

Well? Yes, you may now.

OK. Well, just I haven't been asking the questions where I had written them down, just to put it on the tape. Because I have so many questions, and it is taking a lot of your time. And it is in the book, if anybody wants to read it.

So I just want this on the tape, in case anybody watches the tape and wants to read the book to find out that information.

Well, it is the book, if anybody is interested. It's published by Benmir Books. Benmir, this is Benjamin and Miriam, the grandchildren of the publisher. Benmir Books. And in Berkeley.

So whatever is not discussed can be found here. I interrupted myself earlier, describing the situation in which we were. Hardly enough to eat, and we should have been desperate. But actually we were not at all. And we knew that it was important for our morale to regard our existence as a game, a sport.

We sometimes said, here are two people, my friend and I. Of course, there were more, but we are talking on our own terms. Like dropped in a parachute, in a country where they knew nobody, where they couldn't talk, where they had no shelter, no money, no nothing. And we're told, here you are-- live.

And that was a challenge. And we held on to this. Could we make it? Could we not make it? My friend was an antique book dealer, and he brought along some books of his, hoping that he could sell them. And I brought along some manuscripts, not just some pieces of paper, which I hoped I could sell.

And then we had our meal tickets at the beginning, but we didn't like that. We wanted to earn our own meals. And then I would come home one wonderful day, when for the first time the story was accepted, a contribution to a magazine.

And I said, look at this. 5 pounds. Five guineas, they said. Five guineas. A guinea is a pound and a shilling. I mean, that was such a triumph. We could live for maybe nine more days now on our own.

If you think of what people are figuring in investment and for rainy dates, as I mentioned earlier, and what would they do in old age, God, we didn't have money for two weeks from now. But we felt nine days, that's plenty of time. Meanwhile, you could sell something else. And sure enough, Kurt would come home and say, I sold a book. So that gave us another, I don't know, five or six or seven days.

And that went faster and faster, and this was the way we lived. And it was one triumph after another, oddly enough. It shows how much really the attitude counts. We could have been desperate.

We could have said, good god, we're going to starve two weeks from now. No, we will not starve. And we could pay for the rent and could eat with the community.

There was one friend of ours who met us one time on Tottenham Court Road in the street. And he said, I bet you you're hungry. I know a place where you can get spaghetti for only sixpence and they're wonderful. And this is the way we lived.

How did your parents support themselves after they got out of the internment camp?

Hah. Before the internment happened, I once, in a restaurant, in that very restaurant that I just mentioned, where we got those spaghetti, I was befriended. There was somebody at the next table.

I was befriended by this young couple. And we got to know each other, and we remained in touch. And these people, Englishmen, English man and woman, his wife. And these people, they were really friends in need.

When it came to internment, all these myriad things that had to be taken care of with the flat, with the furniture, it was incredible. They would come, and this was rented but it was our own furniture.

So they would come and take it in and stuff it into their own apartment. And it was these same people, these two, who looked after my parents after they were released from-- they were seven months in this internment camp.

And Mother did the cooking for them. And they appreciated it very much. And that was a good tit for tat. And this is how they lived.

Did your relative renew the stipend he gave him?

It was not renewed. I didn't want. No. I said beforehand I was trying to live without it. I suppose if it had really come to a catastrophe, then perhaps it would have to be done. But I didn't want to.

What was your trip to Shanghai like on the boat? The food, your average day? I'm talking, I guess, about the trip from here. Didn't you go to New York first?

No, I was not allowed into the United States. I had an affidavit. And I had a quota number. These two elements were central for immigration. You had to have an affidavit, which means that American citizen had to guarantee to the government for five years that the sponsored person, the immigrant, the refugee, would not become a public charge. That was affidavit.

In addition to that, you had a quota number under this system. Only so many could immigrate from Austria, so many from Denmark, so many from Ecuador. Depending on how your number was, if it was a low number, you could come this year. If this year's quota was filled, you had to wait for next year.

If you couldn't wait for next year, for example, if you lived in Austria, that meant that Nazis picked you up and sent you to the camps. And that was the end of it. Therefore it was so vital to have a low number.

And as for my trip to Shanghai, it was a long, long trip. It took, in all, 55 days to get from Liverpool to Shanghai. I had to cross the Atlantic in the blackout. England was under blackout during the war.

The ship was blackout. We were escorted by destroyers because of the submarines, the German u-boats. In fact, we had to wait an extra day in Liverpool because the ship before us was sunk by u-boat. Imagine that, the frame of mind in which we were. We were the next one, and there were these u-boats.

Well, anyway, we got through, and we saw the lights for the first time in Halifax. And we were allowed only to pass through Canada, not to the United States. United States you could only enter when all these two conditions were fulfilled, affidavit and your number had come up. Then you can immigrate.

But not even transit through, no. But Canada allowed that. Only on condition that you would immediately take the connecting ship on the West Coast of Canada, going on to Shanghai.

So we arrived in Halifax. We saw the lights. Metaphoric word. It was quite an experience to see a lit up city for the first time. We crossed the continent from coast to coast in many days of train travel. I think in the early interview, I talked about this episode at Niagara Falls, which is forever engraved in my memory.

And our really desperate efforts to convince the Canadian authorities to allow us to stay long enough until our number would come up. We were not going to stay. We could prove that we would be allowed in the United States.

Absolutely not. The Canadians were worse than the United States and certainly worse than most other countries, which we painfully felt when we saw these vast stretches of uninhabited country. As we rode on, we looked out the window in the Great Plains and endless hours and hours.

Not only were there no settlements, there wasn't even a house. There was nothing. There would have been room for the rest of the world it seemed like. No. Nobody was allowed in. So we arrived in Vancouver, again, a last effort.

Somehow, I made a connection with Ottawa and with an MP there, but nothing helped. And then across the Pacific into - we arrived in Japan. And here we had the same mentality as in London when we said, well, we are here now. Now, by golly, we are going to make the best of it, and we are going to live.

And in Japan, we behaved as tourists. We were now in Japan, looking at Japan. We went to the museums and went to the temples and went to Nara, where they had beautiful waterfalls. And there were these animals, deer, rickshaw.

Just behaving-- nobody would have known the difference just looking at us. And we had fun with the chopsticks, with the food, everything else. It was only a few days, but by golly, we were going to get everything out of this trip to Japan. We would have never dreamed sitting in Vienna that we would at one time be visiting Japan.

So then they came. Again, we had to take the ship in Vancouver on that particular day. We had been issued in London a travel paper that allowed us to go only one way. We could not return to England. They had thrown us out. But they allowed us to go to our destination.

And we were expecting war, the world war. It was not-- I think I mentioned this in the first interview that nowadays you look upon Pearl Harbor as a surprise attack. The word is always used "surprise," it was no surprise at all that there would be war.

In what form that would come nobody knew, that's true enough. But I think I mentioned this in the earlier interview that our tickets were stamped "no refund in case of war." So everybody expected it.

Anyway, so and we were going right back to the Axis again, to the Japanese, who were the partners of the Nazis. It was a terrible, terrible feeling. We didn't know whether we would come out alive.

And so we crossed the Pacific. We headed to Japan. And then came the next ship from Japan, across the Yellow Sea into Shanghai. And there we were. Now on this trip we really felt isolated. You asked about isolation earlier. Here we were, so totally different from everybody else.

Everybody else was at least a citizen of some country, had a passport. We had nothing but this piece of paper that allowed us to breathe, allowed us to exist. But the moment you get to Shanghai, you're on your own. You're no better than a bird-- nothing.

And there was a commercial sign in the harbor of Shanghai, of that shipping company. The shipping company was called NYK, three Japanese, Nippon Yusen Kaisha. And there was this big sign as the ship landed. And it said on that sign, the NYK welcomes you.

I'm sure it is hard to understand now, but tears came to our eyes. There was something welcoming us. We applied it to us. They were welcoming us. I mean, that sign had been there 20 years. And it was all shabby and rundown and all, and nobody gave it that much thought.

Of course, it was just a commercial sign. Welcome us. They were throwing us out of Austria. They were throwing us out of England. They were not allowing us to stay in Canada. We couldn't stay in Japan. The NYK welcome us.

It's just like saying Hell welcomes you. Because we regarded that as the entry to Hell, which we thought the Japanese would take over and we would be trapped there. And that was our trip, 55 days.

We traveled first class. The British shipping company extorted from us the money for the most expensive tickets. They took advantage of our desperate need. We had to leave. That's why I--

At any point in Canada, do you think if you'd wanted to put up with everything it would have taken to live illegally, you could have actually gotten off the train and stayed in Canada?

Yes, I could at any time. We did get off the train. We interrupted in Jasper. Since we were the elegant travelers, we went to the National Park in British Columbia. And we squeezed the last trip out of the opportunity.

We went in Montreal, up Mount Royal, and as you have heard, Niagara Falls. Everything that was possible to see as tourist sites, yes, we did. Yes. Yes. We could have let the ship leave, so we would have been in Canada. But what kind of a life? You cannot live without any papers.

I have a wallet. Look how thick it is. Look here. There are so many-- from the car license beginning and to the health insurance. It will go on and on and on, and you-- I'm sure it would have been a matter of a few days that the police would have picked us up.

And then not only is it inconvenient to be in jail, but you have a plot against it in your life. Then this is on record. You are now on the other side of the fence. No, we decided we are not going to risk it. We took a chance.

On the ship from London to Halifax, how did you spend your days? What did you do? Was the food any good?

The food was as good as-- British food is no good anyway. But on the ship first class, we dressed up. We didn't tell anyone who we were or what. Elegantly sitting at the table with people who-- except there were many refugee-- British refugee children.

They weren't-- Refugee isn't really correct. It cannot apply to them. But they evacuated the children into safe Canada. So there were many of those. But otherwise, just like going on a cruise.

And the same was true at the other end, in the Pacific. There are people, including some Americans. I remember one professor going to Manila just-- and so the whole world situation didn't exist. A strange insularity.

When you got to Shanghai, how did teaching English go?

Well, I kind of--

You weren't very proficient anyway, were you?

Well, I wasn't very proficient. But then, after all, I had lived three years in England and had intensely struggled with acquiring the language. I wanted to learn English. I had to. I needed it for my work, for writing. I wanted eventually to write in English.

So I was very intensive. I was sort of a three-year-old ulpan, you might say, in England. I knew English quite well by that time, and well enough that I could broadcast from the Shanghai radio station. And it was all right.

I could never get rid of the accent, as you can hear. But I did pretty much understand and could write in English, and certainly enough to teach somebody who didn't know anything. And these Chinese students, they were very eager beavers and very devoted, applied themselves, did their homework, asked questions. It was a pleasure to teach these students. I like to think that they got something out of it, even though I was only halfway and they were no way.

I didn't mean to imply that they didn't get anything out of it.

No, you didn't say that. No.

OK, good. You know where you talked about how the students wanted to study Shakespeare instead of basic English. How did you handle that?

Well, I tried to explain the situation, of course. I would have done this to students in any country. And certainly this is too difficult and only the obvious thing I could tell them. And, well, they reluctantly had to accept that.

They were so, so sweet and so, so interested. They would not only ask questions all the time, but after the lesson, after-- I gave these courses at the Shanghai University there, afterwards they took a bus home. We didn't have cars.

And some of them would get on the bus with me. I had a long way to go home. They would get on the bus only that they could pump me some more and ask them more questions. And that made a difference, the bus fare to these students, Chinese students. And they did this. It was really a moving experience.

What were your rooms like in Shanghai?

They were no different from any room you would rent here in any Western countries. It was a pension that was run by exiled Germans who had been there earlier, who had had enough capital to buy that place. And we had our meals there.

It was like an Island. But then in Shanghai, this is a city like no other in the world. Because you can live any style you want there. If you are a Korean, if you are a South American and you want Spanish, or if you are a White Russian, you can go to a White Russian family or a place to live. Everything is in Shanghai.

So there was a large colony of refugees. They lived among themselves. And if they had the money, they could live the way we lived in the French concession. And it was so, quote, normal there that we even could drink the water, which was something special.

We were told beforehand not to drink the water, not to eat any fruit unless you can peel it like a banana. We didn't even eat a banana. We were worrying about something.

And we religiously observed that we never drank unboiled water. It's a long process. First, you have to boil it. Then you have to refrigerate it. You could never use ice, because ice is equally contaminated. But we did observe that, and we did not buy any fresh fruit.

As I also mentioned here in this book, never touched women. We had decided that onboard ship, my friend and I. With all these enormous opportunities and temptations in Shanghai, it's like Paris or like Bangkok, just anything. It's very hard to keep out of it.

An enormous surfeit of prostitution, also, in the streets. They would not just look at you or talk to you. They would grab on to you, and hold your hand and arms and pull you. And there would be another one pulling me on the other side, like that.

They would be in little clusters of three or four or five, and always with an amah, and an older woman who does the negotiating. And just no. I remember one time I was watching a window display, a big glass window. And suddenly I have a voice behind my ear, a man's voice saying, Chinese girl?

So he was a pimp. And I said no. Oh, he said, Japanese girl? I said no. Korean girl? No. Finally, in desperation, French girl? I said, go away. Leave me alone. So his last effort was, want to watch?

This was in front of a department store called Wing On. It's a chain. And this Wing On was not only a department. There you could buy just everything, including that. They had a section that was a bordello. And there you could meet a room. And here were these girls, and you could just walk in right there where you were, take care of things.

Well, with all this going on, we did not-- we absolutely lived like monks there. We thought there's contamination or whatnot. You don't know. And so we never were sick from food. And of course, never had anything else that mattered. We really survived that very well.

Was it very expensive to live there at that time?

No, it was not expensive, particularly. I cannot tell you how much it was, but we could afford it.

When you wrote about how you had given your money to that man to put in a gold bar and then when you asked for it back, he seemed hesitant. Whatever happened with that gold bar?

That gold bar was restored to us in full. There was nothing wrong with this man. I'm not sure nowadays, whether what I perceived as hesitation wasn't there at all. But I could imagine that if he answered just a second later and said, aha, I expected this man to make an excuse.

It was particularly expected because there was something about this being a weekend, I believe, when he couldn't go to the bank right then and there. And I said aha, aha, if you are so suspicious, if your whole fortune hangs on this piece of gold that this other man had--

Well, I think this was a perfectly honest, decent guy. Mr. Tavela. I wish I had the chance to be in touch with him in later years and found out-- he was an important man. He was the head of a bank. And weekly he wanted to learn German. That was wonderful for us. That was one way of earning some money, so we didn't have to use this gold bar. We didn't want to use the gold bar.

What kind of culture shocks did you experience?

Not in Shanghai. In Shanghai, although we were in Asia, it was just a matter of curiosity there, how strange the customs were. Walking around in Shanghai was like sightseeing in Japan or going to the various places in Canada. It was another country. It was an adventure.

We had those who had been there earlier going around with us and showing us things. All of a sudden, the queue of Chinese watching a handwritten letter in a store window. What are they doing here? Well, what about this thing? What does it say?

It says A. Just a letter? Yes. Well, they were admiring the craftsmanship of how beautiful was this letter. We learned a lot. It was wonderful to sense that there are other things in the world.

But even little oddities, flags everywhere of some sort. Instead of advertising, the stores had flags that merely said the name of the store. But they had holes in them. So why do they have holes in them? So that the wind can blow through. And in this way, the flag, you can read what it says there and the flag won't curl up.

I mean, little things like that. And the strange music. This is not music to our ears at all. It's sounds. Many, many oddities. I saw a tube of a mat in the corner of a street.

I mean, here's the wall of the house and here's the street. And where the two meet, there was this tube. Well, what is this? oh this is a bed. That's a man inside. They sleep in these mats. These are the homeless.

And I collected these oddities. I remember one thing. There was a barber store. And it had a glass door. And it said "rebrab" on it. So what does that mean? Is that Chinese or something? Well, the guy said go inside. So I went inside and looked at the door, and the it said barber.

What happened was that the Chinese who had to paint that, he didn't know English. He just copied exactly the letters. And on the inside, it was backwards. He didn't know that. And later on, when I became the editor of a magazine, a German language refugee magazine there, the Chinese typesetters didn't know any German. They set every letter meticulously. There was never any error. But if you made an error, if you had a word mistyped, the typo got right into the printed thing there.

I collected all these oddities and wrote stories about that. And I did quite a bit of writing in Shanghai. And I could mail it to Switzerland and to other places. I saved all these. I have so much stuff at home.

My kids will not know what to do with all the junk, boxes and boxes. But I cannot tear myself away from all these mementos. It is all fate and destiny. I remember one article writing about the Chinese food, of course, which then was a

sensation for me.

Here, you can go in a Chinese restaurant. This is as common as anything here. But there, for me, it was new. I had never had one before. And how I was introduced to this and all these oddities and make a very colorful story.

I was just thinking that, John, he's probably going to want to break before his next interview, and I've got a couple of questions that are out of sequence. They're more towards what I would usually ask in an interview. But I think I'd like to ask them now.

And one is, it was brought to my mind last night when I watched Ted Koppel on Nightline. And he was talking about how we actually in this latest Iraq war, we sent-- up through December 1990, we actually sent, like, spare parts, things that could have a military application to Jordan.

And we didn't-- even though the reporters who reported this say that we most definitely have proof that the real high-ups who had a conversation with Bush at the White House knew that if it continued on the pipeline, it was already in and went to Jordan, it would most likely be a transshipment point for Iraq. So we were basically sending them materials to war against us when we were going to war.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

And so that's part of the question has to do with that. And then the other part of the question has to do with an excerpt of an interview I saw John Stockman about the CIA, and how we have actually gone over and started wars in other countries. I mean, just been real agitators. And I mean, we do all the things that we condemn the Nazis for.

We have-- it's never come to what the Nazis came to, for probably a lot of reasons. We're a bigger country, and we're powerful. It's a different time, different weapons, people are more aware of what war would mean today. And the nation, as a whole, doesn't really want to go to war.

But I mean, what do you think about these things, when you see America doing these things today?

I have no more wisdom than everybody else. I'm horrified. I think it's terrible. It is short-sighted. That is to be taken pretty literally, this short-sightedness. Because it is only the immediate future that is of interest, it seems, from what I can make out. Only in this case, the immediate profits from this war, war material deliveries. And there's no long-range planning in anything.

And this is why the Japanese and the Germans are ahead of us in so many ways. This the immediate gratification, here I come back again to the credit card. The usual argument, why not enjoy the car immediately and have the use of it and pay later? You don't plan of what might happen later that you may not be able to do this.

And especially with Bush, you can see he will not, in my opinion, do anything that-- let's put it this way. If there's a conflict between having some advantage during his presidency versus a long-range thing that will be beyond his time but will benefit the country, he will take the first one.

There have few, quote, real patriots to whom the country is more important than their own political career. And for that reason, things like this happen. Which Bush will do nothing that he hasn't found out beforehand will be popular, will be accepted. He watches the polls. He sticks his finger in the air. And if the popular--

You could see it so drastically. Only just now, only two or three days ago, he was not going to commit any troops to the Kurds. Today, two days later, ah, when he sees how the people watching television and see the misery of these people, these hundreds and thousands of people, and everybody is revolting, he's revolted about that.

Now he sends his troops. He has seen if he does commit troops-- what he wants is to see the troops coming home. I will show you, I am the popular president. I am the popular-- I'm not going to be unpopular by saying then you stay something longer.

But when the people say we cannot bear this misery there, perhaps even maybe I'm projecting too much, but way back in my mind is, if there hadn't been a Holocaust, where they keep saying now, year after year, you, the rest of the people stood by and did nothing, I wonder whether the same-- whether this may not in some way color also these expeditions now.

But what I'm saying, the moment he saw that the public opinion was swinging over, well, all right, the soldiers won't come home immediately, at least not those that have to go to protect those new camps. Then he did it. And there are many examples earlier than that.

He is not a leader. He's being led. And he listens to what goes on. You might say this is democracy. Well, you have to do-- if you are a person in this position, you have to do something, even if it is not popular and be able to lead and guide people.

See what Roosevelt did. He did many unpopular things, but he managed to do it. He used some tricks, even. I remember delivering so-called outdated destroyers to Britain. So he called them outdated and everything goes fine. He's not supposed to give them ships. Ah, if they are outdated-- this is leadership. I'm appalled about-- the politics are terrible.

What about the fact that Bush was head of the CIA, so he had to have known what we were doing? And not only known what we were doing in other countries, but he had to have been a participant, because he was the head of it.

Yeah. And the same with Noriega. It's shameful. It is shameful. I have no use for this man at all. I was so disgusted with Reagan, and see what comes afterwards. I don't think we had a decent president since Truman.

For a short time you didn't know about Kennedy, maybe, but he was only a short time. But what kind of people? Nixon? A fraud. Ford? A nobody who is much more interested in garnering honorariums for speeches and things like that. No color, no initiative.

Johnson? How he got us into this Vietnam War more and more, insensitive, pulling dogs up by their ears? Things like that, details, they show what kind of a person it is.

And it's very sad that a big country like this with so many good people cannot produce a president because of these politics and because you have to play the game, and you have to be a millionaire. What kind of a democracy is that if only a millionaire can become a senator? This is democracy?

Do you see any similarities between the American people in the relationship to our politicians as to kind of the rise of Hitlerism, of Nazism in Germany, that maybe the sense of powerlessness, or I don't know, anything? Do you see any similarities?

Well, the potential for such demagoguery is always there. This is a totally different country. It's a different continents. It's a different history, if there is a history. And the situation is really radically different, but the vermin is always there.

What's this guy's name? Farrakhan, and the skinheads, and the Aryan Nation fellas. They can all be dismissed as weirdos who don't count and who will never accomplish anything. I don't know. I don't know.

It's my opinion that as long as this country is prosperous and that everybody has a job, everybody-- we something like 6% unemployed. Nevertheless, the majority, most people, this so-called recession isn't so hot either. It's not the Depression.

As long as, in general, you have your shelter and have your food and a little extra, I think that we, the refugees, are more or less safe. But more or less. Let things go wrong, if the economy goes wrong, scapegoats will be needed. Who are the first to be blamed? Your guess.

You know who the first ones will be. If Germany had been prosperous, there would have been no Hitler. There was vast



unemployment. The unemployment figures we see, which are quoted from time to time on television, they are a barometer of the security of the Jewish people in this country. Quote. The unemployment figures are the barometer of our welfare.

If you want to break now, we're going to quit.