

DINA PORAT

INTERVIEW

November 27, 2000

M- Turkey was neutral. What do we understand by neutrality today?

D - Today we have a different notion of neutrality, because the archives which have been opened recently have shown us for instance, that Switzerland's neutrality was formal, and underneath the cover of formality Switzerland did have deals, financial deals, economic deals with the Nazi regime. We know as much about Sweden, which is now undergoing period of self-examination regarding it's neutrality. On the one hand Sweden, allowed refugees, Jewish refugees included to be brought to its borders such as the Jews from Denmark. But on the other hand, industry in Sweden and most notably the Wallenberg, the famous Raul Wallenberg family was involved in, again, economic and financial deals in selling of iron and coal and armaments to the Nazi regime. So today we know more about that notion and we know how complicated it was. And we know that there wasn't really pure neutrality by the way of meaning that a country does not take sides and avoids any contact with the sides. This really didn't exist.

M - So what was the content of Turkish neutrality?

Dalia Ofer: The lesson Turkey learned from WWI was that in this situation it should keep neutral in WWII. Although there was a lot of German influence in Turkey, there were quite a number of political leaders who thought that Turkey should ally with Germany. The pressure from the British and the interests that were connected to the British countries that were surrounding Turkey which were under British mandate like Iraq, made it more difficult to take sides. But we must admit until the first stage of the war at least until 1943, even towards the end perhaps of 43, the Germans interest in Turkey were very, very strong and quite influential. Another thing we should take in account is that the fear of Turkey from Russia, from the Soviet Union. In the first part of the war the Soviet Union was together with Nazi, Germany, but once the war started in Soviet Union from the summer of 1941, the fear that when the mood of the war would change what would happen to Turkey because of the constant interest of Russia and the Soviet Union to which hot water, water that does not freeze in the winter was a great really threat for Turkey.

Therefore in the second part of the war allying with the British and the Americans was more promising than with the Nazis who were defeated. I think here lies the major interest in Turkish neutrality which was like all countries

like Switzerland and Spain, they were neutral, but they had different orientations during the war , they moved to different sides

D Porat - Turkish neutrality was complicated by its unique geographic position. Because we all know the map and Turkey is indeed sitting as a bridge between Europe and Asia, and could on the one hand be an avenue of rescue, on the other hand it was a nest of espionage of information collecting and secret meetings between agents and officers and all kind of plotters of the allies and the enemies.

Dalia Offer: D - OK, so first one should remember that there was in Istanbul a major office of immigration or a major office of the Zionist movement that dealt with immigration all the time. From 1940 when the war in the west started, when Germany invaded the Netherlands and France and the Jews could not really operate easily and could not move, transit easily through Italy and Switzerland the importance of Istanbul as a center became more and more central. So, therefore, I think the growing role of Istanbul as a station for operation for immigration to Palestine, grew from 1940 onward. Now immigration to Palestine was a very difficult operation at that time because from the British perspective, most immigrants or a large number of immigrants who tried to reach Palestine in the first wave or mass escape when war started. A large majority of them did not have the certificates, the visas, etc. that the British demanded. They could not have it because of the British rule about immigration to Palestine. Therefore, the British called it illegal immigration, the Jews called it independent immigration or another form of immigration etc... Turkey became very important for these operations. Another thing because the straits, the Bosphorus and the Dardanells were open water and any boat that reached the straits had to get permission to continue it's way. It was also a chance to reach the Mediterranean relatively easier than in other situations. A third reason why Turkey was such an important center for this kind of operation that you had a lot of seaman and old boats who were available for different prices, usually very high prices, and usually not very reliable or large or good boats, sometimes very small ones that one could try and get through Turkey. So both seaman, merchants or agents that dealt with getting boats and the boats availability, all these were important.

Dina Porat: Anyone, you could have seen in a café in Istanbul, you could have seen around the tables. One table, British were speaking to Hungarians. On the other one Romanians with American. It was all a hustle, bustle of information selling, giving, shipping. This made Turkey a unique place... It was in contact with everyone.

Kolleck:) T - Maybe the best example to give you in connection with the fact that Turkey was a neutral country. There was a very good restaurant called Abdullah's to which I went from time to time to meet with various people and I remember the occasions where I was sitting at one table and the next table Von Pappen, the German Ambassador had lunch, so it was that close to each other. I had a German once come up to me and speak to me and said " I hear you are here from Bayroit?" I said "No I'm here from Beirut" So he quickly leaved the room, you know.

. I went to Turkey because it was a neutral country and we had contact from there with the Jewish underground. Gradually this developed into several contacts, also mainly with the British intelligence. The American intelligence didn't exist yet. They started only growing at that time but the British had deep roots there. The people who worked in the British network were mainly people from families who for several generations have been British merchants in that area, in Istanbul, in Constantinople, who knew the area extremely well and that was their great advantage. We wanted contact in order to save, even individual Jews from the other side and to keep contact with the Jewish underground. For that, Istanbul was the right place.

Porat: Also another point of our discussion is not static, it's not that at the beginning at the war you decide what do you do, and then you keep this line of policy until the end of the war. Things changed, for instance,

Porat: Turkey on January 1941 issues a very humane declaration saying that it allows free passage to every refugee, Jews who are citizens of foreign countries included, provided they have the proper documentation. But it allowed from January 1941 to the middle of the year, until the invasion of Germans to Soviet, Russia and the total change of the war. 2,250 Jews managed to come from Lithuania via Russia, Odessa, Turkey to Palestine. It was done with the best of good will. Later when the war is complicated also rethinks and is under much more pressure than before. In 1944 being neutral was risky, because in 1944 the tide of the war is changing. Germans allies are afraid it might lose the war. IF it might lose the war perhaps it is wise and the right to depart from Germany and become a closer ally of the Allies, of Britain and the United States. So that now, Turkey starts thinking in 1944 what's best to do and it waivers between being close to Germany or being close the Allies.

Now the Turkish government, now this was very interesting, because unlike many other neutral countries in 1940 the Turkish government passed a law that any immigrant who had an end visa which means that he had a permission to enter any country, Peru or Cuba or whatever could pass through Turkey, could get a transit visa for Turkey. Now most of the illegal immigrants had fake visas to Panama or other Latin American countries and once they got this end visas they could get the transit visa. So here you had the combination, the government passed a law to get the fake visas was relatively easy so the consuls in each country, Budapest, Hungary, Bulgaria, and you know many people could get the kinds of certificates that were fake certificates. This made the passage through Turkey possible. The hope is from Turkey to go on from and therefore operating or constructing some kind of establishment that would continue the move from Istanbul to Palestine that was as important as making the facilities, helping assisting the move from Europe to Turkey. So here you have again the meeting point of the interests

I think it should be mentioned in this regard that German influence in Turkey had old roots. There are historians who say towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century German influence in Turkey was very much heavy and very much felt and that the Armenian massacre was partly done under their influence and with their help. So that it wasn't easy for Turkey to be absolutely neutral, wasn't easy.

M - How did the Yishuv, the Jewish settlement in Palestine. How did it exploit Turkey as a listening post?

D - Well, First of all in deed, from the beginning of the war there was a chief delegate, Hyam Barlas, the representative of the Jewish agency. He was the one who dealt with the Turkish government to have this declaration of January 1941 issued so those Jewish refugees could come across. And indeed he could credit himself for this achievement. Later than that in 1942, when it became clear that WW II is not only a matter of refugees or passage of refugees from country to another but that there is a systematic killing of the Jewish communities in Europe. The Yishuv sent delegates to Turkey undercover, they were as if reporters, reporting to a certain newspaper in Palestine, but actually they were charged with a task of putting up abridge of information and if possible of rescue between Turkey and occupied Europe. These were young people, active, resourceful, most of them were in their 20's and late 20's such as Teddy Kolleck, later mayor of Jerusalem, Huda Ve'al later ambassador of Israel in many countries. Akiva Levinsky. They were all burning to act and there was a kind of tension between them and Barlas who was the senior delegate.

Kolleck- We had tensions. ... Hayam Barlas worked through official channels. There was an office of the Jewish Agency which was quite official and that was his field of activity. We worked through channels that weren't so open. We found individual British, a few Americans; the Americans only started out at that time, they didn't have a well established history there; with whom we could exchange views, who helped us as postmen to take individual letters and take them to the camps. Barlas wouldn't do that. He did only the official things. We kept separate.

M- What was your cover?

Teddy Kolleck - I was a newspaperman.

Porat: Turkey was a place not easy to act in. Turkey had a very rigid set of regulations for every aspect of life. The monetary system, coming in, going out, having your papers registered. Buying an apartment. Everything was under heavy bureaucracy. It was not easy to move. They had their apartments broken into. They had all their correspondence checked from time to time. Barlas said "Let's keep it in line. Let's obey the rules of Turkey because otherwise we will find ourselves in trouble and we won't be able to fulfill our tasks." And they said "The hell with regulations, people are being killed and by the time we wait for you to go to Ankara, he had to go to Ankara by train, and he was taking the night train so that he could knock at the doors of the offices there in the capital in the morning. By the time you go and the time you come, people are killed, we should play it outside the rules of the game. Not formally, we should do anything we can."

If you try to ask, how much did they do, or how many people, for instance, did really come through Turkey, then the answer is that these 2,250 came and then 1,500 came with about 4 ships after March '44 and about less than 900 others came through the train. These are really small numbers considering the situation of Turkey.

M- If you say that Turkey was a listening post, and the Zionist movement put in a series to listen, what did they know and when did they know it? What countries were they in contact with, what information was coming forth, and what were they doing?

D - Well this is exactly what they asked themselves at the end. What did we accomplish? The knowledge that the killing of the Jews was systematic and isn't just any killing during wartime in which civilians are hurt in large numbers, it became evident in the Yishuv towards the end of 1942. And this is like a watershed from which a point in time

from which these delegates are being sent more extensively than before, they were before too, but not as they were as after 1942. So the knowledge was there.

Kolleck: . We knew more or less what was going on. We couldn't do very much. We could save sometimes and individual and even that was a success for us. - The Yishuv got news not only from us. There were individuals who came to Switzerland from Germany or came to Spain which were also neutral countries and brought the same news. Altogether we couldn't do very much.

Porat: Now the question was indeed which country can you establish a contact from Turkey? The obvious were the Balkan countries were the closest and the contact was good with Hungary, Romania, with Greece with Yugoslavia the part of Yugoslavia. But as you go into the center of Europe and the western part of Europe the other post of the Yishuv which was in Geneva, in Switzerland was the one who established most of the contacts with Western Europe.

M- Let's now go through the four countries and give me thirty seconds on what the evolution of the Holocaust was in each of the countries. A minute, two minutes, tell us about the Holocaust as it occurred in Hungary.

D - OK But before, I'd like to emphasize that they did manage to establish a contact with Poland as well, but later. It was already the summer of 1943, less than a year after they came, but the summer of 1943 marked the end of most of the ghettos, the uprisings in the extermination camps so that not much was left to establish contact with. In Hungary, Hungary was indeed a key country. From Hungary information about Poland, Slovakia and other countries came to Turkey. Because Hungary was independent, it was under German influence, but it was independent until March 1944, when the German army invaded Hungary took it over very swiftly and it was obvious the fate of Hungarian Jews would be the same or equal to the fate of their brothers in other countries. Indeed in a very short while this invasion in the middle of March, Eichmann came with a staff and they put up ghettos mainly in townships, not in Budapest yet, but in the townships. These ghettos were short lived and after a period of a few weeks they started...One cannot call shipping, these are not cattle, once can say...

M - Deportation...

D - Deportation is too gentle a word for what was done to Hungarian Jewry. They were moved to Auschwitz mainly and 470,000 people were killed there in a matter of from the middle of May the 15th of May, to the 7th of July. There was never anything that quick, and brutal and swift as the killing of Hungarian Jewry which vouches until today that they didn't know about the killings in other countries and they were totally caught by surprise.

M - Take us through Romania for a moment.

D - OK, Romania had a former history. After the invasion of the German army into the Soviet Union, Romania is a good ally and as a state wishing to exploit the moment, expelled about a quarter of a million of Romanian Jews into Transnistria. Transnistria meaning beyond the Trans Niestra, beyond the River Niestra into a part of the southern Ukraine which was a desolated area with no roads, and no water, electricity, backward area of small townships. The people were either joining the local Jews in ghettos or were put up to build the camps and ghettos for themselves. Most of them, two thirds of them perished, not in a long time, and only 70,000 remained alive. It was supposed this Transnistria expulsion place of Romanian Jewry is until today considered the harshest and cruelest place, people wore newspapers as clothing, ate the shells of trees. It was unbelievable hunger and want. The rest were rescued. The rest were not expelled.

M - Take us for a moment through the Balkans.

D - Greece. Well, here you have, in Greece; you have the tension between the German rule and the Italian rule. The parts of Greece that were under Italian rule had better luck than those under German rule. One can see the advantage of precedent. When the Germans occupied the coast which included Salonika, they capture the Jews of the city and about out of 70,000 Jews formidable old ancient vibrating Jewry 56,000 were again in a very short time sent to Auschwitz. Again not knowing who, where, what, who was against whom. When Athens was taken by the Germans then the Rabbi of Athens said, "We'll study the lesson. We'll all go to the mountains." His most significant deed was to refuse to give the Germans the lists of the addresses and members of the community, which was down in Salonika, not knowing where this is heading. SO the Jews in Athens, the 20,000 Jews in Athens were mostly saved while the others in Salonika were killed.

M- Now as this history is going on, what did the people, what did the Zionist representatives in Turkey know?

D - Well sometimes they knew on time, in what you call today in real time. For instance in Bulgaria where the Jews were deported only from the capital to the provinces. But the population and the king and the clergy avoided their expulsion outside the country except for the Jews of Macedonia and Trakia, which were not Bulgarian to begin with...

M - Macedonia and Thrace.

D - Macedonia and Thrace. And they knew on time when they were expelled they called the delegate in Turkey with whom the established to contact before. They called by phone and said, "We are being expelled". Run to the apostolic nuncio so that he speaks with the highest in office of our clergy and try to stop it. Sometimes they knew on time. Sometimes they tragically knew afterwards. Afterwards because in Poland for instance they sent money and letters and in the summer of 1943 the money and the letters got there, got to Jewish hands near Krakow, to a camp and the remnants of the ghetto. The messenger came back with answers and letters, but the letters testified that their letters and money came at the last moment. So they knew about the last moment. The last letters came from Begin where there was an attempt to revolt against the Germans and those who headed the revolt against the Germans wrote them their last letter and they were killed shortly after. It is a complicated question, it depends on where, how far did they reach...

M- And in Hungary?

D - In Hungary they were in very good, in very close contact most of the time. But then when it started after the invasion, the German invasion and setting up of the ghettos. The ghettos on the provinces. The beginning of this swift deportation they were as helpless, they knew, they had Yoel Brand, a member of rescue and aid committee put up in Budapest. They had him in Istanbul speaking to them about, and telling them about what happened in Hungary. So they knew, but I think that we should add the question, let's say they, let's say they knew on time.

How much was it that they could do? What could they do, what were the means they had, in the midst of World War, less than half a million people. There were 455,000 Jews then in Palestine with no army, no ships, no measures, and no financial resources. What could they do? Actually beyond being in Turkey as a hand, a symbol...

Kolleck: T - Terribly frustrated. What we could do was send the people...some money which helped them from time to time. Partly, to acquire very few hand weapons. Generally to have an easier life maybe. There was very little we could do. But you could know what was going on...Even if we took out one person at time, it was one person saved. So, if you even send in a little and the reciever received, the people inside the camps could help themselves to a little bit of food from time to time to buy a pistol or something of the kind. We felt this was an achievement, it meant nothing. It was microscopic in comparison to the disaster. It was what we could do and that's what we did. It was the most frustrating period in my life I think because we could do so little. We knew so much and we could do so little...If we could have done something, the millions that were killed wouldn't have been killed. It was the most frustrating position to be in... It was the most frustrating period in my life I think because we could do so little. We knew so much and we could do so little.

M- Did you have any contact with Archbishop Roncalli?

T - To the extent he could he was of great help. He always, we gave him our news of what was happening to Jews. He transferred it, so he said to the Vatican. He commiserated together with us. He wasn't able to do very much. But what he could he did.

DAHLIA OFFER

Filmed Nov. 28, 2000

Jerusalem

M- Tell us a little about why Turkey became so important during WWII.

D - For the Jews in general, Jewish refugees, for the Jewish community in Palestine which is usually called the Yishuv. First of all if we think where

Turkey is situated. Turkey is a major route of immigration before WWII and of course during WWII it became a route that people tried to escape through. Turkey was a good connection for southern Europe, Romania, Bulgaria, which were not in the war in the beginning of 1939 but joined the war later in 1941. There was a period of time that Turkey had good connections to this part of Europe where a large number of Jewish refugees were assembled, because first of these countries were not occupied and were not under direct German control, although they were part of the countries that were positive to Germany and then allied with them. There was a hope, if you reach closer to the Mediterranean, closer to the Black Sea, if you reach closer to southern Europe you might get finally out of Europe to Palestine or to other places, but mostly to Palestine when you talk about Turkey. So this is from the perspective of the Jews who were captured under Nazi persecution, Nazi rule threatened by the war and its expansion. They looked for ways to escape. Now from the perspective of Palestine of course, Turkey was relatively close, there were land routes and you could use a train to get to Turkey. Of course from a certain point, after France or Vichy France was established it was more difficult. This was still a route that was relatively easier to get in contact with Jews in Europe, and it was even before the war an important place where Jewish immigration was organized for.

M- Tell us a little bit about Turkish neutrality.

D- Now this is another. I talked about the situation of the geographic situation of Turkey; the other thing is the political situation. Probably the lesson Turkey learned from WWI was that in this situation it should keep neutral in WWII. Although there was a lot of German influence in Turkey, there were quite a number of political leaders who thought that Turkey should ally with Germany. The pressure from the British and the interests that were connected to the British countries that were surrounding Turkey which were under British mandate like Iraq, made it more difficult to take sides. But we must admit until the first stage of the war at least until 1943, even towards the end perhaps of 43, the Germans interest in Turkey were very, very strong and quite influential. Another thing we should take in account is that the fear of Turkey from Russia, from the Soviet Union. In the first part of the war the Soviet Union was together with Nazi, Germany, but once the war started in Soviet Union from the summer of 1941, the fear that when the mood of the war would change what would happen to Turkey because of the constant interest of Russia and the Soviet Union to which hot water, water that does not freeze in the winter was a great really threat for Turkey. Therefore in the second part of the war allying with the British and the Americans was more promising than with the Nazis who were defeated. I think here lies the major interest in Turkish neutrality

which was like all countries like Switzerland and Spain, they were neutral, but they had different orientations during the war , they moved to different sides.

M - Let's go through now the different of activity in Turkey of Jews seeking to reach Palestine and later Palestinians seeking to reach Jews.

D - OK, so first one should remember that there was in Istanbul a major office of immigration or a major office of the Zionist movement that dealt with immigration all the time. From 1940 when the war in the west started, when Germany invaded the Netherlands and France and the Jews could not really operate easily and could not move, transit easily through Italy and Switzerland the importance of Istanbul as a center became more and more central. So, therefore, I think the growing role of Istanbul as a station for operation for immigration to Palestine, grew from 1940 onward. Now immigration to Palestine was a very difficult operation at that time because from the British perspective, most immigrants or a large number of immigrants who tried to reach Palestine in the first wave or mass escape when war started. A large majority of them did not have the certificates, the visas, etc. that the British demanded. They could not have it because of the British rule about immigration to Palestine. Therefore, the British called it illegal immigration, the Jews called it independent immigration or another form of immigration etc... Turkey became very important for these operations. Another thing because the straits, the Bosphorus and the Dardanells were open water and any boat that reached the straits had to get permission to continue it's way. It was also a chance to reach the Mediterranean relatively easier than in other situations. A third reason why Turkey was such an important center for this kind of operation that you had a lot of seaman and old boats who were available for different prices, usually very high prices, and usually not very reliable or large or good boats, sometimes very small ones that one could try and get through Turkey. So both seaman, merchants or agents that dealt with getting boats and the boats availability, all these were important. Now the Turkish government, now this was very interesting, because unlike many other neutral countries in 1940 the Turkish government passed a law that any immigrant who had an end visa which means that he had a permission to enter any country, Peru or Cuba or whatever could pass through Turkey, could get a transit visa for Turkey. Now most of the illegal immigrants had fake visas to Panama or other Latin American countries and once they got this end visas they could get the transit visa. So here you had the combination, the government passed a law to get the fake visas was relatively easy so the consuls in each country, Budapest, Hungary, Bulgaria, and you know many people could get the kinds of certificates that were fake certificates. This made the passage

through Turkey possible. The hope is from Turkey to go on from and therefore operating or constructing some kind of establishment that would continue the move from Istanbul to Palestine that was as important as making the facilities, helping assisting the move from Europe to Turkey. So here you have again the meeting point of the interests of the refugees and the organizations.

M- Let's take us through one successful ship and one unsuccessful ship.

D- Successful ship during the war, you want, not before the war? Well there was a voyage, to say successful you know is something that would be ambiguous. It was successful, finally if people reach Palestine, it was successful. If they didn't reach and tragically drowned, it was a tragedy. Then the word successful is a small word for really it entails. But even a successful voyage could be very very painful for the refugees who were on the boat because it could takes weeks, month until the operation could go on. But I'll give you an example of a big boat that reached Palestine in February 1940. This was a Turkish boat, therefore I think I mentioned this boat in particular, the name was the " Zacharia". It was organized by the son of Zev Jabatinsky of the ?????Zionist party or organization I should say. This was a boat...

M - Give us one more sentence or two on who Zev Jabatinsky was.

M- We were talking about successful and tragic ships.

D - I mentioned that the "Zacharia" was organized by the Zionist organization, that it was established and created and headed by Zev Jabatinsky who was a major Zionist leader during the all the years of the Zionist movement and at a certain point he was in a position to establish the leadership, in particular in opposition to Weitzman, Hyam Weitzman, the president of the Zionist organization. He seperated from the Zionist Organization in the mid 30's and created the new Zionist organization. In any case, also operated illegal immigration and this boat that I've mentioned that reached finally Palestine in February 1940 started to get organized when war started in September 1939, even a little earlier, and it was a group of over 2000 people. That's a big boat. Now the people that were stranded on small boats in Constanza on the Danube, ????? before they reached Constanza, until they were able to get a boat that was big enough to take the people. Finally it was a Turkish family that owned the boat, they were also the seaman that operated the boat. For the people who boarded the "Zacharia" it was a great rescue at that point since they were already for weeks, about ten weeks, in small boats stranded. The boat was very crowded, extremely crowded, and the conditions was difficult on the boat, but it moved. It passed the straits, the Dardenelles, the Bosphorus and the British

considered to capture the boat on the high seas, but actually Churchill opposed it, he was not yet Prime Minister at that point, he would become Prime Minister a month later, he was responsible for the admiralty. The boat reached Palestine. The people were kept for a few weeks in detention camp and were released. The Turkish seaman and the family that operated the boat were also captured by the British and were sentenced and the boat was confiscated. So it was a successful voyage, it was unsuccessful in the respect that the boat was captured, the people were sentenced, it took a month and they were defended by a Jewish lawyer in Palestine. It took a month and of course it barred and threatened others to go on with such operations. There was also great pressure by the British government on the Turkish government...

TEDDY KOLLECK

Filmed Nov. 28, 2000

Jerusalem

M - What brought you to Turkey?

T - Practically, the train. I went to Turkey because it was a neutral country and we had contact from there with the Jewish underground. Gradually this developed into several contacts, also mainly with the British intelligence. The American intelligence didn't exist yet. They started only growing at that time but the British had deep roots there. The people who worked in the British network were mainly people from families who for several generations have been British merchants in that area, in Istanbul, in Constantinople, who knew the area extremely well and that was their great advantage. We wanted contact in order to save, even individual Jews from the other side and to keep contact with the Jewish underground. For that, Istanbul was the right place.

M - In what countries did you have contact with the underground?

T - Well, to give you several examples, we had telephone contact, for instance, practically everyday with Budapest. What we found from them were weather reports. You know you didn't have a weather map of the world as you do now.

The problem was that they tried with their airforce to do whatever they could, through that they needed a weather report which then at that time was easy to get if you were in the place, but you didn't have the technical facilities you have today. We gave them the weather report, we spoke o Budapest, we spoke to Bucharest from Istanbul and then we could give a weather report to the British that used it for air attacks of the airforce in those areas. Besides that, more important, but minimal to our regret was the contact, the physical contact, was the Jewish underground. There wasn't very much of it. There was a bit of it in the camps and a bit of it in the various youth movements that existed, but it was very meager. But anyway what ever we could get, very often only over the phone, and sometimes in direct meeting we could get to Istanbul. >From Istanbul we could transfer it to where ever our people said, in Turkey which was a neutral city (country) and how neutral it was I'll tell you: I had for instance, several times, there was one good restaurant called Abdullah's, and I went several times there to have lunch and at the next table you had Germans sitting. I had an incident where a German who didn't know me came up to me and said "I hear you are from Bayrot." I said "No I am from Beirut". He quickly withdrew.

M- What was your cover?

T - I was a newspaperman.

M- You were sent by the Yushurv?

T - Yes.

M- By the party or by the youth movement?

T - No, I think I was sent by the Jewish Agency. I don't think the parties or the youth movement had people there. They first couldn't afford it. It was not extremely expensive but the parties and the youth movement were very small and weak organizations, which couldn't afford to send people abroad.

M- What years were you in Turkey?

T - Let me think for moment.

M- I can check it out.

T - (sound started rolling mid sentence) sitting at one table and the next table Von Pappen, the German Ambassador had lunch, so it was that close to each

other. I had a German once come up to me and speak to me and said, " I hear you are here from Bayroit?" I said "No I'm here from Beirut" So he quickly leaved the room, you know.

M - What did you know was happening to the Jews from the vantagepoint of Istanbul?

T - We had correspondence with the camps. We knew more or less what was going on. We couldn't do very much. We could save sometimes and individual and even that was a success for us. We had an agreement with the British and we would try to get prisoners of war out, the same time we would try to get Jews out. The prisoners of war they were interested in were mainly pilots. They had pilots who were shot down and pilots. The pilots then took many hours to be trained, much more than now- a- days. To get a pilot back who had been shot down and was a prisoner of war and to get him home and make use of him again was a great thing. So the British and we had a close cooperation on trying to save people who were in prisoner of war camps. There were only cases of individuals where we succeeded. This was an ??? affair, but it was very important to get these individuals.

M- You were working closely with the British on one hand to rescue but on the other had the British became opponents when it came time to bring the Jews to Palestine.

T - Well, this was a neutral country. The British also didn't have a very strong position there. The whole question was one of individual, saving individuals on our side as well as theirs. I don't think this mattered very much. I'll tell you when it started mattering. This was before the Hungarians got into the war. We had sent parachutists over, 20 or 30. We had an idea of sending a larger number, we were talking about 250 to 300 in order to prepare the Hungarians for some kind of war like action although they we few. We were training on our side in Israel. 250 young people to be dropped in Hungary as we had dropped 20 or 30 or 40 that we had dropped before. They should organize the little bit of underground that existed in the various youth movements, various Zionist movements. We did this together with the British until one day one of us saw a cable lying on a writing desk, we could read it and get the content. The content was roughly this: " It isn't worth it to organize a few hundred Jews in the underground, it will give us so many problems when the war is over from Arabs and others. You better leave that scheme alone and don't touch it any more." The British intelligence who had worked with us first on the individuals that we had sent and then prepare together with us these 250 that we had

trained here in parachuting and various other things, and they were all people who had come from various areas (Disruption by a chiming music clock)

T - Maybe the best example to give you in connection with the fact that Turkey was a neutral country. There was a very good restaurant called Abdullah's to which I went from time to time to meet with various people and I remember the occasions where I sat one table removed from Von Pappen, who was the German Ambassador, who was normally stated in Ankara but he came to Istanbul from time to time. When he was in Istanbul apparently he also liked good food. So he came to Abdullah's. Another occasion was when a German whom I didn't know; Von Pappen I knew by face, he was often photographed; but a German I didn't know came up to me one day and said: "I hear you are from Bayroit." That's a city in Germany, "When did you arrive here?" So I had to tell him "Dear friend I came here from Beirut, not Bayroit." He withdrew quickly. It was an interesting field to work there.

M- Were you enormously frustrated that there was so little, so much was happening, and there was so little you could do?

T - Terribly frustrated. What we could do was send the people in the camps some money which helped them from time to time. Partly, to acquire very few hand weapons. Generally to have an easier life maybe. There was very little we could do. But you could know what was going on, and that was your question before.

When you knew what was going on, you wrote home and you contacted the Yushurv in Palestine. What response did you receive?

T - The Yushurv here got news not only from us. There were individuals who came to Switzerland from Germany or came to Spain, which were also neutral countries and brought the same news. Altogether we couldn't do very much. If we could have done something, the millions that were killed wouldn't have been killed. It was the most frustrating position to be in.

M- Were there tensions between you and for example, Hyam Barlas?

T - We had tensions. Yes. Hyam Barlas worked through official channels. There was an office of the Jewish Agency which was quite official and that was his field of activity. We worked through channels that weren't so open. We found individual British, a few Americans; the Americans only started out at that time, they didn't have a well established history there; with whom we could exchange views, who helped us as postmen to take individual letters and

take them to the camps. Barlas wouldn't do that; he did only the official things. We kept separate.

M- Did you have any contact with Archbishop Ron Calli?

T - To the extent he could he was of great help. He always, we gave him our news of what was happening to Jews. He transferred it, so he said to the Vatican. He commiserated together with us. He wasn't able to do very much. But what he could he did.

M- Were there any tensions between your group in Istanbul and with the Yushuryv back home?

T - We had different channels. We had different people here with whom we cooperated. We had to keep the two things entirely apart. That's what we did. It was the most frustrating period in my life I think because we could do so little. We knew so much and we could do so little.

M- How clear to you sitting in Istanbul was the scope of the Holocaust?

T - What?

M - How clear was it to you that Jews were being slaughtered systematically day in day out.

T - I think we knew about it through our representatives, through a single person that we had in Spain, and a single person, a Gentile who came out to Switzerland and told the story before we got the news. We had two fields, one was the Jews in Hungary, when Hungary was not yet taken over, it was under the influence of the Germans, they couldn't move a step without their OK. Mainly we tried to keep the spirit up of the people in the camps and it was a different altogether to the line that Jewish Agency or others took. It was the most miserable time in my life, no doubt.

M- Did you feel you were being effective?

T - Well even if we took out one person at time, it was one person saved. So, if you even send in a little and the receive received, the people inside the camps could help themselves to a little bit of food from time to time to buy a pistol or something of the kind. We felt this was an achievement, it meant nothing, it was microscopic in comparison to the disaster. It was what we could do and that's what we did.

M- What were your contacts with Turkish officials?

T - Very little. We were, I personally, we were a very small group. Altogether we were three people there. Many Pommeranz, whom you know, and a man called Bader who passed away from a Kibbutz called Mizrah and I. We were able to send, most important, a little money over so they could maybe here or there bribe somebody to get the mail through or even to get a little bit of food which was also important, very important.

M - Did you have contacts with individual Turks who helped you, who worked with you?

T - Mainly that they closed their eyes, mainly that they closed their eyes. We would have had many more difficulties with passports. I represented a newspaper, I'll tell you, I was a member of a Kibbutz then, Engev, we invented the Engev News. We got an OK from here, some kind of official letter about the Engev news. The Engev needed the Turkish news as I need the news today from some kind of Turkish village. But that's what we had. We had Turks that helped.

M- But mainly by not seeing certain things?

T - Mainly by not keeping quite. But you read from time to time in the papers, today I don't follow this, you read about a thing like this in the paper. I look at it as carefully as I can, and you read about individuals, officers in consulates and give visa to Jews and so some of this is our work.

M- How important was Turkey's strategic position to your work? It being a neutral country, it being a contact between Europe and Asia?

T - It didn't have any influence. Maybe there was some kind of a connection somewhere on some other level. We didn't know about anything of this kind. I don't know until today. The Turks had no reason, the Turks are very careful for their very own reasons to really keep neutral and not to mix various things. But you found an individual from time to time, who would give you a visa in your passport. It was an individual affair. We had, if there was a contact with the Turks it was not on our level.

V- I have a question. Do you remember the Pera Palas Hotel in Istanbul?

T - Very well, I stayed there. The Pera Palas was the oldest hotel, and by the time I came there it was a bit neglected, but at the time we knew Herzelet

stayed there, that it was "The Hotel" in Istanbul. Out time you had already more modern hotels, but the Pera Palas was a historic place for us. We went there from time to time. It had no particular importance in our activities.

V - So nothing important happened there at Pera Palas?

M- They described Istanbul at that point that a place where every group their own intelligence network. Everybody as a double agent or a triple agent or what ever have you. How much intelligence could you gather could you gather just by contact with other people?

M -When you say contact with the camps, which camps are you talking about?

T- Well, I don't know the names anymore but... Names are generally a difficult for me, but some of the people who afterwards came out, over at the head of the war or what ever you call it in the Warsaw ghetto or that kind of thing. They were the people whom we dealt with...

M- So you are talking more of ghettos instead of concentration camps?

T - Yes. I mean, in the concentration camps you couldn't deal with people, you could deal only with individuals in those concentration camps. You had no contact with the masses, with the great numbers. That would have been far too dangerous and would have disturbed what we might achieve by contact with individuals.

M- But in the ghettos you could leaders of the underground?

T - Yes.

M - You spoke of some Turks you had contact with, some worked for money and some worked because the believed in the cause?

T - Indeed. I don't know whether they believed in our cause but they may have. They certainly knew particularly that the time that I was there already. That the war was not going I favor of the Germans. That it will be over soon and any contact they had with the Allies would be very useful to them later. The easiest would have been through us.

M - You have had a very long and a very rich and diverse life. When you look back from the perspective of this stage of your life on your period of time in

Turkey during the war, what does that say to you about that period of time, how do you look back at that period of time?

T - Well it was the most difficult to bear, because you felt so absolutely helpless in comparison to what you could achieve, you might have saved one person here, or two persons there, but it didn't mean anything in comparison to the great disaster. You lived in permanent frustration.

M- What did they try to do?

D - Well they tried a number of plans. They acted a long a number of levels. One was to transmit money into the occupied areas, knowing full well that the Allies forbid the transmission of money because this is giving money into enemy occupied areas, no doubt about it, but they did it, in contrary to Allied laws and to their blockade. This was one of the main endeavors. They collected all and all and transmitted into occupied Europe a million and a quarter Sterling. Which was one Sterling then was four dollars. A dollar then was worth twenty-four dollars today. Or at least of the eighties, I would say the eighties.

M- So we are talking about 96 million dollars into today's terms.

D - Yes, yes. It was a substantial sum especially...

96 million dollars, say today's sum, 96 million dollars.

D - Should I say that?

M- Yes.

D- Which are in today's terms, about 96 million dollars of today. This was a heavy sum for a small community. Part of that, about a quarter was given by the "Joint", the Jewish-American community and most of the rest collected by the Jews in Palestine. So that was one avenue. Sending the money so that medicines and certificates and armaments could be bought. Another one was the arrangement of parcels of food and medicines to be sent. This was a successful on a small scale because if you are speaking about the 11 million that were designated by the Nazis to be killed and 6 of them were killed and you send a number of hundreds of thousands of food parcels... It's not much; it's a drop in the ocean. On the other hand it was an achievement. Let me say whoever thinks that the Germans really took a food and medicine parcel and gave it to the Jews, is utterly naïve. Certainly what fell into the hands they ate and they took. They also were at war and had no interest supporting Jews of course. They reached a certain kind of informal agreement one for you one for the Jews. At least half of the parcels fell in German hands anyhow.

M- What about the attempt at ships?

D- Well, after the Struma case in February 1942, the ship with more than 800 people on its board. It sunk in the water not far from Istanbul. The ships stopped coming until March 1944. For the obvious reasons, Turkey didn't want to let them go. They sure at

that time to buy them. The Jews of the Balkan countries who could make it to a port and board a ship were afraid to do so. There were casualties before that as well. But that tragic case of Struma, was tied weeks in Istanbul. The citizens and residents could see it with the flag, which the refugees put up, "Save US". The negotiations still going on for weeks and then the ship leaves the port and sinks. It cast a heavy shadow on the Turkish government who refused after that to allow any other ship and was blamed for the case although I think the documentation show more that the British were to be blamed because they pushed the Turkish government into letting the wrecked ship go into the ocean. So there was a stop between February 1942 and March 1944. In March 1944 it again became profitable business to have Jews to pay for their use of ships from Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary to go through the Black Sea to Turkey and to Palestine, because then the end of the war was coming close. Eastern Europe started being liberated. The ship owners, Turkish, Greek mainly, decided, quite rightly so, that this was the time...

M- Tell us about the children.

D - The children affair, it could serve as a test case for whatever we have spoken till now. The end of 1942 when it became clear that there is systematic killing of Jews in Europe, the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem had at it's disposal 29,000 certificates. It came to the officials of the mandate, the government in Jerusalem and said "You know we will give up any rescue of adults, provided that you give it to 29,000 children and they will be brought to Palestine. Of course the British government said "Of course such a humane case children it's a noble cause no doubt. OK" And where would the Children be brought from? Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, the countries...you could reach from Turkey and the countries you could physically could still get them out get them out because they were not yet as we have shown before in camps or in ghettos. But at the very same time British officials in Turkey, go to Turkish officials and say that His Majesty's Government would see it with a favorable eye if they don't let the children pass to quickly through Turkish territory. But, hinder and put a number of obstacles in the way especially by way of bureaucracy and formalities. And indeed what happened is definitely connected to Turkish position during the war. First of all two small groups, of children did come. One from Budapest and the other from Bucharest. They came on January and February 1943. They Yishuv went out of its way to welcome them. The delegates in Turkey said "hush it don't say a word, don't publish it will spoil the way for others, let's not publish the fact at all." But I think that the desire to show those Children are being rescued. That some rescue work is being done overcame the arguments of security and secrecy. The Newspapers of the Yishuv were ecstatic with joy; the children were coming and more and more will come. Now in Palestine there were German colonies, mainly the Templars. And some of them being of German origin, wanted to help the German cause. Some of them born in Palestine knew Hebrew and German, went to Istanbul, set there, and became interpreters and translators for the Germans off the Yishuv Press, Radio and public life. And after the children came in no time at all, in a few days, they translated in the Yishuv press and it was in Eichmann's table and his delegates in the Balkan countries in a matter of days and the passage stopped. And a delegate of the Yishuv, again via Turkey and the English authorities. By the time they came for the second time to ask them to give the children passage, there was already a set of regulations which was set up

by the Turkish government with the help of the British. They need the certificate and they need the other and Switzerland is our representative, Switzerland acted as a representative for That could come and take the certificates so that they are authorized by the British. The delegate from Switzerland came to the occupied or to the countries allied to Germany only once a month. If you missed him, that's another month. The Turks said only 50 children could enter Turkey and another 50 cannot enter until the first 50 are out. You should have seen the miserable situation of the train system in Turkey at that time. Not to say a word about the fact that nothing moved without the known Baksheesh and with out the need to smooze your way every other minute. So it just didn't work, it didn't work.

M- Were there tensions between the Yishuv delegates in Turkey, and the Yishuv itself?

D- Yes there were. They absolutely were. There were tensions among them as we said the young ones, and Barlas and Bader (not sure of spelling) who were the elder ones. There were tensions because the delegates said...not only said by letters...but they kept coming by train to Jerusalem and to Tel Aviv to state their point and to say that they need much more money and many more resources not more people, not more delegates. Each movement and each party and each landsmanschaft (spelling) wanted a delegate in Turkey. They maintained that a small group with good cohesion, and with good habits of secrecy would do the work. But they need more money and more resources and they need also the visits of higher officials and leaders from Palestine, that Ben Gurion should come. Sharet came, came once...

M - That's Moishe Sharret....who was

D - Who was the Foreign Minister of the Jewish Agency, the Chief Rabbi came, Rabbi Herzog, who worked a lot for rescue. Kaplan who was the treasurer of the Jewish Agency.

M- Eliezerr...

D - Eliezer Kaplan (spelling) was the Treasurer of the Jewish Agency, he came. Itzak Ben Zvi (Spelling) who was chairman of the National committee. But they didn't come for long. It wasn't that one leader of stature said I would leave everything all my jobs, all my tasks and duties for awhile, along while, and dedicate myself only to rescue. This didn't happen. Either because they already understood that rescue on a large scale was not going to happen, was not going to materialize and then perhaps better build a haven for survivors than invest your efforts in the impossible and break your head against the wall.

M - Let's go through heroes and villains. Who would you regard as heroes?

D - In this story? I would say that the delegates did show devotion and spent night and day. Didn't take a penny in their attempts to rescue. Politically I would say that, that the main villains were the Germans, there is no doubt it. But if you are asking about the

game, these political games between Turkey and the British authorities, I would say that the British authorities hindered much more the effort of rescue and suggested to the Turks, sold them ideas, how to hinder it, more than the Turkish authorities perhaps would have invented on their own. It must be said that when refugee ships or trains came, the trains especially, Turkish policemen treated them very nicely and with much politeness and ushered them through Turkey and ushered them from the ship to the train, what ever was needed and took care of food and blankets. I am not sure that the fact that Turkey was not a passage for many more thousands was only Turkey's fault and out of bad will. It was a combination of the circumstances of a backward country poorly run, poorly managed with a miserable train system, with a horrible bureaucracy, afraid for it's skin in the political and military situation, then a question of bad will or ill intentions towards the Jews. If you take case by case the children case, the later ships which were not bought like "Vatan" or "Tarih". You can see how the British authorities always have the idea how to put another stone on the racecourse.

M - Put the British political, give us a couple of words about British politics was about, why they were behaving that way.

D - Well that was I'd say a gross miscalculation, but still they had their policy. The policy was the Yishuv was small with no resources, no oil, and no strategic points, geographically strategic points, in it's hands such as the Suez Canal. The Arab world should be kept close to Britain as far as possible, as much as possible cause they had the larger numbers of people, they had the oil, and they had the Suez Canal and they had through Iraq, the way to India. So they should have been kept quiet and appeased and not be angered by Jewish immigration. That was the main line of policy. Still one must add that other departments of British authority such as information and security and intelligence valued the quality of the people of the Yishuv (Spelling!), the members of the Yishuv, their knowledge of languages, their dedication and their will to sacrifice for Jews in Europe and they used them a lot for missions in Syria... This is where Moshe Dayan lost his eye... In Syria, in Lebanon, in Egypt and in Europe especially in the Balkans. But this was the army or part of the army, mainly the intelligence. Politically the colonial office, the foreign office, was the main ones who thought that the Arabs are those who would be on their side. It was a miscalculation because the Arabs kept their own skin untouched and they did not really join the war or join the British brigades in the war. They just waited.

M- Two questions for you. How important was Turkey after the war in the movement of Jews toward Palestine?

D - Well then it was less important because after the war, most of the Jews, the refugees, and the displaced persons gathered in Austria, went down from Eastern Europe to Austria and to Germany. Were about a quarter of a million in DP camps and those could and already had the ships came down to Italy and Italy became the center of immigration. But still through out 1944, until the end of 1944 it is Turkey, which is the main, gate then Italy.

M- Any questions I haven't asked you that you would like to comment on?

D - The Turkish-Jewish community.

M - Very important.

D - During the war the Turkish authorities changed policy towards the Jewish citizens and suddenly they materialized a law, which was in existence before. It wasn't exactly a law; it was a set of taxes. And during the war after 1942, mainly 1943 they put up a committee, which decided how much each Jewish family, would pay as tax. Now this committee was very harsh and in most of the cases they decided the tax was equal to most of the property of the family and many of the Jewish community was impoverished. Moreover, when they couldn't pay the tax they were sent to Anatolia for hard work in villages, not in camps but in villages as a way of trying to pay what they couldn't.

M - This was not only directed at Jews, at Greeks...

D - Yes at Greek, definitely, it was a policy against all minorities. Armenians, mainly Armenians, Greeks and Jews. Turkish citizens paid more or less a reasonable tax. Now it should be said that despite this plight, which caused a number of thousands of the Jewish community to leave Turkey at that time to make their way by train, by foot or whatever down to Syria, Lebanon, and through to Palestine. Despite that quite a number of them found it possible to help the delegates of the Yishuv. Because the delegates were illegal, they were as if reporters, publicly you couldn't act in Turkey. No public activity was allowed. They took the addresses of two ladies, Turkish-Jewish ladies in Istanbul, Saul Goldblat and Irmgard Brown who gave their private address as the address for correspondence with Europe. They sent, despite running the risk of being asked by Turkish authorities what is it? They sent thousands and thousands of postcards to possible addresses in Europe so that the delegates could have established a contact. Also, they knew Turkish, which the delegates obviously didn't. They knew the way; they had contacts with the police. They knew who was whom, who was more important, who should be bribed, so they were of great help and some of them worked hand in hand to bring the refugees to have them supported with food and blankets and medicine when they came. To wait in the port...How many times could Barlas be in the port without it being too conspicuous or especially the young ones. So Turkish Jews were of a lot of help, especially they were of great help of the Jews of Greece. Because from Izmir, Turkish Jews, who had relatives in Greece, established contact by small boats, fisherman's boats and shipped food parcels, money, blankets and brought back refugees, including by the way Papandreou who later was Prime Minister of Greece.

M - Georges Papandreou..

D - Yes, was then a member of the Greek underground.

M - In what countries did you have contact with the underground?

T - Well, to give you several examples, we had telephone contact, for instance, practically everyday with Budapest. What we found from them were weather reports. You know you didn't have a weather map of the world as you do now. The problem was that they tried with their airforce to do whatever they could, through that they needed a weather report which then at that time was easy to get if you were in the place, but you didn't have the technical facilities you have today. We gave them the weather report, we spoke o Budapest, we spoke to Bucharest from Istanbul and then we could give a weather report to the British that used it for air attacks of the airforce in those areas. Besides that, more important, but minimal to our regret was the contact, the physical contact, was the Jewish underground. There wasn't very much of it. There was a bit of it in the camps and a bit of it in the various youth movements that existed, but it was very meager. But anyway what ever we could get, very often only over the phone, and sometimes in direct meeting we could get to Istanbul. >From Istanbul we could transfer it to where ever our people said, in Turkey which was a neutral city (country) and how neutral it was

T - We had correspondence with the camps. We had an agreement with the British and we would try to get prisoners of war out, the same time we would try to get Jews out. The prisoners of war they were interested in were mainly pilots. They had pilots who were shot down and pilots. The pilots then took many hours to be trained, much more than now- a- days. To get a pilot back who had been shot down and was a prisoner of war and toget him home and make use of him again was a great thing. So the British and we had a close cooperation on trying to save people who were in prisoner of war camps. There were only cases of individuals where we succeeded. This was an ??? affair, but it was very important to get these individuals.

M- You were working closely with the British on one hand to rescue but on the other had the British became opponents when it came time to bring the Jews to Palestine.

T - Well, this was a neutral country. The British also didn't have a very strong position there. The whole question was one of individual, saving individuals on our side as well as theirs. I don't think this mattered very much. I'll tell you when it started mattering. This was before the Hungarians got into the war. We had sent parachutists over, 20 or 30. We had an idea of sending a larger number, we were talking about 250 to 300 in order to prepare the Hungarians for some kind of war like action although they we few. We were training on our side in Israel. 250 young people to be dropped in Hungary as we had dropped 20 or 30 or 40 that we had dropped before. They should organize the little bit of underground that existed in the various youth movements, various Zionist movements. We did this together with the British until one day one of us saw a cable lying on a

writing desk , we could read it and get the content. The content was roughly this: " It isn't worth it to organize a few hundred Jews in the underground, it will give us so many problems when the war is over from Arabs and others. You better leave that scheme alone and don't touch it any more." The British intelligence who had worked with us first on the individuals that we had sent and then prepare together with us these 250 that we had trained here in parachuting and various other things, and they were all people who had come from various areas (disruption by a chiming music clock)