

This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Erwin Deutscher. This is tape number two, side A. And we had gotten up to this summer time of 1938. And you had already gone with your father to the Central Office of Jewish Emigration and got your papers.

Let me just interject a little bit, which I didn't mention before. You know that I was a member of the HaShomer HaDati. And one Saturday was one meeting there.

Our leaders were definitely pleasant people, outstanding leaders. And one was Dr. Weinstein. And the other one-- oh, yeah, I'll remember it in a few minutes.

These were Viennese Jews?

Viennese Jews who are leading this. And everything was so tranquil. And we wanted to be prepared for the trip we are supposed to make these 25 kids. Suddenly, a few Nazis broke in, came in-- wild, broke a few furnitures and some. That, we didn't expect.

Is this while you were there?

Yeah. That, we didn't expect. They were just informing us what to expect in Israel, and so on. At that time, it was Palestine, of course.

And the leaders talked to the Nazis. Whatever you want, we are going to do. We are just informing those children what to do in Israel. And we were, what? We couldn't understand that something like this can happen.

We were all sad, choked-- not so much for ourselves, that they insult our leaders, who were great people in the city. And we just couldn't even see that there will be an end to this. They were wild. They are like animals.

For some reason, they left. And we were happy about this. And they told us, go home. We will instruct you not in the central place anymore. We will find.

And they didn't use-- first of all, many people didn't have phones. That wasn't so common. And for some reason, they contact each one.

And I was so happy that both of those leaders survived. One was in Haifa, and the other one in London. Yeah, they came on. But this was a shock. I went home.

Had you seen any other examples of physical assault on the streets or in buildings up to that time?

Direct assaults, which we heard in history, no, but a few unique things. The Jews were cleaning the streets with a toothbrush.

Did you see that?

I saw it. But I moved away. I didn't stand there.

Why not?

It could be that either I was scared, or I was ashamed to see something like this. They told them to get dressed. And the women went for a coat, and the best coat. I would say I was rather embarrassed more than even frightened. I didn't want to see it.

It was sad. You see your own best people. And they're in a fur coat with a toothbrush cleaning the signs, the [NON-ENGLISH], written with the lacquer signs. Vote for this. So I never stood.

And then, on the other hand, you would see the stupidity of those people that were standing on the side and laughing, which was just unbelievable. Well, what? Do you enjoy when people are in such agony, embarrassment? But--

Did you feel threatened?

No. No. No. I thought they just take advantage of us. A small, little story I have to tell you on this. , Actually, it will be two. I had to go again to this [PLACE NAME] Palace about my papers.

Back to the emigration office.

Yes, the emigration office. And it is common that students would always stand in a streetcar, not sitting. They would not sit inside. They would stand on the corners of the train.

And there were a few students there a little bit older than I was. Of course, they had no idea that I was a Jew. They didn't even pay attention that I was there. So they had no idea what I was or what I--

So they mentioned that it's better now than it was before. Things are better organized. And there's a better future.

And one young student-- they call them [? Buckfish. ?] That means, if they're between 15 to 17 years old they call them [? Buckfish, ?] because that's where the girls develop. And she said, it's really better. But why do they have to mistreat the Jews in such an embarrassing manner?

And then they started to pay attention to what was going on. So then they came to a conclusion and said, well, if the fuhrer would know this, he would not permit to do it. That's just the low class of it.

Of course, then we found that it's almost the opposite. The low class were better than the fuhrer himself. Yeah, they said, but the fuhrer has class.

That he was able to hypnotize a nation, which was supposed to be a somewhat cultured nation, a nation one of the-- well, I would say the British and French had a good name. But the Germans had a name with their whole conscience. And the Jews were involved in their cultures.

I heard then once, in Hitler's time, once they were saying, the Jews can never be good in the German language, because those are foreigners. When they speak, there's always some slang in it.

Did you still feel very Austrian at this point--

No.

--when Hitler was in power?

The only thing I feel is--

I'm talking about at that time.

Yeah. Even today, he had no right to kick me out. And I can do what I want to do. I like to do-- I was born there. What is beautiful in the city, I like to enjoy. What is not so beautiful, I brush it away.

Even today, I feel very comfortable there, because that guy even who was left there-- he had not more rights and more wisdom than I had, nothing. And really, they tried sometimes to impress me that I am the great one, and they are nothing, they themselves.

So you are now 15 and a half years old. And it's the summer time. And you've got your papers to go to Palestine. And

both your parents are home--

Yeah.

- With you?

Both. That's an additional story. By the way, I wanted to-- as religious as my father was-- and that was the last day of Simchat Torah when I left, in the evening. He let me go to the bank and pick up two and a half Palestinian pounds.

They had Palestinian pounds. I was surprised. I give him mark, and they gave me the Palestinian pounds. And that was another story, what happened. But he let me do it.

So you continued your life until you left in the fall. Did you do anything special in September?

Well, first I went to school. And there was, too--

Did you start school in the fall?

No. No, because I was leaving already. Even there--

What were your thoughts then, 15 and a half, leaving your parents and your siblings?

That cannot be answered in one second. There's too much involved, because the powers that worked on me were not only the sentimental powers of being a son of parents or a brother of siblings. Zionism had a strong impact, because I want to build a country.

And when we went to my full departure on the southern station, the terminal station to go to Italy, from the streetcar to the station, we had to walk a couple of blocks. And there came an old woman-- an elderly woman, let's say. And she-- oh, you poor Jew boy, they drive you out of this country.

I said, heck, you stay with that idiot. I'm going to my country, and I want to be a free person. And of course, if I would have said this a few weeks later, then someone would have heard. It would be different. But at that time, I just almost liked to express myself.

Did you look older than 15 and a half?

No. No. No. No. No. No. I don't think I looked older than the others. NO.

So you went with this group of 25?

Yeah.

What about your family?

They went with me, too. That's what I'm now saying. They went with me to the terminal. Do you know, before we left, we danced the Hora, because we are going into the right [INAUDIBLE].

The atmosphere was great. Nobody disturbed it. They let us dance there. And then we moved into the car. Do you know, as sad as it was, we were happy children. That's just unbelievable.

You had said, by that time, you said goodbye to your parents.

Of course.

Did they say anything special to you?

Well, of course, the mother expressed and all this. This, I don't forget what my father said. He said, be a Jew. You see, for them, the whole country knew it is Jewish. So that means do the commandments, like this.

And by the way, I had a grandfather in [PLACE NAME], which is Poland. He wrote me a card, because I wrote to him all the times. I started when I was six years old.

So I wrote in Hebrew letters German. It wasn't Yiddish, because I didn't know. And he wrote me not to go to Palestine, because in Palestine it's very hard to be a religious Jew, and wait until my papers come to the United States. I just want to say how things were.

Of course, my father, he would have crawled to Israel if he could have gone. Israel was more important to him than the United States, also to my mother, because it was her father whom she never had seen. That was her dream. And not only the dream of seeing her father-- the New world was just in her head. That's the way it was.

So now you're on the train with these 25 children. Did you know them well before you left?

Some. I knew some of them. I even have a few-- one picture left from that period.

Were these boys and girls? And what ages?

No, only boys, because we went to a boys' school.

What ages were they?

The same age. Most of them were a little bit older. I would say a year older, or something like this.

And who were the leaders?

The leader-- well, we went to the group. That whole transport was organized by, or at least handled by Joseph Burg, who was for many years a member of the Israel cabinet. I met him in Jerusalem just a few years ago. He's still there. He's 86 years old, or something like this.

He was very active. That guy didn't think too much about Hitler either, because a year later, he was back in Czechoslovakia and tried to pull him out there. He thought he can do all those things.

They were a certain individual. But you know about the relationship after the departure with my parents. There's a whole story, because-- you want--

Well, let's follow along on your journey. So you went from Vienna to?

Trieste. From Vienna, I went to Trieste. Because we left at 10 O'clock in the morning, we arrived at 10 O'clock at night. Other children fell asleep. I had a little calendar book. I wrote on every station, looked out, and this.

And one man had two sons. They went to Israel. And he begged me to take a golden pin with me. I said, why not? And on the border, the Nazis, already in black uniforms, started to examine me where everything is.

The pin was here. He just didn't see it. He didn't pay attention. I brought it to Israel. But I was up until the first-- until we arrived in Trieste. Didn't sleep a second, wrote down every note.

And then what happened in Trieste?

In Trieste, as soon as I left the train-- and first, we saw-- it was the Mediterranean. But to us, it was an ocean, as we saw

open, white. It was new. We saw that big ship that was waiting for us.

But the main thing-- you felt you could eat it. We felt freedom. People were smiling, freedom. And I recognized that freedom. The interesting thing is--

How did you recognize it?

That all that [INAUDIBLE] is behind me. And I was more concentrated on myself than probably on my family. And I jump a little bit ahead. But then we'll have to go back again.

When I was in Israel just a few days, I wrote my parents. I wrote my father. I wrote to him. You wouldn't believe it. I am so free. And it's so good. But I am homesick.

And then that's the only letter I got for him, because after this, he was in Dachau. They took-- on the Kristallnacht. He said, you wouldn't believe it. Every night, when I fell asleep, I had to cry first, because I knew you were leaving us. And that was going for two months.

So until I comprehended the whole thing, he had got that feeling-- so free, everything is fine. And now I'm getting homesick. What do you want, go back?

This is hard to explain for people who cannot grasp all those things. All kind of powers work together. Of course, in Israel-- we will have to talk about this later. Israel preoccupied us so much, because we had the unrest.

OK, now you get on the boat in Trieste.

Yeah.

And what was the voyage like?

The voyage was great. It was very great. Only there was one Arab Nazi, which is [INAUDIBLE], because we were on a Italian ship, on the Galilea.

What day was this?

No, wait. Monday, we arrived. So I think it was Wednesday. Wednesday.

No, what date.

What date? OK, the 18th. I left the 18th of October. We went on the trains. On the 19th, we boarded the ship. We embarked on the ship.

And for some reason, we stopped at that Arab. So many people, they just talked to me. And he said, as long as there are Jews in Palestine, and as long as-- the full words, I want to say. As long as there are Jews in Palestine, and as long as there are Arabs in Palestine, there will never be peace.

And of course, I react with indifference. I listen. You are talking to people who know what they want. But anyway, I felt very comfortable.

Did you take anything special with you, anything sentimental? Did your parents give you anything?

Well, by the way, some of the Jewish businesses, they had to close. They gave us material we would need in Palestine, like a-- how do you call those nets? Mosquito nets and special boots. We got this.

Did you take anything sentimental with you?

I had my [INAUDIBLE]. And of course, I had that [INAUDIBLE], and all this Hebrew stuff. And that's it. I didn't want to take too much away from them. Let them have it.

Did you take photographs?

We didn't. I have only one picture. That's all. It was the passport picture. That's all I have. And the passport is gone.

So I have it, the membership of HaShomer HaDati. It's the only one I have left, and then that little picture in Trieste, which I enlarged. And now it's a great thing I have at home.

Is this a picture of the group?

It's the original group, the nucleus of the group. That means the HaShomer HaDati from before, not the new one, [INAUDIBLE]. Interesting, each of those individuals, one was-- listen, they were all famous later on in the army, and after this. But this is a different story.

We'll talk about that. So you arrive. How long was your voyage to Palestine?

Four days. Five days, actually. It was five.

What did you do on board ship?

Oh. We had our meetings. They gave us even films. Every day, we had American films, Zarah Leander, all that stuff, [INAUDIBLE]. It didn't even interest us much, because we were looking forward.

Always, we were talking about the past and about the future. We didn't talk about our home so much. It's about the Zionist movement.

How big a group of children were there?

Well, this, the close group, was 25 Viennese. There were others, too. Even the Palestinian doors were close, too. And that's a big story. It goes on. But--

So you come to Palestine. And what was your first impression?

By the way, I did not tell you that I had an aunt in Palestine. And that was-- that happened in [INAUDIBLE]. In 1932, the second murder case-- that means murder for money-- was my uncle. They killed him.

He had a little factory-- a shop, rather-- to make brushes. And the brushes were made from animal hair. For some reason, there was a dispute between one who supplied them, the hairs. Actually, I think they stole the hairs from the slaughterhouses. They brought him. They killed him. And--

Where was this?

In Vienna. And the newspapers, because life insurance was almost not-- not, common, at least-- collected some money for the widow with her two children. And after years, somehow she got an entrance-- and that was, I'm talking, 1932 or '33. They went to Israel.

She couldn't help us either to get papers, and so on. Yes, I know she was there. But when we arrived, she didn't even come to the boat.

It was very unique. Everybody was afraid to move around. It's not like Israel today. But anyway, I came. And when we--

What was it like to put your foot down on soil?

That's exactly what I'm trying to tell you. When we arrived, we came to stay overnight. They called it [NON-ENGLISH]. That means, to an emigration house. We still were happy.

And we saw a few Viennese there. They already were in the auxiliary police, and helped a little bit, or bragged a little bit, whatever, as if they know whatever is going on there. And we slept there overnight.

The main thing immediately was how you were served food. First of all, there was a little smell in those kind of dining rooms. They didn't have linen cover on the table, whatever materials were so easier to clean.

It had a little smell. It was already different. It was like a commune. It was OK. We were young, what does it matter, this.

And then, because I haven't even told you where we were going, we were going to Mikveh Israel, the outstanding agricultural school in Israel. It was something supreme, actually. The school was great. And it had a system like in England, 10 children in one room. And this was only boys there.

But it was a great school. At that time, it was very prestigious, too. And we did appreciate all this. But the first few days-- homesick.

I think the Viennese showed it strong, their homesickness. They showed it stronger than those that came from Germany, because the Germans were already in preparation camps before. You see, in Germany, that whole thing started slow. And we got that whole thing at once. And I think, in the first few years, the Jews had a much better chance to leave the country than in the coming years.

But to put your foot down on the soil for the first time, was that a special--

It was a thrill in the full meaning. And you know, when you come on in Haifa, it's a beautiful city. And you see the Carmel Mountains immediately.

And then, of course, Jews are all around. You don't even have to think about everything. And we really were dreaming about building a country, not only just coming there as refugees, and so on.

So You go to this agricultural settlement in Israel.

Two years, I was there in that school. And that was outstanding. The level of learning was great. The atmosphere was great. Of course, we were in a religious compound.

We were almost different than the regular students-- well, although we worked together. There were so many famous people in that school. The chief-- how do you call it? The chief rabbi-- no, we don't. In the military, the chief--

Chaplin.

Chief Chaplin slept in the-- I was four years with him together. And then Haim Bar-Lev, who was the head of the military's system, and many-- the two sons of the future President, [INAUDIBLE], we were all together. [PERSONAL NAME] was with me together. We were students together, two years. The whole atmosphere was very elevated.

And there was no such thing that there was even not a single student who didn't study. And we didn't have to be pressed for anything. That was natural. And we did everything together.

And we had to go. I would say, two weeks after, we arrived on Shmeerah to watch [INAUDIBLE] already arrive. I was 15 years old, 16. And we were very active in all this-- exercising, working, studying, studying Judaism.

The food was very unique, but we liked it. The first time I ate olives, they were bitter. And then, later on, I loved them-- halva, and all this. It's a new world. We loved it.

Did you know what was happening? Now you left in October.

That's a totally different story.

Did you know about Kristallnacht?

My mother-- you're talking about Vienna, what happened there. My mother should have been a member either of the Secret Service or whatever it is. She sent me a letter. And there were a few lines left over.

She said, well, I left those lines for your father, for Dad. I left a few lines. Oh, he just left, and didn't add. Next time, she wrote, he went to get some food downtown to the markets. Again, he didn't write.

And then she-- oh, he had some meetings in the consular. And she pulled me for two and a half months. And for some reason, I didn't follow.

Then she writes back, he just came back from Dachau. And of course, later on, he was in Buchenwald, too. But I'm just-- that's the way she--

Meanwhile, I had a few guys-- or at least one I definitely know. But he was informed by his mother that, from Dachau, they sent his urn home. That's the ashes. And--

So your father was picked up after Kristallnacht.

The same. They took him in the stadium. And he was picked up. First, he was taken in the stadium in Vienna. And they were picked up. Then later on, of course, he told me who was with him. But he was stubborn. Let's say, he--

Did you know about Kristallnacht when you were in Palestine?

But I didn't know that my father was in it.

But you knew about what had happened.

They were cracking a few synagogues. How do you know? It was not so clear as it really was. Kristallnacht-- so they have damaged a few stores.

On the other hand, I know that they had papers to America. So somehow, it would have to go through, whatever, to grandfather. But as soon as he left Dachau, he was 45 kilograms, about 90 pounds.

So the American consular tells him, you have to recover. And then, because he said-- he told me, you will not be able to stand ocean trip in this condition. So when he recovered-- he was discharged from Dachau in January.

1939.

1939. And in June, they picked him up for Buchenwald. And again, my mother didn't tell me. And then, after September '39, I had no contact at all. So I didn't know what happened. I didn't know if they survived, if they lived, whatever it is. Later on, the stories-- well, then really the stories started there, which was great agony.

You heard Hitler marches into Poland September, 1939. And what was your reaction being in Palestine?

That time it already started to penetrate that we're in real troubles. And then, later on when we found out about more



concentration camps, we saw it very badly. But until the full destruction came, that took a little bit longer to even penetrate. And we still had hopes this will be, and this will be.

But then we saw that the doors were locked. You couldn't get Jews out. I got other relatives. They came on illegal transports.

They went to Danube town, and so on. So many came at the doors of Palestine. Some were taken to one of the islands, to the British islands, and then later on some to Cyprus.

Your father was taken away to Buchenwald when, and for how long?

Until, again, January '40, in 1940. But I didn't know anything about this. That was already an entirely different story, that Buchenwald business.

Anyway, in January 1940, the commandant of Buchenwald approached him and said, they're working for you in the United States to get you out of here. And my father reacted-- oh, yeah. And he said, well, we're going to relieve you soon.

And for some reason, he felt so confident to talk to that commandant. He said, why do you hate the Jews so much? He says, 'cause they're bad people.

So my father told him, all of them? Don't we have a handful of good people, some of them? He said, well, very few.

Then he said, tell me, and Germans, are they good people? Yes, definitely, he said. Don't you have a few crooks? And meanwhile, the commandant knew what was going on in his head.

So at that day, when my father was relieved, they had 1 meter snow in Buchenwald. And 11 Aryans were released, non-Jews. And he was the only Jew relieved. So he called the Aryans. And he told them, that Jew will have to march out with you on the gate.

And they were marching, they called it, in goose lines, one after the other. And what happens when you go in snow? When the first one gets tired, he goes on the side and goes in at the last one so that it's easier to walk.

And he told him, that Jew is always going to be the last. And he protected him, I just want to say. So as soon as those Aryans came to the gate of Buchenwald, they just let him lay in the snow. Apparently, that guy knew that will happen.

So they came in as-- wagon, like this. They just threw him in that wagon and drove him to the-- maybe because he had to go to America. I don't know. He drove him to the terminal.

And at the terminal, my father stands there. And the detective came to him. What are you doing here? And he said, well, you know what I'm doing here, because, you know, his beard.

Oh, they just released you from over there? Yes. So why are you standing here? I'm hungry, very hungry.

So the detective looked at him and said, why don't you go in that restaurant? Go in and get something. He said, don't you see the sign? It says, Jews and dogs, their entrance forbidden.

Oh, OK, I'll buy you something. He says, I don't have any money. So the detective bought him some food. He swallowed it.

Then he went to buy his tickets. And that girl looked at him and said, you're very hungry, aren't you? She slipped her sandwich to him. He said, kosher, he's not going to eat it.

He ate everything. And he still was standing there. And then the detective-- why are you standing? Why don't you go?

He says, don't you know? The Jews can only go on the train who stops in every station, the local, not the free. Oh.

So he put him on a-- that detective put him on a military transport. And he said there were soldiers also. He said not a single soldier paid attention to him.

And they were drinking beer. And everyone-- he said he had a thirst for that yeast. Every drop that was left, he said, ugly or not, his body demanded it.

So then he arrived in Vienna at night. And in Vienna, the last streetcar has a blue light. That means you don't have to wait. He comes, and he saw that last one, that last streetcar passing. So he walked home, and far, to cross the river, walked home.

So he came up between 2 and 3 O'clock at home. And we had those spiked wooden fence. Do you know what I'm-- green, spiked woods. He climbed over this. And he knocked on the door.

And my mother didn't want to-- she didn't recognize his face, didn't want to go in, didn't let him in. And my sister said, that's Dad. Let him in, [INAUDIBLE].

Finally, they let him in. He came in like in a marathon run. He fell down. You understand? He could make it up to there, down.

They picked him up in the bed. And then they started feeding him for days, and so on. He had, too-- he have something very unique.

The next day, my mother went to a store and wanted to buy some food. In the store, there was a woman. She's screaming, you dirty Jews. Do you come in my store? You filthy here, everything here.

And the other customers-- at that time, it was little grocery stores. The other customers knew him. She was so embarrassed.

And then that woman gave here a sign. She said, well, you come later on. We'll have some junk, what's left over. But you have to pay for it. This is at 4 O'clock, or something like this.

And when she came to the store, there were two packages, good food. And she didn't even take any money. Can you put two and two together? God knows. But their luck was that neighborhood was a little bit different.

They had a Jewish doctor. He was on a bike. We didn't know that he was Jewish. That doctor did so much good for them, maybe.

This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Erwin Deutscher. This is tape number two, side B. And you've already mentioned previously that you had arrived in Palestine.

You had been two years at this agricultural school, Mikveh Israel. And you had told us of your father returning from Buchenwald. So let's pick up from that point.

In order to tell you the next step, for Mikveh Israel to the yeshiva actually that I went, I have to tell you how it happened.

Let's just say the time. This is 1940. Do you remember what month when you finished Mikveh Israel?

It was the fall, 1940. And at that time, the unrest in Israel came to a still stand. As soon as World War II started September 1939, for some reason, the Arabs immediately stopped attacking us. So we had a grand tour.

As a reward to the studies in Mikveh Israel, they organized for the grand tour, a lot [AUDIO OUT] marching in the land itself. And between the Netanya section and the Hadera section, on a hill, we saw a beautiful building-- first of all, a large building with a cupola, and then an arrangement of small rooms from the side. We inquired what it is. And they told us it is the agricultural yeshiva.

Mizrahi started this. However, because World War II stopped the flow of money for those kind of expenses, Bnai Akiva, through Rabbi Neria, just saw those empty buildings. And he had about 13 people. And they started to open yeshiva Bnai Akiva.

When we passed by, the main thing that went in our mind was what to do after that school. So we were between 17 and 19 years old. I, personally, was the youngest of this group. And as much as they encouraged us to go to a kibbutz or start working, we were yearning to get more education.

Money didn't exist, not a little. We just didn't have anything. For some reason, we were five [INAUDIBLE] when we passed by after our excursion in Israel. And they pushed me. Let's get here and see what can be done.

So we met Rabbi Neria. We told him the whole story. He was excited about us. But on the other hand, we didn't have any money. The yeshiva itself had almost nothing.

And I am even not talking for food and tuition. What happens if one of us five gets sick? Who is going to take care? What are we going to do when the others get a few weeks vacation, and we had nowhere to go?

Anyway, finally they took us. And they made arrangements that, rather to be regular students, we are the managers of the agricultural fields there. So we actually were already called managers. We had to work half a day, and have a day to study.

But we had to study as good as the others. So that means we went up very early, got up very early, and studied in the evenings. And we just had to be ready for those classes as all the other students, a few.

Then, meanwhile, the situation got quite bad-- first of all, Stalingrad and El Alamein. And the Haganah prepared us, at least mentally, that in case the Germans should be able to cross into Egypt-- and if they would go to Egypt, they would have us entirely. So the Haganah had some plan. It wasn't fully known.

But the women and the children would have to go to Southeast Asia, mainly to India. And the menfolks would have to hide in the mountains and fight against them. Well, here, you see, we were in the yeshiva itself. We were already active for the Haganah.

But luck came very fast. And El Alamein was actually the beginning of the end when they pushed the Germans back. So there was relief.

So I studied there two years. Some of the other fellows continued to go to higher schools in Jerusalem. But I got more entangled with the Haganah business. So the war defense was more serious to me.

And this Rabbi Neria, he had a brother who came sometimes on Shabbat visiting us. And he came in full mounted police uniform. He was the head of that group. It started, actually, through General [PERSONAL NAME]. He was the friend of Israel.

And once, after my two years, I just went visiting Rabbi Neria's brother. His name was [? Benjamin ?] [? Mankin. ?] And I just talked to him. What do you think about my joining this force, and so on?

And he grabbed me first. Oh, we're waiting for you, for the kind of you. And he said-- [COUGHS] excuse me-- they just have a riding school starting in a few weeks. Come. And that was very fast.

And I was a member of the-- it was called [NON-ENGLISH], Mounted Police Settlement Force-- Settlement Police,

rather. After a while, they pulled me into the Haganah headquarters. So I was a mounted police, and still had to go to the headquarters. And all the others is history. I just was involved there.

So maybe a point I have to make-- now what I found out about my parents. But it was at that time I just didn't know what was going on with them. It's very interesting. I was thinking about them many times, quite often.

But you have to know that we were so busy that our daily life had to be performed. And once in a while, I could get sad and think about this. For some reason, I don't think I fully expected them to be a casualty of that misery. I don't know. Maybe people think positive all the time. But I definitely [INAUDIBLE].

So once I was on a maneuver in Tel Mond in the same section. And we had those new machine guns. They were full machine guns, not submachine guns.

And Harold came running with a piece of paper right away. You got a telegram. You got a telegram. And it was a Red Cross telegram.

It was already-- I think it was in '43, 1943. It was a Red Cross telegram. And it had 24, 25 words. It was handled through the Spanish Red Cross. That means from the Italian to the Spanish Red Cross.

And they told me they were in the Apennine Mountains there. From the telegram itself, I just found out that they were alive. They, with my sister, were alive.

And no indication if they were in prison or privately hidden, and so on. But anyway, that was the only thing I received until the end of the war. The other details, I got later.

But I have to tell you something else before I go into the other details. I mentioned to you before that there were two brothers, Edmund and Siegmund. They were lucky.

In 1939-- it could be because of my grandfather in Oklahoma City, or not. In 1939, May 1939, they got a special arrangement to go to the United States. And they were in a children's system, probably a school year. And they had a pretty good time there.

Of course, the older one, Edmund, was pretty soon drafted to the army for Second World-- well, it was a little bit later. I am going a little bit too fast on this-- because as soon as he arrived in the United States, he had his Bar Mitzvah. So his parents couldn't even be there.

So I just want to say that those two went to Pennsylvania and were there two years in school. And then they went to my grandfather in Oklahoma City. But because it was the second marriage, it was not the same as it would be. So he then placed them in Chicago.

And then, of course, World War II started. And Eddie had to go to the army. So this was settled. Now let's go back to my parents.

As soon as the British conquered up to the middle part of Italy, they were able to get a ship to the United States. There were 1,100 people that Roosevelt let come into this country. I forgot the name of the ship, but I have it written down somewhere.

The war was still going on. There were still mines there for some reason. They took him. And of course, they had to go to Las Vegas and New York. There were 1,100 people that were interned then.

But the interesting thing was, meanwhile, I found out how my parents-- what happened to my parents from the time I didn't receive anything from Vienna. So here I found out the story that my father was in Buchenwald later on. But he was relieved.

And suddenly, they got tickets to go to the United States on the Rex. That was supposed to leave. The boat, Rex, a very large ship, it was supposed to leave from Genoa.

When they went to Genoa, there was a constant postponement of the departure of the Rex because, it was very clear Mussolini knew that he will sooner or later enter the war, because he wanted to enter France. And he wouldn't let that ship out of his sight. And they didn't want to announce that the trip will not occur. But they did announce their postponement.

The interesting thing there-- when the Italian Jews, especially from Florence, found out some refugees from Vienna, they helped them. That means the Jews helped them. But not long after this, the situation for the Italian Jews got bad, too. And when my parents saw that the ship is not going to leave and Italy enters into the war, they were hiding in the Apennine mountains.

And after a while, those Jews in Italy, they helped them, needed a little bit of support from them. So there was the [? Campanana ?] family. And their son was, I would say, a year older than I was. And he and my sister, they fell in love. And they met all the times.

And then, when that ship had to depart from Naples, six hours before the departure my sister told my parents, I am not going with you, I'm going to stay with Marcello. So they fast tried to find a rabbi. And they were very young, of course. And their marriage was consummated. And it was a beautiful life.

She developed to be a beauty in the full meaning of the word. And they had a very beautiful life, two daughters. But that whole thing is history. But I just want to say how many things were unplanned entirely.

Was there any particular influence that your grandfather had to get your parents out?

No. No. No, I don't think it was, because he already committed himself in the beginning with the papers and sent them tickets. The only thing I have to tell you is the tickets that were sent before for the Rex wouldn't have been valid for the second ship. So he sent, a second time, tickets. And that was it.

Let's move back now to your story in Palestine. Can you just maybe just briefly tell us some of the activities you were involved with in the Haganah?

OK. Like I told you before, I was a member of the mounted police force. But I was transferred, which was just a few miles away from us. Actually, I wouldn't call it transferred. I was engaged with the headquarter of the Haganah in Even Yehuda.

Just a little picture of the structure of the Haganah-- Israel was partitioned, Haganah was, in three major part. And that part was called Galil. Let's say, a territory you can call it, if you want to. It was called the Upper Galil, the Central Galil, and the Southern Galil.

Jerusalem, as a city, had a status of galil because of the importance. Tel Aviv was called [INAUDIBLE]. That was a much lower ranking galil.

Every galil was partitioned in smaller districts. They were called nafa. And the nafa were partitioned into settlement groups-- and then, of course, the settlement itself.

I was the-- they call it [? secretary ?] [INAUDIBLE]. But actually, I was number four in the nafa, nafa [? Heifa ?]. That's a central nafa.

In addition to have to handle the administration there, I have to tell you about the hidden weapon we had. Every village had some weapon. And they had one, or two, or sometimes even three people who were in charge of this, because if one wouldn't be there, then somebody else knows.

The weapon had to be hidden in all kind of manners. First of all, it shouldn't rust. So it was in the soil. It shouldn't rust.

And then Israel had all kind of weapons-- Czechoslovakian, English, Americans, and even German weapons. So they had to be separated and the ammunition separated. So in each section, there were responsible people.

But I, for the center, I was responsible for all the weapons. So we had to-- even the head of the nafa did not know as much as I did about those. And the British, meanwhile, found out that I had something to do with this. But they couldn't prove it. So they were after me, especially because I was a member of the police force.

So they had power after me. I had to court martials. One for the weapon, but they couldn't prove anything, so I was freed. And the other one, we had a portable radio. That means children went to the pharmacy.

At 2 O'clock, there will be a short announcement on this radio. And we usually had an announcement from 10, to 20, to maybe 30 minutes. As soon as this happened, that whole thing was taken apart. And again, they tried to get me on this. I wasn't even afraid that something would happen to me, because it was a death sentence, and I knew it was not going to happen.

And the British, in this respect, were very unique. If it could not be 100% proven, they just broke it up, said it's not. So that's the way it was. Then, in '46, I got-- and this would be too long to say it in full details. I got a mission to Europe.

OK, we'll talk about '46 in a minute. When did you meet your wife?

In the army. OK, so that was--

What year was that?

In 1948. In '47, when they announced the partition of Palestine in November '47, when it was announced, we already got active in the Haganah to do certain things.

So you met your wife after--

After this.

OK. So World War II is now over.

Over.

And what was your feelings and your reaction when you heard that the war was over?

When the war was over-- just a short time before it was over, I was always dreaming. How could a world be peacefully? And when it happened, it was almost like a dream came true.

But meanwhile, we found out the bitterness that happened in Europe. And I think, at that time, we understood it even more than at the time when it really happened, because we saw the open wounds. The real shock came that we saw that the British locked the doors for Palestine.

And even those people who came on boats-- they were not even called boats-- they wouldn't be in, and they were chasing them. There was great sadness. But we have seen that things have to change. And it did change, of course. And that's it.

And finally, when the partition was declared, I was in Netanya at that time. And the first bus from Netanya to Jerusalem was ambushed. And five people were killed.

And two of the five were very close friends of mine I met just today, the same day, before they left the bus. But we

knew what was happening. In the beginning--

Let's back up a little bit. Here, you were born in Vienna. You were able to come out. When you heard after the war was over the even more terrible things that had happened, do you think it made a difference that you had come from Vienna?

No. At that time, Vienna was--

That you had come from Europe, I meant, that you had been able to escape.

Well, all those surrounded me had almost the same background. So first of all, a lot of Viennese were German even more, and even from other countries already. Romanians came in a little bit. And so we were together.

By the way, even a few Italians came to my school. And that was interesting too, of course. Many of them were fascists.

They were fascists before. Their fathers were high officers in the army. So Vienna-- at that point, to be an important factor, I cannot say.

I don't mean especially Vienna. I meant the fact that you had been in Europe and were able to get out as opposed to someone who was not born in Europe. Do you think you had a different reaction than someone else?

At that time, I think more than the reaction of Europe and anything else was Israel. I was very concentrated on this. I felt definitely privileged, not only that I was saved. I was privileged to be a part of this most historic time.

Probably, in hundreds of years, they will again come. I felt almost this, that I was doing something very special. And I enjoyed it. And I loved it. And I was proud of it. And then, at that time, after this, I volunteered to form missions to break through to Jerusalem in [NON-ENGLISH], like the Arab's [NON-ENGLISH].

Are we talking about the War of Independence now?

Yeah, the War of Independence. And we had four missions. We couldn't fully break through. Even my vehicle was damaged. And we had to pull back.

But we had a [NON-ENGLISH], who pressed. And they went up on that hill. And they killed the Arab leader. He was called [? Abdul-Kader ?] Hussein. That's the father of that Hussein who's now in Jerusalem trying to make the peace.

So when he was killed, that whole thing fell apart. And actually, we could connect ourselves with Jerusalem. But meanwhile, something else happened.

When the Haganah has seen this, we might have a problem to bring food to Jerusalem. So they took old men. Many of them were Yemenites. And they had little stone baskets. They were carrying that stone and building a Burma street, a Burma road south of that one.

It's traumatic, but we couldn't have been without Jerusalem. It was done. Whoever was there, it was a thrill in a certain way. It was a sad thrill. But that's what we called it.

Even the songs said, [NON-ENGLISH]. That means, sadness and glory together. And it worked this way.

In northern Tel Aviv, there was a German section. It was called Sarona. But because the Germans had some Nazi activity during World War II, the British evacuated them. So as soon as the Jews-- that means that the Israeli took care of the whole section that was taken for governments, for government buildings.

But on the slope to the road, we had our tents. And from there, we went to Jerusalem To fight for Jerusalem. As soon as our mission was over, I just was resting in one of those tents. And a quartermaster came to me and said, would you be willing to go in something very special? I said, what do you have in mind?

Well, we have to create a certain section to rebuild those vehicles, to rebuild the vehicles we have taken from the British, and we have bought the old, vehicles, mainly Command cars. That was Dodge Command cars and Jeeps.

What happened when they bought it from Southern France, they caused a certain sabotage. They made holes in the motors and stuffed it with some material so, if we would start this, it wouldn't work. All this had to be repaired. And I accepted this. And I was in charge of the administration.

And that other guy, his name was [PERSONAL NAME], he was in charge of the mechanical works. And I think it was one of the major operation for the army, because we didn't have work shops here to prepare all this. And we needed cars and vehicles all the times.

And even Moshe Dayan came once to me. He said, try to get me a few vehicles out of the regular. And we gave him a few. Later on, they caught that they were not painted according to the standards. So we were warned not to do this anymore. But anyway, this is what happened.

So once, I sit in my office. And in the-- when I came in the office, actually. That's the way it was. There was one of the supervisor of the garages who had to inspect all the vehicles. He came with a young lady, a charming young lady. And I didn't expect anything.

But he came in and had that Israeli approach. You know what I'm saying. Oh, you ruin. Ha, you can do everything. Yeah, whatever, anything you want to.

What do you mean? He said, well, this young lady, she's the only daughter, has a mother only. And for here, it would be good if she doesn't have to go out to the other camps and just be in the area of Tel Aviv.

I said, no problem. So I picked up the phone, and I called. And that central station, whatever it was told me, you cannot do it anymore, because now we are state. And it has to go to regulations. She has to go to a army training course. And we'll send her wherever we think we'll send her.

I told this to the young lady. I said, that's all I could do. I tried. So the next morning, she was sitting there. And I said, didn't I tell you yesterday that I am just helpless? I cannot do anything. And she said, look, I was told that if you really want to do something, you will find a way to do it.

So I didn't know what to do. I had, outside, a little pick-up truck. It was a standard, that they call it, or the British pick-up. And I went with her to the women's training place in [PLACE NAME] where the British used to train their soldiers. Now they called it, in Hebrew, [HEBREW].

I came there. And I didn't see any officer. That whole thing was not really developed yet. So I thought, I'm not going to let them fool me. But meanwhile, we got hungry. First of all, I didn't have any money.

And even if I had money, there was no restaurant about this. So we looked around. And we saw sabras. Those are the prickled pears. Now, how do you get sabras? Not on your fingers.

Anyway, we started eating sabras. We had it full on our lips. At that time, Jaffa was just conquered. But I had an entrance card. So I went to Jaffa. We roamed around in a city without inhabitants and, like young people, finally we realized it's better to go to my base. How long can I fool around?

So we went there, probably came just before closing time. I picked up that phone. And I said, listen, whatever you tell me is not going to work. She is already working, and that's the way it is. And if you cause me some problems, I know how to talk to the headquarters. And four months later, we were married. That's it. That's as far as it goes.

Then you stayed in Israel for how long?



Then the reason-- I have to stay here the real, true fact. At that time, marriage was not in my plans, because I wanted first to visit my parents, and then come back and marry. But everything went fast.

The American consulate, in the beginning, when I asked for a visa to visit to the United States, they says no, because I'm a son to parents, I will stay there. So I have to work on a emigration visa. I couldn't care less what kind of visa as they'll let me in.

Then, when the emigration visa was activated, they told me I have to wait for my quota waiting list. And then I said, well, let's go back to visiting. I just need a visa. He said, no, after you have applied for emigration you cannot have a visa.

So we waited. Meanwhile, a child was born. And we got an apartment. And for some reason, I wrote a letter to Truman, to President Truman. And after a while, I didn't even expect an answer.

After three or four months, I got a reply. And they said, this is not a department that handles emigration. That all goes to embassies and consulates. I said, well, so I didn't make it.

Just a few weeks later, I got a letter from the consulate that I was allowed to come. So we went to the United States to visit my parents, whom I haven't seen in 13 years.

What was it like for you to see them?

The main thing, first of all, my father got a-- he was always religious. But he got even more religious. And we would arrive Friday afternoon. He said, if it's very late, stay in New York. I was just puzzled that he couldn't overcome this.

But anyway, we saw a plane leaving for Cincinnati a few hours before our flight was scheduled. I asked the captain, would you take us? He said, yes, come in. It was a little more casual. It was at that time called Idlewild Airport.

I came. It was very cheerful. And the greatest cheer I saw-- they looked fairly young. And they looked as if they're already recovered from this. The only thing-- the sentimentality was strong.

Well, first, we decided let's stay with them a while. I haven't seen them in so long. Then, after a while, we said, well, I have to do something.

I started working. I didn't want to be involved with their business. It wouldn't fit me. But I just wanted a temporary job. Then we said, oh, it would be good if we have a refrigerator, because in Israel he couldn't have all those things. Let's work for this.

And all this is history. Longer and longer we were. I think, at that time already, my parents needed me just to be around them. That was their reward for their whole suffering. And I think the family found itself in there. And another child was born, and many years later another child.

I have then to say something about the United States. It has a certain magnet professionally, culturally. And you can develop yourself at any age in all kind of studies. University is open until you're 99 years old. What's the difference?

It was amazing. Things went much faster. And then my brothers came. So we hung around a little bit longer and a little bit longer until the leverage changed, and it was more America than Israel.

It's very hard to say what I feel, because Israel is still a part of me, and it's going to be. Even the children went later on studying. When I go back to Austria, first we had to go back to settle certain estate problems.

And then I always had that feeling-- and I still have it, and I think I will always have it-- that, when I left Austria, it was involuntary. And the one who caused it had no right to do anything to me this way or the other way. And that's the reason I react different than some people.

But there are others, too. They have my line. This is actually the way it was. There were, of course, many other little things in between.

Where was your wife born?

My wife was actually born in [? Wolyn. ?] And as a three-year-old child, she came with her parents to Israel. But her life is Israeli from the beginning, because she was a little tiny girl when they came there.

What year did she come to Palestine?

I would say 1930. She was two years old, or something like this. Her family was very charming. I think, almost from the first day on, I was accepted there. So if, for any reason I didn't come, why didn't you come here? But you know, there was a war going on, too. I was right away in that.

In the United States, what kind of work did you do? You said you did not want to join your father.

No, because he had a restaurant. That wasn't for me. And this is an entirely different story, because Rabbi Silver pulled them to Cincinnati to open a kosher restaurant. That would have never fitted me.

This is Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver?

No, that is Eliezer Silver, the orthodox rabbi who was the head of all the orthodox in the United States and Canada. But I want to tell you, because I just wanted to have a temporary job, I started as a shipping clerk, which wasn't-- the bosses were too bossy. And I couldn't tolerate this.

But somehow, Metropolitan Life was after me. And they promised me great things. I couldn't believe it. It was so great. Why don't people stand in line to get it?

But they promised me a certain amount to earn. And actually, the first year I earned three times as much as they promised. And I was promoted faster in management, and then in upper management. I didn't dream about this. It just went.

And then I studied full time, sometime 15 hours a week. And I could work it out. And I got active in B'nai B'rith and was the president a few years there. That means a large president.

And the same with the ZOAs, Zionist Organization of America. I think I even deserve a pension, so many years have I been president there. That's it then.

The family grew beautiful. They started a little bit in Israel. We gave them a good Jewish education. And everything else is history, I would say.