many advantages, too, because among our staff we had people who were some of the finest chefs from Vienna or from Berlin.

So you ate well, whatever provisions there were.

They made-- out of the rations that we got, were allocated to us, really we were lucky. But to come back to that woman. And I looked at her, and it was rather suspicious to me. But it didn't gel in my mind yet because I used to, when I was a little boy, I used to empty the Keren Kayemet in their office. We used to go around as volunteers. We called on people, said you have a Jewish National Fund box, we came to empty it-- and so on and so forth. So her husband, who was a lawyer and an old monarchist, he believed in the principal of Jews to have their own country and so on and so forth. And so I knew her and I knew him.

When she came the second time, I said to myself, but that's not her. That's not the woman I met in Vienna. It slipped my mind again. But a little bit later, after the famous Dunkirk, the retreat of the British Army to return to Britain, this is when everybody was really scared of the fifth columnists and spies. And this when many of our people were detained.

And I just asked myself a question. How come she's there? Because from us she couldn't get any information, if she is somebody that we thought-- we got just as suspicious as the others. She wouldn't get much from us. But then I remembered, there was one of the biggest British training centers, army training centers in our vicinity.

Oh, it was right where you were.

Just not too far. They trained about 30,000 soldiers. That was the initial training phase. And she lived nearby. And everybody being worried, I figured I might just as well share my information or my suspicion with the police. They made note of it. Were lucky enough, I was a friendly alien anyhow, so I didn't get into [LAUGHS]. But there were certain restrictions. And about a few months later, for no reason whatsoever-- I only know one thing. This woman didn't return anymore. We didn't see her anymore. We don't know what happened to her. She didn't live there anymore where she was, where she used to live.

She left her house?

She lived with a farmer there, as far as I remember. And she just vanished from the surface of the Earth. I was called to the police. They took my alien registration book. They canceled all the restrictions that I had, and I could move around free wherever I wanted to go and without having to get any permission from the police. And still, they didn't tell me what happened to her.

Were they rewarding you for revealing Irene Harrach?

I can only guess.

You never asked, and they never told you.

In Britain you don't ask. You're not nosy to this extent. But anyhow, and this is when I took-- well, when I ventured to the outside a little bit.

You left North Wales.

That's right. I ventured to-- I was looking for a job. I didn't want to remain in the hostel. So this was really an obligation on our part because we belonged to that halutz movement. But I figured, for the purpose of completing my study, for the purpose of learning English, I would move to a bigger city, where we had an urban kind of settlement, where people worked in factories, businesses, and still belong to the movement.

I went to Leeds, which is in Yorkshire. And no sooner did I get there, than was I called up to the army.

You were called up because you were now a citizen.

That's right. Remember, I was [INAUDIBLE]. I was called up to the army. But of course, according to the British, I was a Pole, you know. So I was supposed to report to the Polish Army at that time. But there were certain regulations that permitted people who did not want to serve with the army of their nationality, they could serve with the British Army. Anyhow, I did not-- I was not accepted in the army, but I had to perform war work. And I worked in one of the biggest clothing factories in the world in those days.

As a matter of fact, if you go to there, to London, you will see Montague Burton stores all over. We manufactured the uniforms for the army there. And the nice thing about it, I have to give great compliment to the owner, which is Montague Burton, that those who were Shomer Shabbat, who kept Shabbat, he specially opened one department in his factory on Sunday in order that we can make up, both salary-wise, wage-wise, and for production, what we couldn't do on Saturday. And I remained there for about a year. And the evenings, I-- during the evening, I went to the College of Commerce in Leeds and completed one part of my studies.

Where did you live while you were in Leeds?

Oh, we had little apartments. I shared an apartment with a friend.

Who, you and your cousin?

No. He remained in London. We parted. Because he had a brother there, too, as I told you before, so it was a little bit easier for him. And then the other part of my studies I completed by a correspondence course. But basically, I went back to North Wales, which I really liked. It was beautiful and safe setting. And the tragedy, of course, was that we could see Liverpool being bombed and burned.

Oh, dear.

And as a result, 200-- not quite-- 100 Jewish children were evacuated from Liverpool to the village where we were, where we had already set up some agricultural training centers for people in preparation to--

What did the villagers, the Welsh villagers, think of these little refugee boys?

Well, in a way, their life was guided by our organization. They really prepared every day and every night for the purpose to go to Israel. The fortunate part of this was really that agriculture was one of the most essential industries in Britain. So all those who were working in agriculture were exempt from military service or whatever you want. And this, whether it was by accident, but it turned out to be one of the greatest blessings in our work in preparing people for Palestine and to keep people in safe places.

Also, I know of many, many of my friends who were called up. They went to the army. And some of them, I even remember, that died on the first day they arrived in the Pacific, which was really horrible. The horrible story is this. Their parents, if they survived, never knew what happened to that child. If the child-- the child, of course, didn't know what happened to the parents. But after the war, you found out so many horror stories, where even to the present day you don't know. There might be relatives living next door, and you don't know that they're even related.



But the worst thing is if you don't know what happened to one of your members. As a matter of fact, you don't know who lives next door. This is what happened to me too. In one of the villages I referred to, we were-- where I worked for the-- where I was an assistant manager for the [INAUDIBLE] children from Liverpool. One day somebody told me, you know, there's two nice ladies from Vienna here, living not far, about two miles from here. You are from Vienna. Why don't you go and visit them?

And of course, when I got there, they were gone. But it turned out to be they were two of my second cousins from Vienna, and I never knew. And they left for South America in the middle of the war. And that's it. So this is the tragedy, that we were dispersed so, not sometimes over distances, sometimes very near, and you don't know. And you don't know where, so that you really never could re-establish contact.

In any case, at that point, which was going already into the '40s, in '41, '42, I was asked to join the movement, the office of our movement in London. And in order to build what was known to be the Bachad Fellowship, which was an organization of community leaders that were supportive of all the youngsters that had the intention, after the war, to go to Palestine. It was basically an organization for the promotion of agriculture and vocational training for Jewish youth for Palestine.

It was a bit like a hakhshara then?

Oh, we had centers. We had-- and then it was the middle '40s, we bought our own farms. It's still an ongoing situation, where people who want to go even to Israel now--

Can prepare themselves.

--we train in a very scientific way and to be knowledgeable, according to the latest technologies you find today even in Israel. So this was a very challenging position that I held in the Bachad Fellowship. And the person who was in charge was the second shaliach that I referred to that came to Vienna together with Dr. Burg. His name is Arie Handler. So this is where--

It's a small world.

So I don't know whether he remembered or not. But when he asked me to come to London, apparently he must have thought of it, that we have met 24 hours or 48 hours after Hitler marched into Vienna. And my main task in those days was to prepare, at least to create the economic base and the support, which will make it possible for the people to emigrate to Palestine and then to set up their own kibbutzim and so on and so forth.

Did you manage to send them?

Which we did. And as a matter of fact--

But the English weren't permitting the Jews in at that time, were they?

Where?

Into Palestine?

Well, actually you had two waves there. A certain group-- as soon as the war finished, before a real policy had been developed and the State of Israel hadn't been established yet, people still went illegally. They went to France, to Marseilles. And from there, they went to Palestine. Some of them, even halutzim that were, let's say, were trained in England, they were caught up in that whole illegal immigration process, too, and didn't quite make it till a little bit later.

Now this was the time when horror really reigned-- the V-1, the bombing of London, the V-2. During the day you worked, during the night you were bombed. Your friends died in the streets. And we had to be the Civil Defense

workers. We had to walk in the street and be fire watchers or whatever was demanded of us and still be able to function.

And in this respect, again, everybody's giving credit to the British. Their attitude, their strengths, their fortitude was such that they could not be deterred by any bombing or anything of that nature to break their spirit. Of course, this is what Hitler had hoped for, but it didn't, thank God, it didn't--

It only strengthened their spirit, I think.

That's right. Now, part of the work we did, too, was geared to the soldiers, welfare for soldiers in the British Army or in the Allied forces. And one person I remember extremely well, who every time he was on furlough he came to the office and sometimes worked at night at blackout, is the present president of the State of Israel. In those days he was known as Vivian Herzog.

Oh.

That's right. He was an officer in the British Army too, which is known.

Would he remember you?

40 years, who knows? Probably when I tell him where we were in, and what we did.

He would remember that.

And how we operated in the blackouts a mimeograph machine in order to print the newsletter, he probably would suddenly remember. Dr. Burg I must say, he remembers, and we are in touch. He has a phenomenal mind. Now-- which doesn't take away from the other one, from Herzog.

But in that situation, we started to prepare, as a Jewish Committee for Relief had been formed, which enlisted volunteers in order to work after the war in Europe. It was part, or became, under the British Red Cross. We were trained in order to move into Europe. And not only Europe, we had already volunteers with Tito.

In Yugoslavia.

Before the war had finished. Yes, there was a liaison mission in-- British liaison mission, the military mission in Yugoslavia. And we had already one or two of our workers attached to that mission. And there was a contact office in Egypt too. But we could only-- in any case, I volunteered. Or as better, the movement had asked me to be--

They volunteered you.

That's right. They volunteered me. And we went through a rather brief training course, which was interesting in a way because how can you train anybody to face a situation that nobody has ever encountered? It never happened in history, and hopefully will never be. The only thing I remember is we were divided into groups. And one of the army officers told us, well, if you would be a team leader, you just tell us. Write it down.

If you get a message-- this was in 24 hours-- you will have 20,000 refugees coming into your area. What are you going to do? Well, of course, in this kind of a setting you had to visualize what are the needs of people? What will you have to do? What kind of people, of course?

Did they prepare you with material goods for this kind of contingency?

Oh, yes. Yes. Yes. And anyhow, it wasn't too soon the day came, thank God, that we were asked to take up our positions. Some of them went to Bergen-Belsen with the British Army. Some others were assigned to child search centers. And I, as a team leader, was sent with five other people to the British zone of Austria. Well, we were a little bit disappointed because most of the happenings really were in Germany, and very little was in Austria.

Wasn't that very dangerous to go back to Austria?

Well, we went on a military train. And so it was a closed train. But the horrible destruction that we saw leaving the Channel, right through Germany, it was unspeakable. You couldn't even go out. You couldn't get water. You couldn't drink anything. And I remember what the Cologne looked like, the station. In those days, we just shrugged it off because there was no pity on our side, when we saw what happened to London.

So you retaliated.

It was less than the quid pro quo, really. But here too, and just for one second, we stopped in Paris. And we stepped out of the train. And I had the British Army uniform and the insignia of the Jewish Relief Unit and the Magen David. And in front of the station, out of nowhere, there comes a little boy. And he says to me, [NON-ENGLISH] Yiddish? do you speak Yiddish? In those days, there were no Jewish kids around. But it was rather a very heartwarming moment on a long, long way into the British zone of Austria.

We were assigned. There wasn't really much to do except on one or two occasions we had to go to Milan, Milano.

Why did you do in Milan.

In order to pick-- pardon?

Pick up more refugees?

No. We went there to pick up some supplies we needed. For one of the Jewish camps, we needed some baby clothes and something else which we didn't have. We couldn't get it, whatever it was. So here we had the British Red Cross. We went down, and there, too, for the first time I went to a huge Jewish center, a transit center of people that were prepared to go illegally to Israel. This was my first encounter, really, that-- and it remained one of the main staging areas for a long time to come.

In Milan? And what, 1944?

That was in 1946.

Oh, '46.

1946.

Well, you're jumping ahead. I wanted to ask you whether it would be appropriate to tell the story about Mr. Chaim Schreiber.

Oh, we nearly forgot about him. That's right. Now, that young man, when it was fairly well known that England, when they declared war, they didn't have anything as far as armament are concerned, planes and you name it, whatever it is. Well that little Jewish boy, after I call him, who was a little carpenter, coming-- and he was really little, physically too-- coming out of Lemberg, wanting to be an artist, went to the Ministry of Defense and said, I can help you. He says, what can you help us? The same story as he went to the English Consulate.

He said, I have a process whereby you could utilize plywood. It can be treated and handled in a certain way where part of the Spitfire, of your planes, instead of metal, which was a long process, can be made out of plywood.

Really?

That's right.

And that was functional?

That was functional. And this is when the mass production of Spitfires started in Britain. And they caught up, to a great extent, with the German Luftwaffe. So here again, you see a little person, a young person coming from nowhere, having made a major contribution to the British war effort.

Truly a major contribution.

But this, too, reminds you of all those that were killed and all those were murdered. Who knows how many people with this kind of capability would have been around to make a contribution to world peace, to everything that we are still longing for. And it may just be that this is one of the reasons we don't have peace, because they may just have killed the wrong people in those days. They shouldn't have killed anybody. But sometimes you wonder whether we wouldn't have been better off.

So in the area where I was assigned to the headquarters, the British Red Cross in the British zone. And for a few weeks, we really didn't have anything to do.

What year are we on?

That was still '46. So we went to Milan, you know, and we saw--

I think maybe we should backtrack because we don't exactly have a continuity. You worked in North Wales with the children. And then you came and you worked in Leeds for a while.

But then I worked in London.

In London-- and now is-- when the war ends--

And now I'm working as a relief worker of the Jewish Relief Unit in Austria.

OK. Does that bring you to liberation day, to--

Oh, liberation day, yes. You know, we worked so much we didn't even realize when there was liberation day.

That's what I want to ask you, what your comments were.

It's interesting. It's interesting that you make the point. It was, in a way for us, very anticlimactic. I don't know why. We saw the masses, you know, Piccadilly Circus. And you've seen it in movies so many times over. But for us who were involved in this, and for us who wanted to go back to the continent, for us, though, we wanted to see whether somebody survived or we were part of a relief unit, it only started. So for us, the war really hadn't finished. And sometimes I wonder whether it has even finished now.

But it gave me--

Did you hear-- excuse me. Did you hear anything about your mother and father during this time?

Only for a brief-- I had a brief message from somebody-- I don't know-- that my mother had been arrested in Vienna. And my father did-- he was supposed to get a certificate in Czechoslovakia, this because he was deported to Czechoslovakia. He didn't get it. And he had been in a concentration camp. But we will come back to this in a minute.

So I knew already things did not necessarily work out as I wanted. And therefore, too, having been assigned to Austria was rather a very traumatic experience. Perhaps I could have avoided that whole confrontation with reality, what happened to my family, by not having gone to Austria. Let's say I would have been assigned either to Italy or to Germany or whatever it may be.

And in any case, this, as I told you, my first encounter with the Berihah, with illegal immigration, really was in Milan. We returned with our supplies to the British zone of Austria. And about a week or two weeks later, lo and behold, we got a message that, to the dot, fitted our training session.

2,000 refugees will be arriving from the east at a given point in the British zone of Austria. You have to go. You will be attached to to an UNRRA team. Then we were attached to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation team 332, which is located in Sankt Marien in Austria. And good luck.

This is 1946.

That was in 1946. Well, we had a van, which I thought was rather a nice camp. We only had about, let's say, a day, a day and a half to prepare. We put in a requisition to the army, which was very, very efficient. If they didn't have it, we got it from the Austrians. We had all the supplies, food, blankets. We had our own medical staff. And the only problem we had, of course, is that I was the only one who could communicate with the people because I spoke Yiddish.

So anyhow, sure enough, about 48 hours later a train pulls up, and there were 2,000 Jewish refugees.

Were they from the camps?

No. They were not from the camps. They came from Russia. They were Polish Jews that escaped into Russia when the German Army moved into Poland. There may have been a few survivors that were in concentration camps because at one point some concentration camp survivors went back to Poland. You may have had a sprinkling of those that survived in Poland, actually. But 99.9% were from Russia.

And we bussed them to the camp. I talked Yiddish. But what I didn't realize, because of knowing Yiddish, the pressure was really on me and not on all these other team members, you know, of United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation. Some came from Indonesia. Some came from Dutch. So for them it was Double Dutch, the language they spoke, the refugees.

No sooner did they enter the camp that I saw now, for the first time I have a chance to talk to refugees. But we nearly had riots on our hands.

Why?

Very simple-- they walked into the barracks, and they had those bunks like they had in concentration camps.

Oh.

And somehow they knew that this is how people had to live in concentration camps. And then they started screaming, shouting. They wanted to break it up, want to set fire to it. Are you going to get us back into this situation? And it was a highly, highly-- not only emotional thing, it was a rather dangerous situation.

Sure. Sure.

Because, don't forget, these people that survived in Russia, survived as partisans in Poland, there were no two ways about it. And this was my first encounter with reality. We remedied the situation by making promises, by providing army cots, which were shipped in a little bit later. But we all started to learn with whom, what kind of, let's say, what changes went through these people during the years of deprivation in Russia and so on and so forth. And there was no joking, very much matter of fact. And the day later is, when are we going to the American zone or to Palestine?

There wasn't a minute. Whatever you-- you needed their cooperation, so many things. There was no question. But their mind was set to get out of the British zone very simply because they knew, from what they knew, that the British are anti-Palestine. And if they're anti-Palestine, they're anti-Jews. And they did not want to stay. What made it even worse is

that there was an agreement between the three powers, the French, the British, and the Americans, that every zone had to take a certain number of refugees, split up equally. But they didn't care. But we couldn't provide access to the Americans, so we couldn't do anything else.

And it was rather a very difficult time because we tried to normalize their situation to a degree, where we said, listen, why don't you just wait it out. Do a little bit of work. And in the meantime, until the whole political process, till we know about Palestine, till immigration opportunities will be offered, until you will make contact with your family abroad, all this is going to take time. Well, they didn't know anything about that.

Well, Jews were going illegally to Palestine then.

Oh, yes.

All the time.

Oh, yes. They were. But this was the interesting part in this. But they didn't want to know. They didn't have time to get out of the British zone, so much so that when we got the first supplies of-- and this was another great tragedy in the life of the refugees. Those who wanted to go to Palestine, they had to cross a mountain, the mountains into Italy. Now, neither did they have boots, nor did they have experiences as mountaineers to cross, and you name it. But in any case, we had in our supply store a dozen or two dozen very heavy boots that usually is used by mountaineers.

And the terrible thing is, every so often, let's say once a week, 12 people were chosen to get a pair of boots, to cross the mountains, the Alps, into Italy. And for somebody to bring the same boots back--

Oh, my goodness.

--to give it to another group. And here, I do have to say that, in spite of everything, these borders were closed and watched by the British Secret Service and what was known as the British-- the FSS, nobody normally could cross. But again, I'm sure-- not only sure, I know that the person in charge of that particular detachment at a certain border, who didn't know anything about Jews before, who didn't know anything about Palestine, but he realized the significance. I don't know. At that time, when they crossed these mountains, there was nobody around.

So he was a Righteous Gentile. He saved many, many Jews.

That's right. And it happened in many situations, many. Give you an idea. We had near riots practically every day in the camp because they didn't want to do anything for themselves. They want to escape. And we couldn't get permission for them to go to the American zone, where immigration was already a little bit easier. There was the American Joint Distribution Committee and so on and so forth. So we had no other choice than, one day, our director of the American Joint Distribution Committee in Vienna made an appointment with the head of what was known as the P-- PW and DP division, the prisoner of war-- we had-- we were in good company-- who was a colonel in the British Army, one of the old regulars, who it's the king and country. And whatever his orders are, this is what he's going to do.

And he wasn't very sympathetic, from what we know. But we might have made a mistake, because this is the way they carry themselves, that you really don't know what their feelings are. Now, he was a wonderful man, the director of the American Joint Distribution Committee in Vienna. He could even have a British regular or, let's say, a British officer and gentleman as his friends. And they were talking about unrest in the camps. The people didn't want to take jobs. They didn't want to do anything.

And in the course of the discussion, he said to him, if we would have the right type of welfare workers, perhaps they could put them at ease and things would--

You mean to teach them skills?

Pardon?

To teach them skills?

Oh. We came to that not so much here. But anyhow, he told that army officer, why-- and so the army officer said to him, so why don't you bring in those volunteers that know how to handle this particular group? We'll have nice and peaceful and everything fine. So he said, but these are people that really are not Allied nationalists. They cannot work under the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation organization.

And he made it, in a very nice way, clear to him that what we need are those that are working as shlichim, as delegates from Palestine, who came to work in the camps and organize the illegal immigration to Israel. So he said, fine. So why don't you get them? He said, but they can't cross the Russian zone. They don't have papers. It's not so simple.

I mean, I know you're very nice. You might want to have them in the British zone, but-- and he understood that the only way, that officer, to get peace there is get these people in, the shlichim from Palestine, and to get them out, the DPs. Anyhow, whether you believe it or not, and his own staff car, he took three shlichim, drove through the Russian zone, and brought them to our camp.

Thereafter, it didn't take very long. It took about three, four months, and the camps were practically empty. Part of them moved to the American zone, and the others went to Palestine. Again here, it was the understanding on part of an individual, what has to be done at a given moment over and above.

So did you lose your job as a result as these people moved on?

No. No. While they were in camp, there's one thing I was still able to do for them with the help of JDC. And this was something that everybody was interested in. Everybody wanted to be a driver.

Oh, so you had them all take driving lessons?

So we had the first vocational training school, but a proper one, with car maintenance, with Austrian engineers working with them.

That was a good idea.

That was a very fine course. And this was the only thing they wanted to do.

Where did you get all the cars?

Well, we got army. We had army trucks.

Oh, army vehicles.

They basically were trained on army trucks, which was helpful then later on, too, in different situations because the people were able to drive for the army and others. And they could earn some money.

So they got new skills.

But anyhow, it didn't take too long. In August of 1946, I was very lucky. I was hoping I will go back to England already. So the JDC, the American Joint Distribution Committee, asked me whether I wouldn't want to join their staff and to do something similar in the area of employment and training.

In Germany?

In the Austrian zone, in the Austrian zone-- in the US zone of Austria. And I figured, well, I might just as well accept it. I was assigned to Linz, in Austria. And I became the director of what was known the Works Project Administration,

which was much more complicated than that little training course we had. The Works Project Administration, just for anyone to visualize, was built-- my boss was an economist. And he worked in the WPA in the United States in the time of the Depression.

So the whole program was built with the WPA as a model. But it went further. We built our own economy. That means whatever people produced was then resold in camp stores and paid for in script, which they earned.

So they must have had a great deal of pride working that way.

That's right. Well again, all sorts of problems because the first problem is one what we have here today. It's quality.

Quality, yeah, the results.

You know, there's one thing. And they gained. But all this, number one, had the one great-- how should I say-- advantage. They produced and were paid for what they could accomplish. Those that were hardcore cases, what we know are hardcore cases, they got money without working. And we, in the long run, which was a period of years, they did not trade this. They didn't have to bring supplies anymore into Austria. Everything was manufactured.

So you were self-sufficient then?

That's right. We were self-sufficient.

Is this when you met Mr. Simon Wiesenthal?

Well, he's coming soon. He will be there soon. But what happened, the second day I came to my new assignment, lo and behold, the central workshop of the refugees, where they made clothes, went on strike.

Oh, against you?

Against JDC. This was every other-- so they asked me-- I didn't know anybody there. I have never been confronted. I've been confronted, let's say, with the truck, those that were trained in truck driving. But anyhow, I don't know what gave me the strength. I said, if you hired me for this position, then I'm going to resolve it. Because they wanted to bring in somebody else, back and forth. I said, no.

Because I said to myself, if I can resolve it, that's fine. Then probably I can do the job. If not, I might just as well give up there and then. Anyhow, we resolved the issue because I discovered, really, what their problem was to a degree. Because, there too, you had to provide them with certain leeway whereby they could do something for themselves, too, in addition to what their official earning is.

It reminds me of a story there too. Everybody got paid for everything, doing a little bit of work. And so there were some garbage collectors in one of the camps. And they never wanted more pay because, as garbage collectors, they're not going to get paid as much money as a tailor. So one day, we're in the [INAUDIBLE]. I said, how come they never complained that they get so little paid and this and that?

He said, well, they make money on the side. So I said, well, how can you make money on the side being a garbage collector? He said, oh, you don't know. I mean, if we slaughter a little, let's say, heifer or something or so on, so they have to discard the skin and the bones and so on. And for this the butcher is paying them some extra money. So here, too, I discovered soon that when they went on strike, it was they wanted a certain leeway somewhere in order to make life more tolerable. And it was really JDC that provided that and so on and so forth.

Wiesenthal came into the situation very soon.

Oh, what was his position?



Because he represented all the DPs in the American zone of Austria. So I was promoted afterwards, first as the area director for the zone around which was known Upper Austria, with the headquarter in Linz, and later on then in Salzburg for the whole of the American zone, which I didn't know at that time. But anyhow, this is where Wiesenthal comes into play. And my first encounter with him, of course, was in Linz, where he lived. And we were on the opposing side. He had to try to get the maximum for the refugees, and I had to try to implement the policy of-- whether it was the army or the Joint or whatever it is, and to be fair in certain ways.

During this period, too, one has to remember everything that went on. There was Austria. The American zone of Austria, I would say, was one of the biggest staging area for illegal immigration to Israel, too, with the trains and everything coming out of the east, moved into Austria. Sometimes they went right through.

Did the Americans closed their eyes to all this activity?

See, Americans were much more lenient than the--

Than the British.

--than the British. And then, of course, illegal immigration started, too, from the camps, where the shlichim that had been working in the American zone organized transports to Israel. And this is how, too, which is known to everybody, you had the Exodus. You had some of the people that were detained in Cyprus and so on. And these were all the people that, at one point or another, did come through.

But it's interesting that they weren't stopped until they got to the shores of Israel. They weren't stopped when they were in the trucks on route.

Again, it was a goodwill on part of-- and here too, give you an idea. We once had the problem-- and I just happened to have been in Vienna on that day. And by the way, I haven't been to Vienna more than six times during the eight years that I was in Vienna because I just couldn't face--

It must have been hard for you.

--face the situation. But that particular day, I was in Vienna having a meeting with-- we had a new director of the American zone-- of Austria, from JDC. And a very wonderful person he is. He came from-- he was a lawyer from the West Coast. And lucky enough, he was a card-- a companion of General Mark Clark, belonged to the same group that played cards, had a poker game going every so often.

So there were things that he could do.

That's right. And I remember, that Sunday morning was really strange. He gets a telephone call from the Czech border that one of the trains had been stopped, with refugees coming from the east, Jewish refugees. And he calls up the general, and they were talking about a poker game and so on and so forth. And then by the way, we have a problem at the border. The General said, don't worry. I'm going to send my lorries there. No problem. It was no problem. It was resolved before the poker game even started.

That's marvelous you had the spheres of influence.

Again, it is a goodwill on part of so many people against the-- how should I say-- against the British policy in regard to Palestine. And America can really be proud of the behavior of many of their nationals, wherever they were. I would say, if it would have happened somewhere else, I don't think it would materialize.

Now, in the camp now, talking in general terms about the camp--

You're talking about the displaced persons camp.

Displaced person camps. You have to remember, too, again, if it wouldn't have been for Joint, JDC, people wouldn't have survived either because we provided about 1800 calories per person a day plus what they could still earn. Now, 1800 calories necessarily for Europeans and so on and working and so on wasn't really too much. And sometimes it wasn't just the food that would give them the necessary nourishment, but it worked.

But the strange thing is that you were confronted, really, in the camps, with two elements. Like, we are talking about the victims and their murderers. Those were the displaced person. Why? Let's say, if you had an Allied national, who was in a concentration camp. Let's say French, Italian, others. I mean, after they surrendered. Or you had Norwegians or even from some other Allied countries. They went back to their home country.

Now, the only two segments that couldn't return were those that were afraid to go back because of their affiliation and cooperation with the Nazis. They couldn't go back because they know they would be immediately imprisoned and would face whatever problem, especially Ukrainians and others, so on and so forth. They would have to go back to the Soviet Union. And the Jews couldn't go back to Poland because, even those few who tried, if you remember, you had the first pogrom in--

Oh, in Kielce.

That's right. Soon after liberation--

In 1946.

In Kielce. So there was no way for the Jews. So what you really had in a given situation, here on the one hand, those who murdered the Jews were in camp, and the Jews were on the other side. And in this kind of a situation, and it's-- and now it's easy to detect because so many things come to the surface. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation organization, which basically was here in order to help the persecuted, those who were on the Allied side--

Did they? Did they actually help?

Well, but what happened is that both these elements somehow were declared eligible for relief and rehabilitation by UNRRA, so what they were known. Now, Jews had the-- the strange thing is this. Jews had to prove much more that they are eligible. We had many more problems because those that formerly were cooperative with the Nazis and so on, everybody knew that they were anti-communists. You know, it was very simple, even in those days. They're anti-communist? Fine. So here you are.

Here, is suddenly you had the Jews that came out. They were occupied by the Russians, or they were-- or they escaped into Russia, or whatever happened to them. Suddenly all the political questions surfaced. And very often you had the eligibility officers in the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation organization who might have been Jewish. And they were even bending backwards to be sure that the laws and regulations are carried out in the most--

So you had conflict of interest very often.

--even-handed manner. So our whole programs, especially when it came to the area of immigration, whatever you name, where we needed the cooperation of people, this became a very, very big problem, took years until they understood that Jews are persecuted people and that there is this kind of political liability, which we saw in the people that murdered them. And then in regard to the immigration, too, there were only two countries that accepted, really, everybody the way they were, for the sake of saving them. That was the illegal movement to Palestine. They took everybody, young, old, sick, you name it, babies, and so on and so forth. And the other one that very few people know was Norway.

Oh, Norway.

Norway took in most-- wouldn't say most-- mostly people that suffered from tuberculosis.

Well Sweden did too.

That's right. Active cases. And they haven't-- there was no selection based on any other criteria than their handicap. The more handicapped they were, the more willing they were to take them. So unfortunate thing is that Norway is a very small country. So the number they have accepted between Germany, let's say, and Austria could have been about 500 and some. But we're talking here about principals, the belief in human beings.

Moritz, we have to wind up soon. And I think you want to tell us what happened to your mother and father and your family before we have to conclude this.

Well, what happened is, first of all, I met my wife.

Ah, that's the most important point.

That's right.

In the camps, working in the camps.

No. She worked for JDC, for Joint. She worked for a colleague of mine. And you know how things develop. And we became friends. She lived in with her mother in Linz. And she, of course too, the most-- she perhaps has one of the most fascinating stories to tell because she and her mother were, perhaps, amongst the 800 Jews that survived the war in Vienna.

We'll get to her story.

That's a story in itself and should be told by her. Now, I did go to Vienna to find out what happened to my mother. Now, there were no records, not a British Red-- not in the Red Cross and nowhere. So I went to the police to find out what happened. Actually, I didn't have to find out. I knew-- but just to have it verified. And the Austrians, like the Germans, they're very particular, everything. They keep records of everything.

Oh, we have one person picture of a document.

That's right. We have a document. And, as you can see, or at least if you believe me, what I'm telling you is that in 1942-- that was actually the last transport of people to the east, to the extermination camps. And she was on a train to Minsk.

Oh, and she died in a camp in Minsk?

That's right. Well, in Minsk, really, they hardly had the camps anymore. As soon as people came, it was already the time when the German Army started to lose the war. So they were in their liquidation process, is what they called it. They were rather very efficient and very fast. And it, again, when you have today, people even that are writing books which are known to be written by revisionists who want to tell that the stories are not true and so on, I wish they would just go to all the police stations and--

All the records of the Germans.

--the records that are available, and just take the original German and Austrian documents. Then they will see whether it wasn't, perhaps, even worse than we are able to confer and talk about.

So she actually died in Minsk of-- in a camp, I suppose. She didn't have enough food.

I wouldn't know this.

And your father?

And my father was interned in Slovakia. He was deported to Czechoslovakia. And then Slovakia was, to a degree, was an independent state under Hitler. There was a so-called Quisling in charge. But as far as Jews were concerned, it didn't make much difference.

He was interned. He was in a camp. And I understand, a few months before liberation, unfortunately, he had passed away. During the war, only on very rare occasions, only once or twice, did I get a letter from my mother, which went via Paris. That was still before Paris was occupied because we had relatives there. And knowing my mother, one of the reasons she couldn't make it out or she didn't is because she wanted to make sure that everybody in our family was safe and was able to escape.

Oh, so she had everyone go out--

As a matter of fact--

--before she did.

--in the beginning of '42, she was able to help one of my cousins to cross into Budapest, where an American visa was waiting for him. That was just before America entered the war. And they got the American visa, and my mother was left behind.

Oh, that's so sad. Moritz, I think we're at the end of this taping.

So, that right. That's right.

And we thank you very much. Do you have one last message of a few words before we end?

The messages, I would say that I have found refugees who, in a given situation, constituted, perhaps, you would claim to be the lowest-- behaved in the lowest form you could imagine. But when they are placed into the right environment, they are new human beings, contributing to society. And I've seen it with many. And like we say, desperation sometimes brings the worst out in people. The crisis makes--

But if we give them a chance--

--people out of them, menschen.

Absolutely. And I've seen it all over the world. I've seen it in Israel. I've seen it even in our own country, where I know a 16-year-old boy that was trained in the British zone was-- no, two of them as a matter of fact-- 35 years later, I met them here. They are leading members-- the leaders in their communities, including Cleveland and so on and so forth because we were able to help them. And the same goes for the rest of the people.

Thank you. Thank you.

You're welcome.

Thank you very much, Moritz. Thank you.