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# Why the Jews?

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# WHY THE JEWS?

George Anastaplo \*

This is one of thirteen conversations in a six-hundred-page transcript of recorded conversations between George Anastaplo and Simcha Brudno, *Simply Unbelievable: Conversations with a Holocaust Survivor*. The first such conversation (March 23, 2000) is included in *Reflections on Life, Death, and the Constitution*.<sup>1</sup> The second such conversation (March 30, 2009) is included in *The Christian Heritage: Problems and Prospects*.<sup>2</sup> The third such conversation (May 4, 2000) is included in *Abraham Lincoln, Lawyers, and the Civil War: Bicentennial Explorations*.<sup>3</sup> It has been translated into Spanish by Manuel Vela Rodriguez, with the title *Simplemente Increible: Conversaciones con un superviviente del Holocausto*.<sup>4</sup> The tapes of these thirteen conversations were transcribed by Adam Reinherz, who was then a student at Loyola University Chicago School of Law. The current availability of these conversations in print has very much depended on both his diligence and his knowledge of Jewish things. All of these conversations were recorded in Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago.

Simcha Brudno, a recognized mathematician, lived in Siauliai, Lithuania, until he was deported to Dachau, Germany, in 1944. After the war he lived in Israel before settling in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

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\* Professor of Law, Loyola University of Chicago; Professor Emeritus of Political Science and of Philosophy, Dominican University; and Lecturer in the Liberal Arts, The University of Chicago; Ph.D., 1964, J.D., 1951, A.B., 1948, The University of Chicago. For more information about Professor Anastaplo, see Maria Kantzavelos, *Law School Graduate Thrives Despite No License*, CHI. DAILY LAW BULLETIN (Apr. 25, 2011), <http://chicagolawbulletin.com> (search "anastaplo"; then follow "Law School Graduate Thrives Despite No License" hyperlink); George Anastaplo, *Echoes From a Resounding Silence*, CHI. DAILY LAW BULLETIN (Apr. 25, 2011), <http://chicagolawbulletin.com> (search "anastaplo"; then follow "Echoes From a Resounding Silence" hyperlink).

1. GEORGE ANASTAPLO, REFLECTIONS ON LIFE, DEATH, AND THE CONSTITUTION 251 – 278 (2009). This book also contains a few pages from the second conversation.
2. GEORGE ANASTAPLO, THE CHRISTIAN HERITAGE: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS 257–300 (2010) [hereinafter THE CHRISTIAN HERITAGE].
3. George Anastaplo, *Abraham Lincoln, Lawyers, and the Civil War: Bicentennial Explorations*, 35 OKLA. CITY U. L. REV. 85–111 (2010).
4. George Anastaplo, *Simplemente Increible: Conversaciones con un superviviente del Holocausto*, in SHOAH/SOAH (Manuel Vela Rodriguez, trans., Anotnio Lastro & Francesc Morató, eds., 2010).
5. For more information on Simcha Brudno, see Josh Noel, *Simcha Brudno*, CHICAGO TRIBUNE (June 13, 2006), available at [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2006-06-13/news/0606130256\\_1\\_camp-mathematics-holocaust-experience](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2006-06-13/news/0606130256_1_camp-mathematics-holocaust-experience).

The conversation published here was recorded on October 5, 2000.<sup>6</sup> I attempted on that occasion to learn how the Jewish victims of the Nazis in Lithuania and Germany were regarded by the Germans and by others.<sup>7</sup>

My own first “exposure” to living Jews had been when I entered the United States Army Air Corps during the Second World War. There had been no Jews that I knew of in my Southern Illinois town of Carterville, which is located in Williamson County. I did encounter, in 1943, during my one college semester before reporting for active duty, some anti-Jewish prejudices from my housemates at the University of Illinois. I have had occasion to describe that encounter in this way:

My housemates were, for the most part, older than I; they had been around more—and they had picked up decided opinions about Jews that could be summed up, most delicately, in the suggestion that they should all be sent “back” to what was then known as Palestine. I enjoyed the distinction of being the lone dissenter, at least the only one who spoke up. We fought many a skirmish. They were not malicious, only ignorant.

I must confess my ignorance as well—for to the best of my knowledge, I had never seen a Jew before I went to college. Nor did I really know much about what was going on in Germany at that time. It was, I like to believe, that I simply thought the attacks unjust to the victims and demeaning to the attackers, and something someone of spirit naturally could not permit to pass unchallenged in his presence.

Indeed, as I look back now, I believe the most effective single lesson I ever received on this subject came during an assembly in our high school gymnasium a couple of years before, just after the war started. A newsreel showed the Japanese diplomats in Washington at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor; some of the youngsters in our audience booed—and the principal, a physically powerful man with a firm sense of decorum, immediately stopped the film and shamed his students with the reminder that “we don’t behave like that.” War, he gave us to understand, did not justify the suspension of the rules of behavior he always insisted upon in *his* school.

This reflects, I suspect, the decisive condemnation of anti-Semitism as well as of any other bullying or exploitation of some men by others. Decent men just don’t behave like that.<sup>8</sup>

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6. For more information on the Anastaplo-Brudno encounter, see GOERGE ANASTAPLO, *The Holocaust and the Divine Ordering of Human Things*, in *THE BIBLE: RESPECTFUL READINGS* (2008). See also *THE CHRISTIAN HERITAGE*, *supra* note 2, at 357. See generally George Anastaplo, *Selected Writings By and About George Anastaplo*, WORDPRESS, <http://anastaplo.wordpress.com> (last visited Apr. 17, 2011).

7. The spellings used in this transcript for the names of persons and places in Lithuania could not always be confirmed.

**Anastaplo:** You say you want to fill in all kinds of gaps this afternoon?

**Brudno:** Yes. You ask questions and I will fill in. Here is one detail.

When the Germans entered my hometown they were very sure of victory. They were very healthy. They looked very brave. And my mother, she's Jewish but she's a woman, she told me, "These are men in their prime." Men who would go arm in arm, you know, only in their trunks in the streets and sing, "Oh lee oh la. Oh lee oh la. Oh lee. Oh la. Ah la la la la la." Just exuberance.

**A:** Really?

**B:** They were dead sure that they would win the war.

**A:** Men in their trunks?

**B:** Only their trunks, only their trunks, half-naked.

**A:** Arm in arm?

**B:** Arm in arm, taking over the whole street and just exuberant. They were so sure that they would win the war.

**A:** What we say is that they were on a roll. And by the time they left your hometown—

**B:** They were still sure that they would win the war, but not as exuberant, and not the same age, I would say.

**A:** This is three years later that we are talking about?

**B:** Three years later and they started taking older people, too.

**A:** What happened to the younger ones?

**B:** They had moved them into Russia. So there is this little detail. My mother observed, I remember, that they were men in the prime of their manhood. I used this in Israel, you know in 1948 when the war was won and the Jews were celebrating. I had seen a celebrating army before. It doesn't mean you have won the war.

**A:** There is something else I want to talk about with you. This is a little essay of mine on George Orwell's *1984*.<sup>9</sup>

**B:** Yes, that's also horrible.

**A:** Maybe we could talk about my essay when you get a chance to look at it.

**B:** Fine.

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8. GEORGE ANASTAPLO, HUMAN BEING AND CITIZEN: ESSAYS ON VIRTUE, FREEDOM, AND THE COMMON GOOD 109–10 (1975). The high school principal referred to was Elbert Fulkerson of the Carterville Community High School. What I since learned about Jews is best suggested in what I have written about one of my teachers, Leo Strauss. See, e.g., George Anastaplo, *Reason and Revelation: On Leo Strauss*, WORDPRESS, <http://anastaplo.wordpress.com> (last visited Apr. 17, 2011). What I have learned about the Nazis is suggested in the discussion of the 1945–46 Nuremberg Trial. GEORGE ANASTAPLO, ON TRIAL: FROM ADAM AND EVE TO O.J. SIMPSON 297–312, 339–60 (2004).

<sup>9</sup> See George Anastaplo, *The American Moralist on Law, Ethics and Government*, 161-80 (1992).

- A:** And the other thing that I want to talk with you about, because it bears upon something we've touched upon several times, and that is Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*. Have you ever read it?
- B:** No, I haven't read it?
- A:** I will send it to you.
- B:** I don't think I will read it now, honest to God.
- A:** You don't think you will read it?
- B:** I don't think I will read it, let's face it.
- A:** I am trying to get a sense of how the Jews were regarded by others, and why they were regarded that way. I start off with the proposition that you as a scientist will appreciate, that there is no effect without a cause.
- B:** Fine.
- A:** And so I'm trying to learn from what you know and from what you've observed, what accounted for this savage homicidal hatred of the Jews. There are people who have other people as enemies. The French and the Germans, for example, for many years were enemies. But the French and the Germans never did this to each other.
- B:** Except in the last war. They annihilated one little French village. You know that?
- A:** One village is not the same as—
- B:** The "good intentions" were there, but they managed only one village.
- A:** If the Germans had destroyed only one Jewish village somewhere, it would be a radically different picture.
- B:** Like I have told you, the Jews did not resist and it was easy.
- A:** That may have permitted it to be done, but that does not account for why they wanted to do it, you see? The Italians might not have been able to resist either, if something was being done to them, but it wasn't done to them, even when the Germans took over Italy. So what I am trying to see is what the Germans believed about the Jews.
- B:** Look, the Germans did it to a French village. They did it to Lidice in Czechoslovakia. When they were in a good mood, they did it, except when the price would be too high. That's all.
- A:** No, that's not a sufficient answer.
- B:** Okay, it's not sufficient.
- A:** No, because they did not set out on a plan of mass murder against the French or the Czechs or the Italians or the Greeks, even though they had grievances against each of these people for one reason or another, whereas against the Jews, they did it even when it was not in their interest to do it, even when it diverted them from the war.
- B:** First, they were frustrated. Then they looked on whom to let out their frustration, and the Jews were available. When I told you they did it to the Gypsies too, you said that the Gypsies were regarded as

- parasites. This belief was in Lithuania also. The Lithuanians thought the Jews were parasites, because the Jews don't work at hard labor. There were, of course, Jewish blue-collar workers, but the majority was not. And the Lithuanians looked on these as exploiters: "They exploit us, they have all the money, they have everything." Analogous to this were the Greeks in Egypt. They also were an upper class and—
- A:** Or the Chinese in Indonesia?
- B:** There you have another example, the Chinese in Indonesia.
- A:** That's right. Of course, there was this bloody massacre, a massacre of Chinese on a grand scale in Indonesia.
- B:** We both agree.
- A:** But then why were the Ukrainians so fierce?
- B:** Same thing, same thing. I am talking from history, from books. This is not my own observation. Okay, I will give you a real history. Do you remember there was the Kievan Rus?
- A:** Yes.
- B:** And the Mongols conquered it. I think in 1140 or—
- A:** That is ancient Russia, is that it?
- B:** Ancient Russia, the real, real, real true Russia, where the name, Rus, comes from. The Mongols must have been harsh. And who liberated Kiev from the Mongol yoke?
- A:** Who did?
- B:** The Lithuanians.
- A:** The Lithuanians did?
- B:** In Russian history they never mention this.
- A:** I see.
- B:** It's beneath their dignity. The Lithuanians liberated Kiev. The Lithuanians kicked out the Mongols from the Ukraine. The first time that the Russians did resist the Mongols was 1380. But long before that, the Lithuanians were already in Kiev. And the reason they could defeat the Mongols was because the local population was definitely pro-Lithuanian. They didn't like the Mongol yoke. Second, believe it or not, the Christian world looked at both the Lithuanians and the Mongols as pagans at that time. To them, fighting the Mongols and fighting the Lithuanians were the same.
- A:** But does all this help account for why—
- B:** Wait, wait, that's only the background.
- A:** Okay.
- B:** The Lithuanians united with Poland, and the price for this was that they gave away Ukraine to Poland. When I ask Poles who was the great Polish king who conquered Ukraine, they have no answer because they never conquered Ukraine. Lithuania took part of

Lithuania and gave it away to Poland. This is how it comes Belarus and Ukraine. The Poles somehow were Catholics and the Ukrainians were Greek Orthodox. So right here there was friction. And the Poles were very aristocratic. They very much used the Jews as middlemen in dealing with Ukrainians. So when the Ukrainians made a revolt against the Poles—there was a big revolt in 1648—the Ukrainians let off all their steam against the Jews. One city, I don't remember which one, was surrounded by Ukrainians. There were, of course, Poles and Jews defending the city. And the Ukrainians said to the Poles, "We have nothing against you. Just turn over to us the Jews." The Poles did that. And the Jews were massacred. Afterwards the Poles were massacred.

**A:** Afterwards the Poles were?

**B:** Yes.

**A:** That was 1648 you said?

**B:** 1648. This is when Ukraine asked the help of Moscow.

**A:** Did they become part of the Russian empire that way?

**B:** Of the Muscovite empire. I don't know if it happened right here precisely. Ukrainians today are not happy with it, because they are not so sure that the Moscow yoke is better than what they had before. The Russian influence is absolutely everywhere.

**A:** Still today, you mean?

**B:** They can't get rid of the Russian influence. So in Ukraine it's an old, old hatred. But it just doesn't justify what they have done, in this generation. It *is* an old hatred.

**A:** You are saying that this hatred goes back primarily to the fact that the Poles used the Jews as their middlemen?

**B:** But this might be only an excuse. I don't know. The hatred of the Jews in Ukraine *was* very big.

**A:** The Lithuanians, on the other hand—

**B:** There was no such hatred of the Jews in Lithuania—it was not deep, never in history.

**A:** It was not deep?

**B:** Not deep. Up 'til 1905 the Jews and the Lithuanians cooperated against the Czar completely. If a Lithuanian was persecuted by the police, he knew he could hide in a Jewish place.

**A:** But you also told me, I don't know whether on tape or not, that the Lithuanians believed that the Jews always cheated them. Is that right? That would have been when you were there, as a youth. Was that the accepted Lithuanian opinion?

**B:** They believed the Jews cheated them out of everything. "It is our country and what are the Jews doing here?" Also, there were some Lithuanians who told me the other way around, that Lithuania was a

- very poor country and only the Jews brought in money and gold. All of a sudden there was a Lithuanian treasury because the Jews brought in money and gold. No doubt, during the first years of Lithuania's independence, the Jews were of great help.
- A:** That was when?
- B:** 1918. But by the time I grew up anti-Semitism grew and grew.
- A:** It had grown a great deal by then?
- B:** Yes.
- A:** And that was primarily because—
- B:** I think the economic fight was very silly, because I told you the Jews built the cities. In the cities the jobs were in Jewish hands.
- A:** And the Lithuanians did consider the Jews different from themselves?
- B:** Oh, yes.
- A:** Primarily because of what?
- B:** Religion, religion, religion.
- A:** There were Lithuanians, too, who had money, but they weren't considered different people, right? So it was the religion, you say?
- B:** Religion, yes.
- A:** How do you believe that the Lithuanians regarded the Jewish insistence upon retaining their religion?
- B:** Very, very negative, very negative. I was accused of being a Christ-killer, very openly. And what's more, when I was a small child I felt guilty about that. I knew nothing. What did I know about Christ? Nothing. I thought this was the greatest anti-Semite the world had ever seen.
- A:** Who?
- B:** Jesus.
- A:** Jesus himself?
- B:** Yes. Also, there was a blood libel against Jews. And the main accuser of the Jews, in the Czarist empire, was a Lithuanian priest.
- A:** But that was many years earlier?
- B:** Yes, 1905.
- A:** But in your lifetime, there were no blood libel charges in Lithuania?
- B:** No, no, just rumors. And our neighbors said the Jews are using blood for—
- A:** Yes.
- B:** But they were teasing me. It was the economic fight that was serious, an open fight for jobs.
- A:** But how do you believe that the Lithuanians understood the fact that the Jews remained non-Christians, that they remained Jews?
- B:** I have no idea.
- A:** You have no idea how they understood that?
- B:** I have no idea. I never came to theological questions.

- A:** Never? Some of them could have been feeling, whether they said it or not, "We have a perfectly good religion and it would be better if everybody had the same religion, but the Jews—".
- B:** Both of them believed that they had the best religion in the world, the Catholics and the Jews. Both have very strict marriage morals, you know?
- A:** Yes.
- B:** Divorce was almost non-existent among both the Jews and the Lithuanians.
- A:** So you have no other sense what it was that they—
- B:** The economy was bad enough.
- A:** I have already said that there were well-off people among the Lithuanians also.
- B:** Yes.
- A:** But they were not regarded as targets?
- B:** It depends. When the Russians came, they were also targets.
- A:** Of the Russians, of the Russians. But I mean before.
- B:** It was the religion.
- A:** So the religion then becomes the critical factor in determining who will be thought of as particularly bad exploiters. But still a question remains, you see, as to what it was that they saw the Jewish insistence upon their religion to mean. You see what I am trying to find out?
- B:** The Lithuanians thought that it was a religious question. I told you. Even when Hitler came they thought it was a religious question. It was only he who said it was race. The Lithuanians would allow the Jews to become Christians, I have no doubt.
- A:** Well now, to go further with this, but from a different direction. The Ukrainians saw the Jews as agents of the Poles at one time and as their exploiters?
- B:** Yes.
- A:** And as a foreign people with a different religion?
- B:** Different religion, different language.
- A:** Different language even?
- B:** Yes.
- A:** In everyday usage, a different language? Is it true that the Jews didn't speak Lithuanian very well?
- B:** They spoke Yiddish. Lithuania belonged for about one hundred and twenty years to the Czar, so if Jews wanted to learn another language, they learned Russian. So there were more Jews who spoke Russian than Jews who spoke Lithuanian.
- A:** And that also separated the Lithuanians and the Jews?
- B:** In my time there were some Jews, a very small number, who started to introduce Lithuanian, who called their children Lithuanian names.

- They began to do that because they realized that you could live in Lithuania as a Jew without having to speak one word of Lithuanian.
- A:** You could?
- B:** You could.
- A:** Live comfortably?
- B:** Live comfortably.
- A:** And carry on your life and everything?
- B:** Carry on your life.
- A:** Even when you went to deal with the government?
- B:** Lithuanians were not so chauvinistic in the beginning. When I was a little child, everyone who considered himself something spoke Polish. The Polish influence was very strong.
- A:** If you were somebody important, you spoke Polish?
- B:** You spoke Polish.
- A:** But if a Jew went to talk to somebody at city hall—
- B:** They had to talk in Lithuanian, of course.
- A:** There wouldn't be people there to translate for them?
- B:** I don't remember.
- A:** You don't know how that was done?
- B:** There was a Jewish minister in Lithuania, but I don't remember. I was too small. The economic fight was for real. I told you about this factory the Lithuanians wanted to buy from the Jews. They offered six million litre. (That was a million dollars.) The Jews disagreed, because it was worth thirty million. It was worth five times as much.
- A:** They tried to buy it from the Jewish owners?
- B:** Yes. And then the Lithuanians fought back with cooperatives.
- A:** You probably noticed the recent report about a conference in Vilnius about recovering Jewish art.
- B:** No, I'm not familiar with that.
- A:** This was a conference, attended by a number of people from various Jewish communities as well as by others, about the recovery of art that the Nazis had stolen.
- B:** Confiscated.
- A:** It was held in Vilnius. It was said that some Jews were uncomfortable about having this meeting held there because the Lithuanians had never acknowledged the part they had played in the killing of the Jews in Lithuania.
- B:** Right.
- A:** *Did* they play a significant part?
- B:** They did all the dirty work. They did the real shooting.
- A:** Is it true that they have never faced up to that?
- B:** They have faced up to it, but they say this was only the scum of the earth among them.

- A:** This report also said that no one has been convicted and imprisoned because of it. Is that true?
- B:** I'm sure it's true, why not? The Lithuanians look at all those who killed Jews as those who fought to get rid of the Russians.
- A:** The killing of the Jews was part of resistance to the Russians?
- B:** Yes. Don't you know that the Jews are Communists? For God's sake, what world are you living in?
- A:** But was not this done after the Germans had occupied Lithuania?
- B:** Yes.
- A:** And so the Russians were no longer there, obviously?
- B:** So what? The Jews are part of Russia.
- A:** So this is what, you think, the Lithuanians believed who were in those death squads—that their primary purpose was to deal with Communism?
- B:** They said, after the war, that they had to drink a lot before the killing, so that they would not feel they were killing anyone. It was definitely a Lithuanian unit that did the killing.
- A:** We have talked also about the Ukrainians doing what they did to the Jews.
- B:** About Ukrainians, again, I disqualify myself.
- A:** But they did some things to the Jews in Lithuania?
- B:** Oh, yes. But about what happened in Ukraine, I know, like you, only from books.
- A:** But weren't Ukrainians used by the Germans in Lithuania?
- B:** They were used to take the children.
- A:** In Lithuania?
- B:** Yes.
- A:** So you don't know it just by books, you know it from—
- B:** Oh, yes.
- A:** It is true, isn't it, that they *were* the ones—
- B:** Yes, the Germans brought in a Ukrainian unit. They were still more anti-Jewish than the Lithuanians.
- A:** And the Lithuanians would not cooperate with that?
- B:** At that moment the Lithuanians did not cooperate.
- A:** So you have those two peoples doing some terrible things. This becomes even more of a problem when you look at the Germans. The Germans dealt with the Jews at the highest level of development of the Jews, in German terms, by German standards. You would agree to that? That is to say, the Jews that the Germans saw in Germany were German-speaking and often highly cultured.
- B:** Completely assimilated.
- A:** Virtually, not completely, assimilated? They were still Jews in some ways?

- B:** There were many Jews who changed their religion and everything.
- A:** So what then accounts for the killing of the German Jews. You see what I mean? You can't simply put it in terms of what the Lithuanians were moved by or what the Ukrainians were moved by. Do you have any opinions about what it was that moved the Germans to go after the Jews? There was, this week, a memorial service on this campus for a man who had immigrated from Germany, a very distinguished Jewish scholar.
- B:** What scholar?
- A:** He was a Hittite expert, an archaeologist. Among the things that were said was that he was of the aristocracy of the scholarly world.
- B:** I have no doubt.
- A:** You know who I mean?
- B:** Yes.
- A:** He was very highly regarded by all kinds of people everywhere. The description of him indicated that he was part of a fairly large number of people who were remarkably assimilated. They were German to a very high degree.
- B:** Oh, no doubt. They considered themselves Germans of the Jewish religion. The majority even assimilated and became fully Germans, Christian and everything.
- A:** Why, then, did the Germans go after them? They go after those people over there in Ukraine or in Lithuania. They are all different. They speak Yiddish. They dress differently. They have beards. They eat different. But those in Germany—
- B:** They are taking all of the good jobs.
- A:** In Germany, too?
- B:** Lawyers, lawyers, lawyers.
- A:** What do you mean? The legal profession?
- B:** Jews flock to the legal profession.
- A:** And to the medical profession?
- B:** And to the medical profession.
- A:** But they weren't going out and killing all the doctors and the lawyers they could find?
- B:** Basically, yes. It's competition. Why do they need the Jewish lawyers' competition? Why do they need the Jewish doctors' competition? Why do they need it? They can get rid of them.
- A:** Well, somehow, this doesn't sound to me sufficient, considering the ferocity of the hatred.
- B:** The hatred was there, and if they couldn't let it out on the Jews, they would let it out on somebody else. The ferocity of the German hatred of the Russian prisoners of war is to me also unimaginable.
- A:** Yes.

- B:** After all, these are fellow soldiers.
- A:** Yes, but the Russians are strange people out there, in the east. They are barbarians, and so forth. The Jews in Germany were not barbarians.
- B:** No, they were not barbarians.
- A:** They were not strange. They were very familiar to them. They knew them. They had socialized with them. They spoke the same language – literally.
- B:** Yes.
- A:** May I turn to another aspect—
- B:** Fine. But don't expect me to explain craziness in rational terms.
- A:** In the course of your three years in the ghetto and your one year in the camps, did any of the victims that you knew ever express the opinion, or indicate, that it was better to be victimized the way they were than it was to be the ones doing it to somebody else?
- B:** The Jews were far superior. They would never do it to somebody else. Of course not.
- A:** I am not asking whether they would do it themselves, but rather did they ever say to themselves, "I would rather be a victim"?
- B:** They didn't say it, but they assumed they are superior by being victims. They assumed it. Of course they never said it.
- A:** Why do you say, "Of course"? You didn't find some of the Jews saying to others, "Awful as this is, it's worse to be like them"?
- B:** Nobody ever said it.
- A:** Did anybody ever believe that?
- B:** That I don't know. I told you I personally was very jealous of the Germans, how they go to their—
- A:** Yes, as soldiers and so forth.
- B:** As soldiers. And I was very jealous of them. I tell you frankly.
- A:** I understand that, and your mother had the same kind of feeling about it.
- B:** I guess so. I guess so. I even thought, "Who knows, maybe I am wrong, maybe they are right, maybe they are a master race. Who knows?" It's not so obvious, you know, that daring and bravery and everything is a bad virtue. It's not so obvious to me to this day.
- A:** Well, no, it's not. Courage *is* something to be desired.
- B:** Right.
- A:** But I am not asking if they were admirable in certain ways.
- B:** I looked at the Jews as cowards. It really bothered me very much.
- A:** There did come a time when there was very little you thought the Jews could do. They had to submit to this terrible thing.
- B:** I repeat, again and again, that this assumes that dying is the most horrible thing in the world. But if you die in order to save other

people's lives, then it looks different. If more Jewish people had resisted, the Germans would have been more in danger. They would not have been so anxious to do what they did.

**A:** You may well be right about that. I am not disputing that. But at the same time, I am wondering whether people ever thought that horrible as this is—

**B:** I never heard that, never.

**A:** —it's better to have this be done to us than to be doing this to others?

**B:** No, I never heard it. Definitely, I never heard it.

**A:** And as far as you know, it was never thought?

**B:** That I don't know, because there was, for example, this idea about taking revenge. It was said that we should kill all the Germans after we are liberated. And if they found a good German, they would say, "He will be buried amongst the good Germans." That's all. That was the saying: "He'll be buried among the good Germans."

**A:** I see. If there was an occasional good German, he could be put where the good Germans—

**B:** He'll also be killed. This shows the craziness of it all. Please, don't expect even for one moment to make it rational. It wasn't.

**A:** I'm not trying to make it rational. What I am trying to see is—

**B:** All the things were excuses, all the things were excuses. The Germans must have been very frustrated. It was very frustrating. It is frustrating to me even to this day.

**A:** What is frustrating to you?

**B:** What happened. It shouldn't have happened, it's against all logic.

**A:** I'm not disputing that. I'm trying to see what it was—

**B:** People find all the time excuses.

**A:** But at the same time there are situations when one cannot do anything. And still my question is, whether there was the sense among those who were victims, that terrible as this is—

**B:** No, no, no.

**A:** —it's better to be this than to be—

**B:** I never heard this said.

**A:** You never heard it?

**B:** I never heard it.

**A:** You never heard it anywhere?

**B:** I never heard it anywhere.

**A:** Your father, for instance, never said something like that?

**B:** My father was a soldier in the First World War. To him war was a natural thing.

**A:** Well, he never said to you anything like, "Bad as \_\_\_"

**B:** He assumed that the Germans will kill Jews.

**A:** What do you mean he assumed it?

- B:** I told you he prophesized either the Germans or the Russians will take over Lithuania— he said the Germans will annihilate us bodily and the Russians spiritually.
- A:** Now you are a scientist.
- B:** I hope so. A scientist I define as openminded.
- A:** But it's more than that in this case. You have certain training and specialties that entitle you to be thought of as scientific. Do you, on the basis of what you observed, have any sense, in terms of probabilities, about who survived and why? I think we've touched upon this already, but I want to try to draw together what we have said.
- B:** Probabilities is pure statistics. I refuse to go there because of all these counterexamples. A guy—
- A:** You are not being very scientific now. The fact that there are counterexamples doesn't take care of this.
- B:** I survived only statistically. It's not because I am clever, not because I am good-looking, not because of anything. There was no law about who survived and who died.
- A:** There was no what?
- B:** No law, law, L-A-W. Why do you accept a statistical approach to atoms and not to human beings?
- A:** The problem is that with atoms certain things are more likely to happen than others.
- B:** That's it. It is more likely. The weak are weak. If he was in the wrong age group, it was more likely for him to die. It didn't matter if you had been strong. It was more or less the law of statistics.
- A:** Wait a minute, now, you have just said there are factors that made it safer or that made one more vulnerable? If you were very young, you were vulnerable, right? There were the children, right? If you were weak you were vulnerable. Now what else? If you were too old you were vulnerable. That's a different form of weakness.
- B:** Also craziness, that's dead upon the spot.
- A:** If you're insane, in some way—
- B:** Insane, yes, insane. I mean crazy crazy.
- A:** If you're insane you're vulnerable.
- B:** And how, I mean that's the death sentence.
- A:** What about if you're highly religious?
- B:** They didn't give a damn about that.
- A:** They didn't care about that?
- B:** They didn't give a damn one way or another.
- A:** But they did care about the Jehovah's Witnesses?
- B:** They put them into concentration camps.
- A:** Yes. So if you were—

- B:** Incidentally, the Witnesses were daring and brave in concentration camp.
- A:** Did you see them?
- B:** Yes. One was shouting that Hitler is the anti-Christ. He was shouting it at the top of his voice in concentration camp.
- A:** Daring and brave, you say?
- B:** Daring and brave.
- A:** Or was that foolish?
- B:** Please, don't—to me it's daring and brave. I don't mind if others call it foolish. It doesn't matter.
- A:** Well, would they be killed for doing that?
- B:** *He* wasn't killed. He was shouting at the top of his voice. Nothing happened to him.
- A:** Did it make a difference, for survival, whether you were male or female?
- B:** Under the Lithuanians, it made a difference. The Lithuanians wanted to kill only the males. That's how they behaved in the beginning. There were ghettos for women only. In Telz, there was a ghetto for women only.
- A:** The men had been killed off?
- B:** The men had been killed off. It's only under the Germans later who said, "No, no, no."
- A:** In Telz, you say? How's that spelled?
- B:** T-E-L and Z. Any way you want. There was a yeshiva in Telz and there was a great Jewish community. And they killed all the males.
- A:** And they let the women stay there?
- B:** They made a ghetto for women. And the women worked.
- A:** I see.
- B:** Then came the Germans. Many women refugees came to my home.
- A:** From there?
- B:** From Telz, yes.
- A:** The Germans had come and said, "We're not making that kind of distinction."
- B:** No kind of distinction.
- A:** Generally, did it matter with the Germans whether you were male or female as to your chance of survival?
- B:** They didn't make a distinction between the sexes. Anyone who is good for work they sorted out to work, male or female. They didn't assume that women will work less. They didn't assume it.
- A:** Are you saying that the systematic killing, about which you heard, was done only in the cases of people who could not work? They also killed a lot of people who could work, who were healthy, strong?

- B:** 'Til 1943, it was completely racial and ugly and dirty—and crazy as it could be. By 1944 the Germans all of a sudden realized they have a work force—
- A:** —and they needed a work force?
- B:** Yes. In 1943 there were, officially, no Jews in Germany. By 1943 they had got rid of all of them. But in 1944 Jews appeared again as slave labor.
- A:** They were brought back to Germany?
- B:** Right. Again, I don't look for any rational explanation.
- A:** You've said that strength and a sound mind, that is, not being insane, gave you a chance to survive.
- B:** It gave me a chance.
- A:** What about intelligence?
- B:** Not of much help.
- A:** No? Weren't people who figured things out better than others—
- B:** Of course, in every society. Some people managed to be those who are writing down how many people—
- A:** But you didn't have the sense generally that intelligence, thinking about situations, helped people survive?
- B:** I don't know. I thought about the situations and I decided I would rather work than try to wiggle out by being clever and so on.
- A:** What about religious faith. Did that make it easier to survive?
- B:** I don't know. I mean, perhaps it was easier for those who believed, who thought that this is God's will. My mother was very religious and of course I was respectful of that. I myself decided that most of the religious things are manmade and are affected by conditions. If the conditions are bad, then forget it. I thought that most of the little laws—you know, thou shalt not eat this and thou shalt not eat that—all this is under good conditions. The conditions that we were in, all these laws are not valid. It was easier for religious people, I think, because God wanted what was happening. Finish—you don't need any explanations.
- A:** I'm sorry, God wanted what?
- B:** For example, there were Jews who thought that God is punishing us for not being religious enough. We didn't keep the Sabbath when we could, so now we are forced to work on the Sabbath. This is God's punishment.
- A:** When you were reading the German newspapers, which you did throughout the war—
- B:** Basically, yes.
- A:** —did you see there any talk about the Jews? Was it unusual to have discussions of the Jews in the German papers?
- B:** It was unusual.

- A:** And, of course, there was no indication in the papers that the Jews were being killed off? That's correct, isn't it?
- B:** Yes.
- A:** Except for the indication that there were no longer Jews in certain places?
- B:** Yes.
- A:** But they weren't saying anything about Jews being killed off?
- B:** No, no, no. It didn't even say anything about the Russian prisoners of war being killed. They are being "liquidated."
- A:** Have you known Jews who have said that somehow all of this served a good purpose?
- B:** No.
- A:** You never heard it?
- B:** There were Jews that said that this is a punishment from God for not going to Zion, not immigrating to Israel.
- A:** But you haven't heard any Jews say that, terrible as this was, it was worth it because it permitted us to have Israel?
- B:** Oh, when I was in Israel there were many Jews saying that.
- A:** They *were* saying that?
- B:** Oh, yes.
- A:** Because of what happened to world opinion and so forth?
- B:** It goes without saying.
- A:** They did say that?
- B:** When I am in a good mood I say that Hitler liberated all of Asia and Africa, including Israel.
- A:** I see. When you are in a good mood you do say that?
- B:** Yes. [Laughing] It's clear cut to me that without him there would be no State of Israel.
- A:** Well, and was it worth it?
- B:** What are you asking me? Wait a minute. I'll tell you why many people don't think it was worth it. The number of Jews in Israel is maybe one quarter of the number of Jews that got killed. Number-wise, it doesn't fit.
- A:** I see.
- B:** You don't kill six million to save three million, you know? That's why people don't believe it, number-wise. I don't want to go into theoretical questions.
- A:** You don't want to go into what?
- B:** Theoretical questions.
- A:** I'm just trying to get a sense of whether something this terrible was seen as serving a grand purpose.
- B:** The Zionist view is that it served a grand purpose.

- A:** Now, you were saying that Germans didn't talk about this in the papers?
- B:** Right.
- A:** They didn't talk about it in the papers, but they must have talked somehow or other in justifying what they were doing in attempting to conquer Europe?
- B:** They are the master race. They are freeing Europe from all this badness. They are building the future for the Germanic tribe, who deserve land and everything. You know what is *liebensraum*?
- A:** Space.
- B:** Space. They believe the Germans are too crowded and here Russia is so sparsely crowded. Obviously, this land is waiting for the Germans to come. The Germans are the highest—
- A:** The highest development of the human race?
- B:** Oh, yes.
- A:** Well now, in your dealings with Germans over these four years, you were constantly dealing with them, one way or another.
- B:** I tried to avoid them.
- A:** You tried to avoid them, but there they were, right?
- B:** Yes.
- A:** Did you *ever* get the sense that they had serious doubts about what they were doing?
- B:** No, no.
- A:** You never had that?
- B:** No, they were so sure that this is the right thing to do. There were no doubts.
- A:** You never had the feeling that they had questions about the justice of what they were doing to various people, any reservations at all about that?
- B:** There was, of course, the German, high in the SS, who made the ghetto in our town. He said that Hitler was a god, a genius. But as far as the Jews are concerned, he believed that Hitler was crazy. So there was here and there maybe a German that thought that. But in general they were dead sure that Hitler is a god, and the messiah, for certain.
- A:** I see.
- B:** He took them from the depths they were in after the First World War – from hunger and inflation, everything – and he brought them to the pinnacle of power. And God is on his side because he overcomes France and Poland and Denmark and Norway and Greece. God is on his side.
- A:** So you didn't encounter among the Germans reservations about how they were treating certain people?
- B:** No, I told you, no.

- A:** In your dealings with them, was there any courtesy exhibited by them?
- B:** I told you, the Commandant would visit the Jewish doctor—
- A:** Yes, and he would bring—
- B:** —and he even brought chocolates for the girl, but the next day—
- A:** Okay, we have that. You dealt with Germans again and again, you came in contact with them.
- B:** I told you all these things. For example, a German had been kicked out in 1940 and he came back—
- A:** Came back to your town?
- B:** Yes, came back to Lithuania. I talked with him, like person to person, because we were neighbors.
- A:** He had been to Germany?
- B:** Yes.
- A:** And then he had come back when the Germans came in?
- B:** Yes.
- A:** And that there was between you a human relation, you are saying?
- B:** A human relation, no doubt. He didn't have to stop and talk with me. He could ignore me.
- A:** I'm not talking about Lithuanian Germans. I'm talking about German Germans.

[The conclusion of this conversation is missing because the tape is inaudible.]

