

All right, you're welcome to continue.

OK. I wanted to ask you if you knew about a revival of Judaism in Germany. Is that going on? Do you know?

I know some directly and some from the newspapers and also a book. Especially the Jews from Russia. I hear that there are more than 20,000 Russian Jewish people in Berlin now. And that a small town, I forgot the book, the name of the book, a small town they brought I think 800 Jewish families and people altogether, they are families from Russia, into this town, in this small town, and from the beginning they have had plenty problems.

Plenty of problems?

Yes.

From the neighbors?

Yeah. They don't accept it. But in the end it works. This problem is always especially in West Germany because the economic situation in West Germany was very, very good and everybody wants to live there. And so you know with the law what we have had after the war was a part of the experience during the Nazi time that the country is open for foreign people and special for assessment and religion reasons and so on.

But the country was, I think it was too much to open and the population, the people from other countries they came in and you can tell it only in thousands and more. And so they changed the law. And they changed the law in all Western countries of Europe because there the borders are open and you can go from this country to this country without any control because they have nobody there on the border.

Right. But they're not giving benefits like they were doing, is that right?

Yeah.

Because they just couldn't afford to keep doing that.

Yeah.

I remember in Vienna particularly they had a tremendous influx of people from Eastern European countries and that really set off a tremendous backlash of anti-Semitism before World War II. And I wondered if people in Germany were worrying that that would happen again if too many Eastern Europeans came in.

It's still there. It's the right-wing parties in Germany that they speak only *auslander aus*, Foreign people out of the country. That's their big line. But they are just always on the border between 5% of the population and the votes and just under or just over. And so sometimes they have somebody in the government and sometimes they lose. And it's a dangerous situation, I think.

And the big problem still in Germany is unemployment. Especially in East Germany it started with 50% just after the wall come down, and now it's still between 17% and 27% unemployed people.

Which is a lot.

It's a lot. And that's a basis we have had with Hitler that these are the people who give him the vote. And this, I think, still is a problem in Germany that the situation come back and now we have more than 4 million unemployed people in Germany.

Divided. How much between East and West, do you know?

In the East part of Germany it's about 17%, 20% and in West Germany around 12%, 13%. It's too high. If you have 3% unemployed people, then we speak in Germany it's the best situation. And the 3% fluctuates. It changes as the jobs. And my thinking, my hope is that the Social Party wins the election next year and that they change it a little bit more. Because they are more for the people and not for the money.

So you think they'll do something about unemployment.

Yes. They will do it. Germany is the only capitalist country at the moment in Europe. All the other countries have already social governments. But Germany is very powerful in the European Union, and so I hope that it changes.

How do you feel about the state of Israel?

My wife, she had relatives in Israel and I was thinking or we are thinking it was a very good thing with Israel. But with this president at the moment, nobody of our friends and we think it's a wrong situation with this president. You know the foreign minister canceled his job yesterday.

What did he do?

He lost his job. He gave it away.

Resigned?

Yeah, almost broke the coalition.

We spoke with plenty of friends in Israel. We celebrated Greta's 70th birthday two years ago in Tel Aviv. And so we come together with our relatives and they spoke already about the same point that they said it doesn't work very well. And we spoke together how it was going in Germany with the communists and the East and West Germany. No one person was sure. It was just finished with a communist situation in Germany and we couldn't believe it. And they hope let's do it with the Palestinians on a peace way. And it's not easy and it is very hard for Israel.

I remember that it was more than 10 years ago we went to Israel. And it was in the Egypt part, in--

Along the Sinai?

Yeah, south of-- We made a stop on the way to the Cloisters Santa Carolina, and somebody killed in this area, a Palestinian person. And they say this was a family war between two families and the last person from these two families was killed 45 years ago and now it had to do with this 45 years ago. And so it's very hard to become peace in this area.

Long memory,

Yeah.

And what do you think about genocides in other parts of the world? What kind of response do you have when you hear about the troubles in the former Yugoslavia?

We know this problem. I've been there plenty of times. And I still cannot believe it that they fight each other in this way. What I say, everything is going extremely orthodox, like Jewish orthodox communities. It's very wrong, to my eyes.

The orthodox.

To be orthodox. If you are orthodox, you don't accept other people and their way of life. If you do it, then you should be much better. We are all lovers of this world and we have to live together on a special way, to accept each other. If you are orthodox, you cannot accept that your neighbor thinks differently or wants to do things in a different way. And that's the same as in politics if you are too extreme in one direction. I think you have to tolerate it. You have to look for a way

to go together or to accept each other. This is, to my eyes, the only way to have a real life without enemies.

So extreme orthodoxy frightens you.

Yeah, we saw two months ago, a movie in New York about the orthodox Jewish group in Parkland and they are OK. They said, we just came to this country because in this country we can do what we want to do. That's the freedom of this country, the United States, that everybody can do what is his behavior and OK, you can accept it. This is a very big country. But if you have to live together very close with other people, you cannot do it all over. You have to accept that you have neighbors. It's not easy for people if they are thinking in this extreme way.

Have you found your own thinking becoming more conservative as you get older, more attuned to how to get along with others and how to compromise?

My family was Catholic. They are Catholics. And I changed my mind now 20 years ago because in Switzerland there is a factory for weapons and I hear that about 60% of the capital, of the money, of this company the owner is the Vatican.

The what?

The Vatican. It's the pope. I couldn't believe it. And so it was going around on the radio and television. And the answer from the Vatican was this is a very lucrative company for us and we don't want to lose it. And this was the end of my thinking to be a Catholic. I go out of church. And that's the only thing that you can do. You cannot fight them.

We have been in this last year in Auschwitz and also in Poland. There was a congress on ghetto. And the Polish people are super Catholics, you know, and she works for an organization the ISPP is the name, and there are plenty of Jewish academic people there. And there was a panel discussion with the Polish academic people about this point, to be a Catholic or not. And only one person came from their side. And you cannot change it, right? The churches are very powerful, especially the Catholic Church in Poland, those in Krakow. But we have to still work on it. It's so important to think in a human way, not in an idealistic way.

Was that hard for you to move away from the church?

No. I was married with my wife. She was Lutheran, and so it was no problem.

So that was already a first step.

Yeah.

How much awareness do you think there is in Germany about the other groups that were persecuted along with Jews-- the Gypsies and homosexuals, political prisoners? How much awareness is there of those groups and what they went through?

After the war?

Yeah, both during and after.

Yeah. It's not easy to answer that because the government, also from the Social Party and also from the Christian Party, they are looking for the German country is for Germans. That's the first. It started before 1973 to get foreign persons to work in Germany first from Italy and then from other countries and start to get workers from Turkey and they are Muslims and so in my job I have to deal with industrial companies. It was a big thing because they need separate washing rooms and dressing rooms and so on for the workers because the Muslim cannot put out their clothes in front of Christians and so on.

And so it was already in industrial companies some troubles between the foreign people and the German people. But most of the Germans, they accepted and they want to be international and not separated that we are Germans and they

have to be by side or something like that. This is a long time ago. Only I think under 5% of the Germans say they fight for a clean country only for Germans.

Clean of foreigners.

Yeah.

Is there much awareness and recognition in Germany about the groups other than Jews who had suffered during the Hitler regime?

No, I think it changed totally that the Germans accept them and they are part of our social life.

Have they made restitution to say political prisoners who were put in concentration camps? Do they give them any kind of reparation like they've done to Jews, the government?

Yes, the government has. And there is no question to the government spent money for them for Israel and also to help people. I know that in New York Greta and her family get money from Austria and now Jewish people from Germany they get their money from Germany, a pension. And there are no problems, especially from West Germany. It was different to East Germany, but now I don't know the situation what happens in these East Germany.

Why has the German government been so reluctant to pay reparation to people from the East as opposed to people from the West?

I think this was the Iron Curtain between West Germany and the East. There was a war and there was an ideological border. And Greta, she spoke about the situation that the Austrians, they never have been Nazis. They are liberated from the Nazis just for the way. The same East Germany they never have had something to do with the Nazis because they cleaned their country. And they are the only country who said OK, we have had Nazis. This was German Bundesliga. West Germany.

And this is still the situation. It changed already in Austria. Greta took her information and you had to question here and in this country. It changed after Waldheim. After that, it's absolutely another situation than the time before.

Now they have suddenly recognized that they were oppressive to Jews and they're paying reparations and they are paying for stolen property?

Yeah.

And this is all since Waldheim.

Yeah. But now we have an absolutely new situation in East Germany because the West German government took East Germany and didn't change the law maybe for Jewish people who had had a house or something in East Germany. And they say, come on, this now it's the first time I can ask to get it back or get money from this country. No. The law in Germany was I think 1953 that everybody can say, come on, if you have something, a house or a business in Germany, then you have to say, here are the papers. This was my.

Yeah.

And the Jewish people, they come now and say, look, in East Germany this factory was my factory of my family. And now the German government said, come on, you have to say that before 1953. And the law is on this way. And so in the moment there are big problems.

So they're not sure whether they're going to--

Maybe they have to change the law, but I don't know which way that works. I got a book about it. And I never know

that there are problems like that in the country. And East Germany never pay something or money or help somebody from Jewish people or from the survivors of the Nazi time.

They didn't recognize that Jews were oppressed.

But now they do it because it's now Germany all together. And the most money came from West Germany still from this side.

Do you think all this could happen again?

I hope not. But I don't know. Not in Germany. Maybe in other countries, but I don't think so that it won't happen again in Germany.

Do you think it could happen here in America?

You know this it was a test of I think in California a teacher tried to teach on the Nazi way his class. And they accepted it and say, that's wonderful, that's fine. And the parents accepted it too. There was a special name. I forget the name. The Wave. And in this way it can come back in each country and in each place. It was a very idealistic idea. What they do with this idea to kill other people, it was written in Mein Kampf against the Jewish people. He wrote it down, but nobody believed it. But the way was the best way to give you the answer.

Are there any things that we can answer for you?

For me?

I don't know. I never lived together with a Jewish person like me. This Greta is from a Jewish family and we have a very, very good life. We have plenty of discussions. And not only both of us and also with friends of us. And I think it works very well. It's very peaceful. And the big problem, it was a problem to accept each other that we came from different way of lives. But it works very well. It's very good.

It's been a pleasure meeting you and taking your story, Herbert. And I think that your life and your marriage is symbolic of a world that can heal.

Yeah.

Two wounded worlds got together and began to healing.

We were both of us we work on it.

Yeah. It's been very inspiring to meet you.

Thank you.

Thank you.