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Interviewer: Lani Silver

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INTERVIEW OF: JOSEPH MOREL

TRANSCRIBERS: BARNET ABRAMOWITZ and RICHARD GREENSPAN

About, I think about 4 or 5,000 people, the island was Greek mostly with Turkish minority and a Jewish minority, and the community was Spanish-speaking essentially. That was our language, with the exception of the more educated Jews who spoke French.

And especially the, my mother's generation, my mother had access to education in France, so she raised me with French, that was my mother's tongue. But the background language at home was Spanish, you know, our Spanish, which is remarkably close to modern Spanish, I found that out later after I had contact with the Spanish world.

And the Jews had been there, well, I assume since the 15th century, end of the 15th century, and the overwhelming majority, if not the total amount of the Jews there, were of Spanish descent, you know. There were no other Jews, there were no Greek-speaking Jews, for example. There were Greek-speaking Jewish communities in Greece, I found that out later.

But the funny part of this, that all those Greek-speaking Jews had Spanish last names, so they had maybe lost Spanish being in outlying Jewish communities,

1 but people like M-A-G-R-I-N-E, which is a very Spanish name  
2 from northern Greece in I-P-A-L-U-S, northwest in Greece.

3           Anyway, in Rhodes, the Jews were, they had been  
4 there since the 15th century. 1492 is supposed to be the  
5 date of the expulsion, but from what I have been able to  
6 gather there had been movements of Jews out of Spain as  
7 early as the 1300s due to a variety of reasons, but I guess  
8 the big exodus was in 1492, and they came to settling the  
9 Turkish, what was then the Turkish empire, and we were  
10 accepted, I would say even envited by the Moslems -- by the  
11 Turks, I should say, because of their skills and whatnot.

12           And they found refuge. And a rather tolerant  
13 environment there, and wealthy Jews lived, a lot of Jews,  
14 especially the less wealthy Jews lived in the Juderia, they  
15 called it, the Jewery, the Jewish ghetto which was inside  
16 the walls of the old medieval city built by the Crusaders.  
17 There was also a Turkish district.

18           The Greeks lived outside of the walls. We lived  
19 outside of the walls too. We live in N-E-C-O-R-Y which was  
20 the new district which was essentially amongst the Greek  
21 population. But the cantacts between the various ethnic  
22 groups were, I would say, limited. Each group was  
23 self-supportive. And so the Jews were, did some trade and  
24 trade even with Turkey, with Asia Minor which was close by.

25           Anyway it was Turkey, and they did crafts, they

1 did things like cabinet making and weaving and, well, you  
2 know, technology was not very highly developed in those  
3 days. But the outlying population was Greek. Of course  
4 the villages, I think there were two or three Turkish  
5 villages, I'm not sure, but mostly Greeks. And the Jews  
6 lived their own life, as it were.

7 My mother was born under Turkish rule in 1911.  
8 The Italians occupied those island, the Galapenese Islands  
9 off the coast of Turkey. It was the Turko-Italian war or  
10 Italia-Turkish war, and the Italians took Libya from the  
11 Turks and the islands. So I was born an Italian citizen,  
12 and I came to this country as an Italian citizen.

13 And I went to Italian schools, Italian Catholic  
14 schools in Rhodes with the Nuns in kindergarten, and with  
15 the Italian brothers or Marion brothers, I think, in the  
16 first four grades. Then we moved to Athens, and it was a  
17 fortuitous move, as I said, because it probably saved our  
18 lives.

19 AN INTERVIEWER: This was in 1934?

20 MR. MOREL: In 1934 my mother had been killed  
21 many years before that, so we stayed, we lived with my  
22 mother's brother in my mother's brother's houses. So he  
23 moved to Athens to seek better employment and we moved  
24 along with him. And we lived in Athens from that time on  
25 until 1946, December, '46 when we left for the United

1 States.

2 So these were very good years, with the  
3 exception, of course, of the German occupation.

4 AN INTERVIEWER: When you moved to Athens, which  
5 area did you move to, was there a Jewish section?

6 MR. MOREL: No, no, no, in Athens, the Jewish  
7 capital, the Sephardic capital of the world in knows days  
8 was Salonika, the Salonoke, which is the capital of Greek  
9 Macedonia.

10 AN INTERVIEWER: Right.

11 MR. MOREL: It is a very large and very active  
12 Sephardic population. There were other elements among the  
13 Jews there, but the overwhelming majority was Spanish  
14 speakers. Spanish was the language of communication. And  
15 they were just beginning to integrate, the younger ones,  
16 linguistically, that is. But essentially they formed a  
17 distinct ethnic group, and this was their downfall, of  
18 course, because that's what happened.

19 They were rounded up and destroyed. And that is  
20 a chapter which, of course, is a very sad one because they  
21 represent the bulk of the Jewish population in Greece, they  
22 were extremely vulnerable. They didn't know how vulnerable.

23 AN INTERVIEWER: There were almost 50,000 of  
24 them?

25 MR. MOREL: Yes. They were almost 50,000 of them.

1 Yes, they couldn't suspect that was in store for them, how  
2 could they? But the fact that horrible things were in the  
3 offing, there was a feeling, a tremendous feeling which was  
4 well justified, of course.

5 AN INTERVIEWER: The situation in Athens?

6 MR. MOREL: In Athens, first of all Athens had a  
7 much bigger population and there were fewer Jews, and the  
8 Jews were not concentrated in any area. They were  
9 scattered all over there and there was no concentration of  
10 Jews anywhere in Athens, nowhere, and that may contributed  
11 to our survival also.

12 Because we were able to blend in as it were  
13 actually, the population. Although we sort of vanished  
14 from circulation, but that's another chapter. So we were  
15 in Athens, and now?

16 AN INTERVIEWER: And you lived, before the  
17 Italian invasion of Greece, were there any signs like when  
18 the war was declared on Poland in 1939, did you know in  
19 Athens about what was happening to Jews elsewhere? Were  
20 there any signs?

21 MR. MOREL: Oh, that started at an earlier stage  
22 because with the advent of Hitler to power, of course,  
23 rumors, and then hard news had been coming out and the  
24 persecution of Jews and the virulent anti-Semitism of Nazis  
25 came known to everybody.

1           And pretty soon, later on, in the later 30s, we  
2 started hearing rumors and actually some Jews were  
3 filtering through into Greece from Germany, from Austria,  
4 from other parts on their way somewhere else, hopefully,  
5 and the Jewish community was trying to help them in Athens,  
6 you know, give them shelter and food and put them up, you  
7 know, so we kept hearing.

8           Some of them were going to Palestine, the Jewish  
9 mandate, and so I was a young kid then. And, but I  
10 remember talk about it and there was money sent, you know,  
11 to, for the land fund in Palestine, you know, to buy land  
12 and whatever and to help people. And we kept hearing about,  
13 you know, the persecutions and so on and so forth.

14           So we didn't personally feel threatened because,  
15 you know, we didn't know what was going to happen, and then  
16 when the war broke out in 1939, when the Germans invaded  
17 Poland, you know, things started happening. And, of course,  
18 I have to go back. I went to an Italian school in Athens,  
19 because we were Italian citizens, and Italians citizens in  
20 Athens was a very big presence, a big presence, and we  
21 started hearing about the Axis pact which was signed by  
22 Mussolini and Hitler.

23           And, you know, anti-Semitic propaganda, although  
24 the Italians, it was kind of half-hearted, or it was,  
25 really, not really meant the way the Germans meant it.

1 But in '37 or '38, I don't remember, we were  
2 told -- now, there were a few Jews in the Italian school,  
3 and we used to have sports activities and whatnot, and then  
4 it was a fascist undertone to, you know, you marched and  
5 saluted and all that stuff.

6 And then one day on the soccer field there, we  
7 were all lined up together, the coach came out and started  
8 reading names and he says, "Those of you whose names I call,  
9 fall out," and we fell out and we just noticed we were all  
10 Jews and he was extremely perturbed, he was shaking,  
11 trembling, and he says, "We got orders from Rome from today  
12 on, you guys are going to March in a separate unit,  
13 separate group. " That was the beginning.

14 So we told that to our parents and our parents  
15 told us, "Okay, that's it, quit, we are quitting the  
16 Italian school." We all left en masse. And I went to a  
17 French school in Athens with with the French brothers, the  
18 Marion brothers, and I finished the three grades there.

19 The principal of the Italian school called in  
20 the Jewish parents saying, begging, "Please, don't go away,  
21 don't, we will send teachers to you, this is a temporary  
22 thing, I am ashamed, of course." The Italians are human  
23 beings, you know. They are decent people, let's face it,  
24 there is no comparison. The Germans is something else.

25 The Italians are human. I have nothing but

1 greatest love for the Italian people. So we left, and I  
2 went to the French school and the next three grades I  
3 finished, I didn't have any problems, I knew French. So,  
4 and then the war broke out.

5 And then Italy invaded Greece on October 28th,  
6 1940, after provoking the Greeks, you know, torpedoing a  
7 Greek war ship, doing all kinds of provocation. They  
8 invaded Greece, and if you know history, you know that the  
9 Greeks pushed them back into Albania from where they had  
10 attacked.

11 So there was an interim, and the interesting  
12 thing is we were in Greece and we were Italian citizens,  
13 but we were not in any way molested. Of course, they knew  
14 where our sympathies were, certainly antifascist, and we  
15 felt a total, total solidarity with our Greek neighbors,  
16 you know.

17 And there was a great time of solidarity. We  
18 helped in the Greek war effort, you know, giving clothing  
19 and everything and whatever we could, and women were  
20 knitting clothes for the soldiers in the mountains. There  
21 was a great feeling of unity and solidarity and, of course,  
22 I fully, as a child, you know, my family fully  
23 participated in the Greek struggle for independence. And  
24 then, of course, the Germans hit, April, I think it was  
25 April 1941.



1                   They came in from the north. They invaded  
2                   Yugoslavia and Greece, and in three weeks we had Germans in  
3                   Athens. And that's when they came in, like a bunch of  
4                   locusts, hungry locusts, devouring everything. Within one  
5                   week there was a food emergency. People started passing  
6                   out from lack of food. And the Teutonic presence became a  
7                   reality for us, the aliens, I mean they were truly aliens.

8                   It is funny, it is hard to explain, but they  
9                   were aliens. We had had the British who had come into help  
10                  the Greeks before the Germans came in, and they looked  
11                  human. It is hard to explain. I am expressing my own  
12                  biases, but the Germans were, there were, there was  
13                  something alien about it, it was hard to explain, totally  
14                  alien, as if they were creatures from another planet.

15                 Now, the Italian troops came in on the heels of  
16                 the Germans, shamefacedly, as it were, because they knew  
17                 they had been beaten. But they came in and they occupied  
18                 Athens along the, with the Germans. As a matter of fact,  
19                 Athens was under Italian occupation for a long time and  
20                 that was a help.

21                 The Italians were humans. The Germans, there  
22                 was something, it is hard to explain, it is hard to explain,  
23                 aliens, that's all. And so began our whole, the terror and  
24                 everything else.

25                 Now, Athens was officially under the Italian

1 administration. And from that time until Italy collapsed  
2 in 1943, things were terrible, I mean the starvation was  
3 unbelievable. But the Italians somehow managed to keep  
4 things very, managed to avoid the kind of horrors that the  
5 Germans had perpetrated.

6           Meanwhile in northern Greece, it was the Germans  
7 who held sway and the Bulgarians were, the Bulgarians were  
8 in Trace, so that didn't affect us, but in Solinika, it  
9 started, it started, the process, the machine started to  
10 get into gear, you know, for, to fulfill the timetable of  
11 extermination, you know. I'm sure Berlin said, well, in  
12 two months we can send Jews, so many trains, so you can  
13 take them to wherever you are taking them.

14           So then began the registration of the Jews and  
15 some Jews began to escape from Solinika to come to Athens,  
16 younger ones, especially the younger ones, unattached young  
17 men and women. That's what happened. They managed to get  
18 out, risking their lives, traveling illegally. They came  
19 into Athens. We got to know them. We found them places to  
20 stay. There was support from the Greek population. It was  
21 rumored that even the Italian had helped, Italian officers  
22 had arranged to give them passage on trains. I haven't  
23 confirmed that.

24           They started coming out, a few, handfuls. And I  
25 know some of them, some who are living in Israel, some of

1 them are in Athens, B-E-R-T R-U-B-Y, B-A-R-E-N-E-L-L-A,  
2 C-H-U-M-E-N-A, a few other people that I got to know.  
3 There was an interim period there before the Italian  
4 collapse in '43 when these people filtered out.

5           Then we started hearing real horror stories.  
6 For example, the Germans decided to get all the men from 15  
7 to 65 in the main square in Salonika, the Jewish men, line  
8 them up, they had dogs, beat them, terrorized them; total  
9 terror, they were masters of it, they were masters, total  
10 absolute terror. They did it all over Europe. They are  
11 masters, those guys were, they were trained masters, that's  
12 all there is to it.

13           And then began the deportations, right, but we  
14 never, we never in our -- well, there were rumors, you know,  
15 they are sending them to be, to work on farms, but we knew  
16 that they would also kill, we knew that they would kill,  
17 but we never could even imagine in our most horrendous  
18 dreams that they were actually, there was a blueprint for  
19 total extermination. But we knew it was a terrible threat,  
20 we knew it was very, very bad, you know.

21           And then, then Italy collapsed, Italy fell apart  
22 in August, I think, July-August 1943. Athens was  
23 essentially garrisoned by Italian troops, where I lived.  
24 And, of course, the Italian army literally disintegrated,  
25 literally disintegrated. They didn't know what to do with

1 themselves.

2           The Germans disintegrated, they were running  
3 drunk in the street. And if somebody had acted quickly, I  
4 had a feeling that perhaps we could have chased them out.  
5 But the Italians didn't want to fight. And some of them  
6 took off their clothes, sold their weapons to the  
7 underground and put on regular clothes.

8           They had girlfriends, they had Greek  
9 girlfriends, they blended in physically, you couldn't tell  
10 them them you apart really. Some went up in the mountains  
11 to fight with the guerrillas, the Greek guerrillas, who  
12 themselves could not feed them, and told them, look, we  
13 appreciate your help, but you, now, you know, we are  
14 starving, you want to starve with us, that kind of stuff?

15           Although some did fight, some did and did stay.  
16 And then others were rounded up by the Germans, taken to,  
17 used as, you know, working, workers, you know, to do the  
18 heavy work and sent to Germany to prisoner of war camps.  
19 And when Italy fell, right away, we had to make a decision.  
20 We knew this was it, the real fun begins now.

21           We were very fortunate. Well, back to, I had an  
22 uncle, M-A-U-R-I-C-E S-O-L-D-I-A-N-O, who was an important  
23 man in Athens, and he had his wife, my Aunt R-E-G-I-N-A,  
24 and three children, N-E-S-A, L-U-B-Y, and L-E-N-A. L-E-N-A  
25 was 10 years old, N-E-S-A was 17, 16, L-U-B-Y was 13. He

1 had means, he had contacts even with the Italians, and when  
2 he knew Italy was falling, he said, "I want to get my  
3 children, my wife out of here."

4           Where did he send them? To Rhodes. That was  
5 the most terrible decision he ever made, because, see,  
6 Rhodes was Italian, and there were lots of Italian troops,  
7 but the Germans invaded Rhodes and took it over like that  
8 and the Italians didn't fight, that's all. And they were  
9 caught and sent to Auschwitz.

10           My uncle, he managed to get out. We, what  
11 happened is this: We were very fortunate, we had very good  
12 neighbors, we had very close, very loving connections with  
13 our neighbors, our Greek neighbors. When we heard that,  
14 you know, this, the fun was beginning, the Germans put the  
15 thing in the paper, all Jews must register within 24 hours,  
16 any Jews caught unregistered would be shot, executed. So  
17 we were ready for it.

18           We gave away all our furniture, everything in  
19 the house. We were fortunate because we had two families  
20 especially. I mean Greek friends came to us and said, what  
21 are you going to do, what are you going to do? Well, we  
22 will take care of you, we will take care of you. Mind you,  
23 this is at the risk of their lives, you know that. The  
24 penalty for harboring Jews was death. And so we scattered.

25           I was -- now, my Mother's brother in whose house

1 we lived was J-A-C-K I-S-R-A-E-L and my Aunt R-A-C-H-E-L,  
2 his wife, who happened to be my father's sister, so we had  
3 double -- then my two sisters and first cousins, A-L-I-C-E  
4 and B-E-C-K-Y, and my brother and I. And we all lived  
5 together and we had the maid, too, of course. Everybody  
6 had a maid.

7 And so when it came to those very critical days  
8 of deciding what we were going to do, the first thing we  
9 knew was this: We would have to split up, you know. There  
10 are safety in numbers but there is also danger in numbers.  
11 So we had a lot of friends, thank heaven for that. The two  
12 girls went with a Greek family a very, very well-to-do  
13 Greek family. And we stayed there for a while, you know.

14 My uncle and aunt went someplace for very short  
15 time, and my brother and I, what happened, its, see, it is  
16 the sequence which is very interesting. It had to do with  
17 the logistics of finding housing.

18 Well, my uncle worked in an office, in a company,  
19 large company, and one of the workers there, one of the  
20 employees, a humble man, said, you know, my house is at  
21 your disposal. He had other offers, but there were two  
22 families, two Greek families which were outstanding in what  
23 they did for us, the Economides family and the Pavlakis  
24 family, were our neighbors and who saved our lives, that's  
25 it, they saved our lives.

1                   They risked their lives daily because we had to  
2 move from one place to another. Some places became  
3 dangerous, then we had to move to other places. They  
4 orchestrated the whole thing, they found these places, they  
5 brought us food, you know, they were our liaison between us.  
6 They even arranged a meeting between us, all of us, the six  
7 together.

8                   These were terrible moments, but I want to say  
9 that this is nothing compared to what the people in  
10 Salonika went through, or worse yet, the martyrdom of the  
11 Jews in Poland, in the Lodz ghetto, the Warsaw ghetto, the  
12 living hell on earth, we never knew that. The really  
13 catastrophe was in Poland, you know, where, you know, the  
14 Germans, it haunts me, I hate to say this, but it still  
15 haunts me. Everyday of my life it haunts me, but anyway,  
16 we had the fear; some close calls.

17                   My mother went to stay with the Economides and I  
18 went to stay with the Pavlakis family. My two cousins went  
19 with another family, I forget the name. I might remember.  
20 My uncle Nat went and stayed in the basement of a Greek  
21 church outside of Athens, in the periphery of Athens. They  
22 went there and the priest took care of feeding them and  
23 everything.

24                   Then he had to move from there because people  
25 were getting suspicious, and then for a month or so, my

1 uncle and aunt stayed in the periphery of Athens in a slum  
2 district, I mean slum, you can not imagine. We slept on a  
3 dirt floor with mice running over us. There were  
4 outhouses, there were no facilities.

5 We stayed there for a month. And finally my  
6 aunt and uncle and the two girls, my two cousins, found a  
7 place to stay. My uncle and aunt had to leave the church,  
8 they were absconded, they were taken away with an ambulance  
9 because people, they had been betrayed or something, I  
10 don't know, but anyway they found a place for the girls,  
11 and they lived in a neighborhood, a very low profile, very  
12 low profile.

13 People knew they were Jews, but did not betray  
14 them. Then my mother and I found, my mother then left the  
15 Economides house and she and I found a place in a very  
16 large home in the heart of Athens, a very large home. We  
17 got a room there, and the Pavlakis and Economides, our  
18 friends, brought us food, you know, and kept us going.

19 And then we had to move again because things  
20 were getting a little dangerous in that particular area.  
21 The Germans were making blocks, they would call them. They  
22 would surround the neighborhood at night with trucks and  
23 lights on, loudspeakers, everybody come out in the street.  
24 If you are caught inside the house you would be executed.

25 Then there would be people pointing out, this



1 guy -- then there would be people with hurts pointing out  
2 this guy is this, that one, take him away, you know. It  
3 was the time of the executions, the mass arrests, reprisals,  
4 shooting hostages and everything. We lived that way for a  
5 year and a half, from July, I think, or August 1943 until  
6 October, 1944 when we were liberated.

7           And all of this time, of course, we were  
8 underground. We had false papers which fortunately we never  
9 had to show, because who knows what would have happened.  
10 And you kept hearing, so and so has been caught, so and so--  
11 it was rumored there were Jews who were being betrayed by  
12 people, you know. The going price, they said, was two  
13 English pounds. This was the measure, you know, everything  
14 was in English gold, sovereigns.

15           There were even Jews, I think, there was one guy,  
16 E-P-R-I-C-O-N-A-T-I, who was betraying Jews in Salonika,  
17 selling them to the Germans, and he was, I think he was  
18 executed after the war, I'm not sure.

19           The Greek government, even the puppet government  
20 supposedly, protested. The Greek bishops protested to the  
21 Germans, that these were Greek citizens that were being  
22 deported and everything. They went in orphanages, they  
23 went into veterans hospitals, they went into mental  
24 hospitals, they went to retirement homes, put them in  
25 sealed trains and take them away.

1                   And Rhodes, what happened to in Rhodes  
2                   apparently, by the time the Germans got there, a lot of  
3                   Jews had emigrated from Rhodes between -- well, in the late  
4                   30s, early 40s, so that what was left was about 1850 Jews.  
5                   These were shipped to M-A-R-A-R-O-S, the port of Athens,  
6                   taken for one or two days to a concentration camp outside  
7                   of Athens called H-I-D-A-R-I where several died from the  
8                   hardships, beatings, a few people.

9                   My great aunt S-E-P-H-I-L-A Israel, who was the  
10                  wife of my great uncle R-U-B-E-N I-S-R-A-E-L on my mother's  
11                  side, who was the Great Rabbi of Rhodes, she died, she was  
12                  80 plus. My Aunt R-E-G-I-N-A Regina -- I'm mentioning just  
13                  a few of my relatives, all together we calculated there  
14                  were 27 of our family that got destroyed in Rhodes -- my  
15                  Aunt R-E-G-I-N-A and her daughter L-E-N-A, were destroyed  
16                  right away.

17                  My cousins N-E-S-A and L-U-B-Y was, were put to  
18                  work. N-E-S-A was put to work in a coal mine, in the  
19                  bottom, and didn't see the light of day for a year and a  
20                  half. They were underground. When he was found --  
21                  fortunately he survived, a miracle, he was almost dead, and  
22                  the Russians liberated them.

23                  And then he somehow ended up in a sanitorium in  
24                  Switzerland and he had tuberculosis and he survived.  
25                  L-U-B-Y, I think, was sold to some German East Prussian

1 farmer and N-E-S-A was a very delicate very -- well, not  
2 very, educated highly refined girl, upper middle-class,  
3 governess and all that.

4 She was a bonded slave in, a German slave,  
5 chained in a stable every night, beaten regularly by the  
6 farmer's wife. She and D-O-R-A C-A-P-U-L-A,  
7 D-O-R-A C-A-P-U-L-A was also a girl from Rhodes, a  
8 neighbor of ours. When they heard the canon and everything,  
9 when the Russians were advancing, they escaped, they  
10 managed to escape and went to the front lines and they were  
11 found by some Russians and survived.

12 And I saw N-E-S-A a few years back, she lives in  
13 Argentina a few years back, so does her brother. So the  
14 two of them survived, the two from the S-O-R-I-A-N-O family.  
15 My aunt and her 10 year old daughter were wiped out.

16 We survived because of the goodness, I would say  
17 the compassion, the heroism of our neighbors. I mean when  
18 I think of it, you know, what greater proof of friendship  
19 can anybody ask for? And, so we were liberated. When I  
20 think back of the dangers that we were in, I blanch. But  
21 thank heaven we personally did not have the kind of  
22 emergencies that other peoples had. We were not found out.

23 AN INTERVIEWER: Were you able to go outside  
24 during this time?

25 MR. MOREL: I was in jail, essentially. I

1 circulated as little as possible and at night only. It was  
2 mortal danger. You have no idea. I mean we kept hearing  
3 about people being, being, you know, caught, the so and so  
4 family, the so and so family, the so and so family, they  
5 have been caught.

6 A Jewish family in the neighborhood where we  
7 were hiding, nobody knew they were there, but we heard  
8 screams, Germans coming in at night and they took the so  
9 and so family. Somebody had betrayed them and they took  
10 them all away, a couple with two children. You know, it  
11 was the hunt, a manhunt, that's all. So when we were  
12 liberated, I couldn't believe it, I mean, you know, I had,  
13 it was like you know, a dream.

14 We came back to our neighborhood. Now, the only  
15 families who knew were the Economides and the Pavlakis, the  
16 other neighbors didn't know. When word came out that we  
17 had come back, the whole neighborhood poured out into the  
18 street, hugging us, kissing us, telling us how happy they  
19 were to see us alive. You have no idea how much love they  
20 showed us.

21 So we knew that, you know, it was a boon to our  
22 hearts, to everything we had gone through, to see these  
23 proofs of affection on the part of our neighbors. They all  
24 the told us that they were so happy. I mean it was genuine,  
25 it was an outpouring.

1 AN INTERVIEWER: A sharp contrast to what  
2 happened to Polish Jews who went back to Poland.

3 MR. MOREL: We all know about Poland, we all know  
4 about Poland. I feel sad. It is a reflection on the  
5 Poles --

6 AN INTERVIEWER: Right.

7 MR. MOREL:-- not on the Jews.

8 AN INTERVIEWER: No, no.

9 MR. MOREL: This is why I have a tremendous  
10 loyalty to Greece and love and identification.

11 AN INTERVIEWER: How were you treated by the  
12 army who liberated you, the British?

13 MR. MOREL: Oh, the British, the British, what do  
14 you mean, how were we treated? There was no, we were free.

15 AN INTERVIEWER: You were put back into your old  
16 house?

17 MR. MOREL: We were not put back into our old  
18 house, we reclaimed our old house. Incidentally, it is a  
19 good question. When the war ended, the neighbors, the  
20 Pavlakis told us, you know, your apartment has been  
21 occupied by squatters who came from Macedonia. These were  
22 Greek peasants who came from Macedonia because they were  
23 fleeing from the Bulgarians.

24 Macedonia, Bulgarians were sort of halfway  
25 allies with the Germans, and so, so the Greeks, a lot of

1 Greeks were kicked out of Bulgaria, T-R-A-C-E, the  
2 Northeast -- of Greek by the Bulgarians, and they came as  
3 refugees, and, of course, the Jews' homes were opened.  
4 They were empty and our house was empty, there was nothing,  
5 except the four walls because we had given everything to  
6 our neighbors, which we got back after the war.

7 And they squatted there. Now, these were  
8 super primitive peasants, I mean really primitive. And  
9 they left, as soon as the war ended, they left to go back  
10 to their villages. When we came into our apartment, it was  
11 a pig sty beyond description. It took us weeks to clean  
12 that. I mean the walls were covered with blankets of  
13 cockroaches, I mean a living mass of cockroaches, the floor,  
14 my poor mother was, you know, but we managed to clean it up  
15 and we went back to living there.

16 And then we, we, when we came back, we began to  
17 really acquaint ourselves to become aware of the enormity  
18 of the crime that had been committed against the Jews. We  
19 didn't know. Then it started coming out, the Auschwitz,  
20 the horror, and then some of the Jews who had been deported,  
21 whom we knew, started coming back, under, in unbelievable  
22 shape.

23 One girl, N-I-N-A S-A-K-O-R-I-E, she was a  
24 classmate of mine. I saw this creature, this puffy-faced  
25 creature with tufts of hair looking, I mean, and she was

1 what, 17, and I saw her in the street and she says, "Don't  
2 you remember me, S-A-K-O-R-I-E?" And she says, "I'm back  
3 from the concentration camp," and I was horrified to see  
4 her, horrified, I didn't recognize her.

5 And they started coming back, the Jews, you know,  
6 and we heard, we became aware of the extent of the awful  
7 crime, and little by little, you know, the news, we started  
8 seeing newsreels, the camps and everything like that.

9 We hadn't seen any newsreels from the allies'  
10 side for four years of Italian German occupation, all we  
11 had seen was Italian German propaganda newsreels, even  
12 Japanese newsreels, believe it or not, showing the war in  
13 the pacific from the Japanese point of view, which is  
14 interesting.

15 Then we standard seeing those things from  
16 Aushwitz and Dachau and Bergen-Belsen and all those things  
17 and I sat in this, there was a newsreel theater and they  
18 were showing them around the clock and I was, you know,  
19 stunned.

20 There was someone behind me, they were showing --  
21 you talked about Poland -- they were showing one incident  
22 that happened after the war where some Jewish survivors  
23 were set upon by the Polish so-called partisans, the Polish  
24 partisans who killed many Jews and they were showing, they  
25 were (inaudible) these poor creatures and everything.

1 There was one guy behind me who said, "I'm glad they did it  
2 to them," in Greek. There were people like that.

3 Then we heard our neighbors, our good neighbors  
4 told us, "You know the so and so people, your neighbors  
5 across the street, do you know what they were saying?"  
6 They were happy that the Jews were being killed. Of course,  
7 they said they felt sorry for you. They didn't know if we  
8 were still alive, they felt sorry for you, but they thought  
9 it was great that all the Jews were being massacred by the  
10 Germans.

11 So there were, you know, remnants of this  
12 medieval anti-Semitism was still there among very few,  
13 overwhelmingly, overwhelmingly, and I can speak on the  
14 basis of my knowledge and what is told by some of our  
15 friends like the T-U-V-E who went up into the mountains,  
16 and there was a very good family that we knew from Rhodes,  
17 the T-U-V-E, who went up into the Greek mountains, they  
18 were sheltered in a Greek village.

19 The couple had two daughters, Rachel T-U-V-E was  
20 a good seamstress, so she found plenty of work, you know,  
21 working and sewing, and they were, any time there was a  
22 rumor that the Germans were coming in the area, they would  
23 be, the peasant would come, "Okay, let's go, you are going  
24 up into the mountain. " So they were actively protected.

25 By and large, the behavior of the Greek



1 population was irreproachable, if not supportive wherever  
2 possible. But, of course, everybody was acclimized in  
3 those days, you know that. Wherever the Greeks were aware  
4 of what was happening, they helped. The Greek police  
5 helped in Athens, warning the Jews, the Germans are  
6 rounding you up, scatter. That is a fact, an undeniable  
7 fact.

8 By and large, by and large, they treated us like  
9 their own kind at the risk of their own lives, I have to  
10 say this. This is a matter of, I have to say, the Pavlakis  
11 and Economides who were our dear friends, what can I say?  
12 They were angels, comforting us.

13 AN INTERVIEWER: why do you think they were like  
14 that?

15 MR. MOREL: By and large the Greek population is  
16 a pretty damn decent civilized, civilized, truly civilized  
17 population with a kind of principles, I mean a love and  
18 respect for life. I've never had any conflict between my  
19 Jewishness and my Greekness.

20 AN INTERVIEWER: But the Germans were very  
21 civilized people too?

22 MR. MOREL: Not on my terms.

23 THE INTERVIEWER: Yes, but the difference is the  
24 love for life?

25 MR. MOREL: The respect for life, the love for

1 life. I didn't say it to the point where there were some  
2 German prisoners that the underground had caught --

3 AN INTERVIEWER: But the difference is the love  
4 for life, maybe that's the difference?

5 MR. MOREL: The love for life, the respect for  
6 life. I have seen it to the point where there was some  
7 German prisoners that the underground had caught, you know,  
8 and the Germans were scared to death that they might be  
9 shot and the Greeks said, okay, don't worry, have a cigaret,  
10 don't worry, we will turn you over to the British. I'm not  
11 saying that there are no Greeks that are capable of cruelty,  
12 but who isn't?

13 The Jews are capable of cruelty. They have done  
14 their things in Israel, too. I mean, let's be honest about  
15 it, there has been cruelty, gratuitous cruelty on the part  
16 of Jews, too. But the Greeks by and large are a civilized  
17 hospitable warm-hearted kindly population. You know, they  
18 don't have hang-ups, you know -- they have hang-ups, but  
19 you know what I am saying.

20 AN INTERVIEWER: So they are a very warm, loving  
21 people similar to the Italians?

22 MR. MOREL: Yes, of course they are, of course  
23 they are. The Italians too. I saw Italians giving food to  
24 the kids, you know, soldiers, and God knows their rations  
25 were miserable compared to those of the Germans, but they

1 showed compassion. It is, even some Germans for that  
2 matter. There was -- well, I can tell you stories, but he  
3 know what I am saying.

4 AN INTERVIEWER: Did you see or hear of any  
5 resistance on the part of Jews in your area, an organized  
6 kind of resistance?

7 MR. MOREL: It was every man for himself, every  
8 man for himself. You are talking, you are totally  
9 defenseless, you are totally defenseless, there were Jews  
10 who were in the mountains and fought, but you, you know,  
11 the Jews were subjected to the most dire immediate  
12 emergency and threat, you know. They were faced with  
13 annihilation and extinction, they were singled out as the  
14 main target of the Germans.

15 I mean what were they going to do first? You  
16 know what I am saying? What could they do. And in  
17 Salonika, it was so fast, before you know knew it, 50,000  
18 Jews had vanished, just a few weeks, bam-bang, go, that's  
19 it, all of a sudden they are gone. They never knew what --  
20 we had warnings in Athens, we had warnings. We were  
21 fortunate, I know it, although I had made a vow to myself I  
22 was, they were never going to get me alive, I mean no way,  
23 no way, I mean I was mentally prepared to fight it out with  
24 them.

25 AN INTERVIEWER: Were you with your mother this

1 whole time?

2 MR. MOREL: Not my whole time, not the whole  
3 time. She was, she was with Economides for a while, Mr.  
4 Economides, who was the vice president of one of the big  
5 banks in Athens, and a long-time friend, a saint, his whole  
6 family were saints. They comforted us, even with words  
7 when they saw us so depressed, you know, "Be patient, you  
8 know, you have ridden the whole donkey, all that is left  
9 now is the tail." That's a Greek expression, you know, be  
10 patient, be patient, everything will be okay.

11 My mother was with them and then she had to move  
12 away from there, and come, we found a place to be together  
13 and then we moved to another place. And I wanted to go up  
14 the mountains, I had contacts with the underground and I  
15 had made arrangements to go up in the mountains with the  
16 guerrillas and Mr. Economides got wind of it and said to me,  
17 you have no right to do it. You have to take care of your  
18 mother, he said she needs you, I stay here.

19 AN INTERVIEWER: You were how old?

20 MR. MOREL: I was 15, 16.

21 AN INTERVIEWER: It probably, he probably saved  
22 your life?

23 MR. MOREL: Well, I was in the Korean war, I  
24 came here and they drafted me and they put me on the line  
25 in Korea, in 1951-52, but that's another history. But what

1 I am saying is we personally are very fortunate and I know  
2 it. I don't know what would happen to me if I would be in  
3 a concentration camp, I would probably be dead by now. But  
4 survival, there were 50 Jews more or less that survived  
5 from Rhodes, out of 1850, 50 survived, that's all.

6 I know T-H-E-O-D-O-R-A C-A-P-U-L-A  
7 Mr. S-O-R-A-N-O, Mrs. S-O-R-A-N-O, my two cousins, and I  
8 saw D-O-R-A in New York City, she had two her teeth knocked  
9 out by one of those women guards, she is now living in  
10 Atlanta, I think, I'm not sure. L-U-B-Y and N-E-S-A are  
11 both in Argentina, both married with children.

12 Some of the men and women that came back to  
13 Athens had been sterilized they told me. We, you know, it  
14 was, I mean, after the war we began to measure the extent  
15 of the catastrophe, you know, by asking what happened to so  
16 and so, she is gone, what happened to so and so, she is  
17 gone.

18 What happened to them? They were caught, they  
19 were shot, they were hanged, they were gassed, they were  
20 killed. Some tried and succeeded in going to Asia Minor by  
21 island hoping with boats, and then from there there were  
22 groups there, Jewish groups, I think, they were taken to  
23 Palestine, which was the British mandate. Some went to  
24 Egypt and stayed for the duration of the war in Alexandria  
25 and then came back; some relatives of mine did,

1 the P-I-S-A-N-T-E, but the P-I-S-A-N-T-E escape a different  
2 way, they escaped by sailboat when the Germans were  
3 invading Greece.

4 They landed in Crete and then the Germans  
5 started bombing Crete and then they managed to go over the  
6 spine of Crete as it were, the mountain chain on the other  
7 side, and they got passage on a British war ship who took  
8 them to Alexandria and that's how they survived.

9 The other, my mother's other brother,  
10 R-I-C-H-A-R-D I-S-R-A-E-L, my other, because my mother had  
11 two brothers in Athens, got his family, went up to one of  
12 the Greek islands and then island hopped and ended up in  
13 Asia Minor; from there he ended in Alexandria, he survived.

14 Others did not make it, did not make it. And we  
15 found out what had happened to them. A lot of them we  
16 assumed they had been deported and shot or destroyed in the  
17 other way. So our mortality in Athens, Greece was  
18 something between 83 and 7, 86 percent. The Jews were  
19 extremely vulnerable.

20 You know, you register. "We just want to get a  
21 census" and then before you know it one day they keep you  
22 there. Then they bring your wives and children and that's  
23 it. You've had it. So now the Jews in Greece, there's  
24 what, 5,000, 10,000. There is no future for the Jewish  
25 community. There is no future.

1 AN INTERVIEWER: In your own particular family,  
2 like when the war ended in '44 for you, what was the  
3 impetus for staying in Greece or to leave Greece.

4 MR. MOREL: The impetus was to get out. Anybody  
5 that could get out, wanted to get out. I mean not just  
6 Jews, Greeks too. Because, well, we were liberated in  
7 October '44 and you have to study the history of Greece,  
8 and you know that is a hard thing to do, because it is such  
9 a partisan thing to do. You know, I have read about a half  
10 dozen histories of Greece with different slants, but the  
11 reality of the fact was that there was a clash between the  
12 exiled government that came into Greece and the guerrillas,  
13 who were pretty much on the left, the majority of the  
14 guerrillas.

15 Athens erupted into a civil war, Greece, you  
16 know, and we found ourselves two months after liberation in  
17 the midst of a horrible civil war. Athens was, you know,  
18 being blown up like Beirut, you know, and those were  
19 terrible periods.

20 We spent about a month, a month and a half in a  
21 war thing, and I think finally we were "liberated" again by  
22 the British who pushed the left wing guerrillas away from  
23 Athens. Now, this was the first round of the civil war  
24 which went on and on and on until the fifties. By that  
25 time we were down and out. I mean, we were on our last

1 legs. There was no future for us. We wanted to get out  
2 because it was terrible. Anybody that could get out got  
3 out.

4 So we had relatives in the United States and  
5 they sent us the documentation to help us immigrate, and we  
6 came here under the Italian quota, strangely enough. We  
7 and thousands of other Greeks from the Dodekinese Islands,  
8 who are in Italian possession, see, and what the United  
9 States Government did was apply the Italian quota to the  
10 Greeks as allies, you see, and it had been accumulating  
11 during the war because Italy was originally -- you know, it  
12 was against the United States, you know, officially, so  
13 Italian quota, the accumulated Italian quota was given to  
14 the Greeks of those islands.

15 So when we left Greece there were 900 Greeks  
16 from the Dodekinese Islands and us from Jewish families  
17 immigrated to the United States with Italian quotas. Under  
18 the Italian quota, not the Greek quota. The Greek quota  
19 was nothing

20 AN INTERVIEWER: Which year was this

21 MR. MOREL: This was the December 1946, and we  
22 landed in the United States, we picked up some Sicilian  
23 immigrants, about 300 of them in Sicily, and then we landed  
24 in New York City December 21, 1946. It was you know like  
25 entering the gates of paradise



1 AN INTERVIEWER: Were you settled by Jewish --

2 MR. MOREL: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

3 strictly individual. My uncle -- I had an uncle in Valajo

4 My mother's --

5 AN INTERVIEWER: Right here.

6 MR. MOREL: My mother's brother-in-law, Jack

7 Avoir, who did the affidavits of support and sent us -- we

8 didn't have any resources. I mean, we were broke.

9 There was some Jewish organizations that  
10 distributed some food to the Jews in Athens and -- that  
11 helped us too, because in the midst, in the midst of the  
12 civil war when bullets and mortar shells were flying all  
13 over, we were told that in the Jewish synagogue in Athens  
14 they were distributing food through the Jewish aid, so I  
15 and my uncle, we braved the bullets, sneaking our way  
16 through, sneaking our way through the streets and  
17 everything and crossing, you know, barricades and  
18 everything to go there and we present ourselves, and they  
19 gave us packages of food. You know, like flour, sugar,  
20 instant soups and cans of food, and we carried them on our  
21 backs in bags and came back and that helped us, and our  
22 neighbors, because we gave some to our neighbors, survived  
23 because for 40 days we had no food and no supplies, and I  
24 mean it was worse than ever, and so that did help us, and  
25 after the war the states, Canada, Australia, New Zealand

1 and all these countries that started bringing food and we  
2 managed -- they managed to get some food distributed,  
3 provisions like powdered milk and cheese and flour and  
4 things like that, you know, margarine and whatnot. You  
5 know, the basics to survive, and then my relatives, I had  
6 relatives in New York, on my father's side, relatives in  
7 Valajo on my mother's side were sending us packages and my  
8 uncle in Valajo sent us the affidavits of support to get  
9 our visas and we spent a couple of weeks in New York and  
10 then we came to Valajo, California, which was heaven.  
11 Heaven. That's the only way. It was like coming out of  
12 hell into heaven. You know, I mean, let's face it. And so  
13 here -- this is how here I am

14 AN INTERVIEWER: When you were saying earlier  
15 that the Greek population was very good to is how Jews and  
16 yet after that you said there was no future for the Jews in  
17 Greece, how do you know?

18 MR. MOREL: Well, no future because we were  
19 reduced to nothing. Now, when I say no future, it doesn't  
20 mean that an individual Jew could not choose to stay on in  
21 Greece, of course he could. You know, nobody would prevent  
22 him -- I have family in Greece now, right now, they are  
23 doing very well.

24 What I meant by future as Jews means as a Jewish --  
25 as an organized viable Jewish community. Do you understand?

1 I mean, let's face it. There was a Jewish community just  
2 like there was an Armenian community, there was a Turkish  
3 community. There was enough of them to maintain their  
4 numbers if one chooses to maintain one's own identity. Do  
5 you know what I mean? This has been always a problem for  
6 the Jews. I mean, actually the push to assimilate is very  
7 strong in Greece

8 AN INTERVIEWER: Everybody looks alike.

9 MR. MOREL: Yes, I mean, you have to keep people  
10 away because in the sense, keep them at arms length because  
11 you don't want to assimilate because it will be so easy to  
12 assimilate. You want to intermarry? Sure you can. Well,  
13 we intermarry here, let's face it.

14 I mean, America is, but in Greece too, the push  
15 to say oh, well, the hell with it. Why should I struggle  
16 and fight and stay a Jew? What does it really mean in the  
17 final analysis? I am perfectly at home here. This is my  
18 country and I have no obstacles. Do you know what I am  
19 saying?

20 So what I are say by Jewish community, I mean a  
21 Jewish community who has enough members so he can maintain  
22 a viable religious and ethnic identity. Right now there  
23 are so few of them that, you know, the kids, the new  
24 generation, they go to Israel.

25 AN INTERVIEWER: But did you ever think of going

1 to Israel or to any other country

2 MR. MOREL: Well, I thought about it, but you  
3 see the pull of the United States, I have a lot of family  
4 here, a lot of family, and they -- you know, come, it's all  
5 there for you, come. You know, they invited us. So, you  
6 know, the idea of going to Israel at that time, and there  
7 were conditions. You couldn't even go there. You know, it  
8 was illegal, to begin with. You had to be desperate, like  
9 some of the people in the DP camps and who were fleeing  
10 from the horrors of Poland and other countries. This --  
11 you know, they were the ones.

12 With us there was no immediate pressure to leave  
13 Greece, that's for sure. We were in a friendly environment.  
14 You see what I mean? So here our relatives in New York and  
15 Valajo, you know, we are waiting for you with open arms

16 AN INTERVIEWER: It would be hard to make any  
17 other choice.

18 MR. MOREL: The question did not even arise. I  
19 mean, there was -- well, no, no, I have to say I was  
20 interested in agriculture and I had ideas. I even read  
21 Walter Lauder milk, who was -- do you know anything about  
22 Walter Lauder milk? You heard of him. He was one of the  
23 specialists in Mediterranean agricultural (inaudible). He  
24 worked in Palestine, you know, Israel. I had read all his  
25 books. I had talked about going into agriculture. As a

1 matter of fact, I had even applied for admission to the  
2 Athens -- to the School of agriculture in the University of  
3 Athens.

4           So I had thought about it, yes, I had. It's  
5 hard to remember these things, but you know what I mean,  
6 but then, you know, it was right there and I was not a  
7 Zionist, you know, you know, to any degree, you know. We  
8 always sent money to K-E-L-E-M K-H-I-A-M in Israel. We  
9 had a thing where we used to give money where we had a  
10 picture of Palestine in the M-A-G-E-N-D-A-R-E-I-T, you know.  
11 We all put money. I used to put money, you know, which was  
12 collected and sent there regularly.

13           This was a feature of our home. I had the bond  
14 with the Jewish people, of course, it's there. I mean,  
15 let's face it. I am a Jew. I have paid the price. Not as  
16 much as some other people, but Israel as such, you know, I  
17 don't know how you feel about it

18           AN INTERVIEWER: Might you have stayed in Greece  
19 had there not been a civil war right afterward

20           MR. MOREL: No. I wanted out. Look, the Greeks  
21 wanted out. There was a gigantic waive of immigration of  
22 Greeks going mostly to Australia. There was half a million  
23 Greeks in Australia now. Canada, United States. Everybody.  
24 My friends would tell me oh, you are lucky to get out. I  
25 wish I could get out.

1 Greece was a wreck, a ruin, so -- and I had to  
2 pull up my family, you know. I wanted to turn my back on  
3 Europe. I didn't want any part of it. I didn't want any  
4 part of it. Not Greece itself. No, I am perfectly at home  
5 in Greece. I mean, I love Greece. I am as loyal to Greece  
6 as any Greek would be in the sense that the fate of Greece  
7 interests me personally, you know, but you can have more  
8 than one loyalty. You know what I am saying.

9 AN INTERVIEWER: And at the time, at the end of  
10 the war, which language was your family speaking? As you  
11 said earlier you had --

12 MR. MOREL: Spanish, French and Greek

13 AN INTERVIEWER: And you and your mother,  
14 between you?

15 MR. MOREL: That was French Greek. Okay.  
16 French was a transitional language. Now, if you are  
17 interested in Jewish history, the near eastern, the  
18 (inaudible) the Jewish Israelite or the Jewish Universal  
19 Alliance, which was essentially the creation of some highly  
20 placed French Jews. Among them there were the Redchek  
21 family. They were going to establish schools in the Moslem --  
22 in the Jewish countries in the Moslem communities. From  
23 Moracco all the way to Iraq. They came through Rhodes.  
24 They started the school, after (inaudible).

25 My mother went to that school. The medium of

1 instruction was Spanish, because they had trained some  
2 Spanish speaking Sephardic Jews who went there, and my  
3 mother remembered even how she learned the Roman alphabet  
4 because all they knew how to write was only Spanish with  
5 Hebrew characters, you know that, just like Yiddish was  
6 written with Hebrew characters, there was Ladino with  
7 Spanish characters -- with Hebrew characters, but my mother  
8 learned the alphabet and she remembered, she used to tell  
9 me, you know, how you write the I and everything like that,  
10 the (inaudible) section of Spanish. She got scholarship  
11 (inaudible) and spent four years studying there in the  
12 school (inaudible).

13 So there were a fairly large group of better off  
14 Jews who realized that French was the language of nobility  
15 and higher education, because our vernacular did not have  
16 much of that legible modern literature. The language of  
17 nobility a was French. The language of prestige was French,  
18 let's face it, and here were the French Jews setting up  
19 French schools and the Catholics set up schools. There  
20 was, you know, and the French government backed both of  
21 them, actually, because it was an expansionistic culture,  
22 the expansionistic policy that they followed, so my mother  
23 raised me with French. My uncles and aunts, they all spoke  
24 French to us as children. Among themselves they spoke  
25 Spanish

1 AN INTERVIEWER: What about Ladino

2 MR. MOREL: Ladino. Well, Spanish. Ladino is  
3 Spanish. I mean, it's 95 percent mutually intelligible.  
4 It's amazing. I was amazed when I heard Spanish, modern  
5 Spanish. We were very close, with some differences, of  
6 course, and many words that are Turkish, French, Italian  
7 language, but the language is he essentially Spanish, but  
8 anyway, among us the kids were speaking Greek. So French  
9 was a transitional language and Greek was the language  
10 supplanting Spanish, and my generation was the first  
11 generation who was not a prime speaker of Spanish. Do you  
12 see what I mean? It stuck in my mother's generation and  
13 it's dying.

14 AN INTERVIEWER: So among your friends you spoke  
15 Greek

16 MR. MOREL: Greek

17 AN INTERVIEWER: Your cousins

18 MR. MOREL: Greek.

19 AN INTERVIEWER: Greek?

20 MR. MOREL: Oh, yes, Greek. Greek was our  
21 language, and my nephews and nieces in Greece now, they  
22 speak Greek and English and French, but Greek, primarily,  
23 and they know a few words of Ladino, which two generations  
24 before was the living language which is printed, we had  
25 newspapers, you know, in Ladino. The language was sung,



1 the language was the medium. I remember when I was a kid  
2 Spanish in the streets, in the streets, Spanish. The town  
3 crier in the old city in Spanish. The synagogue -- you  
4 know, the service was in Hebrew, but the sermons and all  
5 the announcements was done in Spanish.

6 And it's gone. You know, it's gone. Just like --  
7 well, Yiddish is much stronger because it represents a much  
8 larger number of people and we may survive, it is surviving,  
9 but Ladino, it is spoken in Israel, you know, but it  
10 doesn't have a future, really. You know, it's a dying  
11 language. It has ceased being significant. But Salonika,  
12 Salonika was Spanish city. At one time there were 80,  
13 90,000 Jews, there were 10,000 Greeks and 10,000 Turks. It  
14 was all Jewish city. It was the center of Greece, of  
15 Turkish Mascedona in those days, you know. But, you know,  
16 it's -- so you are dealing with an Italian set of realities  
17 there. This is what happened here

18 AN INTERVIEWER: Would you be able to just  
19 comment on the day of liberation, what you remember

20 MR. MOREL: Oh, my God, the day of liberation

21 AN INTERVIEWER: What it was like.

22 MR. MOREL: We almost got killed then because  
23 the Germans came back. After they left Athens they came  
24 back on a retaliation raid flying at rooftop level and  
25 scattering bombs at random and blowing their houses and

1 killing people. You know, just to remind us of their  
2 presence, but we had been of course following the news on  
3 the illegal radio, as you know, and there were a lot of  
4 publications. The underground was beginning to show itself,  
5 and what publications, you know, pamphlets put under the  
6 doors and signs and everything, and we kept following the  
7 changes, you know, that were taking place in Europe. You  
8 know, the Normandy landing, June 6, 1944, which was the  
9 first solid ray of hope, and then of course the Russians,  
10 there was Stalingrad and all of that, for all those who  
11 lived through it, and then little by little the progress,  
12 and we said well -- we heard rumors, you know, the British  
13 and Latin commanders in Crete, you know, the British  
14 shelling the islands, you know, they are landing secretly.  
15 The Germans were still there.

16 And then the Americans were bombing also German  
17 airports around Athens at night and the daytime -- you  
18 could see them flying at night, the Germans started patrols  
19 into the streets, trucks leaving the city, so we knew that  
20 something was going to happen.

21 And as they began to evacuate certain  
22 neighborhoods, immediately the underground groups would  
23 takeover, you know, and start fighting each other, start  
24 shooting at each other.

25 This is the tragedy, the fools, and then they

1 would say stop, the German patrol was coming, the German  
2 patrol would go by and then they would start fighting again.  
3 This is the tragedy, unfortunately.

4 And then as time progressed, you know, the  
5 Americans were bombing every day. You know, you could see  
6 smoke, you know, the Germans -- the airports were being  
7 completely wasted and the Germans leaving and leaving and  
8 leaving and then one day all of a sudden we start hearing  
9 an outcry, bells and everything, you know, and they say go  
10 out to the terraces, you know, the flat little terraces  
11 where people live, you know, in the summer it is so hot,  
12 and we look to the Acropolis and the swastika was still  
13 there flying, you know, and then somebody chopped it down  
14 and we saw it go down.

15 There was no electricity, there was no running  
16 water, there was no gas, there was nothing. The people  
17 went to the old fountains, you know, springs to get water  
18 for their daily needs.

19 That night people made little candles, you know,  
20 with like oil lamps and everything on every terrace, the  
21 whole city. It was an October night. It was beautiful,  
22 you know, and we were on a slight rise looking down to the  
23 Selonik Gulf, which is where the Port of P-I-E-R-O-S-A,  
24 which is, you know, the Port of Athens. It's one huge, you  
25 know, metropolitan area.

1                   And I was looking towards the Gulf. All of a  
2 sudden the whole horizon, the whole horizon looking into  
3 the river erupted in one gigantic monstrous eruption.  
4 Thousands of tons or pounds of explosives that the Germans  
5 would time-fuse, it killed thousands of people. The whole  
6 port, including ships loaded with ammunition and everything  
7 blew up in one awesome, awesome explosion.

8                   And when I saw this, this was about 7, 8 miles  
9 away, I fell flat on my face because the shock wave came.  
10 All of a sudden the shock wave came and broke windows, you  
11 know, and then an hour or two later people coming,  
12 streaming a way from P-I-E-R-O-S-A, refugees, crying and  
13 everything, you know, and then the Germans came in and  
14 bombed that night, and you could hear the bombs exploding  
15 all over and we fell flat again on our faces because they  
16 were flying at rooftop level just scattering bombs  
17 everywhere, and the Mantlemeyer and her daughter, who were  
18 unbeknownst to us hiding in the house not too far away,  
19 almost got killed because the bomb blew against the  
20 building and it just went right through the room and had  
21 they been standing up it would have cut them in half, but  
22 they survived. They were on the floor. And I went -- when  
23 we found out they showed us the place, the bomb had come  
24 through and broken the window, the shutters, had gone  
25 against a big mirror had completely shuttered, right down

1 the wall and torn down the wall too, and they survived.

2 You know, I mean, you know, and then we were out  
3 in the streets and I couldn't believe that I was free. I  
4 couldn't believe. (Unintelligible) I made sure I had my  
5 false papers. Hey, they told me you're free. Relax. You  
6 know, I was tense. I was a like a prisoner out of jail,  
7 and then the British came, the commando troops, the bells  
8 and things, you know, and people embracing and shouting and  
9 everything, and we looked at each other and we said the  
10 nightmare is over. The nightmare is over.

11 That night there was some British soldiers, you  
12 know that came out, people that had come to our house and  
13 we were touching them to see if they were real, you know,  
14 and this was liberation

15 AN INTERVIEWER: I am going to tell my son about  
16 this, my sons, I have two of them, exactly the way I am  
17 telling you now with backing it up with all the pictures  
18 from the family, because we have an extensive collection of  
19 pictures of the family going back, you know, to the early  
20 1900s, and I will tell them exactly what happened, you know.  
21 I will try and document it as thoroughly as I can.

22 They are very young still. I don't want to  
23 traumatize him, you know. I don't want to traumatize him.  
24 he -- But I want him to become a conscious human being.  
25 You know, a B-I-N-A-R-O-U-M, as we say, we used the word

1 B-I-N-A-R-O-U-M in our language. We say M-U-I  
2 B-I-N-A-R-O-U-M, meaning I want him to be a decent person,  
3 I want him to be a decent person, to know, to understand,  
4 to have a kind of insight, although sometimes I wonder,  
5 it's a burden, you know, being a Jew. It's a burden.  
6 Let's face it. It's a burden because somehow you demand  
7 more of yourself. You carry concerns in your head which  
8 other people don't seem to bother with, but that makes Jews  
9 perhaps more aware, more -- not all Jews, mind you. Not  
10 all Jews.

11 AN INTERVIEWER: Some.

12 MR. MOREL: Some. Some, because others -- but  
13 you know what I am saying. But I am going to tell them, of  
14 course, he is going to be getting some Jewish instruction,  
15 education, my wife wants him -- them to have, you know, to  
16 get the center here (unintelligible).

17 My wife is Swedish, you see, Swedish, but  
18 Lutherin, not practicing, and she -- I never put any  
19 pressure on her, you know, as far as their religious  
20 education or anything like that, but she of her own  
21 initiative, she says I am going to take them to the Jewish  
22 community center, you know. I imagine they teach  
23 (inaudible) and things like that, which is always good to  
24 have. You know.

25 I'll tell you a little thing, I will tell you a

1 little anecdote which you might find a little interesting.  
2 We went through periods of starvation which were  
3 unbelievable. You know, where people actually died in the  
4 street. You would find corpses. You would find corpses in  
5 the street, and -- especially when the Germans first came  
6 to this town, it was horrible, and we were really suffering  
7 from starvation, you know, lack of vitamins, lack of food,  
8 very narrow rations. Even though our family was a middle  
9 class family, you know, but you couldn't find food. I mean,  
10 we had chill blains and our fingers were swollen from  
11 edimas, you know, like sausages. You bent them and they  
12 would crack at the knuckles. You know, they would become  
13 infected. It was terrible, and yet it was worse yet.  
14 There were people who actually died of hunger.

15 And I remember no fuel, no heat. We would curl  
16 up with blankets, you know, inside the house at 6 in the  
17 evening in the winter, all of us, the little kids, you know,  
18 hugging each other from the cold, you know there was -- it  
19 gets cold in Athens in the winter. You know, we had snow  
20 falls that winter, it happens.

21 So I remember one day, and my mother and my aunt  
22 used to try to keep the food, you know, divided equally, so  
23 they gave the children most of it. They had sores -- we  
24 had sores from the lack of vitamins that wouldn't heal.

25 One day this old woman, beggars in the colony,

1 dying of hunger, and this old woman came, you know, and my  
2 mother says well, we have so much for tonight, you know,  
3 bean soup or whatever it was, and I want to take something  
4 from all of us, you know, to give her. I have to give her  
5 something.

6 So she gave her, you know, whatever she could.  
7 The woman ate it like, you know, a wild creature from  
8 starvation, and then she looked at my mother and she says --  
9 I remember, she says I have not got \$20 here. Nobody gave  
10 me anything. You are the only Christians, in the  
11 neighborhood. We were the only Jews. You are the only  
12 Christians she says. (In Greek) She says you are the only  
13 Christians. We were the only Jews. My mother looked at me  
14 and we didn't say anything. Okay? So there you are.

15 I'll give you another interesting thing, an  
16 interesting sidelight. My uncle worked in a big company,  
17 well, actually was a textile factory, and it had a  
18 wholesale outlet in the heart of Athens C-O-S  
19 G-O-L-D-B-R-I-T-A-N-I-A. It was owned by the Ahadev family,  
20 who were relatives of ours, very wealthy, very wealthy.  
21 And Ahadev -- Ahadev and Israel were the two leading Jewish  
22 families in Rhodes. They were nobility, as it were, and I  
23 am related to both of them. Not that it means anything.

24 I am the poor member of the family, but anyway,  
25 in Athens my Uncle Jack, my mother's brother whom we lived



1 worked in the place there, and my Uncle Jack spoke German  
2 fluently. We were under Italian protection because we were  
3 Italian citizens and the Italians took good care of us.

4           There were Germans who would come in to shop, to  
5 buy cloth, and my uncle was the one, of course, delegated  
6 to deal with them, and these Germans were officers, very  
7 correct, you know, danka schoen, bitte schoen, you know,  
8 click their boots and all that jazz, and there was one SS  
9 man who started hanging around. He was an SS officer. Of  
10 course, we didn't realize how bad they were. I mean, we  
11 didn't really -- we knew they were special troops, and he  
12 used to like to talk with my uncle. You know, just talk.  
13 Asking questions and everything, and befriend him. My  
14 uncle was only scarred.

15           And one day the German says, "Do you need food  
16 or something?"

17           He brought him a bag with 30 loaves of German  
18 army bread. He says, "Here, take it."

19           That was our first experience with pumpernickle.  
20 You know, sour German bread. You know, what is this? You  
21 know, what's this? But it was round loaves. He gave him  
22 30 loaves and my uncle, of course, gave it to the employees  
23 there, you know, the Greek employees. He says, "Here."  
24 You know, he brought a few at home and we cut it. It was  
25 sour bread, but you know, hunger is hunger. And then it

1 was hard look like a rock and we sliced it and let it dry  
2 and make it like biscuit, you know, like, you know, and we  
3 ate it, you know, because it was food, and the German kept  
4 bringing him stuff.

5 And then one day towards the end he said to him  
6 "Listen, things are bad. They are starting to round up the  
7 Jews. I am not going to say any more. I am telling you."

8 And that was the last time he he saw him. Okay

9 AN INTERVIEWER: Unintelligible?

10 MR. MOREL: Yeah. All right? Obviously this  
11 German was, I hate to say a decent fellow, at least his  
12 actions, he asked my uncle if he wanted some food. You  
13 know, that shows a certain human concern. He warned him  
14 about the impending roundups. You know, things were  
15 getting bad. So I'm sure, you know, I mean, there must  
16 have been some decent ones among them. I know that there  
17 were, obviously.

18 Rhodes, the Jewish life in Rhodes before, when I  
19 was a child, was very traditional, very beautiful, where  
20 holidays were celebrated, you know. There was no -- none  
21 of the extreme -- excuse me, none of the extremes of  
22 religiosity that you find among such groups as the Hasidim  
23 and other people. It was a fairly enlightened, you know,  
24 attitude towards Jewish life as it were. It was a  
25 community life. You belong to a community. You share the

1 same -- you share the same history, the language, the  
2 traditions, the foods, the holidays, and they were marked --  
3 you know, Jewish holidays are very specific and very  
4 significant and little prayers when you had the first  
5 cucumber of the season or the first apricot of the season,  
6 I have forgotten all about it, and Pesach was a big thing,  
7 beautiful thing, Kippur was beautiful, Yom Kippur. You  
8 know, beautiful.

9 AN INTERVIEWER: There was one synagogues

10 MR. MOREL: There were two synagogues. Two  
11 synagogues. C-A-L G-R-A-N-D-E and C-A-L S-H-A-L-O-M,  
12 C-A-L D-E S-H-A-L-O-M. C-A-L meant synagogue. C-A-L-A,  
13 C-A-L-A or C-A-L, they used to call it C-A-L-A.  
14 C-A-L S-H-A-L-O-M and C-A-L G-R-A-N-D-E. C-A-L G-R-A-N-D-E  
15 was the big one, the big synagogue, you know, and it was  
16 beautiful. You know, the weddings, the foods

17 AN INTERVIEWER: Were things kosher

18 MR. MOREL: Oh, sure. We would buy chickens and  
19 then the man would take them to the S-H-O-F-E-T, you know,  
20 to have them killed. The meat was kosher. Oh, yes. We  
21 buy the chickens from the pessants. The pessants would  
22 come with their donkeys with chickens tied and hanging on  
23 both sides. You buy the chickens and then you keep them in  
24 the back yard, and you know, feed them and then when you  
25 needed them -- at Kippur you kill maybe a dozen chickens

1 and you give six to the poor and six for the family dinner  
2 after you broke the fast.

3 Yes, always traditional. We had the poor, the  
4 poors, our Jewish poor who would come and they would know  
5 we would have chickens for them for Yom Kippur, post-Yom  
6 Kippur dinner, you know, and it was a happy life for us, a  
7 happy life, you know. We were in a beautiful island

8 AN INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

9 MR. MOREL: We ate superlative food. We had the  
10 freshest produce brought to our doors, from the sea, you  
11 know, live fish, practically, you know, still alive. The  
12 best of everything. We lived a beautiful life. It turned  
13 into a nightmare. You know, it's gone now. There is about  
14 a handful of Jews in Rhodes, a handful of Jews, and I think  
15 one Soviana family and one Ahadev family. There are no  
16 Jews in Rhodes. You know, there are no Jews in Rhodes.  
17 There is something about the Jewish history of Rhodes here,  
18 you know, there is

19 AN INTERVIEWER: I was going to ask you to point --

20 MR. MOREL: 15 miles wide and it is about 30, 35  
21 miles long, so it has a population of about 70,000 people.  
22 52 villages, small towns, and, you know, Rhodes, and the  
23 network of -- the Italians took an island, it was a Turkish  
24 back water and turned it into a beautiful thing. They  
25 spent millions which they should have spent for their own

1 people. They built a whole road network. Made it a modern  
2 beautiful thing, and we were born here, you know, I was  
3 born here in Rhodes, in Rhodes, this is L-I-N-D-O-S,  
4 C-A-N-D-I-O-S, M-I-T-A-L-U-B-O-S, you know, the main area,  
5 and the rest of it.

6           Downtown -- most of it, this is -- this has to  
7 do with the Jewish quarter and the presence of the Jewish  
8 community in Rhodes, and this is -- it has to do with the  
9 fountain, which is called -- which is in the square called  
10 the P-L-A-T-I-A A-V-I-O-N M-A-T-T-I-O-N, the square of the  
11 Jewish martyrs in the old Jewish quarter and it is a  
12 fountain, a beautiful fountain in the center of the square  
13 with blue tiles and bronze seahorses and marine creatures  
14 and the M-A-R-A-T-I-E-R-O-N, that is that this monument,  
15 commemorates recent history.

16           In 1934 there were 6,000 Jews living in the  
17 centuries old Jewish quarter. By 1939, about 4,000 had  
18 emigrated. When the island was taken over by the German  
19 troops in July 1943, the remaining 2,000 were assembled in  
20 the square and transported to concentration camps in the  
21 Third Reich, only 50 survived. Today 7 Jewish families,  
22 about 30 people are left in Rhodes. The synagogue nearby  
23 on L-U-X-C-I-O-R-D-O-S Street is open to visitors. That's  
24 it.

25           **AN INTERVIEWERS:** Elaborate some more on your

1 experiences with your non-Jewish Greek neighbors during the  
2 war and some of the stories that you had told us about how  
3 they helped you.

4 MR. MOREL: Well, I can state very simply and  
5 right off the bat that I probably would not be alive, and I  
6 and those of my family who survived, if it hadn't been for  
7 the devoted and sustained help that we received from our  
8 Greek neighbors and friends, and I would like specifically  
9 to mention two names: the Pavlakis family, Nikko Pavlakis  
10 and his aunt, Katarina -- Katarina Pavlakis, were our  
11 neighbors from across the street.

12 Nikko Pavlakis, when things became very  
13 difficult for us and the Germans asked the Jews to come and  
14 register at the synagogue in Athens, which eventually led  
15 to their being rounded up and shipped away to their deaths,  
16 we never even for one minute considered registering.

17 We decided to immediately go underground and we  
18 managed to get some false papers through friends in the  
19 Greek police. How good these papers were, I don't know. I  
20 never had to use them, fortunately.

21 But we tried to then find shelter, essentially,  
22 and Nikko Pavlakis, our neighbor, right away came to us and  
23 said, wanted to know what we were going to do.

24 Well, we had some temporary shelter arranged at  
25 some -- an employee who worked in my uncle's office, kind

1 of a colleague of my uncle's who put some of us up for a  
2 short time, and then my uncle and aunt went and hid in the  
3 basement of a Greek church, and my two cousins, two girls,  
4 young girls, teenagers, well, 11 and 13, went to some  
5 friends' family.

6 Nikko Pavlakis insisted on keeping in touch with  
7 us. He on his own initiative started to look for a place  
8 for my mother and I specifically to find shelter, and he  
9 did find a house in a fairly nice area of Athens, a big  
10 house where some people were staying, were living, the  
11 Limberopolis family, I should mention them, and my mother  
12 and I went to stay there.

13 I had been briefly sheltered in Nikko's house,  
14 and then my uncle and aunt and their two daughters, with  
15 whom we had been living, were held by the Economides family,  
16 who were absolutely the most wonderful people in the world,  
17 who found a way to get my Uncle Anthony and his two  
18 daughters together. They found them a little apartment,  
19 which was rather secluded, and they essentially provided  
20 the support that was needed for them to stay underground,  
21 just as the Pavlakis did that for my mother and I, but I  
22 must also say that the Economides family, which had been  
23 friends of my family for a long long time, were also  
24 instrumental in helping my mother and myself.

25 Nikko Pavlakis was -- he is dead now -- an

1 exceptional, an exceptional, a marvelous human being, and  
2 so were every one of the members of the Economides family.  
3 They were the kindest, the warmest, the most supportive,  
4 the most compassionate people that I have ever known. They  
5 risked their lives daily to help us. Selflessly.

6 They brought us food. They brought us clothes.  
7 They acted as a link between myself -- my mother and I and  
8 on the other hand my uncle and my two cousins. They even  
9 arranged a meeting one night at the Economides' house where  
10 we had a brief reunion, and then we each went our own ways,  
11 and again we were risking our lives by going out into the  
12 streets at night. They were patrolled by the Germans and  
13 their minions, and they in every way, they came to see us  
14 every single day, one way or another.

15 There were times where the food situation was  
16 extremely scarce, they shared it with us. They brought us  
17 food. They would go into the black market to get us  
18 provisions so we could survive. They gave us moral support  
19 when they saw us in a state of depression. They brought us  
20 news. They did everything they could to help us.

21 I would also mention the Nikiforiortes family.  
22 These were my immediate neighbors. I was friends with  
23 Byron Nikiforiortes. My cousins, the girls, were friends  
24 with his sisters.

25 In the initial moments where we were, all of us



1 scattering every which way and making arrangements to find  
2 shelter, the Nikiforiortes also came forth. I stayed in  
3 that house a couple of nights because we were afraid that  
4 the Germans might come in and grab us, so we evacuated our  
5 house right away and we distributed all our belongings to  
6 our neighbors, which were returned to us right after when  
7 we came back.

8 So a large number of people, and I am sure there  
9 would have been more, except that we felt for safety sakes  
10 that fewer, the fewer the better as far as knowing our  
11 whereabouts were concerned, but we felt totally safe in our  
12 neighborhood. It was extremely supportive.

13 The Nikiforiortes, mainly the Pavlakis and the  
14 Economides, and others, the Limberopolis and the Condos  
15 family, another family where we stayed, my mother and I for  
16 awhile because things got a bit hot in the Limberopolis  
17 neighborhood.

18 There were German activity. They were searching  
19 for people and blocking whole streets and going into the  
20 houses at night, you know, and dragging people out. It was  
21 a reign of terror.

22 And we moved from place to place for safety sake.  
23 And as I said again, the amount of comfort and support that  
24 we got from these people is indescribable. It's the  
25 highest, the highest, shall I say the highest way anybody

1 can show their friendship and their love, and this is  
2 something that of course is part of me. I owe them  
3 literally -- we owe them our lives.

4 And I renewed -- of course I maintained  
5 acquaintance after the war and we kept in contact. I went  
6 back to Greece. I saw Nikko Pavlakis and Katarina, his  
7 aunt. I saw the Economides family. Unfortunately they are  
8 all dead now, just about. There is only one, the daughter  
9 of Mr. -- Mrs. Economides, Evie, who is alive and whom I am  
10 planning to see. She is about the only surviving member of  
11 her family. Nikko and Katarina Pavlakis are both dead. As  
12 I said, they are not dead in our hearts. They are still  
13 alive, very much alive in our hearts.

14 And as I said, this was the comfort in the  
15 bitterness of our trial, in our exile, you might say,  
16 within Greece. They were the ones who kept our hopes up,  
17 who comforted us when we were low, who fed us, who  
18 sheltered us, who found us places to live, all at the risk  
19 of their lives, all selflessly, and there is no higher show  
20 of friendship than that.

21 And when we came back to our neighborhood, I can  
22 truthfully say that a lot of our neighbors didn't know if  
23 we were alive or dead. When we came back, the word spread  
24 around, the whole neighborhood poured out into the streets  
25 to welcome us, to hug us, to kiss us, to tell us how happy

1 they were to see us. It was a spontaneous outpouring of  
2 love and affection and very heartwarming and it restored my  
3 faith, you might say, in humanity.

4 And this is what I -- these were my experiences  
5 in Greece during the war.

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