

Interview with GINETTA SAGAN

Holocaust Oral History Project

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Lenore Weilgleinter

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BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1

Q: TODAY IS MARCH 4TH, AND WE'RE AT GINETTA SAGAN'S HOME, AND THIS IS LENORE WEILGLEINTER, WORKING WITH ADELE LEIBERMAN, DOING THIS INTERVIEW. GINETTA, WOULD YOU LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOURSELF FOR THE TAPE?

A: All right. My name is Ginetta Sagan. I am involved with the work of Amnesty International. I was born in Milan, Italy, in 1925, and I grew up in northern Italy.

Q: GINETTA, WE'D LIKE TO GO BACK A BIT, BECAUSE WHEN WE TURNED IT OFF, YOU HAD SHARED A BEAUTIFUL STORY WITH US, AND WE WONDERED IF YOU'D PUT IT ON TAPE.

A: I will be glad to put it on tape today. It's forty-some years later. Like other people in Italy who were unable to divorce, my parents when I was born had the problem of how to declare me -- either daughter of a

known parent, or do something that many people did -- that is to say, have another family declare that you were their child. And it's very complicated, the story, but they did, and so I grew up actually with two beautiful families. My natural mother was Jewish; she was from Poland, and she had French papers, which in 1938 became useless, and then Mussolini began applying the racial laws as well. Therefore, I lived with both families -- the family which provided me with the birth certificate and gave me shelter and love and care, and with my natural parents as well.

However, my natural parents very often had to move, and I had to spend, for example, when I was 11, they took a house outside of Milan. In spite of the papers, they were still afraid that perhaps somehow, innocently, I may betray the fact that my mother was Jewish. So we spent two years near Milan, outside. Then when I was 14, the same thing again, moved to another house with my natural parents, and again being very much afraid that my mother would be discovered.

The family who gave me the papers was a farmer family -- while the children were rather jealous of me -- the mother especially, I became her favorite, so to speak. And when, later on, my parents were taken, I had to hide, of course. I lived in Milan, and the resistance

provided an apartment for us where we could live, but this family provided food and sometimes shelter when we needed it.

Q: GINETTA, CAN I GO BACK A BIT?

A: Yes.

Q: WHEN WE TALKED A LITTLE BIT OFF THE TAPE, YOU TALKED ABOUT THAT THIS FAMILY THAT SORT OF ADOPTED YOU GAVE YOU THE BIRTH CERTIFICATE.

A: They -- I was declared as their child. Yes.

Q: WAS THIS THE BIRTH CERTIFICATE OF A CHILD OF THEIRS AT ONE POINT OR....

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: SO THEY WERE GENEROUS -- THEIR CHILD HAD DIED.

A: What happened, apparently, their child had died. And my parents were both physicians, and this was something that had been arranged -- I don't know how, I was too young. And my father, only in 1943, in June on my birthday, began talking about how they had to do that, because they were not married, they didn't want me to be the daughter of unknown parents. Let's remember, this was sixty years ago, different mores, and my natural father's family was deeply outraged that he should live with a Jewish woman, and on top of that, a Polish Jewish woman. So there were lots of complications.

Q: YOU TALKED A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THAT WHEN THE WAR WAS OVER, YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO BACK TO YOUR NATURAL BIRTHDATE....

A: Yes.

Q: ...AND YOU DECIDED NOT TO.

A: I decided not to for two reasons. One, my father was priorly married to somebody else and had two sons. He had left his wife long before he met my mother, but in Italy there was no divorce. There was a real problem, and the family was -- his family, my father's family -- was outraged that he should dishonor the whole family by: A) living with a poor Jewish woman and B) she was a physician, she was well-educated, but -- and B) had a child on top of that. And they made a lot of trouble for me, frankly.

I promised them that I would never discuss this problem with anybody, but now it's forty years later, I feel free to talk about it. Number One. Number Two, I gave them all the correspondence I had with my father, including I gave the last piece of paper that my father...[crying]...sent to me from Buchenwald. And I gave it to them, and I said, "Leave me alone." Then one of them began to feel very guilty, and I was at the time, it was 1945, I was recuperating in the hospital in the mountains, in a sanitorium. And one of them came to see me very often, with bunches of flowers, and would have been very,

very nice, I think, but there were just too many problems. There was a trust fund set up for me. I just felt, "Close the door, and don't look back; look forward."

Q: WHY -- I'M SURPRISED THAT YOUR FATHER WAS TAKEN. IS THAT FAIRLY STANDARD [INAUDIBLE]?

A: He was -- well, he was involved in the -- he was anti-Fascist, number one, and I guess, according -- I have never been able to find out exactly what happened. What I have been able to find out is the following: that both of them, both my parents, were trying to help former POW's and Jewish people to go to Switzerland or to find safe houses. It was after September 8, 1943, when the armistice was signed, and there was total chaos in northern Italy, because the king in Badoglio went to southern Italy, and they left northern Italy essentially in the hands of the Germans.

Two things happened. One, the POW's and the people who did not want to fight anymore with the Germans, prior Allies, just had to be helped with clothes, with hiding, with a house, with a place, and so did the Allies and the Jewish people, begun a true shasalom. Until then, the Jewish people, we could hide them. We could find coupons for food. We could help them much more. But after September 8, 1943, then it was much more difficult to find food, safe houses,

clothing and the passage to Switzerland. The organization of the -- bringing them over through the underground network.

Q: COULD WE NOW GO BACK A LITTLE BIT TO YOUR STORY? GO BACK TO, YOU GREW UP IN A RICH...

A: In Milan.

Q: ...NOT JUST, NOT JUST THE PLACE. I DON'T MEAN "RICH" FINANCIALLY.

A: No, middle-class. Use something like this, "comfortable."

Q: NO, I DON'T MEAN RICH FINANCIALLY. YOUR GENERIC CULTURE...

A: Culture, yes.

Q: AND YOU HAD A FARM FAMILY THAT LOVED YOU AS WELL.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO YOUR THINKING? HOW OLD WERE YOU? WHAT DID YOU EXPERIENCE AS YOU WERE GETTING INTO BEING A TEENAGER AND THE WAR WAS COMING ALONG THAT MADE THE IMPRESSIONS ON YOU TO GO IN THE DIRECTION THAT YOU WENT? AND THEN WE'LL DISCUSS THE DIRECTION. BUT NOW I'D JUST SORT OF LIKE TO GET A SHORT LITTLE IDEA OF, IF YOU CAN REMEMBER, IMPRESSIONS.

A: My family was anti-Fascist. They ridi-- I mean, they were outraged at what the Nazis and Mussolini were doing, in terms of discriminations against the Jewish people, or the reprisal against people who were anti-

Fascist. Approximately 100,000 Italians underwent the so-called "military tribunal" experience, when they were condemned without open trial, without due process of law, and I think probably the most important thing that both sets of parents had was they hated injustice. But it was a very steady thing. Then in 1943, September 8, I felt very keenly that they when -- didn't want us to make a choice. There is really no way to get around of making a choice.

Q: WAS THAT WHEN THE GERMANS CAPTURED MUSSOLINI AND PUT HIM IN PRISON...[INAUDIBLE]...

A: No, no, no, the Germans did not capture Mussolini. On July, 1943, Mussolini was -- the Cabinet was ruined, and one of his -- the main people who engineered the ruin was actually son-in-law, Count Galeazzo Ciano. At that time in July, 1943, already there was a network of the resistance in Milan, primarily among educated people, but also workers, also women who worked in the factories. And the women who worked in the factory or in the university were a vital link between organizations, which are primarily male organizations, including the Air Force.

Q: GINETTA?

A: Yes?

Q: WHERE WERE YOU AT THIS POINT?

A: In school.

Q: NO, NO. WERE YOU IN SOME SCHOOL STUDYING?

A: No, I had to have private school.

Q: OKAY.

A: I spent two years in a school, which would be the equivalent of high school, in a place outside of Milan, approximately an hour drive, again, with my fictitious -- well, it wasn't my name, my legal name.

Q: THAT'S WHO YOU WERE.

A: And it was in the countryside, and it was beautiful. And my parents always said, "Don't say anything, don't discuss anything. Never come out, just do your school work." And we had to prepare beautiful essays glorifying Mussolini, because that was the only way you got an "A" to pass. And, but at the same time, you know, it was terribly difficult. Once in awhile, we'd try to make jokes and then get punished for it. Then, two of the years were spent in another school.

Q: WHY DID YOU MAKE THE CHANGE?

A: Fear. Fear. Constant, constant fear. Just the constant fear that you might inadvertently say something, or somebody may know something. I mean, you have to break the chain. And so, it was not very far, it was probably about half an hour drive from the other school where I went to another school for two years. But I had a lot of private instruction, and the reason was it was better if I didn't go to the library. You just



never know. Although I was safe with the document, I was not safe in case somebody may have suspected, you know.

Q: DID YOU KNOW ANY OF YOUR OTHER -- WAS THIS A CO-ED SCHOOL OR WAS IT ALL GIRLS?

A: Co-ed.

Q: CO-ED?

A: Yes.

Q: DID YOU KNOW ANY OTHER CHILDREN IN THE SAME SITUATION?

A: No.

Q: AND EVERYBODY WAS...

A: And one thing which was very difficult for me is because I am a very bubbling person, and it was a constant effort to control oneself for fear of giving away something that could be very damaging.

Q: WHEN YOU FINALLY MADE THE CHOICE, CAN YOU THINK OF THE ONE THING, CAN YOU REMEMBER BACK TO THAT ONE THING THAT SAID, "I GO THAT WAY, BUT NOT THAT WAY"?

A: Oh, surely, no problem with that. I was (A) outraged at seeing these black cars stopping in front of the house, just because they were Jewish people, and with the butt of a rifle, push them out and push them in this truck and throwing them in the trucks and kicking them. It was -- apart from the physical pain that they were inflicting, I thought the humiliation of an individual human being, the

undermining of the dignity of that person, that absolutely enraged me, as it did other people. I think...

Q: HOW OLD WERE YOU AT THIS TIME, CAN YOU REMEMBER?

A: I was 17, 18 years old.

Q: SEVENTEEN?

A: Yes.

Q: SO THAT YOU MADE THIS DECISION....

A: Eighteen. Let me see...September, 1945 to September...how many years is that, 18? Approximately?

Q: WHEN YOU MADE....

A: I'll finger it out!

Q: [laughing] WE'LL WORRY ABOUT THE MATH LATER.

A: Yeah.

Q: BUT WHEN YOU MADE THE DECISION, DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT YOU DECIDED TO DO?

A: Yes.

Q: WHAT?

A: Well, the first thing to do was, there was a group of people that I knew; one was a lawyer, and his brother also a lawyer, Enrico Mulasano (sp?), who since July when Mussolini was overthrown, had begun already gathering together people to work in the resistance. And another lawyer, whose name was Enco Cantamesa -- the key person was Enrico

Mulasano and his brother, Pigi Mulasano, both lawyers. And Enrico Cantamesa, another lawyer also -- who ended up being tortured, unfortunately -- but they began right away organizing (A) safe houses, with our help. We had to go and scout for places. I was asked, and others were asked, to work, to apply for a job in offices where they had coupons for food, as the only way to steal some. And we were given a lecture that they understood that our conscience may be troubled by doing something that is unethical, but this is a question of providing survival for people who are unjustly persecuted.

The other thing we were asked to do was to -- for those who spoke German -- was to attempt to work in the German offices, to attempt to immediately get copy of the curfew paper and M.D. papers, to enable some of the people in the underground to move around, to go around. Then, for the people who were truly in danger for their lives, then they had made arrangement step-by-step from Milan to a place, Busto Arsizio, from there to Como, from Como to the valley, and from the valley to the border, with different people constantly isolated from the other -- in other words, I only knew a piece. The other person knew the other piece. And began the underground railway to Switzerland.

And the greatest helper to us, besides many wonderful people who organized the resistance in these passages, to Albula in Telbe, and

especially a place called Lanzel in Telbe, were the smugglers. They knew the border, they knew the guards, they knew everybody. And I must say that most of them truly did it without being paid. Some were paid.

But in that particular valley, we know of only one instance where an infiltrator was able to come through and damage the trip. But the rest was these marvelous people up in the mountains, who incidentally I knew also because it was a place where we went on vacation in summer, these beautiful valley in Telbe, between the Lake of Como Argeneio and the Lake of Lugano in Switzerland. All that area is a large border.

Q: GINETTA.

A: Yes?

Q: I'M GOING TO GO BACK AGAIN TO YOUR ROLE. I'M SORRY, I NEED -- I WANT TO TRY AND STAY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF YOUR EXPERIENCE....

A: Okay...But these were parts of my work.

Q: I KNOW, YES.

A: The one I love, too.

Q: WHEN YOU STAYED -- AT THIS POINT, WERE YOU STILL LIVING AT HOME WITH YOUR ADOPTED FAMILY? WERE YOU OUT ON YOUR OWN?

A: No.

Q: DID THE RESISTANCE SORT OF LIVE TOGETHER?

A: Oh, never, no. On our own, no, no. After September, 1943, I never saw my natural parents again. The sign was there that I should not go back home, and then it was a terrible job attempting to find out what happened. And it's awful when you are trying to find out what happened. And I was also at that point afraid to go back to my....

Q: ADOPTED...

A: ....adopted family, because they lived in a farm, and I was very afraid to compromise them. The resistance provided us with an apartment, and they paid the rent. They provided us with some money, they provided us with shoes, and I also remember that I couldn't pick up any clothes, but they gave me an army coat. You know, those woolen coats, which a dressmaker simply undid, dyed it and turned around, and it was the nicest and warmest coat that you could ever have --navy blue. And that's what I had throughout the war, as well as other few clothes that they could put together.

Q: CAN YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT THE OTHER PEOPLE IN THE RESISTANCE, YOUR FRIENDS?

A: Yes. There were people from all walks of life. There were women like myself, very young, there was in my particular network or group, there was a boy who was about 14, and his name was Nino Benedecti. And

then, besides Enrico Mulasano, Count Mesa, Pigi Mulasano, who was a lawyer and established, there were other people, such as one, his name was Jacob Bodaine Tejay. He was 17, he was a student. The other was....

Q: IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO.

A: No, no, no, no, no, it's not that long ago.

Q: YOU REMEMBER....HE WAS SPECIAL.

A: Ninos Coppola. They were all special. Ninos Coppola. He was 23 years old, he was married, his wife was pregnant, eventually. I mean, following years, she was pregnant. And then there was other girls who worked in the factory, other women who worked in the countryside, and I would say 50% of the resistance were women, and in fact, a friend of mine whom I pushed and she did it -- she did a book of research and interviews which were published, it's called La tramida de la resistance??, The Other Half of the Resistance.

Q: WHEN YOU SAY "THE OTHER HALF OF THE RESISTANCE," YOU KNOW, DO YOU SENSE THAT THERE'S A NEED FOR THE WOMEN'S STORY TO BE WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED?

A: Absolutely.

Q: WHY? WHY WAS THEIR STORY DIFFERENT? IVE GOT SEVERAL QUESTIONS, IN A WAY. WHY WERE THE WOMEN....

A: It's a quarter to time.

Q: OKAY. WHY WERE THE WOMEN IN THE FACTORIES THE FOCAL POINT? HOW DID THEY WORK....

A: It's not just in the factories. There were women in the factory, who worked in the factory; there were women who worked in the countryside in the farm; there were women who worked within the university; there were women who worked in the hospitals; there were women who also worked in offices, and the administration was a Fascist one. And they were often the most precious source of information.

Women also were often used as "stufata," means "in bringing information from one outpost to the other" -- bringing information from one factory to another factory, either in the same city or in other cities. Like, for example, many women worked as stufata to organize a strike, which took place on March 10, 1944, in three cities: Milan, Turin and Genoa, simultaneously.

Now, to organize a million and a half people, you have to have a lot of communication between the center of command, which was in Milan, and all the factories, to organize this strike, which had to start precisely at 10:00 a.m. in the morning of March 10, non-violent, everybody cross their arm. And there were mothers and sisters and children, and the women very often, you know, would pass much more innocently than men, especially men of military age. Because men of

military age were supposed to be either in Germany or -- I mean, shipped to Germany for labor or as prisoner, or work with a newly-established military command called Republicanì, means these were the soldiers of the republic, "Republic of Mussolini," which was established in a place called Salò, on the Lake of Garda, where Mussolini established his command. Now, obviously the Germans were in charge, but this puppet regime carried on the work with them. The women were essential to infiltration, communication, distributions, care, feeding, clothing, all sorts of things.

Q: THEN WAS THIS ACKNOWLEDGED, WAS THIS KIND OF SUPPORT, THE WORK, THE EFFORT ACKNOWLEDGED, OR BY THE FACT THAT YOU FELT THAT TO ENCOURAGE YOUR FRIEND TO WRITE THIS BOOK ABOUT THE WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE RESISTANCE, THAT IT DIDN'T QUITE GET THE RECOGNITION THAT IT WAS WELL-DESERVED?

A: Some were recognized. Many were recognized, but not...the women were half of the resistance, and yet I know of cases of people who were deported to Ravensbruck. And these women who gave so much of their lives, and did so much, when they returned from Ravensbruck -- unlike the men, who were cheered or received with bands and wine and joy -- these people arrived alone, and they were told, "If you had minded your own business and stayed home, you wouldn't have had this problem."



Now, not all that many. But many others who had come to the forefront of activity and, outside of their milieu, which was housewife, mother, teacher -- totally came out of their usual, traditional role, and did so much -- quietly faded away themselves. At the end of the war, they just wanted to close the door and just get on with life.

Q: WHEN YOU STARTED OUT, YOU SAID YOU WERE ONE PART OF THE LINK ON THIS UNDERGROUND.

A: Yes.

Q: AS TIME WENT BY, YOU KNOW, A MONTH, TWO MONTHS, DID YOUR ROLE CHANGE? DID YOU TAKE ON MORE RESPONSIBILITIES, OR DID YOU TAKE ON MORE COURAGEOUS ACTIVITY? WHAT KIND OF THINGS DID YOU BEGIN TO DO, BECAUSE BY THIS POINT YOU'RE SEASONED.

A: Well, we talk about "courageous activities," I think that everybody who helped in an even minor way; for example, to harbor a partisan, was punished by death. Anyone who gave food to a Jewish person or a POW or an Italian who refused military service and was hiding, could be punished by death. Minor role -- I don't believe that when we talk about the possible death penalty, we can call any role "minor," whether it's transmitting a letter, transmitting information, going to the hospital -- the resistance group and each one of us became involved with others.

Names were only sparse, identity cards were changed all the time, and the resistance spent hours training us to repeat our new name, date of birth. And, you know, I think we are not conditioned to do that. Our minds seem to...rebel at the thought of taking on something like that, and yet it was made clear to us that the safety of others, not just yours, was at stake, unless you do that, unless you memorize it. And many more people joined it. I mean, from a handful in my network, eventually there were a lot of other people.

But, there was a problem -- each one had a false name [laughs]. Except for a few that I really knew, like the Mulosanos or Andrea Ceene and Counta Mesa, and all the others had false names. One was a count, and we called him "Stanley." I saw him briefly at the end of the war, and then I never saw him again. There were two whose nicknames were "Pero." One at the archbishop's place and one near the mountains, where eventually I got caught. I don't know their names.

**Q:** YOU WERE A YOUNG GIRL OF EIGHTEEN OR NINETEEN, AND WE ALL KNOW WHAT WE THINK ABOUT AND HOW WE FEEL WHEN YOU'RE EIGHTEEN.

**A:** Mmmm-hmmm...yes.

**Q:** WHAT DID YOU DO WITH BEING A YOUNG GIRL?

**A:** There were many young girls. There were many young boys. There were also elderly people, because the younger either had to hide some

place, go to Switzerland, or be with the parties' armed bands, which had already formed -- the armed bands of parties which dotted northern Italy and middle Italy.

Q: COULD YOU SORT OF TAKE THIS ALMOST LIKE IN AN OUTLINE FORM, JUST LITERALLY LIST FOR US THE KIND OF TASKS AND JOBS AND RESPONSIBILITIES THAT YOU HAD, SO THAT WE CAN GET AN IDEA OF EXACTLY WHAT YOU DID?

A: Yes. Well, one day, for example, I was told, "Well, there is this person must be brought to Switzerland." So I would initiate the job of getting false papers through somebody for that person. I would have had a description of that person: age, height, hair, color of the eyes, etc. And go and see somebody who was involved in procuring papers. Once I got the papers, then I would get to that person and say, "We do have the papers. When are you ready to leave?"

Meanwhile, they were in the attic or in the cellar, or in false places. I mean, you can't imagine how -- what an organization it took, that. Then I had to have somebody else in between to go to the next step, and I would not know until the moment of departure who would be and where. I had no idea. Only before leaving, I would be told where I was going. Until that moment, we didn't know. So we reached the first place. Once we reached the first place, which could have been any place. If I take a map of Milan, I can show you the place.

Q: EXCUSE ME, SO IN OTHER WORDS, YOU ACTUALLY -- IF I UNDERSTAND YOU CORRECTLY, YOU ACTUALLY TOOK THESE PEOPLE.

A: Yes...yes...yes.

Q: OKAY, SO IT WASN'T JUST A CASE OF GETTING PAPER WORK....

A: No, no.

Q: ...YOU PHYSICALLY TOOK THEM FROM POINT A TO POINT B.

A: Physically. Then at Point B, someone else took over, and I had no idea who, and I had no idea who, you know, what would happen next and next and next, until they have crossed the border. Often, I found myself to be the last link, because I knew the border. And the guards knew me, some of the Swiss guards had known me since I was much younger, no taller than me, you know. And the smugglers, the smugglers [laughs] all knew me, because as children we'd go to Switzerland to make chocolate, as a game, as a joke, you know.

It's funny, it's a beautiful area, and so very often I find myself -- but never the same spot, you never cross the same spot. And I went back there last September -- not this last September, the year before -- and I took my youngest son with me. I just had to share it with him. Everything is grown, everything is so beautiful and peaceful. And I also sat down with a friend who was doing the same work in Lunso, and we were trying to figure out who was doing what, now that it's no

longer dangerous to talk about it. But she agreed with me that the smugglers were probably our greatest helpers.

Q: WHY DO YOU THINK THE SMUGGLER WAS HELPFUL? YOU KNOW, HE'S FACING THE DEATH PENALTY IF CAUGHT ALSO.

A: Absolutely. They knew the terrain, and they hated Mussolini.

Q: THEY HATED MUSSOLINI.

A: I think that's the key.

Q: THAT'S THE KEY, YEAH. GINETTA IS LOOKING AT SOME DOCUMENTS THAT SHE'S ACTUALLY BEEN ABLE TO SAVE SINCE THE WAR AND SINCE THE RESISTANCE, AND REVIEWING THIS, AND SHE'S GOING TO SHARE WHAT'S ON THIS PAPER WITH US RIGHT NOW.

A: One of the people who worked -- one of the lawyers who helped a great deal with the trials of partisans, and who eventually was deported himself, to either Dachau or Buchenwald, I can't remember. His name was (Morris).. He was a very important person to the network, together with Mulosano, the two Mulosano brothers, as well as the Renzo Cantamesa. But the most important person that I saw after the war in 1968, was a woman. And her husband's name was Bruno Bianchi, and she had various nicknames. "Ana" was one, but then went on to others. I can't imagine anyone who had more courage than this woman, and who was an inspiration to all of us.

She worked at every level, whether it was to bring messages between one group or the other, between a factory leader, whether it may be a woman or a man. There were women leaders in the factories, or whatever. She was expecting a baby, and she was killed. Her husband was in prison with me at the same time, so they would interrogate him, and then they would interrogate me. And that was the first time I realized with full dimension how important it is for everybody to really join this work.

They were using her...putting the picture of his wife, who was in Milan and already probably dead by then, to force him to give away names. "And she's pregnant, isn't she? Well, we are going to take care of that." I mean, that cruelty --that the realization came to me then these were not people who started out necessarily as cruel people.

These were ordinary human beings. It was the ordinariness of this creature, whom I personally saw step-by-step escalate the wounded, both physical and mental, of other human beings, that probably has made me fight more than anybody else, as well as another person who died under torture, another young doctor who was in the same place. His wife was just as (Janet) as the picture. I have -- her photograph is at the bank, but he made a copy of her photograph.

Q: FOR HOW LONG DID YOU WORK IN THE RESISTANCE ACTING AS -- WELL, IN YOUR VARIOUS ROLES -- BEFORE YOU WERE CAPTURED?

A: I was captured at the beginning of February, 1945.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER WHERE?

A: Yes, of course [laughs].

Q: OF COURSE, AND DOING WHAT. SILLY QUESTION, RIGHT?

A: No, actually, I was doing....

Q: AS IF ONE COULD FORGET SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

A: We were doing all sorts of things, including providing food, including providing information, smuggling things, organizing -- helping to organize escapes -- the men usually did that, although occasionally there were women who joined the armed things. I personally refused to carry arms. I knew I couldn't do it, I said, "There have to be other tasks to be done. I don't want to kill anybody."

I like -- first of all, there were two things that bothered me. One, indiscriminate killing of people, just because a young man was wearing the German uniform, sitting at a cafe, in the regular military. I didn't feel that I would want to kill a person. I felt the S.S. and the Gestapo and the S.D. -- the Secret Police -- those were criminal organizations. People joined, and they were trained to do criminal activities. My belief, and it was very strong, was that these people at the end of the war should be brought to trial, be given due process of law, and teach the world who they really were, how they did it, how they were trained,

so that future generations would understand how ordinary human beings can be trained to be murderers, torturers, killers.

Some people thought, "Well, anybody who wears the German uniform, even from the regular army, shoot them." I couldn't go along with that. I felt that poor kid wanted to stay home as much as anybody else, and I don't believe in indiscriminate killing. So some women did join such a group. I always refused, and so did many others, and we called ourselves the "non-violent urban resistance." We felt there were other methods to use, such as printing the clandestine press, gathering of information.

You know, the propaganda was totally controlled, the means of communication were totally controlled -- radio and newspaper. However, I was able to get with others some paper from the regular newspaper. And that was very dangerous. If they caught you with this paper, you're in trouble, because they hated the clandestine press. Propagandists are all alike, whether they are left or right-wing regime, it doesn't make any difference. They are all liars. They have to lie all the time, in order to maintain themselves in power.

And myself, Nino, Ana, others, felt very strongly that perhaps it was very important, even in a minor way, to counteract the propaganda of the Nazis. The Jews were all described as "criminal," you know, all those terrible cartoons. Well, the Jews are human



beings, and they've made many contributions. Young people were brainwashed to go along with Hitler and Mussolini. Well, these are the truths, this is what happened. If you just help one of your friends who may have refused to go and serve with the Germans, you can be shot. You can be shot if you harbor a Jew, you can be shot.

So what we did was to try to print and distribute the underground press. It sounds an easy thing when you are sitting here around this table. It is not the same when you are living in a country where, at every step, there is police watching everything, checking for black market. For example, food was rationed, so if you're hiding people, you have got to find a way to feed them. The police was often checking the store in the neighborhood to find out whether any family had purchased extra food.

Well, certain food was rationed, so you couldn't get it, but we stole ration cards. We sent people to work inside those places, including me, for a few months in one place. And you try to be very careful, you know, but you sent out the coupon for food, for clothing, for shoes, because everything was rationed, and the distribution entailed a tremendous network of people, from Milan to the countryside.

Q: DID YOU EVER THINK OF GOING OVER THE BORDER YOURSELF? I MEAN, THOSE NIGHTS WHEN YOU'RE REALLY TIRED, AND YOU SAY, "I'VE HAD ENOUGH TO JUST GO OVER THE BORDER"?

A: Yes...yes...yes. But then there was always somebody else who needed it, and yes, it was a tremendous temptation to just go across. And I remember in, it must have been August 1944, I brought somebody over, and then coming back, I realized that there was a group of special units, Italians, a special unit called MAS -- M-A-S. And they were the parachuters, and they were all very strong Fascists, more than anybody else, and they had their own units of interrogations, like the (brigotonerri muti).

They had their own interrogation unit. And I thought, "Jesus Christ, how am I going to get out of this?" And fortunately, there was a wonderful elderly couple who had a (biter), who had a, just a two-bedroom above the room downstairs where they cooked and ate. There was a bench outside when you went outside in the summer. They made cheese -- they brought up in summer the cows and the pickera - - how you say? -- sheeps?

Q: Mmm-hmmm.

A: And they would make cheese, and the caves were carved in the side of the mountains, in such a way they were hardly visible. What happened was in winter, when the snow came, clean, they shoveled in a lot of

snow, and there was a lot of snow in the mountains. Then they put clean straw, and the cheese made would be put there until they came down in late fall. When the weather get cold, then they bring back the cows and the sheep. Well, those were marvelous hiding places, if you had to wait two or three days before you were able to go across the border. And the word came, either from one of our underground, or most likely from the smuggler.

Q: HOW DOES ANYBODY -- I MEAN, I'M SITTING HERE AT THIS TABLE, AND I'M TRYING TO CREATE A VISUAL PICTURE OF WHAT YOU'RE SAYING -- BUT HOW DOES ANYBODY FIND ANYBODY? HOW DO YOU KNOW WHICH HOLE IN THE MOUNTAIN TO GO TO?

A: Well, we knew people. For example, I knew that area, and so did other friends. (Landee), Telbe, many families had houses there for summer vacation. One particular family is the Bonfi family. And there were two brothers: one is Momi, his real name is Ariel Do, but everybody calls him "Momi," and his brother. Both of them joined the underground, and the wife of the brother, Juliana, she was one of the leaders with the people in taking people to Switzerland, as well as others in the area. We try not to tell who else was involved, as much as possible.

Q: YOU MEAN TODAY, OR....

A: Oh, no. Today, I mean, it's wonderful!

Q: YES...YES.

A: We had a great reunion a few years ago, Involdo Telve Lugano for a great dinner.

Q: BUT YOU WERE ANA, YOU WERE MARRIED, NOW WHAT ABOUT [LAUGHS]...

A: And that Momi, for example, I didn't know his brother, who was one of the key leaders of bringing people to Switzerland. And Momi and Julia, the wife of the brother who died in Mauthausen -- but I didn't know, because I knew him under another name -- we went to the house, to the country house, and there was a big picture on the piano, and I said, "Oh, I know him!" And there was a dead silence, and then I understood, it was the brother who had been caught and deported to Mauthausen and never came back. And Momi is the president of the Federation of European Resistance now -- the brother who survived. Survived torture and survived, and he is now -- he became one of the leaders of the Socialist Party in Italy. He's a dear friend.

Q: CAN WE GO BACK AGAIN?

A: Yeah, surely.

Q: I WANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT YOUR FRIEND, BUT AT ANOTHER POINT. YOU TALKED ABOUT -- I ASKED YOU ABOUT GOING OVER THE BORDER, IF SOMETIMES YOU DIDN'T WANT TO JUST RUN AWAY YOURSELF...

A: You did. You did.

Q: ...BUT YOU DIDN'T GO, BUT YET YOU TALKED -- FOR HOW MANY YEARS WERE YOU DOING THIS?

A: No...sometimes...Not very long, I wouldn't have survived longer. From September 1943 to February -- January, because in February I was caught.

Q: OKAY, THAT'S WHAT I'D LIKE TO KNOW.

A: 1945.

Q: COULD YOU TELL US WHAT YOU WERE DOING, WHERE YOU GOT CAUGHT. I'M QUITE SURE YOU'VE NOT FORGOTTEN YOUR FIRST THOUGHTS.

A: No.

Q: COULD YOU SHARE THAT WHOLE EXPERIENCE?

A: No, what happened was that three of the people in my network had been caught. The only reason I was not caught was because I'd been sent some place else to do something else. And we had apartments provided by the underground. And, incidentally, I am on the track of how the underground got the money. There is one person who's alive in Washington, D.C., and I will see him. I want to know where this money that I brought him came from.

I was asked, would I be willing to try to find hostages to release them, because it was toward the end of the war, and occasionally the

Germans would say, "If you give me back two high-ranking Germans, fine, I'll give you back this." The arrangements were all done through the church. And the man at the church who was arranging all this, the Archbishop, was Don Bichiari. A wonderful man, who really fought very, very hard, to help as many people as he could, Jewish and non-Jewish.

And at that time, Father Bichiari worked with a man whose code name was "Pero." He was a small man, and he looked at me, and he said, "Look, I cannot send anybody else. I would like you to try to find a unit of armed partisans who were prisoners, who are high-ranking, and then we'll come in and exchange. This is the password to go through the first step, where there is a nucleus of partisans. See if they have them.

So that was near Letko. So I left by foot and walked, except for a few rides on carts, and except for a little ride on a train -- but very short -- and I went, and went to see the priest, gave the password, he immediately gave me something to eat, et cetera. He said, "I'm afraid, Ginetta, we have nothing." And he said, "Well, from now on, you must be called 'Giorgio,' " a man's name, number one; and number two, "I don't know, probably the only place you can find them, it's way at the end of the valley on the Swiss border, called 'Levino.'"

So I said, "Fine," you know, and he said, "Well, but stop in between and see what happens. They may have it." So he gave me the password to the next place. (inaudible). To make a long story short, it took me five days of walking to get to a place, but the night before, I was able to get the password to go all the way to Levino. I was told no, there was nothing there. It was late, there was a curfew, "Stay here." And it's a night to remember, because the woman was wonderful. She -- I always remember her black scarf, all dressed in black. And they gave me some polanta, which is a classical dish with some rabbit, or something like that, and then she put me to bed. And the only thing I remember is this featherbed that you do like this [noise], you just drop in! And I was so tired, I fell asleep.....

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2

A: ....I said, "Oh, my God, oh, you just don't know." But they had long stubbles and unshaven, and "coustauf," as they say in French, you know. And so they surrounded the bed, and so they said, "Well, will you get up, we want to talk to you." And first of all, they were worried, because they were told that it would be a woman who was Fascist, who was trying to infiltrate the top command. But they talked to me

downstairs again -- no, everything was, you know, I responded to their questions, without of course giving away the person -- the archbishop. You never do that, you never know whether these people are real, or they're impersonating.

I mean, these are the [inaudible] situations you find yourself in. I was very cautious. I said, "No, this is, what you say, for humanitarian reasons, I am not involved in politics, I am not involved in anything, but I was asked if I could do this. So then if they were German, or any sect -- Italian Fascists working with the Germans -- I don't know, what would happen, but .... they started smiling, and they gave me something to eat, and then they said, "No, we don't have any. Now. There is one place that you can go, and that is Lavin. You leave here, and after two hours of walking, you will come to a place here, and there is a man whose name is 'Pierre.'" [laughs] And I said, "Pierre in Milan, Pierre here." And I thought you'd have to use more imagination to find some names. And he said, "He will take you the next step." So shaking hands, big hug, "thank you," and off we go.

And I met Pierre, and lo and behold, here he was, chopping wood, in the place that they said he would be. And I gave the password, I ... was very nice. He just put down the chopping, and he said, "All right, I'll be with you in a minute," got his jacket, and he said, "You go ahead by yourself, and you go to this hotel in Biermer, in a place called



Borneo, and I will stay with another friend, and from now on, I will keep an eye on you."

And I went to the Biermer hotel, and you never know if the hotel keeper is with you or against you, but it was obvious that there were some Fascists there. One of them, a man from Florence -- and he had warned me there was this possibility of having Fascists watching. The reason is very simple, it's that Borneo is at the foot -- the beginning of a valley, and this valley leads to Lavin and the Swiss border, and Lavin was partisan territory. So anyone who goes through there must have a reason.

So my reason was that I had a boyfriend in a sanitorium in Valley (Summit) -- that really I wanted to marry him, but nobody wanted me to marry him, because he had TB, and at that time, TB was a scary [inaudible]. But there was a crazy priest up there, and he would marry us. So I just wanted to go to ask the priest to marry us. Anyway, and I wrote a postcard to this boyfriend to this effect, which was very important later, that postcard.

I stayed at the hotel, paid my bill -- next morning, began walking. And I realized that Pierre was behind me, but he kept distance, so that we were never together. And then, you reach a point where there is an outpost, and here the partisans were in command, and they stopped me, and I gave the password, and they gave me something to eat, and

then a terrible thing happened that day. Some of the partisans who'd been on duty were sleeping upstairs, and one of them -- the musket, it is called musket? You know, the...

Q: RIFLE.

A: ...the rifle. They left it [inaudible], and it fell, and the bullet went through and killed the partisan who was sleeping on the bunk under it. And so there was a great deal of commotion, and that night a sleigh with horses came, and blankets, et cetera, and from this point, they took me down to Livinio to the commander of the whole area, whose name was Franco. And he asked me, "Do you know the password?" and I said I wanted the hostages to be exchanged, and he said, "And if we don't get them, you'll get them -- if we don't have them, we'll get them. We don't have any now, but we'll get them for you." And I wasn't about to quibble. They put me in a room, however, and I was not allowed to get out. They were checking through the underground, all the way to Milan, and that was fine.

Q: THE RESISTANCE WAS AMAZING.

A: It was an incredible system, and I have no idea how they did it, but they did it. And, again, because they were afraid; apparently, they had been told that the Fascists were going to try to send them a young girl to infiltrate them, to find out. And so it was perfectly justified, and I'm very glad they did. But, anyway, they gave me a nice dinner, a

resorto, and then they asked me to join in the singing, which I did. And that night, they caught an attempted infiltration by a spy of the Fascists.

And they brought him in into the room, and they began pummeling him. And I said, "Please don't do that. If we do this, we are no better than they are. We really want, you know, to bring him to trial, keep him in prison." At the end of the war...which was coming. And one of them took the gun and came up to me, and he said, "Are you with us or with them?"

And I said, "Well, if you do this kind of thing, you are going to undermine your credibility as being truly devoted to democratic principles, to due process of law, to a fair trial. You want the world to know what these people did. And why are -- then they can say, 'They beated us, they did that to us,' and then people will say, 'What is the difference?' And I said, "I happen to believe that we are different, we don't want this kind of thing."

Anyway, Franco calmed everybody down, and they threw him in a room, and I said, "And give him something to eat." And they said, "You really want to walk to the border?" [laughing] They were very upset about my concern, but I thought it was important from the very beginning that there be no assassinations, but bring them to trial, so

the world can learn about what these people have done and how they have done it.

Anyway, they did not have hostages, but they promised to try to help and said, "We will get them for you." So I began walking back, went back to Borneo, spent the night in the hotel, and by that time, I didn't have Pierre to shadow me. I was on my own. And I was very tired.

My feet were very swollen, and I took the bus, which was a fatal mistake. I should never have done so, but I was very -- I couldn't walk! You know, it was hurting.

And then I arrived in a place called Tirano, and the bus was in the main piazza, and the bus was surrounded when it stopped by a lot of people with machine guns. They were checking the papers, and somebody said, "Ya...." Well, they took me to the place called La Questura, where -- which is...

Q: HOW MANY WERE "THEY"?

A: Oh, I don't know. It was all around the bus. Maybe a dozen or more. At least a dozen.

Q: DID THEY PICK UP ANYONE ELSE BESIDES YOU?

A: No. They were really looking for me.

Q: SO THEY KNEW YOU WERE THERE. HOW DO YOU THINK THEY KNEW?

A: I think it was this -- I think -- I know it was this man from Florence who was staying at the hotel in Borneo, who was there to watch who was coming and who was going, and anyone that he felt was suspicious, he would have been picked up. Also, apparently, he did watch by walking up the path which led to the valley, and so he saw that I was going up there. And my excuse that I was going to see the priest to marry me to someone in a sanatorium was laughed at. In this place, it was laughed at; some place else, no, but anyway, they took away all my clothes.

It was February, it was in the mountains. Imagine being in Taos City and having no clothes and being thrown in this place with broken windows and nothing! Just a plank, and ... and they left me there for a few hours; no food, no water, nothing. And then, I don't know what time it was, because my watch was taken, and it was dark, and they took me, and they had an interrogation room, which was in the basement of the place. And it was equipped with a big table with straps. And they had a hand-electric generator for electricity.

Q: DID THEY GIVE YOU BACK YOUR CLOTHING WHEN THEY TOOK YOU INTO THE ROOM?

A: No.

Q: SO YOU HAD TO SIT THERE NUDE WITH HOW MANY MEN?

A: Yes, that's right...oh, God knows. Lots of them. I mean, probably ... they seemed a lot. I didn't count them, but there were lots of them. And then somebody began making very lewd remarks, and ... names ..."You whore, you," you know, that kind of thing. And then they decided what they quote "have fun." And, I don't know, it took hours. I lost consciousness after awhile.

There was no interrogation at that point; it was simply brutal actions to intimidate you ... "Tell us about your friend, now, you're going to give us the name of your friend. They sleep with you all the time, anyway. You know them; you know..." I mean, and all so really vulgar, degrading remarks..... Let's turn off this a minute. [pause]

Q: GINETTA, WHAT GROUP WAS THIS, INDEED, THAT WAS INTERROGATING YOU?

A: This group was called Brigateleri Muti. This particular group was the equivalent of the Gestapo. These were volunteers, who had volunteered to work with the assassins, the Gestapo.

Q: THEY WERE ITALIANS.

A: They were Italian volunteers, and they volunteered to do criminal actions with the assassins, the Gestapo. This group had nothing to do with the regular army, which would have condemned such action. But like the assassins, the Gestapo, their primary aim was to destroy the quote, "the enemy of Fascists and Nazis." And you were an enemy, and

as such, they felt then they had to A) get information -- the information questioning did not begin until the following night. The first night was simply horror.

**Q:** GINETTA, WHAT SUSTAINED YOU THROUGH THAT HORROR? WHAT DID YOU FIND IN YOURSELF THAT SUSTAINED YOU? WHAT KEPT YOU.....

**A:** I kept on thinking about flowers. I kept on thinking about the Lake of Como, and in April, on the lake, up on top of the lake, there are fields and fields of something called narcissus. And I still have a few in my garden; I always have to have them. And I kept on thinking about beautiful things. And I kept on thinking about the people who are being deported, and the people who would be in trouble, if I break down. And they got mad. And I got mad. I really got mad. But it was not easy.

**Q:** YOU WERE MAD AT WHAT, THEIR INHUMANE BEHAVIOR, OR....

**A:** Yes. I felt like, "Hell, I'm going to break down. You can..." And I remember a Latin phrase, "(frangeteur non flecter)" -- I will break, but I will not bend. And by breaking means, maybe pay the ultimate price. I had no reason at the moment to believe that I would survive.

**Q:** DID YOU EXHIBIT THIS ANGER OUTWARDLY, OR WAS IT JUST AN INWARD ANGER THAT YOU SAID, "YOU WILL NOT BREAK ME"?

A: No. No, I told them. I told them. I told them that this was inhuman, that what they were doing was a disgrace to all mankind, and so they began slapping even harder ...that I felt -- well, eventually, I lost consciousness again. I mean, when they give you electric shock, then you just were out.

But I don't know how long it went on. They wanted the name of the people involved, who sent you, where are they, and who is working with you, the usual. And "We are going to get it out of you; you may just as well tell us now." But, and I was there for a few days; then they moved me to another place called Sondrio.

Q: COULD WE GO BACK A BIT? EXCUSE ME FOR INTERRUPTING.

A: Yes.

Q: TO, YOU SAY, THE NEXT NIGHT AFTER THAT HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE, THEN THEY STARTED WITH THE INTERROGATIONS. HOW LONG DID THAT KEEP UP?

A: I don't know.

Q: DID THEY GIVE YOU YOUR CLOTHING BACK?

A: No. No.

Q: SO ALL THIS TIME...DID THEY GIVE YOU ANY FOOD?

A: Some. A kind of dirty-colored coffee. No food, except some dirty-colored coffee.

Q: DID YOU HAVE COMMUNICATION WITH ANYONE ELSE?



A: Totally in communicato, totally in communicato.

Q: SO YOU KNEW NOTHING ELSE....

A: I didn't know where I was. I didn't know even if anybody knew that I was there. I was totally in communicato.

Q: WAS THERE ANYONE IN THIS GROUP THAT YOU CAN THINK BACK TO WHO SHOWED THE SLIGHTEST SIGNS OF BEING A HUMAN BEING? OR WAS EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM [INAUDIBLE]?

A: Not on this particular occasion, no.

Q: WERE THEY OLDER MEN, GINETTA?

A: No. They were young, young. We're talking about....

Q: YOUR AGE AT THIS TIME? WE'RE TALKING EARLY TWENTIES.

A: Early twenties.

Q: OR EVEN YOUNGER.

A: Maybe one may have been late twenties, but by and large, they were very young.

Q: AND THEY INTERROGATED YOU FOR HOW MANY DAYS?

A: I don't know. It was so dark...you know, there was no light. So they take you out, and they bring you back. I had no way of knowing, because everything was boarded up. Not only that, after they brought you back, people came in and raped you again. And the next thing I knew, they are giving me some insects. I mean, I had insects in my

hair, and then eventually I discovered I had an infection as well, but that was not until I was in the hospital, then they discovered it.

Then they brought me to Sondrio a few days later, but I don't know whether it was one day or three days -- it's impossible to figure out. It seemed an eternity, but...They brought me to Sondrio. Again, there was a questura, and I was at this questura, which also had a similar room, equipped with a similar rough wooden table and straps and....this time, they did give me back some clothes. And they put me in the car at night, and they took me to a house. Some place, I don't know what.

And we entered the house and went down the stairs... and the first thing that was striking was that all the walls were plastered with blood, as well as bullet marks. And there was a chair... there was a table where they sat, and there was this chair where they made me sit, and they tied my hands and legs. And then they began questioning and questioning, and they kept on saying, "You see this blood? You know, that's what you are going to."

And everybody talked, "You are not going to be the one who's going not to talk." And then they kept on shooting, saying, "Well, okay, she's not talking, let's ... let's do it."

And I was there for awhile, and then -- but they brought me back to the questura, where they put me in this dark room, and again at

night, men would come in and do what they wanted... and ... Then they decided they were going to take me to Como, which is a city, and .... [Janet, you need me? Is that Janet?] And they would take me to -- they took me to Como, and I finally understood, they made me clean up and wash my hair, and I thought, "What's going on?"

On the -- between Sondrio and Como, they stopped, and they made me sit at a table in the middle of a restaurant. They sat at other tables, separate. And didn't order food. They were hoping that some of the partisans -- this was all partisan territory -- that somebody would come up and recognize me. So that I was the fly -- the honey pot attracting the fly.

And I kept my eyes down, I was hoping that nobody would see me, and fortunately, nobody came up to me at the time. Then we went to Como, and they took again to the questura, and again this man, who evidently was an officer, took a stack of photographs from underground. And they kept on saying, You know this person, you know this person."

And there were two people I know. And one of the women was Jana, and her boyfriend, who was Nari. And I kept trying to keep my face straight. Yet, it's -- in spite of the training, which is very intensive, that they give you -- it's awfully difficult to control your muscles. I mean, either you were a trained lawyer, where you probably

learn how to control your muscles-face, but -- and that age, and especially, I was a happy-go-lucky person. It was terribly difficult to get the message. You know, you can betray people, people can get killed unless you are careful. And so I did my best, I didn't betray, but I did hear them say, "[Quante li mea balma fate, agenda] What didn't we do to her? She never broke down."

And then that night, they put me in a cell with her. And she told me, in my ear -- she was in a terrible state, oh, God, talking about state -- and she said, "You know, I may be killed," and I thought she was going to be killed by the Milazeck. But she told me that she and her boyfriend had knowledge of a million dollars, which came to Italy to be distributed to all the members of the underground, that the Communist Party -- somebody in the Communist Party wanted to hide this money for post-war communist organization. And Jilli had found that.

Well, next day, I was taken back to Milan and taken to the Fascist Mouti Center, and that's when all my effects were given by the police and [inaudible] to Milan, and they read this postcard that I had written to "my boyfriend," saying, "I am going up to see the priest. I hope he will marry us." And this captain, ober-- oh, I don't know, an officer in civilian clothes, of the Mouti also, saidj, "No [Italian]. You never spoke, but we have the means to make you talk."

And I said, "I don't know anything. I just wanted to get married. I just wanted a priest who could marry us." He said, "Well, you don't want to marry somebody who has TB." And I said, "But I love him." And he said, "Well..." Then he talked to the others, he said, "Well, this postcard should have been sufficient," and he released me.

I went home to my apartment, and dear Lord, the stuff under the bathtub had not been touched. And there was a woman there, and I will not name her, because it's very embarrassing -- when her boyfriend had been taken with this other friend, all what she did was to cry. I was the one who went out and tried to do something about it. At the end of the war, she -- she had done everything, she claimed credit for everything.

Anyway, I arrived home, and she remarked on my bruises. Now, electrical shocks do not leave physical things, but I had trouble walking, and I had, you know, in some places, but like a dumbbell, I was covering up everything. She said, "What did you do here?" I said, "Oh, I fell." "What is this blue thing?" "Oh, well, I fell," and she got the message, but she didn't -- she was too pre-occupied with her own thing and her own boyfriend to even worry.

She left the house to go someplace, and I didn't understand why she was there anyway, because she had her own apartment with her

boyfriend. It was very dangerous for her to be in my place to begin with, when there was a place on the fifth floor.

Anyway, it must have been about two hours. There was no hot water, of course. I still washed myself, and I realized I was full of lice, in my head and every place else -- and, oh! And I realized that I had an infection, and I didn't know what to do. You are so ashamed at this time, you don't -- you know, it's one of those things. At that time, these kind of diseases were very socially unacceptable, and you don't go to the doctor and talk about it. At the same time, I knew that I had to do something.

Must have been about three hours later, the stuff under the tub was okay; they had not found it. If they had found it, I wouldn't be here. The bell rang. And I thought, "Oh, my God," you know, you just - - and it was one of the people who interrogated me, the lieutenant. Not the captain, the lieutenant, with somebody else.

He came in, and he said, "Oh, so you've been released, eh? But so now, you don't have a job." I said, "Well, I will look for a job." "Oh," he said, "we have a job for you. We need a secretary." And at that time, if you didn't work, you were deported. So I thought, "Oh, my God," and I said, "Well, you know, that's fine, but I had made some arrangement to see a friend. Would it be possible for me to see my friend?"

"Who is the friend?" "It's this lawyer," and lawyer, you know, a lawyer and the priest were two things that you are to be careful, not to go to the priest in the church, in case somebody else was inside the confessional, which had happened many times. But to a lawyer -- and I did have some money, didn't have to be hand-out, although the underground insisted that I don't go to the bank, I don't touch it, I don't do anything. I think that more than anything else, they wanted to know where I was going. They let me go, and I said, "Enrico, what do I do?" And they said, "You take it."

"Oh," I said, "I can't go back! I can't go back!" He said, "You have got to do it, because we need to know as much as possible about what's going on, what all --" and of course, meanwhile, I gave him a list of everything that happened.

And so I went back to the house, and lo and behold, they came back. I was hoping -- at that time, I asked Enrico, "Can't I go to Switzerland? I really want to get out. I can't take this anymore." And I realized that I was embarrassed to tell him what had happened in prison. I couldn't do it.

Q: DO YOU THINK HE DIDN'T KNOW?

A: [sigh] I don't know. I don't know. At that time, you tried to pretend -- I mean, probably for a matter of being alive, I would have burst out into

tears, and everything would have come out. But ... it was a long time ago, when women were not supposed to -- it was a whole social malaise.

Q: SO NOW YOU HAD GONE BACK TO YOUR APARTMENT, AND THESE TWO MEN CAME AGAIN ABOUT THE JOB.

A: They came, and they said, "You are not working?" And I said, "No, I don't have a job, but I'm looking for one." And, oh, there is a funny story in between, and that is that we had set up a scam to sell engines -- one horsepower engines -- to the Nazis, for a price, and the engines were ruined. I mean, there was something...

Q: DEFECTIVE.

A: ... that moves -- defective. And we made a lot of money out of it, but we only lasted a month, and then we got out of it, but that's another story. A man called Cheleste, who was working -- [laughing] I mean, the kind of thing we were doing. They came, and they said, "You are not working, and we have to -- you have to work." So I said, "Well, I'm sorry, but I had to go and see my lawyer and do a few things," and they let me go. Not easily, but to go and see Enrico, who lived at 19 Ville Billet in Milan.

And I think the major reason they let me go was because they were hoping then that they would trap somebody else, in the process; that's the only reason. And Enrico said, "If you can do it, do it." I was scared to death, but I did go back, and as soon as I arrived, they put



me in the hands of the women's unit of Fascists, who just threw me on the floor and beat me like mad. And they called me "spy." They knew who I was.

However, they also made me work, as well, and in interrogations again. They wanted to find out who was behind me, who was here. And it was in that period that they interrogated these men: Bianchi, then me, and then this young doctor, who was 27 years old. And he died under torture, actually. He did.

[pause]

Q: GINETTA, WE'D LIKE TO USE THE COPY OF THE LETTER, IF THAT'S OKAY WITH YOU, BECAUSE THIS IS VERY MUCH A PART OF YOUR STORY.

A: It's a very important part of my story.

Q: AND IT'S A VERY IMPORTANT LETTER.

A: I think so. When I worked very, very hard, especially at the beginning, when Amnesty International was so small, in '67, '68, '69; and I went from church to church, from place to place, and nobody had hardly heard of Amnesty International. And I came home so tired, and I would say, "God, I have had enough." But then I kept on thinking about what we went through, what people were going through, what people are going through right now, and, "Hey, baby, you know, who are you to complain?"

Q: I'LL SORT OF JUST ADD A LITTLE ASIDE. WHEN YOU WALKED OUT TO GET THE LETTER, ADELE AND I JUST LOOKED AT EACH OTHER WITH ABSOLUTELY NO WORDS TO SAY, OTHER THAN HOW BRAVE YOU ARE TO SHARE THIS...

A: I am not brave.

Q: ...NO, TO SHARE THIS. THIS IS....

A: No, the time has come when it has to come out for the sake of others, I think.

Q: THANK YOU. LET'S GO BACK, SO WE CAN GET ON TO THE GOOD THINGS AT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. WHEN YOU'VE GOT -- YOU WERE NOW PUT WITH THE WOMEN, AND YOU WERE MADE TO WORK. CAN YOU CONTINUE YOUR STORY FROM THAT POINT OF YOUR EXPERIENCES?

A: Well, first of all, officially, I was supposed to be working. Unofficially, I was beaten up every night, I was called a spy, and I was in a terrible situation.

Q: WHEN YOU WORKED THERE, YOU HAD TO LIVE THERE, TOO. YOU COULDN'T GO BACK TO YOUR PLACE.

A: Oh, no, no. Heavens, no, no, no. I had to stay with these women who were the Fascists -- you know, they were the real Nazis in the group. And they took away all my clothes. Most of the, you know. I had very little. But they also made me work, and they also beat me up, and they

also did something else at night. And this is, again, I saw both men and women being so socio-psychopath in this matter.

There was one particular woman who was in charge of this -- with these women -- who came when they were interrogating us, and she was the one who was giving us injections of sodium pentothal. And here she was, you know, trying to give us this thing -- both Bianchi and myself.

And the questions -- and the questioning, and the questioning never ended; it was endless. I don't know what helped me, I really don't. I kept on keeping my mind on a track. "I don't know, I don't know, I don't know." And I don't know -- you know, that's -- but this particular woman, for the first time, I realized then that there are women who become professional in the nursing, not to the service of the patients and to humanity, but to help these torturers.

And then, I was -- that's when they killed Tiberio, in that period. I don't know the exact day. I had no watch, I had nothing. I had no money, I was at their mercy. However, one day the captain called me in, and his name was Catanio, and he said, "I really hate to see you in this condition. You know, I have a 17-year-old daughter -- sixteen, something like that -- I would hate it if she was in the same situation. I'm very fond of you. I really don't like you to [inaudible]. I tell you, I know that you are in pain."

You should have seen my feet-- you would be repelled -- but they are burned, they are burned, they have done other things. And he said, "You may want to buy some aspirin."

I said, "Yes, but I don't have any money; you took all my money." And he said, "That's all right, I'll give you some money, and why don't you go to the pharmacy and buy some aspirin? And I'm very sorry, really, that you have these, you know. Actually, when you come back, you know, I'll just close up, and when you come back, I will give you some gauze, or something to make it better. And buy some aspirin that relieves your pain."

And as he was talking, there was a stack -- and I mean, a stack -- of denunciation, written by hand by people in that area to the secret police, denouncing, with the name, people, saying they are Jews, or they are in the underground; in other words, giving away people. I could only see the one on top. I could not see the others. But when he made this offer, I said, "Thank you very much. I really appreciate your kindness."

And he said, "Come on, let's go." And they dropped me from the car to a point, and at least they said, "The pharmacy's there." I didn't know the area. "The pharmacy's there, so walk." So I did; got out of the car and began walking. It was very difficult to walk, because my

feet were so sore. And in Italian pharmacies, you know, they have these opaque designs, and some clear glasses.

And I didn't know whether he was sending me there to watch us, just in case the man was a member of the resistance, and he was told about me and would recognize me, and then grab him, or what. The idea at that time was that they had to find all the people involved, because they must have no witnesses to what they had done.

Anyway, I went here, and I, with a straight face, said, "I would like some aspirin. I am detained in this place. Captain Catanio and his lieutenant, and they have denounced a lot of people, the local people, including these men. And unless you can wander, they are going to be caught.

And he said, "Gracias, senorina." He gave me the aspirin, gave me the change -- straight face. But I didn't know at that moment whether he could have been one of them. I just took the chance. And then I walked out, and I walked back, and lo and behold, the car was on the side, and they came and got me in the car and got me back. There was no way to run, you see. What do you do? I went back, and at that time, they made me sign that I was there voluntarily.

Q: FOR WHAT PURPOSES?

A: Working. I was employed, I was there voluntarily, there had been no coercion. They were trying to protect their ass -- excuse the expression.

Q: DID THEY SEE AN END TO THE WAR NOW?

A: Oh, surely, the Americans were coming.

Q: SO THAT'S WHY THEY WERE TRYING TO PROTECT...

A: But they also wanted to eliminate all the witnesses. So they decided to begin the interrogation again that night. And I ... it was bad. But I was barely regaining consciousness, when they said, "The end of the war is near, and there will be a fight between the Allies and the Soviet Union, and the Allies will need us. So the most important thing is to find all the witnesses and get rid of them, so that nobody can testify against us, and then when the Allies need us, we will have another job with them."

And I was barely, you know, emerging out of this, when the telephone rang, and they answered it in German. And I don't know what they were saying; I don't understand German, except, "Yavol, Heil Hitler." Hung up, and then he turned to the others, and I don't know which one was talking, because I was on the floor, and I was not in very good shape. And they said, "They want to talk to her again before we get rid of her." And the others said, "(Mair)," you know, the equivalent, "Shit," excuse the expression. "But we have to do it."

In other words, they had an inferiority complex, vis-a-vis the Germans. And the lieutenant said to the captain, "Maybe you'd better check back, though." So they did check back, and somebody answered in German, saying, "Yes, we want to talk to her."

These two men came in, they were in German uniforms, and "Heil Hitler," clicked their heels, and picked me up, yanked me in the back, and took me outside into a car. And they drove me to the hospital. And to this day, I still don't know who they were, and I was told at the end of the war -- and I said, "But I want to thank these people, I want to..." They said, "No, you don't say a word, because we declared all the deserters as prisoners of war. If we declare them as deserters, they will be prosecuted by the German army, knowing those Krauts, as deserters, and you don't want to create trouble for the people that have helped us to help you."

So at the end, in '67, when I went back with Nancy Hirsch, that was one of my priorities, to track down those who helped. And we met with Franco, who was the commander of the area. At that time, he was no longer young and dashing as he used to be. He was rather -- he is a judge, very distinguished, very friendly. And he said, "Well, you know, we organized as many escapes as we could. You are one of many." And he didn't remember who did it, except, and he said, "Please don't talk about -- it is possible they were Germans, it is

possible they could have been Yugoslavs who spoke German." But he said, "I don't know, but I -- please don't, don't speak publicly about it."

And last year, after forty years, I said, "To hell with it! I'm going to say it, because it's too....."

**Q: DO YOU THINK AT ALL THAT THE DRUGGIST LET PEOPLE KNOW YOU WERE THERE?**

**A: Oh, I -- no question.**

**Q: OKAY.**

**A: Number One: That when this German took me to the hospital, for the first two days, they kept me in the basement, because the shooting was still going on. And so they hid me, and in Italy, they use huge baskets to move potatoes; very sturdy. What they had done was to remove the bottom of one and put two baskets in the cellar, and put a mattress in it, and the potatoes were run out. So they had mattresses and blankets, and that's where they hid me, just for a couple of days, and then they brought me to the hospital, where I was taken care of.**

But the day of the liberation of Sondrio, the first person who came in, who was stubble and had a handkerchief -- I will never forget him -- and [inaudible] was this man who said, "Thank you for saving my life!" They came half an hour just after he escaped, half an hour later, the police was at his house. So the pharmacist was okay.



And there was that poor boyfriend up in the mountains, and I don't know what happened; I could never go back to him. I believe he was very hurt; probably, he hated me. I couldn't tell him that I was all infected. Last year, I thought -- I know he's married, has three daughters, and I debated about letting him know the real reasons for it, but I thought a curtain has fallen, the door has been closed; I am happily married, with three sons, three grandchildren; don't touch the past.

Q: THAT'S A DECISION WE JUST MAKE FOR OURSELVES.

A: Well, then I was brought to the hospital in Sondrio, and that was a hospital for TB people, and the boyfriend I had was there. But somehow, I could never bring myself to tell him what had happened. And I was then moved to a place called Valle Sona, which is a private sanatorium, where I was given a lovely room, and all medical care, and taken very good care. I was in Valle Sona until the end of September, and then I went to Milan....

Q: THAT WAS IN 1940....

A: Nineteen forty-five. Then I went back to Milan, and I was home in Milan, in my little apartment, which had been provided by the underground throughout the war, and I stayed there for about a month, and then I was sick again. And they sent me to a convalescent home, in a place called Somateil de Castrova, which is in the mountains, in

the Dola [inaudible]. Many people, either who had been in the same situation as I was, or were returning from the concentration camps, were in the convalescent home, with medical care, good food, best of everything.

Q: GINA?

A: Yes?

Q: CAN I ASK A QUESTION I ASKED YOU BEFORE? WHAT SUSTAINED YOU? AT THIS POINT, THERE IS JUST PAIN -- PHYSICAL PAIN FOR YOU, DESTRUCTION ALL AROUND YOU -- SOMETHING HAD TO SUSTAIN YOU.

A: Find my parents was the first priority, number one. Number Two: I believed that until that night when I was caught, I never -- I knew then the Germans were arresting people, putting them in Dachau, in Mauthausen, since 1933, from all walks of life; Jewish and non-Jewish. But until that day, when I was tortured, I felt there is a -- the story must be told. If all -- and this is not only psychopaths; this is ordinary people, who because of a political situation can bring themselves to destroy human beings, without batting an eye. The story must be told.

And yet, when I survived, after 1945, I felt like crawling in a hole. I just wanted to find my parents and just close everything, and I think it was because I was too sick to have the energy to try to find people. It was not until 1967 that a man in Washington, who is the editor of

The Washington Post, at that time, Phillip Galen, said, "You must write about this. You must write about this. If you feel so strongly that you survived because you want the story to be told, and then you crawl in a hole..."

I was helping other prisoners, in an individual way, but he felt that that's what I should have done. And at that moment, I asked Nancy Hirsch, who lives in Manassas, Virginia, to come with me and go back, at the suggestion of Phil Galen -- go back. And it was by going back and seeing -- meeting some of the people, like this man and the family of the other, that I finally was able to come out of the hole, so to speak. And it may have been also the fact that the military junta took power in 1967 in Greece.

That's a country that I adore; I feel that Greece has given us so much, in the way of civilization, and it was a country that my parents felt -- the Greek gave us the beginning of democracy; not for the slave, but for many people, it was a beginning in the history of civilization. The Romans gave the laws. Again, the slaves were exempted, but step-by-step -- and the one thing that my parents emphasized time after time, that the evolution of a civilized society is a slow process, and each one does what one can.

This letter reminded me of what my parents had said time after time after time. But I was not ready physically to do it; I mean, I was

too sick, too -- I mean, I was in the sanitorium for so long, then back and forth to the hospital, and -- but the most important damage was psychological, I think.

I lived with terror, nightmares, and then in 1949, I found out that my parents had a trust for me, left with a person in Paris, who was the head of the American Bank, and who had been a friend of the family, or my real parents, for many, many years. So I went to Paris, and he said, "I think the first thing you need is good psychiatric care."

Q: GINETTA, CAN I GO BACK AGAIN TO WHAT YOU SAID?

A: Yes.

Q: YOU FOUND OUT THAT YOUR PARENTS HAD LEFT THIS SMALL TRUST. WHAT SORT OF ORGANIZATIONS WERE WORKING THAT LET YOU FIND THIS OUT?

A: It was a man whose name was Angelo Bernatti, and he was the head of the Italian Bank in Paris. And Angelo was an extraordinary man, who had ties to the Italian government -- to the Italian, yes, to the Italian military, and to the king of Italy, his son, especially, Berta. Angelo is the Jewish person -- he was called by the Gestapo, "the Acting Brain of the Jewish People in France."

And Angelo was the person that when Italy attacked France in 1940, had the Italian army help to move the Jews to safe places. Angelo was also person who attempted to put so many Jewish people

in sanatoriums, in the (Alpha) team and all those places. And somebody, I can't remember who it was, told Angelo about me, and he invited me to see him. And he said, "Well, number one, let's try to find out about your...."

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1

A: ...but my number one priority was getting better. And one suggestion that he had made was that maybe I could go au pair in England, away from everything, which I did. I went to Glasgow au pair; it lasted a very short time, but I met a family who were the -- the father was one of the best psychiatrists in Glasgow. And that family said, "Why don't you come and stay with us?" And he gave me about -- anywhere between one hour and three hours therapy every day.

Q: GOOD.

A: He did. Then in June, I came back to -- there was one problem there, and that was that they had two sons, and they didn't care which one I married, just as long as I married one, which created a lot of complications. I was pretty at that time, you know, fourteen years ago, and -- oh! It created a lot of complications.

Q: I WOULDN'T MIND THE LIFE IN YOUR FACE AT THIS POINT; I'VE ENJOYED IT SO MUCH.

A: But anyway; also, I was very embarrassed to tell the son what had happened; I mean, I did not feel that I could marry anybody, to be very honest. I just wanted my life to be put together, and at that time, I went back, and that's when I got through.

A man in France, who had been in a concentration camp, came to Milan and delivered me a little piece of paper that my father had -- it was a secret, you know, the secret paper, just saying, "I'm sorry, do the best you can, and .... anyway...And I went to see my natural grandfather for the first time, that I'd never met, I'd never seen.

Q: THIS IS YOUR PATERNAL OR MATERNAL?

A: Paternal.

Q: PATERNAL.

A: And he got up from his desk, and he said, "Mademoiselle, I'm very sorry, but my son for me died many years ago." On the other hand, my mother's side had recited the (Kohdish) when she began living with my father.

Q: OH, GOD. YOU REALLY HAD NO FAMILY IN YOUR LIFE.

A: So....close the doors.

Q: THAT'S RIGHT.

A: Go on with your life. I felt that prejudice is one of the most terrible things in this life. It doesn't matter who practices it, and I felt strongly that, in '67 perhaps, the best lesson I've learned is that prejudice is a very strong psychological matter for people, and when people persecute other people because of their race, their religion or color, it's something that has to be exposed. And it doesn't matter who does it, whether it's left-wing regime, right-wing regime, Christian, Jews, Muslim, Shiites, you know, anyone.

I think if we want to live together in this planet as a human race, the most important thing is to understand that we must respect differences, and just because we are different, we are not inhuman. We are still human beings. That's my hope. Personally, I strongly identify with the Jewish people. I don't know why; don't ask me. My mother was Jewish; I feel Jewish. I feel -- although in the paper, it says I'm the daughter of a Catholic, I could have made a choice.

Q: BUT BY JEWISH TRADITION AND JEWISH LAW, YOU ARE JEWISH IF YOUR MOTHER IS JEWISH.

A: Yes, but....

Q: BUT THAT'S NOT -- THE IDENTIFICATION FOR YOU IS NOT SO MUCH...

A: ...that's not what made me choose it. I chose because I feel strongly that I'm Jewish.

Q: COULD WE TAKE THIS BEYOND TO -- I MEAN, INSTEAD OF -- SHARING A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT YOUR LIFE; HOW YOU CAME TO THIS COUNTRY, HOW YOU MET YOUR HUSBAND?

A: Oh, very easy.

Q: HOW YOU GOT INVOLVED? I MEAN, INSTEAD OF BITTERNESS AND ANGER, YOU REALLY DID PUT IT BEHIND TO JOY AND HOPE.

A: I was very lucky. First of all...

Q: HOW VERY WELL DESERVED!

A: First of all, I must say, my nurse was a very strong force, in a quiet way. When my parents were gone, she kept on saying, "Life goes on for each one of us." And here was a farmer, a wonderful woman who had barely gone beyond the third grade, probably, or fifth grade -- I don't know exactly -- but she had the wisdom of centuries of Italian occupation. Because Italy was never a country until 1870. And there was a constant series of invasions from one side or the other, and these farmers had survived all these invasions.

And what she was saying was, "It will pass. It's just another phase." And in some way, I think -- she had other children, I can't remember how many -- I was the favorite. So we had [interruption] my parents, but I was her favorite, which made me the pariah of her own natural children, who hated my guts, and who didn't know the truth -- didn't know the true story. And I think she gave me a raw strength,



coupled with a more intellectual background from my own parents. From them, I learned Greece and Rome and history, and all sorts of things; from her, I learned the strength that comes from leaning with the hurt. So I think there was a combination of things that made me a very lucky person, to, in perspective -- of survival. My mother, although her situation was comfortable, but there was always the fear of being caught after 1938.

From her, there was the strength of having said, "Oh, but you know, people, invasions come and go. Bad things come and go, but you always" -- so there was a nurturing, at both the emotional level, from both sides, and the intellectual level from my own parents, and an historical level, I would say, in a primitive way, from this family. And it was a combination of all these things.

For example, we were starving, but I would arrive home, and here was -- she had [inaudible], I would find a piece of butter and piece of cheese and piece of something, you know, that she had managed, in spite of the shortage, to make sure I wouldn't starve. That's caring, caring, caring -- all the time. And when I went back to Italy, until she died in '68, she was the first person I went to see. I saw everybody else, but she was always the first person.

From my parents, I got -- here are two people who -- my father was defying all the conventions of Italy; his wife, by all accounts, slept

with everybody, so when he left her, you know, it was just too bad. There was no divorce. But they were a very devoted couple. None of them practiced any religion, except they felt strongly that concern for human beings is the most important thing that we can have in life -- caring for other people, caring.

And then, when I went to live in Paris, it was my godfather -- I went to school, and again, one of my professors and his wife, Jacqueline Veldoux and Dr. Veldoux, not only were they teachers, but they were friends. And they're still my friends. I'm a very lucky person. I have had love and care and cherishing all my life. So I guess, when those people were trying to make me believe that I was nothing but a piece of dirt, there was too much around that said, "Hey, don't let them convince you of that."

Now the frightening thing was when they told me that nobody knew where I was and nobody cared. And that's when the episode of the matchbox occurred. That was in Sondrio. And I had been badly mistreated. I was very hungry, I was very thirsty, and I was in terrible pain, and one of the guards, shouting obscenities -- I don't know why those people love those dirty words, I can't understand it -- but threw the door open, and threw in a small matchbox. Inside the matchbox, there were some matches, and one small piece of paper saying, "(Corragia)." So I knew somebody some place knew where I was.

And that's one of the other things -- that the most oppressing thing is when you think -- because they make you believe it, that nobody knows where you are, nobody cares. And then you get something like that. But I think in my life, what I got was messages of caring from all sides, whether it was from the Mulasano family in Milan, when I was in the hospital, in sanitorium, I had visitors every week, with flowers and fruit, and it under scarcity.

Then I decided to go to Glasgow -- I had excellent care. I went to Paris, lived in Paris, went to school for three years at the Sorbonne. The Veldoux were wonderful, and my godfather was just absolutely marvelous, to the point of...[interruption]....stayed up until 1:00, until I came back, and now 2:00, and I said, "Go to bed, for Pete's sake!" I was out with friends.

It was an incredible period in Paris at that time. It was the period where there was the big discussion between Camus and Sartre, Camus claiming that -- stating, which I believe -- "A victim is a victim, no matter who makes the victim. Period." Whether it's the Nazis or the Russians in the Gulag.

Sartre was saying, "But we have to secure a socio-economic rights; therefore, one is [inaudible], and then Stalin is trying to give food and shelter to millions of people, and Camus says, "No, no, I don't believe that!" I stood with Camus, who was not very popular at that

time. Sartre was the popular, the "darling" of everybody. And I think I came out of that period with a very strong belief that a victim is a victim, no matter who makes the victim.

I don't want to hear about whether it's Stalin or Nazis, or whatever. The most important thing is to help the victim and do everything you can to prevent any dictatorship from making victims. What happened to the Jews happened because people were silent, people accepted it; they knew it.

When people tell me they didn't know, I feel like screaming. They didn't want to know. They didn't want to know. That's why it happened. I think that everybody knew about the torture center in Milan, the Bandacock. Everybody knew about the torture center in Villa Trista, in the other places; everybody knew that it was happening! People didn't want to hear about it.

Then, of course, at the end of the war, everybody was a partisan, everybody was in the resistance. We were so few. But lo and behold, at the end of the war, everybody has been in it. And above all, as far as the Jewish deportations are concerned, it happened because people chose to look on the other side. And it can happen any place, any time.

**Q:** YOU THINK IT CAN HAPPEN HERE?

**A:** In this country?

Q: IN THIS COUNTRY.

A: No. And I tell you why. Because I think that there are too many people who cherish democratic roots, I believe. And I also believe that it could not have happened in Italy. Jewish people were deported, but there could not have been an Auschwitz in Italy. Now, my Polish friends get very upset at me for that, and I didn't understand, until I went to Warsaw last November, how it could have happened. Those vast expanses of nothing, where no one can get to it. In Italy, people would have found out; in France, people would have found out.

Still, in my judgment, the Nazis were successful only because every supporter -- secret police, sympathizer, informant -- in every single Nazi-occupied country, helped the assassin, the Gestapo, to round up the Jewish people, to round up those who opposed the Nazi-Fascist regime, those who were suspected of opposing the Nazi-Fascist regime, those who were suspected of harboring Jewish people, or members of the resistance. That's why Auschwitz occurred.

And I believe it is very easy to say, "The Nazi did it." The Nazi did, but they had the help, the cooperation, some time eager cooperation, of the informants, of the secret police in every single Nazi-Fascist occupied country. And that's why I feel it's important to understand that point.

Otherwise, we'll say, "Well, the Nazis did it; the Nazis have been eliminated." But those whose people supported the Nazis are still there, in every single country of Europe, in the United States. And once you have these feelings, once you believe that it is okay to destroy a Jewish person, or a black, or somebody else, then you go ahead and you do it.

**Q:** I'M INTERESTED IN HEARING YOU TALK, THERE REALLY IS VERY LITTLE ANGER IN YOUR VOICE. THERE'S A LOT OF HOPE, AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF CARING.

**A:** I am hopeful. I think that forty years ago, I did what I could for a few people, too few people. I made a choice on September 8, 1943, that I would try to save those whom I could save. I was not optimistic, but I also remember telling myself, "Even if you fail, at least you must try." And I believe that has been probably my lifetime guideline. "You may not succeed, but you must try."

The difference today is that, unlike during the Nazi period, we can give a name and a face to the victim. We can ask, through the free press in many countries, help for that victim. And I've always been convinced that Mauthausen, Dachau, were the early harbingers of the institution which led to Auschwitz. And people protested the Nazi activities, and interring in Dachau and Mauthausen, starting in March 1933, the Jewish people and Germans, just because they were

Socialists, they were Catholic priests, they were Protestant ministers, they were trade unionists; people from all walks of life, who either helped the Jews, or opposed the Nazi policies. Those people went in Mauthausen and Dachau in 1933!

And here were the propagandists of the American-German Friendship Society, getting together in New York with a lovely luncheon, everybody was dressed, to talk about, "What a terrible propaganda there is by the Marxist-Leninist-communists, who say that we are interring innocent people in Dachau and Mauthausen."

DAMN IT! DAMN IT! Those people were helping the Nazis to begin to institute the railroad for Auschwitz. And those people were propagandists for the Nazi regime, and they were never exposed for what they really were! Essentially, they helped the institution of repression, which led eventually to Auschwitz.

The reason I am emotional about this is, you notice, is because I have seen the same thing repeated by some well-meaning people of the American-Vietnamese Society, to do the same -- to protect Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam, when thousands of innocent people were being exterminated. THE DAMN SAME THING twice in my lifetime. It's too much.

Q: CAN YOU....

A: Sorry for the outburst.

Q: NO, NO, THERE IS...

A: But those members of the American-German Friendship Society, they knew damn well what was going on in Mauthausen and Dachau, and they were saying, "If you could feel(?), some communists and criminals. They're all rapists, they're all this and that and that." They never took the trouble of finding out.

Q: GINETTA, IT STILL CONTINUES. YOU CAN GO INTO MUNICH TODAY AND ASK WHERE DACHAU IS, AND NO ONE KNOWS WHERE IT'S AT.

A: So with Mauthausen; we had trouble finding it.

Q: WELL, WE HAD TROUBLE WITH DACHAU.

A: Well, from Glasgow, I went to Paris, and in Paris I went to school at the Sorbonne, at L'Institute de psychologie at the Sorbonne, and I was terribly lucky, because one of my major concerns was, "How am I going to earn a living?" At that time, I didn't know yet of the trust fund, and I felt that no matter what happened, I must know how to earn a living.

Even in the hospital, I tried to learn short-hand, typing, languages, all sorts of things to help me to make a living. I went to the Sorbonne, and then found out that there was this trust set up for my education, et cetera, which was a miracle, and enabled me to be relaxed about the kind of study I wanted to do. I was interested in doing electroencephalography, and especially child development. And



I was very fortunate, because Piaget was one of my professors. Milo Ponty was one of my professors.

One of my friends said to my foster father -- we called him "foster father," he was the godfather -- but he really always saw that I was well-cared for; he was very busy with the bank, you know, but making sure that I was okay. He said, "Why don't you take an M.D.? If you have an M.D., you can do much more work than you can." And the only place that I could do so was the University of Chicago, because if you pass the exam, then you can enroll. So I came to the University of Chicago.

Q: YOU DIDN'T SPEAK ENGLISH AT THIS TIME.

A: I did.

Q: YOU DID.

A: Yes. Not as, you know -- I still don't speak English very well, but I manage very well. Anyway, at that time...

Q: YOU'RE A SURVIVOR.

A: I'm a survivor and proud of it.

Q: THAT'S RIGHT.

A: And at that time, I realized that my tests showed that I was a straight-A in the humanities, in languages, in philosophy, in literature and straight F in science! So the suggestion was made that if I took a year of physics, chemistry and biology, perhaps I could make up. Well...I can try. But there was one man at the University of Chicago, a Dr.

Sifandel, who was the Dean of the Medical School, and he was very encouraging.

He said, "You know, I want to help you in any way I can," and I've always been grateful to him. But I was staying at the International House at the University of Chicago, arranged by Professor James Miller, the head of the Psychology Department at the University of Chicago, who had come to Paris, met me at the Institute of psychologie at the Sorbonne, where there was a conference going on in 1951, and also suggested that maybe that's what I should do. And he was very kind, he made arrangements for me at the University of Chicago, and I came to the International House, and I had a nice room. And I went down to the cafeteria that night absolutely convinced that I was going to go right back to Paris. I wasn't about to stay in Chicago. I met this wonderful young man, who talked to me about supermarkets, what is a supermarket....

Q: HE'S AMERICAN, YOUR HUSBAND?

A: Yes. And anyway, we started talking, and I said that I was going to have to make up some courses and go to medical school, and he said, "I am in medical school, a first-year medical student." Making a long story short, he called me every night. And I didn't unpack; I stayed. Three months later, my foster father arranged for me to go down to Virginia to meet an eligible man -- a big party.

And I said, "Well, I'm going to California to meet the family of this young man," and the interesting thing was that here was a man whom I had known since my childhood, my only tie to my natural parents, who adored my mother.

But when it came time to get married, he did not want me to marry a Jewish person. He felt that I had suffered so much, he wanted me to marry somebody wealthy, protected and no more trouble. So he had arranged for a party in Virginia with a lot of people. Instead, I came to San Francisco, met my husband's family, and three months later, we got married. And he hit the roof.

The night before we got married, I called him. I said, "Poppi, I really want your blessing." And he said, "I won't give it to you." But the next day, he sent a telegram, saying, "I completely disapprove, but I give you my love." Something like that. Anyway, we had a trust, and.....

Q: WAS PIERCE A WONDERFUL MAN?

A: {inaudible} And I'm still married thirty-five years later, so that's my Pierce.

Q: WELL, THAT'S QUITE A STORY. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SPEND A LITTLE TIME....

A: We got married at the University of Chicago, a little chapel, March 14, 1952; and spent three more years in Chicago, when he was going

through medical school, then came to San Francisco, where he did his internship, and spent -- and I had one child by then. And came to San Francisco and had a second child, and lived in San Francisco, and one year in Ross, and then we used part of my trust to buy a home in Mill Valley. But then Leonard had to go for two years in the service after he finished his residency, and spent two years in Monterey, came back, spent two years in Mill Valley, in our own home that I adored.

But then he made a decision to go to Japan for three years. So we went to Japan, in Nagasaki, lived in Nagasaki for three years, came back, and he decided to do another degree, and he went to the Harvard School of Public Health, lived in Boston for a year, then go to Washington for three years, and that's when I met Phil Galen, who told me, "Go back."

And at that time, the military junta was in power, and I was beginning to get reports from various people who had been tortured, including a woman whose name is Kitty Arseni. And Kitty Arseni, when she told me the story, it was a carbon copy of what happened to me. And I became enraged.

At that point, Amnesty International was just beginning with a small group in Washington. I joined it. I gave them a copy of that letter, and I said, "Let's get going." Then, in '68, we moved here, and at that time, we had about -- I started Group 19 of Amnesty

International, U.S.A. But I was very busy working for people in Greece, back and forward. One of them is today the President of Greece. The other was Maria Fleming. [interruption]

Q: YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN STARTING CHAPTER 19.

A: Well, in Greece, it was paramount. Lady Fleming was a personal friend of my professor in Paris, the Veldoux who helped me forty years ago. And so, because of various things, I began working with people in Greece, for people in Greece, as well as in Brazil -- I mean, the first office of Amnesty was in this house. It was a madhouse.

Then in 1971, I asked Joan Baez to give a concert for the Greek Legal Defense Fund. She did, and we have been friends ever since. We fight like mad sometimes, but that's -- I admire and respect her, and she's always there when I need her. But then, of course, the idea was to develop an Amnesty International constituency. So for a long time, I travelled, to Chicago, to Detroit, to -- with my two bags of material; until a friend said, "Why don't you try the direct mail?" And that was very important in developing, reaching a broader range of people -- well, you know what's happening.

Q: GINA, THE ONE THING I STILL -- I JUST SENSE IT'S IMPORTANT, IF YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE GOING BACK, BECAUSE IT'S THE HEAVY

ONE. BY THE TIME THE WAR WAS OVER, PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO WOMEN IN THE RESISTANCE.

A: Yes, they were neglecting many people -- many women simply faded back into their own....

Q: BUT WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE EXPERIENCES CAME OUT OF WHAT A LOT OF THE WOMEN IN THE RESISTANCE HAD GONE THROUGH?

A: Many people would say, "If you had minded your own business, you wouldn't have been in trouble. Why didn't you stay home and take care of your husband and children?"

Q: I GUESS THE WOMEN LOST EITHER WAY.

A: I mean, that was a fact; that's what....

Q: I'M NOT QUITE SURE HOW TO SAY THANK YOU FOR SHARING WITH US.

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Q: WE'VE HAD A LOT OF CONVERSATION AT THIS POINT WITH THE TAPE OFF, AND MY QUESTION NOW IS, HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR OPTIMISM?

A: Because I've seen the changes. I do believe that forty years ago, there were so few people who -- now, Tony didn't believe the report of the people who were escaping from Auschwitz, from Mauthausen, from Dachau, from Buchenwald. There were very few, but people did not want to believe.

Today, the difference is that we have Amnesty International, and its research, we give a name and a face of the victim. And because of the credibility of Amnesty International, we have seen changes. We have seen enormous changes. We have been able to help victims in Greece, in Brazil, in Chile, in the U.S.S.R, in the Philippines, and I have seen enormous changes taking place, but above all, people are finally beginning to say, "But what does Amnesty International say about this report of people being arbitrarily arrested, detained without charges and tried without due process of law," -- people being tortured, people being executed, people disappearing -- it's true.

Argentina is a case in point. But what I like, and my optimism comes from the fact that in Greece, instead of vengeance, when the military unit fell in 1974, instead of vengeance, there was due process of law. There were trials of the torturers, there were trials of the people responsible for atrocities committed.

**Q:** AND THAT'S TAKING PLACE IN ARGENTINA NOW.

**A:** In Argentina, I see the same thing. And I know that Corey Aquino will do the same, with due process of law. She has already released all prisoners, she has already said, "There will be no arrests by decree, as Marcos had decreed, and had ruled under martial law, but the people who will be arrested, it is because they have committed a crime, and they will have a chance to defend themselves in a court."

Q: BUT GINETTA, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL COULD NOT HAVE HELPED DURING THE NAZI COLLECTION OF JEWS. YOU JUST COULDN'T KEEP TRACK. THE NUMBERS WERE SO HUMONGOUS, WERE SO LARGE, THAT AMNESTY CAME OUT OF WORLD WAR II, BUT I DON'T KNOW IF IT COULD HAVE BEEN USEFUL -- IT COULD HAVE BEEN USEFUL, OH, YES -- BUT COULD IT HAVE BEEN WORTHWHILE -- NOT WORTHWHILE -- COULD IT HAVE REALLY DONE A JOB, BECAUSE THE NUMBERS WERE SO GREAT THERE.

A: Let us start at 1933. Let's go back to March 1933, when Hitler came into power, and immediately -- practically immediately -- Mauthausen and Dachau camps were opened with headlines. With headlines! And the people interred were the classical prisoners of conscience. They were Jewish people, they were trade unionists, they were priests, they were Protestant ministers, students, professors -- people from all walks of life.

Now. Had Amnesty International existed at that time, and very strong, in order to be able to adopt each prisoner and give a name and a face to the victim, would the Holocaust really have occurred? Because the extermination did not begin really until about 1941. And between 1933 and 1941, there were people who were saying, "Look, this is happening," but nobody believed it. And if Amnesty International existed worldwide, putting the spotlight on this problem,



maybe it wouldn't have made any difference. Maybe Hitler was such a mad man that he would have done it anyway.

But the reason I believe if Amnesty International existed and the Holocaust, the extermination, may not have happened, is because Hitler tried in every possible way to hide what he was doing. He tried to punish severely people who were escaping.

Remember, there were the punitive actions taken against the cell-blockmate of the people who escaped -- standing for 48 hours in the courtyard. In other words, he did not want the truth to come out. Why? Had an Amnesty International organization existed at that time, putting the spotlight on these events -- the fact that Hitler didn't want it to be known, neither did Mussolini, neither did anybody else in Nazi-Fascist occupied countries -- makes me believe that they didn't want it to be known, and therefore, if the publicity had taken place, if world public opinion was outraged by all these events, and people had protested, there would have been oppression, but I am not so sure the extermination would have occurred.

Q: I THINK YOU USED THE KEY WORD - PUBLICITY.

A: Publicity.

Q: BUT WITH EACH YEAR, GREECE, ARGENTINA, THE PHILIPPINES, THE MEDIA...

A: Yes....the media....yes.

Q: YOU CAN THROW MORE PUBLICITY SO MUCH QUICKER AT SUCH A FASTER AUDIENCE. SO THAT EVEN IF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HAD EXISTED, THE AVERAGE PERSON WOULD HAVE HAD TO SEEK OUT THE INFORMATION. THE MEDIA WASN'T AS BROAD-BASED; IT DIDN'T INFILTRATE AS MUCH.

A: Yes. It was not as broad-based, but there was such an effort by the Nazi-Fascists and the Allies to hide the facts...

Q: OH, YEAH.

A: ...which makes me think even if the clandestine press -- I mean, we were very feeble in the clandestine press. We printed these newspapers and magazines and lists of people who were....

Q: HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO SAVE THESE THINGS? I MEAN, AND THEY'RE IN SUCH MARVELOUS CONDITION. THE PAPER DIDN'T EVEN TURN BROWN.

A: Oh, it is brown.

Q: NO, NOT -- I MEAN, IT'S NOT THAT OLD. I HAVE THINGS FROM '41, THE PAPER'S MUCH -- THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE PAPER'S MUCH WORSE.

A: And [INAUDIBLE], it's really falling apart, but that's all right. But the point is, I think, that mobilized public opinion. The fact that they were hiding everything makes me believe that had organized public opinion believed the report, it may have made a difference. They still

would have incarcerated people. What I'm talking about, would the Holocaust actually, the extermination, occurred?

That's what I'm talking about. I don't think they would have stopped incarcerating people. I believe that if there was an outraged public opinion mobilized, speaking up, the Holocaust itself -- and they may have stopped at the concentration camp, not at the extermination, that's what I'm saying.

Q: WELL, HISTORY SAYS...AND TOOK ONE STEP AT A TIME.

A: Took one step at a time...why...why....why.

Q: THEY WANTED TO SEE HOW MUCH THEY COULD GET AWAY WITH, AND THEN STEPPED OVER TO THE -- OH, THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WERE DOING.

A: Exactly. Exactly.

Q: ARE THESE FINISHED? I'D RATHER....

A: At the end of the war, each one of us who had gone through this period, male and female, had to go eventually in front of a commission, military commission, in Milan. They were all men, high-ranking people. And they looked through my file, and one of them said, "Senorina, are you sure you didn't invite the rapists? Are you sure you didn't incite them?"

I walked out of there. They still gave me a pension, but....you know, I mean, honest-to-God, you feel like taking your chair and

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crashing it to his head! To his credit, another general spoke up immediately and said, "This is a stupid question to ask of a person who has been duly identified as a victim and the culprits were also identified. I don't believe that you should ask these kinds of questions."

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END TAPE 2, SIDE 1