

This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Dolly Bestandig conducted by Gail Schwartz on July 27 at the Holocaust Memorial Museum. This is tape number three, side A. And you were just talking about the future of the Jewish people and what your thoughts were.

I do feel that we have to go on. But I think that we are a special people, born to look-- to show the humanity that we have brought to the world very good deeds, and very good things. And we are not only because we are human beings-- besides being a human being, we have a tradition to give to our children. We have a legacy of generations and generations of bright people, of good people, bad people. We deserve to live, and we will go on living.

And I will say, like, the Hebrew people say [HEBREW], [INAUDIBLE], because I really mean it, that we will live, that HaShem is our God, and we will even see our children to grow up happy, in a happy land. And I appreciate it and thank HaShem for making me come to this country of Mexico, or to this America, where I can breathe freely, where I can-- I could work, I could study, I could become a person useful to other people.

And we have to appreciate, also, all those countries that gave us the right and they gave us the opportunity to grow and to make money and to work, to be independent person and give us the rights to do whatever we like, to live where we want to live or to do whatever we want to do. And [INAUDIBLE]

But have you gone back to Europe or to Vilna?

No, never. I have it always in the back of my mind that one day I'm going to go back to that part of Europe. I have been to Europe, but not in that part. I had to go in 1968, that I went to Israel. I went to Milano to visit a cousin of my husband. And we took a car to go to Munich, because I had to go and see a lawyer there for the visit with my-- that pays me money.

If I would have gone there, my fee that I received would be doubled as now. So we went with the car in Milano to pass the border through Munich. When I came to the border, I said to my husband, please turn around. You know, I said-- I won't stand. When I saw those policemen, they had different clothing, the Nazis, and I understand they were different people. But I just couldn't stand it. I never could go to visit that lawyer and fix the papers. And I'm sure I would have received now much more money than what I received, but--

How do you feel--

It's impossible.

--about it. How do you feel about receiving the reparations?

Not well. I don't feel well. I receive it and put it aside for my children. That's all. They are not paying me for nothing. They cannot pay me-- not my life, not my parent's life, not my family's life. I have a feeling that I could-- that they don't repay me that, and that they were responsible, and have to take the responsibility to-- that they-- by-- for what they did. But with that, they don't wash the responsibility.

But I also don't blame the new generations of Germans. I cannot blame them because of their-- what their grandfathers did, and parents.

What was it like when you hear the German language?

Terrible, and I have heard it all my life, since my in-laws were Yekkes and my husband speaks the beautiful German. And I used to speak with my mother-in-law. I thought it was Yiddish, and she thought she was speaking German, and I was answering her in Yiddish. The truth is that by now, when I speak Yiddish or when I teach Yiddish, I see that I have a lot of words that are really from her, that they're German-Jewish words.

But it's one thing to remember her speaking to me in German and me catching up a few words, and another thing is

when I hear a German in the streets speaking. It's very hard for me.

What does it do for you?

It makes me remind of sounds and words I once heard. And shouting, especially shouting. That's all. Thank you very, very, very much. You've been very kind.

Well, thank you very much for doing this interview. We do appreciate it. This concludes the interview of Dolly Bestandig.

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