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The Reminiscences of  
Dr. Maurice L. Perlzweig

Oral History Research Office  
Columbia University  
1993

## PREFACE

The following oral history memoir is a result of 14 tape-recorded interviews with Dr. Maurice L. Perlzweig, a Rabbi and longtime leader of the World Jewish Congress. The interviews took place in New York City on April 14, April 28, May 26, June 4, June 27, September 23, October 24, December 7, 1981, March 24, June 2, June 15, June 16, June 23, November 30, 1982. The interviews were conducted by Peter Jessup.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that he or she is reading a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

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November 25, 1992

Mr. Ronald J. Grele  
Director, Oral History Research Office  
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New York, N.Y. 10027

*MAURICE L. PERLZWEIG*

Dear Mr. Grele,

Thank you for your letter of November 17. I am afraid your earlier letter never reached me because we gave up Chalet Baladin in Diablerets several years ago. The address above is now my only one.

Yes, by all means do allow bona fide researchers full access to my father's transcript. I have no objection at all and I am sure he would wish the same.

Is it possible for me to obtain a copy of the transcript, and if so what would be the cost? My daughter (who lives in Geneva) is a historian and is building a family archive, so this would be an important piece. Indeed we might want two copies because my cousin, the author David Cauté of London, is also very interested in the family history and particularly in Dad's activities, which he followed closely.

Sincerely,

*Francis M. S. Peel*  
Francis M. S. Peel

*cc. John Ford*

*Director, Columbia Oral History*

*Here is a copy of my  
November 25, 1992 letter. May I  
have an answer?  
Francis Peel  
August 19, 1992*

DK

Interviewee: Dr. Maurice Perlzweig

Interviewer: Peter Jessup

Place: New York City

Interview No. 1 - April 14th 1981

Q: Good afternoon, Dr. Perlzweig. It's nice to renew this acquaintance after many years. Here we are on a rainy day on West 72nd Street on the day before income tax is due, and I am very happy to be here. This is Peter Jessup from Columbia.

Dr. Perlzweig: I am very glad first of all personally to see you after all these years. I think I might mention -- that will not take too much time -- that our last encounters were in Washington and in Herzliya, in Israel.

Q: Yes, yes!

Perlzweig: And in Geneva. Perhaps when I come to those points



in our encounter ~~we~~ might say something about that.

But in general I think, and in accordance with your suggestion, I ought to begin at the beginning.

I was born, for a reason which I will explain in a moment, in a small Polish town called Yaroslav in 1895. This was a town in Austrian Poland, as it then was, and the peculiar reason why it happened there was because my late mother had no confidence at all at the time in the medical arrangements for birth in England.

My parents had lived in London for some years before I was born. My father was the cantor or precentor in a synagogue in London, and as the time of the birth approached my mother decided that instead of being subjected to what she regarded as the barbaric methods of London she would go to that center of medical advance of civilization which is called Yaroslav, and that's why I was born there, and I remained there for eight months, after which we returned to London. I have absolutely no recollection of it.

Q (laughs).

Perlzweig: And I know nothing about the town in which I was born. I have been to Poland twice since, but for one reason or another I had no opportunity of ever going to look at it, although I even remember from what my mother told me the name of the street in which I was born, which was Ulitza Spitka.

Now in spite of what I said my mother brought back to London a young woman whom I used to call Nyanka -- which I think means nurse -- to look after me, and who did it apparently very well, so well in fact that the first language that I spoke was Polish.

I cannot speak Polish now, but it did leave a certain resonance in my ears, so that when I went to Poland later -- many, many years later -- the signs over the shops had a certain familiarity for me, and I could pronounce them, but I didn't speak the language. I spoke the language as the first language, that I am quite certain about, because I have a curious recollection of forgetting the language. The recollection takes the form of little vignettes in my mind when I was sitting with my mother and some of her friends who suddenly reverted to Polish because they were talking about things that they did not want me to hear. That is a recollection that is firmly fixed in my mind.

The other thing is that before I went to bed on various nights and was taken up by this girl -- this Nyanka -- I was made to say good night in Polish, and I began to have some difficulty in doing it.

So although I have spoken English all my life, and I have even been from time to time regarded as rather fluent in English, the fact is that my first language was Polish, and it left a certain mark.

The mark was reinforced by an uncle of mine, a brother of my mother, who had been an officer in the Austrian Army, but who

was a secret Polish nationalist, and he taught me when he came to London on one occasion the words of the Polish national anthem, and I can still say YEZKHA POLSKA NEZKHANEVA.

I am not quite sure that I know what it means, but it means something like POLAND WILL RISE AGAIN.

So the Polish background, which comes chiefly from my mother, is an element in my makeup. Actually I am not completely of Polish descent because my father was born in what was then Czarist Russia, at a place called Kremenetz-Podolsk. I am not sure that I know exactly what it is, but I am certain that he left it when he was very young.

But what happened was that his father, who was also a cantor -- which was a form of activity which seems to have run in the family -- lived in this place in Czarist Russia which at that period was not a very comfortable place for anybody who was a Jew, and came to a town in Galitia which was Austrian Poland. I think he came first to a place called Dukla, which had a reputation for piety ~~and~~ in living and that kind of thing, and subsequently to Yaroslav, the town in which I was born. And that was how my father met my mother.

Now the atmosphere in which I was brought up in London, though we spoke English at home, was not only influenced by the Polish background of my mother, but also the Viennese background of my father. He had shown a very early facility in music, a great love of music and a great power as a singer -- as a chanter

in the synagogue -- and he was sent by his father to Vienna, where he went to the famous Conservatoire.

The result was that in my household -- in our household -- Vienna had a large place. When I subsequently went to Vienna many years later I knew the names of a great many places, and I was able, talking to the then Chancellor, to use much to his astonishment phrases which are common in Vienna and not known in the rest of the German speaking world.

So I come from a background of partly Polish and partly Russian, that is to say a sort of a mixed marriage within the Jewish community.

I was brought up in a house which my parents had a place called Bedford Square in London, which was what is called in New York today a town house, with four or five floors, and I remember particularly the 'basement. I remember that because my father at that time was famous as a cantor in London. For example when they had a choir made up of the cantors <sup>all</sup> of London he was appointed the conductor. He was a first-rate musician, and his cantorial expertise, if I may use that expression, was something which was then widely known in London.

Well, the thing about the basement was that it was the place where the choir rehearsed, and I used to go -- he was always very keen about this -- and sit there as a young child and listen to the singing of the various chants, with which I became very familiar, and as part of my theological education I have

the feeling that it may have been more important than the degree that I took in Cambridge or the rabbinic studies that I made under a special group in Cambridge many years later.

Q: Does a cantor have any other connection to the temple than the musical one? I mean does he have an official other one, or is a cantor a separate profession sort of?

Perlzweig: Well, it is a separate profession, but in the contemporary world and in the world before -- in the world earlier in this century -- it was very difficult for a small Jewish community to have both a rabbi and a cantor and pay a full time salary, with the cantor only officiating on Friday night and Saturday morning, on the Sabbath -- and on the high holy days of course -- and it was economically rather difficult, so the cantor has become in the contemporary synagogue also a teacher in the religion school and in part a social worker. He is a member of the clergy.

Q: That's what I was wondering.

Perlzweig: He is a member of the clergy, and he officiates at weddings and funerals together with the rabbi. The exact arrangements depend on the locality and the country and so on.

But as far as my father was concerned, although he did officiate at marriages and funerals, he was first and foremost a musician,

and his services were famous.

The synagogue, which no longer exists -- called the Synagogue -- in which he officiated was packed on Friday nights and Saturday mornings, and I remember two incidents.

One was that under the weight of the people the gallery of the synagogue collapsed. Nobody fortunately was hurt. What happened was, as in every other synagogue the normal thing was for the men to sit down on the floor and the women in the gallery, but there were so many people on this occasion. He had sort of given the service an extra dimension by bringing in musical instruments on the feast of Hannukah, and there were so many people in the gallery that it broke down.

The other occasion ~~was~~ which I remember -- and I don't know why I should because I couldn't have been more than 4 or 5 -- was that I was sitting on the almamah it's called -- almamah is an Arabic word, like another word which is a Greek word, bimah, which means the platform in the synagogue on which the officiants stand. Now most synagogues have a platform -- a bimah -- in the middle, because there used to be very big synagogues and in order to be properly heard the cantor or the reader would stand in the middle ~~the~~ so that they could be heard at all extremities of the synagogue. But for economic and architectural reasons some synagogues were built so that the platform -- the bimah -- is at one end.

This was the case with this particular synagogue.

As I told you my father made a great point in having me attend the services and attend the rehearsals, so when he went to the synagogue on Friday nights, in the informal way which was then current in the synagogue he would take me and sit me on the almamah. There was a bench riding all around it. People came up for various ceremonies in the course of the Sabbath service, and I used to sit there.

The point arose when it became unbearable. I was so bored with the proceedings, because I knew them inside out, which had its good sides. So one afternoon I stood up on this bench -- this little nipper, as I then was -- and I tumbled over, and it seemed to me that the whole congregation rushed forward to save me, which they did. I mean nothing happened. Nothing untoward happened to me.

The reason I mention it is because I am not the only person who remembered it. Many, many years later -- the year is 1940 -- I was in New York, and among other things I had been asked to speak at a performance of the Yiddish Art Theater, which during one of the intervals in the play had asked me to speak on behalf of British War Relief, which I was glad to do.

Q: A good cause.

Perlzweig: Then when the play was over and I went out, a man came up to me and he said, "You don't look a bit different from what you were when you were a little kid who jumped and tried to lean over the barrier between the almamah and the congregation."

So he remembered, regardless of the name, which he remembered.

Well, one memory which is perhaps quite interesting that I have is that my father took me to see the return of the troops from the South African War.

Q: The Boer War?

Perlzweig: The Boer War. There was a march down Whitechapel Road, I think it was, and he took me because he was very pro-British, which was a very common feeling among the Jews in Eastern Europe.

I mean a guy named Theodor Herzl laid the foundation of the Zionist Movement, and it was one of the strongest emotions in Chaim Weizmann's life and probably in the end ruined him, when England let down the Zionist Movement, and he was dispensed with by the Zionist Congress.

But at any rate that was the feeling, and I watched. I haven't a very clear notion of what happened, and I didn't understand everything, but my memory is that there were very few people about. These soldiers were marching down, headed I think by the general who played a big part in the war, General



Redvers-Buller. That's only a memory, but it shows what sort of world I was brought up in.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: Now I must say that both these parents of mine -- and it's something that I really have to say because it really makes a tremendous difference to a man's life -- were people who were marked by a sense of deep concern about their children.

Before the story ends there were eight of us -- eight children/

Q: Oh really? Gosh!

Perlzweig: Yes, of which I was the oldest, and I have two recollections which I think I ought to put down to tell you the sort of people they were.

After being for some years in the East End, my father was invited to become the cantor of the synagogue in a district called Finsbury Park. Now today it's a built up district and rather crowded, but in those days it was on the edge of the country. We had a house the end of the backyard of which was open country, and if you walked down the street, which was called Hermitage Road -- a quarter of a mile, you came out into open fields.

And there were some local barbaric rites, for example rat catching, which was conducted out in these fields, <sup>that</sup> ~~and~~ I remember going to and being rather put off by it.

At any rate Finsbury Park was an interesting congregation. It consisted of French Jews, German Jews, and a large contingent of what I suppose really contains both -- Alsatian Jews.

The intellectual level was rather high. Two people who became famous in Jewish life afterwards were members (of that congregation), and were fellow worshipers of mine and my contemporaries. One was Leon Roth, who was a lecturer in philosophy at Oxford, and was afterwards professor of philosophy in Jerusalem, and his younger brother Cecil Roth, who in some ways was the most prolific Jewish historian of the time and the editor of the Encyclopaedia Judaica, which is the biggest thing of its kind which has ever been done, and to which incidentally I contributed a couple of articles, and what is rather more to the point in this connection, I am the subject of an article, that is to say I am one of those innumerable people who since the days of the prophets have had their say about Jewish life and Jewish thought.

Q: This Encyclopaedia Judaica consists of a large number of volumes.

Perlzweig: Yes. I haven't. . . I think I've got here. . . There

is a summary of it. But this other thing is much too big. I have got so many ~~many~~ encyclopedias here. I've got the original Jewish Encyclopedia which was published in this country early in the century, and I really have the room for it and I have the use for it.

But at any rate that was the synagogue. I mean there were others there. For example there is a man who has appeared on television, Jonathan Miller. His father was a contemporary of mine. He was a psychologist and a psychiatrist, and he was a member of the congregation.

There were a half a dozen others whom I've forgotten now who were intellectuals. So this was a kind of intellectual congregation. It was Orthodox, but it had two weaknesses according to the ultra-Orthodox, that is to say it had the almamah -- or the altar you would say in common language -- up at one end instead of in the middle. It had the same feature that the previous synagogue

This meant nothing religiously, but it was a departure from tradition.

Secondly, the ministers -- there were two of them -- wore gowns, or I think they call them in this country robes, these black gowns, you know, which is a common thing, which is regarded as being, by the ultra-Orthodox people, an imitation of the Gentile way of life.

And thirdly there was a choir. I can't say that the choir was very much, because it consisted almost entirely of the cantor's family. I remember being the oldest had to try and imitate as far as I could a bass voice, and the youngest was so young that they had to have a little something <sup>on which</sup> ~~where~~ he could stand above the reading desk.

But actually it was the cantor's family. I think there may have been one or two men who were brought in to have more mature voices.

But it was a reverential, traditional service, in which the people were modern (modern ?) people.

The service was held for example on the first of those two days, which is a rabbinic law, and not one day, which is the Biblical law, but on the second day the synagogue was practically empty. In other words it was a normal Jewish congregation in those days.

Now the memory I have -- to show you what sort of a woman my mother was -- on the Day of Atonement, which is the most solemn day in the Jewish year, when I was a boy, not obligated strictly to carry out the law because I wasn't 13, which is the age of maturity -- and it isn't as <sup>absurd</sup> ~~absurd~~ as it sounds, because in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet I think they are 12 and 13. I mean people mature much later nowadays.

Anyhow I wasn't 13, and therefore I didn't have to carry out the commandments, one of which was that you fast on the Day of Atonement. I was very anxious to fast. I don't know at this stage whether it was a religious feeling or the desire that I had to be regarded as an adult or something like it. All I know is that my mother came to the synagogue and I was called out. It stood in a garden, and we went in the back and she took out an apple, and she said, "You must be very hungry," which indeed I was. But I mean I simply wouldn't take it, and I said, "For heaven's sake, take this thing away." I said, "What will people say if the cantor's son eats on the Day of Atonement?"

She was a pious woman, she was really punctilious in carrying out all the commandments as regards the kosherut and so on. But at the same time her feelings as a mother overcame her on the Day of Atonement that this poor child of hers was suffering because he had had nothing to eat ~~xx~~ that day. Well, she was like that all through her life, that is to say I was spoiled. I mean this thing went on when I went as an undergraduate to Cambridge, <sup>and</sup> although they were not, as you can imagine, being a cantor, wealthy people, -- It was all they could do to make ends meet -- I got food sent every week to Cambridge. That was ~~my~~ my mother -- she wouldn't dream of making me suffer in any way.

The same thing applies to my father. I remember going with a brother of mine when we were in Finsbury Park to a seaside ~~resort~~ resort called Ramsgate. It has a certain place in Jewish history because it was the seat of Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885).

Q: Oh really?

Perlzweig: And in fact there is still the house he lived in -- it is now a theological college -- and an old chapel in which he and his wife are buried.

But there was some friend of the family who thought that we were not getting fresh air living in a town and so on, although I can assure you the air was much fresher there than it is in New York now. And she arranged. . .

Q: Do you have a match?

Perlzweig: Oh yes, I have matches.

Q: Thank you.

Perlzweig: She arranged that we should go to a house which she knew, kept by a lady who would see that we were ~~xxxx~~ properly looked after. And we went there. We were properly looked after,

and it<sup>a</sup> was great experience for us. But the first day, or the second day that we were there, we were given lamb, and this was lamb which was bred on the Southern Downs, and it was very good. It had a very highly distinctive taste, and we concluded that we couldn't be kosher, so what do we do? I mean the idea was terrible to us. I am just suggesting how anxious we were to ~~xxx~~ stick to the rules.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: How deeply imbued in us this idea was, not because of any pressure, but because we took it in from the atmosphere in which we lived. If there had been any pressure the thing would have gone sour.

So we went out for a walk, and we went to a stationer's and got a postcard, which was all that we could afford, and we sent that to my father and said, "We are being given nonkosher food. Please come and take us away."

The next day he arrived. I mean he put everything aside. The idea that these children were being led astray, or that they were suffering in any way . . . And he took us away.

You see, I must say. . .

Q: Then the lamb was nonkosher, was it not?

Perlzweig: No, it wasn't. It was kosher.

Q: Oh really?

Perlzweig: Oh yes. I mean she knew what she was doing, but the point was we'd never tasted lamb like that, you know. Lamb off the ~~SHREVEPORT~~ hills -- the Southern Down -- is some of the best in the world, the sort that I wish I could have now, but you could feel that the taste was very distinctive. I am merely mentioning this in order to indicate the kind of household in which we were brought up. It was not a household with any wealth. On the contrary, it was always a struggle. My father, in addition to being a cantor, was also a teacher of music.

Q: Of voice or an instrument?

Perlzweig: Both. There were three things that he taught. One was voice -- he was extraordinarily good at that. I mean I remember that they did in the synagogue things that I would think as a rabbi inappropriate. His command of coloratura was one of the most remarkable that I've ever heard. Now I can't imagine that the young Jews of the Middle Ages practiced coloratura, but he came through Vienna, and he was able to produce these extraordinary sounds while he was reading the liturgy, which was the source of the fame that he had at the time.

But in addition to that he taught voice and piano. He was a very good piano teacher. There is -- or there was -- a whole



tribe, you may say, in Vienna at the time who taught piano, although they only played in a very mediocre way themselves, but they were very good teachers.

Then he taught also harmony and composition.

One of ~~xxx~~ the things that he did when he came to London was to enroll in what was called the School of Music, where he studied harmony under a man called Professor Ebenezer Prout, which he did I think not wisely but too well, because one of his forms of amusement was to take a text by Beethoven and correct the harmony, because Beethoven, like Milton or anybody else, didn't stick to the rules of grammar. His genius broke through. So his form of entertainment was to take a piece of classical music and correct the harmony so that it fitted in with what the textbook said.

Now this had an effect on me because for one thing he talked to me at great length about these things, and among the things that I learned were the Greek modes in music which he was familiar with. Some of them had survived, -- I can't say they survive today -- in parts of Jewish music like Olivian Mold and similar melodies. Some very rare things have survived in the Day of Atonement service.

But it generally gave me a conception of music that <sup>I</sup><sub>^</sub> wouldn't otherwise have had.

So he taught, and he did this as a profession, and he was known in the district in Finsbury Park as a man who if you wanted to do anything <sup>in music</sup> ~~amazing~~ would be able to give you the rudimentary instruction.

I think that's how we managed to survive. I mean you will find it difficult to believe if I tell you what his salary was. As a cantor, it was two pounds a week. That in those days meant eight dollars. So clearly he had to find things elsewhere.

Now one of the things that he passed on to me as a result of his Viennese stay was the passion for Zionism.

Q: And how old were you?

Perlzweig: I am talking now about the time when I was about 12 or 13 years old. He was a member in Vienna of a Jewish student society which was called Kadimah, which has a place in Jewish history as the first group which actually called on Theodor Herzl to become the leader of the Zionist movement, to set the Zionist movement in motion, and he always had a reverence for Herzl which was only this side of idolatry. He in fact published a great deal. I have here an article which I wrote for the Hebrew University, a book which they presented to somebody, in which I tried to give a prospectus of what he had published.

He published both secular music and ecclesiastical music. I myself -- I wish I had the text now -- was present when his music was performed by bands in the British Army. But he also wrote a great deal of liturgical music. In fact he was the prototype in music the kind of people who write for other people -- I've forgotten what the word is.

Q: Ghost writers?

Perlzweig: Ghost writers. He was a musical ghost writer. It was a common practice at the time, when a cantor retired, for the congregation to publish his works. Well, most cantors don't have any works, so he used to write for them. Sometimes they had enough grace to acknowledge ~~it~~ in the preface, especially the more eminent among them, where they got the help from, but in fact he wrote the whole thing. He was extremely fluent, and he was also very industrious. I have never come across anybody who worked as continuously as he did at the things that he believed in.

For example, I told you that he was a teacher of voice. One of his theories was that if you sing the eight notes of the octave in all possible permutations and combinations, you would succeed in hitting the right note every time you sing if that was what you practiced often.

Now it may surprise you to learn that eight notes can be written in over 30,000 ways. In fact it's a very simple mathematical computation if you go in for mathematics, for

permutations and combinations.

He actually sat down and wrote these eight notes, I think 32,000 times, and what is more astonishing is that he thought that there would be a publisher who would publish it. Of course there wasn't. I don't know what's happened to it.

But he did many other things in addition. He wrote Zionist marches and hymns, a Herzl march and things of that kind.

At that period he was known in London as the man who wrote the Zionist music. But he -- I got that from him, he talked about Herzl as though he were practically the Messiah, and this was in spite of the fact that Herzl was anything but a practicing religious Jew.

Q: Really?

Perlzweig: It's one of the surprising things about him that he was in fact a very assimilated Jew who was the Paris correspondent of a Viennese newspaper called the Neue Freie Presse, and he was present at the trial of Alfred Dreyfus in that connection. And that was one of the things that set him along this path.

Anyhow I have been moving away from the narrow line which I ought to pursue.

Q: Which is your youth.

Perlzweig: My youth. Anyhow this was the youth that I had. It was Judaism in a very humane context. For example, I remember that it was a strict rule in the household that the cat which we kept should always be fed before meals, before we ate. This is a rabbinic rule, you see, but it gives you an idea of what it is.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig? And I remember that on one occasion when I came in and the cat was sitting on the armchair which I used to sit on, I pushed her off, and my father said to me in a sort of puzzled way, in the Viennese German which he spoke, "Eine Katze ist nicht einer Mensch," -- a cat isn't a human being. (laughs softly)

So this was the kind of humane background, strictly Orthodox,. in which I lived, and I remember one incident which I think I ought to record, and that is ~~is~~ that at a certain point -- I can't now fix the date, although there are documents in Jerusalem at the Hebrew University Library which could fix it -- at which it became obvious that people in England at Jewish gatherings wanted to sing Zionist hymns. Now the chief of them was Hatikva, which is now the national anthem of Israel.

Q: Oh yes. When had Hatikva been written? Years before?

Perlzweig: Years before. You see, Hatikva actually is much older than the Zionist movement, and in fact the theme is to be found in all kinds of East European music -- Rumanian, Czech and Polish, and in fact it occurs in Smetana in one of his symphonies, the whole ~~musi~~ melody runs there. This was about the middle of the 19th century, before the Zionist movement began.

According to what I learned in Jerusalem when I was working there on this life of my father, according to what they have in the library-- which is for this kind of thing the best in the world -- the melody was used by non-Jews and Jews in various ways. In fact I remember seeing a copy of a German cantor's transcription of this melody from the year in which I was born, 1895, in which he calls it Turkish-Jewish melody for some reason or other.

But the article in the ~~Ency~~ Encyclopaedia Judaica, which is written by one of the musical libraries' librarians, makes it quite clear that the melody was first brought from Rumania to Israel, and it was only much later used as the national anthem. It's a very old melody. But the suspicion was at one time that it was a comparatively recent thing.

Now for example there was a rabbi here in New York, Dr. David de Sola Pool, who was the head of the oldest synagogue in New York, the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue, and who was a friend of my father's, and who in fact came from England, and in fact had

studied under my father various kinds of hazzanut, who has written a book which deals with the history of Sephardic Judaism, and who gives this account of the way in which Hatikva became the national anthem.

H e says that my father went to a synagogue -- a Sephardic synagogue -- called the Milemapok Synagogue in North London, -- It doesn't any long er exist -- and he there on a festival this melody sang to a psalm.

Q: To what?

Perlzweig: The words of a psalm, and he decided that the melody fitted exactly the words of Hatikva which were written by a poet called Inber, whom I remember. In fact Inber died much later in New York, and thousands of people attended his funeral. But I remember Inber sitting at my father's table, and mostly engaged in drinking from a bottle which had a white  
In fact he probably killed himself by his alcoholism. But he was a good poet.

According to de Sola Pool in his book -- which was shown to me by Professor Kutch who used to be at New York University years ago, but a<sup>B</sup>out which I didn't know -- he says that it was my father who took this ancient ~~Sepa~~ Sephardic melody and wedded it to the words of ~~Ina~~ Inber, the poet, and that that was the birth of Hadikva.

It was for that reason that the people of the Hebrew University asked me to write about my father. They wanted to know more about him, and my inquiries convinced me that I had the unhappy task of saying it was all an invention, that it was quite untrue.

What actually happened was that the publisher at the time -- a man called Mazin -- had a great demand for this, and asked for the thing to be done in a popular way. What he did was to write it out, ~~xxxxxxx~~ <sup>-- it was</sup> ~~xxxxxxx~~ a melody that had been sung for years before that, he didn't invent it, nor did the Sephardic Synagogue -- he wrote it out, and he put under it the Hebrew words, and it was translated into English, and he put under it, un\_der the Hebrew words, the English words, a poetess who was well known at the time.

Then he wanted something that apparently only I could supply. As it was for popular use, he wanted a type of musical notation which was taught in the English schools at the time -- I don't know whether it's still taught -- that is to say tonic sonafar. This is a type of notation in which the notes ~~xxxxxxx~~ go Do by the letter D, and Re by the letter A and so on, and the intervals for the length of the notes were indicated by commas and full stops and so on.

So for the first time in my life I was actually engaged, and was paid eight shillings -- which I shall never forget -- in order to write the tonic sonafar, to translate the staff notation into tonic sonafar, so that I had a hand in that.



I was so happy to have the eight shillings. I didn't think of it in historic terms at all. (pause) I am trying to think of the name of a lady. . .

Q: The poetess?

Perlzweig: The poetess, whom I forgot for a moment, but it might come back. I am sure I could find it. She was a very good poetess.

There were at the time, but one name which I certainly remember is Israel Zangwill (1864-1926), whose works I have and who was a very good poet, and who is now the subject of theses in American universities, and whom I knew very well.

Anyhow this was one of the things that I remember. I became more and more involved in Jewish life.

I remember when I was bar mitzvahed, which was before this happened -- I think I must have been about 15 when this edition of Hatikva took place, I can't get it now, unfortunately when my father died I was in America, it was during the war, and no one knows ~~xx~~ what happened to most of what he did, I've got most of his stuff here which I was able to buy secondhand in various places on Charing Cross Road, because one of the things that he did, which was more scholarly, was to revise the use of what was called Cantillation, that is the musical system by which the scripture is read in the synagogue, and which is denoted by little dots and signs above the text.

Well, he did that. He published what was called the authorized Book of Cantillation, something that the community accepted as the account of cantillation for the Torah, the Five Books of Moses, for the Prophets, and for certain special books like Esther and so on. I think I've got that.

Generally he was very punctilious about that, and he was noted for insisting that when these things were chanted the accent should be put on the right place in Hebrew, whereas the habit in grownups to some extent still persists of being rather haphazard about it, and not minding ~~whether~~ whether you do it correctly or not so long as you have the right words.

He did that. He published the Book of Esther , and in fact in the British Museum, in their catalogue, there is the better part of a column which records the examples of his works that they have, and then in former times a good many of the things that he wrote were not sent to the Museum because the publisher ~~didn't~~ didn't know any better. I am talking now about the world as it existed before the First World War.

At any rate he did leave a heritage in that respect, and I am bound to say that as far as I am concerned -- as far as it concerns me -- I learned from my parents that Judaism is a humane religion first and foremost, above everything else, so much so that when I finally theologically parted company and became as I did what in this country would be called a reform rabbi, they were willing to acquiesce, and in fact when I was inducted

they were present, which was a sign of courage, because as you will hear later on there were times when I had to have police protection when I started in a very Orthodox neighborhood.

Anyhow, there was --

Let me turn now to what is also important, and that is my school experience, and I want to say straightaway that I went to what in this country, not in England, would be called a public school on Ambler Road, and I have the most pleasant recollections of it. The one thing about it that my father didn't like was that one thing they taught me to do was to play football and cricket, which he thought were rather barbaric forms of activity and didn't approve of because they took me away from serious things which I might have been doing.

But generally I got on very well. For example, I have no recollection of anti-Semitism.

Q: In your earlier youth?

Perlzweig: In my earlier youth at the public school, at the elementary school, or at ~~was~~ what was called the higher elementary school. I knew about anti-Semitism, I encountered. . . For example I read about it in the newspapers, but so far as my fellow students were concerned they were puzzled, but I am bound to say in all

honesty that of my religion or political ideas had depended on anti-Semitism I wouldn't have had any religion or political ideas.

Of course there were signs that things weren't normal in my case. For example, I was always talking in class, which I take to be the result of the fact that I was brought up in a household in which the reading of books was considered a virtue, which wasn't the case always the case with the people around whom I lived. And also every now and again one of the things I always got was the English prize. This went on until I went on to the university -- I was always at the head of the class in English. And occasionally a schoolmaster would say, "You boys ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Here is a boy who comes from a household where they don't speak English and he does better than you do."

Well, it wasn't strictly true -- we did speak English. I think I am the only one of the eight of my brothers and sisters who was anything like fluent in Yiddish, and even that I am sure I wasn't fluent in because I used to bring the house down in places like Buenos Aires when I spoke in public in Yiddish, and although they understood what I was saying they thought the way I did it was extraordinarily funny. But my brothers and sisters only knew a word of it at the most here and there of the sort that you read in the New York newspapers.

But I didn't feel any anti-Semitism, and in fact when I went to what was called the higher elementary school -- in a district called ~~xxxxxxx~~ Tafnall Park -- I became very popular for a

reason which no one would guess, after what I have been saying, and that was that in the regional athletic tests -- there used to be games for ~~the~~ 20 or 30 schools in a particular district -- I did very well. I ran the 100 yards in ten seconds, which in those days was very good.

Q: Extremely fast, considering the condition of the track and the shoes you wore, everything.

Perlzweig: Oh yes, it was done in a very professional way. The world's record of the time was 9 and 3/5ths. It's now I think 9 and 2/5ths, but ten seconds for a lad of 14 or 15, which I then was, was very good. I've still got somewhere pictures with a trophy and all that kind of thing. That made things very easy for me at school.

I must in all fairness say this, because you have a picture very often painted of a very difficult life for Jews in public schools. Of course there were boys who had these ideas, but most of them so to speak were too ignorant to have them.

Now for example I remember once in Finsbury Park telling the boys that I was playing with that I came from Austria, and they were very puzzled by this, and they finally decided that there was no difference ~~from being an~~ between Austria and Australia. They didn't know the difference, you see. That's what I mean when

I say that they were too ignorant to be prejudiced. They hadn't heard of these highfalutin ideas about race ~~add~~ so on.

Of course it was a very free atmosphere in London at that time.

Q: This was prior to World War One?

Perlzweig: Prior to World War One. I mean I remember -- to give you another reminiscence of the kind of free atmosphere that there was, it was something that I discussed only recently with a priest, a Roman Catholic priest in Geneva, which demonstrated to me what has happened in my lifetime -- I used to go to Finsbury Park, which was a large open space, on Sunday afternoons when they had open air speaking by the liberal party, the labor party, the conservative party, and all the religious sects,--the Catholic Truth Society, the Protestant sects -- and I was standing in the crowd there, and a man ~~said~~, speaking as a Protestant and in favor of the Biblical view of life -- something not unlike what is now called Creationism, began quoting the first chapter of Genesis where it says, "And God created the ~~world~~ heavens and the earth in one day," or as ~~he~~ he put it the first day, and I remember correcting him because it says "one day" in the book, the argument being according to the rabbis that if it's any one day it can't be the first. The first is a comparative thing. But in Hebrew it's one day, no question about it.

He said, "When it says one day it means day in the sense in which we employ the phrase in Caesar's day. It might be 1000 years."

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: Well, I piped up, you see, being then about 15 or 16, or whatever it was. I piped up and said to him, "The text says, and it was evening and morning one day. The says, it was evening and morning the second day."

He said, "Oh, that's not so. That must have been put in by the translator."

I said, "Now you show me the Bible, and I will show you where the words are put in by translators. In order to explain things there are occasionally words put in, but they are always in italics."

He said, "Oh that's not so," and he was very angry with me because I'd upset one of his ideas.

So then I said what I shouldn't have said. I knew the Hebrew, and the Hebrew which I repeated to him is quite clear, "And it was evening, and it was morning one day."

So he said, "Don't be impudent, young man," and it didn't go any further (? voice trails off)

But I remember that because in Geneva only a few weeks ago I met a Catholic priest who had impressed my granddaughter because of his liberalism, and his liberalism took the form of

saying, "Where it says one day it means what we mean what we mean when we say in Julius Caesar's day."

So I had the unfortunate. . .

(laughs while speaking)

~~This is a very first time I have ever written this letter to you and I have never before written to you~~

~~Anyhow~~

My first encounter with that theory must have been 60 years ago.  
it's what  
Anyhow/I said to the Catholic priest as far as I am concerned.

I don't mind what this old writer said about one day. What I am concerned with is that he said "and God created the world," because if you say God creates the world it means that there is a certain mind, that there is a certain law that governs the universe, but it's that law which illustrated this thing we've been hearing about -- about the spacecraft, which is able to move because these laws have been analyzed and you can use those laws. If you were a Greek you would have to believe that there was one God on Saturn and another one on Mars, and whatever they happened to think of them at the moment would decide what happened in the space in between.

The crucial thing about the first of Genesis is "and in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In other words, there is a mind -- I don't know whether mind is the right word, but there is an intelligence there, and there is the law for us.



Or Einstein put it "God does not play dice with the universe."

Anyhow that's rather irrelevant.

I must say that from the higher elementary school I went to what I think was a very great school, called the Owen School at Islington.

Q: Named after Robert Owen?

Perlzweig: No, much older than that. It was named after Dame Alice Owen, who was the widow of a judge in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

Q: Really ?

Perlzweig: And it was a very strict school, which had all kinds of academic achievements to its credit. Its graduates went on to Oxford and Cambridge and made names for themselves. It was mostly what would be called a middle class school for the sort of people who became accountants and lawyers and were in Government service and so on, and were able to pass examinations.

Now I did have a little resentment for that school because of the rigor with which this was enforced. Every boy had what was called a journal, and in the journal once a week was put in the marks that he got for every subject that he was doing, and

this had to be signed by the parent, so that he was under constant pressure.

Q: Two ways.

Perlzweig: Two ways, and that was one thing that I didn't care about -- I thought it was much too rigid. The other was that the school was famous for its mathematics. I mean some of its graduates were what were called in Cambridge at the time -- no longer -- "wranglers." The senior wrangler was the head of the mathematics tripos, and came occasionally from this school.

But at any rate there was one great advantage, and that was that the headmaster was a man called (R.F.) Cholmley, which was spelled .C.H.O.L.M.E.L.E.Y., ~~which~~ which gives you an idea of his background. It does occur as a matter of fact in what was then, and no longer is, a famous novel called Sinister Street by Compton MacKenzie. I mean that was then a very widely read novel.

Q: Did Compton MacKenzie go to that school?

Perlzweig: No, but what he did do was to go to St. Paul's School, and this man Cholmeley, whom I am referring to, was the second master at St. Paul's School, which is of course a London school.

At any rate this was a very old school and it had very old customs. Its board of governors -- or the people who were responsible

for it in those days -- was one of the city guilds, called the Brewers Company, many of whom weren't brewers at all, it was just a matter of tradition. But at any rate certainly we didn't see the broad side of the effect on the school, it had no effect on the school.

But there was a time once a year when they gave away I gather what was called maundy money, or whatever it was, newly minted sixpences, depending on what form you were in.

At any rate this was a very good school. It was so good that I can tell you a formula of mathematics which I can repeat to this day and will repeat to my death and not know the meaning of. It's "the cosine of an angle can never be greater than one." Now if you ask me what a cosine is I haven't the faintest idea.

What happened was -- and I remember this very well -- there was some youth there who was no good at academic things who wanted to be a clergyman, and had to pass the school leaving examination to qualify to go into the clergy, and this poor fellow made a mess of everything -- everything intellectual. I remember he was asked by the schoolmaster, "Have you any comment to make on this?" And the schoolmaster wrote COSINE SO AND SO 321.5. "Do you have any comment on that?"

So he said, "No, sir."

"Now don't you know that the cosine of an angle can never be greater than 1?"

And the whole class had to stand up and repeat, THE COSINE OF AN ANGLE CAN NEVER BE GREATER THAN 1.

That's all I can repeat.

Now I didn't approve of that. I thought that was rather mean, but on the other hand Cholmeley was a great man for literature, and he conceived the idea that I would be a poet. There was a magazine of which I have a complete file of the time called The Arrow published at the school by the board. The reason for The Arrow was that Dame Alice Owen founded the school because she was working in the fields -- fields which were a part of the City of London -- and somebody was practicing with arrows, and one of the arrows went through her ~~max~~ head and she nearly died as a result of it, so she founded a school on the spot as a kind of thanksgiving for having escaped murder by arrow. So the magazine was called The Arrow, and I was for a time the editor of it, and I remember writing articles and poems. This was during the First World War. I wrote a poem which was a poem for peace, which was then rather unfashionable.

And I remember writing -- I don't remember how I came to this at all -- about music, the way in which music is the objectification of emotion. I don't know if I really knew what that meant, but at any rate I was sufficiently absorbed in music to do it.

And I must say that this man Cholm~~e~~ley, who spent the best part of a year --<sup>a</sup>/whole year -- in making sure that I grasped the English language, rendered me a very great service. R.F.

Cholmeley. I say a whole year because there was a system, which I think still prevails, under which you could get a degree at London University without going to the University if you passed the right examination, and one of the things the school did was to pass the intermediate B.A., that is to say the B.A. . . . , well, it's not the B.A., but the examination that you are expected to pass on the way to it.

So we did the intermediate B.A., but instead of going on to what were really university studies I was restricted to writing, and I wrote on the most peculiar subjects, because he didn't care what the subject was. What he was concerned with was the language.

For example I remember writing on the Jews in Baghdad. Now in 1913 or 1914 the Jews in Baghdad had no contemporary significance at all. The only significance that I discovered afterwards was that a member of the Cholmeley family had married into the Sassoon family.

Q: Oh really?

Perlzweig: Which came from Baghdad, and that's what gave him the idea. I don't know where I got the information for the writing, but at any rate he wasn't concerned with whether the information was right or wrong.

I must say that one of the things that Owen did for me was to give me, rightly or wrongly, some fixed ideas about the English language. For example, I cannot now even if I want to split an infinitive. I can't blame this on Cholmeley. He was prepared to accept it as an inevitable development, but I simply cannot split an infinitive, and when I hear it on the radio -- from the White House or whatever it is -- I wince. This I got from Owen.

Well, I found that I got on very well with most of the teachers, especially one of the teachers who was a clergyman called Esmond, who was a graduate in divinity from Durham University, of all places, and who appeared to think that it was worthwhile my understanding the intricacies of Anglo-can theology.

Q: What??

Perlzweig: Anglican theology. Now there was a time when from time to time they spoke about the reunion of the Anglican Church with the Roman Church. There was for example the efforts of Lord Halifax, the father of the Lord Halifax who became Foreign Minister. They had meetings in Belgium with representatives of the Pope. The theory was that they weren't negotiating, but the Anglicans just happened to be there by accident and listened in to the discussion.

Well, whatever it was there was a great deal of talk for example about the apostolic succession. This was explained to me in very

great detail by this clergyman, who wanted to make sure that I had no illusions that his orders weren't naturally correct.

I learned a great deal not about Christianity, but about the theology of the split between Anglicanism and Catholicism. In short, I found it very profitable. We spent a great deal of time for example in the library. There were five Jewish boys in that school -- at least five Jewish boys in the class in the form which I attended -- and it's interesting to analyze how they reacted to the situation.

Of those five only one was a Zionist, and that was myself. The others had no objection to it, but they regarded it as being on roughly the same plane as flat earthism. The thing was so remote from possibility and from what is practical that wasn't a thing you worried about -- you just tolerated it. It didn't do any harm.

All the five except one stayed away for the high holy days from school. The one who didn't stay away was a communist. He was the son of a Russian communist who became at the time of the Revolution the Soviet ambassador or Kommissar in Teheran of all places. His name was ~~Therstein~~ Rothstein. The son, Andrew Rothstein. . .

The father was Theodore Rothstein, who was known as a writer ~~in~~ in his day and wrote about imperialism and all that kind of thing and worked for the National Guardian.

The son, Andrew -- who is still, as far as I know, alive and is still one of the principal theoreticians of the British Communist Party, which of course hardly exists -- he didn't stay away. He was an atheist, and there was no animus in his atheism -- that's how he'd been brought up.

And there was one other curious thing which was unusual and unexpected. None of us could speak Yiddish except this atheist, and I know that afterwards he went to Russia. I met him subsequently in Geneva where he represented the TASS organization.

But that was the school, and from that school -- where I had I think most of my education, especially in English, but none of the things that I did at the university -- now here I am, to go back to one other thing which is very important in my life. It is a sort of contact that has an American dimension.

~~Max lived in the house in Finsbury Park~~

There was a second place in which we lived in Finsbury Park, and that was a road called Blackstock Road, which was in Islington, where this school was originally founded.

Islington had a public library which was endowed by -- what was his name, the famous American engineer, the Scottish engineer who built a lot of libraries?

Q: Andrew Carnegie?

Perlzweig: Yes, Carnegie. This was a magnificent building, and I



have a great debt to it, because I was able to take five books out, and one of my principal occupations was to walk to the library, which was a long way from where I lived -- I mean it took a good half hour's walk, Street, Islington -- and take out five books. And I read history.

Now I subsequently took a degree in history at London University, University College, and did very well in it. I am quite sure that everything that I wrote in that examination I had read before I got to the University College, <sup>in</sup> ~~and~~ these books that I got out of the library, so that I had, and still have now, a very good all around education in the Edwardian literature, criticism of it, the names of all these authors are familiar to me, as are their ideas, all of which I got out of that library.

This man Carnegie in putting up this building must have rendered a service which <sup>it</sup> is just not possible to measure to thousands of people who use the resources of the library.

It wasn't only the books,--I used to go with these five books and then go back as soon as I could change them -- but there were also lectures, and I remember many of these lectures which were public lectures. I remember going to a lecture by <sup>Lord Robert</sup> (Sir Arthur) Baden-Powell, who founded the Boy Scouts, and people like that, and others, which were a great supplement to the education that I was getting in school.

Well, anyhow, where are we?

Q: Near the end (of the tape).

Perlzweig: There was one difficulty that I had as I neared -- in 1915 it was -- the end of my time at school, and that was that by that time the First World War had broken out, and I was technically an enemy alien, because I was born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Nobody took it very seriously. It was quite obvious from the way in which I talked and everything else that I hadn't just come over from Galitia. It was just an unfortunate accident that I was born there because my mother didn't believe in the advancement of British medicine.

I remember in this connection that there was another man in which a similar accident took place, with I think even more serious consequences. That was Stephen Wise (1874-1949) who was in his day the most influential rabbi in New York, and who was known as a man who had influence on a whole succession of Presidents, who was not born in New York, who was born in Budapest. That was because his mother -- his parents lived in New York and his father was a rabbi in New York, and a very well known rabbi, but his mother, who ~~was~~ belonged to a very distinguished family in Hungary, a member of their House of Lords, decided that New York was a barbaric place as far as medicine was concerned, and that she would have the child in Budapest. And that's why he

was born in Budapest, and he used to say as one of his jokes that he frequently ~~am~~ indulged in, "If it hadn't been for that I could have been President of the United States."

So my case wasn't the worst, but it was very awkward when the war broke out.

There was in the school a branch of what was called the OTC -- Officers Training Corps -- and I wanted to join it, and Chblmeley, the headmaster, was quite anxious that I should do it, and he made ~~inquiries~~ inquiries, and it turned out to be quite impossible. I simply could not. I was not allowed, being technically an enemy alien. This was one of the difficulties.

From Owen School I went to the University College, London, and this was one of the peculiar results. I was one of the minority of men at University College. Mostly were women because of the war.

I had three years at University College which were extremely active for me. I cannot give you a list of the societies of which I was president because it would be too long, but it was a very active time for me, <sup>were there</sup> Not only ~~with~~ these societies -- for example a society called the Critical Society, which was modeled on the Cambridge Heretics Society, the Historical Society --

I sang. There was a Musical Society and I used to sing. I remember singing there -- duets and one thing and another -- and above all (I was active) in what was called the Union Debating

Society, of which I became president.

I did a great deal of that, and this is when I began my Zionist activity.

When I first matriculated -- that was before this time, before the war broke out -- I passed the matriculation examination, which was a sort of passport to enable you to go to the university when the time came. It took the place of the school leaving examination. One of the first things I ~~did~~ did with it -- with this new status, although I ~~needn't~~ didn't have worried about this examination -- I was to join the London University Zionist Society. I thought I couldn't join it if I hadn't matriculated, ~~because~~ but of course they would have been glad to have anybody (laughter).

But the fact was that was one of the things during the early days of the war which I was most meticulous about, and I am bound to say that I ~~learned~~<sup>heard</sup> at this society -- the London University Zionist Society -- some of the most instructive lectures that I have ever heard anywhere.

The president was a man called Leon Simon -- Sir Leon Simon. He was a very big man in the British Post Office and that kind of thing -- he was in the civil service -- but he had been a classical scholar at Oxford, and he was best known -- and is best known now -- as the translator of Ahad Ha-Am (1856-1927), a famous Jewish philosopher, or essayist I think would be a more accurate word.

He translated Ahad Ha-Am into English and made his writings known to English Jewry, and also to American Jewry. It was published in this country by the Jewish Publication Society of America.

He was the president. He was a very independent man. He had a close association with Weizmann. He wasn't a direct follower of him but he was a ~~first~~ follower of Ahad Ha-Am.

There were others who were afterwards ~~very~~ very important to the movement. There was a man -- I don't know whether you ever came across him -- called Harry Sacher. He became related by marriage to the famous Marks & Spenser Company. He was a barrister, and he had been a writer for the Daily News of London, which no longer exists, and had refused to go along with their support of the war -- the First World War -- because that meant support of Czarist Russia, so he resigned, and there was quite a scandal about that. Then he went to Manchester, and in Manchester he worked for what was then called The Manchester Guardian, now The Guardian, and there it was that he met Weizmann -- Weizmann was a lecturer at the University of Manchester -- and Israel Sieff and Simon Marks, and he married one of their sisters. He was in Jerusalem for a time as head of the Jewish Agency. Of course he is no longer living -- none of these people are living, unfortunately -- but he was one of the active people there.

Another man was Norman Bentwich, who was subsequently Attorney General of Palestine under the mandate, and whom I knew very well.

This is where I began being active in Zionism.

Q: You had quite an exposure at that early age.

Perlzweig: At that age, you see. And I remember that I went in and I studied thoroughly the origins of the war, and I read a great deal about it, so that when the next war came I had some background.

But the result was that I did ~~no~~ practically no studying. I was engaged in student activities. Some of it was important. For example the Encyclopaedia Judaica, which gives what purports to be my biography, mentions among other things that I was the chairman of the University Labor Federation of Great Britain. Now this was in its day an important organization, because the universities in Britain returned members of Parliament. That has since been abolished. I mean Oxford and Cambridge had two each, London (University) ~~had~~ one, and there were other arrangements for the North and the Scotch universities.

We called together -- I was at that time I think chairman of the Cambridge University <sup>Labor Party</sup> ~~xxx~~ when this particular thing was set up, or it may have been the London University Labor Party. We called them together, we had a meeting, and we elected an executive and advertised ~~xxxxx~~ ourselves.

I was the first chairman. The first treasurer was Malcolm MacDonald, a man who died the other day, and the first secretary was Kenneth Rinsing. I met MacDonald later.

But I was active in the Zionist movement, I was active in the labor movement in the University, and I was active in various student movements, and I did practically no studying at all.

And then something really very strange happened.

When the day of the examinations arrived I went and sat for the examinations, and I was glad to see that I passed. When the thing was all over I was summoned by my principal professor, whose name was A.F. Pollard. He was a very able man -- extremely so -- and his books are still being printed although he's been dead many years. He said, "Look, you don't deserve it, but I have to give you the Rothschild Prize."

This was a prize which was given to the best student/ . . .

(end of tape)

End of Interview 1 w/ Dr. Maurice Perlzweig by Peter Jessup,  
April 14th 1981.

DK

Interviewee: Dr. Maurice Perlzweig  
Interviewer: Peter Jessup  
Place: NYC

Interview No. 2 - April 28th 1981

Q: Good afternoon, Dr. Perlzweig. It's awfully nice to be back here for session number two. This is Peter Jessup from Columbia, and here we are on a rainy day on West 72nd Street. Nice to see you again.

Dr. Perlzweig: Well, I think the last time we came to the point when I was sent by Professor Pollard, who was one of the professors of history, who informed me that he was very disappointed with the results of the degree examination. This was the examination which led to the B.A. degree and honors degree in history.

But he tells me that nevertheless <sup>it</sup> ~~he~~ had been decided that I should receive what was called the Rothschild Prize in Historical Research. I should explain that it was not for historical



research, but in order to encourage historical research.

I asked him why if he was disappointed with what I had written in 13 papers they had decided to give me this prize, and his simple answer was, "Because the others were even worse than you were." (laughter)

So I took the prize.

I think I ~~ought~~ thought to say before I go any further that although his judgment was right about many of the papers which dealt with hard facts, he was not right about some of the others.

The hard facts, as he ~~pointed~~ pointed out to me, came down to this: that in all the papers there were only two hard facts, and they were both wrong, and I knew ~~xxx~~ at once which they were.

It was in a paper in which there was a question about the history of medieval Switzerland, and there were two battles, the names of which I gave, and I knew the names because I had been reading a book on the subject on the way to the examination on the bus. The only trouble was that I mentioned these two battles, but annexed the wrong date to each one of them -- I changed the dates over.

What I did do well at was what <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ called in this country political science, but in England has a much more modest and I think accurate title -- the history of political ideas. I knew a good deal about that, because I had done one of a number of unusual things about it.

There were in the University three series of lectures at the time more or less simultaneously on the same subject, which

covered the whole of the European history of political ideas from the Greeks down to the present day.

One was given by Professor Pollard, whom I have mentioned, and who did it with a certain element of ill grace from very ancient notes, because this had been assigned to him, and he wasn't really interested in it.

The other one was by a man then very famous at the London School of Economics, called Graham <sup>Wallas</sup>~~Wallace~~, who had acquired fame as an explicator -- I think that's the right technical word -- of ancient Greece and its political and social life.

The third was a man of whom very few people then had heard and fewer still now, called Professor (J.F.) Allen at Bedford College for Women.

I decided to take the three courses, although only one was compulsory, and I am very glad I did, because among other things I learned about the deficiencies of those who lecture on the history of political ideas.

Q: Ah!

Perlzweig: I attended first early in the week the lecture by Pollard, and then I went down a few days later to the London School of Economics -- I was able because of the to do this -- and heard Professor <sup>Wallas</sup>~~Wallace~~, and then I went to Professor Allen at the Bedford College, .

Far and away the best of these courses was that of Allen, and I have an acute recollection of the circumstances because first of all it was a woman's college, and there I sat in the front row, a solitary male.

Q: Oh really?

Perlzweig: And behind me were 30 or 40 young women, all of whom were sometimes almost audibly making remarks about my appearance, or about what they thought I might be doing or thinking.

And then there was a professor in front of me who was certainly the most eccentric that I have come across in a long time.

Q: What was his first name -- Allen's?

Perlzweig: I don't know. I put it down because I have one of his books here.

The book that I have, which I can show you. . .

J.W. Allen -- I don't know what his initial was --

The book is the History of Political Ideas in the 16th Century.

I come back to the question of his eccentricity. First of all he always wore carpet slippers, and he explained that to the class -- he found it more comfortable, and that he deemed to be an adequate reason.

Q: I think it was.

Perlzweig: Secondly, he always smoked a pipe during the lectures, and it's a pipe which had a peculiar shape. It was rather long with a thin barrel at the end of it, and I spent 50 years trying to find a pipe like that and I haven't succeeded.

But he always began his lectures by saying, "There are certain common errors about the subject which I am going to discuss with you."

And he would repeat almost word for word what I had heard in the first of the lectures, and denounced it as a common error, and then began to explain it.

Well, the result of this experience was that I really mastered the subject, and I have been interested in it ever since, and in this paper I certainly did very much better than I did in the papers which dealt with the brute facts of battles and wars and kings and so on, which comprised the other questions.

Another set of papers which I did I think rather better than usual was those that demanded not facts but imagination.

For example I was asked in one question why it was that when there were three kingdoms in ancient Britain -- Wessex, Mercia and Northumbria -- Wessex came out on top.

Now I don't think anybody can give an exact answer to that question, but I was able to excogitate reasons for it, especially as I have a habit of remembering odd facts.

One reason I gave was that Wessex had Canterbury, which was an archbishopric, and Northumbria had York, which was an archbishopric, and poor Mercia did not have an archbishopric.

And I remembered that King Arthur, whose name still exists in England in something called Arthur's , ~~and~~ had attempted and had succeeded for a brief period, because he realized as I did that to have an archbishopric in your dominion was to enhance your status, he attempted to create an archbishopric at Litchfield, which was the capital of Mercia.

I knew about Litchfield because I'd read about the famous Dr. Samuel Johnson who was born in Litchfield.

Q: Aha.

Perlzweig. I happened to read about him and about the history of Litchfield before his time, so I had this fact, which after all was also a hard fact in my mind.

So there was reason for giving me this prize, which meant that I would undertake to go on and do research which they wanted to discover.

There was also another reason why I think they gave me the prize.

I was very popular with members of the faculty because of ~~the~~ some of the eccentricity of my ideas.

I wrote two papers -- and I am sorry that I don't have them, because I would read them now with much enthusiasm.

The first was -- and this I did at the request of a Professor Newton, who was a professor of colonial history -- it dealt with

the origins of American constitutional ideas, and I attributed the development of <sup>the</sup> American Constitution to its origins in feudalism, which most people wouldn't expect -- that it wasn't so terribly revolutionary, that Massachusetts began as part of the of East Greenwich and Kent, because they had to think in feudal terms.

I don't remember the rest of the paper, but it certainly pleased some of these eminent and learned gentlemen to know that the story about the way in which the United States had outstripped England in development was not well founded.

The second thing was even funnier. I was directed by Professor Newton to look at what are called the colonial state papers, which is a large collection made by the Government in England of documents which relate to the colonies, and I found one paper which dealt with an island the name of which I have forgotten in the West Indies, and this was an account of the trial of a doctor who was accused of murder. He was judged to be guilty and condemned to be hanged, whereupon the inhabitants of the island got out a petition to the Privy Council in London asking that he should be spared ~~xxxx~~ because he was the only doctor on the island, the chance of getting another one was really remote, and for their own sake they wanted to keep him alive in order that he may attend to their medical needs.

And I remember to this day writing the last sentence of this paper, "This is only occasion in the history of humanity when the knowledge of medicine has saved a life."

I hadn't done any serious work, even though I was at the head of the list of the examination -- was first of all because I did spend a lot of time on Zionism -- the charge was perfectly true and it was notorious at the time -- but the other was that I spent too much time on the life of the college itself.

For example I was the editor of the college magazine, which was quite a hefty magazine which came out once a month. I was the president of the Union Debating Society, which was the nearest thing as far as debating went to the unions in Oxford and Cambridge, and I spent an enormous amount of time on that.

I was the president of the dramatic society, in which capacity I produced several plays a year. I may say incidentally that I succeeded a young woman who was called Dora Black, and who afterwards acquired fame in various ways, but chiefly as the second Mrs. Bertrand Russell.

Q: Fancy that -- Dora Russell.

Perlzweig: Dora Russell, yes, whom I got to know, as I worked with her on this thing, very well.

I was an active member of the music society, and used to take part in performances, and on top of that there were other societies, for example a society of which also I was president -- I don't know how many presidencies I had in the college -- called the Critical Society, whose objective it was to have speakers who

~~who~~ would criticize the establishment and current notions about politics and religion and everything else, something not unlike the heretics and

Well, this wasn't the end of it, because I founded what came to be known as the London University Jewish Students Union, which took in not only the college but the whole university.

This I spent a great deal of time at, and also exhibited what the Jewish community thought was a certain eccentricity. I wasn't the president of this. The president -- which was a nominal position -- was Israel Zangwill (1864-1926), who became a famous writer.

Q: Right.

Perlzweig: And whom I got to know very well through this.

But the eccentricity was for example that Zangwill would deliver a speech or a lecture on Jesus of Nazareth, which the Jewish community in the early part of the <sup>20th?</sup> 19th century thought was an odd subject for a Jewish society.

I remember speaking up twice, personally introducing him, I criticized the audience for being so small -- I don't think there were more than a dozen people present -- and I remember Zangwill stood up and said, "Why are you berating these people? They have come. The ones who haven't are beyond your reach."



The other thing was, when he finished I said, "~~whatever~~" "Whatever we may think about his ideas, as Jews it's our bounden duty to try and understand the religion of the people among whom we live, and especially in view of the fact that what is believed about Jesus of Nazareth has had an immense impact on Jewish life."

This I remember because several weeks later there appeared a letter in the Jewish Chronicle written by a professor at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati whose name was Gotthard Deutsch (1859-1921) who said, referring to me, that it was all nonsense, there never was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, and therefore there is no good reason for considering him.

This was the first idiosyncrasy that the Jewish community didn't take kindly to.

The other was that I invited a notorious anti-Semite to deliver a lecture. The notorious anti-Semite was Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953).

Q: Ohhhh yes, the Catholic philosopher.

Perlzweig: Well, more or less Catholic philosopher. I don't know whether you'd call him a Catholic philosopher. He was mostly interested in economics, and was antistate. He would have liked the Reagan point of view. But he was a notorious anti-Semite.

I also invited -- and he came too -- G.K. Chesterton, but Chesterton was a genial man. Belloc wasn't.

Q: And Belloc wasn't?

Perlzweig: No no, Belloc was rather a bitter man. First of all he was ultra-British, although he himself was born in France and had become a naturalized British subject, and therefore had a sort of minority complex on the subject. But apart from that he was genuinely anti-Semitic and made no secret of it.

I had a conversation with him immediately after the lecture which had <sup>an</sup>~~an~~ effect on the rest of my existence, because I tried to find out why he was so anti-Semitic, and the answer was because the Jews in England had control of everything in England, they had control not only of the newspapers and the banks, but also of the church,

So I said, "How can that be?"

There were then only a quarter of a million Jews in England.

He says, "Well, what do you call a Jew?"

That's a question that often troubles the Jews: who is a Jew? So I said, sort of drawing a bow ~~xxxxx~~ at venture, "Anybody who would be buried in a Jewish cemetery," which I thought covered the whole spectrum of possibilities.

So he said to me, "Would he be circumcised?"

I said, "Oh yes, probably."

He said, "Well, tell me this -- is Sir Alfred Mond circumcised?"

Q: Ah. Sir Alfred who?

Perlzweig: Sir Alfred Mond (Baron Lord Melchett, 1868-1930).

Now Sir Alfred Mond was a very big figure in his day. He was the leading exponent of private enterprise. When I afterwards went to Cambridge and they had a discussion on private enterprise he was invited as the spokesman for it. At any rate he was a member of the Cabinet ~~and~~ in England, and he was the head of Imperial Chemical (Industries--I.P.L.) which was one of the biggest enterprises at the time.

So I said, "I don't know, is he circumcised?"

I remember his answer, "You'd better ask Lady Mond." (laughter)  
Which was typical of him.

Then I said, "Look, you say the church is controlled by the Jews. I think that's absolute nonsense."

He said, "What about the Archbishop of Canterbury?"

I said, "You mean Archbishop Davidson?"

He said, "Are you telling me that with a name like that he is not a Jew, or a hidden Jew?"

Anyhow this was part of my college existence.

Q: How many members were in the Jewish Student Union that you founded?

Perlzweig: Oh there were about 40 or 50. You must bear in mind that in London there is a very large accumulation of colleges, medical schools and specialized places of instruction, all of which form part of the University of London. It's not quite so

uniform as the University of New York, where all the colleges have curricula that are fairly similar. But in London there were means of affiliation to the University, which included theological colleges for example, and the result was that there if I had had all the Jews it would have run into hundreds, but actually I think there was about 40 or 50. But at any rate we made a big splash.

Now this was one of the reasons why I didn't do any work.

The other reason was Zionism, and here the thing was really serious. I first joined a body called the London University Zionist Society. Before I went to ~~the~~ University College I was so keen on it that when I succeeded in passing what was called the matriculation examination,--which is the passport to entrance to the University, but is taken a year or two before you contemplate going to the University--

I remember that among the privileges that I thought it conferred was the right to join the London University Zionist Society.

Well, I went along, and I discovered that if I had been a Hottentot or a Hindu from somewhere else I could have joined it -- they didn't care where I'd come from -- and then that the thing had nothing to do with London University.

It was a society of university graduates mostly from Oxford and Cambridge who didn't like the Zionist Federation which existed in England, and were rather snobbish, like that relative of yours that you referred to. They wanted to be in an intellectual atmosphere, and they were people of the highest intellectual

caliber. The president was a man called Leon Simon who had been a classical scholar in Oxford, and who was one of the leading Hebrew scholars of the day so far as contemporary Hebrew was concerned, and was the translator of the chief Hebrew writer of the time Ahad Ha'am (born Asher Ginzberg, 1856-1927).

Q: Oh yes, you mentioned him in the last interview -- Leon Simon.

Perlzweig: Well, his <sup>lot?</sup> interest in life, strangely enough, was to be a civil servant, and a civil servant of an unusual kind, because his job was to look after the telephones in England, but nevertheless he was an intellectual of the highest rank.

Another one was Norman Bentwick (1883- ), who was afterwards Attorney General in Palestine under the mandate, and then a professor at the Hebrew University, a really a man of very great, deep convictions and very great capacity.

There was another man whom the world should have heard more of but didn't called Harry Sacher. Harry Sacher I first heard of when he resigned from the Daily News, which no longer exists, at any rate in London, because they supported the war. He resigned not because he had any feelings about Germany, but because his horror about what was happening in Russia was so great that he thought it was immoral to go into a war on the side of Russia against anybody else.

Q: I see.

Perlzweig: But he went to Manchester and obtained a post on The Manchester Guardian. It was fortunate for him in many ways because in Manchester at that time -- when he went there -- a group of Jewish families was the famous Marks and Sieffs families who are the proprietors of Marks & Spencer in London, and he married one of the girls in one of the families.

Q: One of the Sieffs?

Perlzweig: Either one of the Marks or one of the Sieffs -- I don't know which. At any rate he ended up in life much later -- I got to know him very well -- as a director of Marks & Spencer (Dept. Store and therefore he had nothing to worry about.

But at any rate he was one of the members of this society, and he played a very great part in the development of Zionism. He went to Jerusalem and was chairman of the Jewish Agency for a period before he came back, and wrote a great deal about it. I think he is one of the best historians of Zionism, he really is, and I very much cherish the books that I have.

Well, these were the kinds of people.

The kinds of lectures were what you would expect. For example I remember one lecture which was a lecture on Nietzsche (1844-1900) and the Jews. Who would care two hoots about what Nietzsche thought or did about the Jews? But I remember the lecture. I remember the man who delivered it -- his name was Oscar Levy,

who had translated Nietzsche into English -- his was then the current translation -- and Nietzsche was a current figure in European countries at that time.

I remember a bookshop along the Strand in London which had a big notice informing the passerby that he had books on what he called THE EURO-NIETZSCHEAN WAR the war that was going on at the time, you see, the First World War.

So I went regularly to that society and I got a great deal of intellectual stimulus out of it. I never played any part in the government of it -- I was only a youth at school, and these were men who had positions of great responsibility and were very learned.

But then you see I wasn't content with that. I began to work in the Zionist movement. I began by delivering a lecture in North London at a meeting of a body called the North London Zionist Society. I remember the title of the lecture -- I don't remember what the lecture was about. It was "Continuity and Change." I had developed the philosophy that what you should do in life is to make sure that your roots are maintained, but at the same time make equally sure that you keep on changing, because I had rejected Orthodoxy at that time, when I was about 16 or 17. Until I was 16 or 17, I was <sup>la</sup>very exact and careful observer of all the rules of Orthodoxy, but then from that time I began to find them no longer convincing, and I dropped it.

And so I developed this philosophy.

The result of that lecture was that I was unanimously elected secretary of the society, although that wasn't very difficult because there weren't many people there who were willing to undertake the job, and in that capacity I became a delegate to the Central Federation. There was a body called ~~the~~-Angle incorrectly the English Zionist Federation -- it should have been the British Zionist Federation.

(static in tape)

who founded the society weren't as exact as that.

I will give you one example (of what I did there).

I went to a meeting in March 1917. I remember that date very well because the Balfour Declaration, which changed my whole. . .  
(phone rings, interrupting train of thought)

In my capacity as a delegate of the North London Zionist Society I attended a conference -- the place I don't remember -- which was addressed by Dr. (Chaim) Weitzmann (1874-1952).

I mentioned the date -- March 1917 -- because the Balfour Declaration was delivered in November 1917, and we were all anxious to hear what was going on.

Now you must imagine what the situation was. I was a youngster, I was an undergraduate, and here was an assembly of the elders of the community, and sitting at the head table were people who were gray-haired people, and I got up to ask a question.



I remember saying, "Dr. Weitzmann, everyone knows that you are in negotiation with the British Government about certain concessions in regard to Palestine, but some of us are worried about the price that you are paying for it. Is it possible that you will promise them Jewish troops in the war?"

And then I sat down. He got up and polished me off with a single wave of the hand -- which I find very difficult to convey, because he used Yiddish words,—"sachen de wei" to the British if they need Jewish troops -- and the whole place dissolved in laughter.

"Sachen de wei" means roughly, "poor bastards, if that's what they need they must be in a very bad way."

Well, I mention it because it's a matter of interest, and also it shows the kind of thing I was doing. I was playing an active part in Zionist affairs.

Q: There was no British Jewish legion in World War One, or was there?

Perlzweig: There was, there was. It wasn't a Jewish legion, but there was one thing called the Zion Mule Corps, which went to Gallipoli. There were a few Jews there, but it was extraordinarily difficult. I mean one of the people I met at the time -- Vladimir Jabotinsky (1860-1940), who promoted the idea --

But when you imagine a Jewish assembly, or any assembly, laughing out loud at the ideas that these Jewish tailors and

shoemakers in the East End of London would march against a cannon, and compare it to now, you will see what an incredible distance the Jews have traveled during my lifetime.

Well, this is only one of the things. I could go on almost endlessly. But I did play an active part, and finally became a member of what was called the Council of the Zionist Federation.

So when Pollard said that Zionism was at fault in my having devoted so little time (to my studies), he was partly right, but not altogether right.

Now I think I ought to go on from there. I graduated, I did a certain amount of research in the British Museum -- in the famous reading room of what is now the British Library -- and as a matter of fact that was the year in which I got a ticket, that same year, 1917. I went to the British Library about two years ago with a son of mine who lives in Columbus, Ohio who happened to be in London, and he wanted to see the British Museum Library, and the clerk there took out my original ticket, which said 1917. It's almost a historic document.

Q: Yes. Your own library card.

Perlzweig: Yes. Oh yes, they have library cards. The strange thing about the British Museum now -- or the British Library now -- is that you have your picture on it but not the name of the British Museum, and when I asked why that was the answer was to prevent

theft. If I lost the card somebody would come in and could walk out with a book. Anyhow however that may be it's not really of any great importance.

I did do some research, but then I got the first job, which was a strange job, which was obtained for me by Professor Pollard.

I am just trying to think. . .

The Stanford University in California. . . I've forgotten the first name. . .

Q: Leland.Stanford (1824-1893).

Perlzweig: Leland Stanford. There was a professor from Leland Stanford who came to England at about this time for the purpose of acquiring documents and books which related to the war.

You remember that Herbert Hoover was one of the great patrons of Leland Stanford.

Q: That's true.

Perlzweig: When you remember that you will understand that he was able to get official documents not only from the British but from all over Europe. They were glad to give him something. He was the big man in food and that kind of thing. But they didn't think this was enough -- they wanted ordinary publications.

So the job I got was one of three posts ~~xxxxxxx~~ that they established -- one in London, one in Vienna and one somewhere

else, I don't know the exact details -- that were occupied by somebody who looked at the publications that came out from time to time and sent a list to their agent in London, or wherever it was, who bought the books and passed them on to Leland Stanford.

Q: Was that the basis of the famous Hoover Library?

Perlzweig: Well, that was the time when the Hoover Library was being put together.

Q: I see.

Perlzweig: Now I was given the British Empire or Commonwealth, whichever you like to call it. It was not a terribly difficult job because I had one source which was perfect. I don't know whether it works today. The Times Literary Supplement had every week a list of the books published in the United Kingdom, and I went through this list, and I had to judge whether because of the author or the subject it was worth having it sent to America. And I tried to make as honestly as I could a fair selection of books of different points of view. For example I do still remember -- it's curious how these things stick in one's mind after half a century -- I remember that I put in a pamphlet which was called Is the Kaiser the Beast Referred to in the Book of Revelation?

I thought they ought to have something to show that there was a great deal of irrationality going on.

I kept this job, it was a very small thing, and I went on with my research, when something else cropped up and took me away from what might have been -- perhaps unlikely, but it might have been -- an academic life.

That was that my father had spoken to the Minister of what is called the reform-synagogue in England. I say it's called the reform synagogue because the word "reform" in England does not mean what it means in the United States.

There are two non-Orthodox schools of thought in England. One is called liberal and the other reform, and the reform is something like conservative in this country, but not really as conservative.

I had had thoughts about being a rabbi, but my father suggested and I went to Jews' College where rabbis were trained, and when I saw what went on there, the kind of ritual they believed in, I decided that this was not for me. You may not understand it, but for example they had two sinks, one for meat and the other for milk. In the kosher system you may not mix meat and milk. There is a passage in the Scriptures which says, "Thou shalt not <sup>see</sup>~~see~~ the kid in its mother's milk," and the rabbis have a great talent at making a lot out of nothing. They developed this into the whole system of Kashrut -- the business of being kosher.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: Well, if you go as far as that, that really is not my cup of tea.

So I went back and I said, "No, I don't believe in the literal interpretation of the Scriptures and don't like that kind of thing."

So my father set up a meeting between me and this reform rabbi who was a great man, called the Reverend Morris Joseph (1848-1930). His particular form of non-Orthodoxy arose out of the fact that he had been an Orthodox minister and preacher -- one of the leading preachers -- and had said in one of his sermons that he didn't believe in the restoration of the animal sacrifices, even if the Messiah came.

This was such a terrible heresy that he had to resign, and as it happened there was a vacancy at the reform synagogue, and so he became their spiritual leader.

The reform synagogue in England, which is now the liberal synagogue to which I ultimately went -- which is the radical kind of reform -- began about 150 years ago, and as I often point out, before the Darwinian hypothesis became dominant in the world of thought, and their reform took the form of cutting out what they call the rabbinical accretions on the Biblical record.

They became biblicists, they followed the Bible faithfully, but they did not accept the Talmud. In this respect they were very like the Karaites in the Middle Ages. That was a Jewish sect which still exists, except in very depleted numbers, of

people who believe <sup>in</sup> the Hebrew Bible but to not accept the rabbinical superstructure, which as I say these people dismissed as accretionist, with some peculiar results, because for example the feast of Hannukah is not referred to in the Bible it's in the Apocrypha, so they have to whittle wiggle a little bit to give it any notice. And so on.

The other thing is that the Hebrew ~~pr~~ prayer book, or the Jewish prayer book, is both in Hebrew and in Aramaic. Well, although Aramaic does occur in the Bible the principal language is Hebrew, and the result is that a great many of the familiar prayers in Aramaic had to be turned into Hebrew.

At any rate they were people who in their way were enlightened. They were not bound by ideas of the restoration of the temple and the sacrifice and all this kind of thing, which a great number of Jews to this day believe. I mean the Moral Majority is not merely a Christian phenomenon -- there are Jews mad enough to think along those terms.

I saw Morris Joseph, who as I say was a great man, and ~~xxx~~ really the hours I spent with him gave me a great deal of insight, and he said, "I think we ought to give you the Albert Loewe Fellowship."

This was a fellowship which the synagogue awarded to people who, it thought, might become rabbis, and it was available to you if you went to Germany, where there was an institution called Hochschule des Judentum, or to the Hebrew Union College at

Cincinnati.

So I said that I would think about it.

(there were)

Now I was summoned to a meeting at which four very aristocratic gentlemen who were people of Spanish descent and had been in England for 300 years, or at any rate their families had been, with names like Mocatta and so on, really Spanish names -- and we had a long conversation, and they said they thought I might be the kind of thing they were looking for.

So I said, "Before we go any further I want you to know that I am a Zionist."

At this time -- the time of which I am speaking -- to say you were a Zionist in polite circles was the equivalent of saying you were a believer in a flat earth. If you weren't really worried that anything was going to happen -- which was the position when I was a boy at school -- you thought, well, this was an amiable idiosyncrasy, nothing really to worry about. If on the other hand you thought that there might be some truth in it, and that there would be this terrible specter which haunted these people with double nationality, then you thought it was a very dangerous thing.

Now then when I said this there was dead silence in the room, because I said, "You have to think now whether you would like a Zionist to be in your group."

I don't know where I got the guts from to say this, but at any rate nothing was said, except that Mr. Mocatta -- who I think



had inherited the title of duke in Spain --

Q: Is that the same name as <sup>Mercator</sup>~~Mercator~~ projection in geography?

Perlzweig: No. No, the geographer is M.E.R.C.A.T.C.R.

It dates from that time, but it's M.C.C.A.T.T.A.

I mean this was a very fine man. I think that once described him as an angel with a checkbook.

At any rate he turned to me and said, "Oh, you are very young, you'll grow out of all this."

Well, this of course annoyed me, but I went away and said nothing, and went to think about it.

In due course the document turned up, a very Victorian document in copper plate on paper that looked like parchment, telling me that I had been appointed to this fellowship. I didn't take it. And this made a great impact on one member of the congregation, who in his day was very famous, who was also a founder of the more radical congregation called the liberal Jewish synagogue. That was Claude Montefiore (1859-1939).

Q: The son of Moses (Sir Moses Haim Montefiore) ?

Perlzweig: No, a nephew or great-nephew. At any rate he was a man of quite extraordinary qualities and gifts. He was a very handsome man. The painter Watts, who was once famous in England,

painted his portrait, which was shown at the Royal Academy.

He was a pupil of Jarrett at Oxford. Jarrett was one of the great gurus of his day.

He delivered the Hibbert Lectures at Oxford, which were a great thing. He was also a very wealthy man. His name was Claude Goldsmid Montefiore, and the Goldsmid family were very wealthy, and he had inherited an estate from them, and generally had all the appearances of the kind of man who would go in for gambling or hang about at the stage doors of theaters or anything like that, but he was anything but that -- he was a great scholar, he was a deeply religious man, a man of the highest integrity, who actually practiced -- and for this I had a deal of evidence, and I saw it myself -- the old Jewish precept, which is pushed by people like Maimonides, that you should give charity, but anonymously, so that you don't shame the recipient.

Anyhow he thought it was very remarkable that anybody should make a material sacrifice for a conviction, and he insisted that I should not be allowed to disappear.

Now he was a rather cynical man, but it was quite clear that the world then, as the world now, contained a lot of people who thought of material goods rather more than of their convictions. I didn't. I thought everybody did the right thing also.

At any rate the liberal synagogue wanted a minister, and he pressed them not to let me go. What is remarkable about it is that convinced as I was about Zionism he was equally convinced

about the evil of it. He was probably in his day the leading anti-Zionist -- the leading intellectual anti-Zionist -- anywhere in the world, and he represented the consensus which prevailed in the liberal synagogue and indeed in a great many quarters.

There could be no doubt as to where I stood, because where I stood was not my private expression of belief, but what I did in public, where the Balfour Declaration was promulgated on the 2nd of November 1917, big meetings were held to celebrate the occasion, and at some of these meetings -- and some of them were very big meetings, I was one of the speakers, representing what was called Zionist youth. This was quite public.

So nobody had any doubt about it -- I was committed in my soul and publicly. On the other hand, Montefiore was, as I've said, a man of the opposite point of view.

I mention it to show you that there are decent people in the world however much one may read in the newspapers about politicians who have taken bribes. Apparently there is a great spate of such stories now appearing.

Well, I think I ought to leave this for the moment -- my entry into the liberal synagogue.

Q: I have one question, and that is, if this is the correct impression, why was the liberal Jewish group in England. . . was it dominated by Sephardic people?

Perlzweig: No, the reform was. . .

The majority at that time were of Sephardic descent. It may be interesting to recall the case of Isaac D'Israeli (1766-1846), the father of Benjamin Disraeli, Lord Beaconsfield, who was Prime Minister (to Queen Victoria).

Isaac D'Israeli was what they would call a man of letters, who collected information about writers and so on,--I've got one of his books here which is very rare, by Isaac D'Israeli, -- who had been elected to be warden of the Spanish and Portuguese congregation, the Sephardic synagogue, and he didn't want to do it. He thought it was a bore, he thought that the services were conducted in a rather disheveled way without dignity, and so they fined him, which apparently at that time they had the right to do, to which his answer was to leave the synagogue altogether.

His answer was to be an agnostic, and to bring up his children as more or less nothing. I think his son Benjamin did get some Hebrew instruction, but not very much, but then of course he was baptized when he was 13 in a church in                      called St. Andrew's.

These people used to go out because they thought it was backward.

Now in the case of the reform synagogue there was a group of ~~tham~~ very eminent people who got together and said it was hopeless, we'd better start a new synagogue, and while we are about it we will cut out all the nonsense.

So they reduced it to the bare bones, and instead of observing two days for a festival they observed one day, and instead of observing all the minutiae of Talmudic and rabbinic prescriptions they stuck to what was in the Bible. They kept the Sabbath, but on the other hand they didn't overdo it. And this was the origin of the reform synagogue.

I think myself that they got their idea from the nonconformist Christians with whom they consorted, who returned to the Bible.

I remember there used to be a sect -- perhaps there still is -- called primitive Methodists. That meant that they went back the Biblical record and discarded the tradition which had grown up in connection with Catholicism, or even the Church of England.

So they did/<sup>what</sup> in a sense ~~what~~ the Reformation was supposed to do -- return to the Biblical sources.

There is a professor at Hebrew Union College who wrote an article in one of their publications to whom, if I hadn't been so indolent I would have written, who says he conjectures that a Karaite Jew was in London at the time, but he provides no proof. I think that has nothing to do with it.

The people about whom I am speaking, who were extremely enlightened people, who were the tail end of the enlightenment in Europe, were the people who together with <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ nonconformists founded the University of London because their friends and relatives were not permitted to go to Oxford or Cambridge unless they were prepared to take a Christian oath.

So they had very close associations with the nonconformists who suffered the same disabilities. I think it was about 1830 or thereabouts.

The liberal synagogue was not dominated by the Sephardim as the reform synagogue was. I don't think the reform synagogue is dominated now by the Sephardim. The Rabbi, Hugo Green, is an American who is a survivor of Auschwitz, which is not the aristocratic background that they used to have -- it's an entirely different thing.

The liberal synagogue was dominated by Montefiore, who was a Sephardi in origin and was brought up in the reform synagogue, but the rest of them were not. It was a mixture of all kinds.

Anyhow, I've made these points and I ought to stop for a minute and take notice of the fact at least that a war was going on during this time, up to 1918, about which I have said nothing, which meant a great deal to my way of life.

In the first place, strange as it may sound, I was technically an enemy alien.

Q: You described that.

Perlzweig: I was born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, ~~and~~ if that conferred a nationality. I don't know that it did -- I never had a passport. I came to England in the halcyon days, when you traveled over Europe without a passport.

I was told to register, which I did. I remember it was only 1914, and on the 4th of August 1914 I was still a boy at school, and I remember the policeman said to me, what are you, and I said a student. He said, "Ah, a student of language

You see, it struck him as being that an Austrian should be able to speak English. There must have been something special about him.

Well, a committee was set up, because I was in the same position as hundreds of others if not thousands, in order to certify that certain people were not Austrians or Hungarians but Poles or Czechs, or whatever their nationality might be, whom the war was supposed to liberate.

Q: And they hadn't yet drawn the Versailles borders.

Perlzweig: No, I am now talking about 1914.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: The Versailles borders were in 1919 or thereabouts.

Q: Yes, in June 1919.

Perlzweig : So there was a Polish committee set up, and I went to work for it at the time, and I got a green paper with my picture

And this I expressed at a meeting held at University College, where the others who were sitting at the high table conducting the meeting were Dora Black -- who was afterwards Dora (Mrs. Bertrand) Russell -- and John Drinkwater, the poet (1882-1937).

A day or two afterwards one of my fellow students came up to me and said, "Look, I want to talk to you. My father is a colonel, in the Intelligence and he said they were very worried about this meeting."

All that the meeting said was that the slaughter had gone on long enough, explore the possibilities of peace. There was nothing subversive about it.

He said, "If I were you I'd lay off."

Well, I didn't particularly lay off, but nothing happened to me, and I want to repeat -- I was technically an enemy alien.

That is one side of England which is sometimes overlooked.

~~XX~~

Q: The lack of witch hunts.

Perlzweig: The lack of witch hunts. The last witch hunt in England was Titus Oates (1649-1705) during the reign of Charles II, when they were witch hunting Catholics, and he was obviously a scoundrel. There were no witch hunts. I'll give you a lot of examples before I finish.

The other doubtful thing which might have led to trouble was that I decided that it was time to change the establishment, and



that I would join the Labor Party.

You must remember that the universities had an importance in politics then that they don't have now. They were represented in Parliament. London University had a member who was voted for by the graduates; Oxford had two; Cambridge had two, the English universities had three, the Scottish universities had two, and so on.

The idea apparently was at that stage that this was a chance of appointing people to Parliament who were there because of their eminence and not because of their place in their particular party. I think the origin was obviously feudal.

I refer to it only to show you that there was a serious side to the political side.

So I decided that there should be a branch at the University College. I thought with all these societies, nothing on politics?

So I went to a large notice board that was there and put up a notice which was headed UNIVERSITY COLLEGE SOCIALIST SOCIETY, President, Professor Sidney Webb; Secretary, Emil Perlzweig, the truth being that these were the only two members that we had.  
(laughter)

Now University College. University of London Socialist Society, because <sup>Webb</sup> ~~xx~~ was a professor at the London School of Economics.

The next time I passed by I saw that the notice had been taken down, and I was summoned to the study of the Provost, Sir Gregory Foster, a man of great Victorian dignity who wore

a morning coat -- you know, black -- and when I opened the door I saw this very large room, and he tells me that the secretary of the college -- who was a man called Dr. Seaton -- had given him this notice.

I should mention that Seaton was a man whose mind and ideas were concentrated on the Middle Ages, and he wrote <sup>about</sup> the lives of the forgotten saints of the Middle Ages. That was the cast of his mind, so you can understand that the fact that I put up a notice about a socialist society, and with Sidney Webb as the head of it, didn't please him.

Then Sir Gregory turned his back on me and he looked into the fireplace, and he said, with his back to me, "I want to ask you one question, and I hope you'll answer it truthfully."

I said, "What is that, sir?"

He said, "Were you put up to this by Lenin and Trotsky?"

Now that sounds incredible, but this was Lenin and Trotsky at the time. ~~He~~

I said, "No. The president is a professor at the University."

Well, I didn't proceed with it not because of what Sir Gregory Foster had said, but because there weren't any members.

But I did proceed with the London University Labor Party, which leads to a long history of involvement with labor, where I was the chairman, and where the secretary was a man who died about a year ago called Stephen Hayden-Guest.

Anyhow I was talking about the war, and I got off that. I just wanted to mention the fact that in spite of the war, and in spite of my being technically an enemy alien, I went about and did my ordinary business without interference, and the efforts that I made to my joining the O.T.C. or other things to help with the war effort were consistently rebuffed on the ground that I was an enemy alien. The thing when you look at it closely was stupid, because I was having all the advantages of not having to serve in the Army, and being a rather precious male in a university deprived of males.

The first thing that I remember in the war was when the Zeppelins came over, and I remember the occasion very well. We lived in a street in Finsbury Park -- Blackstock Road -- which was about a quarter of a mile from the underground station -- the Finsbury Park station -- and I remember that when the alarm went that the Zeps were over I seized my mother and rushed to the street down to the station in order to go underground, which was then the place where you went, both then and in the Second World War, because some of the stations

There was no panic, but the Zeppelin didn't appear. It had apparently dropped a bomb not very far away which damaged a pub.

But the second Zeppelin that came over -- or the second one that I was aware of -- I shall never forget, because ~~it~~ left an indelible impression. We were sitting in the front room, the window was covered, it was evidently. . . -- I've forgotten what the technical word is -- a blackout.

All of a sudden through the curtains , through the blinds, the whole room was suddenly lit up, red, and we who were sitting in the room -- my father and myself -- rushed out into the street to see what it was. And there in the distance, in the north of London, we saw the embers of a Zeppelin floating down.

Q: It had been struck by antiaircraft?

Perlzweig: No, antiaircraft in those days was nonexistent. It was struck by. . . -- I am trying to think of the name, because I used to know it for years -- a lieutenant, who was in an airplane and fired an incendiary bullet.

Q: Into the bag?

Perlzweig: Into the bag, and it went up in flames, and the flames were such that although this must have been 20 miles from where we were it lit up the room which was covered, and you could stand there for 20 minutes while these enormous embers of what was left of the things were floating down.

The street was full of people, and there was my father, a clergyman who couldn't hurt a fly, cheering at the discomfiture of the enemy who was trying to bomb us.

That's the only other thing I remember about the war.

Q: The defense at that time were barrage balloons, weren't they?

Perlzweig: No, that was in the Second World War.

Q: Oh, no barrage balloons in World War One?

Perlzweig: Not that I remember.

Q: I see.

Perlzweig: I mean this was very primitive as these things go. There was the Zeppelin, an airplane which was only the beginning of this development.

Q: And they couldn't go that far.

Perlzweig: They couldn't go that far and carry that weight. There were other planes that went up to tackle the Zeppelins, but they apparently didn't know how to do it, until it happened I think almost by accident that this fellow fired his bullet into the envelope of the Zeppelin and it went up in flames. The man became a public hero overnight, and this stopped the Zeppelins. They didn't come any more. And he was made a V.C. -- Victoria Cross -- which is the highest military decoration for valor. . .

Q: Under fire.

Perlzweig: Valor beyond what was needed. There wasn't any great

valor involved in this, but nevertheless it was universally applauded.

There was difficulty a little bit about rationing, but not too much.

The real horror of the First World War was not the civilian population -- not in England, the civilian populations were harmed on the Continent a great deal, but not in England -- it was in the trenches in Flanders, where a whole generation was wiped out. One of the things that I remember very well is ~~the~~ ~~disappearance of~~ all the obituary notices which I had to write as editor of my school magazine.

Q: Of your classmates.

Perlzweig: Yes, and some of them very brilliant people -- poets and others. It was really a terrifying experience, that part of it.

I still remember these boys, you see, some of them. One of them was Waller -- I remember his name -- who had written very beautiful poetry, but who went with the others into the Army and fell. Large numbers of them fell.

The most famous of them -- which was also something that I heard a great deal about in the war -- was Rupert Brooke (1887-1915).

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: Because I used to go to poetry readings on top of all



(Prince Georgi Yevgenyevich Lvov, 1861-1925) and -- what was the name of the man who succeeded him? (Alexander) Kerensky (1881-1970).

There was a great feeling in London at the time that this was the changing of the face of Europe, that the democracy which would grow up in Russia would change the relationship of nations and get rid of this terribly corrupt and brutal czardom which ~~had~~ had oppressed so many people. And they founded this club taking it to be a marking point in the history of Europe.

You can gather the nature of the club when I tell you that the first president was Ramsay MacDonald (1866-1937). The second president was Sidney Webb, and the third president was H.G. Wells (1866-1946).

Q: Oh!

Perlzweig: The fee membership was two pounds a year when I could join it. A pound was worth much more than it is now, but still it was worth comparatively little.

We had a house in what is now Chinatown in London at No. 4 Gerard Street -- you see, I remember the number -- and the flower of English intellect used to gather there. It was very simple. The people who were there were not only the leading writers of the time, but people like the Huxleys, and I remember people who have since been famous actors, like Elsa Lanchester and the man that she was with, I've forgotten his name.

Q: Charles Laughton?



Perlzweig: Laughton. They were frequently there. It had everybody --

Well, to talk of my own friends, on the one hand Professor Morris Ginzburg, who was a professor of sociology at London University, and who was of Lithuanian origin, and on the other hand the Honorable Lily Montague (born 1873) who was the daughter of an English millionaire and very prominent, and one of the leaders of the reform synagogue.

But you had these people of all possible shades of the left.

I remember the club that I used to go to very attractive people, people you wanted to talk to, and you might sit down and <sup>have</sup> ~~have~~ lunch for half<sup>a</sup> crown, which was two shillings and sixpence, ~~xxxxxxx~~ really half a dollar, roughly speaking. And next to you you would see H.G. Wells having lunch for half<sup>a</sup> crown.

I used to go to it a great deal, and I had another encounter which I will tell you about which was strange when you think of me as an enemy alien at the time.

I can't unfortunately recall the name of the man who started a society in the club, which was called the Society for the Study of Republican Institutions, but it's easy to ascertain. He was then, curiously enough, a colonel in the British Army. He wore the uniform of a colonel -- the war was on -- but it was a labor battalion, or something of that sort. He had risen to fame because he was an Australian of Irish origin who had fought in the Boer Army against Britain the Boer War, and he was condemned

to death for treason. But England being England, and he being harmless, they commuted the sentence, and the penalty was set aside, and he entered the mainstream of English life and he became a member of Parliament. So when I knew him there he represented some constituency up in Lancashire where there were a lot of Irish immigrants. He was a Labor member, and he had been made a colonel in a labor regiment.

He was rather colorful, as you can imagine from what I told you, and a fiery person, and he thought that the aristocracy was corrupting England, or corrupting all the people who came in touch with it, and he gathered around him a number of very eminent men who agreed with him.

One was John Galsworthy (1867-1933), the writer, H.G. Wells, and to some extent -- not very passionately -- George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), who didn't attend any of the meetings, but the others did.

All these men refused to accept knighthoods. That was the one practical result of the existence of this organization. It says that accepting a title like that was to be corrupting, and so they didn't accept it.

Now here was I. I joined this group, and we discussed the things and the questions which came up, and whether we should write a letter to the Times, which was a great  
(static in tape, tape skips)  
the English equivalent of having a demonstration, objecting to it.

And in fact letters were written by I think Bernard Shaw and John Galsworthy objecting to that whole process of giving titles to people.

Then we got a message. The Attorney General at the time I am speaking of was a man called F.E. Smith. He was the man who invented the phrase "glittering prizes" which has become a phrase now used on television. There is somebody -- a writer -- ~~in~~ in England who uses

That is to say you go up the ladder and you become attorney general, and then you become Lord Chief Justice, when you become Viceroy of India.

This F.E. who was Attorney General, and it was his business to ferret out or to receive reports about people who were conducting treasonous activities, and he had a report about this society.

I remember now as I am speaking -- it comes back to my mind -- that the chairman was an English actor called Hornemann, who was a very famous actor in his time.

So we got the message, which was given to this man whose name I can't remember, but which is on the edge of my mind somewhere --

Q: We'll catch it later.

F.E.

Perlzweig: . . . that ~~F.E.~~ Smith, who was the Attorney General, had spoken to a man called ~~Tim~~ Healy in the House of Commons,

an Irish nationalist MP. Tim Healy was afterwards famous as something very important in Ireland which I have forgotten -- President or Prime Minister or what (\*) --

But he said to Tim Healy, "You are an Irishman, and this lunatic is an Irishman, or at any rate he is an Australian Irishman. Go and tell him to drop this silly business, otherwise we'll have to move, because it's against the law."

There was a war on, remember.

Well, again this is a typical English way of doing it -- you don't witch hunt people in public, you tell them in private, "Stop doing this silly business, and you won't compel us to move against you." (?)

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: So the society dissolved. But remember for the third time I was doing something which could properly have been described as improper for an enemy alien.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: I thought I'd mention that, especially the 1917 Club,

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(\*) Tim (Timothy Michael) Healy (1855-1931) was Governor General of the Irish Free State and later MP (transcriber's note).

which played a big part. In fact somewhere I've got a book about it which somebody wrote years later, but I can't find it. I know I can't find it because my granddaughter, who wrote a quite different thesis for her licence in Geneva wanted to write about that because she'd heard of it.

Q: But she couldn't find the reference.

Perlzweig: I couldn't find it. I told her what I could, but there is a great deal more to be said, and that was about the eminent people connected with -- people who were great musicians, great actors, especially actors for some reason or other, and great scholars, and people of the most varied character who were going to come together.

I remember one other important meeting there, because the thing spawned a great many meetings. There were a lot of small groups,--like this group for the study of Republican institutions -- small groups of people in the club who took up other causes, such as making sure that people were not incarcerated in lunatic asylums unjustly, that kind of thing.

I remember very well the day when Ramsay MacDonald returned, when he had been summoned to the Palace -- *to* form the first Labor Government, which was a turning point in English history because before that there hadn't been any such thing, it was an alternation between Liberal and Conservative and nothing else -- when he had been summoned to Buckingham

Palace, the place he went to when he left Buckingham Palace was the 1917 Club.

Q: Oh really?

Perlzweig: And we sat in the big room there on the floor -- the place was packed -- while he was reporting as much as he could, which wasn't very much, of what happened when he was asked to form the first Labor Government in England.

So that's the 1917 Club.

Now I could go on from there if you want me to.

Q: I think we've almost reached the end (of the tape)

Perlzweig: What I want to go on to next is my entry in to the liberal synagogue, which is the beginning of my public activity which sparked a great deal of public controversy in England, and also gave me a platform, and it also led to my going to Cambridge. Perhaps I can get that in.

I went to Cambridge in order to get another degree -- I already had a degree from London -- in what was rather pretentiously called Oriental Languages. The only Oriental languages which I studied were Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac, because that was the minimum you could do to obtain what was called in Cambridge the Oriental

~~Tripas~~<sup>+tripos</sup>. The word "~~tripass~~" evidently comes from the seat on which you sat which had three legs for the original examination, sometimes

Now how do I go to Cambridge?

What happened was that Montefiore insisted that I should somehow be drawn into the liberal synagogue. He thought that the fact that I had refused this fellowship was a sign of the fact that what I said I believed I really believed, and that I wasn't going to take any risks about entering into some engagement which was not fully understood in all of its implications.

Well, the result of that was -- and also the result of the intervention of a lady who was called Mrs. Loewe, curiously the daughter-in-law of the man for whom the fellowship was named --

Q: And which you had refused?

(end of tape)

End of Interview 2 w/ Dr. Maurice Perlzweig by Peter Jessup,  
28 April 1991.

DK

Interviewee: Dr. Maurice Perlzweig

Interviewer: Peter Jessup

Place: NYC

Interview No. 3 - May 26th 1981

Q: Good afternoon, Dr. Perlzweig. Here we are again, on a very warm day on the West Side of Manhattan. It's nice to be here.

Dr./ Perlzweig: Well, I think I ought to resume from where I left off, if I can be sure to remember it.

I had I think finally achieved my first ambition, which was to graduate with a degree from University College.

I then had two problems to confront.

When I graduated, as I have recorded, I received what was called the Rothschild Prize. That was a prize which was given not so much or not only for what had been achieved but in the hope of stimulating or encouraging research, historical research.

So one of my first problems was to decide what research I was going to do, and what research I could usefully undertake in view of my interests and the education I'd received.



The second problem which was coming to all human beings was how to earn a living, and that I will come to when I have dealt with this first problem of the research.

The first proposal for research which was made to me was by a professor at the University whose lectures I had attended, but whom I had come to know almost intimately. His name was Norman H. Baines, and his speciality was the history of the Byzantine Empire, in which I must confess I did not have a very deep interest.

What he suggested to me was that I should undertake an appraisal of the significance of the Maccabees, which was a subject in which he was interested.

Now the Maccabees have an important place -- or at any rate it is now generally believed that they have an important place -- in the history of Judaism, because it is said to be by many authors the first occasion in the history of mankind when a people rose up in rebellion against an attempt to suppress their religion and their culture.

There was a man at the time in Syria -- which seems to be a ~~place~~ country doomed to all kinds of strange manifestations of human ambition -- who was called either Epimones, which meant a madman, or who called himself Epiphanes, which meant a hero. For the moment his real name escapes me, although he is very well known, but no doubt it will come back to me.

He wanted to homogenize his empire, which included Palestine. That meant that he wanted the Jewish religion to be abolished and replaced by some kind of Hellenistic cult which would also strengthen his political situation.

What happened was that the people in the villages led by the Maccabees -- and I won't go into the whole story because it's easily available, and it's described very vividly in the first book of Maccabees, which is a book of the Apocrypha -- rose up in their <sup>at</sup>wr~~o~~th and like a typical national redemption movement succeeded in gaining a military victory, which was a remarkable thing historically, because they were untrained people, they were civilians, and they did this out of a deep feeling of commitment.

I think there are many cases in recent years where this kind of commitment meant more than military expertise.

They succeeded in recapturing the temple and in cleansing it, and they established a festival which we now observe and which is sometimes confused quite wrongly with Christmas, which is called Hannukah. The word Hannukah means dedication, and the festival commemorates the ~~rededication~~ rededication of the temple. It does not commemorate the military victory.

It's one of the extraordinary things about Jewish history and Jewish ritual that it never commemorates a military victory. There are festivals that commemorate the reception of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, that commemorate the exodus from Egypt, that even commemorate the passage of the Jews through

the wilderness on their way to the Holy Land. There are fasts that commemorate disasters, but there is not a single festival for example that commemorates the occupation or the conquest of Palestine by Joshua.

Now you can draw all kinds of conclusions from that, but the point I want to make at this stage is that Hannukah is not the commemoration of a military victory though it more or less coincided with it. As a matter of fact I believe I am right in saying that war continued after the temple had been cleansed.

Now whether this is of major significance in the history of mankind is a subject on which there will no doubt be differences of opinion, but it seemed to me as I looked at the problem that on the surface one could say that the victory of the Maccabees, the reestablishment of the temple and the cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem meant also historically speaking that there would be one day a religion called Christianity and a religion called Islam.

If that was a correct appraisal -- and I looked at it only superficially -- it would have meant that it would be worthwhile to go into the question of the historical significance of the Maccabees.

I had one great argument in favor of it, and that was Baines.

One characteristic about him, as I remember, was his extraordinary devotion to the welfare of the students with whom he dealt. Although I didn't go to any of his lectures, he turned

up at innumerable meetings of student societies, he was willing to advertise the University College magazine which I edited, and he was willing to do anything that might make the life of student happier and more fruitful. In this respect he was not a typical university professor, who more often than not regards the discharge of his functions as a lecturer or tutor to be the be-all and end-all of his mission. And that was one of the reasons why I wanted to stick to Baines. He was a bachelor who looked after his aging mother in a London suburb, and it was as though he wanted a family, and he found a family in the students.

I've got one of his books here which is called Israel Among the Nations, and I notice that he dedicated it "To My Students, Past and Present," which is very typical of him.

Nevertheless there was one argument against my doing that, and that was that it would have been inevitable that I should have had to acquire two rather exotic languages, or what seemed to me at that time exotic.

One was Hellenistic Greek -- post-classical Greek, that is -- and the other was Aramaic, and I thought that was too much for me, so I abandoned ~~xx~~ this project.

I am bound to add that there is an ironic footnote to this, -- one of these exotic languages I was subsequently compelled to acquire, Aramaic, at Cambridge.

I then turned to another aspect of historic human life.

I had become involved ~~only~~ in the periphery of a movement then to secure justice for the Armenians.

It will be recalled that in 1915 the Turks slaughtered, deliberately and systematically, about a million and a half of Armenians. It was a horrifying event, but the war was on, and when a war is on governments are not inclined to worry about refugees.

As the war drew to a close and was nearly finished, this movement came into existence to secure justice for the Armenians, and I joined it.

I contributed to a pamphlet or brochure ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ which they published at the time which I think I must have somewhere among my masses of papers, in which I wrote on behalf of the young Zionist movement, of which I was then the leader, a very strong statement that the governments were morally obliged to restore the rights of the Armenians and to give them the opportunity of developing a national life.

There were a great many of the leading people in England contributing to this pamphlet. I remember one of them, Israel Zangwill (1864-1926), who made the observation that if he had to yield the crown of martyrdom to any people away from the Jews, the only applicants as it were -- the only candidates whom he would consider would be the Armenians.

I attended a meeting which they held in a very large hall -- I think it was the Royal Albert Hall but I am not sure about that --and the chief speaker was Lord Robert Cecil.

He repeated what was then becoming an almost universal refrain in what might be called the political class,

"When we settle after the war, when we sign the peace treaty, what we shall aim at will be Judea for the Jews, Armenia for the Armenians, and Arabia for the Arabs."

I heard that repeatedly.

The only people who were really disappointed were the Armenians. The Arabs not only had Arabia, but they were given about 20 states, and the Jews, who would have been deprived of their promises, refused to allow it, and by their own efforts -- the methods used were subject to great controversy -- by their own efforts they succeeded. The Armenians were left out in the cold.

That seed which was then sown we are gathering the bitter fruits of in this year 1981.

The question I was interested in was, how can a people like the Turks ever bring themselves to the point of laying waste whole areas of their own country in order to destroy the people whom they regard as their enemies?

Now I found very great difficulty in answering that question, There is an easy answer, and that is the Christian theological answer of original sin, but I couldn't accept original sin, I didn't find it plausible. First of all the theology behind it seemed to me to be very doubtful, -- the whole of the myth about the Garden of Eden and all the rest of it which you know,

and which incidentally plays no part in Judaism. This Jewish myth has left no mark on the Jewish religion, and it's very rarely referred to. I couldn't accept it because I ~~know~~ found it difficult to believe that a child at its birth was sinful and had to be saved from the consequences of it. It seemed to me, to put it mildly, implausible, so I had put that aside,

I began to get an inkling of the answer when I got involved -- not very deeply, but just on the periphery again, in the question of Irish nationalism.

I remember listening to three. . .

I remember attending three meetings. Two of them were lectures. This was towards the end of the war, or shortly afterwards.

The first was a lecture which was called the Foundation Address at the University College by Sir Edward Carson -- afterwards Lord Carson -- who was known at the time as the Uncrowned King of Ulster, and he delivered the kind of address that you might expect to hear today from a representative of the Ulster Loyalists, as they are called. They start to go back to the Catholic character of the Irish State with its prohibitions of divorce and all the other things that we have.

That was an extremely eloquent address.

One of the strange things about Carson which is overlooked is that he wasn't an Ulster man. He was brought up in Dublin, in the South, and he was educated at Trinity College in Dublin,

and became a member of the Irish Bar and a King's or Queen's counsel -- a Queen's counsel it must have been -- at the time of Queen Victoria, in the Irish Bar, and subsequently went over to England.

He represented in the House of Commons Trinity College. In those days the universities were represented in the House of Commons. Subsequently he obtained a seat

Northern Ireland.

But that was part of the strangeness of the situation -- that a man who came from the South, like many distinguished Irishmen who made their mark on the British Commonwealth -- Dean Swift, Edmund Burke, and George Bernard Shaw for that matter -- were all Protestants or of Protestant background.

Well, I got nothing out of Carson.

From the next speech I did hope for more, which was also a foundation address, this delivered by George Bernard Shaw, and certainly <sup>I got</sup> one of the things that I expected, which was the unexpected.

I don't recall that he put forward any clear solution for the Irish problem, but he did say that he thought what the Irish needed above all was a

Now this was a very sensible remark, but it was quite impracticable. It was like his proposal for which he left money that the English alphabet should be altered to be made more rational, which is very sensible, but there are forces in the world that make sensible things impossible.



So I got nothing out of Shaw. I must mention in this connection that I once wrote to him a couple of years later asking him to contribute to a magazine which I was about to begin, to be called The New Judea, and I asked him to write on what he thought was the solution of what in those days was called the Jewish problem. And he sent back a postcard -- which somewhere in my mess of stuff I <sup>have</sup> still got -- which said, "I wouldn't expect to ask you to write me an article on how to solve the Irish question, so you shouldn't expect me to write an article on how to solve the Jewish question."

But I did attend a meeting held at University College which was designed to promote a solution of the Irish problem on the lines that were subsequently followed, namely the partition of Ireland and the creation of an Irish Free State.

The principal speaker was a man named Sir John Simon, who had been a member of the Cabinet -- and I think was destined to be a member of the Cabinet -- who left an impression on me of complete blandness. He said as little as possible about concrete matters, and talked about the desirability of finding a solution and of giving the Irish an opportunity of living their national life.

What really electrified me at that meeting was a short speech made by a young Jesuit priest -- an Irish Jesuit priest -- who stood up, and after speaking for a very short period, ended with a single sentence, which he delivered in a ringing tenor voice that transformed the audience.

He said, "God gave Ireland to us and not to you."

They sound now very simple words. I can only say that that English middle class highbrow audience stood up on its feet and ROARED with applause.

And then I saw the real roots of the Irish question. It has nothing to do with rationalism or statesmanship. Both sides believe -- and honestly believe -- that what they are doing is the will of God. It is an extraordinary fact, but it is true. I let no one say to me that they don't believe it is merely a political device. If a man starves himself to death in Ireland, or -- let us take another example -- a Buddhist monk puts a light to himself in Vietnam, I am not going to believe that he doesn't believe in the causes which led him to do these things.

So we come down to this -- that the root of the matter is what in theology is called fundamentalism.

Now of course this is a difficult problem, because one easy way out is to take the rationalist view and say the whole business about God is pure imagination and therefore forget about it, say there is no God, which is what Nietzsche was supposed to have said and about which a lot of people were talking at the time to which I am referring.

But it's not as easy as that.

I am an old preacher. I must have delivered hundreds of sermons. One way in which I differ from almost all preachers, Jews or Christians, is that I never wrote out the sermons.

Christian Science and Mormonism -- you find this idea that men are instructed directly by God as to what to do about everyday things to be deeply rooted.

I decided that I would try and probe this thing further. I realized that it wasn't political science alone -- that it involved theology, psychology and all kinds of things, and that it was extremely complicated.

But as far as I was concerned I didn't want to produce a philosophy which eliminated God, but I wanted God to be regarded in a rational way.

In this of course I was in the line of Jewish tradition. All kinds of Jews have written about God, like Maimonides (1135-1204), who regarded Aristotle as being of the same rank as Moses, and was largely governed by Aristotelianism. Or if you take a man about whom there is much controversy -- Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677)-- you've got a man who was prepared to use rationalism about everything. It could be a text of the Bible, or cosmology or anything you like. But not about God -- that was accepted, there is such a Being, and he doesn't argue about Him.

So I wasn't being a stranger to Judaism, nor in rejecting original sin did I reject the I think sensible Jewish psychology that runs through the Talmud and other writers, namely that every man is governed by what are called two inclinations, Yetzer Ha-Ra and Yetzer Ha-Tov -- the evil inclination and the good inclination -- and that the human personality is a battlefield

on which these inclinations fight each other. And you try to get what strength you can by prayer, by studying, ~~and~~ by relying in other words on God.

Well, so what did I do with it? The answer, I am sorry to say, is nothing in the way of writing, but it left a permanent mark on me, so much so that I cannot believe in or accept seriously anybody's claim that on a particular political issue or on a particular practical matter he has received God's guidance. I can no more accept that.

When a member of the Gush Emunin says to me that God gave him the right to settle near Nablus, then I can accept it if an Irishman tells me that God gave him the right to live where his ancestors had defeated James II.

So I can't say that all this thinking was in vain. I have never questioned it since. I do not accept, either in politics or religion, fundamentalism.

Now I come down to my second problem, which was how to earn a living.

Well, I had a small job, as I have already recounted, namely working for Leland Stanford University. It was very tiny, and it didn't involved very much effort. And I also had this scholarship, which was supposed to be for the purpose of keeping me going.

I then by accident -- and this is where I begin to get <sup>more</sup> involved in Zionism and Israel -- got a job as English secretary to the

Education Department of the Jewish Agency in London -- the Jewish Agency for Palestine.

They had very high hopes in those days about what they were going to do in Israel. It was going to be an ideal country, and the notion was that Jewish teaching would be given a name, a place -- I've forgotten the Shakespearean expression -- a habitation and a name, and among other things education was to be the most progressive and the most diverse.

Two men were appointed to run this department in London, in an office which had been set up by Weitzmann in Piccadilly, with the help of the famous Marks and Spencer partners, Israel Sieff and (Sir) Simon Marks.

The two men were Dr. S. Bergman, <sup>a</sup> Czech, who afterwards became professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University, and a man called Solomon Ginzburg, which sounds enough of a ~~xxxx~~ commonplace name in Jewish life; but he was the son of Ahad Ha-Am, the famous essayist (1856-1927).

Q: Oh!

Perlzweig: Now neither of them knew English well. They were learning English, and they came to the rather obvious idea that they had better have somebody in the office who knew the English language, because one of the purposes of the office was to consult with British educational officers -- governmental and nongovernmental--

and put out reports and so on.

Well, I worked with these men, and I must say I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Q: What were their native languages?

Perlzweig: Well, they both spoke German quite fluently, and I spoke to them in German, or at least my version of German, which wasn't very good. Bergman spoke German, which most of the Jews in Czechoslovakia spoke. ~~Hexxxxxxxx~~ It used to be a joke of the time -- in Czechoslovakia there are Czechs and there are Slovaks, and the other Czechoslovakians are Jews, which was largely true ~~xx~~ except that most of them spoke German, but most of them also spoke Czech.

So he spoke German, I think most fluently, and also Czech.

Ginsburg spoke Hebrew. He had lived in Palestine, and he told me ~~xx~~ one of my first encounters with the marriage problem in Israel. He was married to a lady whom you may have come across, called Rosa Ginsburg, who was the first woman to become a lawyer in Palestine, and was also a leader of the Zionist movement and so on. But she had divorced her previous husband. Solomon Ginsburg was a Cohen -- he was descended from the priestly tribe -- and therefore under Jewish law, and under Biblical law for that matter he wasn't entitled to marry a divorced woman. A Cohen has to marry a virgin.

So I asked him how he did it. He said, "Very simple. Things are very relaxed in Palestine. I didn't go to a rabbi in a village where I was known/ I went to the next one, who knew nothing about me, and he didn't ask any questions, and he married us." And once a marriage takes place it's quite valid in Jewish law.

So I realized that there was a sort of

Q:

Perlzweig: Yes, in Palestine. I can only think of a Hebrew word, Hefka. It was unorganized, and it depended on the village that you went to and what the rabbi thought or did. It wasn't anything like what it is now, which -- when I come to it I'll talk about it -- is due to the regulations promulgated by my own friend, Norman Bentwich, when he was Attorney General of Palestine, who ~~wanted~~ thought it was wrong for everything to depend upon what the local rabbi said and that there should be a court of appeal, which meant uniformity, you see.

Well, anyhow I worked with these two people, and I remember having some very interesting conversations and learning what I would never have suspected about English education.

I was at a high school, as it is called in this country, where I learned everything -- apparently everything -- from Anglo-Saxon, or Old English, to trigonometry. I've got the

certificate somewhere, and I look at it with awe, because most of these things I know nothing about. I couldn't tell you about trigonometry if my life depended on it. I do remember some Anglo-Saxon or Old English. I can even repeat the first verse of Genesis in the translation that King Alfred is supposed to have made of the Bible, and I might mention as a sort of footnote that the book out of which I learned it was an American book. There apparently was nothing in England which could serve the purpose. It was a book written by a man called I think A.S. Cook, ~~xxx~~ and meant for undergraduates, although we used it in the high school.

So I thought ~~ixknow~~. I had a good education, but I very soon found out after I talked to Bergman and Ginzburg that I hadn't even begun, because they wanted textbooks on subjects which I thought hardly existed, or at least they didn't exist for me.

One was a history of world civilization, and the other one was a textbook on biology. I had done all sorts of scientific subjects as a schoolboy: chemistry, qualitative analysis, quantitative analysis, although I am not sure I know what these things mean now. But I did physics and I never liked physics. I did sound and light and all kinds of scientific things, but one thing I never did -- and that no one ever suggested I ought to do -- was biology.

So I went to the British Board of Education to inquire whether they could suggest textbooks that we could translate into Hebrew



Jewish  
for/schools in Palestine, and the man looked at me in astonishment.

I found a man sitting in an armchair with his feet on his desk reading the Daily Mail. Evidently bureaucracy in those days was not as hard pressed as it apparently is now. And he said he'd never heard of textbooks for these subjects, he didn't know that any existed. He thought I'd better try either the United States or France.

But then he went on to say, "You see, we don't really know in this office what is happening in the educational field. We are a free country. Every local authority decides on its own curriculum and its own timetable."

And he took out his watch and he said, "It's 11 o'clock. If you were in the French Ministry of Education somebody would be able to tell you exactly what they are doing in every classroom in France. I can't tell you what's happening in any classroom anywhere."

And that's all I got from the British Board of Education. I admit it was very rudimentary, and there was no ministry in those days, and it was all done locally.

I saw a good many other people, one of whom was Sir Cyril Burt, whom I mention because in recent years he has been the subject of very bitter polemics on both sides of the Atlantic because he came to certain psychological conclusions on the basis of data which he was supposed to have invented.

Q:

Perlzweig: So I didn't get very much from him. I must tell you that I did succeed in learning more about the problems of education than I would have ever suspected before. Well, that was one thing which I did.

I got also another job, and I am not sure whether I was paid for it or not, but I would have paid in order to do this job, because it was so intimately connected with the Zionist movement and its leadership. The year was 1920, and ~~xx~~<sup>there</sup> was held in London a meeting of very great historical significance of the leaders of the Zionist movement from all over the world.

It was the first international meeting at which for example Mr. Justice (Louis D.) Brandeis appeared, and he dominated the meeting. He was looked up to with reverence verging on awe because of the position he held in the United States, and because of his manner -- his judicial manner.

The meeting was the beginning of a conflict between him -- Brandeis -- and Weitzmann, which finally ended in Brandeis leaving the Zionist movement years later in the United States -- leaving the organized Zionist movement, not the ~~xxga~~ underground Zionist movement, which he continued to support faithfully. He was deeply committed to it.

I won't go into the conflict which developed because although it played a great part in subsequent years.

But <sup>at</sup> this meeting, the constitutional validity of which was very much in doubt -- it was done shortly after the war, in 1920, when communications were difficult and when any attempt to keep to the exact words of the constitution of the Zionist Congress was virtually impossible -- they really got the top men from various countries to come together, and one of the things that occurred to them was that it wouldn't be a bad idea to have somebody who <sup>could</sup> put out the communiqués and everything else in English. So I was brought in and I became eventually the English secretary of this historic meeting.

And I met two men who were world famous in their time every day at lunchtime -- we went out together to a tearoom such as still exist in London, then much more frequently encountered than now, Lyons or ABC or Express Dairy, where you got more or less simple meals.

These two men with whom I went out and showed about that part of London were two men who were known in every Jewish household.

One was Max Nordam (1849-1923) -- Dr. Max Nordau -- who was a European best seller and a leader of the avant-garde of Jewish thought. He wrote a book called Conventional Lies of Our Civilization which I have, and which gives you an idea of the way in which his mind ran. One chapter is called "The Conventional Lie of Religion" for example, where he says that everything is degenerate -- I mean the art and so on -- and a good deal of it was, there was a lot of truth in what he said. This was the time when the Edwardian Age was appearing.

The other man was A.S. Yahuda -- Professor (Abraham Shalom Ezekiel ) Yahuda -- who had a rich and **variegated** background.

Nordau was a physician by trade. That wasn't his real name, it was a name he adopted for writing, and I've forgotten what his real name was, something like Südfeld. He was the son of an Orthodox rabbi in Budapest, and he came to what was the intellectual capital of Europe, Paris, and lived there and wrote in French, and became a very famous, as I say, best seller until the war came, and then he suddenly discovered -- as others discovered elsewhere -- to his surprise that he was an enemy alien; he was born in Hungary, and France was not a country then, or even now, which naturalized people easily. So he was thrown out, and he went to Madrid, and he lived in Madrid.

It is usually supposed that the Jewish community in Madrid is of very recent origin. Whereas in its present form that's true enough, it existed under King Alfonso, and King Alfonso -- the last King of Spain -- not only had relations with it but did his best to encourage it, a fact which isn't very well known, and that was one of the reasons why Professor A.S. Yahuda became the professor of Jewish studies and Hebrew at the University of Madrid.

Yahuda was born in Jerusalem in the days when it was quite a rarity to be born in Jerusalem, a long time ago, and he went to Germany and he studied at Breslau at the Jewish seminary there and elsewhere, and got his degrees in German universities.

He became a scholar in Middle Eastern studies, and particularly in Egyptology, on which he had many startling theories which are now very largely rejected. He was also deeply interested in the development of the Hebrew language, which to him born in Jerusalem was the native mother tongue.

Well, when Nordau was thrown out of Paris as an enemy alien and went to Madrid, one of the people whom he met and teamed up with was Yahuda, which is why they sat together at this meeting and why they came out together with me, because I was the person who showed them where to go to have their lunch, you see.

This contact with these two great men -- one of whom at least, Nordau, is a hero in Israel folklore now -- in the contact with these two great men one of the things that surprised me is how <sup>un-Orthodox</sup> ~~orthodox~~ they were. Nordau's lunch consisted on occasion of ham, which was bad enough from the Orthodox point of view, washed down with milk, which made the thing terrible (laughter), and I couldn't believe my eyes, because I had been brought up in a very Orthodox way, and very skillfully brought up let us say, that is not pressed to do it, but just allowed to take it in from the atmosphere. And even when I ceased to observe Orthodoxy -- for example I stopped, as we say in Anglo-Jewish, laying twilling, putting on the phylacteries when I was about 16 and I became more and more agnostic as I got older, which is almost normal at that age, at least in that generation -- nevertheless there were some things I never did and haven't done until this day, such as eating ham.

I remember once when one of my fellow students invited me to play tennis one morning in South London during some holiday and she gave sandwiches, and the next day I thought one of the sandwiches might have had ham, I was ill for a whole day trying to recover from it. So it was pretty deeply implanted in me, and when I saw Nordau eating ham and drinking milk, and seeing Yahuda, who was a great Hebrew scholar and a man who had done a great deal to develop the study of the ancient Middle East, I was very much surprised by it. But <sup>at any rate</sup> ~~generally~~ I had the experience and I benefited greatly from it.

And I must say that at that stage -- from about 1920 onward -- for many years to come you might say that my chief interest in life, again by the side of which everything went to the wall, was the development of this ideal state of Israel.

All right. At the same time as I was doing these things -- leading the young Zionist movement and acting as English bridge with the non-Jewish world for various branches of <sup>the</sup> Jewish agencies -- I was still thinking of entering the ministry, and I come now to another phase of my life which eventually would turn out to be decisive, which was my attempt to find a way of entering the ministry without accepting Orthodox doctrine.

The first lecture I ever delivered -- and I used to speak quite often at boys' clubs and places like that and at Zionist meetings -- the first lecture I ever delivered was called "Continuity and Change."

I wanted to put together these two apparently contradictory things, which as you will see later is really what my conception of Judaism is about.

Well, I went and had a look at the Theological Seminary which existed in London, called Jews College, and I came away with the deep conviction that it was no place for me.

One of the things that upset me -- although there is no reason why I should have been upset -- was that they had two sinks in their kitchen, one for what is called milk and the other for meat. I thought if I go to that extent that the water coming out of the tap isn't enough to cleanse the utensils that they clean, this is really going too far.

And I must say that they were very strict in their Orthodoxy. The principal was a Hungarian called Dr. (Adolf) Buechler (1867-1939), who had been trained in the Hungarian Theological Seminary in Budapest, and he was a rigorous man in all that he did. For example, impossible as it may sound to say so, he learned the English language in a simple way. He bought a dictionary and learned it word for word from beginning to end. Well, this for me obviously was, with my indolent mannerisms, not a place to go to. So temporarily I gave it up.

But then my father went to speak to a remarkable man who at that time was the chief minister of the reform synagogue. His name was Morris Joseph (1848-1930), and he was in many ways a man of great courage and great integrity, and was known in the

Jewish community for his skill as a preacher and for his mastery of the English language.

The story used to be told that a Jewish minister in Glasgow one Sabbath morning went into the pulpit and said to his congregation, "I know that Mr. Morris Joseph is a much better preacher than I am, and therefore I think I am doing you a favor if instead of delivering a sermon I were to read one of his," which apparently went down with great acceptability.

But at any rate this was Morris Joseph, and he (my father) arranged for me to see Morris Joseph.

I remember the interview now as though it had happened yesterday. I never entered an atmosphere so heavy with religion as the atmosphere I found in his study. If somebody had told me that God was present and listening, I wouldn't have ~~had~~<sup>had</sup> the courage to deny it.

He told me about the responsibility of the ministry; he told me of what it meant, of the great privilege of being able to enter the lives of other people in a way which is denied to other professions. In general he succeeded in thoroughly frightening me, but at the same time inspiring me.

He asked me whether I would consider accepting a fellowship which his synagogue had, which enabled a student ~~as~~<sup>who was</sup> a graduate of a university to go either to Germany or to America to an appropriate seminary in order to prepare for the ministry.



I said I thought it was an idea which I ought to consider -- I didn't want to rush -- but I was very insistent that I should stick to my own convictions and not sell myself to any ideology.

Well, he was in a position to say that he hadn't done that because as a matter of fact he had been an Orthodox minister and was inhibited from preaching by the chief rabbi -- that was the word that was used, inhibited -- because of one of his beliefs. His belief was -- you would no doubt think it's quite a harmless belief -- that there is no chance that Judaism would ever re-establish the offering of sacrifices in a temple.

But that was apparently so shocking at the time that he was felt to be unfit to lead an Orthodox congregation, and he probably was, and so as there happened to be a vacancy at the reform synagogue they snapped him up, and he was their minister, and he repeated this to me. He said, "Look, I didn't give up my beliefs. I preached what was rank heresy from an Orthodox ~~pulpit~~ pulpit, and therefore I would be the last to suggest that you should give up yours."

In due course I was summoned to meet the people in whose gift this fellowship lay.

There were four or five men whom I met at one of their homes, and I must say I have no complaint at all of the treatment that they gave me. They were all men of aristocratic lineage and upbringing, and they acted like that. They bore historic Spanish names,--their ancestors at some times held high offices -- and they

acted throughout in a civilized and gentlemanly way. I must say I look back on them with great satisfaction.

They put to me the usual questions, and I told them what I thought, and they made it quite clear that they were seriously thinking of me as a candidate.

But then I felt a certain unease which arose out of this same fear of ~~being~~ selling myself to an ideology that I did not accept, and I said to them, "Gentlemen, I ought to tell you that in addition to what we have been discussing I am a very keen Zionist," and something like a chill fell on the proceedings.

Nothing happened, until the chairman, for whom I had conceived a great admiration, turned to me and said, "You are very young, you will grow out of all that."

Now if you tried hard, you couldn't have said anything to a man in the early 20's that could have infuriated him quite so much, and I made my mind up that if that was the view that they had of something in which I believed in very deeply, I was not a suitable man to be one of their ministers.

They explained to me, I must tell you, that they were not bound to me, they were only bound to give me the fellowship if they gave me it, but whether they accepted me as one of their ministers they would have to decide in due course.

But nevertheless that was the decision I came to.

I must tell you they did ~~give me~~ nevertheless award me the fellowship, and somewhere I have the paper which informs me of it.

It is a handwritten certificate on a sort of parchment, written in the way in which in those days they used to write such documents, and I really think that I could have some fun with that if I produced it now.

But after I got it I wrote them a letter in which I thanked them for their kindness in giving me this fellowship, but pointing out that whether they were bound to accept me as a minister or not, the fact was that there was only one reform synagogue in London at the time, there was a smaller one in Manchester, and there was a precarious one in Bradford, and that therefore I had no choice. It was either to be one of their ministers in due course, or not at all. And so I thought the honest thing to do was to thank them, but to say that I couldn't accept the fellowship.

Now there was one person who was deeply impressed by this act of mine, and who played a great part in my life. His name was Claude G. Montefiore (1859-1939). He was in very many ways a great man. He was a great Biblical scholar, and I have a whole row of books which he published, including the Synoptic Gospels which in its day had a great deal of influence, one of the earliest Jewish writers to write about the New Testament.

He was a pupil of a teacher at Oxford -- I am trying to think of his name -- whose pupils included Asquith and a great many of the other leading people of the time, and he was much influenced by this teacher, but at any rate he represented the best in Oxford scholarship.

He was also a very wealthy man. The G in his name -- Claude

G. Montefiore -- was Goldsmid. He had inherited money from the Goldsmid family, and also from the Montefiore family. One of his uncles was Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885), who was Lord Mayor of London very early in the century, and who was a confidant of Queen Victoria. He was a handsome man, and the great painter (George Frederic) Watts painted his picture for the joy of it.

He was universally recognized as a leading scholar. He delivered the Hibbert Lectures at Oxford, which were regarded as a recognition of scholarly achievement, and so on. He had everything which a man needed in order to have a pleasant and easy life. Of course others in his position, who had his money and his status, would have been the sort who would have gone to gambling clubs or hung around the stage doors of theaters.

But he didn't. He wanted to be of all things a rabbi, and he went to Germany and was trained by some great scholars, including one about whom we used to speak a great deal, a scholar called Leopold Zunz (1794-1886) who wrote a textbook which in my day was still used at the University of Oxford, even though it hadn't been translated into English.

He was really a great man, but he was also, as far as I was concerned, distinguished by the fact that he was not only not a Zionist, but he was an anti-Zionist, and he regarded Zionism as a menace both to his life as an English gentleman -- an English country gentleman -- and to Judaism as a religion, because he

foresaw, or thought he foresaw, Judaism developing more and more into an ethnic identity and a nationalistic creed and giving up religion, which was the thing that he was really interested in.

Q: You are talking about Claude Montefiore?

Perlzweig: About Claude Montefiore. Well, he was a man who was impressed by my refusal of the fellowship, and he said to the then minister of the liberal synagogue, which had begun a few years earlier -- and who was an American imported for the purpose, Israel Mattuck (1883-1954) -- he said, "We can't let that fellow go." It wasn't much of a compliment to the Anglo-Jewish ministry or rabbinate that he thought it was so remarkable that a man wouldn't sell himself, or wouldn't give up ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxx~~ What was really materially of very great importance to an impoverished student, who wouldn't give up a gift of that kind if he thought that his beliefs would be jeopardized, or that his convictions would be jeopardized, but <sup>he</sup> thought this was a very rare thing, and he hammered away until it was decided that I should become the minister of the liberal synagogue.

There was another person who had the same view. The fellowship was called the Löwy -- L.O.W.Y., with two little dots on the O, an umlaut. His daughter-in-law, who was also the mother-in-law of Victor Gollancz, was one of my admirers. I used to go down and speak to an institution called the Jewish Reading Room in the

East End. On Friday nights they would have a speaker who would deliver a lecture on some Jewish subject -- I mean a subject of Jewish interest -- and would then subject himself to questioning.

I did that quite often. She was one of the people who ran this Jewish Reading Room, which was a philanthropic institution, and she was very pleased with the way in which I handled the crowds that came there, and so she spoke to Montefiore, quite independently of Montefiore's own feelings, about the desirability of drawing me into the liberal Jewish ministry.

So that was the background of it. That was why when the opportunity came I was approached by the liberal synagogue, and the opportunity came when a handful people in North London decided that they wanted a liberal synagogue.

The difficulty about that was that they had no money, they only represented what might be called the middle class -- intellectuals, schoolteachers and people of that kind, especially schoolteachers, who were impatient of the kind of Judaism they got in the conventional synagogue, and they wanted a modernized and liberalized forum.

But there was no assurance that there would be enough backup to make a synagogue viable.

Anyhow the result of long conversations was that they established a committee, and the liberal synagogue -- the main liberal synagogue, which was quite a wealthy organization -- undertook to support them, and undertook to find a minister for them.

Where were they to find a minister? Well, they finally decided that they would ask me to be the minister. This was quite irregular, because first of all I had no qualifications. I had had what I think I can describe as a good Jewish education. I knew enough Hebrew to be able to conduct a service and to read the Hebrew passages, and what was more important to read the Torah. There is a portion of the Torah which is read at every Sabbath service. It is written in the ancient way, that is to say without vowels. It's very difficult for people who learn modern languages where no distinction is made between the vowels and the consonants, which are all printed in a normal way -- it's very difficult for them to understand this, but the vocalization of Hebrew came much later, and it was done by putting little dots and signs above letters in the text, and these signs stood for certain melodies or motives which were sung.

Well, I knew that, because my father had written a great deal about that, but I didn't actually ever sing a text or chanted a text. I read it. But I was able to read it, in spite of the fact that it's difficult to read without vowels, and in the Torah -- in the scroll which is kept in the synagogue -- it is written by hand on parchment, without the vowels. I knew enough Hebrew that if I prepared it I was able to read it, so I could get away with it.

But it was. . . I can use to describe it a Hebrew or Yiddish word which has become American --chutzpah.

I mean here was I, whose only qualification was that he had obtained a degree at University College in the history of political science; well, I had other qualifications -- I had acted in plays, and therefore could pretend to a presence in public, and I had spoken a great deal, and so I was fluent, and I was able to read. I'd read a lot of Jewish history, some of it written by Jews, some of it written by non-Jews. There was one in particular, which is forgotten now, by Dean Milman, the Dean of St. Paul's (Dean Henry Hart Milman, 1791-1868), called History of the Jews (1830), which I read with great appreciation. Not that I liked his treatment of the Scriptures -- he was rationalistic, he was like some <sup>other</sup> ~~sorts~~ people who would like to rationalize everything, and I don't want to rationalize it, I want the original ancient stuff, and I don't mind if the author of the first chapter of Genesis uses the cosmology of his time. It doesn't worry me in the least bit, so long as he says the right things about the creation of the world and the creation of man and and so on. I don't mind what he says in the language of his cosmology. I would be more astonished if he had written the first chapter of Genesis in a way to make it compatible with Einstein's theory. That would have seemed to me implausible.

Anyhow I didn't have the qualifications at all. But Mattuck, who was the one that spoke to me, said to me, "Montefiore is most anxious to bring you, and this will be a test. What we



would like to do would be to engage your services for. . ."--  
I am not sure whether it was three or six months -- " for six  
months. If the congregation will last that time, then we will  
reconsider your situation."

Well, I undertook to do it. I had this quality which is  
calledchutzpah, I had youth, and I had fluency, and there were  
a number of people who were anxious that I should undertake it.  
They didn't care who the rabbi was, so long as they had a rabbi.

So I was a sort of student rabbi.

Well, we had the first service in the public library of

and to our intense astonishment not only was it packed, but the  
line of people down the stairs to this comparatively small room  
stretched into the next street.

The excitement of having a heretical service in what was then  
a very Orthodox neighborhood was such that out of sheer curiosity  
a lot of people came (? voice trails off)

There was nearly an accident then. I read the service, the  
sermon was preached by Mattuck, and when he was making the  
announcements he treated the thing as though  
(static in tape)

"We have distributed forms of application for membership. If you feel that you would like to become a member you take one and send it back to us," upon which a voice called out in shocked terms, "SHABBATH -- to take this thing and write on the Sabbath?"

So he added quickly, "Take it away with you, fill it up and send it to us at the address," and so forth.

So we nearly suffered a catastrophe there, and we had an idea of what was likely to happen.

All right, that was the first service.

The second the following Saturday. First of all we had the service on Saturday afternoon. The reason for that was that first of all many of the people went to work, and secondly, there were services at the Orthodox synagogues on Saturday mornings, and we invented the idea of having it on Saturday afternoon.

It wasn't as successful as we thought because we had another competitor, and that was the football matches that took place on Saturday afternoon. However, we had it on Saturday afternoon.

The next Saturday afternoon we took a larger hall at the library, and -- it may have been a mistake -- we advertised it in The Jewish Chronicle, and apologized to the people who had been turned away.

The result was that a vast crowd turned out the next day. I read the service again, and the preacher was Montefiore.

This time the opposition wasn't content to shout out a single word. Montefiore began to preach, and he preached in his most Irenic way, as Stephen Wise used to say. He said Judaism teaches this, and Judaism teaches that. He didn't say liberal Judaism, he didn't touch any controversial subject, but he stuck to Judaism, and as he was saying it for the third time-- "Judaism does so and so,"--a man stood up in the audience and he said, "Judaism?? You call this Judaism?? You should be ashamed of yourself." And the whole place went up in pandemonium, and for about 10 or 20 minutes the service ceased, until our students that we had there persuaded the interruptor to go out, and we finished the service, and in order to make sure that everyone who wanted to say something would have an opportunity, I announced in agreement with Montefiore that there would be a meeting on the Wednesday night of the following week at which anybody could come and ask any questions. We ~~wanted~~ thought that in that way we would help to overcome the opposition.

One of the results of this was that <sup>at</sup> the next service members of my family insisted that I should have police protection because when I had announced that next Wednesday at such-and-such a date date we will have this meeting, there came from the audience the cry YES, IF YOU ARE STILL ALIVE ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL THE SO AND SO.

Well, there was a policeman outside, and there was a policeman inside, and there was no disturbance that time when I preached my sermon.

The only thing that I remember about it which seemed to be significant in a larger context was that a man came up to me and he said, "Why did So-and-so read the Haftalah?"

The Haftalah is the prophetic reading. You read the Torah to begin with, and then you read the Haftalah.

On the two previous occasions the preacher read the prophetic reading. I arranged it that way in order that he could take the measure of the hall. He hadn't spoken there before, and it would be useful to him to know whether his voice carried and so on.

But on the third occasion, when I preached myself and I knew the hall, I thought ~~another~~<sup>a</sup> layman ought to have the chance to read it.

And this fellow who spoke to me after the service was quite indignant. He said, "Why did you have So-and-so read the Haftalah?"

I said, "Because I thought he ought to have a chance to read it." And he said, "But it's always been the preacher."

I said, "What do you mean, always?"

He said, "We've ALWAYS had the preacher read it twice. That's what tradition means."

That impressed itself on me.

Anyhow we went on for the six months. We had ups and downs, we had all sorts of difficulties. Attempts were made to prevent people from coming to the services. There was one rabbi who absolutely banned it, I mean he said it was a sin to go to it,

and people should stay away.

On the day that he did that, the next Saturday, we had a large crowd who wanted to see what this terrible thing was.

But at the end of the six months it was firmly established, and I was called in. They said, "Look, this thing is difficult for us, but the people want it."

I must say that there were only a handful that really adhered to it -- I mean maybe 40 or 50. We started in the beginning, when the service was interrupted. with 12, which I used to tell the people that it had the precedent of the 12 Apostles.

But at any rate there were about 40 or 50, so it really was taking a risk, but it was growing steadily, and it was obvious that if the effort weren't as strong as it was -- the social effort -- to

You had this kind of thing, People who wouldn't come and play cards with members of the congregation, not because they were themselves religious -- they were quite irreligious -- but because it was denounced by the rabbis.

Anyhow they decided that the thing was now permanent, and therefore I must be permanent and I must be properly trained and so on.

And I entered into what must have been a very unusual arrangement. This took me up into the middle of 1923, I think, 60 years ago -- they had their 60th anniversary this year. I don't know which year. . . er. . . but it was 60 years ago,

and it was agreed that I should conduct the High Holy Days services, and then that I would. . .

Well, they put together this arrangement, which as I say was very unusual.

One of the members of the congregation was Israel Abrahams (1858-1925), who was the leader in Rabbinic at Cambridge University, and they decided since there was no liberal or reform seminary in England at the time that they would ~~xxxx~~ construct a kind of rudimentary seminary at Cambridge, that I would go to Cambridge, take a degree in what the University called Oriental languages -- which is a rather pompous way of saying in my case Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac -- and then in addition to that Israel Abrahams and some others would together instruct me in what was called rabbinics, ~~xxxxxx~~ that is to say the Talmud, the Mishna, the Gemara, and the Midrash, and later Hebrew literature.

In order that this should be done, not only would he teach me separately from the University, but they brought in a number of other people. One was a man called Herbert Loewy (1882-1940), who occupied a similar position in Oxford, and who came to Cambridge once a week in order to give me instruction in later Hebrew, codes and so forth.

So I had a double function to do at Cambridge, namely to take the degree at the University -- which was going to be difficult because this wasn't going to be history where my imagination or ingenuity would help, I would have to learn

these infernal languages, and that meant hard work -- and on top of that I would study the Talmud and other Hebrew rabbinical literature with ~~Abx~~ Abrahams and Loewy and others who were brought in from time to time.

The arrangement was to be that I would be made a member of the staff of the liberal synagogue, that they would pay the fees of the University and of these men who were to teach me, but that as a member of the staff I would get a certain stipend, which would enable me to live, but that in return for all this -- and in return for acquiring the degree I needed and the additional qualification of being instructed in rabbinics -- I was to go to London from Cambridge every weekend, read the service in the liberal synagogue on Saturday morning, take the service and preach Saturday afternoon in North London, and on Sunday morning teach in the religion school of the liberal synagogue, and then go back to Cambridge, so that as it were I earned my way through, although I must say it was a generous way of earning it because in addition to this stipend -- I don't remember what it was, but of course it would be quite meaningless in current terms, I think it was about 300 pounds a year, but it was enough to live on and to pay certain fees at Cambridge --

So for three years during the time I was at the University doing all this, every weekend I went to London. Now that sounds hard, and it was hard, because I used to leave on a train which left at 6 o'clock in the morning on Saturday, which was the hardest

thing I did. But on the other hand it was not as hard as it sounds because even though it may be new to Americans a term in Cambridge lasts eight weeks, that is to say I was at Cambridge during the year for 24 weeks out of the 52, which is remarkable.

It's a way of life there. It means that a great many of the undergraduates don't do any work during the term at all, but do it during their very long vacations.

I had some difficulty in explaining all this ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ to the landlady in whose <sup>house</sup> ~~xxxx~~ I lived. These were licensed places. You lived either in a college --

Before I got into college I had the extraordinary privilege of living in rooms where John Milton was supposed to have inhabited. I lived on New Square, which was not very far from the college in a house which was more or less supervised by the University, and in order to leave Cambridge you needed what was known as an exeat, a permission. It was like in the Soviet Union, where you need an exit permit to get out. Of course there were many people who didn't take any notice of it, but if they were caught it was going to be very difficult. In any case it was known whether they were in at night.

But I had an exeat. All this was arranged by Israel Abrahams, who was a member of the college to which I went, and that's why I was admitted there, Christ College at Cambridge, which was in its way a great college, known for the liberalism of the theology



which some of its greater alumni practices. There was a great Scottish theologian ~~xxxxxx~~ who was a leader of the literary criticism of the Bible -- Robertson -- who was thrown out of the Scottish Church and was immediately admitted as a fellow in Christ College.

It was also the college in which two extraordinary men studied. One was John Milton and the other was Charles Darwin, and it was extraordinary that the last gasp, as it were, of the medieval world which you find in Paradise Lost, was succeeded by a man, Charles Darwin, who was in a way the father of many modern ideologies.

At any rate it was a great college, and I had another great advantage, and that was that I was in some way singular myself, that is to say a man who was a lecturer in Aramaic at the University treated me as though I were something rare and precious because I was the only pupil he had. Aramaic was not then, and probably isn't now -- but it certainly wasn't then -- a favorite subject of study.

The man under whom I spent most of the time at Cambridge, and to whom I shall always be very much beholden, was a man by the name of Norman MacLane. He was then the tutor of the college. He ultimately became the master of the college, but he was the tutor then, which meant that he was the man who taught me a language which I never dreamt in my wildest dreams that I would

learn, called Syriac. He was said to be the greatest authority on Syriac and Syriac literature, which fortunately for me is not a very large literature -- it covered only a small shelf.

He wrote the article on Syriac literature for the Britannica in its eleventh edition, I think, which was in the days ~~on~~ which the Britannica was regarded as a very great source of knowledge, and as a matter of fact out of his regard for me he gave me the original manuscript which <sup>he</sup> had written for this article, and I've got it somewhere.

This shows you the age I am talking about -- a man gives me a manuscript written in his own hand, not typed. In fact in the college in those days, as far as I could ascertain, there was only one typewriter in the whole college, and that was in his rooms, and there was only one telephone. No, there were two telephones -- one in the master's lodge, and one in his rooms.

Q: That was about 1923?

Perlzweig: That's right, 1921-1923, yes. I think I went down in 1921 and I went down in 1923, because I was so precious that they did anything they could to facilitate my going there. They didn't have many people doing what I was doing. It was a very unusual thing.

So I went up,--and I was what was called a man --  
I went up in December. . .er. . .

No, I went up in January of the term after what I was talking about to you took place. I went up in the second term instead of going up in the first term of the year, and I began to study these languages.

Now I had an extraordinary series of people to deal with.

First of all there was MacLane. I did with MacLane two things. One was Syriac. Now Syriac is a Semitic language. I didn't regard it, much to my surprise, as a hard language, not as hard or as difficult as Hebrew, which is a very difficult language for a European -- I am talking about Biblical Hebrew.

Syriac was much easier. I mean just to show you part of the difference, to indicate to you how the psychology of languages is different, in Hebrew you don't say Jacob's book -- Jacob, apostrophe, s, book -- you say the book of, which is one word, Jacob.

Now to get into that frame of mind, to turn the genitive in what is called a construct state is very difficult.

On the other hand in Syriac, although there isn't a genitive in our sense, they say the word of, the word of exists, and it happens to be for some peculiar reason the same as in French, de. So there you say the book of Jacob.

So I didn't have these hangups that I had in Hebrew. Hebrew was, strange as it may sound, much more difficult for me.

The only trouble about Syriac is that it has three alphabets. On the other hand the alphabets are identical in content but

different in form. So I had to learn three alphabets, but it was only one alphabet, really, with little wiggles -- little bit different one from the other -- and I did extremely well in Syriac.

One of the people there told one of my friends that I got in the final examination at the University something in the 90's -- 95 percent -- in Syriac. I don't know what I got in Hebrew, but it wasn't as high. However, I did get a Hebrew prize. This was a prize which I deserved even less than the one I got in University College.

I came in to Norman MacLane one day to do either Syriac or the Hebrew that he used to do with me. There was so much Hebrew -- the literature of the Hebrew that they dealt with was the Bible, which was a considerable amount of Hebrew.

He said to me, "Sit down, sit down." So I sat down and he said, "Well, my boy, you got the Bishop Gell Prize."

I didn't know what the Bishop Gell Prize was. I had never heard of it. This is one of the charms of Cambridge or of Oxford -- all sorts of things lying about that suddenly appear, which have been lying there for hundreds of years and you don't know about them.

What was the Bishop Gell Prize? He was a Bishop of about the 17th century, after the Shakspearean age, while the memory of the authorized version was still fresh, and when Hebrew was regarded as a classical language, not as a Middle Eastern language. They

knew at that time nothing about modern Hebrew, they didn't recognize it.

Anyhow let me get back to the Gell Prize, because it's really quite extraordinary.

I went out and went into the college library, and I persuaded the librarian to look up the original documents which had established the Bishop Gell Prize, and it turned out that this prize was to be given to the undergraduate preparing for holy orders who had done best in Hebrew at the end of a certain year.

So I knew I wasn't eligible. My orders were not holy.

So I went back to see him, and he said, "Well, what is it, my boy?"

I said, "Sir, I have been to the library and I have found out that I am not eligible for the prize which was meant for people preparing for holy orders, which I unfortunately am not."

He had on the table a tumbler and a jug. The jug was full of yellow liquid, which was not tea, and he poured it into the tumbler, and he took up the tumbler and he downed the whole of the tumbler, and something like a glow went over his face. Remember I am talking about a Scotsman who was so Scotch that after 50 or 60 years in Cambridge he still spoke Scotch.

He looks at me and he says, "The good Bishop has been dead for 300 years. He's been in Heaven a long time, and he knows better now."

Q (laughs).

Perlzweig: Now this actually happened.

I was given the prize because there was no one else to give it to! I mean I assume that it was recognized that I had a fair knowledge of Hebrew otherwise they wouldn't have given it to me, but I learned that the way to get a prize was to have no competitors, and to have people who are giving the prize who are liberals who won't recognize these ancient obstacles that were put up by bigoted men.

I'll never forget that as long as I live.

Well, anyhow, in Christ College -- before I come to the University itself -- I played a very active part.

One of the societies they had you will not be surprised to learn was called the John Milton Society, and in due course I was elected president of it. It ~~was~~<sup>is</sup> largely a debating society, but it always remembers John Milton.

(end of tape)

End of Interview 3 w/ Dr. Maurice Perlzweig by Peter Jessup,  
May 26th 1981.

DK

Interviewee: Dr. Maurice Perlzweig

Interviewer: Peter Jessup

Place: New York City

Interview No. 4 - June 4th 1981

Q: Good afternoon, Dr. Perlzweig. Here we are for our fourth interview. Fourth or fifth?

Dr. Perlzweig: I think it's the fourth.

Q: It's nice to be here on this warm New York afternoon. This is Peter Jessup.

Dr. Perlzweig: I think the last time I was talking about Claude Montefiore, (1859-1939) and I would like to add just one other consideration, which made his support of my entry into the ministry so unusual.

He not only believed in freedom of speech, which I felt absolutely certain he would defend at any time when it was challenged

or threatened. But he would do so all the more because he disagreed with what he was defending the right to give utterance to.

Montefiore was not only a very distinguished scholar who had delivered what in England at anyrate were famous -- the Hibbert Lectures at Oxford, some time late in the 19th century, but he had written a number of very important works, one of which was also remarkable because it dealt with the New Testament, and Jewish scholars were not in the habit of writing commentaries on the New Testament. But one of his numerous books was called The Synoptic Gospels, and I encountered it in my journeys which I will come to later, and almost everywhere being studied by Christian clergymen, ~~xx~~ in Jamaica in the West Indies, or in Sydney in Australia.

But he was in the minds of many people distinguished because he was in a sense the world's leading anti-Zionist. I say leading anti-Zionist not because he indulged in a great deal of rhetoric about it, or joined anti-Zionist organizations, <sup>but</sup> because his anti-Zionism was founded on his conception of religion, and in this country -- the United States -- as well as anywhere else the anti-Zionists turned to him for intellectual and spiritual leadership. And yet he knew that my reason for not going into the West London Synagogue or in the reform synagogue at the time was that I was suspicious that they might put hindrances in my way in what I was doing in support of Zionism. Th~~at~~ made it,



according to his view, all the more a moral obligation on his part to see that I was not hindered while I was one of the rabbis of the synagogue of which he was the lay head and really the founder.

But I wasn't content with that. I knew that I would never have any real trouble with him, and that perception was absolutely born out also in the 18 years that I spent at the liberal synagogue.

My real fear was that the senior minister -- at that time the only minister -- who was an American, would import some of the bitterness of the struggle in this country between the Zionists and the anti-Zionists. He was Israel Mattuck (1883-1954), who was a graduate of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, and a , and was a very considerable scholar in his own right, and a very energetic man and really the leader of the congregation.

Montefiore -- I can't say that it was a weakness of his because I was the beneficiary -- always treated the clergy of the synagogue with the utmost respect and consideration, and therefore Mattuck, if he had any ideas about what was to be done in the synagogue -- how it should develop, how theology should develop -- had very largely a free hand.

So I went to see Mattuck to make sure that he knew what my views were, although by that time in the Anglo-Jewish community they were notorious -- I was one of the leaders of the Zionist movement, one of the local leaders of the Zionist movement in England, -- and also to make sure that he understood that I would

insist on what in America at that time was called the "free pulpit."

That phrase, which is very important -- or was very important in the religious life of reform Judaism in this country -- arose out of the controversy between Stephen Wise and Temple Emanu-el.

There was a point in the early part of the century when Wise, who was then the rabbi of the West Coast, was invited to become the senior rabbi of Temple Emanu-el. I think they were probably prepared to overlook some of what they thought were his rather bizarre views on social questions because of his eloquence and because of his personality.

There were negotiations, and the result was that Mr. Marshall -- I have forgotten his first name, but he was a very distinguished lawyer at the time, who was the principal lay leader of Temple Emanu-el -- insisted that they should see the sermons before they were delivered.

Q: Aha, and read them?

Perlzweig: Well, this was in reference to several problems.

First of all Zionism, but secondly also social questions. Wise at that period of his life was rather inclined to be on principle on the side of the strikers, if there was a strike, and these were very affluent gentlemen of the old school.

Q: You mean the board of Temple Emanu-el?

Perlzweig: Yes.

Q: Which was the richest and most conservative of the temples in New York?

Perlzweig: Well, first of all with one possible exception it's the largest temple in the world. The possible exception is in Budapest, where there is a very large and ornate temple which claims to be able to seat a few more.

Secondly, its rabbis have always played a very important part in the life of the community. One of them was Judah (Leon) Magnes (1877-1948), who was the first president of the Hebrew University. And there were others, distinguished for their eloquence or their scholarship or whatever it may be.

I don't think it's any exaggeration to say that Temple Emanu-el, at that time at any rate, was probably the most influential Jewish congregation anywhere in the world.

Well, they ended up by not agreeing, and they didn't even agree to disagree, because one result of the controversy was that Wise published a pamphlet in which he set out all the letters and all the arguments and denounced the attempt to circumscribe the right of the preacher to speak in accordance with his conscience, and the slogan of the "free pulpit" became then a very popular one and dominated a good deal of reform Judaism for years to come, sometimes with remarkable results, because things were said that

perhaps shouldn't have been said from a Jewish pulpit.

He decided then to establish what he called the Free Synagogue, the word "free" having various implications. One was that the pulpit was free in the sense that whoever spoke from it was not bound by any limitations other than the general limitation of being within the framework of Judaism, and secondly also that you couldn't buy a seat. First come, first served. There was no distinction. And thirdly, that you subscribed to the synagogue what you thought you could subscribe in accordance with your worth.

These principles made a very strong impression in this country. The Free Synagogue still exists, although it's probably not quite as free as it used to be, and it's called nowadays the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue.

Now Israel Mattuck had come from America, and he knew about this controversy, and when I put to him the question of what would happen to me if I said something from the pulpit into which there would be read a Zionist implication -- it wasn't my intention to use the pulpit as a political platform, but on the other hand I am what I am, and my convictions are bound to color everything I say -- his answer to me was direct and simple. He said, "You will have a free pulpit, because if you don't have it, then I might not have it, and therefore I will be your strongest supporter in seeing that you are free in what you say."

In those days he was very liberal in his political views.

Q: This is Mattuck?

Perlzweig: Mattuck, yes. He was very anti-Zionist, the offspring of a very Orthodox family from whom he took his anti-Zionism. In those days to be very Orthodox almost certainly meant to be anti-Zionist because the Zionists were trying to anticipate the Messiah, which was regarded as wrong. I am putting it rather crudely, but this was his background.

As far as his theology was concerned, I used to think to myself when I listened to him -- and I listened to him for many years -- that the difference between him and (Baruch) Spinoza (1632-1677) was so small that it would be difficult to define.

So he was very liberal, besides which he said to me, "Well, it depends on you."

I remember one thing he said, which is probably true, though it was never a danger in which I ran. He said, "A man who is a rabbi in a liberal synagogue or in any non-Orthodox synagogue has the chance of doing a great deal of work and a great deal of good, or if he is so inclined and indolent enough to do nothing at all and not to upset anybody. Whether you do one or the other will depend on you, and therefore if you are worried about the question of freedom there is no ground to be worried."

Now just as I was certain that Montefiore would back up my freedom, I was never quite sure about Mattuck, because he carried with him some of the animus in the conflict between the two schools of thought that he had acquired in America.

Anyhow I agreed to undertake this rather unusual arrangement, which meant that I would become a member of the staff of the liberal synagogue; not in any sense a minister or a rabbi, but a member of the staff, which meant that I would get a salary, and with that salary I would be given leave of absence during the week -- for the whole of the week except for the weekend -- in order to go to Cambridge to acquire the qualifications which were deemed to be necessary for the ministry of the synagogue, so that in a sense I worked my way through.

I was to go to Christ College in Cambridge -- there was a reason for that, which I will come to in a moment -- to do two things while I was there: take a degree in what they called in Cambridge Oriental Languages -- which meant in practice for me Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac -- and at the same time conduct studies in rabbinic theology -- the Talmud, the Midrash and so on -- under a group of scholars which they brought together for the purpose. So they created as it were a movable theological seminary.

The man in charge of all this was to be Dr. Israel Abrahams (1858-1925), who was associated with Christ College and was the reader in rabbinic at the University. That was the title of the post that he held. He also happened to be one of the founders and members of the liberal synagogue.

He was to be assisted in this task of creating a rabbi -- I don't know whether you would call it theological cloning or what -- by a man called Herbert Loewy (1882-1940), who was at Oxford,

and would come to Cambridge once a week in order to instruct me, and other people were brought in from time to time, so that at the end of three years I would have <sup>accumulated</sup> enough knowledge and qualifications to be able to fit in the rather exacting standards which Claude Montefiore had laid down.

Q: This was a rather unique approach to preparation, wasn't it?

Perlzweig: Absolutely unique. I wasn't the only one. My successor was trained in the same way, but now they have a theological college. The two parts of what is called progressive Judaism -- what are called in England the reform synagogue and the liberal synagogue -- have come together to create a seminary which is called the Leo Baeck College (Leo Baeck: 1874-1956). Leo Baeck was the leader of German Jewry during the Holocaust.

But it was absolutely unique. It was unique in several ways.

First of all, this ad hoc arrangement, and secondly, it was unique in the sense that I was the first liberal rabbi -- or non-Orthodox rabbi -- trained in England, and every now and again when I go to England to preach, the rabbi usually introduces me by saying, "This is the first man ever to have been trained to be a rabbi in a non-Orthodox Jewish community in England."

Well, it was a very hard job, because not only did I do this double education simultaneously, but I undertook to go to London for every Saturday and Sunday. What in fact I did was to leave

very early on Saturday morning -- at about 6 in the morning -- to take the train, and go to the liberal synagogue in St. John's Wood, where I helped to conduct the service and I took part in the service. Then I would go in the afternoon to North London, where I conducted the service and preached, and then on Sunday, the next day, I would go to what they called the religion school to give instruction, which I used to do at the big liberal synagogue on Sunday morning, and then go back, maybe go on Sunday afternoon to North London for a meeting, but then go back in the evening.

In order to do this, it was arranged with the College that I should get every week what was called an exeat, which is a kind of exit visa such as they give in the Soviet Union. If you are an undergraduate you are not supposed to leave Cambridge, unless it's the end of the term, without an exeat.

One of the things I remember is that . . .

Q: You were a graduate student though.

Perlzweig: No. This is one of the curious things about it. I was then a graduate of London University, but when I went to Cambridge, what I began to study was in no way connected with what I had studied at University College in London. I had done history and political science, whereas at Cambridge I did Oriental Languages, and one thing had in a sense nothing to do



with the other. I could under the rules, because of my London degree, have graduated in two years, but considering the amount of the area which I was supposed to cover, that would have been physically impossible.

So there I was, an undergraduate at Cambridge, and in the street I wore an undergraduate gown, and except that I had friends who were dons in various colleges who would invite me at their own high table when there was an occasion, I led the life and the existence of an undergraduate who attended classes, but hardly any lectures because there weren't enough people doing what I was doing to create the cannon fodder for a lecturer, so I was an undergraduate, and my status was that of an undergraduate.

I had two undergraduate existences, which again was rather unusual, and I took two B.A. degrees, one in London and one in Cambridge, quite separate.

From the point of view of being educated, it was probably much better than starting as a graduate student at Cambridge.

But one of the things that happened was the puzzlement of my landlady in the rooms where I was staying, which of course were licensed by the University.

It looked very bad -- going for the weekend and arriving on Sunday night just before midnight. I don't know whether I should mention this, but among the undergraduates the train I went on was colloquially known as "The Fornicator" which gives you an

idea of what must have passed through her mind.

So I carefully explained what it was all about, and she was extremely pleased, and she said to me proudly, "My husband is in the same train." That was the word that she used, and I thought for a moment, he must be an impecunious curate of a church whose wife went in for being a landlady in order to supplement his income, and then I said to her, "What church is he at?"

She said, "Holy Trinity. He is the gravedigger at Holy Trinity." (laughs) That was her conception of the same train.

Anyhow I think I ought to mention who the people were with whom I dealt for the degree, who were very great scholars.

I have moved about in the world a great deal, and I have never come near anything comparable, and I doubt whether it exists.

First of all there was the tutor of my college -- at Christ College -- whose name was NormanMacLane, and who was a Scotsman who still spoke with what they used to call Gothic accent of Edinburgh, and who still took every opportunity of informing his interlocutor, whoever he was, that the greatest, the most beautiful city in the world was Edinburgh. But he was a master of all the languages of the ancient Middle East.

Q: He was the man who got you the Bishop Gell Prize.

Perlzweig: That's right. I don't know whether I told that story to you.

Q: You did about the Bishop Gell Prize.

Perlzweig: On the tape?

Q: Yes, on the tape.

Perlzweig: Anyhow he was the man. This is the kind of man he was. If we were dealing with a passage, usually of the Scriptures, the meaning of which was obscure -- because it might have been altered by a scribe who had copied it, or because a word didn't occur anywhere else -- he would say quite casually, let's see what the Armenian says, or, let's see what the Ethiopic says, or, let's see what the Amharic says. And he would go over to the shelf and take down the book and consult it without any difficulty at all. I have never seen or encountered anybody with that facility.

He wrote the article on the Syriac literature for the Britannica in its great days -- the eleventh edition -- and one of the things he did for me was to give me the article that he had written in his own handwriting. I think there was a typewriter in his room -- I have the feeling, but I am not sure. In those days people used to write.

He was always very solicitous, and he did everything he could to help me, and I used occasionally to wonder why that was. It occurred to me that I was very precious in his sight because

he was the University reader in Aramaic, and I doubt whether he had any other pupil except me, and I in a sense justified his existence. Well, that was one man to whom I was very deeply indebted and who was extremely helpful to me in any way he could.

One of the things he did for me is that when the rooms in which Milton is supposed to have lived became vacant he made them available to me, which was a very great favor.

I don't know whether this tradition is correct or not, but at any rate it was believed.

He was one man to whom I owe a great deal.

Then there was another man whom I also greatly admired, but who was rather eccentric, ~~named~~ a professor of Hebrew -- there were several of them -- called Bevan.

His eccentricity took the form of bringing a small black kitten into the classroom. There I wasn't alone, because there were a number of others who were studying to be clergymen, and as Bevan used to put it it was always useful when you were reading a commentary on the Bible and there is a quotation in Hebrew in a footnote, that you should recognize that it is in Hebrew.

So the Hebrew wasn't very advanced, but it had a certain difficulty for me. Hebrew is treated in Cambridge -- or was treated, perhaps it has changed since then -- as a classical language. It exists in the Bible -- the Hebrew Bible -- and maybe one or two inscriptions which have been found. But beyond

that it's not recognized. It is as though in an English or an American school they taught Chaucerian English and regarded Shakespeare as newfangled and not be considered. . .

Now if it was a classical language, one of the things that you did in a classical language in England in those days was to write verse in that language. For example I have read that John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) acquired a great reputation at ~~Edon~~ <sup>Eton</sup> by the facility with which he wrote Greek verse.

Well, we were supposed to write Hebrew verse, which in a sense was a rather ~~xxx~~ ridiculous thing. The Hebrew verse which exists in the Hebrew Scripture is to be found in the Prophets and in the Psalms and so on, and consists of something called "divided parallelism." You say the thing one way in one line, and you say it in a different way in the next line.

It was quite amusing in its way, but it created difficulties for me, because when I produced my Hebrew verse I would occasionally use a Hebrew verb which didn't occur in the Bible, and I didn't know the difference, and that led to all sorts of arguments.

I could give you an example, but it means using Hebrew words which are very difficult to transcribe, and so on, so I won't. But at any rate I did produce a piece of verse in which I used a Hebrew word with which I was very familiar, and he said to me ~~xxx~~ when he got it, "What is this? Have you ever come across this?"

Q: What is the word?

Perlzweig: "Asherai." In the first line I said, "Simha lanu --  
it will be joy unto us."

In the next line, "Ashranu" which means "we rejoice," but  
it's a later word; although the root of that word exists in  
Biblical Hebrew the word does not.

Anyhow there was a great to do about it because he looked up  
in the concordance, and of course it wasn't there, and I said I  
knew the word well, and I knew it because it was in the Jewish  
liturgy, it afterwards occurred to me, and used very often.

Nevertheless I got on quite well with him.

Q: This was Bevan -- B.E.V.A.N. ?

Perlzweig: B.E.V.A.N. There was a family of that name -- no  
connection with the politician (Aneurin Bevan, 1897-1960). I am  
trying to think of his (first) name. He wrote a number of books  
and I used to have some of them.

There was another man -- I am only dealing with the leading  
ones, you know, because there were half a dozen or so.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: He was called Canon Kennett. This man was Regi<sup>u</sup>s  
professor of Hebrew, that is to say that chair dated back to  
Elizabethan or Jacobean times, in the classical tradition, and  
the chair was associated with the Cathedral at Ely, which was

in the Isle of Ely, which is not far from Cambridge. He was a canon of the Cathedral, and he was a very remarkable man in many ways, a very modest man, but a man who was absolutely in the front rank of Biblical scholarship. I was his only pupil because I did advanced Hebrew, you see, which wasn't the case with Bevan.

He displayed a knowledge of post-Biblical Hebrew which was really very formidable, but in his modesty he always used to say to me -- I shall never forget it -- "As Maimonides observed about this phrase -- and he knew better than I -- such and such, and such and such."

You see, that was his modesty.

There were people there at Cambridge who were in touch with him who were first students of mine (?) because he liked them but they were not studying with him, and I remember on one occasion he invited us to the Cathedral to have lunch with him in the Cathedral close, where he had a 14th century house at Ely. This was the kind of man he was -- everything was, as far as he could determine it, strictly kosher, and what is more, before the meal began he said the benediction in Hebrew, to make sure that he was on the right side, which is the usual benediction over the breaking of bread.

I remember the conversation chiefly because his wife, to whom he was very devoted -- he dedicated some of his books to her -- was rather acidulated in the tone about which she spoke

of his activities, especially what she called his female admirers.

I couldn't understand that, because he wasn't the sort of man who would have attracted that kind of attention, but at any rate he was another man for whom I conceived a great affection.

He was a rather extreme scholar in his support of what is called the higher criticism, so extreme that Montefiore, who was himself notoriously heretic, used to warn me not to take everything he said as being Gospel truth. I mean he was this kind of a man. There was an exercise which was called "emendation." You were given a Hebrew text -- or it might be a Syrian -- and were told to emend it where you thought it ought to be emended. The theory was that some scribe had made a mistake, and that by the change of a single letter the whole complexion of the sentence would be changed, which was very often true.

Now his emendations were really very remarkable.

He would take a word consisting of two Hebrew letters, the meaning of which was either unknown or obscure, and put one letter on the blackboard -- one letter on one edge of the blackboard, and the other letter on the other edge, and fill in the gap between the two. Well, that was emendation with a vengeance, and he did it with very great skill, and I still read some of his stuff with very great appreciation.

I don't know what his religious views were in detail, but he was a skeptic. It was said that his attempts to preach to his rural parishioners at Ely on the basis of the higher



criticism was not widely appreciated by the persons who came to listen to him, which I can understand, but his relations to mine on religious questions were very easy. He would quote a phrase in Deuteronomy, which he said was all there really was to religion. It says, "The Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy heart and in thy mouth, so though mayest do it."

I don't remember the exact words, but it says, "You don't have to say it is over the seas, who shall go over the seas for us to bring it unto us that we may hear it and do it. Neither shall thou say it is in the Heavens above. Who will go up to Heaven to bring it unto us that we may hear it and do it. But the Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy heart and in thy mouth."

Well, you can put many different interpretations on that, and of course the exegetes have done so.

But he adopted it. For him it meant you follow your conscience, and then you do what is right, never mind what this theologian says or that.

That's the kind of religion he had, and I got on extremely well with him.

Now there were others that I won't refer to, although I still remember them with a great deal of appreciation.

One man ~~xxxxxx~~<sup>who</sup> for some reason or other was assigned to go through the Book of Amos with me, which has left a permanent mark on my thinking.

But these were the three men who really mattered -- the two professors of Hebrew and the tutor of my college, who was a reader

in Aramaic at the University, and who was afterwards the master of the college, which in Cambridge of course is a great distinction.

Q: Yes. <sup>That's</sup> MacLane, Bevan and Kennett.

Perlzweig: Yes.. I have one of Kennett's lectures here, and I will show it to you.

There were others of course -- other members of the University staff, if I may call it that -- that I was interested in, and I went to some of their lectures because of my interest in what they had to say. They had nothing to do with what I was doing at the University.

1876-1962

One of them was George Macauley Trevelyan, who was a professor of modern history, and I am glad I went to see him ~~xxxxxxx~~ and to attend some of his lectures because I learned some things which were useful to me afterwards.

One very curious thing. Once I discussed anti-Semitism with him, and he pointed out that it had an international legal background, and he cited the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713, which was the treaty under which Great Britain acquired Gibraltar.

One of the clauses of the treaty, which has since been obviously violated, was that His Britannic Majesty ~~undertook~~ -- his Catholic Majesty -- undertook not to allow Jews or Moors to settle in Gibraltar. Now the Prime Minister of Gibraltar more often than not is a Jew, and a very observant one, and of course

the Moroccans come in without any hindrance. I remember discussing this afterwards with the Spanish Ambassadors and pointing out that the treaty had been violated, but it was violated because the Spaniards were Spaniards, and they had laid down these conditions.

Well, George Macauley Trevelyan was a man whom I greatly admired. He was also a skeptic. There is a famous saying attributed to him. Somebody came and made some question about a phrase that he had used in one of his books and said, "That isn't the kind of thing that you'd expect from. . ."  
not from an atheist, that's not the word. What is the other word?

Q: Agnostic?

Perlzweig: Agnostic. "That isn't the kind of thing that you'd expect ~~from~~ from an agnostic," and his answer was, "You know, that's not the whole story. There is a difference between an ordinary agnostic and an Anglican agnostic."

Well, he was an Anglican agnostic. He was one of the men whom I remember with very great appreciation.

The other was a man called Sir Arthur (Thomas) Quiller-Couch (1863-1944), who was professor of English literature. His lectures were worth going to not only because of what he said, but because of the way in which he conducted himself.

It was a large hall, because English was a popular subject, and a great many of the young ladies at the University ~~were taking~~ ~~this~~ used to take English.

So you would go in to a room and see this room -- this lecture hall -- three quarters filled with young women, and at the back rather obscurely a handful of men.

But Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch always began his lectures in exactly the same way, "Gentlemen." He didn't acknowledge the existence of the women, although they were the bulk of his audience.

Well, I got to know him, and -- I don't know whether it's at this point -- he came to Christ College on one occasion, at a meeting of what was called the John Milton Society.

Of course apart from studying, which was no small matter -- you learned a language like Syriac, which has three alphabets, and the three alphabets, I ought to say in mitigation as it were, are the same, but they are printed in different ways, so that you have to learn the three, but they are not three alphabets in the sense that there are three different sets of letters. They are really the same letters, but they are printed in different ways, and they are connected with each other. But Syriac is a language with which I had no connection at all. I knew a little Aramaic from what I had studied in the ordinary course of being a Jew, and that helped in a way. The same with Hebrew.

I mentioned Professor Bevan, and in that connection it reminds me of a man who dropped out of that course who was a friend of mine and a remote relative of my late wife, called Avino Em Yellin. He couldn't keep pace with the course, and Hebrew was his native language. He was born and brought up in

Jerusalem, and his father David Yellin (1864-1941) was the creator or the inaugurator of the Teachers' Training College which still exists, and was the first institution of higher learning existing in Palestine in those days.

The reason he couldn't keep pace with the course was because he couldn't write the kind of Hebrew verse which they demanded. He was as a matter of fact a very good Hebrew versifier, but he wrote Hebrew verse in the tradition of the medieval Jewish poets in Spain -- Yehuda Halevy and Ibn Gabirol (1021-1056), who had an Arabic mark, and it was a fairly advanced kind of verse which a European could understand.

This Old English, as it were, or Chaucerian verse was absolutely beyond him. For him to forget the Hebrew which he spoke as his daily language because words didn't occur in the Bible, was impossible.

Well, Avino Em Yellin was one of the men who fell out, but another man whom I met at these lectures in the classrooms was called Louis Billig. Billig was an encyclopedic scholar.

Q: A German-Jewish man?

Perlzweig: No, he was East European, brought up ~~in~~ in the East End of London, and his history, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ which is a very simple one, was that he left Yeshiva, where he was studying, and went to Jews College, which is the college for the Orthodox

rabbinate, or the enlightened Orthodox rabbinate in London, and then because of his scholarship he was sent to Cambridge. He took, not only repeated the Oriental Language tripos -- which was childish to him -- but he had the classical tripos, the Latin and Greek, and when I got to know him he was doing history.

He was one of the people that helped me a great deal because one of the things that I did was to read even the New Testament in Syriac or German works together with him, which had to do with the tripos that I was dealing with, so I got to know him rather well.

He and Avino Em Yellin were the two people -- Billig was a man who really taught me a great deal, in Syriac for example -- but they were in a sense fellow students, except that by that time Billig was a graduate student.

I mention them as among the people whom I saw because they appreciated and understood what I was trying to do, and also because both of them, when they went eventually to Palestine, after a period of professional life they were murdered by the Arabs. That was before the war.

Billig was a professor of Arabic at the Hebrew University, and Yellin was an inspector of schools under the mandate.

They committed one cardinal sin in the eyes of the Mufti of Jerusalem. They produced together a handbook in Arabic -- an Arabic handbook -- to enable Jews to learn Arabic. It was written in Hebrew, but its purpose was to enable people -- Hebrew-speaking people -- to learn Arabic.

The one thing that the Arabs then didn't want was any collaboration with the Jews. I am not talking about the Arabs, I am talking about Hajamin Hussein (b. 1893) who was the Mufti of Jerusalem, who had been appointed originally by (Lord) Herbert Samuel (b. 1870), who thought that a friendly gesture like that might turn him round. It made no difference.

Anybody who thought to bridge the gap between Jews and Arabs was in danger. Ben Gurion as far as I can recall was never subject to any assassination attempt. There were people. . .

The wild men of Jewry were not threatened by these people. What they feared above was that somebody would talk to the Arabs in their own language and would create bridges which they didn't want.

Now these were two of my fellow students whose death was entirely uncalled for. I mean they were not politicians in any sense. They were both professional men, Billig completely wrapped up in his Oriental languages, in his Arabic, and they died that way. When Avino Em Yellin came out of the Education Office onto the street some man just went up and shot him. In the case of Billig, he was examining a manuscript -- an Arabic manuscript -- which had been sent to him by King Abdullah of Transjordan, who wanted to have advice on what it meant, what it was worth and so on, and a man came to <sup>the</sup> window of the room in which he was sitting and put a rifle between the slats of the blind and shot him.

Well, not the college itself ~~xx~~ I am bound to say that I was very active, which I shouldn't have been, because I had ~~xxxx~~ enough

to do ~~it~~ to master these languages and to do the exercises and so on, but I became very active in the college in what was then the primeal (?) college society, called the John Milton Society, which commemorated the fact that Milton was a graduate of the college.

Now this was a very peculiar society in many ways. It had all the elements of English humor about it. One of them was that when a meeting was called everybody stood up while the president unveiled a bust of Milton, and then everybody sat down, and in the course of what followed -- in the debate that followed -- the thing to do was to refer to what "Our John" had said. So this had a certain good effect. It meant that people had to read Milton if they really wanted to be able to play a prominent part in the society as it were.

Now this meant a great deal to me. First of all I read Milton and I am inclined to agree with a person whose name I have now forgotten who said -- I think he was an English professor of literature -- "Anyone who has read Milton, his poetry and his prose, has had a liberal education."

Well, that was one thing it did for me.

The other thing was that it connected me in an almost semi-secret way with the people who had occupied the post which I occupied before I left, that ~~is~~ president of the society, before me, one of whom I encountered many years later in the person of General Smuts--Field Marshal Smuts -- when I was in South Africa.



Now one thing the presidents of this society had between them over a long period of years was a story as it was told to me by my predecessor on the last day of my presidency -- it was that one president had taken this bust to his room and put it on the mantelpiece, -- Every English room in an old-fashioned house has a mantelpiece, -- And when he came in , ~~xxxxxxx~~ -- ~~xxxxxxx~~ when he came back after leaving it there -- he found to his horror that it was lying in fragments on the floor. Now for an icon like that to be destroyed was a very serious thing, so he spent a frenetic afternoon rushing about from one antique shop in Cambridge to another, in order to find another bust of Milton, and there was none, so he ended up with a deception, which has remained as far as I know to this day. He got a bust of George Washington, and I unveiled this bust a good many times in the year in which I was president, and nobody as far as I know ever spotted the deception, which gives you an idea of the power of human imagination.

Q: And of suggestion.

Perlzweig: Yes, suggestion is the word. Anyhow that was one of the first things that Smuts asked me about when I encountered him in 1938 in South Africa, much later.

Q: About the broken bust?

Perlzweig: Yes, I mean he had been president of the John Milton Society, and he knew this secret. I mean you have no idea what this did for me in South Africa. He put aside all kinds of things. He wrote me personal letters that I have now given to the Zionist Archives in Jerusalem; he took me to luncheon in the Assembly -- I think they call it the Assembly -- in Capetown and so on; he gave me abundant time in Pretoria, which is the executive headquarters of South Africa, where he was at that time Minister of Justice.

But anyhow that was the college. I was active in the University too -- in the University's societies, chiefly I might say in the societies with a narrower compass. For example I became president of the society of old boys or alumni of my school, who were at Cambridge. I also became president of the Cambridge University Zionist Society, in which there were people who were afterwards destined to become very important people; for example Abraham Sachar, who was once president of Brandeis University, was one of the officers of the society. Another man became the secretary of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. A third man, whose name I come across now, became professor at McGill University, and he is one of the leading ~~authorities~~ authorities in the world on the structure of the blood. And so on.

I also went, I ought to add, occasionally to the Heretics.

After all, if you are in Cambridge, even if you don't understand what is going to happen to some of the people that you encounter, you can't altogether ignore a generation which included Bertrand

Russell and John Maynard Keynes.

So occasionally I went to the society, which was known as The Heretics, although I didn't play any part in it, and I didn't do what I did in London -- play a leading part in the dramatic and musical life of the University.

Q: There was another sort of closed society in Cambridge, wasn't there? The Apostles ?

Perlzweig: The Apostles was at Trinity. It was a college society. I don't know whether it still exists. It probably does.

I think a good deal of what one says or thinks about these things depends on who writes about them.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: And in the case of The Apostles there were a number of leading writers who took part in its work. But that was at Trinity College.

Where I spent most of my time and made the biggest impact in the University was in the University Union.

Q: The Cambridge Union?

Perlzweig: The Cambridge Union. There I don't know whether I created a record. All I know is that from the very first day

in England at that period sounded very much more outlandish than it would in America, where after all people are used to foreign names, and with the views that I had which were far in advance of the times. One of the most unpopular things that I did, and which will give you an idea of the prevailing atmosphere, was that I actually proposed at a general meeting that they should institute in the building of the union a retiring room where a woman could go. Merely to suggest such a thing was then regarded as *outré*, quite unthinkable.

Q: Ah!

Perlzweig: Now in that atmosphere I twice headed the poll. I don't know whether it has often been done. I never heard of any other case where it's been done, and one reason is --

Oh, of course when you head the poll twice you cease to be a candidate and you become a life member.

I think one reason that it's very rare is because the man who heads the poll as likely as not goes on to become president of the union. Well, that never happened to me. If I had stayed for a fourth year, which a good many of them who became president did, I think I would have succeeded in doing it, but I had to limit myself to three years, and I was quite content to do that, so I never became president, although the reputation that I was president of the union spread over a great deal of the circles in which I

moved in London. You see, in London afterwards, and even in this country, I remember when the war broke out. . . er. . .

No, not when the war broke out, but at the time of the election in 1940 of Roosevelt, the British chargé d'affaires, whose name was Neville Butler -- this was when Lord Lothian had died -- said to me, "You can't remain in America for the election."

I mean in those days Americans were apparently sufficiently simple-minded to think that a wandering Englishman in the country could affect the election.

I said, "Look, this is silly, what difference could my presence make?"

"It doesn't matter," says Butler. He says, "I hate to contradict the president of the union."

You see, he was a Cambridge man, and that's why I am mentioning the story. The rumor spread, but in fact I was never president of the union. I think it was very rare for any man who was only there for three years to be elected. But at any rate I did do, as you can see from what I told you, ~~as~~ well in the union, and I am therefore still a life member of the committee of the Cambridge Union.

Q: I was interviewing some time ago another man slightly after you who was president of the Cambridge Union, Michael Straight.

Perlzweig: Oh yes, yes. Well, of course today it's changed. There has been a woman president of the union.

Q: Really?

Perlzweig: Oh yes, there was a woman president,--and I am trying to think of her name, which I've forgotten -- quite recently, who made history by being elected president as a woman, and then made further history by taking her infant into the House of Commons and feeding it there. Ah!

I am talking about a dead world of which I am a survivor. This made it most remarkable.

Now I took part in a great many debates in the union. I will only mention one because it's quite incredible. It was a debate where I moved the motion that this house would welcome the appointment of a Labor Government. What was remarkable about it was the people who took part in the debate.

My opponent was Geoffrey Lloyd, who afterwards became Minister of Mines in some Government later, before the war, and whom I remember very well and who was very friendly to me. And we each had a distinguished visitor. ~~THis~~ distinguished visitor was Stanley Baldwin (1867-1947). My distinguished visitor, believe it or not, was Sir Oswald Mosley. Mosley was then one of the upcoming stars of the Labor Party, and Mosley and I, so to speak, won the debate -- the first time that a Labor Government had been approved by the Cambridge Union. Now I don't know whether it's anything to boast about, but Mosley -- who was afterwards notorious, although he consistently denied it, as an anti-Semite and the leader of the fascists -- was the man who was on my side

in this debate.

Q: He was a good speaker, wasn't he?

Perlzweig: Oh yes, he was a good speaker. As far as he was concerned his real trouble -- because he had I think very few convictions -- was his ambition. He could have been the Prime Minister for the Conservative or the Labor Party. I have no doubt in my mind about that at all. He was a very good politician and he was a good speaker, he had plenty of money, he had a very aristocratic background, but he couldn't wait, and he had to take over, and he didn't do what he tried to do in relation to the Labor Party, so he started a new party, and this was one of the side effects of this debate -- I was one of the people whom he used to invite to his place, and one of the people to whom he offered the chance to fight ~~for~~ for a seat in the House of Commons.

Well, I leave the union at this point except to say that as far as I was concerned for many years afterwards I was very grateful to it for giving me a certain facility, much more than I have at present -- facility in speech I mean.

It did another thing for me, <sup>where</sup> ~~and where~~ again I think I wasn't absolutely unique, but I am not sure.

Because of the part which I played in the union I was one of the very few, if not the only undergraduate -- because I was, as I told you, an undergraduate -- who was offered the chance of

contesting a seat for the House of Commons while I was an undergraduate. This happened because there was a strong Labor Party in the County of Cambridge. Now this is an interesting and unusual story.

They had a meeting one Saturday. They used to <sup>meet</sup> ~~be~~ in the Town of Cambridge, which is not included for parliamentary purposes in the Co-unity -- the Town was conservative, the Town was inclined to be rather liberal.

Well, they had a meeting, and they decided that they would invite me to be their candidate, and I returned, as I usually did, one Sunday night, and the next Monday morning I knew they were coming to see me, and there walked in a number of very dignified gray-haired men who sat down and began telling me that they'd had a meeting the ~~day before~~ Saturday before and they had come to the unanimous conclusion that I was the right person to represent them at the next election.

Well, I made all sorts of objections. I said, "Look at my name. You put me up as a candidate with a foreign name like that?"

Their answer was very simple, "We are internationalists, and we are not worried about it."

I said, "Then there is the question of my religion. I don't know how popular or unpopular it would be, but I am a Jew."

So one of them bent over to me and he said very earnestly, "But you are not a Catholic!"

Q: (laughs)



Perlzweig: I said, "No, I am not a Catholic, but I am a Jew."

He said, "What sort of a Jew? Are you the same sort of a Jew as in the Old Testament?"

Well, I had some difficulty in answering that, and I said more or less, I am descended from them.

Well, that's what they wanted. It's one of the things which is not realized, and people, both Jews and non-Jews, are afraid to mention it, but these constituencies in what is the old Cromwell country regard a candidate who happens to be a Jew as an advantage.

Now in the next constituency at that time -- which I think was the Isle of Ely, but I am not sure -- the member was James de Rothschild (1878-1957) who left a big mark in Israel, among other places, and I think the present one in one of those constituencies is a Freud, a grandson of Sigmund Freud, who is himself not a Jew, but who is of Jewish descent, and would be regarded popularly as a Jew. And I was a beneficiary, because my predecessor in that constituency was Edwin Montagu (1879-1924), who was a Jew.

Now what had happened was that they had as a candidate a trade union organizer who was rather obscene in his speech, and they thought they wanted something more respectable, especially an intellectual.

Well, of course I couldn't take it. I explained to them that there were two reasons. First of all, one was a purely economic one -- members of Parliament in those days didn't receive any

emoluments at all, and you had to be a rich man, and if not a rich man supported by a trade union or a lawyer who went to court in the morning and to the House of Commons in the afternoon, which I think they still do. I had no sources of income at all.

Secondly, and more importantly from my point of view, I was committed to the liberals in the Commons.

So what I did do was to undertake to act in place of the candidate which they didn't have,<sup>as</sup> what I think in America is called a pinch-hitter, and I had some very interesting, sometimes frightening and sometimes amusing experiences.

One which I'll never forget is going and speaking outside a schoolroom in the open air, and the crowd in front of it -- quite a big crowd -- moving all the time because the landowner's factor -- I think that's what he was called -- was watching to see who had attended this labor meeting. And I am talking about the 1920's of this century.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: Here the people moved into the shadows so as not to be recognized as attending the meeting. So I learned a good deal, but of course I didn't pursue it.

What happened was that one of my friends who was really responsible for it was a don -- an instructor in agriculture -- at Trinity College -- who was called Wedgwood, and who was a

nephew of the famous Josiah Wedg~~g~~wood. I had already become friends with Josiah then, and it was he who promoted me, but at any rate this was part of my activity at Cambridge, and I must tell you -- oh I could go on endlessly talking about the various activities there -- I wasn't sorry to leave, because the life was very hard.

I was glad to go away with so many friendships. One of them was R.A. Butler. He and I used to meet and have dinner when we'd had a debate or before the debate. And this other man whom I mentioned in this debate, Geoffrey Lloyd, and a great many others, The people of the union committee -- of my union committee -- I think most of them have become Cabinet ministers, one of them Archbishop of Canterbury, and so on. I am the only one who hasn't done anything of that kind, but on the whole I think I am glad. I wouldn't be alive if I had been a member of Parliament or any kind of regular politician.

Q: That's amazing. I have to stop now because I do have to run to Connecticut, so we have to wind this down.

Perlzweig: Oh.

End of Interview 4 w/ Dr. Maurice Perlzweig by Peter Jessup, May 4th 1981.

DK

Interviewee: Dr. Maurice Perlzweig

Interviewer: Peter Jessup

Place: NYC

Interview No. 5 - June 27th 1981

Q: Good afternoon, Dr. Perlzweig. This must be our fifth session, and here we are in New York on the eve of your departure to get away from the heat to go to Geneva.

This is Peter Jessup, and here we go.

Dr. Perlzweig: Well, I hope very much that I shall get away from the heat, but I have known Geneva to have its own heat problems, and the only thing to do about it is to hope and pray that it will be a bit easier, because heat at my stage in life is a little difficult to sustain.

I've been talking about Cambridge, which made an enormous difference to my outlook and my life and prospects, which is one of the reasons why I have given it so much time. But I haven't said all that I ought to say about it to give a complete account of

the significance from my personal point of view of my stay there..

After all the real reason for my going to Cambridge was<sup>so</sup>/to speak not simply to go to Cambridge, but to have a theological education, and for the sake of the record I must/say something about that.

This part of my education was in the charge of a remarkable man, Dr. Israel Abrahams (1858-1925), who bore the title of Reader in Rabbinic at Cambridge University. That was not the reason why he was in charge of my rabbinical education. He was one of the founders of the liberal synagogue, and he was also a very close friend of Claude Montefiore (1859-1939). He had done a great deal in building up the influence of this synagogue, and in view of his academic status, and the fact that he had written a number of books which have remained to this day among the most important books written on Jewish subjects, made him the necessary choice for the man who would be in charge of this unprecedented way of training a rabbi.

I should like to emphasize that as far as I know, no other Jewish congregation up to this time had ever tried to evolve a system of educating rabbis in conjunction with a university and in the absence of a theological school, which was up to the time it was organized a unique effort of its kind. I think it was once imitated -- one of my successors was educated in this way -- but then it disappeared with the establishment in London of the Leo Baeck College, which trains rabbis, I may say male and female,

for the liberal synagogue and for the reform synagogue.

Now there are, I should say, about 50 or 60 such synagogues in England, and therefore a theological seminary is necessary and justified.

At the time of which I am speaking there was virtually only one liberal synagogue and three reform synagogues, two of which were very small in membership.

The way in which they trained their rabbis was either to send them abroad, or if they thought better of it to import them from abroad, for the most part America, for linguistic and other reasons.

Anyhow I was put in the charge of Israel Abrahams, and I must say that he exerted all his influence, which was very considerable, to make the arrangements in Cambridge possible and tolerable.

I used to meet him at stated intervals, which depended, I am bound to admit, partly on his whim and partly on mine, because he was very tolerant, and neither of us were people who wanted to study very much.

We used to meet at stated intervals at the University library in an alcove where the Talmud was on the shelf, and we studied together -- or rather he taught me, which would be a much more accurate way (of putting it) -- the translation and the meaning and the background of certain passages which he chose out of this immense book. Very few people have ever read the book through, because it's so enormous.

But he, with his quite exceptional knowledge, knew what passages were significant from the point of view of someone who had both to preach and to defend the tradition of Judaism.

One of the things I noticed -- and I ought to have noticed in a sense with regret -- was the way in which when something which struck his mind or his imagination he would pull out of his pocket an envelope and write a reference on the back of it which he explained to me he was going to use in the writing of a book. That book in nine cases out of ten was never written, and the world has been the loser through it, because he was a brilliant writer, and his book for example called Jewish Life in the Middle Ages is being reprinted now as though it were the result of contemporary research, which for all practical purposes it is.

One of the great services which the ~~late~~ Stephen Wise rendered to Jewish scholarship was to compel Abrahams to write down the lectures which he delivered for Wise at a theological school which Wise founded in New York, the Jewish Institute of Religion, which was afterwards merged with the Hebrew Union College.

It was one of his habits to invite leading scholars from Europe to deliver lectures, and Israel Abrahams was one of them.

One of the things that he absolutely insisted on, and had great difficulty in obtaining, was a transcript of these lectures which Abrahams delivered, and which were printed in this country.

Now Abrahams wasn't the only man who formed this curious arrangement for the training of rabbis. Another was called Herbert Loewe (1882-1940), who was a lecturer in Hebrew subjects at Oxford University, and who under this arrangement came to Cambridge once every week, and I studied with him mostly post-Talmudic Hebrew

literature, which I may say is enormous. The choice that he had and which he exercised in choosing what he thought would be of importance to me in my future professional life was of course up to him.

What is remarkable about this is that Loewe was at least nominally an Orthodox Jew. Now when I say nominally I don't mean to suggest that he only professed it and didn't practice it. He practiced it, he was an Orthodox as a reasonably Orthodox Jew can be expected to be. Where he was heretical was in his relation to what might be called <sup>the</sup> received wisdom of the Jewish community.

For example, he was an anti-Zionist, which was one thing that he had in common with Claude Montefiore, and he attempted to use this ideology, if it may so be called, to give a different interpretation to passages in the immense rabbinical literature of Judaism.

For example there is a passage in the Talmud which says that the air of Jerusalem maketh wise, which of course many Zionist orators are very happy to use in order to show the respectability of ~~xxx~~ their point of view.

Loewe's answer to that was to say that this was simply part of the quarrel between the ancient Oxford and Cambridge

rather Babylonia and Jerusalem. The Jerusalem man would say that the air of Jerusalem maketh wise, by which he meant that it was a better place to study rabbinics than the Babylonian schools.



So it affected his point of view very much, but it didn't make much difference to me.

I didn't find the same attitude with Israel Abrahams. Israel Abrahams was first of all a great scholar, and it was impossible for him -- much more impossible for him than for Loewe, or even for Claude Montefiore -- to ignore the Jewish past and the place that Palestine or Israel, as we call it now, played in it, besides which he was in very close contact with people in Israel.

I happened to find a book here that he was in part author of, called Maimonides, which is by David Yellin and Israel Abrahams. Now it's a very old book, and I cite it only because David Yellin was the head of the first higher education establishment at Three Teachers College in Palestine. His son Yellin -- I think I mentioned him -- was a merchant.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: But you see, that's the kind of man Israel Abrahams was. He would be in touch with Jewish scholarship all over the world, and therefore his attitude to Israel was much more friendly than the attitude of various other people.

Q: Were Abrahams and Loewe congenial?

Perlzweig: Oh yes. It was Abrahams who recruited Loewe for his purpose.

Q: Oh I see.

Perlzweig: All I am saying is that for example when we talked about Zionism, which we sometimes did, with Abrahams, he would say to me, "Look, so long as you call it the Jewish people and not the Jewish nation, then there is no quarrel between us."

Well, as I always called it the Jewish people and never called it the Jewish nation -- because the word "nation" has different connotations ~~#~~ in different languages -- we got on very well together, and he was a supporter of the Hebrew University in Israel and so on, <sup>..</sup> and I had no difficulty with him.

These two men played the principal part in this instruction, and I got a very good conspectus from them of the course <sup>of</sup> ~~and~~ the development of Judaism during the centuries.

But there were others too who were brought in for the purpose -- to cite one case -- of reading German works with me. My German was fairly fluent in domestic matters, but in theology it was quite hopeless. So if there was somebody who knew German well that would appear at Cambridge -- usually an American, and I remember one in <sup>..</sup> particular from Los Angeles -- he would read some esoteric book with me called Die Agade de Tenahitin, which is difficult to translate and I needn't translate. It was written by a Hungarian scholar in the middle of the last century. It was a two-volume work, and ~~Exhad~~ one volume which belonged to Israel Abrahams and had his signature in it I've still got.

So I had a fairly good education, and it took up a fair amount of time. It was not allowed to interfere very much with other things, and it was based on the University curriculum.

I took the degree in Oriental languages, which was <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ foundation of the whole business.

Both these men -- Israel Abrahams and Herbert Loewe -- followed very closely the progress I was making at the University. In fact it was from Loewe that I got the judgment at the end -- he must have talked to the examiners -- that in Syriac, a language of which I didn't know a word and hardly knew the existence of when I went to Cambridge, before I left I got on the examination the equivalent of about 95 percent, whereas in Hebrew I was down into the 80's. I had always regarded Hebrew as a much more difficult language.

Well, I just wanted to make sure that there was some reference to what was the real reason for my going to Cambridge.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: The only other thing that grew out of it and overshadowed it, but in fact it was very important to me -- and I must say that the fact that it took place at all did my reputation in England a great deal of good -- it was only about a year ago when the present Orthodox Chief Rabbi who has just been knighted by the Queen in her birthday honors, Rabbi Jacobowitz said to me courteously, "Did you have Herbert Loewe as a teacher?"

I said yes. I was talking to him in London at a meeting which was addressed by the president of Hebrew University whom I happened to know, and this apparently had been simmering in his mind for all these years, and when I told him it was true I am sure I must

gone up a degree in his estimation. So it was important -- it was important from many points of view, and I am very grateful to him, because not only did I get a good idea of what Talmudic Judaism was all about and of the way in which Hebrew, not only post-Biblical but post-Talmudic, developed in later years, and how the great sages of Judaism added to the raw material from which we now draw, but it validated my right to preach, and I thought I ought to make some reference to it, although I must say that I still regard it as quite inadequate when I think of the importance of the part which it played in my life.

Now I would like to turn to another part of what I may call the extended Cambridge experience.

I have referred to the debate in the union in which I proposed a resolution ~~which was carried~~  
~~(was) carried~~

in support of the Labor Government which for the first time in the history of the union was carried. The people on the other side were Stanley Baldwin, who was about to become the Prime Minister, and . . I am just trying to think of his name -- at times something flashes ~~flashes~~ in my mind and then it flashes out -- but I have mentioned him so I needn't mention him again, he <sup>became</sup> ~~was~~ Minister of Mines.

Q: That wasn't Simon was it?

Perl;zweig: No, not Sir John Simon. At any rate he was a Member of Parliament for one of the Birmingham constituencies. But my

supporter was Sir Oswald Moseley, and this is one of the things on which in order to complete the record I have to say something.

First of all the winning of this resolution, which we all thought was a tremendous victory, didn't sit well with the handful of communists in Cambridge. There has been a great deal written about communism in the 1930's in Cambridge, which was a time when What-was-his name. . .

Q: Sir John Ervine?

Perlzweig: No. His son was a famous spy who is now in Moscow, Kim.

Q: Oh, Philby.

Perlzweig: Yes, Philby. You see I mentioned S because I knew him, and I'll come to him. But I was trying to get by way of association the name of the son, Kim Philby. Kim Philby was in Cambridge in the 1930's, and did recruiting, according to these accounts which have come out in the last few months.

Q: Sir Anthony Blunt and so forth.

Perlzweig: That's right, that was in the 1930's. In the 1920's communism in Cambridge was very feeble and very weak.

What happened was that after this debate, which of course was rejoiced over by the Labor Club in Cambridge -- which at that moment

was headed by a man called Ewen Montagu (1901- ), the Honorable Ewen Montague, whom you may know as the author of The Man Who Never Was/

The Labor Club of course was extremely pleased, but there was another body which was almost invisible which I never encountered, which was called The Red Circle, and it was headed by Ivor Montagu, who was a brother of Ewen, and Ivor was an extremely able youth -- brilliant, no question about it -- who was not only a man destined to become, as he is at this moment, one of the theoretical leaders of <sup>the</sup> British communist party, which in itself is very , but was a table tennis champion of England, a famous translator of French books, and a commentator on the cinema which did a great deal. I don't know his intimate history, but I know that he was a young man of extraordinary brilliance, and he did one thing for which I must say I have to take my hat off to him.

In order to show his contempt for the Cambridge union, in the debates of which he certainly never took part, he had his name put up for the committee, and was duly elected by people who judging ~~judged~~ from the name Ivor Montague assumed that he was some Englishman aristocratic ~~English~~ of Norman descent, not knowing that his ~~ANCESTORXXXXXXANCESTOR~~ ancestor was a man who was born Montague Samuel (1832-1911) who had thought that it would sound better to turn the name around and call it Samuel Montagu, who was the common ancestor, the grandfather in fact, of these two young men to whom I have referred.

Well, anyhow the Red Circle either passed a resolution or made the statement at a meeting of the Labor Club that when I did this thing -- when I supported or proposed this resolution -- I betrayed the interests of the working class.

Now I thought that was rather funny. Here was a young man who was the offspring of a very wealthy City family -- to this day the Samuels control the price of silver, or at least hold part of the control over the price of silver in the world -- himself the grandson of a peer of the realm, entitled to be called The Honorable, and living in obviously fairly comfortable circumstances in Cambridge, who says that I, who in a sense worked my way through betrayed the interests of the working class.

Now you must remember he wasn't attacking Moseley. In those days I should say that the communists had considerable sympathy for Moseley, because Moseley was married to Lady Cynthia Moseley, who was the daughter of Lord Curzon, who was, as the phrase then went, a very superior person, and the granddaughter of a man in Chicago called Levi Leiter.

Q: Oh yes!

Perlzweig: Who was one of the great packing fortunes. Now I knew Lady Cynthia, and I had great admiration for her.

One of the things that happened as a result of this meeting in Cambridge was that I was invited on the numerous occasions on which the Moseleys at their country house invited the leaders of

the Labor Party. I remember meeting Arthur Henderson and people of that kind there.

And I saw and spoke to Lady Cynthia. She was an extremely attractive woman, but she was much more than attractive -- she was an extremely intelligent woman, with a profound knowledge not only of English politics but of European politics.

In the course of my wandering -- I don't know whether I have it here -- I came across Trotsky's diary in French. I don't know what language he wrote it in, but in the course of this diary he reproduces a letter written to him by Lady Cynthia, mostly in English, -- I've got a very clear recollection of that -- where he has been expelled from Russia, or has left Russia, and she writes to him -- this was Lady Cynthia,

"It is a great event for us that you can come and instruct us, on what to do."

In other words, she was a communist. She didn't sit as a communist in the House of Commons, which was one of the things that happened at that time -- there were communists in the House of Commons -- she sat as a member of the Labor Party, but her outlook and her conviction was communist.

So long as she was alive she acted as a foil to Sir Oswald's ambitions. What he wanted to do was to be Prime Minister of England. He could have done it as a Conservative, which was the party to which he belonged when he first entered the House of Commons for Harrow. He could have done it ~~as~~ as a Labor man if he had had the patience. But he didn't.



When Lady Cynthia died and this guide was lost -- I mean she and he had in common the belief that they wanted to change the structure of English life and industry, although he was not a communist in any sense of the word, every time he thought of doing something adventurous, or what the communists/called adventurous, she held him back -- and then when he married into the Mitford family after Lady Cynthia died. . .

Q: In what year?

Perlzweig: Well, this was in the 1930's. Now the Mitford family was headed by a man called Lord Redesdale who wrote a book which I have read called The Myth of the Twentieth Century or something like that, which is rather anti-Semitic. One of his daughters fell in love apparently with Hitler.

Q: Unity.

Perlzweig: Yes, Unity, and there is a very good book about Unity, a paperback which I've got somewhere, written by Arthur Pryce-Jones.

But there were also others. There was Jessica Mitford, who went to America, and not only married a communist but a Jew. So it's a very peculiar family.

Once that happened -- once he married a Mitford -- the one restraining influence in his life keeping him on a sensible path was gone, and I don't think that that has been sufficiently noticed,

was rooted in one of the things that separated me from them, the fundamental philosophy of the world.

And it pursued me to America when I came to America,--and I'll come to that when I come to America-- when I was attacked by the Daily Worker, denigrated. The worst thing they could say about me was "a friend of Churchill."

Anyhow that's one of the things that happened as a result of this thing.

The other thing was that I attended a meeting in my Cambridge disguise at Oxford, which founded what was called the University Labor Federation of Great Britain.

As I think I have explained, in those days a labor club or a liberal club or a conservative club was more than a place of discussion. Each university returned one or more Members of Parliament, and the club therefore conducted an election, and so these ~~parliamentary~~ bodies were important.

At this meeting, which was held at Oxford, I was elected chairman of this body. The treasurer was Malcolm MacDonald, who afterwards became one of the most important influences in the public life of England. The secretary was Kenneth Lindsey, who didn't reach the same level that Malcolm did, but who nevertheless played a very important part. In fact the whole executive, except for myself, entered the House of Commons.

That was one of the things that happened which made a great difference, but I have very little to say about the University

Labor Federation except that it arose the ire of the communists who said this was a group of people who wanted to enter the House of Commons, bourgeois politicians, which was largely true. It wasn't true in my case, but that happened to be an exception. I had another function in life.

At the next meeting, which was held in London -- when I had already gone down from Cambridge somebody else was elected to finish my term in office -- we did have a quarrel with Oxford of another kind, and I remember it because for the first time in my life I achieved a headline.

There was a student at Oxford called Andrew Theodorovich Rothstein, whom I think I mentioned because he was at school with me at Owen School, and he was one Jew at Owen School who didn't stay out of classes on high holy days, and he was also the only one that spoke Yiddish fluently, and that was because his father was a Russian Kommissar, Theodore Rothstein, who wrote a book about Persia (Prussia?). He represented the Soviet Union in Persia as their Kommissar.

Well, Andrew Rothstein, whom I haven't encountered for many years, was an open and avowed communist and a member of the communist party and a writer of many of their publications, was entitled to a very prestigious prize -- I've forgotten its name -- in Cambridge, in history, and he was denied the prize, and the newspapers were full of it.

It was said, and it was probably true, that he was denied the prize because he was a communist. At any rate I accepted it

established what he called the New Party, and this belongs to this narrative because he invited me not only to join the party but to contest a seat on his behalf.

Now this was a very mixed multitude. It wasn't right-wing or left-wing. It said, A PLAGUE ON ALL YOUR HOUSES, WE ARE STARTING SOMETHING NEW.

And among other people he recruited people like Harold Nicolson, who had a great reputation in his day, and still has, as a writer on diplomatic affairs. He wrote a book called Diplomacy.

But this was only the first stage. Obviously it didn't work. He had underestimated the impact and the gravity of the pull of the existing political organizations. He thought that everybody would follow him. He claimed to have an answer to unemployment and all the other ills ~~was~~ which plagued England at that time.

I mention that ~~because~~ in Moseley and his context ~~as~~ because it wasn't due to Moseley that the communists criticized me. It was due to the fact that I had the attitude, which I still have, of what in England is called a social democrat, that is to say I ~~wanted~~ don't accept the view that the state is something that ought to be removed from human affairs. I think the state was created precisely because there are some things that only the state can do.

For example, we don't now do what certain cantons in the Middle Ages did with their unemployed -- sell them as mercenaries to someone else, treat the human being as a commodity.

So this hostility to what I did on the part of the communists

but as I went to the Moseleys on these occasions when they invited people, and as I had discussions with him and especially on Jewish and other questions, I have no doubt in my own mind that the change in his life, and the way in which he threw away a wonderful opportunity, was due entirely to the fact that instead of being married to a woman of very high intelligence and very great knowledge, he was married to a woman who came ~~xx~~ from a family which hung about the outskirts of . . .

Q: On the fringe.

Perlzweig: Yes, fringe is the word. (They hung on the fringe) of the anti-Semitic movement in Germany, which took various forms, especially in the writings of a man called Houston Stewart Chamberlain.

Q: Oh yes.

Perlzweig: I said a moment ago erroneously that Lord Redesdale wrote this book. It was a translation from the German of Houston Stewart Chamberlain's book. It was not an original work, but he was the translator.

Q: So Moseley's rightward turn toward fascism included anti-Semitism and

Perlzweig: Well, when he came to that point. He first of all

as true, and in the address which I delivered at the opening of the first meeting after the Oxford meeting of the University of Labor Federation I denounced this as a form of blue terror. We had the white terror in Russia, we had the red terror in Russia. This was Oxford, the terror of which was blue.

This blue terror for five minutes became a headline in the Daily Mail and other newspapers.

Then of course once I left the University I left the club and I left the organization. I don't know whether it still exists, but in its day it played an important part.

I have also no doubt that this achievement -- the result at Cambridge of passing that resolution -- may have had something to do with my being elected, out of this collection of ambitious young men, as the chairman.

It also reminds me of the fact that while I was at Cambridge I went on various missions as a representative of the union to take part in debates.

For example I remember that two of us went to take part in a debate at Girton College, which was, and probably still is, for women, and had to be entered with all the care of getting into a nunnery. When you came up to the front door, something was opened, and you heard a voice coming through this crack, asking you who you were, and if the guardian was satisfied with your respectability, the door was cranked open, and you went into this extremely female place.

On one occasion I remember <sup>the</sup> two of us who ~~were~~ <sup>were</sup> deputed by the union, or the union committee, to do this were Butler and myself, he representing the conservative and I representing the labor party. And we took part in the debate, and I can tell you we were both absolutely terrified to be surrounded by these hoardes of young women.

But another case which I remember particularly was when I was deputed to go to Edinburgh Union. The Edinburgh Students union had a debate, and I remember that very well, because the next day -- the day that is to say following the debate -- the Scotchman, which is a daily newspaper of Edinburgh, and a very respectable and highly regarded and sober newspaper, had a notice about the debate which quoted one line which I had delivered, which I had already tried on the Cambridge Union and brought the house down.

It was the time when Mr. Herbert Asquith -- that's H. H. Asquith -- the Prime Minister who became Lord Asquith, had lost his seat, which was Paisley in Scotland, and I said first to the Cambridge Union and then to the Edinburgh Union, "Having worn the trousers of the late Mr. Gladstone for 20 years, it is not surprising that the Right Honorable Gentleman has lost his seat," (laughter)

Well, this was a typical undergraduate joke. I don't know where I got it from or how I conceived it, or whether it's mine, or whether I stole it from somebody, but I know that it absolutely

brought the house down. So I repeated it in Edinburgh, which of is much nearer to Paisley, and it had a much greater resonance. (laughter) It's worth noting because <sup>it's</sup> the peculiar sort of undergraduate humor which has been developed in England.

Something which is not nearly so good -- coming to another aspect of my Cambridge existence -- was what was called the Presidential Debate of the John Milton Society.

The subject was -- the motion was, Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour, England has need of thee, she has become a fan of mineral waters -- instead of stagnant waters, you see.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: Well, the principal protagonist -- I don't remember any of them except one -- was the formidable Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch.

Q: Right.

Perlzweig: Who was the professor of English literature, and to whom I think I have already referred.

We met in the hall -- in the dining hall -- of the college, and as they sat on these benches in front of the tables on which dinner ~~was served~~ used to be served, you could see that each participant had a big metal mug which was filled with beer, and the whole of the debate was conducted with the full and enthusiastic



participation of this great scholar, or great professor anyhow, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch/ It was conducted in the same way.

There were only two schools of thought: Those who said that England had sunk to a level to which it had never sunk before because strong liquor was not drunk in the quantities in which it should have been , and the others who indignantly denied that England would ever do such a dastardly thing as to substitute mineral water for the real thing.

There wasn't ever anybody who would even dream of suggesting that it was the proper thing to ~~have~~ have Prohibition so to speak.

Well, that was another thing that I think was closely connected. I think there are a few things which I had forgotten about Cambridge that I . . .

(voice trails off)

Oh yes, a really funny thing.

The weekly or monthly newspaper -- it was weekly I think -- of Cambridge, called The Granter one day came to see me in the person of its editor with a book called The Burden of Egypt, which was written and was published by Chicago University Press, and was an account of the state of ancient Egypt. And they asked me to review this book, so I said, why do you bring it to me? I know nothing about ancient Egypt.

The answer was, but we can't find anybody who does, you are the nearest thing.

I said why am I the nearest thing?

Well, Oriental languages. After all, the thing I was studying, which was the Semitic civilization, which is north of Egypt, was the nearest thing to it.

So I undertook the review. I am sorry to say that I didn't read the book right through, and I am not the only reviewer who has to make this confession.

Q (laughs).

Perlzweig: But I did realize that one of the problems which ancient Egypt was confronted with was to find room for the numerous progeny of the Pharaoh, as he had many wives and concubines, and some of the buildings they put up were put up with that in view.

So I wrote the review, which was very successful chiefly because of the heading. The heading was TUTANKHAMEN AND BIRTH CONTROL, which went down very well.

When I was about to leave Cambridge, since there is mechanism for these things in Cambridge, I had both the magazines which I read -- The Granter and The Cambridge Review, which was a more serious thing -- because they both reported the meetings of the union and the speeches which were delivered, so I had some idea of that.

I've still got the book and I am still hoping to read it.  
(laughter) (pause)

Well, before I leave Cambridge, there is a last point about Cambridge, which is a confession of sin, that is to say I did something which was against the rules of the University.

I had by then become a member of the Council of the Zionist Federation. This was a governing body. It used to be called, I thought ungrammatically, English Zionist Federation, because it included Scotland and Ireland, and later when I had more influence I got that changed.

But there was a council which met once a month, and which was the final seat of authority in the Zionist Federation. It consisted I think of about 20 to 30 people.

Now what was I to do when I was in Cambridge when the council met? I didn't want to lose my touch with the movement. I had made my way by steps to what was the center of the Zionist life in England, and I was deeply interested. To me not merely the Zionist idea but the Zionist movement and the participation in it was like any other drive nowadays -- I just could not live without it.

Well, it would be hopeless to go and say I've got to go to London to attend a meeting of the Zionist Council -- I would never have got permission for it, they would have said you've given all that up.

So what I did was to go without permission. I had a season ticket because I went every week for which I did have permission.

The difficulty was being caught. You had to wear a gown at night -- these were meetings ~~xx~~ that took place at night -- so what happened was, as I walked to the station with my gown on and mortarboard and went into the station innocently, and then when the train came in I would go into a compartment, and to the astonishment

of the other people who might be there, took off the gown and put it under my overcoat, you see.

So I did it/ It wasn't very often that I did it, but I did it with great trepidation, because if I turned up after midnight I probably would have been sent down . I mean this was quite often enforced. The rule about coming either to your lodgings if you were not in college, or to the college, was -- the gates were closed at 10 o'clock, and if you came after 10 but before 11 you were fined in those days threepence; if you came between 11 and 12 it was fourpence; but if you came after 12, that was the end of you, you were sent down.

Q: Really?

Perlzweig: Yes. And every entrance was noted either in the lodgings in which you lived or by the college porter.

Now I will just give you one example of a famous name which I saved from this kind of total extinction -- I mean academic extinction -- and that was, as he was then called, Lord Louis Mountbatten.

Lord Mountbatten -- the man who was murdered recently by the Irish Republican Army -- was a contemporary of mine at my college, Christ College. I remember coming back at about a quarter to 12 from a meeting at the union, and as I came in front of the college there I could see a body with an undergraduate gown on -- it was a short gown which undergraduates wore -- lying in front of the curb

in the -- what is it called, I forgot --

Anyhow he was lying on the ground there, and I couldn't tell from where I stood when I first saw it, whether he was alive or dead. So I went up to the body and I found that it was breathing. So, what could I do? I had no idea who it was. On the other hand it rather pained me to think that if I left this unfortunate youth there and he was found the next morning and hadn't come in before 12, his whole life at Cambridge would be ruined.

So I rang the bell, and the porter came to the door, and I said, "Here is a man lying in the gutter," -- that's the word I was looking for -- "who I think is drunk."

So he came over with me and he said, "Gee, that's Lord Louis Mountbatten!"

So I remember dragging him up to his room inside the college, and I remember the difficulty of going round one of the towers where the stairway wound up its way up one of the entrance towers.

Anyhow, this did me a great deal of good many years later, because when Lord Mountbatten and his wife came to Toronto, Canada I think in the middle 1940's -- around 1948 --

the museum (static in tape) the Mayor of Toronto had a dinner at which the chief people of the town were present, and I was one of those invited, and we were introduced to Lord Mountbatten.

I can still see the look of astonishment on the Mayor's face when Lord Mountbatten said, "You don't have to introduce me to this man. He saved my life!" (laughs)

, So my stock in Toronto went up considerably.

Now that was all due to the fact that these rules were kept in this way.

So, when I went to London to attend the meetings of the Zionist Council I had to make quite sure that I got back in time to take a taxi from the station which would bring me right to the gate or wherever it was before midnight, otherwise it would have been very difficult.

Well, I think that is the story of Cambridge. I don't think there is anything else that I have to say about it, except that for reasons which I cannot understand, and which I am sure nobody will understand in view of what I have said, I left Cambridge with a great feeling of relief. I don't know why anybody who lived in Cambridge at the time when there were people whose names are still mentioned with awe were in residence should have found it dull, but I did find ~~it~~ that what would be called in this country campus life was carried on within very narrow limits. (pause)

I think there was something in <sup>my</sup>mind which I wanted to add and which has just gone out of it again, which shows you the result of age pushing its way up.

Oh yes, very important. I was talking about the communist  
. . .

Q: The Red Circle.

Perlzweig: The Red Circle, which was a trivial thing in Cambridge.

What really was powerful in Cambridge , and what I don't have difficulty in understanding, was not communism, but fascism.

The young men had just come back from the war,--I am talking about the early 1920's -- especially the medical students, who have a long period, and their passion against communism was almost indescribable.

The incident which crossed my mind and which I had nearly forgotten comes out of a world which has now disappeared.

Now fascism in the military youth that returned was quite strong. I met it at London University when I was at University College. For example the medical students, peculiarly enough, would take me in a sort of pseudo-friendly gesture, to the local pub, which was called The Orange Grove, which no longer exists, and would ply me with whiskey in the hope of making me drunk and generally disreputable.

It never worked, because I'd learned very early one way of coping with it, and that was to pour out the whiskey on the floor on which there was sand or sawdust, and therefore it wasn't visible. So I was able to do that.

But in Cambridge it took a different form.

There was a society -- I don't remember which it was, but I think it must have been the Labor Club -- which invited a Member of Parliament to speak to it, and the name of the Member of Parliament was ~~Sackletts-Varler~~ Sacklett-Varler.

He was peculiar from the point of view of a Member of Parliament in that he was a communist and he was an Indian. He was a colored

man and a communist, and yet he was elected by a London constituency -- I think it was Battersea.

Well, when news of this got about the people whom we called fascist, whether rightly or not -- I am not sure that they were fascist or that they knew what fascism was, but they acted as though they were, and they were very violent in what they did, they didn't believe in argument -- the fascists decided that they would murder Sacklett-Varler, and they would get him when he came into Cambridge.

This was spread all over the town, people heard about it, and the result was it was arranged for Sacklett-Varler to be taken off the train at the previous station in order that he could be brought in by car into Cambridge and not be confronted by a big mob at the terminus.

Anyhow he was taken off the train at the previous station, at the one just before -- I've forgotten the name of it now -- but the other side had heard of this trick. You have no idea how this triviality became swollen into a major event.

The other side had heard of it, and had slashed the tires of the car ~~which~~ which was going to pick him up.

The only trouble about it was that they were so nervous, and the slashes were done so badly that they made no difference, and they weren't noticed until the next day.

But we were milling about in front of the hotel where the meeting was to take place, very largely undergraduates, and of course a large number -- fortunately as it turned out -- of Indian undergraduates.



I remember discussing the situation with one of my friends and I asked him what should be done about it, and he said, "Very simple. One of us has got to give our gown to Sacklett-Varler and he will be indistinguishable from any Indian student."

The only problem then was who was to give the gown, because it was dark and if you were caught without a gown, . .

But anyhow he was saved. The meeting was canceled. The man who owned the hotel, or was in charge of the hotel, wouldn't take the risk of the enormous expense which he would have had to meet if the place had been smashed up, as it probably would have been.

But I mean that gives you an idea that Cambridge at this time, at the time of which I am speaking, regarded communism as something so exotic as barely to exist, and when it appeared above the surface it was very difficult to pin it down.

The Red Circle was a handful of people, and I cannot to this day tell you what it did. I can only tell you that it had no impact on the university at all.

Of course in a decade's time the situation changed, when you had people who were recovering as it were from the aftermath of the last war, not the last war.

The people who came back from the last war were inclined to be violent. But these were the aftermaths.

(above unclear)

So I think it's important to point out that as far as communism was concerned I think I can pretty safely say that in the 1920's

in Cambridge it was not a cause which excited any interest at all.

Well, that's Cambridge.

Going from Cambridge, I remember the last journey very well, not curiously enough with sadness, but with exhilaration.

I don't know why -- I think I was very stupid not to try to stay in Cambridge from one point of view, but I'll tell you my desire to get to the outside world and to have some impact on the course of events was such that I rejoiced.

And I came back to my parents' house.

Now there is one thing that became very important in my life at this point which is very difficult to talk about, and that is my encounter with my wife.

I first knew her at University College. She was a student there. Her background was a little unusual in that she was born in Antwerp, or in a village near Antwerp, and her father was a member of the Antwerp Jewish community and a member of -- I've forgotten what they call it, the diamond. . .

Q: Exchange.

Perlzweig: Yes, the Diamond Exchange. Anyhow they came to England as refugees at the time of the First World War, when the Belgians gave up. They went to live outside of London -- I suppose they had some resources -- in a place called Buckhurst Hill, a name which I had forgotten for a long time, but I remembered it when I saw that (Richard) Crossman (M.P.) -- the man whose famous diaries have been

published -- was brought up in Buckhurst Hill; his father was a judge who lived there.

Anyhow I got to know her through the meetings of the University , she was a regular attendant at the union and so on. In fact she knew me very well before I knew her.

At any rate we used to meet, and it was by no means an easy thing, because one of the things I think I have mentioned was that during the war I was one of a minority of men at the college, but we used to meet, and I got to know her well, and then to make a long story short -- because I used to meet her mostly secretly -- I invited her to come to Cambridge for May Week.

Now May Week is a peculiar English institution. First of all it's always held in June, which is probably why it's called May Week (laughs). This is the last week of the term, and the authorities allow a great deal of license on that week. You bring your girl friend to Cambridge, and they don't ask too many questions. There are balls and what not.

Well, my secret girl friend came. Actually I wasn't then in college, but I stayed in lodgings, and one of the rooms was empty -- one of the other people who lived with me in this house had gone home -- and at any other time of the year it would have been unthinkable, but they allowed her to come and stay in that room, which was not far away from mine.

Well, we spent a very happy time together, and one of the things I remember which I appreciated was that we got our food sent in from what was called The Buttery, which was the college

kitchen and so on, and it was really awfully good, and it was all brought in -- some youth brought it in -- and it was really awfully good, and she being Continental in my innocence I thought was a person who really would know about good food.

Another thing I remember with appreciation was that when we walked near Kings College along what are called the Backs -- the backs of the college -- along the River Cam, what she saw of the architecture and the way in which the place was kept was so beautiful that she actually wept, from which you can see that she was a person of great sensitivity.

Well, anyhow I think we decided during this May Week in 1922 or whatever it was that we would get married, and then the question was breaking the news to the rest of the world, or to our parents.

Anyhow that was one of the things that happened to me in Cambridge.

There are two places which I can't go along now -- if I have the opportunity of going along -- without remembering this. One is to walk along the backs of Cambridge, which if you haven't done you should still try to do, because one of the differences between Cambridge and Oxford is that Oxford has been allowed to become a tourist haven, whereas Cambridge is still a small English town dominated by the University.

The other is to walk in the Fellows Garden in Christ College, where                      must have walked.

I can't go to either of these two places without remembering this happy time.

Well, that's Cambridge.

Now do you want me to go on? If you do, I will.

Q: Sure!

Perlzweig: All right. Now I went back to London, and of course I made it a point to go to have an opportunity to talk to the man who was to be my senior and colleague, Israel Mattuck (1883-1954).

Q: He is the man from Cincinnati, isn't he?

Perlzweig: Well, his family came from Worcester, Massachusetts, but he took his degree and his rabbinical ordination at Cincinnati. He was also at Harvard.

Now I talked to him, and this was in the early days, the days when he was still very liberal, the sort of man who. . . -- I don't know how to put it -- the sort of man who, as Stephen Wise used to say about himself, always assumed that a striker was right.

I don't think that was true of Mattuck, although he was pretty near to that in the beginning.

But what I was worried about was what was going to happen between us when he talked anti-Zionism and I talked Zionism. There were all the possibilities of rupture there.

Well, he was very clear with me. He had no objection to my pro-Zionism at all. He said, "Look, if you don't have a free pulpit, then I won't have a free pulpit. However much we may

differ about what our orientation and our attitude is, we are both in agreement that we want a right to speak, to say the things that we believe, and not things which are dictated to us."

And he was as clear as you can be.

There was one way in which he was different from Montefiore whom I referred to. Montefiore was an English gentleman from the Shires, and when he believed in freedom of speech it was as though he had received that from God Himself. Mattuck was not that kind of a man at all. He was a man brought up in a town, with an industrial background, with a typical striving for upward mobility.

Whereas I could rely on Montefiore to be on my side whatever happened -- and remember he was the antithesis of me in everything that really mattered except a certain conception of Judaism, whereas the difference between Mattuck and myself from one point of view wasn't so much, after all he was born in Eastern Europe, and so was I, he didn't stay there and I didn't stay there, we both were brought up in two different environments, but nevertheless something remained -- I wouldn't have lasted if it had depended on Mattuck, I am quite ~~xxxx~~ certain I wouldn't have lasted more than a year or two. But fortunately there was Montefiore.

Now Mattuck and I agreed about a great many things, and in retrospect I am inclined to agree with him even more in some things.

Montefiore and I agreed on very few things, but Montefiore remained faithful to his vision of me as a person who said what he believed.

When I refused the fellowship which was offered to me at the West London Synagogue, as far as he was concerned that was proof that I was a person with certain convictions that I would adhere to, and he thought that that was good enough, and that that was even more important than I should have the right convictions.

Now he differed from me not only on Zionism -- he differed from me about his view of society. He was a high tory of the old school, whereas I, as I have said to you, was a social democrat.

I could make a joke about the society in which we lived. For example I remember on one occasion offending a number of people by explaining why I was late when I came from Cambridge to a meeting of the North London Liberal Synagogue. I said, "Well, you know what the railways are like. They run not in the interest of the passengers, but in the interest of the shareholders." Because of course they had not been nationalized then. And I remember a man called Sir Basil Henriques (1890- ) who was saying I ought to be shot for having made a crude remark like that.

Q: Was he the father of Robert Henriques, the writer ? (1905- )

Perlzweig: No, no. Robert Henriques was also a member of the liberal synagogue. But Basil Enriques was a disciple of Montefiore who spent his life as a leader of settlements in the East End of London, which still exists, and a great deal of his time was given

up to the promotion of liberal Judaism. I'll come to Robert Enriques a little later on.

But at any rate I could rely as though he were a rock on Claude Montefiore.

I have a letter from him for example which he sent round to my home a couple of hours after I had delivered a sermon at the liberal synagogue. It was on the feast of Hannukah, which is the feast of dedication, and I laid great stress on the fact that the word was Hannukah, dedication --it had nothing to do with war. It was the rededication of the temple, and the war was still going on, and I criticized those people who thought that Hannukah was an occasion when you would commemorate the Maccabean War. I said it ain't so. The Maccabees were what we should now call a national liberalization movement. They were not soldiers, and the Jewish habit which had grown up to have a special service for soldiers on the eve of Hannukah in the synagogue was based on a misconception.

When I finished delivering this sermon and I was outside in the sort of hall leading to the synagogue, he came up to me and he said, "Do you know what Judas Maccabeus would have said or done if he had heard that sermon?"

I said, "No, what?"

He said, "He'd have taken his sword and run you through."

So I said, "Look, we'll have to differ about that."

(laughter)

Now what was typical of Montefiore was that within a couple of hours when I got back home there was a man with a letter -- his



own butler who had been sent in a car to make sure that I shouldn't worry about the fact that he was rude to me, in which he apologized for having threatened to run his sword through me, and then went on to say what I thought was very remarkable. The one hope of his life which had been ruined was that his son/Leonard, whom he loved, had not become what he wanted him to become, which was an officer in the British Navy, and then he went on to say, "I am not one of those of people who want to abolish war. If you don't have war what opportunity do you have for heroism, for sacrifice and so on?"

Well, I am sure you will agree that this is a rather old fashioned view.

Q: Ha!

Perlzweig: I mean most people would say even more old fashioned. But holding the views that I did then -- that I was opposed to war, that I wanted to abolish it, and that I didn't like armies and navies at all -- for a man to write that to me as a kind of excuse for his inability to agree with what I was saying, was an indication of the fact that he was determined to preserve -- he had accepted and was determined to preserve -- my right to say what I believed.

The difference between him and Mattuck in that respect was like day and night. Whenever a chink opened which enabled Mattuck to weaken my position by putting Zionism or Palestine in a bad light, he would do it. Whenever that happened Montefiore, instead

of taking advantage of the weakness of my position, would do something to shore it up.

Now one of the things that he did which I think worthy of record is that at a certain point -- and I am speaking now for many years after I first went to the synagogue -- when Zionism was under attack and Mattuck was there attacking it for example by writing an article in The Spectator in which he said that he wouldn't go <sup>o</sup> so far as to say that a Zionist couldn't be a good citizen, but he would say that he'd be a good citizen only by virtue of being able to believe in contradictory things at the same time.

Those are not the words he used, but this is what it amounted to, and one of the results of that was that somebody wrote a letter, either to The Times or to another newspaper, that said, "How can Rabbi Mattuck say so and so and so and so, when one of his own colleagues in his own pulpit says something different?"

Now of course I would normally have written a reply and said, "In this synagogue you can have your own views," but I didn't want to do that, I didn't want to exacerbate the situation.

The point I am making is that I was able to survive in the liberal synagogue, and could have survived longer with Montefiore. I could not survive with Mattuck.

Montefiore at a certain point, when he began to feel that my point of view, which meant for him me, was being attacked in the public prints, went out of his way to ensure that I should have

the best possible recommendation, the right of having a place in the liberal synagogue.

He wrote a pamphlet which had a long title, but the substance of which was Zionism and anti-Zionism in liberal Judaism, and in this pamphlet he said that it was being written by him and by me in order to show that we both had a place under what he called the umbrella of liberal Judaism. And he went on to say, which was extremely valuable to me, that he would go on being an anti-Zionist and being active in anti-Zionism, and I would go on being a Zionist and being active in Zionism.

Well, he sent me this thing, and he said, "You know, Mattuck who has seen this thing doesn't want it published at all."

I've got that letter somewhere, and I'll produce it one day.

He said, "But I think you are entitled to have your position clearly explained, because you explained it when you came along."

So I altered this pamphlet because he gave me the views not of Ben Gurion but of (Vladimir) Jabotinsky. He made out that my Zionism practically meant that every Jew should take up his luggage and go to Israel at once. Well, I pointed out that that wasn't so.

But at any rate he thought that this thing ought to be printed and I subscribed<sup>to</sup> it, and it was, and there is a copy of it today in Cincinnati

But from the synagogue -- from the Jewish Religious Union as it was called -- it disappeared shortly afterwards, and has not been heard of since.

However, the last time I was in Israel the Hebrew Union College there insisted of having it duplicated -- I had a copy of it, and they insisted on having it duplicated -- and it was duplicated a half a dozen times and it was sent to all sorts of places here, and of course it's in the Zionist Archives in Jerusalem.

Montefiore, although he had all these views which to me are very hard, nevertheless is one of the great people in my life, although he was a man who took every appropriate opportunity -- and he didn't take any inappropriate ones -- to denigrate Zionism, was prepared to say if necessary -- was yet prepared to say that a man who was a Zionist but who believed in Judaism could have a great and noble religion. You will find something like those phrases -- that very expression -- in an essay which he wrote from the book which I mentioned repeatedly, The Legacy of Israel.

Towards the end of the book there is something called "Conclusion" -- I think it's called "Conclusion, but anyway something like that, of which he is the writer -- and he says there that although he is against Zionism he has to admit that the man who is a Zionist but who a religion at the same time can have a great and noble religion.

Now I rather pride myself for being responsible for that. Whether it is so, or I am taking this pride without any justification I don't know, but at any rate I am one of the few people that he ever discussed the thing with; Therefore he was one of my standbys, and he was so anxious to give me a status in the synagogue because of my difference of opinion that he used to quote me whenever he

could, whenever I gave him the slightest chance.

For example, he once preached a sermon in which he said that he wasn't in favor of going out and converting people who were on the street, if they were Christians or nothing at all

It's not appropriate, and it somehow offends his sense of what is right.

I didn't think that was a good enough excuse for not converting people if you wanted to. I had another excuse, which was rather daring. My excuse was that no human being knows the truth, -- the whole truth -- and that you shouldn't convert somebody else; he might have some other truth that you don't have.

Now that appealed to him, and in one of his printed sermons he quotes that from me, and I am sure he did it quite deliberately in the effort to try and show that I was something of an authority on this.

I relied on him heavily until the very end, until I felt that my position at the liberal synagogue was not comfortable enough. I wasn't able to fit myself in, I was under such constant pressure, chiefly from Mattuck, I am bound to say, not from other people.

Mattuck, and to some extent -- I'll come to that in a moment -- a man called. . . I am trying to think of his name, but I have forgotten it now. . . Colonel Gluckstein. . .  
(voice trails off)

It will come back to me in a moment.

At any rate, when I found that it was impossible -- even though

there were people in the synagogue, especially one man, Sir Philip Hartog (1864-1947), who was one of the great academics of his time, the sort of man who wrote the articles on the examination for the Encyclopaedia Britannica, although he constantly rang me up and said, "Don't surrender, don't surrender, fight it," and was very helpful to me, he and some others, nevertheless I decided that the only thing I could do was to find another post, which I did, at <sup>the loss of a</sup> ~~xxxx xxxxx~~ third of my salary, at the synagogue called Aylwyn Gardens Northwestern Reformed Synagogue.

So Montefiore summoned me. He was lying on a couch, and he was obviously ill, and he was obviously going to die, and he says, "I have asked you to come and see me for the ~~prx~~ pleasure of seeing you, and secondly to tell you that Sir Philip" -- that was Sir Philip Hartog -- "says that we should leave no stone unturned to keep you in the synagogue."

So I said to him, "Mr. Montefiore, If only to please you I'd like to do it, but you are not the obstacle. I don't think that Mattuck will leave me alone, and I think the best thing I can do for the synagogue and myself is to go."

So I went, and at the last annual meeting of the synagogue, I am bound to say in all truthfulness -- it was a public occasion -- Mattuck got up and said that I had worked wonders for the synagogue and I had kept the bridges open between the synagogue and the Jewish community, which was true. That was true, because I was the only party in the synagogue to whom most of the Jewish community would talk.

When he came to dates -- for example I had life insurance, half of which I paid and half of which the synagogue paid; well the synagogue didn't give me its half, if it cashed it in, it ~~let~~ let me keep my half and thought it was doing something and that wasn't comme il faut, however it's a small matter, and as events had it that would be worth very little now, so I took it at an early date at which I was able to

But I was for 18 years at the liberal synagogue, and I managed during those 18 years -- and there is enough on record to prove it -- to maintain that a Zionist and a liberal Jew could be the same thing.

In fact I went further, and I am sorry now that I didn't commit it to writing. I said you couldn't be a Zionist without being a liberal Jew. If you were an Orthodox Jew you had to wait for the Messiah, which is what the Naturae Carta says today, and in my view says so correctly from the Orthodox point of view.

If you wanted to be a Zionist you had to be prepared to agree that Judaism in its outlook ~~must~~ must alter in order to accommodate the establishment of a Jewish community in Israel.

That was the view I held. I am sorry I never wrote it down. I have admitted several times that I suffer from what I politely call indolence, for which the more correct word is laziness, which explains why I didn't write it.

But that was my view, and I was able for 18 years, almost alone in London, with people in the synagogue bearing me up, like Sir Philip Hartog, and a man called Louis Jacobs, who was a follower

of Henry George, who had flourished in New York and in America.

Q: The single tax man?

Perlzweig: The single tax man. He -- Louis Jacobs -- was one of the people who used to contribute, together with Colonel Wedgewood -- whom I'll come to in a moment, Colonel Wedgewood who was a supporter or at least an admirer of Henry George --

Q: I think we've come to the very end (of the tape).

Perlzweig: Right.

(end of tape)

End of Interview 5 w/ Dr. Maurice Perlzweig by Peter Jessup,  
June 27th 1981.



DK

Interviewee: Dr. Maurice L. Perlzweig, Rabbi

Interviewer: Peter Jessup

Place: New York City

Interview No. 6 - September 23rd 1981

Q: Well, Dr. Perlzweig, it's very nice to be here after your vacation. You were in the United Kingdom and in Geneva.

This is Peter Jessup from Columbia, and we are about to resume our memoir.

Dr. Perlzweig: Well, at this point I think what I had better do is to put in a few definitions of words which I used, and which are sometimes used rather ignorantly or indiscriminately, and if anybody ever does read what I said it will perhaps make it a bit easier to understand some of the things that I've said.

The definitions I am thinking of are of various currents of opinion in the Jewish religion, in Judaism.

Now let my first definition point out that the word "Judaism" in English refers to the religion. In other languages it has a

wider definition. Das Judentum in German means the totality of Jewish life and thought, like Le judaïsme in French, but in English when we talk about Judaism we are talking I think for the most part about the religion of Judaism, about the Jewish religion.

Now the words that I think we need to have a clear definition of are such words as Reform, Conservative, Progressive, and so on, and I must begin by saying that these words have different meanings in different languages.

In the United States Reform means what I can call the extreme left or the left, that is to say the largest movement away from Orthodoxy.

That was certainly true during the 1920's and the 1930's and 1940's. It's a little bit less true, if I may use that expression, today, because the Reform movement in America -- which is represented by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations so far as the congregations are concerned, and by the Central Conference of American Rabbis so far as the rabbis are concerned, and I am one of them, I am a member of the Central Conference -- is today a much broader movement. You will find in it people who are radical in their views of religion, including even something called Humanistic Judaism, and at the other end people who are very solicitous about maintaining certain ancient traditions, and even bringing them back, because Reform Judaism in this country, like humanity in general, has been lately overwhelmed by the drift towards conservatism, in its various forms, whether

it's the Moral Majority or Reagan's economics, or whatever it may be -- you find the same in Jewish life.

But radicalism in Reform in America has taken various forms. I have mentioned one -- humanistic Judaism -- and it's not unusual in this country for a rabbi -- a Reform rabbi -- to officiate at a marriage together with a Catholic priest or a Protestant minister.

Generally in America it means the left of the whole spectrum of Judaism.

In England on the other hand Reform means conservatism.

Q: Really?

Perlzweig: That means it is not the extreme left. The extreme left in England is called liberal, and sometimes now progressive, but it's liberal, and Reform is a movement which began 150 years ago roughly, in a way which I will describe in a moment.

In Germany Reform was the extreme left. In fact before Hitler there was only one congregation in the whole country which called itself Reformed. It was called Reform Gemeinde, and I remember it was on Johannesstrasse because I visited it in the 1920's.

Q: Where, in Frankfurt?

Perlzweig: No, in Berlin, and it represented there the last word in assimilation, you know.

The Reform Gemeinde was a congregation where Hebrew and Aramaic were reduced to a minimum in the service. Sometimes a whole page was reduced to one line, just in order to keep the feel of tradition, but the rest of it was in German.

The Sabbath was moved from Saturday to Sunday.

When I attended a service in that synagogue I noticed the three rabbis on the platform were dressed like Lutheran clergymen, with ruffs around their necks.

On the other hand there were signs of tradition. They read out of the scroll of the law on a Sunday morning, and all the people who were assisting in this ceremony were wearing in the morning full evening dress -- white ties and tails -- and the three clergymen who read the service or conducted the service were so Prussian in their accent that even a stranger like myself only slightly acquainted with German was able to feel very strongly the impact of this Prussian accent.

That was the Reform Gemeinde.

Liberal in those days in Germany, on the other hand, was a mild tampering with the service, but the general conduct of the service was not unlike the Orthodox. Men and women were separated, with the women in the gallery -- which was a very reactionary thing -- but this was the liberal movement, of which the real leader was the famous Rabbi Leo Baeck (1874-1956).

Of course they changed -- in the business of women for example -- they changed very considerably.

Now in this country conservative, which began as a reform movement, but called itself conservative to distinguish itself from Reform, consists today of people who place special emphasis on Halakhah, which is the Hebrew word used to signify the whole body of Jewish law which has developed, except

only the degree of development or the final result is the subject of great differences.

I remember that when I was in the World Jewish Congress one of my colleagues was a conservative rabbi, and he would say, "I don't know on a certain Saturday whether I will arrive in time to go and conduct the service. If I don't arrive I'll let you know somehow, and you go and conduct it."

He didn't mind whether I was Reform or anything else, and what was even more striking, he arrived on this Saturday morning in an airplane, and broke all those rules about observing the Sabbath.

So you have to bear in mind that all these things have different origins and have undergone different evolutions.

Today, strange as it may sound, with not enough Reform rabbis to go around -- there are about 1200 of them in this country -- when the Placement Committee as it's called wants to fill a pulpit, it will sometimes send to its members a conservative ~~pulp~~ pulpit, and neither the conservatives nor the reformists thinks it is strange if a rabbi who was trained as a Reform rabbi conducts the services in a conservative synagogue.

There will always be Reform rabbis not so desperately Reformed and ~~that~~ they are prepared to read portions of the service

Reform synagogue.

Now the word "progressive" has an interesting history. There was founded an organization early in the 1920's called The World Union for Progressive Judaism.

There was a problem involved in the name, because there were two sets of synagogues. In England for example, what is called in England Reformed or what is called in England liberal-- who both joined in this World Union, and the word progressive was excogitated in order to cover both.

On the other hand I must add this -- that some of the synagogues which were called liberal in England in former times have now transformed themselves into progressive, without any change in ritual or anything else, but in order to indicate that they want to be nearer the mainstream of the Jewish traditions.

One of the synagogues in which I was a minister, a liberal synagogue, is now called the North London Progressive Synagogue.

The origin of the word "progressive" lies in the fact that you had to find a common word to cover both Reform and liberal and so on, which were names which were given to synagogues which were all deviations from Orthodoxy.

Now the Reform synagogue in London -- which has as I say a rather unusual, idiosyncratic origin -- doesn't call itself a Reform synagogue, or didn't. It began as the West London Synagogue of British and Foreign Jews, the idea being that they wanted to say that they are really British, and to distinguish them from the Sephardim and the Ashkenazim, which they thought was an artificial distinction.

Now when they began their theory was, or would have been, familiar to certain kinds of nonconformist Christians, but was not in the Jewish tradition.

They adopted the theory that what was divinely ordered or recorded or revealed was in the Hebrew scripture, and that everything which followed -- the Talmud, the Midrash, the Mishna, and that whole tremendous literature which has grown up around and based on the Bible -- was what they called "accretions." That was their favorite word.

I used to possess a book -- I don't know whether I've still got it -- written by a man called Laurie Magnus (1872-1933), whose father, Sir Philip Magnus (1842-1933) -- later a member of Parliament for the University of London -- was once a minister of the Reform synagogue, and Laurie Magnus was the father of the present Sir Philip Magnus, who is a well known historian,

Well, he wrote a more or less polemical book justifying the Reform synagogue, and he used the word "accretions"

constantly, something you could drop.

The result was that what was in the prayer book in Aramaic -- such as the prayer which is recited which is really a doxology after death, which in the average synagogue is in Aramaic -- they put back into Hebrew. Aramaic disappeared. It became Hebrew, and the Hebrew scripture was everything.

The result was that they followed the Bible in every respect, even when it had been modified by the rabbis who came later.

I mean this wasn't consistently done. For example in the Bible there is no objection to polygamy. On the contrary, the very men of the Bible indulge in it from Abraham onwards, and of course we know the case of Solomon, from whom probably most of us are descended, because he had a thousand ladies who helped to carry out the First Commandment, THOU WILL BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY.

But the result was that they became very much like a sect in the Middle Ages called the Karaites. This comes from a Hebrew word which means "to read." They read the Bible and said this is it. The Karaites have really disappeared. There are some in Israel, and there used to be quite a lot in Russia and in Egypt and in various other places in the Middle East. They went back to the Bible.

One professor in this country has speculated that there must have been a Karaite in London who told them that this was the way to proceed. I don't think there is any truth in that.



What happened was, the early Reformers, who were very distinguished people, had very close ties with certain non-conformists. The people who founded the University of London I think in the 1330's -- and who did so because people who were not Anglicans couldn't obtain degrees in Oxford or in Cambridge -- consisted of nonconformists and Jews.

These nonconformists, like the Jews, said, What we follow is the scripture.

There was a sect for example, called the Primitive Methodists, and that meant primitive in the sense that they went back to the scripture and the whole Catholic tradition they abandoned, -- the Catholic tradition which is very strong in the Church of England, and in England in the Presbyterian Church in some respects.

So this is what happened. The result was that certain festivals they couldn't celebrate properly. I am talking now about the Reform Jews. Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication, is post-Biblical. The Maccabees came after the Bible. They are recorded in the Apocrypha, therefore they had to abandon, or at least modify, Hanukkah.

Or if you take another case, Passover, which is a tremendous occasion in Jewish life, uses -- I know you are conversant with the word Haggadah, I remember years ago we discussed the famous Haggadah in Sarajevo, which has since been reproduced --

Haggadah consists very largely of Aramaic, therefore the Haggadah disappeared -- I say Aramaic -- because there are quotations from the Talmud and so on.

They substituted something they called domestic service for the eve of Passover, or again they didn't observe two days in the festivals, which was an addition made by the rabbis. They went back to one day.

I visited the synagogue when it still used that structure, and it was very strange to me -- I am talking about myself as a boy.

So this is what reform was. It was very radical. It was really a kind of Jewish reformation, that is to say to abandon the tradition of Catholic antiquity, which is current Christianity, and go back to the Bible.

Well, these are the definitions, and I am not sure that they are very helpful, but they show that these words have changed. I remember a character -- I think it was Humpty Dumpty in Alice in Wonderland -- who said, "A word means what I say it means." And you can say very much the same thing about some of these words.

Now having gotten that put of the way. . .

Q: I think it's a very useful framework.

Perlweig. Yes.

Q: Some people may grasp this (unaided), but for others this will be very helpful.

Perlzweig: Yes. I mean I don't know of any account of these things, which may be partly due to the fact that they are constantly undergoing change.

You see, in the body to which I belong -- the Central Conference of American Rabbis -- there is a constant struggle as to what the definition of Reform Judaism in this country is.

There are all kinds of splinter groups. It doesn't break up, -- I mean the organization doesn't break up, because it's a very large and powerful organization, which possesses theological seminaries and so on -- and the general feeling is, and certainly my feeling would be, if a man chooses to officiate at a marriage between a Jew and a non-Jew, if his conscience is right about it, I am not sure that I am entitled to say to him you shouldn't do it.

The result in the Central Conference is that it is not in the spirit of Jewish tradition to officiate at mixed marriages, and we would wish to discourage it, but they don't say that they would prohibit it. They don't say that they will exclude a rabbi who officiates in that way.

I don't know how many rabbis do it. The figures I have seen vary between 100 and 400. But certainly enough do so that if anybody in New York or Chicago or any of the great cities

wants a mixed marriage like that with a rabbi -- either a rabbi alone or the clergyman of the party which is not Jewish -- they have no difficulty in having the ceremony performed.

So that's as far as definition goes.

Now I want to say that between . . . -- I don't know when I graduated from Cambridge what the year was, 1921 or 1922 or something like that, but between then and 1938, when I left the liberal synagogue, I must say that I am appalled when I look back at the amount of territory that I covered, and I don't know how I did it, because I was simultaneously the minister of two synagogues. I was the second minister of the liberal Jewish synagogue in St. John's Wood, which is the cathedral synagogue of liberal Judaism, and I was the minister -- the founder and the minister -- of the North London Liberal Synagogue.

I think I got away with murder almost, because I was so fluent, that is to say I didn't have to sit down and write a sermon. In fact I am ashamed to confess that during that whole period I only wrote up two sermons, and then after they were delivered.

Q: Ah!

Perlzweig: One was a memorial service. It was a memorial for Israel Zangwill (1864-1926) which The Jewish Chronicle, which

was very friendly to Zangwill,

(for)  
The other was/a man called Noah Baru , which I wrote out afterwards for the paper which was then called The Weekly in this country.

But I wrote them both after they had been delivered.

What I used to do would be to go from one to the other, and while the anthem was being sung think up the sermon. (laughs)

Now there must have been some very peculiar sermons, although no one ever complained about them. But I was able to do it. I could think on my feet, and this is I think one of the reasons why I succeeded in doing it.

But as a matter of fact I had an enormous activity.

Now let me just put it on the record. Let me put on record now the various movements and organizations that I was involved in during these 17 or 18 years.

I began with the B'nai B'rith, and there I would like to disclose something which I think nobody has ever revealed or knows.

There was a man in London called G. Gordon Liverman, who was a Justice of the Peace and a borough candidate for Parliament and so on, and who had been a friend of mine since childhood, and he took it into his head one day to say to me, "You ought to be in B'nai B'rith."

Now B'nai B'rith in England wasn't what it is in this country. In this country it is a mass group, and it rejoices in the fact

that it has so many people in it, and part of its influence, which is quite considerable in its headquarters, and even with some Government agencies, is due to the fact that it represents such a large membership.

In England -- you might say characteristically -- it was an élite; you had to be elected to it, and the election wasn't only a formality.

So when I agreed to join this party -- it was called The First Lodge of England of B'nai B'rith -- and Liverman put forward my name, there <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ very strong objections.

The objections were not to me personally, but it throws some light over the condition of Judaism as a religion in England that the objections were very strong on the part of people who said, "We can't have a liberal minister here. It's not Jewish."

So I withdrew my name and I waited. And he rang me up.

Q: Who rang you up?

Perlzweig: Liverman. He was one of the chief people in the B'nai B'rith. He had been the first officer at large, and he was the ~~person~~ president of the body, whatever it was called -- I have forgotten -- which was the body that governed all the lodges in England. There were very few at the

time, only two or three.

At any rate he rang me up and he said, "I think the time has come when you ought to have your name put forward again, and I consider it as a member of the B'nai B'rith very important that someone exercising your influence in the community should be there to counsel them."

I said, "Well, if you think it's all right, I don't mind whether they accept me or not."

So he put forward my name again, and this time there were the same objections, but one man in the audience arose and objected to the objections. That man was a very great scholar and a great leader in England called Dr. Moses Gaster (1856-1939). His youngest son, Theodore Herzl Gaster (b. London 1906) is a professor in America, I don't know where exactly, but a great authority, one of the leading authorities on primitive Middle Eastern religions.

And I may say -- it's an interesting point -- that when Gaster was an old man and going blind and couldn't read so easily he compelled this poor boy to learn Samaritan. The result was that he is now a great authority on the Samaritans.

Anyhow Gaster, with whom I had certain personal connections -- I used to go out to see him very often, and one of my sisters married one of his sons, he had 15 children altogether, and 13  
(loud noises in tape)

of them survived, and one of his sons married a sister of mine, so I had family connections with him, besides which I used to go out with him to bookshops where he bought for a song very valuable volumes, and I was the one who read the front page of the book.

Q:

Perlzweig: For years I. . . . .

I remember once in Brighton of all places I went to a bookshop and the man said, "I've got something for you, Dr. Gaster," and he produced some Latin work which I didn't know. And Gaster said to him, "How much do you want for it?"

I read the front page, you see.

He said, "How much do you want for this?"

"Five pounds."

Well, all I can tell you is that he went out of the shop carrying this book for five shillings!

Q: Now five pounds.

Perlzweig: Not five pounds, five shillings. Well, I was very useful to him that way, and I got to know him very well.

The only trouble was, as I wrote in the paper of Hebrew University, that when I used to see him on the second day of



festivals, -- the Orthodox <sup>have</sup> ~~missed~~ two days for most of the festivals, and the liberals had one, so on the second day I used to go to Gaster's house in Maida Vale, where he sat on a very high-back chair with a fez on his head for some reason or other, and we used to have a conversation, and it always went like this,

"What are we going to talk about? In religion you are a follower of that simpleton Montefiore, in politics you are a follower of that rascal Weizmann."

And I would say to him, "Dr. Gaster, there is still Jewish scholarship to talk about."

And he would say, "What Jewish scholars would there be since Zunz (Leopold Zunz, 1794-1886) except for myself?"

I mean that was the kind of man he was, but he stood ~~xxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ up in the B'nai B'rith and he lambasted them, and he said, "Look, a Jew is a Jew according to the tradition, and the purpose of the B'nai B'rith is to promote and use one of their expressions, brotherly love and harmony."

And the irony of it was that the founders of the movement in the United States included a great many Reform Jews who wanted an organization which bridged the gap between the Orthodox, foreign and native and all that kind of thing.

So I was elected to the lodge.

Within about four years I had occupied the great office of the lodge and became the president.

And this is very important in one respect. I told this unbelievable story.

In 1932, in November of 1932 -- I think Hitler came to power in 1933 -- when the newspapers were full of the advances of Hitler and so on, I delivered what was called the Presidential Address, which was a great social occasion, where several hundred people were present, including most of the leaders of the Jewish community, and I got up on my hind legs and said, "This fellow Hitler, if he comes to power, is going to destroy the Jews in Germany and in any other place where he will be."

And in order to document this I read out of the program of the nazis which they had published -- they had had a meeting some years before-- <sup>in</sup> /which they had put in various headings of the things they were going to do, and one was to get rid of the Jews.

But what was really striking and what convinced me, if I needed any conviction, was that the Manchester Guardian a day or two before the lecture had published translations of songs which were sung by the storm troopers as they marched through Germany, and these songs were of the most bloodthirsty character.

Q: The Horst Wessel song ?

Perlzweig: ~~Thaxxxxa~~ Well, that was one of them, but they were songs that said quite clearly that when they were in power the



Capitalism and the Jews, which I've read. . . which I've had  
for 20 years

(voice trails off, plus recording extremely poor)

who took the same view, that there was no end to what the nazis  
would do.

Now I reminded that the B'nai B'rith was a

I am still put on their notepaper as the next president (?)  
which included many leaders

As I said it was in those days an élitist affair.

They were very helpful at the time and before the Balfour  
Declaration overcoming the effects of Jewish opposition to the  
Balfour Declaration, which was quite considerable and very  
important

My friend Claude Montefiore, together with the <sup>then</sup> president  
of the Board of Deputies of the Queen's Council,  
Alexander, published a letter in The Times objecting to the  
whole thing.

B'nai B'rith helped to rally the rank and file  
that produced

I had to resign.

And there is a history which somebody has written <sup>of</sup> ~~xx~~ which  
I've heard a great many times

but which I haven't read because I just hadn't the time to get through it all.

Q: That's a history of the B'nai B'rith?

Perlzweig: Of the first lodge of England, of

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: They sent me a copy of it. What pleases me is that the man who wrote this, whose name was Schwab -- he is still alive -- had a daughter who is a female rabbi of the liberal synagogue.

Q: In England?

Perlzweig: In England, whereas he, Schwab's father, whom I remember very well, I used to have rows with because ~~xxxxxxx~~ his business in life was import and export, and he used to go to Germany, and when he was ~~xxxxxxx~~ put up as president I ~~was~~ strongly objected to it.

I said, "How can a man whose business it is to denounce Hitler go to Germany every now and again and do business," which he

justified on the ground that he was giving Jews in Germany an opportunity to sell their goods which otherwise they would not have sold. (? voice trails off)

But the B'nai B'rith at any rate was very important to me because it gave me the platform on which I imparted (?) my view of Hitler.

From that day to this I've never had the ~~ix~~ slightest tremor of doubt that Hitler had intended to wipe out the Jews.

Now I was asked in London, "Why and how did you come to this conclusion?"

Well, I read naz' literature, I read prenaz' literature. There is a book here I have been looking for, the name of which I have forgotten, where a man describes what Germany should do in the way of becoming more nationalistic, and it's clear from this book that those people even thought that the communists were preferable to the people we generally call liberals.

That was one thing. I knew there was this movement in Germany and that it was very strong.

Secondly, I probably had a prejudice. I think I may have mentioned when I was talking about my father that in the household in which I was brought up in as a child you had virtually a colony of Vienna, and all the intellectual things which were discussed in Vienna were discussed there, and one of the things was the enmity which Wagner felt for Giacomo Meyerbeer -- the Jewish composer Meyerbeer (1791-1864) -- who was doing at one

point better publicly than he was, and Wagner wrote this book called Das Judentum in der Musik -- Judaism in Music -- which was a filthy

I mean Wagner was altogether a rather objectionable person.

I read only the other day somewhere -- which shows you all the stuff I got here--that the first conductor of one of his operas was a man called Levy -- Hermann Levy (1839-1900) -- and before he would allow Levy to conduct the opera -- and he wanted him to do it for technical reasons, because the man was a very great conductor -- he tried to indicate to him that it was improper for a Jew to do it and that he ought to become a Christian.

Well, this is the type of man he was.

So that's B'nai B'rith. At that point

I don't think that what I did in the B'nai B'rith I did a great many things there.

Sooner or later this was to come to an end (this must come to an end ?)

That was one thing -- B'nai B'rith, which I continued when

still an honorary member of ~~of~~ the Toronto Lodge.

Now the other thing was -- I said nothing so far about North London, and I must say that it was very difficult, the journeys to North London from where I lived, which was either Hampstead -- I lived for the most part in Hampstead Gardens -- or. . . to get to Stanford Hill, to go in the morning to the liberal synagogue and then take a bus to Stanford Hill for the afternoon. It was physically very wearing.

The only thing I had was when I went through the Golder's Green one of the roads I went down was called Camden Road which had a special meaning to me because Compton MacKenzie (1883-1972) wrote a novel called Sinister Street, in which I had a certain interest because one of the characters in it was depicted as the second master at St. Paul's School, which is a famous school, what in London they call a public school, which is a private school, and he was afterwards my headmaster at Owens School.

And the other was that the whole of this long thoroughfare is lined by nonconformist and peculiar religious chapels of various kinds, and I was always from the top of the bus able to look ~~XXXXXX~~ and see whether I could recognize what religions they were.



I was doing work on these two things, and in North London I was alone. I mean I was not in any way supervised from the liberal synagogue. I was not an employee of North London, I didn't receive a salary. That is to say the liberal synagogue lent me to North London.

From the point of view of the of the congregation I could do almost anything. In fact I was elected chairman of the congregation, which is a very peculiar thing that a man should simultaneously be the minister and the chairman.

There were two things about North London that are I think worthy of record, for they have lasted as I say 18 years, which is a very long time in a man's life.

One was the synagogue which we built. We began by hiring a room -- it wasn't much more than a room -- at the Public Library, and we made an announcement -- not a very big announcement -- that we were holding a service on a certain day Saturday afternoon. We decided on Saturday afternoon because it didn't clash with Saturday morning at the liberal synagogue. What we overlooked was that it clashed with the football matches but that's another thing.

To our great astonishment not only was the room packed, but the stairway all the way down was packed, and there were people out in the street who couldn't get in.

Well, this was a revelation to us. Of course we misinterpreted it and we thought that people had a real interest. It was curiosity.

The liberal synagogue, which is in American terms quite an almost conventional synagogue, was regarded then as really far out, I mean practically as they put it Christian.

So we announced then that we would take a bigger hall the following Saturday, and Mattuck (Dr. Israel Mattuck, 1883-1954) was conducting the affair because I had no qualification whatever as I think I have already said.

There is a notice on all the seats, "If you would like further information just fill this in and send it in to us," and an indignant voice from the body of the hall said, SHAVAT. (voice trails off)

They just couldn't conceive of ~~anything~~ anybody doing anything so wicked.

Anyhow we put an advertisement in The Jewish Chronicle which I think that we would have this <sup>service</sup>/on the next Saturday and that would preach.

Well, of course the place was packed, hundreds of people, and Claude Montefiore, who was what Stephen Wise used to call an irenic man, he was a peace seeking man, delivered the sermon on Judaism, not liberal Judaism, and after he had been going for about five minutes a man stood up in the audience and he said, "Judaism? You call this Judaism? You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

And then all hell broke loose, and there was shouting.

There was an attempt made to break up the service.

Well, I don't know how it happened, but our stewards managed to persuade these people to go out.

We had been sitting on the platform helpless, and then Montefiore took up the sermon again and finished it, and I said at the end, "We understand that many people don't understand what we are getting at, and therefore on Wednesday on such and such a date we shall hold a meeting at which we will invite anybody who is interested to come and put any questions or to make any statements, on Wednesday so-and-so so-and-so."

A voice from the body of the hall, "Yes, if you are alive on Wednesday."

And after that we had police protection.

This was the beginning of it.

The people who formed the initial quorum, which turned out to be 12 -- 12 individuals who joined the congregation

-- and there were a lot of people who didn't fail to point out that this was the same number as those who founded Christianity, the 12 Apostles, and that obviously we were going ~~as~~ along the same path.

But the people who joined were liberal minded people, with a very considerable proportion of teachers. There were small businessmen. They were people who really believed that Judaism

ought to take a stand which was compatible with what we knew as a result of scientific inquiry and so on.

And it grew very, very slowly.

We were very much assisted by some of the ultra-Orthodox, especially Hassidic rabbis. There was one rabbi who stood up and forbade any member of his congregation to go anywhere near this liberal synagogue.

The result was of course that the next Sabbath we were overflowing with people who wanted to see this terrible thing.

Well, the first thing I wanted to say was that we decided to build a synagogue and not meet in the library. We met in the Public Library at \_\_\_\_\_, and then we met in rooms which were called the Defoe Rooms. The writer (Daniel) Defoe used to live in that neighborhood and

We decided that we would build a synagogue, and we decided to build it ourselves. It's in my life a very extraordinary affair, where a group of people -- we didn't employ an architect, which was a great mistake, or any professional, we did have a contractor because we couldn't put up a roof without one --

And we drew plans. I drew plans, I suddenly became an architect. And in a place called Belfast Road in a railway site really someplace

I remember going there going there weekends and seeing men with paint brushes -- members of the congregation who built

their synagogue, which gives you an idea of the devotion of the people, and of how extraordinarily lucky we were to have everything done by people who were not paid.

The secretary, who had been a high school mistress or was a high school mistress, acted as a secretary, and kept all the books and everything else. And there were other people who did other jobs.

We had a meeting once a month where we discussed the things that were of interest to us. I would give them a talk on some aspect of Jewish life and they would discuss it. It was from my point of view a very exhilarating experience, and as I say they were liberal-minded.

For example when the choir sang a song which began "Babylon" the mighty city predicted its destruction and how their children's heads would be banged against the wall, the congregation revolted, "This is barbarous. It may be in the Bible, but it's barbarous."

We got rid of it at once. You see, it was that kind of thing. People who thought for themselves, who weren't taken in by what the preacher said, but who examined it.

Well, it was a great mistake building this synagogue, because one of practical results which I will never forget was that we froze in wintertime and we broiled in the summer, because the roof about which we had known nothing was not a protection against the atmosphere.

That was one thing. I mean I recommend to anybody, if they ever build a synagogue in this way -- which has a great deal to be said for it -- <sup>that</sup> /they should employ at least some professional who would tell them whether the thing they are putting up is habitable.

The other thing which I think has no precedent at all that I want to speak about -- building a synagogue or a church by the people in it has happened a good many times and there was nothing very strange about that, but this thing was quite different -- is that we used the Prayer Book of the liberal synagogue and we didn't like it. I didn't like it because it ~~was~~ completely excluded everything which referred to Zion. The people who wrote it were anti-Zion.

One thing that remained and which was the statement FROM AION SHALL GO FORTH THE LAW AND THE WORD OF

It is interpreted to mean that Zion means the ideal, which doesn't seem to mean the ideal grows out of the idea doesn't seem to be a very striking statement.

At any rate there it was. A great many things that we are accustomed to -- the music which



but of course it had to be written.

Then I sat down and drafted the book. I had to use various devices to save money. For example I didn't reprint anything in the book. When something occurred in the service which had occurred before I referred the reader back to page so-and-so, which made it a bit difficult, but still we did it.

And then not only was it printed, but a woman who was then the president of the congregation and a ~~very~~ leading spirit of the liberal synagogue, the Honorable Lily Montague, who was very anti-Zionist, didn't know what it was, it might have been something out of the middle of Africa, wrote the preface, agreed to it.

Now the point I am making is that the big liberal synagogue to whom we were bound for almost anything, lent its own printing plates in order to give us the opportunity of printing our own prayer book, and the prayer book contained among other things what Mattuck used to say not with the best of good will to me, "your Zionist litany."

I used the device, which is very old in Jewish history, of making up a prayer from a collection of biblical verses, so that they read continuously, and I collected together a whole lot of verses that referred to Jerusalem and Zion one after the other, which once every month was read in the four services



The way I look at it now --  
going to get a copy of it -- I am surprised at my moderation.  
I didn't quote some of the things I know in the Bible which  
are very much in the line of Mr. Begin. I didn't. I didn't  
want to overdo it. I just wanted to have this element of the  
Jewish tradition still preserved in the book.

Now the book was very popular. It was reprinted in South  
Africa. There was a big Reform movement in South Africa, and  
they reprinted it there, and when I was in South Africa in 1938,  
which is when I left the liberal synagogue and I paid a visit  
there, they presented a copy of it to me in lion's skin, which  
I need hardly tell you the lion's skin has almost been eaten  
by moths and other things, because at the time I didn't understand  
that you had to take special precautions.

But this thing which you won't find in the British Museum,  
we did it all ourselves. A publisher would know that under the  
law he has to send a copy of everything he prints to the British  
Museum, so it's not there, we didn't know this. You won't find  
it referred to in any history of Reform liturgies which people  
have written. They don't know about it.

So I am glad to have it on record, not because there is  
anything wonderful in it -- I wrote half a dozen prayers which  
are in it and which were, I thought, more appropriate, than  
some of the prayers for the Royal Family for example, which  
occurs in every Orthodox prayer book, I spoke about the British

Commonwealth and all that kind of thing --

I consider that that was a step on the way of the development of this congregation. It's now a very big congregation called the<sup>e</sup> North London Progressive Synagogue. It hasn't built a building. It bought a derelict church, or a church where the congregation had moved away, and it's also very prosperous and

Well, that was North London. I mean there is a great deal more, but these two things were the things that made a dent in my life anyway.

There was also another thing which I would like to mention -- I don't know whether this is the right place to do so -- but one of the functions which I had to perform was to interview people who wanted to become Jews , and I learned a great deal more from them than they learned from me.

I started out as a young man with simple ideas with the view that no one should adopt a religion unless he knew what it was and believed in it.

Now I am sorry to say in a way that the greatest number of converts to Judaism don't approach it from that point of view. They want to marry somebody who is in that religion and who doesn't want to marry out of the faith, or they think it will help them in their professional career, or something.

One of the people to whom I owe a great deal whom I never saw is Sigmund Freud.

Freud has I think demonstrated, whatever one thinks about his views -- and there are all sorts of views -- that there is something called the unconscious, das Unbewusste, which is not sub conscious, and it's something we know nothing about, but it nevertheless guides our views, our acts and our general attitudes in life.

And I knew that there were many people who came to me and said, "We want to be a Jew because we believe in it," but they really knew ~~nothing~~ about it, but they were quite sincere, they were being led by something in their unconscious which compelled them to do it. Mostly it was marriage, sometimes it was something else, but there was always a romantic side to it.

For example a man would come to me -- and this happened several times -- from Cornwall, and say he was convinced that he was a descendant of the ancient Fenicians or Jews who were said to be in Cornwall many centuries ago, before Christianity for the tin.

I would ask him, "How do you know this?" And he would say, "I know."

There were others who had other views. For example a woman came to see me -- and as a matter of fact I discovered that she was a writer of considerable status -- who said she wanted to become a Jew and she wanted to marry a Jew, but she couldn't tell me who it was.

I said, "Why not?"

She said, "Because he is a friend of yours, and he thought that that was wrong."

Actually he was a great sociologist called Morris Ginsberg (bo. 1889), who was a professor of sociology at the London School of Economics, and who was a friend of mine whom I knew very well, and she was a writer, and she became a Jewess, and I have never met anybody who was so devoted not only to Judaism as a religion but to Judaism as a civilization. For example she adopted a German-Jewish child, which after all was a big undertaking.

Now this thing happened. . .

To give you an idea of what I learned I will cite two cases that I remember of people who came to me within a day or two of each other.

One was a young woman, a personable young woman who had known Jewish people and had lived in a Jewish family, and said she wanted to be a Jew, so I said, "But you have to believe in it, you have to be sincere about it. There is no point about it. I've got nothing to offer you. I don't believe in heaven and hell, I can't say if ~~you~~ you do it you go to heaven or that you ~~will~~ will have certain advantages. I don't think I have the whole truth," which she couldn't understand at all.

She said, "Oh no, I am very sincere about it."

I said, "Do you know what it is?"

She said no.

I said, "How can you be sincere about what you don't know?"

She said to me, "You tell me what it is, and I will sincerely believe it."

Now this applies to a very large number of human beings.

Two days later a man came to see me and he said he wanted to inquire about being a Jew, and it turned out that he was a lecturer in theology at a Cambridge college.

So I said to him, "Look, you are a lecturer in theology, and you must understand that to do this thing you have to believe in it, you have to want to do it. Do you believe in it?"

His answer, which was a typical Cambridge answer, was, "I think it is a tenable ~~xxxxxxxx~~ position."

You see the difference between them.

This word sincerity -- I began to ask myself what it meant. It's a very difficult word.

Now the two most famous cases that I had, and which put this synagogue on the map at that time in London, were two people whose names you may know. One of them was Lady Reading, the second Marchioness of Reading, and the second was her brother, whose name was Henry Melchett, Lord Melchett -- the second Lord Melchett (1868-1930).

The first one who came to me was Lord Melchett.

I attended a meeting at the House of Commons, which was called

by a man called Colonel Henry Nathan -- Harry Nathan -- who was a Member of Parliament, and a solicitor -- that's one branch of the legal profession in England -- and he had invited all the Jewish members of the House of Commons and of the House of Lords to this meeting, and a fair number turned up, some of whom were obviously very nervous about it.

I remember one man who became Lord Bancroft, who went to the door to see whether anybody was looking at this Jewish conspiracy.

The only nonmembers who were present were myself and this man to whom I have referred, Ash Lincoln, Queen's Counsel, who was the honorary secretary of the committee that Nathan had set up to help the refugees, and I was the honorary organizer.

There I saw Henry Melchett -- Henry Mond he was then -- Lord Melchett. I sat next to him. But by all accounts he shouldn't have been there because he wasn't a Jew.

He said to me, "I've been wanting to get in touch with you, because Israel Sieff," -- the man who became Lord Sieff and was the head of Marks & Spencer -- "told me

So I said, "All right, give me your telephone number," or he said to me give me your telephone number.

At any rate we didn't wait for that because we went out of the Parliament Building in St. James's Palace, and we walked from there, if you know London, from Westminster to Baker Street,

which is on a district called Marylebone, where Sieff had his office, the head office of Marks & Spencer -- I've forgotten what

And he tells me this story, he says, "I can't, as a man of Jewish descent. . . ." His father was Sir Alfred Mond, who became the first Lord Melchett and was a member of the British Cabinet, and one of the greatest industrialists that England has ever had.

He said, "I can't with my Jewish background and so on go outside the Jewish community, with Hitler," -- this was 1933 -- "I just can't do it."

So I said, "But look, Lord Melchett, this is a religion."

He said, "I know, I've studied it."

He had read the entire Talmud, in a translation by a man called Rodkinson, which is very bad and very poor, and it was an abbreviation, because the Talmud is really a lifetime job.

He says, "I've read the Bible, I've read books about Judaism, and I know exactly what it involved, and I want to become a Jew."

So I said, "Look, I am willing to do anything I can to help you, but I think <sup>that</sup> ~~you~~ a man of such public importance as you are ought to go to the Chief Rabbi, who is a man called Dr. Herz." He was the Orthodox Chief Rabbi.

He said, "I don't have to do ~~xx~~ that. He came to me."

And he told me that Dr. Herz had come to him and said that if he took such a conspicuous part in Jewish affairs he ought

to become a member of the Jewish community.

Now this is very untraditional, it's against the tradition to encourage people to become Jews, because you have to tell them all the disadvantages that go with it, and you also have to say, "We don't offer the kinds of things that Certain Christian sects offer in the way of rewards."

So I said, "Look, if you can't go to the Chief Rabbi what about going to the West London Synagogue." That's what I called the Reform synagogue.

So he said to me to my astonishment, "I've been to services there, and I don't like it, because the Jews there seem to me to be Jews who don't want to be seen with other Jews."

I mean this was a very severe criticism. It hasn't got any meaning now. I am talking about 50 years ago, you know.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: Anyhow I said, "Look, I don't know what I can do about it. If you want to avoid anybody else, the only thing you can do is to do it through the North London Liberal Synagogue. That's hardly a synagogue, it's a big wooden hut that we put up ourselves, and there are ordinary Jews there, lower middle class Jews."

He said, "That's exactly what I want. I don't want the fancy people."





What was I to do with it?

Well, I made sure that he knew exactly what was involved. It wasn't what would have been involved in the Orthodox synagogue.

And the thing happened.

When I converted people -- and I converted, <sup>if</sup> that's the right word, scores if not hundreds, you'd be surprised. Most Gentiles are very surprised that anybody would ever want to become a Jew, but in this country in the Reform movement alone it's about 3000 a year, for all sorts of reasons -- I reported on it. I didn't have absolute freedom to do what I liked, and I didn't want it, because I was thinking of the so to speak, that he should have or she should have the consent of the community, and there was in the liberal synagogue what was called a ritual kind of thing, which consisted of the most learned men that they had -- Montefiore, and people like that -- and I brought the thing up.

There was one objection from one source. I think it was Louis Montagu who said, "Are you sure he is not doing it simply because he is a Zionist?"

Well, I was able to say quite truthfully, "This man, look what he's done."

I didn't myself think that being a Zionist was a bad reason for becoming a Jew, but anyhow it was agreed to,

Then I thought I ought to tell some people of our relation.

After all, I was in the congregation, I didn't know he was

So at the meeting of the council I swore <sup>them</sup> ~~him~~ to secrecy, and I said, "Don't let a word go out, for goodness sake, I don't want him to be embarrassed, I don't want everybody to be embarrassed, but on such and such a date he will come and will be admitted."

There is a ceremony that we ~~have~~ had, which was in front of the open hearth,

I want to be a Jew, and all that.

I mean it's nothing very remarkable. It's very, very simple. And there are two witnesses, and I had to have witnesses, the Congregation did not.

I was being democratic.

The unfortunate thing was that somebody present had a brother-in-law who was a journalist on an evening paper called The Star, which no longer exists, and the result was that on the day that this admission was to have been exercised before a service there was a whole page in The Star describing <sup>a</sup> quite fictional ceremony of admission, which the journalist must have taken out of the Middle Ages. It had no relation at all to this very simple thing that lasted five minutes.

And what was the result? When the service was over the people

came up to me and said, "Look, the whole synagogue is surrounded by photographers," and there was no way out except the front way.

So I said, "Look, you'll have to face it. I am sorry, I apologize."

But I didn't <sup>escape</sup> ~~xxxxxx~~ in secret. We got out of course, but you couldn't get a taxi, it was impossible, so I said we'll have to take a bus.

We took a bus, and as we went along the various streets there there was a newspaper blackout. In those days the newspapers had the habit of putting in a heavier placard (?)

on which they put the most important items of the day. And the thing we saw in shop after shop were the big words in big letters PEER BECOMES JEW.

So he said, "Look, this is very bad."

I said, "You knew it would come out."

He said, "I am certainly

and then he said, "There's something you don't know. My mother doesn't know about it."

This was very difficult. I told him he had to go to his mother and tell her all about it, and it was very difficult, because his mother was not only an Anglican, but a very keen and active member of the Church.

Q: Sir Alfred Mond's widow?

Perlzweig: Yes, his widow, Violet her name was, very, very attached to the Christian tradition. I don't know whether she was of German origin: her name was Gertz, which is a German name, and was her maiden name, but I am told that it doesn't necessarily mean. . .

I think she was born in England, she was definitely born in England, and she was a great woman in the Church and was very active.

Anyhow for the rest of that day I couldn't escape the newspapers.

I had for reasons quite unconnected with this a date with Lily Montagu who lived with her sister, a middle-aged widow -- Marian -- at Palace Gate in Bayswater or somewhere around there -- and I was going to have tea with her, in order to discuss something

When I came to the door she looked at me with a sort of distraught face and said, "I got to turn every room in this house

The next the Sunday Times, which is a very important paper and has columns with comments by all sorts of people some of whom denounced me because they thought

Anyhow that was Henry Melchett (1898-1949), and I want to tell you that on the day of his death he was not only faithful, he was fanatical.

I can't describe to you the way in which quite irrationally he ~~would~~ take anything Jewish that was being printed

Now Melchett -- and I think it's an important fact because he became, as soon as he did this, much more active in the Jewish community -- became cochairman of the Jewish agency, the international body. There was one American, I think, and he was the other one. He became the confidant of Dr. Weizmann and had long correspondence with him.

One of the things which startled me and gave me a certain amount of trouble was that since he was in Imperial Chemicals he manufactured, or rather the organization made, something which I can't remember the name of, but it was something you stuck on the bottom of a ship and at a certain point it ~~breaks~~<sup>burst</sup> into flames and destroyed the ship.

Q: Some kind of barnacle mine or something like that.

Perlzweig: Yes , that sort of thing, a barnacle mine would be a good description of it. And there was a certain point, I remember, at which he gave me an account of how he had gone into this clandestine business of destroying ships in the Danube that were taking oil -- Rumanian oil -- to Germany.

I remember the embarrassment it caused me, because a man came

from Israel to the Zionist office, which I was then attending every day, because -- I didn't have a paid post in the Zionist movement --

This was a man called Dov Hos., who is no longer living -- unfortunately most of the people I've been referring to are no longer living -- and who was one of the chief laymen, and I talked to him about it and said what Melcher did. . .

And he got very angry and he said, "You are not supposed to know anything about it."

I said why not?

He said, "Because you are one of the politicals. You are one of the politicians in this thing, you are not supposed to have anything to do with it, and the Jewish agency mustn't have anything to do with it."

I just want to say one other thing, while I am on the same subject, so I don't have to repeat it.

When he talked to me about his wife I said, "Look, my original point of view is that your wife follows her own line, whatever it is. I am not saying that your wife must be a Jewess." Many rabbis suggest it or try to do it, and in fact in Israel today when non-Jewish women come in -- and this is one of the ironies of the situation -- the ultra Orthodox the Government to have a law passed which would say that a Jew who is admitted must be the son of a Jewish woman, or have been converted according to halakah, that is according to Orthodoxy.

The present law is he has to be converted. That means that any rabbi can do it, whether he is Orthodox or not.

But on the other hand if a man comes in, say from the Soviet Union -- and thousands have come in as you know -- he can bring all his family with him, and his family can include his wife, obviously, and she may be a Christian or an atheist or an agnostic, or anything. So they come.

So these people who don't have as you might say the guts to keep out Russians who are not Jews because they are the relatives of a , are the one who are saying that somebody who voluntarily becomes a Jew should be excluded.

It's inconsistent, and it tells you that the whole thing is covered by a thick layer of mud.

But I am mentioning it at this point because their answer to my complaint is that they go after these women and try to turn them into Jews, and sometimes they harass them. This is one of the burdens that Israel bears -- these people, some of whom, the Agudat, which has been very prominent lately, is not Zionist. I hesitate ~~xxx~~ to say anti-Zionist, which is quite definitely against the Jewish State. They are not in the Government, their votes keep the Government going. They are forbidden because this is a ~~xx~~ false or a wrong anticipation of the Messiah. You only have the return of the Jews when the Messiah comes, and if the Messiah hasn't come the thing is a fake.



Q: On reflection would you say that the role of Lord Melchett toward Judaism was preempted by his ~~xxx~~ pull toward Zionism and  
(cross talk)

Perlzweig: Well, no, I'll tell you what the whole thing

He felt a deep resentment -- I am looking for a word here, and I don't know what the word is -- every time that Hitler did anything or proceeded to persecute the Jews he felt a personal responsibility to

Now you mentioned the Zionist side of it, and it's very important historically.

What happened was that when his father, the first Lord Melchett, died, the family knew instinctively that he ought to have a Jewish burial. He had never been circumcised, he had never had anything to do. . . except that he was a Zionist -- and I knew him well because he was the president of the Zionist Federation when I was the honorary secretary -- he had no connections with synagogues and no in Judaism. He was the son of a man -- I am trying to think of his first name -- who was a great chemist who came from Germany, and who brought up his children as nothing deliberately, and who said, when they are 21 they'll decide whether they are Jews or Christians.

This was a fashion which prevailed late in the 19th century in Germany and in other places.

But he became a Zionist I think partly because of his encounters with anti-Zionism, but chiefly because of Weizmann's influence, and when he died as I say they instinctively thought that he ought to have a Jewish funeral.

Q: This is Sir Alfred Mond ?

Perlzweig: Yes, Sir Alfred Mond. So they consulted Weizmann, and Weizmann told them to consult me, and I didn't want for various reasons for the liberal synagotue to do it, because people would say that the liberal synagogue has no principles at all, besides which I think one would have had to deal with Mattuck and all the others.

So I said to them, "Look, I'll arrange it," because all that it meant was that I, a rabb', should go and officiate at the funeral. They had a plot of ground of their own.

And I persuaded a minister at the Reform synagogue to officiate, but I was responsible for it. If I hadn't been there it wouldn't have happened/

Now there was this -- and this meant a lot to the second Lord Melchett because after all he was the son of the man who was being buried, and he saw what was going on --

Zionism if you go back far enough is one of the motivating forces, and to them Zionism was part of Judaism, to him and especially to his sister. They didn't think, as you just suggested, that the two things would go together -- to them it was one whole.

Q: Already one.

Perlzweig: Already one. They had a belief which to me was a little difficult -- they were more Orthodox Jews than I was -- a belief that God intervened in history for the Jews.

You had the case of the first Lord Melchett, Sir Alfred Mond, who once delivered <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ speech where he referred to the Balfour Declaration and said, "It is the finger of God that has directed the British Government."

And I remember a man, Dr. Epstein, who was the head of Jewish College, which is the Orthodox seminary, saying to me after that, "He is a better Jew than you are," because I had denied that God intervened. I mean my view of the idea that God intervenes in the history and in natural law is that it's all nonsense. It's not my conception of God, and that's why I remember when Epstein rebuked me for it.

But this was their general view.

Q: I see.

of the American Jewish Congress where I had my office, and they told me, "Lord Melchett is in New York, and it's very urgent that you get in touch with him. He is at the Ambassador Hotel."

So I rang him up from my hotel or wherever it was I was staying, and the very urgent thing was that his wife wanted to become a Jewess, so I said, can't this wait until tomorrow?

Q: Ah!

Perlzweig: Anyhow I went to the Ambassador Hotel. She had been mulling over it for years -- I mean he had been converted in 1933 and this was 1940 -- so I said to her, "Look, my difficulty about it is that who am I in New York? I am a visitor, it's not my diocese, and I don't know whether it's the proper or appropriate thing for me to do."

She said, "Oh you will find a way out."

And I did. I went to see Stephen Wise (1874-1949) and I told him, and he was delighted, he liked anything like that, you know.

We came to the conclusion that I should do it, and he would be present as a witness at the chapel which we had in what was the Institute. . . the Jewish Institute. . . I've forgotten what the exact name was, but it's now part of the Hebrew Union College.

But it was a theological something, and there was a chapel and so we did it. We went for the occasion.

Fortunately nobody heard of it, otherwise it would have been publicized all over the world.

Q: Like the other one.

Perlzweig: Like the other one. But what I do remember is a thing which is rather comical. I said to her, "Lady Melchett, this is the way to the elevator."

And he tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Lift, my boy, lift! Don't lose your English accent. It's all you've got."  
(laughter)

I never forgot that. He was an Anglomaniac. Even though he attacked the British Government he was always an Anglomaniac.

Well, the thing was done, and the thing that moved me was that she said, "I am going back on a dangerous journey."

They were going by boat. He couldn't fly because he was a sick man, so they were going by boat, and the chance of getting through without being sunk by a submarine were not very good.

Q:

Perlzweig: So she said to me, "If I die, I want my children to know that I died a Jewess."

This touched my soul deeply.

very romantic

I might have forgotten about it except that I think it was in 1975 -- this carries me very much later -- that I officiated at the cremation of Lady

We went down afterwards in the crematorium where I had unfortunately been scores of times, and somebody who looked very much like Greta Garbo came up and greeted me and said, "Do you remember me?"

I said, "Of course I do."

It was Lady Melcher<sup>†</sup>, still alive.

I said, "I discussed you with Eva."

Not so long ago she died.

The reason why I'd discussed her was because she was too shy to get in touch with me -- Lady Melchett -- so she talked to Eva about making sure that when she would die she would be buried according to the Jewish ritual.

It wasn't difficult. I got in touch with and told him that I had done this thing in New York, and she said, "Do you remember?"

I said, "Yes."

She thought that it was fantastic that I remembered (?)

I am sorry to say I haven't seen. . .

I've been in touch with somebody who for the firm of Weidenfeld -- a publishing firm, Lord ~~Wata~~ Weidenfeld -- is writing

a book on the Melchetts, beginning with the gentleman who came over from Germany until the present time.

There is a man, the young Lord Melchett, now -- his father was in the Labor Party, unlike the Conservatives the old man.

The present one is apparently living in sin without benefit of clergy with some young woman, who told this woman to whom I referred -- this is Jean Goodman of Norwich -- "Get to the bottom of the Jewish business in relation to Lord Melchett."

And of course as soon as she began researching <sup>her</sup> ~~the~~ book several paths led to me.

I have read what she's written and have given her advice and so on.

Unfortunately when I was in London this time I couldn't get in touch with her. I wrote her a letter and got no reply, so she is probably abroad .

But at any rate this thing has gone on even to this moment. I am still engaged in the Melchett business.

Now I come to Melchett's sister, Eva.

Her husband, Gerald, who was a great friend of mine apart from all this, but who is rather an agnostic. . .

Q: What was her maiden name?

Perlzweig: Mond. It's German, and it means moon in German.

Q: Oh, that's Sir Alfred Mond's sister?

Perlzweig: No, his daughter.

(end of tape)

End of Interview 6 w/ Rabbi M. Perlzweig by Peter Jessup,  
September 23rd 1981.



DK

Interviewee: Rabbi Dr. Maurice L. Perlzweig

Interviewer: Peter Jessup

Place: New York City

Interview No. 7 - October 24th 1981

Q: Good afternoon, Dr. Perlzweig. Here we are again on West 72nd Street. It's nice to be here. This is Peter Jessup.

Dr. Perlzweig: Well, I am very glad to see you again as I always am, though I fear that what I have given you so far is not terribly enlightening, except to somebody who goes into detail, and who ~~is~~ would like to know what life was like in England in the very troubled period before the war.

When I was last talking about these things I gave an account of the conversion to Judaism of the second Lord Melchett, Henry Mond, Second Lord Melchett, and I think I covered more or less completely -- or as much as is possible without becoming wearisome about it -- what needed to be recorded about an event which I must repeat made a tremendous impression on life in London.

You can imagine what it is like to go after a ceremony through a great part of London on the top floor of a bus and see the placards, as they were called, of the newspapers, with the words in bold lettering, PEER BECOMES JEW, which was regarded at the time as a bizarre event, and which I failed to ensure the necessary security which would keep it secret, or secret until it could be divulged in a more or less decorous manner.

And I went on to speak about his sister, Eva, who was at that time the daughter-in-law of the great Marquis of Reading, Rufus Isaacs (1860-1935), who had a career which I think I am not exaggerating when I say was without parallel in English history.

Let me say a word about Rufus Isaacs.

There are many lives written, many biographical sketches of Rufus Isaacs, which is what you would expect for a man who came to prominence first as Attorney General of England, and then as Lord Chief Justice of England, which is a tremendously important job, and then as Ambassador to the United States during the war, and long before that Viceroy of India.

I doubt whether there were any offices in the world at that time so powerful as that of Viceroy of India, which meant that this one man had the power of life and death over a subcontinent.

Then finally he was in the National Government set up at a point when the country seemed to be in chaos as Foreign Minister.

Now I knew this man, and I had a curious relationship with him. He was very much intrigued by the conversion of Henry Melchett, and I think he attributed powers to me which I did not have, (he thought) that I was a sort of guru which the fashionable people of London turned to for information and guidance about mysterious matters.

One thing was quite clear to me. Whenever I appeared -- and I appeared on various occasions when members of his family were being buried -- his second wife, who was a very remarkable woman and well known in the United States at the time.  
(static in tape, then tape skips)

was always kept out of my way, in case I cast some spell over her.

His daughter-in-law, about whom I am about to speak, Eva -- who was born Eva <sup>Mond</sup> ~~Munn~~, the daughter of Sir Alfred Mond, the First Lord Melchett -- told me about this fear that I would convert his wife -- his second wife -- to Judaism. She was not a Jewess.

Anyhow, on the other hand he had a great admiration not for my theology or for anything else except my command of the English language, which he regarded as exceptional. He was not a member of my congregation. He was a member of what was called, and is still called, the West London Synagogue, which is reformed.

I think I've already explained that reformed in England curiously enough means something nearer conservative than the

liberal synagogue with which I was associated.

But with his very acute sense of protocol, which must have been developed when he was Viceroy of India, he was very touchy about the purity of the English language, and the trouble was that there were two ministers in his synagogue who didn't measure up to the standard that he would like to see observed.

One was a very fine man whom I knew, who was a colleague and a friend, called Rabbi Reinhardt, and he was an American, and he spoke with a marked American intonation, and this didn't suit Reading at all.

I may say that when the West London Synagogue appointed him one of his qualifications was, ironically enough, that he was not only born in the United States, but both his parents had been born in the United States, and therefore from the point of view -- I may say the rather snobbish point of view -- of the West London Synagogue they thought that that was a sort of guarantee that he would be more of a gentleman than a man whose parents had been born in Lithuania or in the Soviet Union.

Anyhow Reinhardt wouldn't do.

The other man about whom I thought that he was almost the very type of an English vicar -- looked like <sup>it</sup> ~~is~~, and dressed like it, with a clerical collar and so on -- was called Vivian Simmons, and according to Reading, as his daughter-in-law told me, had a curious impediment in his speech -- his voice came

out of the back of his throat. I don't know where else he thought it ought to come from.

So when there was anything to be done in a clerical or pastoral way in the Reading family I was called in, and of course I went.

I remember something that struck me as rather funny in tragic circumstances.

One of the funerals I officiated at was that of a Mrs. (Alfred) Sutro. Her husband was at that time one of the most famous dramatists in England. But at any rate she was apparently not a member of the synagogue, so they rang me up and I officiated at the funeral, and I remember very well seeing Lord Reading, this great statesman and jurist who had occupied more leading offices than almost anybody else in the governance of England, standing there and reciting the kaddish, which is the prayer recited on occasions of death, although it says nothing about death itself, and with tears rolling down his face. His top hat -- because he was always absolutely right in regard to anything which required attention to protocol -- his top hat on the back of his head, and his back bent, he looked just like the old ~~XXXXXXXX~~ caricatures of the Jews who were supposed to sell old clothes, with his son next to him, the Marquis, whose first name was Gerald, standing beside him like a grenadier, with his straight back, and over six foot. The contrast was very striking.

Anyhow it wasn't long afterwards that there was some other event, and his brother Godfrey -- who was notorious for having been mixed up with certain proceedings which were very much criticized, in association with the Marconi Company -- rang me up and said that there was another funeral and they wanted me to officiate.

I said, "Mr. Isaacs, why do you always turn to me?"

And his answer which I shall never forget was, "Well, we were at the last funeral of Mrs. Sutro, and we thoroughly enjoyed it." (laughter)

I mention this in order to show you that Rufus Isaacs -- the great Rufus Isaacs -- came from humble origins, which his brother Godfrey. . . some marks of which his brother Godfrey never outgrew.

I must say that although Rufus Isaacs never went, as far as I know, to a university -- and there are all sorts of legends about how he ran away to sea as a boy to be some minor functionary on a ship, which landed first in the Hugli River, which is the beginning of the Ganges, and looked out on the country of which he was subsequently to become the ruler.

These stories are very much embellished, and I don't think that they are absolutely accurate. I believe that he did go out to sea, but he went out to sea as a boy in comparative comfort, and not as a ship's boy according to the legend.

But although as I say he was not a man who was academically prepared, I have been told by English judges -- men who were contemporaries of mine at Cambridge and who had no reason to tell me other than the truth -- that his judgments as Lord Chief Justice have left a permanent mark on the law of England.

So he was, I understand, a great man. He was also a sentimentalist. He had very strong feelings of association with the Jews and their history, although he did not take an active part in Jewish life in his earlier years.

I am sure it is true to say that his emphasis in his later years on Jewish problems was a result of the influence exercised on him by Dr. Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952), who persuaded him I think in 1929 to become the first head of a fund which I think at that time was called the Palestine Restoration Fund.

At any rate ~~it~~ it is the granddaddy of all these funds about which you hear today -- the United Jewish Appeal, and the United Israel Appeal.

He took his part there, and of course with his prestige that was very helpful.

He also played his part in changing the policy of the British Government in regard to Palestine, although as far as I know he never went to Palestine or had any great interest in it.

There was a period when Lord Passfield -- whom I have referred to elsewhere in this memoir as Sidney Webb (1859-1947)--

was colonial secretary, and a man utterly without imagination, who couldn't understand Zionism in any of its forms.

Just to give you one example of his attitude, I was chairman of the committee, in my capacity as chairman of the London University Labor Party, which committee promoted his candidature as a representative in Parliament of London University,

It was quite a hopeless quest as a matter of fact, and it was done at the time only for demonstration purposes.

What I remember of my association with him at that time was that we had before one of our meetings at the London School of Economics a little dinner party in the cafeteria or whatever the name was at the School of Economics. He and his wife Beatrice were there, and several others.

It was still not very long after the First World War, and we were talking about the efforts of the Germans to bombard London, and he told us this story.

Most of the noise during the bombardments in the First World War was not made by bombs. It was made by the antiaircraft guns, and these antiaircraft guns sent a lot of shrapnel about, which fell into the streets.

At any rate in the Webb household there were a number of servants, - which you wouldn't guess from reading his books, but they lived in rather aristocratic style -- and during one of these air raids the maidservants came running to Mr. and Mrs. Webb in great terror, and asked what to do, and he said that



his answer to them was very simple. He took a piece of paper and put down certain figures, and he tried to prove to them that only a very tiny percentage of people were killed or wounded during air raids, and therefore the chances of their being hit or damaged were very remote.

Q: Which was true!

Perlzweig: Which was true.

He said the extraordinary thing was this didn't seem to make any impression on them at all.

Of course the guns were going off.

That was the kind of man he was -- that he was able to reduce everything to the driest of dry statistics, and therefore when it came to Zionism he was all at sea. It was a point of view which was completely outside his understanding.

During the meeting that followed this little dinner party, somebody asked him <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ question about his views on the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which was then in its infancy, and his answer was, "There is no reason why it shouldn't be put up and supported because after all there was Al Azhar in Cairo, which was that kind of university, which of course it wasn't. It was quite different. He didn't understand this at all.

So when he began to act as Colonial Secretary his white papers were all determined by his desire to reduce the nuisance value of what was happening in Palestine.

Cabinet, and then he would see her again and tell her what had happened in the Cabinet, and that would come back to us.

So she was effectively a conduit between us -- that is to say the Zionist Executive -- and the Cabinet.

Now I rather left the theme I was going to deal with in order to show that Lady Reading like Mrs. Dugdale afterwards was 100 percent Zionist, and not only a Zionist but did a great deal practically to help us.

In this connection I may say that on one occasion when the Government produced a scheme to set up a council -- a legislative council -- for Palestine, which would consist of 50 percent Jews and 50 percent Arabs, with a British chairman, we tried to stop it, because we knew that that meant that the Arab majority would always prevail, and they would simply cut off emigration.

So I was sent to the House of Lords, which was considering it, together with Mrs. Dugdale, and I remember standing at the bar of the House, and Mrs. Dugdale being a lady was given a chair -- not only being a lady, but being the niece of Lord Balfour and very well known to all the noble lords who were there -- and I remember we were there for three hours while the debate was going on, and the lords would come over to us and ask us what we thought about this and what we thought about that.

One I think amusing incident was a man called Lord Lloyd (Lord George Ambrose Lloyd, 1879-1941) came over to see me.

I happened to know him. He had been the High Commissioner in Egypt, and was very well known, and was practically the ruler of Egypt. Well, he came over and he said to me, "You must be getting tired," and I said yes.

"But what is important to me is that this thing should be turned down."

I said, "Lord Lloyd, what are you doing here? You are not a democrat, you are an ultraconservative, and this is a democratic scheme that the Government is putting up. You ought to be against it."

He said, "Well, I have been wondering about it, but after what you said I think I will go home, so you don't have to worry about my vote."

So I did get one man to drop it.

But at any rate she was there, and the diary is interesting for various other reasons. She was a very religious person, and there are accounts of her experiences in church.

But at any rate, returning -- which I seem to find difficult to do -- to Eva Reading, she was one of those non-Jews who had labored for Zionism as though she were a Jew, that is to say she held office in the Palestine Foundation Fund and all that kind of thing.

So when she came to me and said, "Look, I didn't know about my brother Henry," -- because he had said nothing to her about it when his conversion was announced -- "but I have always thought about being a Jew, why can't I do the same thing?"

So I said, "Look, you are very helpful to the Zionist movement. I am not sure whether your becoming a Jewess will make you more or less helpful. Maybe that anyone who is a member of the Church of England and who goes to church could be more helpful in that capacity than becoming a Jew. But that is not what should be your guiding principle. I will put it very simply to you. You should only become a Jewess if you cannot live without it. If you feel that you can become absorbed into the Jewish community, and that you will be unhappy, spiritually unhappy, if you don't, then there is a case for you, but otherwise I wouldn't urge you to do it at all. The Jewish community doesn't put any obstacle in your way of either going to Palestine and living as you often did in Palestine, or cultivating oranges in Palestine, or going out for Palestine funds, or attending Zionist meetings. No one has ever objected to your doing it. Don't think of this as a way of legitimization. You don't need that. Do it only if you cannot live without it."

Well, I don't want to go on at any length about it, because she has written a book called For the Record, which was published in London by a publisher called Hutchinson (Ltd) which I subsequently tried to have distributed in this country, but I didn't succeed because she died while I was trying to do it.

In this book she's given I think a candid account of the travail that she went through in coming to a decision.

She would say to herself while she was sitting in Westminster Abbey, "Am I to give up all this for a hut in North London?" She knew the sacrifice she was making, but there was still a greater sacrifice about which I don't think -- unless my memory does not serve me -- she has written, and that was in her family and in her social life.

Her mother, Violet Rainey Mond, was of Huguenot ancestry. She had a German name, Goetz, and what was more to the point she was very active as a churchwoman, and she was deeply devoted to the Anglican Church. Now when her daughter -- her most famous daughter, because she had several -- became a Jewess and the thing was publicly known, she was heartbroken, and I feel that one of the results so far as she was concerned was that she -- it sounds like a harsh thing to say -- would never speak to her daughter again.

I think I can say that for all practical purposes Eva lost her mother. That was one of the sacrifices she had to make.

There were others of a more subtle character.

One of her obligations was to act as a lady-in-waiting to the Queen from time to time. This was a function which was limited to people who were known to be of high rank. She was after all only the daughter-in-law of a Marquis, which is one of the highest ranks. She assured me when I asked her that when she went back after her conversion to her palace what struck her -- it may have been her sensibility -- was the anxiety

with which they treated her with the utmost consideration, as though to reassure her, or in spite of what they may have been saying privately.

If you can try to imagine what it was like in a court in England in the first half of the 19th century, with its hierarchies and so on, it must have been rather a shock in those days, much more than it would be now for somebody who was a member of the court to announce that she had become a member of the Jewish community.

She didn't speak very much about it, but it was quite clear in her personal relationships that this did make a difference. If anybody ever underwent a conversion at a cost, it was she, but she never hesitated. She was very consc\_ious of her father's place in Jewish history, Sir Alfred Mond, the First Lord Melchett, was one of the people who helped Weizmann in very important ways in his association with the British Government, which after all was a mandatory power at this period in Palestine, and she was very anxious that that connection shouldn't be lost now.

(statis in tape)

There is an interesting story which I think does not appear in any of the biographies or autobiographies of people in the family.

When a man becomes a Marquis, he is entitled to two titles. Now this is sort of a feudal oddity, but it is adhered to in

England.

He is entitled to a viscountcy, so that his eldest son may be called, as Lord Reading's son was called, Viscount Early, and when Eva was converted she was the Viscountess Early.

But <sup>if</sup> he is a Marquis he is entitled as I said to two titles, so that the grandson may have a period during which he is addressed as a lord.

Now this always happens <sup>when</sup> ~~to~~ a man is a Marquis or a Duke, the two highest levels of superiority. The family gets three titles. It did not happen in Reading's case, because Eva refused to allow it to happen. She said, "I want the grandson to have a period in his life when he is addressed as Isaacs, and he is not called by some title."

And this as far as I know -- and I've done a little research on it -- is the only case in English history in which a man who has become a Marquis or a Duke, is content with only two titles.

I should add another thing, and that is that in the whole history of England there has only been one other case where a man who began life as a commoner rose as high as the rank of Marquis -- only one other case in all English history, and the case was that of the famous Duke of Marlborough, who was Churchill's ancestor.

Well, I think I ought to leave it at that, but I emphasize the fact that she was anxious that the heir to the title should be called Isaacs, so that he should know what his origins were.

I must tell you that in preparing for this conversion -- about which I need say very little because she has written a great deal about it in her book to which I have referred, some of which she asked me about, because her memory wasn't half as good as mine -- that in making the preparation for it there was one other incident that I think I ought to report.  
(heavy static in tape)

was that her son Michael, who was at Eaton at the time, might become the butt of the jokes of his fellow students if they read it in the newspapers that Michael's mother had become a Jewess. They would have been puzzled by it, and he might have been very uncomfortable.

So she asked me, as I happened to be teaching at Eton at the time -- and I will come to this later in this memoir -- to speak to the housemaster, a man called Hope-Jones , and to ask this housemaster to protect him (Michael) from anything that might make him uncomfortable.

I remember very well what the housemaster said to me in his astonishment. He looked at me and he said to me, "Isaacs' mother not a Jew?"

He couldn't credit it.

Then there was another person who had to be -- as I think people say in America -- stroked, and that was her husband, Gerald, who was then Lord Early, or Viscount Early.  
(heavy static in tape)



I was very friendly with him, and I must say he was very helpful to me when he became, as he did in Churchill's Government, Undersecretary or Minister of State at the Foreign Office, a position in which he was able to be very friendly to me, I will return to my relations with him later.

Well, he was very worried about this conversion, not because he had any objection to it. One reasons why I admired him -- and there were many reasons to admire him -- was ~~that~~ his firm belief in what I would call the autonomy of the human soul. If his wife had a spiritual vision that she wished to realize, that was her business and he had no right to interfere in it. He never interfered in her activities. In fact he was helpful when he could be, even when he wasn't very much interested in them.

He was technically a Jew and a member of the West London Synagogue, but his interest in religion was very remote. He was rather agnostic in his attitude. But on the other hand he had been helpful to the Jewish Agency for Palestine at various inquiries which the Government held, and a commission was appointed to report on it. He appeared quite often as counsel representing the Jewish Agency.

He was a man of great learning as a lawyer, and very eloquent, as I had the privilege to know. That was an important service that he performed.

So he said to me when I told him about it, "My dear fellow, I have no objection. My wife has the right to do whatever she

likes. But when this thing happens, with all the excitement and publicity, I want to be as far away as possible."

So I said, "What do you want me to do?"

He said, "Tell me three or four days before it happens, so that I have the opportunity of escaping to the South of France, and then I shall know nothing about it and I won't be worried."

He was like a man out of the 18th century, to whom the word "enthusiasm" was not very palatable. He appeared to be a coldish man, but actually he was very sentimental, and he looked like a Marquis as well as becoming one: he was tall, handsome, wore a monocle, and spoke and conducted himself with exquisite grace. He simply did not want to get excited. He was the very image of a Marquis out of the imagined world which we all had as children.

So I told him, and he went away, and didn't come back until the excitement was over.

I have read in Jewish newspapers that he and his wife were married in the Church. That is not accurate, not because they had any objection to it, but because the Church had an objection.

The Anglican Church at that time -- and probably still -- ~~was not~~ would not marry a Jew in Church, and Gerald was a Jew, even though only technically, but he was a very honorable man, and the idea of changing his religion in order to enable him to get married in church wouldn't have crossed his mind.

The Archbishop of Canterbury had been consulted, and affirmed the view of the Church -- that they couldn't get married in church. So they were married in what~~was~~ called the Register Office. A civil marriage in other words.

There was a blessing in the Church afterwards, but it was not a marriage.

I don't know that he had any very strong feelings about the whole business, but he was a man who could be deeply moved.

I was talking about his father and my relation to him, which was a little ambiguous. He was afraid that I might convert his second wife to Judaism, which I hadn't the slightest desire to do. He nevertheless liked the way in which I conducted the service, and in which I used the language.

His father had twice summoned me when he thought he was dying, and asked me to officiate at his funeral service. When he eventually died I was informed and I said of course I would do it, but I wished that they would talk to his own Rabbi, Reinhardt, and explain it to him, because professionally it was rather awkward for me, but they did so.

And I officiated at two services<sup>the first</sup> at Golders Green in London, at the crematorium. He was cremated. There was a tremendous assembly of the leading people in England, and a fair number of rajahs and other such people from India.

When that was over we crossed the road. As it happened it was only a road separating the crematorium from the cemetery

in which he was going to be buried, where his first wife was buried, which was the Cemetery of the Reform Synagogue, in

Lane in Golders Green, and the ashes were put into a coffin, and there was a short service at which I officiated, and it was lowered into the grave.

Q: Was what?

Perlzweig. It was lowered into the grave. There were only ashes in the coffin, he had been cremated, you see.

The only people who were present, apart from Rabbi Reinhardt -- who felt very peculiar about the whole thing and therefore was present, and after all this was the cemetery of his . . . and . . . -- the only people who were present were Gerald, the new Marquis, and the wife of Rufus Isaacs, the second wife, who wept copiously, but when the service was over turned to me and said she wanted to get in touch with me because she wanted to become a Jewess.

So the old man's efforts to make sure that she wasn't lured into this trap turned out to be useless.

I felt at the time, on the basis of a rough judgment in the cemetery, that it would be rather foolish for her after the man for whom she would have done it and who didn't want her to do it was dead, that she should take this step which

might make life difficult for her in other ways, and so I said, "I don't think you ought to make a decision like that in the cemetery here at the grave site. Why don't you ring me up, and we'll arrange to meet and discuss the whole matter."

Well, I never heard from her. I think that I had effectively damped her desire to do this, to take this step, which was a kind of step for the sake of a dead husband, which as I say ironically enough he didn't want.

But what gave me satisfaction in that whole incident was the letter which Gerald wrote to me after the funeral, or the two funerals, which I've got somewhere, and which is very moving, about the way in which I had said the kind of things in the kind of way in which his father would have wanted, and that he was eternally grateful to me for doing it, and he signed the letter for the first time in his life as Reading.

You see, a peer in England signs his title, not his family name, and not his first name, and this was the first occasion that he had, so I've got the first letter that he signed (in that way).

And that is very much cherished in his family. His son, Michael, who now unfortunately is dead too, talked to me about it when I saw him many years later -- that the letter which he had written, and of which they had a copy, had been circulated in the family.

Well, here was Eva Reading, who became not merely a Jewess but one of the leaders of the Zionist movement, and a great figure in the Jewish world. Now I don't know what the significance of that is, but I have gone into it at length partly because there are a great many rumors about it which are not true, and partly because she was, apart from being as it were a congregant of mine, a very dear friend, and I don't want there to be no source of finding the truth for anybody who wants to find it.

Let me now go on to refer to ~~another~~ other cases of conversion at much less length. They were from a historical point of view less important, although quite as important from the point of view of each of the persons concerned.

The first one of which I have any recollection was that of an actress who was very famous in England at the time, called Binnie Barnes.

Q: Oh yes.

Perlzweig: The story, to put it very briefly, was that the man who wanted to marry her -- and his name was Joseph -- had the only bookshop in Charing Cross Road which is almost next to Leicester Square Station. It was an antique bookshop.

He came to see me and told me that he had been at the same

school as I was -- he was older than I am, older than I was at the time -- and said that he wanted to marry this young lady, and therefore he'd come to talk to me about it.

I asked him why he didn't go to the synagogue to which he belonged, and to his own rabbi.

He said, "Well, she is an artist, and it has to be handled very delicately, and I know that's the way that you do it, and therefore I have come to you."

Well, I wasn't terribly excited about it because he was making a convenience of me and my post in the liberal synagogue, and I thought, oh, all right, for human reasons I'll have to see her, and I saw her.

Here was this rather tall, handsome girl, with very black hair -- it was black at this point, but it changed color later on, but it was black then -- and I talked to her and told her, "Look, you shouldn't do this thing unless you really want to do it, and unless you really believe it."

She said that she did want to do it, and that she was very anxious to do it, and she wanted me to help her. So I provided her with material to study, and she came back, and she had a very good knowledge of the practice of Judaism, as good a knowledge, certainly a better knowledge than the average Jew, and there was no reason why I could object to having her admitted into the community.

On the other hand, as I have said, she was a great actress,

and her face never mirrored the slightest emotion of any kind. She didn't let herself go, she had no passions about it. I had told her that to be a Jewess you must know what it is, and feel you can believe in it, and she had taken this quite literally -- she had studied it. And I didn't know what to do.

I remember going to my senior colleague -- my only colleague in the liberal synagogue, there were only the two of us in the whole country -- and telling him about this, and his answer helped to guide me in the future. He said, "It's not your business to suggest what she should do. It's her business. If she says to you that in the sight of God and man she wishes to become a Jewess, and she knows what she is saying, then you have no right to stand in her way."

Well, this is what I call respect for the autonomy of the human soul, if you can apply that phrase in this case.

So after she had been with me for nine months I decided that what Mattuck had said was correct, and so she was converted and they were married, and I married them.

Then somebody sent me a clipping from a tabloid in London some years later which suggested that I may not have made a mistake.

She had gone to Hollywood. A cynic might think that she went there because there were Jewish directors who produced films, and they might look with more favor on her if she were a Jewess. If she thought that, then she was obviously very



much mistaken, because they didn't care to whom they gave opportunities providing they made money on them, besides which they weren't such very good Jews as to worry whether people were Jews or not.

At any rate she went, and apparently she didn't get the opportunities that she sought, and she came back, and the journalists who were waiting for her when she landed from the boat asked her about it, and why had she come back to London, and her answer was, "Because Jewish girls don't stay away from their husbands." (laughs)

So my correspondent who sent me this thing said, "If you had any doubts about it, she apparently is all right."

Q: But she had a number of leading character roles, didn't she?

Perlzweig: Oh yes, she had in England ~~in~~ in Henry VIII -- she was one of the wives of Henry VIII -- and it was a magnificent piece of acting.

I didn't follow this up -- there was no reason why I should. But my North London congregation, who having heard about this thought it was an opportunity too good to be lost to use her services at a dance that they held at which they were going to collect money to build the synagogue, and I said that I wouldn't have anything to do with asking her to do anything,

because it might seem that I wanted some kind of payment for her conversion, or for what I had done to facilitate her marriage, and I felt that that was ethically wrong and I couldn't do it,

But my late wife didn't have this particular kind of scruples, and she said, "Do you object to my approaching her?"

I said, "Well, if you want to do it, do it."

So she talked to her, and asked her whether she would come to the dance.

It was a time when it was fashionable to invite film stars to various functions, which helped to sell tickets for it.

I remember very well that the dance took place in a hall in the synagogue in St. John's Wood, and a lady came down a flight of stairs -- there was a sort of ceremonial flight of stairs on to the next floor -- she came down and stretched out her hand and said, "Rabbi, you don't remember me."

And I looked at her, and I didn't remember her.

She said then, "Well, I un derstand. When you last saw me my hair was black. Now it's red."

And then I realized that she had dyed her hair, and that was one reason why I didn't recognize her.

But she was always very helpful when she could be.

That was the first case that I think I ever had, and I had no reason to object to it.

I had another case which I remember for another reason where

I did want to object to it but I didn't succeed.

A young man came to see me and said he wanted to marry a lady who was not Jewish, and that he wanted her to become Jewish in order that they could be married in the synagogue.

Now his uncle was a famous milliOnnaire -- that's what he was famous for. He was curiously enough a man who had been brought up in Brooklyn, New York, and had acquired a machine which made cigarettes, when cigarettes were really becoming popular, and he brought this machine to England, and he rented a factory, and he made a vast fortune.

If that was a virtue, then this was his virtue, because he had no others. He was very mean. As he happened, after he died I engaged the services of his housekeeper because my wife was ill at the time, and she told me about the household in which she had lived, how he came down every morning and counted the oranges in the bowl in case she or some other servant had taken one -- that sort of thing, he was very mean.

But he contributed very heavily to the building of the liberal synagogue in St. John's Wood. He was quite illiterate. He had learned to sign his name, which he did without looking at it, but he couldn't read.

Q: Could not read??

Perlzweig: No, he could not read. (pause)

When the marriage took place -- and I'll come to it in a moment -- of his nephew to this young woman, the marriage register, which is usually signed in the synagogue on the platform on which the marriage takes place, had to be taken into a side room, so that he could not be seen signing it. He did sign it because he had learned mechanically how to do it, but if he had done it in public people would have realized that the man didn't know and wasn't looking at what he was doing.

So this was a peculiar case where a man -- his name is on the outside of the synagogue, and he once came along and put his penknife in to see whether the letters there were so deeply incised that they would remain there for an eternity.

Anyhow I saw the young woman, and I had a very poor impression of her. She was a member of an aristocratic family with a double-barrel name. She was obviously someone who was marrying him for his uncle's money, and he was obviously infatuated with her and was anxious to be married to this member of the aristocracy.

Well, I didn't remember at the time, but I saw him, and I advised him not to do it.

I cannot tell you where I had gotten the guts to do this -- to say to a man who was passionately in love with a young woman, you will regret it if you marry this woman, don't do it, take my advice and don't do it, after he had persuaded his rather difficult uncle to agree to it.

I would not have remembered it but for a very accidental fact.

When I was in London about 12 years ago, I think, I went to a dinner party at which he was present, and he took me aside and he said, "I haven't seen you for many years, but if I had taken your advice I would have been saved a lot of pain and a lot of money."

That's what he saw, what he realized she wanted, which is not uncommon. In a lot of families a woman marries in order to. . . er. . .

Q: To get the inheritance.

Perlzweig: To get the inheritance. Well, of course there was a divorce. I had forgotten that. But what astonishes me is that I was a young man at the time. I couldn't have been more than in my early 30's, and I had the self-assurance to say to this man you shouldn't marry this woman.

And in retrospect, although I had completely forgotten it until he reminded me of it, I am rather proud of it.

There were many others. I think I will mention just to show you that there is no general rule about this (the case of) a middle aged couple who came to see me -- this was in North London -- and told me their story.

When they were young they were in love and they wanted to marry. She was a Jewess and he was a Christian. Both families were dead against it, and after a great deal of trouble they

persuaded them not to go through with it, and so they separated, and each of them married somebody else, and each of these marriages was a terrible failure, and in due course was terminated.

And after 20 years they came back, and said, "This is where happiness lies."

I was very touched by that. But it shows you that the reason for seeking entrance into the Jewish community varies a great deal, and one thing I learned was that you don't generalize so glibly about human beings as some sociologists do.

I had many other cases.

There were two cases which showed up the differences, and about which I talked a few years ago to an assembly of rabbis in London.

One was a case of a very personable young woman who came to me and said she wanted to become a Jewess, she knew Jews, and she liked it, and I said, "Do you know that you have to believe sincerely in what Judaism is?"

She said yes, she said, "You tell me what it is, and I'll believe sincerely in it." (laughter)

So I said, "Can you tell me what it is that you'll believe sincerely?"

She said, "No, but if you tell me what it is I will believe it sincerely."

Now the strange thing about that was that she meant what she said, she meant the word "sincerely" in her interpretation

of it, and she meant <sup>it</sup> with all her heart -- I don't have the slightest doubt about it -- but she simply did not understand the implications of the word "sincerely."

I had another case which was very different, as it happened a few days later, when a young man came to me and said he wanted to marry a Jewish girl, and therefore he wanted to become a Jew, so I asked him what he was, and he was of all things a lecturer in theology at a college in Cambridge.

So I said, "You must know what Judaism is."

He said, "Yes, I do know what Judaism is."

"Can you really say that you believe in it?"

And his answer was, "I think it's a tenable position."

Q: Ha!

Perlzweig: Now you have these two cases . The young man knew what it was, and understood it. He was talking to a fellow Cambridge man and therefore made no pretense about it.

The other, an innocent young girl, who I am sure made a wonderful wife, and was probably more Jewish than the average Jew that you meet in the street.

So the one lesson I learned was that every human being is different. You cannot generalize about it, you cannot unravel the motives. Sometimes the motives are good, sometimes they are bad, but it is the position of the person concerned.

A last case I will mention took place years after the period of which I am talking, which again is a different story.

I was then a rabbi in Toronto, Canada, and one day a man telephoned to me, and as a result of the talk we had came to see me. He was a professor of psychology in a great university, Toronto actually, and he told me this story.

He said, "My daughter, who is a Ph D and is a nuclear scientist engaged by the Government, wants to marry a man who is also a Ph D and a nuclear scientist who works with this Government enterprise, and I have come to you to ask you to convert my daughter to Judaism."

I was astonished, and I said, "You are a professor of psychology and a very distinguished one."

He said, "Yes. I believe that a marriage cannot subsist except on the basis of a common religion, and in this case the young man has the religion and believes in it. My daughter was baptized and went through it, but she has no great passion for it. His family is deeply committed to Judaism. I look at Judaism as one among <sup>various</sup> ~~the greatest~~ religions. I would like you to convert my daughter so that she has this common ground on which to stand with her husband."

Now I thought that was very remarkable. A professor of psychology, and a man of whom I'd heard and had seen some of his writings.



Well, we went through with it.

The people of the congregation, which was the largest at that time not only in Canada but in the Western Hemisphere -- I had two witnesses when she made her declaration of allegiance there -- they were very astonished and proud about it.

And at the marriage -- and I tell you, this is really the climax of the whole thing -- which took place in the traditional Jewish way under a canopy, standing under the canopy was not only her father, but her uncle, and her uncle was a clergyman of the United Church of Canada and a professor of philosophical theology. And they acquiesced.

So I complete this casual reference to the large number of conversions that I was responsible for. I say I was responsible for -- they were responsible, I never persuaded anybody, I had no reason to. Judaism does not pretend to offer anything to any convert. According to the teaching of Judaism, all the righteous of the peoples have a place in the world to come.

From the Jew it is demanded that he should be true to the tradition of Judaism, the Torah. From the non-Jew that he should observe what are called the Noahid Laws. These are seven laws -- not to kill, not to worship idols and so on -- which are ordinary morality (?)

So I had nothing to offer, and I don't desire to, besides which my own personal belief is that none of us, not even the wisest among us, really knows in full the mind of God. None



didn't write it. But he was present, and he listened and he quoted it with approval.

I think unless we can, all of us -- and I said this in the Vatican -- realize that part of our obligations which tells us to walk humbly with God -- you may remember the Prophet says to do justly, do love mercy ; what does the Lord require of me? To do justly, to love mercy , and to walk humbly with thy God --

Well, we all talk about justice, we all talk about mercy, and the Jews and the Christians of our which has the greatest gift to both, we all forget this last sentence: "Walk humbly with thy God." I am a mere creature. I do not know what eternity is, and my reason forbids me to accept the view that anybody else does.

So although if you had to ask anybody in England, and in the Jewish community in England in the year 1936 or 1937 what I was, they would have said "the great converter" -- and I was not responsible in any single case, I did all I could to show all the reasons against it, --

Q: But in a way you were a magnet.

Perlzweig: Well, this professor in Toronto who came to me, for example, could have gone to other places, because there was another Reform synagogue. I was brought to that synagogue in order to ~~isxxxx~~ reform it.

He could have gone to a place where conversion was a mere

formality. But he knew me. By that time I had preached in a number of churches and my ideas were known. He knew I was an enlightened man, so he came to speak to me, and I thought what he did was something which was worth recording. (pause)

Have we come to the end of our. . .

Q: Just about.

Perlzweig: Well, I just want to say that I must remember where I've got to.

Q: I'll make a note of it.

Perlzweig: Because in reading these papers, which are full of interest for me, and showing the difference between the cultures. . .

Q: There is a little bit of overlapping.

Perlzweig: Yes.

Q: But that's my fault more than yours.

Perlzweig: Oh no, it's my fault. I should have remembered if I told a story. I was really happy to see that they were

all in harmony. I didn't tell a story differently.

Q: No.

Perlzweig: From the cultural point of view, as a piece of cultural anthropology, reading these things was very interesting. The words which everybody in England knows -- for example I referred to King Offa (757-796). It appears at King Offa. Now everybody -- I at least think so -- in England<sup>who</sup>/knows about these things knows about King Offa and Offa's dykes -- Offa's Dyke in the center of England.

And there were other things that the transcriber -- who is very good by the way, I mean really, I was astonished that he or she gets the thing done so well, -- it comes out of a different world, you see.

Q: Yes, of course.

End of Interview 7 w/ Rabbi M. Perlzweig by Peter Jessup,  
October 24th 1981.

DK

Interviewee: Rabbi Dr. Maurice Perlzweig

Interviewer: Peter Jessup

Place: New York City

Interview no. 8 - November 12th 1981

Q: Good afternoon, Dr. Perlzweig. I know you got together with Dr. William Liebmann over another subject, but here we go, about to start what must be our session.

Rabbi Maurice Perlzweig: I am glad I talked to Dr. Liebmann, and I shall do what I can to take full advantage of his experience and advice, and I hope that one day I will be able to put together my papers, in a form which will enable Columbia, or whatever the recipient organization will be, to make use of them for historical purposes.

Now the last time I spoke to you I think I was dealing with the subject of conversion, and more particularly the conversion

of two members of the Mond family, one who became Lord Melchett -- the second Lord Melchett -- and Lady Reading, who was the wife of Gerald, the second Marquis of Reading.

Now Lady Reading was a person with whom I had a very close association in the leadership of the Zionist movement and of the World Jewish Congress, and I think the last time that I had any connection with her activity was in the rather melancholy form of delivering the memorial address at the liberal synagogue, which I think took place in 1975, and I remember it because I was so sure of what I knew about her and of her character that I was not intimidated by the distinction of the audience, which gathered in the liberal synagogue, which included representatives of the Executive, of the Judiciary, and of the House of Commons.

Normally I would have felt what I would regard as proper hesitations and reticences in speaking to so distinguished an audience, but on this occasion it didn't happen, and I think I can say that what I did say was probably the best organized address that I delivered during the whole of my career.

Unfortunately I don't have the address. I wasn't able to give it to the family, who asked for it, because of my unfortunate habit of relying on the audience to produce reactions in my mind and spirit while I am talking to them.

I would like to add that her son, who was the third Marquis and whose name was Michael -- and who had been at Eton while

I was teaching the Jewish boys there -- was very anxious that I should talk to his children, but unfortunately -- and I regret to have to mention this -- his wife, who was rather eccentric in many respects, was also slightly anti-Semitic, that is to say she rather resented being mixed up with Jews, which was the result of her marrying a man who was the son of a Jew and of a mother who actually became a Jewess.

However, what that meant was that for the year or two that Reading still lived I had no opportunity of seeing him, although he did write to me.

But I have to revert to the story of Henry Melchett, the brother of Lady Reading and the second Lord Melchett, because of a controversy in which I was involved through no fault of my own I might add, as a result of something that he wrote in a book to which he gave the title Thy Brother. He was writing the book and addressing the book to Gentiles, and referring to the Jew as a brother of the Gentiles.

This book in its introduction says that I helped him to write it, and the inference was drawn from that by the whole of the Reading family -- quite wrongly, I should emphasize -- that I had actually written the book.

I did not write the book. What I did do was to be present when Henry Melchett was dictating the book, which he did every week for several weeks running, to two male stenographers who



came to his dining room every night after dinner in order to take it down.

I would dine with him, and we would discuss the next chapter of the book, and he would tell me what his ideas were, and I would comment on them, and the understanding was that as he dictated the book I would interrupt him if he made a mistake

I did interrupt him so often that I got tired of it, and as this was rather late at night and early in the morning, it meant that I didn't get home until two or three in the morning. And I also had difficulty in getting a cab in order to get home.

So I dropped the thing, and said I would read it when he had finished the book.

One of the things on which I interrupted him was his account of the way in which the Zionists had rejected the offer of the British Government at the beginning of the century -- in 1903, 1904 and 1905 -- (that is to say) the offer that the Government made of giving them an area of territory in East Africa, as people said at the time Uganda.

The Zionist Congress, which met after the area had been explored by the Jews, rejected the offer, not because the land wasn't worth having, or even because the British settlers who were in the vicinity objected to a Jewish immigration, but because it wasn't Palestine.

There had been, I should say, a number of leading Zionists -- well, not Zionists in their day, but precursors of Zionists,

including the foremost among them, namely Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), who didn't regard Palestine as being necessarily the land which the Jews would live in .

There were others, and conspicuously among them Israel Zangwill (1864-1926), who thought that the political trouble involved in establishing a state in Palestine, or even a Jewish national center in Palestine, was more than enough to justify going somewhere else, and at that time, in the very first years of the century, there were parts of the world which were not inhabited, or not closely inhabited, and which could conceivably be available for a Jewish settlement.

So Uganda was rejected, and it was rejected for reasons that didn't appeal very much to Herzl, who was not a traditionalist in Jewish matters, and who didn't conceive of the new national home of the Jews as other than a refuge for the Jews who would otherwise become the victims of anti-Semitism.

Now the Russian Jews would have none of that. A people who preserved the tradition of Israel, to whom Jerusalem was the center of what they hoped for -- they would have none of this, and they objected very strenuously.

The result~~was~~ was that the offer was refused.

Now Melchett comes into the story because he attributes the refusal to the activity of Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952), which is quite untrue. Weizmann had very little to do with it.

I am not sure that he participated in all of the discussions, but the people who had a great deal to do with it were the people who belonged to the more or less underground Zionist organization which existed in Russia.

When they came to the Zionist congresses which discussed the British offer -- and it was always being put forward by Theodor Herzl himself -- they were foremost among those who said, "This is in violation of our tradition. The Jews will never be really interested in it -- or at least the masses of Jews will not -- and we will have none of it."

Now there were a number of people who took the lead in saying this. There was one of the leaders of Russian Zionism who remained a leader for many years, whose name was Ussishkin (Menahem Ussishkin, 1863-1941), and others.

What was so offensive to some people was that Melchett said that the man who was really responsible for refusing the offer, and who was therefore as it were the repository of the nationalist tradition in Judaism, was Weizmann.

Now I have no doubt that Weizmann had persuaded himself that this was sound. He was a man of great imagination who was inclined to believe what he thought or what he hoped if he repeated it often enough. In this way he was like his successor in the Zionist organization -- and in other fields too -- Nathan Goldman.

One of the things I learned~~ed~~was that these men didn't consciously twist the historical truth. They believed that they really did certain things, or were hoping to do certain things, and they came to believe them and to repeat them.

Now one of the people who attacked me for this, as it happened unfortunately, was the npw recognized to have been the greatest historian in England at the time, namely Lewis Namier (Sir Lewis Bernstein Namier, 1888-1960).

Sir Lewis Namier was at that time political secretary of the Zionist Executive, and in that capacity I saw him very often. In fact I had a closer relationship with him than that. As far as I know I was the only member of the Zionist Executive who had taken a degree in history, and he was par excellence the historian par excellence.

I used to walk with him for hours in Bloomsbury, when he told me -- because he was a bit of an egomaniac -- how Lord This or Lord That had sat up all night to read his book on the structure of politics in the reign of George III.

Q: Ah!

Perlzweig: And we discussed religious matters. He pretended, or he claimed, that he regarded all ministers of religion as being the children more or less of the devil. On the other hand

he talked to me a great deal about religion, and among other things one of his boasts was that he had read in Latin -- he was one of the very few people in Europe who had read in Latin the whole of the Institutes (of the Christian Religion) of Calvin.

So I knew him very well. But he assumed like everybody else that I had written this book of Melchett's, and that I was responsible for the error -- because it was an error, which I did my best to correct at the time when the error was being made, unsuccessfully, as it turned out -- the error which attributed to Weizmann the defeat of resolutions in the Congress favoring Uganda.

Melchett always blandly turned to me and said, in his own words, "I got this from the Chief himself," and nothing I could say or do would persuade him to change it.

It is true that the book contained a great deal of what people at the time recognized as coming from me, and which Melchett picked up ~~in~~ in the sermons that he heard me deliver, as for example, the notion that Israel did not wait or hope for a personal Messiah, but that Israel itself was performing a Messianic function among the nations. He made a great deal of that, and the nearest that anyone could find to any approximation of that idea was among the medieval Jewish philosophers in medieval Spain, which was a long time ago, and where in fact I had first encountered the idea.

At any rate, here was Namier, who today is universally recognized as the leading historian in England at the time, who was responsible for organizing the historical work done in connection with the House of Commons, and who for a time made my life a little bit difficult by blaming me for a mistake which I had not made and which I had tried to get changed, but which was made by Melchett.

There is one other thing to be said about this book, which gives it its special place in the history of the time.

I may say it was very widely read, and that one of the last times I saw a copy of it was in the office of the then editor of the Jewish Chronicle some ten years ago, who showed his copy, which contained a bookplate of the late Justice Cardozo (Benjamin Cardozo, 1870-1938).

What is remarkable about the book is that ~~it is that~~ it says to the non-Jewish world, "You regard the Jews as being timid, as being cowardly, as avoiding the fight. You regard them as having a lack of the military virtues to which you give high priority. Don't you think -- he says -- that you ought to regard the persistence with which they faced and absorbed <sup>the</sup> persecutions of so many centuries as in itself a form of courage?"

Now I mention this because it is so different from what people would nowadays say or write about the Jews.

If you take the young people of today and ask them what they think about Israel, they will say militaristic.

I've read in American newspapers in past years appeals to the American Government to be as forthright as the Israelis, as firm, as relentless. The victories that they have won in the meantime -- during the Six Day War, and before that during the Suez engagement -- are now being used as models in military schools.

The difference between the timid Jew of 1917, let us say, and 1980 -- a difference which has taken place in one generation -- is one of the most remarkable in Jewish history, and even though I have lived through a great deal of it I still cannot quite believe it.

The Jew of whom people said to me in 1917, "We will not trust our fate to these -- as they put it -- schneiders and shoesters," that is to say in English tailors . . .

Q: And cobblers.

Perlzweig: And cobblers, who would run when they heard the first shot.

When I think of that world, in which many people believed, both Jews and non-Jews, and I think of the world in which even today everybody is still prepared to say that from the military point of view the Israelis are more powerful even though in

numbers they are almost trivial than their Arab neighbors.

Well, that is, as far as that book is concerned -- which I repeat I did not write, although undoubtedly some of its material is drawn from what Henry Melchett heard in the sermons which I delivered in the synagogue.

I do not know whether I should continue to talk about this question of proselytizing. There is a certain irony in it. I was not myself eager to promote it in any way. My theology didn't allow me to offer to a Gentile who came to me the promise of salvation. I didn't pretend to know exactly what salvation was, and certainly I had the force of Jewish tradition behind me which says in so many words, "The righteous of all nations have a place in the world to come."

Nevertheless I did receive a great many, and I learned a great deal about human nature in the course of it. I am not sure whether in speaking of proselytes I mentioned the case of Binnie Barnes.

Q: You did .

Perlzweig: I think I did, and so I won't deal with that. But what was striking to me was the variety of reasons why people wanted to become Jews.

There were some who thought they were descending from Jews.



I remember one man whom I finally dissuaded because I thought his grounds were grounds that he would one day revise and maybe regret, who said that he came from Cornwall, the place where the Phoenicians had come, in order to buy tin from the natives. There are ancient tin mines there, and there are places which have Hebrew names, not only a place called Port Isaac, but a place called Mare Zion, which means in Hebrew "the sorrow of Zion." And he had read somewhere -- and there is some ground for it -- that among the people who came ~~from~~ with the Phoenicians through the Jews.

(static in tape)

And he had an overpowering sense of his Jewish descent, and he wanted to get back to his roots.

Well, I am glad to say that I was able to persuade him not to allow something like that to change the whole course of his life, and possibly create difficulties for himself.

I think that in some ways the most extraordinary case I had, which I deal with at this point for nonchronological reasons, was much later -- many years later, in the 1940's -- in Canada, when I had the extraordinary experience that a man who was a professor of psychology at a great university came to see me, and the subject he wanted to see me about was his daughter, who was engaged to a Jew, who was like her a Ph D and a worker in nuclear physics for the Canadian Government.

Q: You did mention that.

funerals. This was regarded as very heretical, but I thought that utterances of this kind at a funeral were largely insincere, and had as their object making the relatives of the deceased feel better than they were entitled to.

In any case, although this went on for years, I said if there were to be a eulogy it ought to take place sometime later -- perhaps a month later, in accordance with the Jewish tradition -- when the atmosphere was calmer.

Q: In other words a memorial service.

Perlzweig: A memorial service. Now I am bound to say I departed from this many years later when I went to <sup>n</sup>Toronto, in Canada, where a funeral was a great social event. People literally in their hundreds would come to the synagogue, and a full scale address would be delivered, sometimes by people who had never seen the deceased, and ~~really~~ knew nothing about him.

At any rate, that was my view at this time, when this young woman died.

Then as I was walking in procession behind the coffin, an old friend of mine came up to me and said, "You must say something, because Rubenstein," -- who was the husband of Conchita de Supervilla -- "will be very upset if you don't."

So I had no choice. I had to excogitate on the spur of the moment, and I had to do it, considering the subject of <sup>the</sup> address,

Q: Ha!

Perlzweig: Which is another illustration of the way in which the ignorance of people about the Jews has dominated the relations between Jews and Christians.

At any rate I recall some of my schoolboy Latin, which I think comes from Tacitus, "ignotum pro magnifico," -- what is unknown appears to be tremendous, magnificent -- and therefore people who don't know what the truth about Jews is, assuming for a moment that the Jews themselves know, read into it all kinds of mysterious things.

But here I was -- and I kept the paper for many years, but I think it's gone now -- where a clergyman of the Church of England solemnly assures one of his parishioners that Jews are people who think in Hebrew, or at any rate a rabbi does, and speaks English.

The other funeral which I remember for various reasons which I ought to take notice of is that of Israel Zangwill.

Zangwill in his day was a famous novelist, essayist and dramatist, and his play The Melting Pot for example had a great run in New York, and in fact helped to develop promote the use of the word "melting pot" as a synonym for the United States.

He himself expressed to his wife, who herself was a writer of distinction and was of part Jewish blood, that I should officiate at the funeral.

At that period, as in so many places, in many ways, I had a sort of monopoly. I was the only preacher in England at the time who was a radical in theology in the way in which Zangwill was, and yet I was also the only preacher who was a nationalist, a man who had a belief in Jewish tradition as an ethnic thing as well as a religious thing.

As it happened my senior colleague was absent in America. I remember the occasion for various reasons, one of which was that with the consent of Mrs. Zangwill I invited Stephen Wise (1874-1949), who by accident happened to be in England at the time, to deliver the address, which as I have explained I was against delivering myself.

He did deliver it with what one might expect (in terms of) impact, a tremendous (cough and static in tape) although it was at the crematorium in *Yad Vashem* Green, where this took place.

Of course he delivered a formal address. He had dictated it before he delivered it, a thing which I never did, not because I was proud of it, but because I was just too lazy to take all that trouble with something so evanescent as a speech.

But at any rate this was an occasion when he officiated, and I remember that he looked at the two Zangwill boys who were sitting there, and the phrase he used was they looked

exactly as Israel Zangwill looked, with out of his face. They had smooth faces, instead of<sup>a</sup>/rather craggy face that Israel Zangwill had.

One of them, Oliver Zangwill, is today professor I think of psychology at Cambridge University.

Mrs. Zangwill kept the ashes at the cemetery in what we called then -- and is still called today -- a columbarium. There was a niche in the wall, and a little plaque over the wall, and there was a striking phrase which looked like a quotation but isn't, "The God of our children give you peace."

I think I ought to say that I learned at the time -- whether from Mrs. Zangwill or somebody else I don't know recall -- that she wanted <sup>to</sup> ~~of~~ had hoped to become a Jewess, but that he had dissuaded her, on the grounds<sup>a</sup>, which was very characteristic of him, that if she hadn't met him, Israel Zangwill, the thought would never have crossed her mind, and therefore this act would be an act not out of conviction but really an act of convenience.

I don't know how far that criticism doesn't apply to a great many conversions, but at any rate this was the rigorous ethical position that Zangwill took up in relation to all the subjects, and anybody may read about it now in a book which is probably next to impossible to get, called The Voice of Jerusalem, which is a collection of his essays on peace and war and religion

and many other things.

The origin of the expression is rather interesting.

During the First World War -- in the earlier part of the War -- there was a Jewish philanthropist in New York called Jacob Schiff (1847-1920), who had written and spoken in favor of peace between the Allies and Germany, and he was denouncing England as the Voice of Berlin, and Zangwill at the time wrote a letter to the Times in London -- which is one of the characteristic things that public men do in London -- in which he said it was not the Voice of Berlin, it was the Voice of Jerusalem. That's the title of the book.

Now let me leave this pastoral side of what I did. Of course I haven't talked about the innumerable encounters that I had with people with every kind of social background, which meant a great deal to me as far as the understanding of religion was concerned.

I think I ought to add something about my relations with the synagogue in addition to what I have already said, or some of the incidents in my relations with the synagogue which led to my departure in 1938.

One arose out of an article which Israel Mattuck wrote in The Spectator of London, which was then an influential weekly.

He wrote an article about Zionism and religion, but more particularly about Zionism, and one of the things he said in the article was that a Zionist could claim to be a good citizen

of the country in which he lived by virtue of the contradictions which existed in every man's mind. In other words, he tried to show that logically you had to say that a Zionist must by the very nature of Zionism be a bad British or American or French or Italian subject, that there was a certain inconsistency in religions and in a man's point of view which made it impossible to have an absolutely logical outlook.

Now this led to an outcry in the Jewish community, and of course it was very awkward for me, because what he was saying was that I was not a good citizen except by virtue of the inconsistency.

Now various people took that up. One man called Israel Cohen, who was a well known journalist, wrote a letter to The Spectator and he said. . . he challenged Mattuck to say in so many words what he thought about his colleague who occupied the same pulpit and would come under the ban.

Mattuck never answered that letter.

But what was much more serious, a body called the Board of Deputies of British Jews--which claims to represent and more or less does represent the Jews of the United Kingdom and has a very long history, 200 years, certain traditional relations with the Court and with Parliament, and is mentioned in acts of Parliament and so on--at that time had as its president a man called Philip Guedalla (1889-1944).

Philip Guedalla, whose name is not much heard nowadays, was

in his day a very fashionable historian, that is to say his books,--which were largely biographies of people like Palmerston (Henry John Temple 3rd Viscount Palmerston, 1784-1865), the English statesman--had a very wide circulation, and were, as we would say now, best sellers. To read him was to cultivate a particular taste. He had been president of the Oxford Union, and had become a master of the kind of language which they taught and which was regarded as the epitome of wit in English at the time. I cannot think of any of Guedalla's quips, but in order to give you an idea of what kind of wit it was I will quote one of my own which had a large circulation.

I said in the Cambridge Union, referring to the defeat of Mr. H. H. Asquith (1852-1928), the late Lord Asquith at a constituency which he had represented for a great many years in Scotland called Paisley -- I said in the language of the Cambridge Union,

"It is not surprising that the Right Honorable Gentleman, having worn the trousers of the late Mr. Gladstone (1809-1898) for over 30 years, should at last lose his seat."

Q: Ah!

Perlzweig: And of course that was greeted by a great howl of laughter in the Cambridge Union, and I repeated it in Edinburgh, where I went to the University to represent the Cambridge Union



in a debate.

The next day The Scotsman, which is one of Scotland's leading newspapers, had a report on the debate, and the only thing/it said about the debate ~~xxxxxx~~ was that in the course of the debate Mr. Perlzweig of Christ College, Cambridge, said the following, "Having worn the trousers of the late Mr. Gladstone, et cetera." That's all they said about the debate.

This kind of witticism, which depends upon the use of words and so on, was regarded with very great respect, and Guedalla was a past master at it. If you read his books now -- which are very good books and a great deal of good historical research went into them -- you wonder how grownup people could go on for pages and pages in that kind of language.

Q: Is Guedalla a Sephardic name?

Perlzweig: Yes. He was a Sephardic. He was a member of a famous Sephardic name. In fact he and another politician whose name is much better known, Hore-Belisha (Leslie Hore-Belisha, 1898-1957), who was minister of war in England at one time, and who wanted to send British troops into Finland to fight the Russians who were taking the Finns, which fortunately Churchill, I think it was, managed to prevent, because Churchill, and this is a point I'll come to, was a very firm believer from very early days in the whole conflict that Russia would come in

on the side of the West -- well, Guedalla and Hore-Belisha, both presidents of the Oxford Union, were candidates for a kind of spectral position, namely the succession to Disraeli (Benjamin Disraeli, 1804-1881) in English public life.

They both cultivated Disraeli's ghost, they both imitated him. I once had tea with Guedalla, and I found that on the table in front of me were not only cups but there was what was obviously a dish, which meant that he was going to have a dish of "tey" in the eighteenth century way. He was very conscious of his Jewish heritage, and he dealt with it very much like Disraeli. He was a barrister. He was called to the bar, let's say, but he never succeeded in making an impression. Apparently his witticisms couldn't go down well either with judges or jurors. At any rate he left that and went in for politics.

I knew him well because his first constituency was one in North London near the synagogue to which I was attached, and I gave him <sup>such</sup> ~~xxxxxxxx~~ help as I could -- not very much, I didn't think it was my business. He was a liberal candidate.

But I got to know him very well. Then he became president of the Zionist Federation, and at a certain point -- which I will come to when we talk about Zionism -- we threw out the existing officers except for Guedalla, and I became honorary secretary, and so I worked with him.

At any rate he was the president of the Board of Deputies when this article appeared in The Observer.

It is very difficult for me to explain my feelings at the time, which were very strong. I had no objection to what Mattuck said -- he was entitled to say what he liked -- but I was obviously put into a very awkward position, so what I did what I do best, which is nothing. I took a low profile, I didn't answer any of the things which appeared in the newspapers, and I waited until it blew over, but not before Guedalla, who was very conscious of his obligations, took the matter up at the Board of Deputies on the ground that this was anti-Semitism, and one of the things they existed to combat was anti-Semitism. So they dealt with this as though it were a piece of propaganda that they had read in a nazi newspaper.

This led to a great deal of discussion and bitterness, but I kept out of it. What I did was simply to do nothing. I find that a very easy thing to do, in accordance with my natural indolence. This is probably a quality which has kept me alive, when I haven't allowed myself to be carried away by strange passions.

That was one incident which created in the synagogue a very bad atmosphere, if only because people came to me and said, "What a terrible thing to do to you. You had nothing to do with it, he wrote an article in The Spectator in which he practically denounced you as a bad thing ( a bad sinner ? " voice trails off).

This was one thing which happened which I think helped to convince me that the day must come when I must bring an end to this rather strange existence.

The other thing was more straightforward.

The British Government at a certain point issued a white paper. This habit of issuing white papers is a kind of epidemic in England. The Government issues white papers at the drop of a hat.

Well, they issued a white paper. I don't remember its contents, but I remember it obviously transgressed a pledge which it had given to the Executive of the Jewish agency of which I was a member.

The pledge was not to do this thing, whatever it was, without consulting us first. In the American way it would have been without holding a hearing, but at least to consult us so that we could put up our point of view.

Well, they didn't consult us, and I was run up by a journalist from the same paper I mentioned before, that is to say The Evening Standard, which had a very important place in the life of London at the time. The reason he rang me up --

because there were two other men who had precedence over me in London, and whom it obviously would have been better to talk to, one of whom was Dr. Weizmann, but Dr. Weizmann as often happened was in America, and the other was Professor

Selig Brodetsky (1888-1954), who was the head of the Political Department, and who was a professor at Leeds University. He was a very remarkable man in many ways. He was a professor of aeronautics, and he never flew in an airplane because he knew too much about them. This made life very difficult when he had to go to South Africa or elsewhere, when instead of doing it overnight he had to take a boat. But at any rate he was in Leeds, lecturing on astronomy or whatever it was that he was talking to his students about.

So all he could do was to ring me, because I had the title which was conferred on me by Brodetsky,--who said he wanted to impress the Germans in the organization-- as Director of Political Information.

So I said to the journalist who got me on the telephone, "I want you to understand that I am talking to you either as a member of the World Executive, or if you prefer, honorary secretary of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain, but in no circumstances should you refer to the liberal synagogue. I am not speaking on their behalf, and you will get me in great trouble if you bring it in."

He said, "Oh no, I won't mention it at all."

So he had this statement, which appeared on the front page in the afternoon newspaper. He said that I had said, quite correctly, that this was a breach of faith on the part of the British Government, and we would certainly not accept it, we

would fight it.

Well, this caused considerable commotion. I mean even in this country, where party political statements are very violent, it would be taken calmly if some rabbi in New York said on the front page of The New York Times or The New York Post that the American Government had committed a breach of faith and (voice trails off)

It caused a great deal of trouble, especially as there were two conservative members of Parliament who were prominent in the synagogue, and who were prominent in supporting the Government in this action.

One was a man who became Sir Louis (Halle) Gluckstein, who was a leading barrister and held many public positions, one of which was as president or chairman of the famous Royal Albert Hall in London.

Well, he went to Montefiore and he said, "This is intolerable. We are keeping a man who is engaged in destroying the Government of which we are the supporters."

So I was summoned to <sup>0</sup>M~~o~~ntefiore's house, and I saw Gluckstein there, and he told me that he thought it was very unfair ~~xxxx~~ when I received a salary from the synagogue and lived on it that I should spend time in the most public way possible in attacking a Government on Zionist grounds which he thought anyhow was absurd. And everybody knew that I was the minister of the

liberal synagogue.

I said, "I told the journalist that he wasn't to mention the liberal synagogue or my connection with it, and he faithfully stuck to it. What I said I said as an individual human being who is entitled to use freedom of speech."

He said, "Yes, that's all very well, but he described you as a Reverend. If he says "Reverend" that implies the liberal synagogue."

Well, of course it didn't. I mean he was a man who was Dean of Canterbury -- I've forgotten his name -- who wrote a book called The Socialist Sects of the World, who was the Dean of Canterbury and who was a communist.

Q: Hewlett Johnson?

Perlzweig: Hewlett Johnson, that's the man. Well, he didn't represent the Church of England, although he wasn't as careful as I was.

I explicitly spoke to the journalist in a certain capacity, and I gave him the choice of two capacities, but Gluckstein said, "That won't do. If you are called Reverend, that brings the synagogue into it."

Well, we had a more or less pleasant conversation.

Montefiore, (Sir Claude Montefiore, 1859-1939), who was anxious to keep me in the synagogue at all costs, said,

"Look, this happens once in a blue moon, and it was due to the fact that other people were not there who could have spoken, and so

It passed by, but it left a very deep impression on my mind. If I was not in a position to express my view -- and I was very careful not to be party political in the pulpit, which I thought would have been out of place -- then clearly the whole thing was not worthwhile.

Q: Who was the other conservative member of Parliament?

Perlzweig: His name was Lyons.

Q: Of the Lyons Teahouse?

Perlzweig: No. Gluckstein was. It was very curious -- Gluckstein. .

The Lyons Teahouse began as Salmon & Gluckstein. Salmon & Gluckstein became a tobacconist which I don't think exists any more.

But Gluckstein was a member of these two families who conducted the teahouse, the Lyons Teahouse, the whole complex.

The other man was called Lyons, which is a common Jewish name, and he was a milder man, and had no interest in it.

But Gluckstein, whom I saw a few years ago -- he has died



since -- and who was a jovial (man), in fact I saw him at the memorial service of Lady Reading and he slapped me on the back and he said, "Just like old times," I mean 50 years had passed by, and the world was very different --

Well, he was very keen on this issue. He was a lawyer, and he took a very active part in the synagogue, and he subsequently became president of \_\_\_\_\_, which was a distinction, (heavy static in tape) because he was the successor of Claude Montefiore, who was one of the most highly esteemed men in the life of eminent Jewry.

Well, I ought to have something, because I spent a great deal of time at it, on the North London Liberal Synagogue, which has since become the North London Progressive Synagogue. It was renamed after I left because there was an attempt to take the sectarian side out of it.

Now this was a very liberal synagogue. It consisted of intellectuals of the lower middle class. Teachers were very prominent in it, journalists, and others of that kind, who were genuinely liberal, and although they were emotionally much more ethnically Jewish than the people in the big liberal synagogue -- who were the people that paid me my salary, and a member of whose staff I was, I got no salary from North London, that was just an addition which was added to my duties, and it was a very important addition, and I may say when I left in 1938, instead of appointing one man to do these two jobs they appointed two, so I must have

been busy even though I often describe myself as indolent, and I certainly relied a great deal on the spur of the moment, especially in speaking.

But it was a genuinely liberal progressive synagogue.

Just to give you one instance of it, they used to sing an anthem, of which I only remember that its beginning was "Babylon, the Mighty City," and it went on from there to explain how Babylon will be destroyed and its children will have their heads banged against a wall, and so on.

All this is Biblical -- I want to emphasize this -- based upon the Psalms, and it was written by a great composer, and it was a very fine piece of music.

Well, one day the honorary secretary of the synagogue, whose name was Miss Carrie Green -- who had been at Cambridge, a little older than I am, or rather than I was, I regret to say, because she died only last month in her 90's -- came to me and said, "This thing is barbaric."

I said, "Well, it's only a transcript of the Psalms."

She said, "Oh never mind the Psalms or anything else. We are liberals -- not political liberals, but progressives -- and we can't have it.

Well, we abolished it on the spot.

Now it was a kind of congregation that wasn't intimidated by having the Bible quoted at it. If it was wrong it was wrong, whether it was in the Bible or anywhere else.

Now that's a sign of a genuine liberalism, of a genuine liberality of the synagogue, <sup>and</sup> of the people in it, even though they were, if you looked at them and talked to them, obviously more Jewish in the ethnic sense than the people at St. John's Wood where the liberal synagogue was.

Now another sign of this attitude which had some historical meaning was that we decided that the prayer book which was used in the big synagogue -- the Liberal Jewish prayer book -- and which was compiled by Mattuck, and in which I had a very minor hand -- (it's mentioned in the preface that I helped him with the thing), was much too cold and lifeless, and lacked some of the inherited warmth of the Jewish tradition.

So we decided that we would have a prayer book of our own.

Now imagine the situation. There is one synagogue in all of England, the liberal synagogue, which has a liturgy of its own and a tradition and has existed for 20 years or whatever it was, and there is this little synagogue which is really a subsidiary, and we're not satisfied to use the prayer book of the big synagogue, because it doesn't conform to what we feel is the right attitude to Jewish life. That is to say the liberal synagogue <sup>the</sup> ~~has~~ no reference to Zion or ~~to the Jewish people~~ and all that kind of thing.

So we decided to have our own book.

And I went about it -- since it fell obviously to my lot to compile it -- by sending a questionnaire to every member of the

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congregation, which said,

"Do you want more Hebrew or less Hebrew?"

"Do you want references to Zion and Jerusalem, or don't you want that?"

"Do you want more traditional music, or don't you?"

And I collated all these answers, and I produced a prayer book, restored certain things which had been cut out, wrote certain prayers myself, and constructed what was afterwards denounced as a Zionist litany, which when I read it now is extremely mild. It consists of sentences taken out of the Bible and put together to form a continuous prayer, which was read alternately by the reader of the congregation.

Each of them has references to Jerusalem,

"For the                      shall go forth from Zion and  
from Jerusalem," -- that kind of thing, you see.

It hasn't got you might almost say the outrageous Zionism that you find let us say in the Book of Zachariah.

There is a passage in the Book -- I think it's Chapter IX or X -- which says, (speaks in a loud, emphatic voice),

"I will bring my people from the East Country and from the West Country, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and I shall be their God, and they will be my people."

In other words, "I will bring people from the United States and from the Soviet Union -- the East Country and the West

Country -- and they shall be brought in the midst of Jerusalem."

I remember once I read that passage -- the whole passage is like that -- on a ship, in the days when ships crossed the Atlantic, and when the chaplain asked me to read I said, "I'll read from the Old Testament," and he said, "Certainly, that's all right."

After the service he said, "I asked you to read from the Bible, not to do Zionist propaganda."

I mean it sounds like that.

Now I didn't put in this prayer book the things which are violent like that, but sentences which are always traditional, and this is an old Jewish liturgical method: You gather together sentences from the Bible, and put them one after the other, and they read together like a continuous piece about one topic.

Well, we not only did that, but we said to the liberal synagogue, "We can't afford to print a book, but if you will lend us your plates with which the prayer book is printed we will use your plates as far as we can, and have the other bits printed."

Nobody objected to it. Neither synagogue objected. They didn't object to the use of their plates for you might say a rival prayer book. This was liberalism in religion.

So the prayer book was printed. Some people didn't like some passages of it. It was Mattuck who invented the phrase

"Zionist litany." "Your Zionist litany, he would say to me," as though this were a blemish on the face of Reform Judaism all over the world, and in fact I think I am right in saying -- and it ought to be a historic fact -- this is the first prayer book printed anywhere in the world which expressed what would now be called Zionist sympathies.

Now I've got one or two copies of it, but it's disappeared because it was put in the basement of the synagogue when they had a third prayer book, and the mice got rid of all those prayer books, so it's disappeared. It's <sup>not</sup> now in the British Museum. But I thought of sending one copy to Cincinnati, except that I am indolent about these things.

It was a very important moment in the history of liberal Judaism. Today every Reform prayer book in England, in America and everywhere else, have got Zionism all over it, and put on with a heavy brush. I mean sometimes I feel myself that it's a little bit too much. After all there is a thing called the Jewish religion, which is connected with Zionism, and which has very close associations with it, but which is a separate thing, and it shouldn't be confused.

Anyhow I was in fact historically -- and I am saying it very frankly -- the first person to publish a prayer book in which the connection between Judaism and Zion, which can't be separated, was actually acknowledged.

Now the prayer book had a very extraordinary history.

The first place to reprint it was South Africa. There was a newly born Reform movement -- it is now a very powerful movement, but then it was very weak -- and what it suffered from was the separation between progressive Judaism as it was seen from Johannesburg and Durban and other places, and Zionism.

So they reprinted it, and I've got somewhere a copy bound in lion's skin, which <sup>has</sup> ~~is~~ of course long been dealt with by months.

Q: It's moth eaten.

Perlzweig: Moth eaten. But when I went to South Africa -- which I will come to -- I had a great reception. I mean a lot of people knew about me there. I am talking about -- I went to South Africa in 1938. I don't know what I was in 1938, but I was under 40. But I might have been a prophet from the Old Testament ~~why~~ because they'd been using the prayer book which I had compiled.

It was also -- and I had discussions about it -- to be translated into Spanish, and to be used in Barcelona by German Jews who were liberal Jews in Germany and found no such place in Barcelona, and they wanted to set up a synagogue, but they didn't of course have a prayer book, and they, being refugees from Germany, were strong Zionists, and they wanted something rather more obviously Jewish, and we arranged to have it

translated.

And then the crash came. It was one of my earliest diplomatic missions to go to the Spanish Embassy and to help to save those refugees in Barcelona who were being denounced and attacked as Germans -- not as victims of the nazis, but as nazis.

There were riots. Most of them left. Anyhow nothing came of this particular thing, but it was symptomatic of the fact that this book filled a need.

And so there was this synagogue which I went to faithfully week after week, and in the course of the 18 years that I was there I got to know. . . . I even got to the point of, in one case, officiating at a marriage of children of people who had been in on the foundation of the synagogue -- two generations.

Well, that's North London, and I wanted to mention the fact that it wasn't simply a small congregation, which had its moments of glory and distinction -- that's where Lord Melchett and Lady Reading were converted -- but it had a life of its own, and is now a big and flourishing congregation.

The first honorary secretary, whom I've mentioned -- Carrie Green, who died last month, I don't know how old she was, but she was in her middle 90's -- was a saintly person, not saintly in the sense of being solemn or serious, because when we had our Seder on Passover she was the life of the party, but who



was saintly in this sense: the word honorary didn't mean that she was just a figurehead -- she did at the beginning of the foundation of the congregation all of the clerical work, the books, everything, and received no compensation for it. It must have taken up a considerable part of her life. She was an intellectual, she was a graduate of Girton (College) with honors, and she had other things that she could have done, but she was deeply devoted to the whole idea of the synagogue, and the others were like that too. And that's why the thing is now flourishing.

All right, I leave the synagogue, and go on to another subject, something else which I dealt with at the time and which I have made reference to already in the conversations we've had. I will now say something about it.

One of the functions I performed quite individually -- it had nothing to do with the synagogue -- was to act as the Jewish chaplain or Jewish tutor at Eton College.

Now I had no particular desire to perform this function, but I had done it in other places. I had done it in Eastbourne College, of which I have very few recollections, where the boys were on the whole younger, and I had done it in another place called Reigate, on the south coast, near Ramsgate, where there was a man who had an estate on which he had built a synagogue, and I used to go down from time to time, where he would gather

together the Jewish children in the district into this synagogue, and I would conduct a little service and talk to the children.

But Eton was a much more serious matter. The rule of Eton College about teachers at the time was that they had to be graduates of the older universities, Oxford and Cambridge, that they had to be people who had taken degrees, roughly at any rate, in the subjects that they were going to teach.

Now as the people concerned looked around at what was available in the United Kingdom, they all came back to me, because there was no one else. There were others who were graduates of Oxford and Cambridge -- a handful -- in Hebrew, but they were Orthodox. No sense in sending a man into Eton to explain that it was wrong to eat pig, and then the boy would have bacon for his breakfast, so clearly it had to be somebody for whom the ritual laws were no longer binding.

And when you came right down to it there was no one else.

I was under great pressure to go once a week while the boys were in chapel, or during Sunday, and take this class of all the Jewish boys, irrespective of their ages, of what they knew and so forth. And I wasn't to be engaged by the College -- this was left to the parents. The College had to agree to it. The parents were anxious to get somebody who would answer to the description of somebody teaching at the College.

So I became -- and this lasted for many years -- the Jewish tutor, which I think would be the best word, at Eton College.

I had an influence on the boys which sometimes exceeded what their parents wanted.

I remember that<sup>of</sup> the two people who negotiated with me one was a man called Lord Bierstead, who was the son of

-- this was the second Lord Bierstead, who was an enlightened man.

Q: Was that

Perlzweig: No. The family name was Samuel. It's a common name in England among Jewish names. I've forgotten what his first name was, but he was the second Lord Bierstead, Viscount Bierstead.

His enlightenment took various forms. He had in the place he lived in -- in the flat that he lived in in Park Lane -- for example old masters, and if they were of a Christological character they would be covered, there would be a curtain that he could put over them when his father came to see him. But he had the pictures. But his father didn't want to see them, so he compromised, and he had a curtain which he could draw if he wanted to. At any rate he was one man.

The other man was a man called Lionel Curran, who afterwards became Lord Curran, who was one of the leading lawyers in

that the  
England, I think ~~the~~ law governing companies and bankruptcy  
and so on ~~xxxxxxxx~~ is very largely his work.

These two men asked the parents whether they could engage  
me, and so they engaged me.

I never saw Benenson's mother, who is the founder of Amnesty  
International. She was a social worker at Marks & Spencer, and  
I am sorry I didn't see her, because she had altogether a  
mysterious background. She was<sup>a</sup> Russian woman, and I have seen  
that she had some sort of relationship with F -- I  
mean that she knew him at any rate.

At any rate the others I had an influence on.

There was one boy there who was called Jack Levy, which  
isn't a very distinctive name, whose father had died in the  
First World War -- Michael Levy -- and I went to see his mother  
and I said, "Look, I must warn you, I am a Zionist."

So she said, "I don't care what belief you get him to accept,  
or influence him to accept, providing he doesn't marry out of  
the faith."

And about a month later she did the very thing that she didn't  
want~~ed~~ her boy to do. She married a Greek architect who was  
very fashionable in London at the time called Ionides.

At any rate I had this boy, and I did my best with him.  
He had no notion of what this Jewish business was about at all.  
He had been brought up by a Baptist nurse who had conveyed to

him beliefs which were of a rather primitive character, and what really worried me was that he had ideas which were current in the eighteenth century about human beings.

I took him to the North London Liberal Synagogue one day just in order to show him during one of the vacations, and because I had -- we have a Hebrew word for it, "Rachmanut," something like consideration, but stronger than that. . .

Q: Concern?

Perlzweig: Compassion. I had compassion for the boy. He was an orphan, doubly an orphan -- his father had been killed in the war, and his mother had married a man outside their circle.

So I took him to the synagogue, and it was he who said to me, "Who was that man who read the service?" So I said the schoolmaster.

He said, "What sort of a schoolmaster? Is he a gentleman?"

He was using the word in the eighteenth century sense as expressing and describing a class.

Q: Uhhmmmm.

Perlzweig: So I set to work on him, and I overdid it, because as I mentioned earlier instead of going to Oxford at the end

of his period at Eton he went to Moscow. Fortunately that didn't last very long, because they didn't clean his shoes when he put them out at the hotel, and he thought that that cut out Moscow.

So what did he do? He remembered what I had said about Palestine, and he went to Jerusalem, and this Etonian entered a Yeshiva in Jerusalem. Can you imagine what that meant? The transmogrification from one culture to another.

And he became very Orthodox. From Jerusalem he returned to London, and he telephoned to me. I feel a certain amount of gratification that years after I had been teaching him at Eton he was still feeling near enough to me to telephone to me when he was coming back, to find somebody to talk to about his change in religion and religious emphasis.

Anyhow I went to where he lived, which was in the West End, and had lunch with him, and he opened the door of his flat, and for a moment I was nonplussed, because there he was, with a beard, and a little yarmulka on his head, looking like a typical Orthodox Jew.

So I said to him, "Look, Jack, you had better give me some of that excellent sherry you used to have."

He shook his head and said, "I don't have that sherry any more, it's not kosher."

It was a complete transformation, and I had to talk to him,

because he joined the Spanish and Portuguese congregation in London, which was the most Orthodox he could find -- or at least he thought the most traditional -- and they got fed up with him, because he was trying all the time to get them to go back to the much older forms of worship and so on.

I happened to be a very close friend of the secretary, who was a historian called Paul Goodman (1875-1949), and at his request I talked to Levy and said, "Look, you can't. . . . These people live in London, they don't live in Jerusalem. They have a long history of assimilation ~~with London~~ behind them."

Anyhow he wouldn't take that, and he finally. . .  
(heavy static in tape) the last time I heard from him was from Bombay.

I had delivered a speech at the United Nations at the Economic and Social Council -- one of the places where I was allowed to make (speeches) -- against calendar reform.

It wasn't that I myself had any strong feelings about the calendar, but I wanted to protect the right of people who wanted to stick to the <sup>Seventh Day</sup>, such as the Adventists, Orthodox Jews, and others.

I didn't care if the reform which was proposed by the World Calendar Society was adopted, which meant that there would be one blank day as it were.

There was a lot of opposition to it on the part of manufacturers and employers who wanted to know who was going to pay for this blank day, or whether there was to be any pay at all. So I didn't want to pretend that it was all my doing.

But according to. . . I think it is called, or was called, The World Calendar Society, which since its patron is dead is also almost dead now -- well, in publishing a book about it they replied to all my arguments.

I am mentioning it here now -- although it caused some amusement, curiously enough, ~~Goxx&X~~ Goldman and the others who thought it was <sup>a</sup>perfectly rational reform--

But it was backed up by -- it had its chief backing from-- the Indian Government.

The Indian Government has a large number of calendars to cope with, so they wanted to have a secular calendar which had international sanction, and they fought for this thing.

The trouble was that they couldn't get over some of my barbs. The idea was to have, I think, 13 months or something like that, you see.

I remember I rather ribbed them publicly by saying, "Why can't you have the same number. . . Why can't you have the 13 months?"

I think they made it a little bit different. They were avoiding the 13, you see, and I took full advantage of that



to denounce them as superstitious.

At any rate the relation of all this to Jack Levy was that the Indian papers published my speech, or some of it at any rate, and he read in Bombay about this speech, so he wrote me a letter, <sup>that's how</sup> and I got in touch with him again -- not about the calendar, in which he wasn't interested, but assuring me that he had at last found the Jews who were really honest to goodness Jews, who were what I call the Black Jews -- the Bene Israel -- who had been in Bombay, and also in the South of India --

Q: In Cochin and in Goa.

Perlzweig: Yes. There is a place actually called Jew Town, which is where the synagogue in the Sultan's compound. But they are and they were in Bombay.

The point about them in Bombay is that as far as they know it -- because they are in many ways post-Biblical -- they have kept the Biblical commandments. For example, polygamy. Now if you read the Bible you are reading the Bible of a polygamist religion.

Well, the point arrived a thousand years ago when a rabbi in Germany issued to everybody's satisfaction a prohibition of polygamy. I have never been interested in that enough to find

out what his arguments were. Of course he could have said that whereas polygamy was a blessed state, a state of blessedness, you don't have to be polygamous. If you are monogamous you are carrying out the law about , which says "Be fruitful and multiply."

At any rate Jack found the thing that he had been looking for. I don't know that he ever married anybody himself, but he found a community which was truly Jewish.

(heavy static in tape)

I want you to know you can

You can like John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) obtain a reputation because of your facility in writing Greek verse, which he did as a boy of 14, or you can go to Eton and be like some of my contemporaries at Cambridge in the front ranks of the communist movement, but you can also go to Eton and end up by being an ultra Orthodox Jew.

So this was one of them.

The others were not quite so picturesque. One of them that I was rather fond of, whose name was Salmon, belonged the Salomn and Gluckstein group of families.

Q: Is that S.A.L.M.C.N.?

Perlzweig: Yes. He was an English judge afterwards, of whom

I strongly approved because when the first racial disturbance took place -- not the recent ones, which were much too big to be dealt with by a judge, you know, you are not dealing with a single incident in a court, but in the old days in Notting Hill, when rowdies would go out and assault the few colored people that there were, these men who assaulted the colored people were brought to court, and I remember Judge Salmon's (heavy static in tape)

the stiff sentence that he gave, and then he said, "The King's subject will be free to<sup>go</sup> about the King's Highway without interference, wherever he may be."

So I was hoping that I had contributed to that.

But the one that I liked best of all is this one of this man called Benenson. It was many years after he'd been to Eton that he came to see me -- after he'd been in the Army, after he'd been. . . . . and I am still rather astonished, because I left Eton I think the last time certainly before the war, I can't tell you the exact date but it was before the war, and when he came to see me it was well after the war, when I had been away from Eton for at least ten years, and when he sought me out when he found out I was in London, I was a visitor in London when he came to see me. I was staying at a hotel -- the Mount Royal Hotel -- when he telephoned to me, because he had heard of me from another man who was interested in human rights, a man who -- I might mention this, it's an interesting thing --

who was representing the British in a meeting of the Human Rights Commission -- or it may be the Economic and Social Council (ECCSOC) -- at Lake Success, in the days when the United Nations was at Lake Success (on Long Island, N.Y.), and who when I was trying to get something on the agenda, and couldn't because of a rule or he came and whispered to me how I could bamboozle the British among other Governments by quoting Article So-and-so.

His name was Alexander, and he has long since been retired from the Foreign Service. But I think he saw him, because he is one of the leading figures in the human rights movement, and he mentioned that I was. . . he knew me. . .

Q: A leading figure in what movement?

Perlzweig: In the human rights movement. Alexander -- he is an old British diplomat, who I think is still flourishing, and was connected with the Antislavery Society of which I have long been a member in London, which has a long and quite distinguished history in the fight against slavery.

Anyhow he sought me out. I remember I didn't recognize him at first. ~~He was a boy when I knew him~~ He was a boy when I knew him, and here was a man who had been through the Army, and he said, "You knew me as Solomon. I have taken the name Benenson because the

difficulty in the Army of being Solomon/was such that it just wasn't worth fighting for."

And then he told me what did I think about this idea that he had, which he had got not from me -- and I don't want credit for it -- but from his own experience, the way he saw the Turks or somebody  
(heavy static)

So when the time comes for to appear before what might be called the Supreme Tribunal, whatever form it may take, if they ask me whether I have done anything to justify my existence I will say, "The mere suspicion that it was I who planted the seed that ended up in Amnesty International is a justification for keeping me at least out of ."

And I am really very happy about that -- that I had anything to do with this.

Q: What was Benenson's first name?

Perlzweig: I don't remember his first name. In these papers. . .

Q: I'll find it.

Perlzweig: Amnesty International, to which I belong -- and<sup>from</sup>/which

among other things I received a thing today called The Matchbox  
(the house organ of Amnesty International) --

Q: Oh yes.

Perlzweig: And a few weeks ago -- I've still got it somewhere --

When I said to Dr. Liebmann that I had done a certain amount  
of work --

I've got files. One is called Encounters, in which I put in  
things out of newspapers which refer to people whom I have  
encountered, and I must say I was surprised by that. I must have  
put it in there. I don't remember his first name, but his (last)  
name is Benenson. He was the president of Amnesty International.  
He was the man who started it.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: Unfortunately he is a sick man now.

(end of tape)

End of Interview 8 w/ Rabbi Maurice Perlzweig by Peter Jessup,  
November 12th 1981.

DK

Interviewee: Rabbi Dr. Maurice Perlzweig

Interviewer: Peter Jessup

Place: New York City

Interview No. 9 - December 7th 1981

Q: Good afternoon, Dr. Perlzweig. It's nice to be here again on this breezy afternoon on the West Side of New York.

You said a moment ago that we were last talking in the previous session about Sir Lewis (Bernstein) Namier.

Dr. Perlzweig: Yes. I think there are a number of things that happened during my association with him which might be of interest to anybody who examines this memoir afterwards.

Namier was a Polish Jew, but a Polish Jew with a difference, that is to say he was an assimilated Polish Jew. He had not been in the Jewish community, he was not brought up as a Jew, he did not observe any of the institutions of Judaism, and I don't think he had any particular feeling of sympathy for what might be

called the general Jewish ethos. But he was a man who had studied Central Europe before he came to England thoroughly, and had an encyclopedic knowledge of all the various nationalities and their conflicts, and of the policies of their various Governments.

He finally discovered that to be an assimilated Pole if you are a Jew was not a comfortable position to be in, and he drifted, you might say almost inexorably, in the direction of Zionism, so that he could have a background -- a nationality background -- which would be comparable to the background of Poles and Ukrainians and Germans and all the others that lived in that part of the world.

He came to England and found England a very pleasant place to be in. The British I might say have an extraordinary genius for absorbing immigration from outside. It was not in those days as it is in America now that you get people who come from abroad and they retain their cultural heritage, what now is called -- or at least used to be called until recently -- cultural pluralism, which was a phrase invented by Horace Kallen -- Professor Horace M. Kallen -- who was a great friend of mine, and in fact played a very large part in my life, because it was really he who persuaded me to give up the pulpit and go into the World Jewish Congress. But that's another story which I will come to.



In England the tendency was to become more English. You can say that the English Jews of the older generation -- the ones that came in during the 18th and 19th century -- were in many respects more English than the English, and Judaism to them meant simply the religion, which more and more was reduced to the observance of certain holy days, like the Day of Atonement and Passover and so on.

Now this meant nothing to him, to Namier, but he felt more and more attracted to the English way of life, and he began to study English life in the country and elsewhere, and became a very great and passionate partisan of the British way of life, even though until the day of his death he still spoke with an accent which was obviously not Anglo-Saxon -- not very markedly so, but enough to separate him from other people.

He worked in the Foreign Office, I think, during the war, and he had a vast number of acquaintances in the English ruling class, if I can call it that. To give you one example, one of his friends was the famous Lawrence of Arabia -- (T.E. Lawrence) -- whom he saw quite often, and they frequently discussed the Middle East.

The only time I myself ever encountered Lawrence was in Namier's room in the office of the Zionist organization.

The <sup>g</sup>eneral feeling of the world is that Lawrence was a passionate supporter of Arabism, a more or less Arabized

Englishman, but as a matter of fact he was very disillusioned with the Arabs. But that again is another story, and has to do with his personal habits and arrangements and so on, which I won't go into.

Well, he came finally to the conclusion that the Arabs would get nowhere unless the Jews came in and showed them how to build their lives on new foundations.

Q: Now this was when, after the war? After his exploits?

Perlzweig: Yes, yes, long after the war.

Q: Had he enlisted in the R.A.F.?

Perlzweig: Yes, he had enlisted in the R.A.F.

Q: And you met him in Namier's room?

Perlzweig: And then he came to London to talk to Namier, with whom he was very close. I had a room in the same building -- at 77 Great Russell Street, which is almost next door to the British Museum -- and I walked in (into Namier's room), and ~~maximized~~ I had a short talk, and he repeated to me what he -- I am now talking about Lawrence -- what he himself had already

written in a letter to (Chaim) Weizmann, which was published by Philip Graves in one of his numerous books,--I am not sure that the book isn't about Lawrence -- in which he repeats that although he would like to be helpful to the Arabs he doesn't think that anything could be done without Zionism.

Now this is a peculiar attitude, one might think, but this is what his view was. I mention it in order to show that Namier's contacts with the people who were responsible for the development of British ideas about international affairs and so on were very widespread.

There was another reason for Namier's interest in the whole business of Zionism, and that was an almost idolatrous worship of Weizmann.

Now Weizmann in those days -- I am talking about the period between the wars -- was regarded in official circles with a great deal of respect. R. A. Butler, whom I used to see frequently at the Foreign Office, once said to me, "We regard Weizmann as belonging to that group of great statesmen who have shaped the present generation. We put him in the same class as Lloyd George (1863-1945), Eleutherios Venizelos (1864-1936). . ." and . . . -- what was the name of the French Prime Minister at the time?

Q: Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929).

Perlzweig: Clemenceau, yes. (He said), "We regard him as being in the same class, and anything he says to us carries great weight."

Now Namier of course knew this, but he also felt the same.

The attitude of the two men to England was alike in the sense that they were both passionate admirers of the British way of life. This was particularly true of Weizmann, and in the end it ruined him, because when the British began to tilt towards the Arabs the Zionist Congress decided that he had outlived his usefulness and threw him out.

But nevertheless his relationship to the British was somewhat different. Whereas Namier became absorbed in British life, began to cultivate the aristocracy -- for what reason? Because they allowed him to go through their papers in his function as an historian, and he certainly changed the face of historiography in England as a result of this.

One of the things I admired about him and never caught up with him in was his mastery of the nuances of British protocol. If he wrote a letter -- which he used to do from the Zionist office, where he was the political secretary at the time that I am talking about -- the way in which he could know exactly when to say "Lady Jane Doe," or "The Lady Jane Doe," which is something I never mastered, that was something that he became an authority on.

Now Weizmann on the other hand never became absorbed in British life, and was what Namier was not -- an authentic Jew of the old school. He was a Talmudist of some distinction, he spoke Hebrew fluently, and his whole life from the time he was born in a place called Pinsk (in Russia) he had been a popular leader of the Jews.

So when he came to England with all his admiration for England he did not become assimilated to the extent to which Namier did. He himself rationalized it in a certain way, when he told me the story of one of his encounters with Balfour -- the famous Lord Balfour (1848-1930) who issued the ~~Balfour~~ Declaration which bears his name.

He told me that on one occasion he had said to Mr. Balfour, as he then was, "Mr. Balfour, I am full of admiration of the way in which you, an Englishman, understand the Jewish problem, and give it all your sympathy in trying to find a solution."

To which Balfour replied, "Dr. Weizmann, I am not an Englishman, I am a Scotsman. I am a British subject of Scottish nationality. The Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, is a British subject of Welsh nationality, and you, Dr. Weizmann, are a British subject of Jewish nationality."

Well, that's one way of looking at it.

Q: Ah!

Perlzweig: It's a little bit different from the way in which

it would be regarded in the United States for example.

But at least it enabled Weizmann to remain until the day of his death a passionate admirer of the British sense of fairness, their understanding of other people and so on, and at the same time retain his sense of absolute identity with the Jewish people.

Now Namier was a much more complicated person.

I talked to him for hours at a time. After a meeting of the Executive at which we were both present we would walk in Soho literally for hours, when he would talk to me about his feelings, and I noticed that all the time he would -- to use a German or French expression -- distance himself from the day-to-day life of the Jews. He was not interested, or pretended not to be interested, in religion, which was not true -- he was deeply interested in it and very worried about it.

For example, when I was first introduced to him he said to me in his rather gruff way, "There is one tribe of human beings that I have the utmost contempt for, and that is ministers of religion," knowing that I was a minister of religion, as a kind of warning not to try and convert him to anything, which of course I never did.

But then when we talked,--either about his writings, about which he was always full, or about the general intellectual life of Europe -- he once told me something which surprised

me. He said, "I am probably the only person alive," -- which I think was an exaggeration -- "who has read the Institutes (of the Christian Religion) of Calvin, all the six volumes, in the original Latin."

A man who reads a vast tome, or series of tomes, like that in the original Latin, obviously has great interest in what the work is about, and he very often mentioned that.

He made one exception, he told me, with regard to ministers of religion, in that he did admire one of them, and that was the man who afterwards became Lord Davidson (\*), who was then the Archbishop of Canterbury. I think he conceived of Davidson as being what used to be called an ecclesiastical statesman, one of that long line in European history of cardinals and others, in England and in France,--men like Cardinal Wolsey (1475-1530), Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642) in France -- who used their religious vocation as a stepping stone to political power.

Now Davidson didn't have any political power to speak of, but he was a man of enormous influence in the country, and especially in governing circles, so he made an exception for him.

But he did talk to me about various religious heresies and religious doctrines in which he was obviously very interested and was examining.

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(\*) Randall Thomas Davidson (1848-1930), later Lord Davidson, was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1903 to 1928 (interviewer's note).

Now I don't think that he ever seriously contemplated becoming a Jew religiously, and that was one of the things about which we quarreled.

I opposed him on a number of occasions, unfortunately in a sense successfully. He wanted to become more than a functionary of the Zionist organization -- he wanted to become a member of its Executive. And Weizmann, as Philip Guedalla (1889-1944) once put it to me in talking about Weizmann -- when Weizmann had disappointed him -- said, "Who is this new Napoleon, who tells every recruit that he has a field marshal's baton in his knapsack?"

He had that sort of feeling. He would take hold of a man and think he was a good man, or a man useful to the movement, and try and promote him.

Now he was I think in a minor sort of way interested in getting Namier into the Executive, but I who knew Namier better than most of my colleagues because of these talks that we had had, was opposed to it, on the ground that he would never strike up any rapport with the Jewish mass, or even with the Jews of the second echelon. He would remain at the top and far away from them.

Weizmann's power partly came from the fact that if there was a crisis at the Zionist Congress or some important Zionist meeting, he would call out the people who were making the trouble, take them into a room, and then address them in a very homely



Yiddish way, and in the end turn them around, and made them harmless. He had a tremendous sense of identity with the mass of the Jews, whoever they were, which is one reason why for example the Labor Party -- the Zion -- gave him their support for many, many years, and enabled him to remain the president and really the spokesman of the Zionist movement.

He had that gift. Namier had none of it and wanted none of it, and I thought that that would be a very bad deal, if he were put in a position of authority, besides which I didn't know -- and my suspicion was well founded -- how he would end up.

He ended up from the Jewish point of view and from the Israeli point of view in a very peculiar way. He joined the Orthodox Russian Church.

Q: Really??

Perlzweig: Yes. I think it was in part due -- now I am speaking as somebody who has some experience in these matters -- to the fact that he wanted to marry a Russian woman who was a member of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Well, this is what he did, and he knew what he was doing, because he had studied, as I have told you, the religious situation in Europe down to its very foundations.

There was another encounter I had with him, which was a little, uh, awkward. I don't think it was very important.

One sign of the fact that he didn't want to become too much merged in the Jewish mass was that when he was a professor of history at Manchester, which was one of the posts he held, and the University branch of the League of Nations Society wanted to have a meeting at which a speaker would explain what Zionism was about -- which after all he as a great historian could have and as done, ~~was~~ a man who had a hand in the political decisions of the Zionist organization could have done himself very well -- he wouldn't do it. He told them to invite me to do it.

So I went up to Manchester and delivered this speech, with some discomfort, because after all this great man was sitting there listening to it.

What happened afterwards that The Manchester Guardian reported the speech, and in the speech I made a remark to which he took great exception.

I said there were these millions, literally millions, of Jews in Eastern Europe, who were more or less imprisoned in the environment in which they lived, in which they didn't have a chance to break out into the modern world, and they were relying on Zionism to give them that opportunity. If Zionism was denied to them, if the British Government -- about which I was very critical in this speech -- did not carry out what

everybody regarded as its moral obligation, they might well turn to the East, which of course meant the Soviet Union.

Now I didn't say that they ought to turn to the East, and I didn't encourage them, but I said that they might well do it, because they wanted to find a way out.

Well, this was reported, and when I saw him again in London and he had the clipping, or cutting as they call it there, from The Manchester Guardian he was in a tremendous fury about it. If there was one thing about him he was anti-Soviet, and so indeed was the world in general at the time.

So he said to me, "You've got to correct this."

So I said, "Oh all right, I'll write 'em a letter."

And so I wrote them a letter, which they duly published, in which I said that I'd said that this might happen, because they would be boxed in and would have nowhere else to go, I certainly didn't want it to happen, and I would regard it as a disaster if it did happen, or something to that effect.

Well, he was very pleased with this, and we became very friendly again, except that he added a snide remark, "Of course the cunning of Reform rabbis is almost inexplicable, they can do anything with words."

He was in fact rather an admirer of the way in which I drafted documents. One of the horrors of my life was that ever since the 1920's I have been drafting documents. It's

a horror first of all because it's<sup>a</sup>/very difficult job. When you are drafting a document on behalf of an assembly which includes people on the extreme right and on the extreme left, religious people and antireligious people and so on, to get them to agree on the text you have to go into what I on one occasion called creative ambiguity. Well, I was doing that.

I remember there was once a time when the Zionist Executive met and had to adopt a resolution, which was rather difficult, they ended up as they nearly always did by telling me to draft it.

You must remember that at the time I was by far the youngest among them all, and any tough job like that was handed over to me.

Well, I don't know exactly what it was about this thing, but he was absolutely ecstatic about the way in which I ambiguously said what we wanted to say.

As a result of that/<sup>I</sup>was the recipient of all sorts of confidences. He wrote a book which in its day was famous and really changed the course of British historiography, called The Structure of Politics in the Reigh of George III, and he did this by unearthing all kinds of documentation from his aristocratic friends that he visited in the country, who let him look at their family papers.

He once told me that Lord Beaverbrook (1879-1964), who was then one of the great press barons of England, had sat up all night reading the book. Whether that's true or not I don't know.

But at any rate he was. . . He did talk to me a great deal about these things, and there was one thing after all that we had in common. We were both tainted, if that's the right word, with the mark of what is called in England nowadays Oxbridge. He was at Oxford, and I was at Cambridge, and there was almost a jargon that we were able to talk in, which was quite foreign to all our colleagues, so we had that in common.

But I did find out that he was a man deeply interested in religion, whether for its own sake or whether because it threw light on the course of historic events I am not sure, but as I say he ended up becoming a member of the Orthodox Church.

Weizmann never had such a temptation. It wouldn't have occurred to him for a moment. He was very deeply interested in the texture of Jewish life. He wasn't an observant Jew in the sense in which in this country it would be regarded. I mean he wasn't kosher, he didn't do that kind of thing, but he knew what it meant to be kosher. And he liked the Foreign Office, he liked the English political establishment. ~~XXXXXX~~

There ~~was~~ a man -- one of the greatest historians of British diplomacy, I think his name was Webster, Sir Charles Webster -- who in his lectures which he published -- and I remember these things, innumerable things, thousands of things that I've read without being able to put my hand on them -- he described the way in which the Balfour Declaration was obtained as a classical

example of British diplomacy -- not on the British side, but on Weizmann's side, that Weizmann went about his job as a British diplomat would have done it, and he adds that it took at least a thousand interviews to secure that result. That's probably an exaggeration which he got from the horse's mouth, namely from Weizmann, but it shows you how Weizmann had not assimilated into English life. He still had the manner of thinking of Eastern Europe, and he was still at home in it, he was still able to communicate in ~~that~~<sup>their</sup> language and in their way, but nevertheless he did assimilate English methods of diplomacy: moderation and. . .

Q: Compromise.

Perlzweig: Compromise, yes, that sort of thing.

Well, so much for Namier, who is, as I think many historians would say, probably the greatest historian in England in the first part of the 20th century certainly, and is still a man who is regarded as current and readable. I've got some of his books here which were reprinted within the last few years in the United States.

Both these men, different as they were -- Namier and Weizmann -- are examples of the strange fate of the intellectual Jews of Europe during the 19th century. You have the most extraordinary variety of ways in which they adapt to the situation.

Well, I am talking about the period of roughly 1920-1923-1924 to 1938. I have already given some account of what I did as a rabbi at the two synagogues to which I was attached, but I have to say <sup>that</sup> if my critics -- of which I had quite a number in the congregation, just as I had very faithful followers -- would have been justified if they had said, "You are spending too much time on other things." <sup>~</sup> ~~If~~ fact the probability is that I spent more time on extra-curricular work than I did in the synagogue. I was able to do that I think because of what Butler once called my fatal fluency, -- I mean that goes back to my undergraduate days -- so that I didn't have to prepare things, and wasn't too upset if when I left the synagogue I found that there was something which I should have said which I didn't.

Well, among the things that I dealt with outside which are of importance from the point of view of throwing light on the situation, was first of all the German situation on which I spent a good deal of time.

I have already, I think, referred to the fact that I gave up the nazis as a hopeless cause.

Q: Early/

Perlzweig: Very early, in November of 1932, before they came to office, when I warned the Jewish community that disaster

lay ahead.

I must tell you that this was not accepted by the Jewish community or by the world at large. There was the conventional feeling that when people come into power they become responsible, and that when they see the realities they will do what after all President Reagan has done -- they will retreat, or put the thing in different words. I mean you wouldn't expect Reagan today to come out with blasts against the Soviet Union in the way in which he used to do because he has been taught by events and by what's happening in Europe that that simply will not -- to use the American expression -- fly.

So everybody thought that the same would happen with the nazis, because they dealt with it in a different way.

Nobody would believe the worst.

Now to give you an example, which I think is a very vivid example, of the way in which nobody would believe that they would do or that they had thought that they would do, or had even suggested that they would do, let me give you this incident.

I went to the House of Commons one day to have lunch with a man whose name was Victor Cazalet -- (Sir Victor Cazalet, MP) -- with whom I had become very close because we had one strange thing in common. He was a conservative Member of Parliament, came out of an aristocratic upbringing and milieu, and so there were many different between us, but we had one thing in common. We had both grown up in England, although we were acutely consc\_ious of our foreign ancestry.



His foreign ancestry was Huguenot. He was a descendant of the Huguenots who came to England in considerable numbers just as they went to Prussia and elsewhere after the revocation of the Edict of <sup>N</sup>Nantes (1598). They created a community in England which was centered in the East End of London, and they were people who were silk merchants and that kind of thing, and it's a very curious reflection on the way in which history changes that the church which they built, which they afterwards had no use for -- because they left the East End and became wealthy and went to the West End and became bourgeois -- that church became the most Orthodox synagogue in London, and that is not the end of the story.

That Orthodox synagogue is now no longer a synagogue, but is now the mosque of the Pakistanis in the East End of London.

Q: Amazing.

Perlzweig: Well, he was conscious of his Huguenot ancestry, and in fact belonged to certain Huguenot institutions which to some extent -- or to a great extent I should say -- had outlived their usefulness.

One of the things he asked me at this lunch was could I find him two people, both of Huguenot descent, who wanted to get married, because there was a fund of which he was a trustee

which was left many years ago, or many decades ago. . .

Q: Just for that purpose?

Perlzweig: Just for the purpose of giving a dowry to two Huguenots who could marry in England. And of course I couldn't.

Q: Ah!

Perlzweig : And I don't know whether he ever found them. But that was one of the reasons why we understood each other, although we came out of different environments and had different ideas. He was at the time regarded as a man with a great future, which never actually worked out, although I think about a year ago somebody even wrote a life of him which had quite a circulation in London.

Now the reason I mention this thing in connection with the nazis was that he was in touch with sources of information which I didn't have, he was a member of Parliament and a friend, so to speak, of the Government in power at the time -- he was a Tory -- and he told me that Goering -- (Hermann Goering, 1893-1946) -- had been found out by the British -- whether by the Secret Service or whatever it was -- that they had found out that he was a drug addict, which of course we know now, and we don't think a thing about it.

But that upset me. I thought if you have a man in the center of power in Germany -- and real power, because they didn't hesitate, they began almost at once to use the power -- who was a man who was subject to the results of taking drugs in considerable quantities, that certainly wasn't a ground for encouragement.

I left that lunch, went back to the synagogue in St. John's Wood and I walked into the study of my senior colleague, Rabbi (Israel) Mattuck, and I said to him, "I've got this information which is devastating from Cazalet, who is the sort of man who would know, and I wonder what its effect is going to be."

Mattuck looked at me with a sort of and he said, "I don't see that there is anything bad in that, no, on the contrary it's good news. The moment that President (Paul von) Hindenburg finds this out he'll get rid of Goering."

Now that's the atmosphere in which a man who was an extremely shrewd judge of events and character like Mattuck would have an attitude like that. That's the attitude that he had. That's the attitude everybody had -- that President Hindenburg was a person of absolute integrity and so on, and wouldn't tolerate such a thing. Nobody thought it was possible, you see.

A great deal of what we don't understand, things about which people have written books -- why did it happen, why did nobody

do anything? -- was due to the fact, which this particular incident demonstrated to me, that people simply didn't believe that what they were reading about in the newspapers was anything ~~more~~ more than the fun and games of lunatics on the fringes of the nazi movement.

So I had a tough job because as far as I was concerned I had no doubts about it, any more than I have now, because I think the thing is still doing its evil work.

What was it that Shakespeare says in Julius Caesar?  
The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones. (\*)

Well, the evil that the nazis did lives after them.  
It's quite an industry now.

But at any rate you might ask, because a lot of people have asked me, "Why were you so sure about it?"

Because as you will hear in a moment -- when I will come to another incident -- I took very great risks with my views.

First of all, I was a student of history. I knew that men could murder on a vast scale and get away with it. After all, taking the less serious cases, a man like Napoleon, who was responsible certainly for vast bloodshed on a great scale, is still regarded, certainly in France and even in the rest of the world, as a great hero, and nobody worries about the innumerable

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(\*) The evil that men do lives after them;  
The good is oft interred with their bones;  
So let it be with Caesar." (Scene 2 of Act III)

numbers of widows and orphans which he created.

But there are worse cases than that. The last time I was in Budapest, which is years ago, I went to the big public square, and there to my astonishment I saw statues of men riding on horses who were the Huns, with Genghis Khan at the head.

When I inquired, "Do you think that Genghis Khan was a great man or somebody whom you should reverence?" the answer always was yes, he was the founder of our national life, and it's still true now.

I wasn't <sup>therefore</sup> the kind of person who would say that President Hindenburg is ~~an~~ an honest man and he won't allow it.

I knew what had happened.

Secondly I had been active -- not very, but in a very modest way -- on the fringes of the Armenian movement, which was seeking ~~to~~ to recreate an Armenian national life. I think I mentioned that. So I knew that the thing would happen.

The fact that for many years -- in fact until a few years ago -- the whole thing was forgotten, until the Armenian terrorists suddenly appeared, which is a very sobering thought after three generations, that there would be young men who would remember this thing when the rest of the world had forgotten it --

It was also true, which I didn't know at the time but which I know now, that Hitler once said to his boys when they were

discussing the question of getting rid of the Jews, and they expressed their hesitation as to the blame that would attach to them, his answer was, "Who remembers the Armenians now?"

Now I think I found a reference to that saying. I've forgotten where I first read it. Oh, here it is. It's quite recent, and I'll give the reference, and anybody<sup>who</sup> can find this,--and they will find it incredible, as of course all the people who say that it never happened will find it incredible -- can confirm it.

This is a periodical called Congress Monthly, published by the American Jewish Congress, (the issue) of January 1981, and it is a review of a new book written by a professor at Rutgers University on the question of mass murder, the Holocaust and similar events. (pause)

I am just trying to find in this thing in front of me what the name of the book is, but I can't. But I remember that he (the authorZ) is a professor at Rutgers University.

This is a review of the book, in which the writer deals with the whole subject, and he mentions without unfortunately giving the actual reference, a statement of Hitler's. I don't know whether it's in the book.

(static in tape, pauses, shuffling of papers)

Ah yes, I've got it now.

The book is called Taking Lives: Genocide and State Power, and it's by Irving Louis Horowitz, who is a professor of

sociology at Rutgers University. He is the holder of the chair which is named after Hannah Arendt.

The writer of this review is a man called Professor William B. Helmreich, who is a professor of sociology at the City College of New York (CCNY).

Now this is a quotation. This is what Helmreich writes.

"After all, Hitler asked, Who remembers the Armenians?"  
Unfortunately he doesn't give the reference to it, and anybody who reads this and is interested would have to look for it  
. . .

Q: They would have to do a little more exploring.

Perlzweig: Yes. But that struck me. That seems to me now in retrospect a rather significant statement. Hitler was telling his boys, "You can do all these things. . ."

Q: Was that in 1933 or 1934?

Perlzweig: Something like that, or probably a little bit later. You see he doesn't give the actual reference to it.

But there is a discussion here on the question of the meaning, and how it happens that people are able to commit these terrible crimes on a large scale, and there is an inquiry as to how the Holocaust of the Jews is different from, say, the

holocaust of other people like gypsies, and he mentions the Indians in America, and this kind of thing. Twice as many people claim to be American Indians today as did in 1960.

He points out that the difference is that whereas in the other cases it was just murder, the purpose of Hitler was to wipe them out altogether, I mean to have a tabula rasa as a result of these (exterminations).

Whether that's true or not doesn't interest me. What I am saying is, one of the reasons why I was so convinced that the nazis meant to do what they said they did was from these examples that I knew more or less at first-hand, almost at first-hand, like the Armenians.

Another reason why I was so sure about it was that I had read the literature. I had read Mein Kampf. I don't know how anybody can read Mein Kampf and have any doubts as to what he meant.

One of the things I remember -- because I haven't got a copy of the thing here, I used to have it in German -- is that he objected not only to the Jews in Germany, he objected to their settling in Palestine.

He said, -- and I remember this quite distinctly -- "If you give the Jews Palestine or something in Palestine, it will simply be their headquarters from which they will conduct their conspiracy all around the world, therefore I



am utterly opposed to the Zionist movement."

Now that's very strange, because other anti-Semites -- or some of them, in this period at any rate -- tended to be pro-Zionist.

Q: Get them out of our place into their own.

Perlzweig: When Goldmann-- (Dr. Nahum Goldmann) -- was representative of the Jewish Agency in Geneva, and there were meetings of the Permanent Mandates Commission, as it was called, when he wanted help he went to the Poles or the Rumanians, and they did what they could. They were anxious to get rid of their Jews, and therefore they were prepared to support a Jewish national home, or whatever name was given to it, in Palestine. That was equally true in France and in other countries. There were people who were anti-Semitic, but who said they were Zionists because they saw that as one way of getting rid of the Jews.

There was a curious variation of that in my own experience.

I had great difficulty at the liberal synagogue in London because I was a Zionist. It was nothing compared to the difficulty ~~which~~ which afterwards arose, when I became a leader of the World Jewish Congress, because there were people there who said, "We ~~are~~ are not Zionists, we don't believe that we are anything else except Englishmen of the Jewish faith, as you might say Englishmen of the Baptist faith or of the

Presbyterian faith. But there is this to be said for Zionism -- that if it really gets going we shall get rid of the people who are a nuisance to us."

Now when I came along and ~~xxxx~~ talked about the World Jewish Congress they were really furious, because I was saying you won't get rid of the ~~xxx~~ nuisances.

But Hitler was different. Hitler understood that Zionism meant that if you wiped out the Jews of Europe there would be a place where the Jews would still be flourishing and even have powers that they didn't have then in order to conduct their conspiracy.

I had read Mein Kampf, and I had no doubt about the authenticity of it. What is much more to the point, I had read all the resolutions of the meetings of the nazi party before they came into power. I had read a great deal about their internal differences, but there was one thing which was constant and never questioned, and that was DO AWAY WITH THE JEWS, THEY ARE THE SOURCE OF ALL EVIL.

I knew that this was the substance of the nazi movement, not a mere addendum for publicity purposes.

And I read also what the Germans call the Urgeschichte, the history of the origins of the whole business.

For example, I read a book by a man called Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927) who lived in Germany. The book was called

Foundations of the Nineteenth Century (1899, translated 1910).

It became a sort of Bible to Goebbels afterwards.

This man was an Englishman of impeccable English origin. His father was an admiral of the Fleet in England, he had an uncle who was a field marshal, but he was brought up in Germany, and he became assimilated to what he thought was the wave of the future, namely the business of racism, racialism and all that kind of thing.

Q: Was he an uncle of Neville Chamberlain? (1869-1940)

Perlzweig: No. As far as I know he was not a relative.

Q: I thought they spelled their name differently.

Perlzweig: No.

Q: NO? Both L.A.I.N.?

Perlzweig: Yes. He went in for this kind of agitation, and in his book, which I still have here somewhere, you will find all the fundamental doctrines of nazism, especially the racial thing, and you will find even the origins of some of the things that the so-called intellectuals and went in for, for example I think he was the man who really popularized

the idea that Jesus of Nazareth was not a Jew, and couldn't have been. You see, that kind of thing.

Anyhow, when Hitler appeared as an agitator he went to Hitler and offered fealty, and said he was the coming thing, and all that kind of thing.

This book was a best seller in Germany, and not only in Germany. It had a large circulation in its English translation in England. The translation was made by a man called Lord Redesdale (1837-1916), who has another title to fame: he was the grandfather of. . . look at that book there, what does it say?

Q: Unity Mitford

West.

Perlzweig: Yes. He was the grandfather of the Mitford girls.

Q: Lord Redesdale was?

Perlzweig: Yes, Lord Redesdale, and he was so important . . . He became a great follower of Wagner, for example, and in fact married one of Wagner's daughters. And when he was dying Hitler came to see him, and Hitler attended his funeral.

Now I read this book, I knew it was a best seller, it even came to England, but that wasn't the only thing.

There were others that I can't mention, that I don't remember,

books that I read by people who paved the way for Hitler, and I found in them common lines of thought.

For example, a certain sneaking admiration for the communists, The people they hated were the bourgeoisie and the liberals, the people who believed in compromise and all that kind of thing.

They said after all the communists were people who had a doctrine and stuck by it.

Now I read all this, and I knew that the Hitlerism which came to power in 1933~~was~~ was not just a flash in the pan, but that it had very deep roots in German life. As a matter of fact, if anyone is interested in it, one can trace back this kind of anti-Jewishness to the Middle Ages, but it also had very strong expression in his later life on the part of a man like Martin Luther, who became the leading anti-Semite of his day. I don't know how he squared that with his reverence for the Scriptures, but that's another matter.

I was convinced that this thing was,<sup>as</sup>/I have said, of the substance of nazism.

Then I began to see the thing after 1933 coming into operation.

Now one recollection which I have which made a great deal of difference to me and (static in tape) ever since, was an incident which happened -- I can give you as it happens the exact date -- on the 31st of March 1933.

We used to encourage at the liberal synagogue our people to have family gatherings on Friday night. Instead of a perfunctory

service in the synagogue late on Friday afternoon, which was attended by very few people, we said the right thing to do is to do it on Friday night at home, have all your family there, and have a little service, for which we provided them with a text that they could use, and we said, then you will feel the Sabbath. One of the things that happen is that the lady of the house lights two candles and makes the benediction and so on.

Now on this particular day I went with my wife to dine with a woman called the Honorable Mrs. Ernest Franklin, who lived I think in Westmoreland Terrace (in London). She was the sister of one of the founders of Liberal Judaism in England, the Honorable Lily (Helen) Montague. They were both called "Honorable" according to the English protocol because they were the daughters -- among the daughters, because there were others -- of a man called Lord Swaythling, whose name was (Owen Edward) Samuel Montague before he was ennobled, and who had a reputation as an ultra-Orthodox Jew, so Orthodox that when he was a member of the House of Commons -- where he sat for Whitechapel which was the Jewish district -- he used to bring to the House of Commons phylacteries. I don't know whether you know what they are.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: So that if they sat all night, which they sometimes

did, he would have them there in the morning to say his morning prayers.

But these two women, who were his daughters, were protagonists of Liberal Judaism, and Lily Montague -- whom I got to know extremely well and who was the president of the synagogue that I ministered to in North London, among other posts that she held -- was I think the most evangelical liberal Jew that I have ever met.

Anyhow, we went there to have dinner, and among those who were present was their cousin, Sir Herbert Samuel. Now Samuel at that time, in 1933, had already held many very important offices. He was Home Secretary before the war, and he was High Commissioner in Paris at the time, which was a very courageous thing for the British to do, because he was to some extent an observant Jew. I mean he could read Hebrew fluently, and he used to go to the synagogue and take part in the service in Jerusalem, and he was very respectful of Jewish ~~XXXXX~~ customs, that is to say when he went to the synagogue he didn't go in a car but he walked, which is what an Orthodox Jew does.

Anyhow when we got there Sir Herbert took me aside and he said he wanted to consult me about a document that he had. He was worried about it and didn't know what to do, and was afraid that anything he did might have bad results.

The document had been brought to him by a niece who lived in Germany. One of his nieces had married a German Jew and

lived I think in Dresden. Her husband was a director of the Dresdener Bank. This document said that the nazi leadership -- it wasn't signed by them, but it had obviously been seen by them -- was extremely angry because we had been attacking them, saying that they were persecuting the Jews. What they wanted was a statement by the leaders whom they named of the Jewish community who would say that this was false, because on the contrary the Jews were allowed to live like everybody else, and that if they received that they would take steps to see that those who were responsible for what had appeared in the newspapers would be curbed.

But they wanted the signatures -- and they had evidently studied the situation very carefully -- of the two men who represented in the formal sense the <sup>the</sup>Anglo-Jewish community, as the joint chairmen of what was called the Joint Foreign Affairs Committee.

There were two bodies in England at the time who were dealing with these matters. One was the Board of Deputies, which was a more democratic body which consisted of people who were elected by synagogues, friendly societies and so on, and covered a broad spectrum of Jewish life. The other was the Anglo-Jewish Association, which was something like the American Jewish Committee used to be here, namely a number of prominent people who did not believe, as one of them once said to me, in plebescites, but who



were important people with influence who were dedicated by respectable methods, by what is called today quiet diplomacy, to protecting the rights of the Jews.

They had a Joint Foreign Committee, and the two chairmen were the two presidents of these bodies. One was Neville Laski (Neville Jonas Laski) K.C. -- King's Counsel -- who was a prominent lawyer, a brother of Harold Laski, and the other one was Leonard Montefiore, who was a son of Claude Montefiore to whom I have often referred.

They wanted a statement signed by these two people plus two others. The two others were Sir Herbert Samuel (1870-1963) and Lord Reading (1880-1935), the two most prominent Jews in England.

So he said, "What do you think of this?"

I said to him, "I wouldn't sign it. First of all it's not true, secondly I am quite certain -- this is what I say, and I am taking risks -- I am quite certain that if you were to sign it, it would turn out to be quite worthless, because they have decided to finish with the Jews."

Now what made the thing urgent was that the next day -- and that's how I know the date -- April the first, the nazis had proclaimed, or said that it was spontaneously proclaimed, a boycott of the Jews in Germany. That meant that there was going to be trouble, and there was.

(static in taper)

There were going to be people -- not Black Shirts, but S.A. men -- in the streets of Berlin and other cities standing in front of Jewish shops and saying DON'T PURCHASE ANYTHING HERE, THEY ARE JEWS.

There were going to be demonstrations, and all that kind of thing, and there <sup>were</sup> going to be notices on the Jewish shops saying WE ARE JEWS. That kind of thing.

Now this young woman -- the niece of Sir Herbert -- was sent over because this thing was to be the next day, and they were terrified, as they had good reason to be, that there would be what we used to call a pogrom, a wholesale massacre.

Now I must tell you we went back into the dining room and started speaking, and the atmosphere was very tense. All the women were sobbing. The young woman wanted him to sign it, whether it was good or bad or indifferent, in order that our people shouldn't be murdered or hurt, and I said, "As far as I am concerned the answer is No."

Then he said, "All right, I've got a date with von Neurath. (Konstantin von Neurath, 1873-1956)

Von Neurath was then the German Foreign Minister. He had been the Ambassador in London, and he was regarded, as Sir Herbert said to me, as a gentleman. Now why was he a gentleman?

First of all, he had been a Rhodes scholar. In those days Germans were eligible to be Rhodes scholars. It's sometimes forgotten now that Germans, like Americans or Canadians or

Australians, were entitled, if they measured up to what was required, to become Rhodes scholars and go to Oxford. He had been a Rhodes scholar. He had been a friend of the establishment in England and he was very much liked, and Sir Herbert said that he had arranged to speak to him by telephone.

So we went into another room, and he spoke to von Neurath -- he got him on the telephone, the thing had been arranged -- and they had a long talk most of which I didn't hear, but I wasn't very worried about that because I'd made up my mind absolutely firmly on the subject.

Then he said to him -- Sir Herbert said to von Neurath, "I've got a man with me in the room here," whom he inaccurately described as a leader of East End Jewry, but that was all right, I didn't object to that, "who says to me that if we sign this thing it will be repudiated by East End Jewry."

Well, I don't know what effect that had on von Neurath, I should imagine he didn't last very long with the nazis, but it probably made no difference to him, but at any rate Sir Herbert turned to me when it (the telephone conversation) was over and he said, "I think it will be tolerable tomorrow from what he said."

All right, So we went back, we had our little service in which Sir Herbert joined, I think quite reluctantly, but these two formidable women were too much for him, so he used to come obediently, although he was one of the older statesmen of

England, and take part in it, because his inclination was more conservative, Orthodox.

Then we put on the radio. One of the things that we had to live with in England at the time was that the broadcasts in Germany were heard in England. This was the broadcast of a meeting, which was held I think in the Sportspalast -- it doesn't matter where it was held -- and the speaker was Goebbels, and this is how it went. It was all in German, but we all understood German in the room.

Whenever he said, "Who is responsible for the unemployment?" a great shout from the crowd, "THE JEWS" "DIE JUDEN." And he went through a whole litany of evils in Germany, and the crowd -- this vast crowd -- shouted THE JEWS.

Now I must tell you one reason why it's so fixed in my mind. All the women -- there were about 20 people in the room, and about half of them were women -- all of the women were sobbing, because they could see, if this thing were really carried to its ultimate conclusion, that the next time the Jews would be murdered.

Well, they were not murdered. A tremendous amount of damage was done -- shopwindows broken in and so forth, but of course the psychological damage was beyond computation.

I didn't know then as I knew afterwards that there had been interventions from people whom Hitler had to consider.

One was the King of Sweden -- (King Gustavus III of Sweden, ~~1892~~-1973) -- and the other was Mussolini. Now those were the days in 1933 before Mussolini had had to yield to Hitler on the subject of the Jewish question. In fact he used to <sup>be</sup> very friendly with the Jews, and if I am not mistaken one of his <sup>or</sup> numerous mistresses at the time was a Russian Jewess.

But at any rate what happened was that a great deal of damage was done, and it was quite obvious -- or it ought to have been obvious -- to the Jews that this would be the end of their honeymoon with Germany.

I mention this incident, which I have not seen referred to anywhere -- I have not seen the document referred to, or the fact that it was sent, which historically is a point which I think ought to be recorded --

I went away from the dinner, and I couldn't get Weizmann because he was not in London at the time, so I telephoned to a man called Professor Selig Brodetzski (1888-1954), who was my colleague in the Zionist movement.

Q: And he was at Leeds?

Perlzweig: He was a professor at Leeds (University), but he also was a member of the Zionist Executive, and he told me that Weizmann was coming back and he would see Weizmann and tell him, because I said this thing's got to be stopped,

otherwise we would just be made fools of and we were doing propaganda for the nazis.

Well, the only thing that happened was that a dinner which had been arranged before for some Zionist cause -- I've forgotten what it was -- at which Weizmann was to have been the speaker, he and Leonard Montefiore and Neville Laski turned up at this dinner, and by their presence at a Zionist meeting -- and they were both non-Zionist, ~~and~~ Neville I think would have said he was a non-Zionist, Leonard was an anti-Zionist -- by their presence showed that they agreed with what Weizmann was going to say.

He made a speech in which he said that the treatment of the Jews in Germany was something which deeply disturbed him and all that, and he hoped it would end, you know, that type of thing.

Q: But the document was never signed ?

Perlzweig: No, no, no, the document was never signed. I am mentioning it here first of all because when I say I take risks -- Imagine what it was like seeing this young woman weeping bitterly, apparently because I said that the document should not be signed, and if had had thoughts of signing it, he didn't want to sign it, but he might have signed it under her pressure, and to save his own relatives in Germany.

I said No, because I knew -- I wasn't really taking a risk -- I knew that it wouldn't make any difference. So that's how my view of the thing helped.

I have never seen this thing referred to. What happened was that they were not murdered. I think some of them were, but the bulk of them were not.

Q: This was before "Krystalnacht."

Perlzweig: That was in 1938.

Q: I see. That was years before. Krystalnacht really set out to do the job. But this was April the first 1933. That's why I remember it. They had been in power for a couple of months. They had taken by that time supreme power. One of the things that were so devastating about Germany was that when the nazis came to the Reichstag and asked for an enabling bill which would give them unrestricted power without reference to the Reichstag, the Reichstag passed it, and a large number of people who were there, who were opponents of the nazis, didn't have the stamina to stand up and object to it or to vote against it. Some of the socialists voted against it. Most of the communists were not there -- they had already been routed out -- but some of them were there, and they voted against it.

yielded to him <sup>was that</sup> 7- their weakness that encouraged him.

They knew that their fundamental pacifism -- I am speaking principally of Neville Chamberlain, but the same was true of a lot of others. It was true for example in one period of Anthony Eden (1897-1977). Anthony Eden is regarded as a hero who joined with Churchill just before Churchill became Prime Minister, but in fact before -- and it's on record if you read the documents -- he used to say, "We must trust Herr Hitler," that kind of thing. He was in no sense worried about it in the sense that I was worried about it. He was worried about it because of what it did to the position of Britain, but on the humanitarian side he was on the whole in the earlier days an obstacle. It was widespread.

The first thing I learned was that this was going to happen, that something was going to happen on a vast and devastating scale.

The second thing I learned was that the one thing they wanted to do while they are doing it, to safeguard themselves, was to try and conceal the truth and get the rest of the world to say, this is just a revolution -- as one man once put it to me -- and therefore some people are going to be killed, you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs, you see, that kind of thing.

They did that very successfully. ~~until the very~~ Until the very last moment millions of people were destroyed without the world



knowing about it, and this was a deliberate policy.

Now I went on in the same way with all the institutions I was connected with. I had been, or I was at the time, president of the London Lodge of B'nai Brith, and there was another man when my turn of office was over -- I think we adopted the American method of two terms, and when my two terms were over there was another candidate, who was a German Jew living in England, a British subject I mean, who had lived in England for many years, but his business was to go and buy things in Germany. I don't know what the things were, and it didn't interest me, but I was not going to have an English Jew going to Germany to trade with Germany, and there was a terrible row. I was perfectly open and blunt about it. I had the advantage of youth. If it happened now I might hesitate to say to a man you cannot be president. But I felt the whole business very deeply, and I succeeded in the end -- he did not become president.

There were court cases, not against me. The ~~existing~~ thing was, I had been open and above, I didn't do it behind anybody's back or utter any libel. I merely stated the facts.

I remember on one occasion -- it comes back to my mind now -- one of the results was that there was a libel action which this man brought against another man called Gordon Liverman, whom I have mentioned, and who was a friend of mine, because Liverman who was evidently influenced by what I had said, did not fight

to give this man the chance of being the president of the lodge..

Other people intervened, and the result was that an arbitration was set up, and the arbitrator was Neville Laski, whom I mentioned.

I was brought as a witness -- a witness to what I don't know -- and I remember one barrister asked me a question, "Did you say at a meeting so and so, and so and so?"

And Laski intervened, "That's a ridiculous question, you can't ask him that, he can't possibly remember all the meetings at which he has spoken," which was so <sup>v</sup>ery often.

At any rate I followed the same line, I did the same thing with other schemes which came up. I made one exception, and that was the arrangement which was come to by somebody -- I don't know who -- to put up a scheme which would enable German Jews to take their goods to Palestine if they went, in return for which the Germans would be allowed to buy certain things they wanted in Palestine.

There was a tremendous rumpus about it at the time. The Zionist movement was split. But it went through, and I still think that it was the right thing to do to save those lives, and to save the chance that these people had to build a new life in Palestine. But I did not in any other way whatever allow anything to happen which would give satisfaction to the nazis.

For example, years later after I had left the North London

Synagogue, the German Jews in England, of whom a very considerable number had turned up, came to me and said they wanted to be removed from England, they didn't care where -- Canada, Australia or wherever it was -- because by that time they were being interned, there being the usual security fear that the Germans would infiltrate with spies and so on. I don't know whether I succeeded, but I talked to the Government about it. The Board of Deputies was against it. They said, if Hitler comes we'll be here, why should they be taken away?

My answer to that was that you might conceivably escape, although Weizmann thought that all the Jews would be killed in England -- I think he was right, I mean there was a black list, and I was on the black list! And they had good reason to put me on it --

But I against the wishes of the Board of Deputies pressed the Government to let these people go, and they were allowed to go. As it turned out it was a very bad affair, because some of them were drowned, <sup>and the arrangements were so very bad</sup> but of course then one couldn't foresee that. They wanted to go.

I don't want to add any more to this particular narrative except to say that all that I read, all that I said and wrote was along the same line. In fact I used the phrase on one occasion which came back . . . I was going to say to haunt me, but I don't mind being haunted by it.

I stood up at some meeting and said, when the war was on, "We have to fight the nazis with all that we have. Either they go down, or we go down," which I literally believed.

It came back to haunt me many years ~~xx~~ later when I went to San Francisco, when my second son was at the neighboring town -- what was it called, where the Black Panthers were?

Q: Oakland?

Perlzweig: Yes, Oakland. He was in Oakland, and he arranged for me to speak at a couple of synagogues and so on, and the local newspapers were full -- or the local nazi rags of which there were a number were full of my history, and this particular phrase, EITHER THEY GO DOWN OR WE GO DOWN, was quoted again and again.

Of course there was a war on and they had attacked us and so on -- there was a reason for it (?)

But that was the line that I took consistently all the time, and I continued it when I came to America.

Sell, this was one of my activities. I became a member of a body which was then very important, called the Council for German Jewry. This consisted of two elements: the leaders of the Zionist movement, and the leaders who were not Zionists. That is to say Weizmann and his friends and followers, and the Rothschilds and their friends and followers, together with

other people who were likely to be big contributors, like the Marks and Spencer group. And I remember that for various reasons.

On two occasions I became a subject of the discussions.

One was in 1933, when I had converted Lord Melchett, and the newspapers were full of it. Before the meeting began its normal business the then chief rabbi -- Dr. Herman Hertz (Rabbi Joseph Herman Hertz, 1872-1946)-- who was of American background and was a graduate of the City College of New York apart from other things, stood up and he said, "I can't let the occasion pass in the presence of Rabbi Perlzweig without saying what a great service he has rendered to the Jewish community, and I would like to express my own appreciation."

Now this was a fantastic thing -- he was an Orthodox chief rabbi.

I happened to know -- and I think I have recorded it -- that the chief rabbi went to Melchett in the hope of being able to do this job himself, and was rebuffed. But this was one thing.

Another thing that happened a bit later at the Council for German Jewry where Sir Herbert Samuel was in the chair was, I had made a statement,--which I will come to in more detail later, because it was an important incident in the politics of the whole thing -- a statement about a scheme to transfer the Jews to Ethiopia, and this was broadcast by the B.B.C. as well as by all the news agencies, and I had said, "We will not tolerate it."

And Sir Herbert who was in the chair -- and who was a very mild man -- said that this had nothing to do with the meeting but he felt that he ought to make a reference to a statement that I had made, and he uttered these remarkable words.

He said, "There is no such thing as the Jewish people, and if there were it wouldn't be represented by the World Jewish Congress," which was intended to

It had nothing to do with the agenda of the meeting.

(end of tape)

End of Interview 9 w/ Rabbi Maurice Perlzweig by Peter Jessup,  
December 7th 1981.

DK

Interviewee: Dr. Rabbi Maurice Perlzweig

Interviewer: Peter Jessup

Place: New York City

Interview No. 10 - March 24th 1982

Q: Dr. Perlzweig, you have been away for some time, I understand in London and Geneva. When we left off you were mentioning Herman Hertz (1872-1946) and the Council of German Jewry, and also Sir Herbert Samuel (1870-1963).

Dr. Perlzweig: Yes. I think that as we go on this seems to be a very long business, and I ought to deal with a number of my other activities in a rather summary form.

First of all, during this period -- that is, between the wars -- I took a very active part in local Zionist affairs. By local I mean the Zionist Federation of Great Britain. That was in a rather peculiar position -- the Federation was -- because it occupied offices next door to the offices of the World Zionist Organization.

The division of labor was apparently very simple. The Zionist Federation organized the Zionist societies throughout the country. It conducted campaigns in connection with the main Zionist fund,

which was called -- roughly speaking reconstruction fund -- and when it was necessary to lobby the House of Commons from the point of view of British Jews, it would organize that lobbying.

The World Zionist Organization, on the other hand, dealt directly with the Government, and spoke in the name not of British Jews but of the Zionist movement throughout the world.

Now to put it as briefly as possible, in the first -- that is the Zionist Federation of Great Britain -- for many years, and I can't for the moment compute how many, but it was almost two decades, I occupied the position of honorary secretary and chairman of the Organization Committee. The Organization Committee, I ought to say, was known locally by some wags as the Zionist Tammany Hall.

So I had a good deal of experience in political organization.

Now putting it into a sentence or two, the Zionist Federation at that time was run by a committee of honorary officers plus the executive director. I am bound in all honesty to say that the executive director was probably more responsible for what happened than the honorary officers who met once a week. He was a man called Max Stansky who had been brought up in Palestine, was educated in Tel Aviv at the famous Herzhyah Gymnasium, and then came to London and took a degree at the London School of Economics. He was, to put it briefly and bluntly, a first-rate operator, who spread the influence of the Federation step by step throughout the Jewish community, and to some extent beyond it.



Of the other three officers who were responsible for the day to day operation and reported to a council for all over the country which met once a month, one was the Reverend J.K. Dobloom, who had been an immigrant from White Russia, and to the day of his death spoke English with a very strong accent, and in public always spoke in Yiddish. He was a man who had acquired fame by being the pioneer of the teaching of Hebrew in Hebrew. He had a school in the East End where the pupils were taught to speak Hebrew at a time when this was quite a rare accomplishment, and the teaching was conducted in Hebrew. He was a man of impeccable Orthodoxy. One of my earliest recollections of him was that when I entered the room to attend a council meeting before I became an officer, and it had been announced that I had entered the ministry of the liberal synagogue, he stood up at the beginning of the meeting, and with tears streaming down his face said, "One of the best young men has left us."

I was sitting there looking at this scene almost with awe. Nevertheless we became in the course of time very good friends, and even traveled together in what was then called Palestine.

The second officer was Paul Goodman (1875-1949), who was the secretary of the Spanish and Portuguese congregation, a very cultivated man who has left what I would regard as indispensable works on contemporary Jewish history, as well as a history of the Jewish people. I became very close to him, and one of his son-in-law's, a leading intellectual in Palestine -- Dr. George Webber -- often tells me how Goodman related to him that we stood

at what was called The Clock in Golders Green (in London) for several hours, until 2 or 3 in the morning, talking about Zionist affairs after we had returned from a meeting in what Americans would call downtown London.

I think that that is all I need say about the organization, except that we called a monthly called The Zionist Review, of which Goodman and I were the joint editors. We had the assistance of a man who has acquired fame and fortune since as a writer in Israel, Moshe Perlman. That is one of the sources of Zionist history in Britain at that time.

Now during this long period there was a certain number of events that I think I ought to refer to as briefly as possible.

One was a meeting in Krakow in Poland of what were called at the time general Zionists. I remember once in Washington during the war, or shortly before the end of the war, before a Zionist congress was called, that somebody in the Embassy -- I am trying to think of the man's name, he was First Secretary and subsequently British Ambassador to Moscow -- said to me, "We know what Zion is, the Socialist Party, we know what the Mizrachi is, which is the Orthodox religious party, but what on earth are the general Zionists?"

Well! We had this meeting in Krakow in 1935 in order to try and find a definition, because we were split down the middle between people who might be described as liberals in the old fashioned sense, and others who described themselves as bourgeois, who were liberals

in the sense that they believed in private enterprise. In England we had no party label -- we deliberately avoided that -- but went along, under the leadership of Weizmann, with the Labor Party. We were in favor, for example, of one trade union organization for the country, whereas our opposite numbers, the free enterprisers, wanted a series of competing unions, and so on.

Well, I will only say that Paul Goodman and I went to represent England at this meeting to which there were delegates from all the surrounding countries -- Austria, Poland, Lithuania, and so on. One of the things which struck me at the time was that there was nobody from the United States, not a single delegate. The reason is easy to see. To attend that meeting in 1935 meant that a delegate from America would have to spend two weeks on the sea in order to attend a meeting lasting two days.

That put a heavy burden on us, and I must say that this was my first excursion into international Zionist politics, and I did my best to be circumspect.

The trouble was, the meeting was held more or less in Yiddish or German, and I was rather weak in both languages at the time, and therefore it took me some time to intervene. Very often while I was collecting my thoughts a decision was arrived at, and my silence made a difference to the result.

But one result was that this grouping of general Zionists split into two sections called by various names -- mostly General Zionists were  
A ~~was~~ the liberals and General Zionists B were the free enterprisers --

Now there were a great many other things that I could expatiate on, but I will only refer to them in passing.

One was that I paid my first visit to what we called then Palestine, and it completely transformed me. I remember going to a kibbutz and seeing the people there, and one of the guides that we had told us about the various functions of the people working there. My late wife referring to one of them said, "He looks like a poet," to which the answer was he is a poet.

The spectacle of these young idealists who had sacrificed intellectual careers in order to work on the soil in very difficult circumstances made a very deep impression on me, as did a great many other things, too many to be reported here.

I remember the High Commissioner at the time, Sir Arthur Wauchope (pronounces it like walkup ) invited us to lunch at the house of the High Commissioner, a post which he later occupied, and I remember the conversation very well. Apparently I based myself largely on sources drawn from the Bible, and Mosher Shertok -- afterwards Sharett (1894-1965), who came in at the end of the lunch, said that Sir Arthur had inquired of him whether I was a member of the Agudat, which I thought at the time was very funny.

One other thing, or rather two other things I remember about that luncheon which struck me was the care with which the meal was organized so that no one would have to eat anything except kosher, which meant in fact that we were really almost limited to some form of eggs.

The butler who came round with the wine also amused me when he said, "Will you have wine, sir, or Palestine wine?" -- which I thought was rather odd.

Anyhow I came back from that journey, about which I could say a great deal more, absolutely transformed. I remember preaching about it at the liberal synagogue to a large congregation of people who either were in no sympathy with Zionism or even hated it, and I was a little apprehensive of the results, but they assured me afterwards that and they said every young man has his dreams.

If the State of Palestine then -- I think it was 1936 -- had progressed in the way it was doing I don't think the subsequent difficulties would have arisen, but shortly after my visit the opposition -- the organized opposition I should say -- led by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, which resulted in sometimes severe casualties and even massacres, postponed the building of a Jewish State.

Of course this was only a highlight. It would take too long to go into details, but I might mention that one of my contributions to the growth of Zionism in England was the lectures which I gave all over the country, and which sometimes resulted in interesting encounters. For example, I held a debate at the Foyle's Book Club Luncheon with Harry St. John Philby (1885-1960).

Q: Oh really?

Perlzweig: Yes, the father of Kim Philby (Harold Adrian Russell Philby, bo.1912), and I recall the excitement that that created in London, not so much about what Philby said or what I said in opposition to him, as the fact that a writer in The Daily Express spent a whole page on trying to explain the feelings of Mrs. Philby when she was questioned about Mr. Philby's adoption of Islam and the practice of polygamy about which he boasted.

I think I can say that I disposed quite easily of Philby, who really disposed of himself, because this large middle class assembly-- the great majority were women -- were outraged when he said, "If we don't get our way through political means we shall as Moslems turn to the sword."

It was really not necessary for me to say anything much in order to counter this argument.

I remember another debate with a Palestinian under the auspices of the Union of Democratic Control, because I never talked to my opponent who refused to shake hands with me, and we were both separated by the chairman of the meeting, which itself was surrounded by police in case of the outbreak of any sort of violent reaction.

I could go on with this list, but I will add on the Zionist side only a reference <sup>to</sup> a new society which was formed and which I joined, which was called the Friends of the Hebrew University.

This was the first such society in the world, and the man who took the initiative was called Dr. M.D. (Montagu David) Eder, (1866-1936), who was one of Freud's first disciples and one of

the first psychoanalysts in England. I remember the rather curious fact that we drafted a statement for publication and gave a list of the names of the persons who had formed the inaugural committee together with their profession, and I remember the embarrassment that Eder felt when he said, "I can't put down rabbi to describe you. I think you deserve something better than that." (laughs)

And he substituted man of letters. He was, of all the men that I have known, very critical of organized religion, but I nevertheless became very friendly with him, and our two families visited each other regularly.

Now that the Friends of the Hebrew University is what it is -- a very powerful organization all over the world -- I would like to recall that at least I was one of those who were at the beginning of the movement during the period between the wars.

Now this was the activity which arose out of my connection with the Zionist Federation. It was in 1935 that I attended the Zionist Congress held in Luzern, Switzerland, as a delegate from England, and it was there -- and I think to some extent as a result of what happened at the meeting in Krakow -- that I was first given a voice in the World Zionist Executive.

It was a rumor that I heard before anybody spoke to me, and I went to Ben Gurion and I said, "B.G., what is this new job which you want me to take?"

And his short answer was, "It's not a job, it's a task," by which he meant that I was not going to be paid and it was not a full time position.

I may add here that although I have held every conceivable position in the Zionist movement -- from local secretary to member of the Executive on a world scale -- I have never received a salary.

Q: Really?

Perlzweig: Yes, the only exception being that when I was a student and took a part time job in the office of the Jewish Agency in London, in its education department, I received what would now be called a token salary, but otherwise I never received it.

Anyhow I was given on the other hand a in the Executive, which I was able to exercise in what was a crucial period in the history of Zionism and the projected Jewish State.

That was in 1935, and I remained a member of the Executive until 1946, although I was not active after 1940 because I was in America, where I was given a place on what was called Provisional Zionist Commission.

Well, I think I ought to leave Zionism and mention another organization which I feel I can't omit for ~~the~~<sup>a</sup> very simple reason. I am the only survivor of the founding ~~of~~ members of the ~~congregation~~ organization. This is an organization called World Union for Progressive Judaism, which seeks to unite progressive, liberal and Reform Jewish congregations all over the world, and now has a very extensive program.

The first meeting took place in London in the early 1920's, and it was memorable for me because among those who attended it



was Stephen Wise (1874-1949) who spoke for the people who were Zionists, or at any rate who believed in the Jewish people as an entity. The record shows that he stood up and said, "There are only three of us, Perlzweig, Levy and myself, who are Zionists, against scores of rabbis and laymen who are not."

That was the first meeting, and it was through Claude Montefiore (1858-1938), who insisted on it, that I was made a member of the first governing body.

Q: Which Levy was that?

Perlzweig: It was Felix Levy of Chicago, who was a very well known rabbi at the time.

That was very remarkable. It shows you what has happened since. Today the World Union has its head office in Jerusalem, which at that time would have been unthinkable.

The second meeting which I attended and which made a great impression on me was in Berlin, and I think it was about 1926 -- I cannot be sure of the date -- and I saw how divided the Reform movement was at the time. There was what they called a Reform

to which I have referred, which was assimilated to the point of being almost grotesque, with the clergy dressed like Lutheran clergymen and so on

Well, I have attended some other of its meetings, but it would take too long to go into that, but I mentioned as I say the first

meeting which took place at the liberal synagogue in London, which included the foremost leaders of Reform and liberal Judaism from all over the world. I am unfortunately the only one who is still alive.

I think I ought -- because it probably will not be found elsewhere -- to make a reference also to what corresponded in those days to what is now either celebrated or denounced as the Zionist Lobby.

There existed a rather amorphous body which was called the Anglo-Palestine Committee. As far as I could judge it consisted of four people with whom I went once a month at the Savile Club in London. I represented the Jewish agency of this committee.

The other three were all very remarkable men. One was the editor of The Church Times, and I am just trying to think of his name, but at any rate he was a very well known journalist, and he really was the editor of what this committee published, which was a monthly with the title Palestine.

The other members of the committee were Herbert Sidebottom, who wrote a weekly column for The Observer -- which was extremely influential, and he was probably the most influential journalist of the day, and often consulted by the Government -- and . . .

I just thought of the name of the editor of The Church Times -- it was Sidney Dark, who was remarkable not only for his writing but for his capacity in the absorption of alcohol.

Q: Ah!

The third member was one of the ablest men I have encountered in the Zionist movement, Harry Sacher, who was at one time the chairman of the Zionist Executive in Jerusalem, and was also a lawyer of distinction and a writer who is worth reading now as I very often do. But no doubt in the annals of time he will figure chiefly as a director of Marks & Spencer. He had married into the Marks family and therefore was able to give a good deal of time to Zionist work.

I need hardly say that this paper called Palestine, which appeared every month, was financed by Marks & Spencer. It had certain peculiarities. The articles which it published were never signed unless somebody very outstanding was induced to write for it, and moreover it was not sold, it was given away. It was sent to every member of Parliament -- Commons and Lords -- and to great numbers of other people.

The thing which astonished <sup>me</sup> was the way in which these eminent gentlemen were quite prepared to use these anonymous articles.

I remember that one noble lord repeated an article which I wrote in full, including a printing error, and it appears now in hindsight.

At the same time I remember receiving a Jewish paper from New York in which an eminent judge delivered a speech which was merely a reading of this article, also including a printing error.

In other words, this device of putting into quotable form what could be said ~~about~~ in relation to the situation in Palestine seemed to work.

describe them as convictions. I am all in favor of people marrying a second time if they want to, but so far as I am concerned I have great sympathy with that tendency which sometimes finds expression in of people who say when you marry, you marry not only for life but for eternity.

Although she has been dead for some 20 years or more, I have never been tempted to forsake my memory of her, which is a constant presence with me. I mention it because it added not only a new dimension to my life but also a new burden.

Our first child was born without any difficulty in a perfectly normal way, but by the time the second child was on the way she had become very friendly with a woman doctor in Northwest London, and this was followed by disastrous results, because when they met together instead of dealing with purely medical matters their discussions ranged over all kinds of fields of common interest to both, with the result that the doctor neglected the right kind of precautions. The result was that she was afflicted by a malady called eclampsia, which meant certain excesses in the blood. At any rate the effect was that she nearly died.

I remember very vividly to this day that when I rang up this doctor to tell her, she immediately summoned another woman surgeon, who came round and examined my late wife, who was then almost unconscious, and in a very casual way spoke about everything except her condition, commenting on what a pleasant sound the lawn mower of the next house made, -- that kind of thing.

Most of the doctors that we summoned thought that her case was hopeless, and some of them thought that her brain was gone or was at any rate severely impaired. I never accepted this hypothesis for a reason that they could not or would not have guessed, and that was that I knew that if she were really in a bad way she would revert to what was one of her native languages, which was French, but when she said anything it was always in English, from which I deduced, not being a medical man, that the case was not hopeless.

I sat by her bedside for several days, and I understood what she was saying. She had all kinds of visions. She said that the Angel of Death had come to take her, but that my elder child -- her first-born -- stood there and waved him away.

This I interpreted as ~~meaning~~ expressing her fight for survival in order to be with this child. To make a long story short, and to leave out all the medical advice that we tried, she was able to lead ~~xxxx~~ after a time a fairly normal life. I brought in another nurse to look after the children, and we found a very good local doctor who brought in even the chief police surgeon, and they all said that the chances of survival were limited.

But one of them, departing from the tradition of English-speaking doctors, said, "You might try a place in France called Royat, where they have waters and ~~treatments~~ and so on."

And so she did. I can only tell you as a matter of hard fact that she went away leaning on a stick and looking very frail and fragile, and I met her on the way back at Versailles, and instead

of being frail she picked up my bags and walked with me. And when she came back to London people stopped in the street to look at her because she was so radiant.

Now I know that this treatment was supposed to have effect for a year, and she went year after year. When we came to America, and the war broke out, of course that was impossible.

Q: She went back to Royat every year?

Perlzweig: Every year she went back, because I spoke to various people there who told me that ~~xxx~~ was how they lived.

Q: Royat was not like Lourdes or anything like that?

Perlzweig: No, no.

Q: It was just a spa?

Perlzweig: It was a spa. There was nothing religious about it at all. Anyhow she was able to lead a normal life. She had to be very careful about various things, and I must say -- bringing the story as far as I can up to date -- that she found a great deal of help in Durham, North Carolina when she came to this country, where they treated her high blood pressure through what was called the Rice Diet.

Q: Oh yes, there was a famous doctor there.

Perlzweig: Yes, I am trying to think of his name, because he was the brother of one of the prosecutors at Nuremberg. He was a German refugee.

Q: It was a something-something Rice Diet, and very severe. (\*)

Perlzweig: Yes, very severe, but she was an extremely intelligent woman, and she knew that all dependent on it (?)

Well, the day came when she went on her regular visit to Durham and they ~~exam~~ gave her a complete bill of health, that is to say they liberalized her diet in many ways, and saw that they had succeeded in bringing her back to normalcy.

Then she went to the airport to take the plane to New York, and while she was there she suddenly collapsed and died.

Q: Oh really?

Perlzweig: In other words the excitement that came to her, the joy of knowing that she was now going to be -- if the doctors were right -- normal, made a great deal of difference.

Q: That was about 1962?

Perlzweig: Something like that, I don't know. All I know is that

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(\*) The name of the doctor in question, supplied by Mr. Jessup offtape is Walter Kempner of Duke University, Durham, N.C.

I was at the time in Australia. Fortunately I was able to fly back with the help of the American Consul General who had approved of my activities in defending the United States and the Allies at the time of the Korean War. I think there was an order out at the time that no non-American was to enter the country without special authorization.

Anyhow I mention this because it made a great deal of difference, obviously, to what I was able to do and to the tasks that I was able to undertake. It was from my point of view a marriage for eternity. The Jewish community is full of people who are always trying to arrange marriages, and I have been a victim of that system for many years, but it never made the slightest difference to me.

So I put it here as an essential ingredient in my existence.

One of the ways in which she was particularly helpful to me in my international work was her mastery of languages, which in her case was almost second nature. When she was ill in London the doctors didn't realize that when she talked English it was a foreigner talking English who had learned it as an adolescent. I did not myself know when I first began to take her out that ~~xxxxxx~~ her English was an acquired language. Her accent was perfect.

When we went to Israel -- because she traveled with me -- before a month was out she was talking quite fluent Hebrew. I remember once in a train while we were traveling in the Low Countries a man who was sitting opposite to me had been talking to her and said what excellent Dutch she was able to speak. I pointed out



to him that the language she knew was Flemish, but he couldn't tell the difference -- when she spoke Dutch she spoke Dutch.

One of the things which sometimes pleased me and sometimes appalled me was when here in America there were occasions when she started speaking authentic American instead of English. She had a most remarkable ear, and she was a very great help to me when I went to speak in countries other than England, when she would write out for me and tell me how to pronounce sentences in Dutch or French or German or whatever it might be.

Well, I think that's all I need to say about that. I ought to add of course that in my ministry she was extraordinarily helpful to me in every possible way.

Q: How do you spell eclampsia?

Perlzweig: (spells, then says) It's an excess of something in the blood

Q: An imbalance?

Perlzweig: It's something that pregnant women ought to avoid and could have avoided very easily in those days. So it was a ~~gan~~ great tragedy in every way.

Anyhow I come to 1938, and I have left the liberal synagogue.

What I did then was to undertake one of my first journeys more or less on behalf of the World Jewish Congress. I have omitted to say anything about the World Jewish Congress so far because until

1936 it did not formally exist. Before that I had been a spokesman in England, and I was in touch with both Stephen Wise and Nahum Goldmann, who were the moving spirits behind it.

I formed a committee to promote it, of which I became the chairman, and I persuaded Lord Melchett (Sir Alfred Mond, 1868-1930) to become the president. But it made very little progress, though I spoke about it in many places, and I did succeed in getting what was called the Grand Lodge of B'nai B'rith to pass a resolution in favor of it, although many of the leaders were dead set against it.

There was great fear in Jewry then that anything which was called international would lay the Jews open to the charge that they were the famous or infamous Elders of Zion who were trying to get control of the world.

So we had great difficulty in getting people together.

The first meeting that we held in Geneva in 1936 -- in the summer of 1936 -- constituted the World Jewish Congress in a regular form. I don't know how many countries we had represented -- I can't recall the exact number -- but it was about 40, which was quite an achievement in and of itself. But in many countries -- and England was conspicuous among them -- the representation was not of the regular representative party but of a special organization created for the purpose.

From the United States we had the American Jewish Congress and the Zionist organizations, but not B'nai B'rith or the American Jewish Committee or any of the really big organizations.

So we operated under restrictions of one kind or another, but anyhow in 1938, after I had resigned from the liberal synagogue and before I could take up my post at the Northwestern Reform Synagogue in Golders Green, I undertook to go to South Africa in order to head a delegation which was sent by the Jewish agency there every two years. This delegation was received by the Government and helped in every possible way, and it raised very large sums of money, and it was therefore very important.

I was the second choice for it. The first was Sharett. Now Sharett, people sometimes forget, was also a trade unionist, and he became involved in some industrial action, as it was called, so Weizmann turned to me, and I remember saying to him what am I to do? I don't know South Africa, I don't know the people.

And he answered, "You will find in every village in South Africa at least one man who will understand the importance of what you are doing and will do everything he can to help you."

And that turned out to be right.

On the other hand, the heads of the Zionist organization in South Africa, some of them, were very apprehensive about my coming. After all, I was a liberal minister, which was a terrible thing. And I must tell you ~~that~~ the cables that went between Johannesburg and Jerusalem and London on this question as to whether I should be allowed to go because of my religious conviction, and I want to say and put on record the fact that Weizmann was absolutely adamant that there shall not be any discrimination against non-Orthodox Jews, especially, as he put it, when it came from Jews

who themselves were only nominally Orthodox.

Anyhow I went, and there were two other members of the delegation in accordance with a pattern which had been developed over the years. One was a Lithuanian, because most of the Jews in South Africa are of Lithuanian origin. When one group of Jews goes, that group protects others from the same area. And the third member was a woman. In this case it was the daughter-in-law of a famous writer and philosopher, Ahad Ha-Am (1856-1927), Rose Ginsburg, who was the first woman lawyer in Palestine.

I went by air, which sounds easy, but it took me five days, because in those days -- I am speaking of about 1938 --- airplanes did not fly at night, and the plane I went in was not an ordinary plane, it was a seaplane, and I took off from Southampton water, and our first stop was a lake outside Rome. Our next stop for the night was the harbor of Athens -- I've forgotten what it's called.

We had a few hours only before we took off because the plane took off just before dawn. Since the dawn when you got up into the. . .

Q: It was brighter.

Perlzweig: It was brighter. So we spent about three or four hours at the Hotel Grande Bretagne in Athens, during which time we saw the Acropolis in moonlight, and went to a nightclub~~s~~ called The Argentine. We took off very early because of the way in which the atmosphere was in the morning, and then we flew over Crete.

I remember seeing Crete, marked out as though on a map, and landed in Alexandria, in the Nile, and then we went on to Cairo, and landed in the Nile, and this is where Rosa Ginsburg had gone -- Ginnsar, as she afterwards became -- and came onto the plane.

It was through her efforts that the pilot was induced to fly low over much of Africa so that we saw vast herds of beasts of various kinds.

Q: Did you go to Khartoum and then Kenya?

Perlzweig: Yes, we went to Khartoum and we spent the night outside Khartoum in a guest house in which there was no running water.

(pause) No, I am sorry, I was wrong about that. In Khartoum we did stay at a hotel which was serviced by Berbers who~~were~~ were very silent and frightened the life out of me when a human being for example emerged from behind the curtains and

But the next night Kisumu, which was on the Equator. It was very~~cold~~. When I walked down the main street I could see familiar names. The traitors were either Lebanese or Jews. There were Cohens and Levys there.

The next town was the worst of all. It was somewhere at the southern end, I think, of the Sudan, and I am trying to think of its name. It was the most wicked tropical night that I have ever experienced outside of New York. I mean it was very humid, and it was impossible to rub oneself dry. The sanitary arrangements were

very bad because there was some rule that the plumber had to be Portuguese, and that took weeks to get.

Anyhow we went on like that for five days, and landed in Natal -- outside Natal, in the ocean -- and now I must tell you that we started out as a very respectable group in Southampton, but we were almost paranoid by the time we got to Natal. The food was terrible because it had to be carried all that way, some of it -- very little of ~~it~~ could be obtained on the way.

Anyhow that was a rather interesting experience. I must say it was slightly worse on the way back because one of the things we had to do was to fly over the Apennine Mountains (in Italy) <sup>and</sup> ~~in~~ this heavy, lumbering and very comfortable waterplane could not fly very high, so we were in constant danger of hitting some of the peaks.

Q: Downdraft.

Perlzweig: Yes. And the people, you could hear the people,--especially the ones. . . -- say, "Mary, Mother of God, save me."

At any rate I got to Natal. There I had one great advantage. The Government incidentally sent down a boat to take me

I remember going to the Immigration Office and being rather appalled by the form I had to fill in, which asked what my race was. I had a choice of European, Black, Negro, Asiatic and so forth.

Well, I had no difficulty about that -- I was European.

But the advantage I had was that the man whom I saw first in the beginning was Smuts. (Jan Christian Smuts, 1870-1950)

I had several associations with Smuts, the most important of which was that he was one of my predecessors as president of the John Milton Society at Christ College. So we had a great deal to talk about, and he asked me whether the old clock in the first court was still cracked -- that kind of thing.

The second association I had with him was because he was one of the leaders -- one of the Gentile leaders -- of the Zionist movement. That was a very important part of the movement, as it is in America today. If people want to understand why it was that AWACS were passed by such a narrow majority even though the Jews are less than three percent of the population, it's because there are millions of Gentiles in this country for whom support of Israel is a religious obligation.

Now they are not all people of whom I approve the Moral Majority.

When (Menachem) Begin comes to New York one of the first people he sees is the Reverend Jerry Falwell, who is very proud of his Zionist Declarations.

Anyhow, coming back to Smuts, Smuts was not a Fundamentalist in any sense of the word. He was an enlightened man who I think did his best about what afterwards became known as Apartheid. But he was a passionate pro-Zionist. He was also a passionate opponent of Chamberlain (Neville Chamberlain, 1869-1940) and his policy of appeasement.

One of the things I brought him was a message from Jan Masaryk (1886-1948), whom I knew in London and with whom I dealt about the

World Jewish Congress, and Masaryk was extremely apprehensive about what was going to happen. He was a man of very violence utterance, and he was not at all careful about his language, and the mildest that he ever said to me was, "My backside is in the East, but my head is in the West."

He wanted me to alert Smuts to the fact that he was not being properly consulted about the British approach to the problem of Europe, and Smuts agreed with that. Smuts was himself vituperative -- the word is not too strong -- of the attitude of the British Government, and he said among other things that although he was a Commonwealth statesman and at the time entitled to papers of all kinds, the number of papers that really mattered that he received was reduced considerably.

At any rate he was in every respect very helpful. He was then the Minister of Justice, he was not the Prime Minister. He was the Minister of Justice, and he had gone in with the Prime Minister's party -- I think his name was Herzog.

Q: How old a man was Smuts then?

Perlzweig: Oh I should say about 60 or so. At any rate he had a great reputation as a soldier in the First World War, and as a statesman.

Then I went to Johannesburg. Now one of the things I had to do in Johannesburg was to speak at the main dinner which inaugurated the campaign, when something very strange happened to me.



By the time I got to the dinner my whole nature seemed to have changed. I was known at the time as a dynamic speaker, which is one reason why I was asked to go -- The Jewish Chronicle had called me a spellbinding speaker. (nota Bene: I believe those are Dr. Perlzweig's words, but voice is extremely low and recording fuzzy).

But suddenly my energy drained away, and when I got to the dinner and started speaking one of the local rabbis whom I knew from the synagogue (?) sent me a note in which he wrote some such message as, "For goodness sake got forward (go for them?). You are speaking like an Oxford don talking about Plato."

You see, what I hadn't reckoned with was that it was 7000 feet up.

Now the next day I went to the office which was conducting this campaign, ~~and I said, "I think you have to drop me, and I must go back."~~ and I said to "I think you have to drop me, and I must go back."

To which he replied, "All those who come say the same thing, and then this disappears. It's due to the height."

Q: And it takes 24 to 30 hours to get used to it.

Perlzweig: Yes, to become accustomed to it. Now there was one man -- I think I wrote his name down, because I all the time -- one minister of the Government who was present, who was. . . (thumbs through papers) Yes, his name was Jan Hofmeyr, and he was an Afrikaaner, but he was a liberal, a progressive in

the broad sense of the word. At one period when I was in South Africa I went to the House of Assembly in Capetown, and I witnessed a scene which filled me with anxiety. He was being questioned as to why he had given a license for some business to an Indian, and his answer was -- which would be true at that time, but not now -- that he was a citizen and all citizens should be treated alike.

For man who sat in the Cabinet to use an expression like that was an act of very great courage. He was also a very distinguished scholar. He had been the head of Witwatersrand University, which is the University of Johannesburg, as quite a young man, and then he went to Oxford and did very well there.

One of the assets that I felt I had in South Africa was Hofmeyr, who was not overintensely pro-Zionist, but I thought was one of a group of men in the world at the time who if they had got together could have held back the tide of fascism in South Africa itself.

Hofmeyr had said to me that he thought that the party which produced and the others was a fascist party, and had in fact been interned during the war because they were so pronazi.

Well, I could speak at great length about South Africa. I was there two months, which is a long time. I not only spoke at these Zionist meetings, which became a little wearisome because they were all the same -- there was always chicken, and there was always Hatikvah, the hymn, there was so much Hatikvah that it became difficult to go through with it -- but I also tried to be helpful, and was very helpful I think, to the Reform movement which was

started there.

For one thing they knew about me for a very simple reason. The prayer book I had compiled for North London they had reprinted, and in fact they gave me a copy of it bound in lion's skin -- I don't know what I've done with the lion's skin, it was long ago, it's probably moth-eaten -- ~~and~~ there I was to a great many of them a man whom they knew, and they were surprised that I wasn't an old man with a beard. I helped them in various ways.

While I was there for example one of the places I visited was a place that in those days was very close to South Africa, namely Rhodesia. When I was in Rhodesia they telephoned to me to come back and deliver the address at a memorial service for Claude Montefiore which they were holding. In other words there was this community with which I had very close ties.

Q: Weren't there extremely prominent Jewish families in South Africa who were not Zionist at all, like the Oppenheims?

Perlzweig: Yes, there were. The Oppenheims as a matter of fact have left Judaism, and they are, at least nominally, Christians. There were, but on the other hand the lawyers who were very prominent in South Africa -- the lawyers who in fact are ~~the~~ the people who have defended the Blacks and the others -- were all completely Zionist. They had a very high level of education.

But the point about Zionism in South Africa was that the Jews felt isolated, separate from the Boers, and separate from the

English. They formed a community of their own, though they spoke English as their language, they felt cut off from the others, and the whole business of Zionism meant a great deal to them, probably more to them, than almost any Jewish community in the world.

Now it would take too long for me to give a complete account of my experiences. I found for example that at that period Rhodesia was a more or less democratic country. I got on the plane one day in Bulawayo to go to Salisbury. A man sat down next to me and he asked me what I was doing and who I was, and then he told me who he was. He was ~~the~~ the Prime Minister, and he is still there. I can't think of his name, but he is the man who is a New Zealander by birth and who went to Rhodesia as a missionary.

The Jewish community in Rhodesia was very well off. It was a beautiful country. I visited one man whose nephew had been a member of a congregation of mine in London -- who was afterwards a Member of Parliament. I visited this man who had been a furrier in Johannesburg <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ was told by the doctors to go to a drier climate, and who built up a settlement of his own. It took a man on a horse a whole day to ride around the boundaries of this settlement. It had a house which had been built by the natives, as they were called, who lived on the settlement, they had all the food they wanted which they grew -- milk and meat -- and it was a remarkable achievement. And if they had had the sense -- which neither they nor the Australians had -- at that point, where they could have emigrated large numbers of refugees from Europe, they would be in a much stronger position today.

There was much of interest. For example -- this is not of historic interest -- I was taken on a tour of the Kruger Park. In those days, when there weren't the restrictions on Blacks which were afterwards imposed, the Zionist Federation of South Africa had cars with drivers who were black, with such names as Isaiah and Jeremiah and so forth. And I was driven with a family through the Kruger Park in one of these cars, when we came to a bend in the road, where the road , and across the road there was lying a lion. There was nothing we could do, except they said to me, "Close the window." I tried to close the window, but it was stuck. So we sat there in apprehension, until the lion in great dignity arose, went over to the radiator and sniffed it, and didn't like what he sniffed and ambled away. Well, I shall never forget that as long as I live! But it has no historic significance.

So here was the end of the South African episode, except that I was able --

I got a few letters from Smuts which I gave to the Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, and they were very glad to have them, although they didn't have anything very startling in them.

Now what I told you about Hofmeyr I tried to implement. I went to talk to various people in England. I talked to Josiah Wedgwood (1872-1943) for example, about the possibility of starting a movement which would include people like Hofmeyr in South Africa and others of similar import in other countries who would say enough is enough to the fascist everywhere, the time has come for us to assert the democratic ideal.

chiefly

Well, I was relying on Jan Masaryk/for that, and he was very interested in it, but of course in due course Munich came along.

Q: And then it was too late.

Perlzweig: It was too late. I don't know whether anything would have come of it, but it's a strange thing to have to report that in order to have this idea one had to go to South Africa, to see a man in the South African Parliament stand up, and though he was a member of the Government say, "This tendency of racism and oppression generally is wrong, and we must put a stop to it."

That was one reason why I have never given up hope -- you find people in the most extraordinary places.

Well, I went back to England and I went to the Northwestern Reform Synagogue. I hadn't been there very long when activities started all over again, and one of the things I was most active in there was the refugee problem. It was so difficult that when we started a committee -- an emergency committee -- I was chosen as chairman because I was the person most pressing for it, and Orthodox rabbis were prepared to join me.

We did what we could. We went to the chief of police in the district,--This was in Northwest London -- who was very helpful, whose ideas about the world were rather primitive. For example he said to me, "When are the Russians coming in?"

I said, "How should I know <sup>what</sup> ~~when~~ the Russians are ~~coming~~ going to do?"

He said, "Oh, but that's one of the places that you control, isn't it?" (laughter)

A great many people believed it.

Now the synagogue of which I became the minister had a fairly large German contingent, because it was not an Orthodox synagogue, and among these Germans I found many friends. There was one man that you may have come across, a man called Dr. Siegfried Moses in Israel, who was the controller who had a brother-in-law who lived in the Hampstead Garden suburb where I lived, and the Germans who came to the synagogue, or who came to my home, were very often <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ source of information of very great importance to me. Sometimes I was wrong in my appreciation of what they wanted.

One Saturday morning an imposing group of rabbis -- about six of them, who were Germans or Austrians -- came into the synagogue and I was appalled, because all these were learned men, and here was I, going to give one of my -- I was going to say shortie (shoddy ? sermons, which I just thought up.

So when it was all over I went to them and said, "Gentlemen, I apologize for my , but I hope you were not disappointed in the service."

They said oh no, you got us quite wrong, we didn't come here to hear you preach, we came here to learn English. (laughter)

So I was wrong sometimes. But on the other hand they had acquired the habit of coming to me to help them in their aims. I thought of it in London not so long ago, when I read in a newspaper about the

80th birthday of a man now called Lord Geoffrey Lloyd. His picture is in the book. He is one of the people on the picture I have shown you in the History of the Cambridge Union.

Q: What was his name before that?

Perlzweig: Geoffrey Lloyd. He has now been ennobled and he calls himself Lord Geoffrey Lloyd, Geoffrey Lloyd being a sort of hyphenated name.

(several false starts of speech here, and a remark "he is a different one" -- I am unable to determine to whom this refers)

He was at Trinity College, and he was a minister of minds.

At the time that I am talking about, which is a year or two leading up to the war -- 1938-1939 -- he was the Undersecretary for Home Affairs.

Now somebody came to me -- a member of my congregation -- about a refugee of a different kind -- he wasn't a German refugee -- who was a Russian Jew who had lived in England before the First World War and was naturalized. Then when the British introduced conscription they had a perfectly reasonable rule that any ~~any~~ subject or citizen of an allied country would either join the British Army or go back to ~~to~~ his country of origin to join their Army. This man was a Russian. He didn't want to join the British Army he didn't want to join the Czarist Army, first because he couldn't



speaking Russian -- he spoke only English -- but he went back because he had to, and he made his way across Czarist Russia to China. I don't know how he did it, but he did it, and he went to a place called Tientsin, where in the course of time he built up a large and prosperous department store.

Now I detail these facts because they <sup>throw</sup> ~~give~~ a sort of light on the way in which European Jewry disposed of itself.

In Tientsin, since he could only speak English, he became a member of the English-speaking community, and one of the things that he did was to have frequent sessions at card playing with the British Consul. So when the crash came in 1938-1939 and things looked bad he went to the Consul and asked for a visa, and the Consul in all innocence gave it to him. When he came to England it was discovered that he was on the list of those who had refused to serve and had gone abroad and was excluded from residency.

Now ~~when~~ one of his relatives came to see me, and I said this isn't a very good case from the point of view of the authorities. My secretary, who was a very intelligent girl, strongly urged me to do nothing about it, because there were others who had a much better claim. But on the other hand I knew that the family would be distraught, and I had this man who was an active member of the congregation pressing me, so I thought that the least I could do was to make a formal application.

So I wrote a letter to somebody called the Undersecretary of State for Home Affairs, -- "Dear Sir" -- and within a couple of days I got back a reply which said, "Dear Perlzweig, since when

have I become Dear Sir to you? All you had to do was to telephone me."

Now I mention this for good and bad reasons. The old school tie -- this man sat with me on the Union Committee. That was a kind of intimacy which never fails, and I was able to ~~am~~ help the German refugees.

One of the things in which I was conspicuously different from the official Jewish community was that when they wanted to leave the country I supported them. I thought that they had gone through enough. I had one experience which illustrates that.

When the war broke out, when there was an alert of a possibility of an air raid, the rule was that you had to take cover. One Saturday morning I felt it was my duty as the minister of the synagogue, air raid or not, to go to the synagogue. If anybody turned up -- I didn't anticipate a large crowd, but if anybody turned up they were entitled to feel that the person whose duty it was to conduct the service in the synagogue should be there.

So I went out on the street, and on the way about halfway to the synagogue I met a couple, and I went up to them and I asked, "What are you doing out in the street? It's wrong."

The answer was, "We are German refugees. This is nothing compared to what we have been through."

You see, I sympathized with them. That's why I was against the official Jewish rule of their being shipped abroad, which was what they wanted. They had the fear that if there was an invasion -- and

there was going to be an invasion according to the Germans -- of course one of the difficulties we were under was that we heard the German radio, by which I mean the German radio in English, which told everybody what was going to happen --  
(end of tape)

End of Interview 10 w/ Rabbi Maurice Perlzweig by Peter Jessup,  
March 24th 1982.

DK

Interviewee: Dr. Rsbbl Maurice Perlzweig

Interviewer: Peter Jessup

Place: New York City

Interview No. 11 - June 2nd 1982

Q : Good afternoon, Dr. Perlzweig. Here we are again on a lovely spring day on West 72nd Street. You know where you were before, I believe?

Dr. Perlzweig: Yes, I was dealing with some incidents in my second ministry, which was at the Northwestern Reform Synagogue, and before I leave that I would just like to refer to one other incident which had a very widely reported political significance.

This incident happened when a number of German Jewish refugees wanted to dispose of a copy of the scroll of the law which they had managed to rescue from Germany, and the synagogue of which I was then the minister undertook to safeguard it -- to give it a place in its own Ark of the Law -- and we had a ceremony which made an impact on the public press in London at the time, and which a great many people still remember.

We got together 12 German Jewish ex soldiers, every one of whom had received the Armed Cross for valor, and they acted as a kind of guard of honor for this Torah, which was carried into the synagogue and placed in the Ark.

It is difficult for me to describe the emotion which this apparently simple act created, but I have a very distinct recollection of my own emotion which became so strong that there were points at which I had to stop, both in the address which I gave on the occasion and in the recital of the Kaddish, which is a doxology recited in commemoration of people who have died.

I mention this because one London paper, and one of the most important, The Evening Standard of the time, in a column which was headed "Londoner's Diary" devoted a whole page to a description of it, and I know that it had an effect, because when subsequently I went to the American Embassy to secure a visa on the strength of a letter written by Stephen Wise, I overheard the secretary who went into one of the offices say with absolute awe, "He had a whole page in The Evening Standard last week." So that it was widely read, and I mention it again because a few months ago I attended a meeting of rabbis of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, and in the course of it I encountered a . . . I think I can call him a youngish man, who is the secretary of the Reform Synagogue of Great Britain, who rebukes me for not having come back to that synagogue which he said he had attended as a youth and which had meant a great deal to him. One of his recollections was that his father had wept openly during the ceremony, and it was the only occasion in his life when

he had seen his father weep.

Well, I think that although I could go on about other events at the Northwestern Reform Synagogue which had a bearing on the larger social and political questions, such as meetings with the Chief of Police on what to do when an air raid destroyed bodies so that you could not give them a normal funeral, -and similar interesting matters which for the moment are no longer relevant -- I think I ought to turn to the World Jewish Congress which was destined to become the chief arena of whatever I was able to do in relation either to the refugees or to the larger Jewish question.

The World Jewish Congress, the first session of which -- the founding session -- took place in Geneva in the summer of 1936, I need say very little about the agenda of the conference because there is in existence a printed protocol in English and other languages which gives an almost verbatim account of what happened. It describes the debates, it repeats the addresses, and it records the elections, and I will say no more about that, except that Wise insisted on my giving an address on the aims of the Congress for the benefit of the then High Commissioner of Refugees of the League of United Nations, who was present.

It was very curious that although we had messages from a number of statesmen like Benes, the President of Czechoslovakia (1884-1948), who was a friend of the Congress, there wasn't a single outstanding politician or statesman outside of the Jewish community who was present, although we had invited a great many others.

This is in contrast to the last meeting of the Congress, or of its Council, which I attended in Washington about a year ago -- or a little more than a year ago, when Carter was still President -- when every statesman of any significance, one might almost say, was present, beginning with President Carter, the leaders of the Democratic and Republican parties in Congress, Henry Kissinger, and almost anybody else who was of significance.

It will give some idea of the growth of the Congress, both in numbers and in influence since 1936.

I think it was not altogether a coincidence that the President of the Congress -- Philip Klutznick, the President at that time -- was appointed by Carter shortly afterwards to a position in the Cabinet as Secretary of Commerce.

I am not trying to suggest that Klutznick didn't deserve this on his own merits, but I think there was a connection.

But there are things in the protocol which will ~~not~~ inform any researcher or reader of what the Congress consisted of -- the people who were there, and so on. What it will not inform them on was the unwritten debate which took place in the Jewish community before the Congress took place.

I ought to mention that this was 1936, ~~and~~ and there had been discussions looking to an establishment of such a Congress in 1933, but the divisions of opinion were so strong and the difficulty in obtaining representative delegations so great, that the occasion was put off until it became inevitable on account of what was happening in the world, which was being mastered by Hitler.

There were many approaches to what was called the solution of the Jewish problem, but you could, I think, reasonably divide it into two parts -- or divide these approaches into two parts.

There were those who said that the solution was to be as quiet as possible, to practice what is now called quiet diplomacy, and above all not to give life to the rumors which were current among the less well educated masses that the Jews constituted a conspiracy designed to conquer Europe and subdue as it were the civilization of Christianity.

This doctrine is set out in a remarkable book or pamphlet called The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. This document has now been proved to be beyond all doubt a forgery by the czarist police and spread all over Europe by them with a view to cutting down Jewish influence. In two countries as different as Switzerland and South Africa it has appeared, it has been subjected to the judgment of courts of law, which have pronounced it a forgery.

Nevertheless, what it records, or purports to record, is widely believed. Today as I am speaking, in 1982, you can buy the pamphlet in Spanish in Barcelona, where it is sold openly in the streets, and you can buy it in Guatemala, where the local press agency disseminates its contents to all the neighboring countries.

It is a powerful influence,<sup>and</sup> although no one in his senses would take it literally -- indeed anyone who reads it can see that it is obvious nonsense -- it's succeeding in frightening a great many Jews,



in frightening them to such an extent that they conceived an international Jewish meeting as in itself something which would arouse anti-Jewish feeling.

Consequently, the conventional leaders of the well established Jewish communities were for the most part opposed to anything like a World Jewish Congress.

Q: They were opposed, uh?

Perlzweig: They were definitely opposed, and they denounced it not only as wicked but as dangerous. The American Jewish Committee in New York, which was one of the most powerful -- and in its membership included people ~~in~~ who had played an important part in the legislative, executive and judicial life of the United States -- regarded the whole thing as a menace to the Jewish people.

The Board of Deputies in England narrowly defeated the proposal. I moved a resolution that the Board should join the Congress in the year before it convened, and the resolution was defeated, though only narrowly, and even then one of the reasons for its defeat was that some of its opponents were not regarded as respectable.

Q: Ah!

Perlzweig: One was the Mayor of a borough who has since, as we say in England, enjoyed His Majesty's hospitality in a prison. But I think the difference was about ten votes out of a couple of hundred.

Nevertheless there was great hesitation on embarking on this new adventure, and in France there was actually a body whose name was Alliance Israelite Universelle.

Q: Which still exists.

Perlzweig: Which still exists, and which had very influential and important people in its leadership, and whose name suggested that their founders at least believed in an international Jewish organization.

Q: They were largely Sephardic, weren't they?

Perlzweig: No, no. They were partly Sephardic. Some of their founders were Sephardic, but. . .

Q: The membership was not necessarily ?

Perlzweig: No, on the contrary. Their last president before the ~~xxxxxx~~ present one, who played a big part in the human rights activities of the United Nations, and who was a member of the Constitutional Court. . . I don't know, it's just my great age that . . . (causes me to forget his name).

Q: It wasn't Brunschwig, was it?

Perlzweig: No no. There was a Br<sup>u</sup>schwig in it. Brunschwig is an Alsatian name. The man I am talking about came from the South of France, or at least his family originally came from the South of France. I came across a ~~pam~~ pamphlet written by a friend of mine, Justice Haim Cohen of Jerusalem -- he is a retired Justice of the Supreme Court (in Israel) -- on this man, but I can't find it, so I'll leave it out. (\*)

At any rate, all these people were against it. The result was that the people who assembled in Geneva in 1936, although there were delegations and significant ones from the United States and the United Kingdom and France and so on, they were not really representative. Either it was the American Jewish Congress headed by Stephen Wise -- which obviously represented a minority of the Jewish population of the United States -- or it was the British Section of the World Jewish Congress which we had created for the purpose.

On the other hand, the masses of the Jews that were then still living in Eastern Europe, were monumentally represented, and not only the Zionists, whom you would expect to be affected attracted by such an idea, but the people whom one could call Folkists, the Bund, which was a Jewish socialist trade unionist movement which had been associated with the First International until it was thrown out, and which believed not in the gathering

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(\*) Mr. Jessup in his notes lists the missing name as Rene Cassin, b. 1887.

of the Jewish masses in any one particular place like Palestine, but who sought what they regarded as cultural self determination -- the use of Yiddish as a national language, and the growth of social and political institutions to preserve what they needed to preserve in Jewish life. In fact the first honorary president of the World Jewish Congress -- whose name again slips my mind, who was regarded at that time as the outstanding Jewish historian and was a Folkist -- represented a very large delegation of his own people though he was not present.

So it is important to remember what the Congress really represented. It represented the broad, democratic masses of the Jewish people where they existed, which meant the Baltic States, in Poland, in Rumania and Czechoslovakia and so on.

We did have one Western country officially represented, and that was as much of a problem as anything else. That was Italian Jewry.

Q: Oh really?

Perlzweig: The head of their delegation was their chief rabbi, Dr. Sacerdoti, who had obtained Mussolini's agreement to come to the Conference and bring with him the Council of Italian Jewish leaders (? voice trails off)

Now it is easy to understand that the relations between Dr. Sacerdoti -- who was not a fascist, but who had acquiesced in the

Fascist Government -- and the Jews whether from England or Eastern Europe, who were either socialists or oriented in that direction, were not very good. And it also made it rather difficult for us in 1936 to formulate resolutions which would talk adequately about what fascism had done to the Jews in Europe, because at that point Mussolini had not only not attacked the Jews or subjected them to any kind of persecution, but on the contrary had looked with favor on the resettlement of the Jews in Palestine, and had even hinted -- he had given broad hints -- that he would very much like to replace the British in Palestine, because the British were so negligent in pursuing the aims of the Balfour Declaration.

At any rate there was the Conference, and I thought it right to have on record the fact that when it assembled in 1936, although broadly representative of the Jewish masses which unfortunately have largely disappeared, it was not representative -- it couldn't be expected to admit that it wasn't representative -- of the more affluent Western Jewish community.

Well, ~~EXCEPT~~ I don't have to say anything about the policy pursued -- except that of course it was obviously very antinazi and that there was a good representation of Jews from German Jewish refugee organizations, and of course the Jewish community of Palestine, which became Israel, was very largely represented.

The question arose how this thing was to run.

You must remember that they had absolutely no money.

Q: None at all?

Perlzweig: None at all. I mean the men who had kept alive a previous party of which the World Jewish Congress could be described as the successor organization, which are known as the Comité de délégalation juive -- which had been a large coalition of Jewish bodies which had represented Jewish interests at the Versailles Treaty discussions-- had a small office in Geneva, but there were no dues. Who was going to ask the Jews of Poland, who could scarcely keep body and soul together, for money?

What we had any hopes for was what the American Jewish Congress would spend on it.

Now there were a number of leading American Jews there, and I think I ought to record them.

One was of course Stephen Wise (1874-1949), who was a great tribune of the World Jewish Congress.

Then there was Judge Julian Mack (1866-1943), a very highly respected Federal judge, who if my memory serves me was actually the first president.

Then there was Louis Lipsky (1876- ), who was practically the . . . What is the word which is used in the United States ? Tammany Hall. The Tammany Hall of Zionism.

Q: Yes! (laughs)

Perlzweig: And the one I remember most of all because I had most to do with him was Professor Horace Kallen (1882- ).

Q: You mentioned him before.

Perlzweig: Yes, with whom I continued because he was the most long lived of all. It's only a few years ago that he died at the age of 90 or 91.

And the Congress itself was organized by the staff of the American Jewish Congress largely, headed by Lilli Schultz, who may be remembered as someone who played in subsequent years a great part in the American weekly called The Nation at the time that Freda Kirchwey was its editor.

We had to decide what to do, and apparently some of the leading lights, ~~of~~ both American and others, came to the conclusion that it would be necessary to have an executive which would function largely in the West, and would be able to travel and so on.

So they drew up a list of about seven or eight names, which was drawn from the United States, England, Latvia, Belgium, Switzerland, who could come together quite quickly. Now where were they to get these people from?

Well, Horace Kallen was given the job, which was rather a tough job, to tackle me on the subject. Remember the year, 1936. The people in America who ~~have~~ could have exercised authority and had the time and the opportunity, were in America. You couldn't in those days just take a plane and fly over for the day.

Q: In a day, no. It was impossible.

Perlzweig: I mean as I noticed at a meeting which I attended the previous year in Cracow, Poland, the most important sections of the Zionist movement which were in the United States were not there, because in order to attend <sup>a meeting of</sup> /two days in Cracow it was necessary to spend almost a couple of weeks at sea.

Q: Traveling, yes.

Perlzweig: Therefore it was very important from the American point of view that somebody who spoke English as the mother tongue should be in this executive and should play a prominent part in its political life. And their choice, especially Wise's, fell on me.

Now what were they going to offer me? The Congress was entirely without money. Any question of a professional post was out of the question. It was ~~all~~ <sup>it</sup> could do to obtain to maintain a small clerical staff at its head office in Geneva.

So Kallen, who had no choice about it and who was really strongly in favor of my being on the executive -- because we had ideas which were very much the same about what he called cultural pluralism and the freedom, the various freedoms, and what was subsequently condified in the Declaration of Human Rights -- took me to a restaurant -- and I even remember the name of it, it was called "Plat d'argent" (Silver Plate), -- and began to work on me, and I pointed out to him that I was <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ wrong person.



First of all, I was already a member with a vote in political affairs of the executive of the Jewish agency of the Zionist organization, that is to say the body that was the predecessor of the Israel Government. I had already important duties in connection with that organization, and I was not a professional member of the staff. My profession was that of a rabbi of the Liberal Synagogue, the president of which was a determined anti-Zionist.

So I had this unpaid assignment. For me to take on another equally unpaid, and with almost limitless responsibilities -- because I was going to be the only European member of the executive who spoke English fluently -- (was too much).

Well, we had a very long discussion about it, but it became there and then a precedent for the World Jewish Congress, about which Dr. Nahum Godmann (1895- ), who was its chairman of president for many years, used to boast, (that) anyone who became a member of the staff or the executive of the World Jewish Congress had to go on with more or less the mind of a monk, that is to say he was going to be a victim of the system. He was not going to have enough to live on.

So I was in due course elected to the executive, that is to say, I . . .

I wasn't the only English-speaking member. There were the Americans, but the Americans might as well have been on the moon, so that a very considerable burden rested on me.

I don't know to this day why, looked at in ordinary material terms or in ordinary social terms, I have undertook it, but I did, and I began to find that I was at work very soon.

I then had the task of helping to establish on a permanent basis the British Section of the World Jewish Congress. We had had I think a dozen or 14 British Jews at Geneva, representing roughly the trade unions' side of things, and the Orthodox religious side, which did not get on very well.

I was a sort of exception. In one of Wise's letters which has been printed he was kind enough to say that he looked over the delegation when he came to London and he wasn't very much inspired by it except that he thought that the labor people were much better than the religious, but he <sup>excepts</sup> accepts me as being only by accident a member, or I could be described as being part of the religious delegation, which was largely from East End synagogues.

Well, I called together all those people in order to found the British Section.

What happened -- this took place in my room at the office of the Jewish Agency -- two of us turned up.

Q: Two??

Perlzweig: Two people. The two people were a man called Dr. Noah Barou -- who had been elected in Geneva a member of what was called the Administrative Committee -- and myself. We sat in this room and looked at each other. Then we decided that we had better do something

about it, so he elected me chairman, and I elected him honorary secretary, and in order to produce a budget we each put a five pound note on the table, so that our whole treasury amounted to ten pounds.

I mention this in order to reinforce the point that at that point in the history of Jewry the World Jewish Congress represented a minority — a rather dynamic minority, but nevertheless a minority.

Well, I won't go into the details. We constructed the British Section of the World Jewish Congress, and we were able by virtue of the kind of people who were in it to exert an influence.

The president became Lady Reading -- that's Eva, Marchioness Reading, who was the second Marchioness, and the daughter-in-law of the famous Rufus Isaacs (Marquess of Reading, 1860-1935).

Her father-in-law, Rufus Isaacs, had been for a period British Foreign Secretary, and ~~he~~ subsequently her husband, the second Marquess, was a Minister of State at the Foreign Office, so she had for all practical purposes access to the Foreign Office.

Then there was Noah Barou.

Now I must resist the temptation of talking at length about Barou. Barou had been a leader of one of the left parties to the right of the Bolsheviki in Russia. He had been elected a member of the Constituent Assembly which was dispersed by the Russians. You remember that.

Q: Was that the Duma (the Russian Parliament) ?

Perlzweig: Yes. Well, after the communists had come to power there was an election held in order to hold a constituent assembly for the Soviet Union, and the Bolsheviks simply sent in some soldiers who dispersed the members. He was one of those members, so he had a very rich background, and he subsequently became one of the leaders of the National Bank of Communist Russia. He managed to get out, and he became in the course of time recognized as an authority on all banking questions and especially on cooperatives. His books on cooperatives are translated into many languages, including Japanese.

He was therefore a man one might say of the world. I can only say that when many, many years later I had the melancholy duty of officiating at his funeral, in the audience -- in the congregation -- there were members of the British House of Lords and people who had fought on the barricades in Moscow and in Petrograd.

He was quite a remarkable man, and I think his energy --

Oh, and I ought to mention ~~at~~ this point, if there was one inventor of the reparations which the Germans paid <sup>in</sup> enormous sums to the Jewish people and Israel, it was this man Noah Barou..

Q: In what year did he die?

Perlzweig: He died I think around 1950. I mean it was well after the reparations had been made.

It's true to say that Nahum Godmann was the man who whenever the negotiations between Germany and Israel or the special organizations

set up to<sup>e</sup> represent the Jews -- the Memorial Council -- were on the point of breaking down, it was Goldmann<sup>l</sup> who saved (the situation), and Goldmann's influence in Germany<sup>and</sup>/with Adenauer was paramount.

But the man who invented the whole idea, the man who ~~XXXX~~ foresaw what was going to happen, was this man Noah Barou.

Anyhow there were the two of us, and I'll leave the British Section at that point, except that I say I am going to leave it, but I can't leave it because we began the work at once.

(above unclear)

I have somewhere an invitation to a meeting which I addressed at the House of Commons at this time, in a committee room of the House of Commons. The invitation was signed by leaders of all the parties, and the man who did all this, and who was a tower of strength in the World Jewish Congress -- and I may say in relation to the Jewish people -- was a man who was a Member of Parliament called Colonel Josiah Wedgwood.

Now I must say that Wedgwood was not only a Member of Parliament but he was a British institution. He was a man who secured all kinds of changes in the law, and I don't think that as a Laborite he was very ideological, but he was a man who had sat as a Liberal and then as a Labor man, and I must say that my own personal relations with him were of the closest.

When I was adopted as a Labor candidate when I was an undergraduate at Cambridge, the initiative had been taken ~~XXXX~~ by a nephew of his who was a don, as it's called in Cambridge, in agriculture at Trinity College, and after that he attended meeting

after meeting and even services at which I preached. And I remember one thing that he said to me when I preached at a service of what was to be the new ~~xxxx~~ liberal synagogue at Brighton, I said to him after the service, "What surprises me, Josh, is that you don't become a member of the congregation!"

To which his reply -- which I don't know whether one should repeat -- was, "Only one thing stands between me and the Jews."

I said, "What is that?"

He said, "The knife."

I mean it was a reference to <sup>Circumcision</sup> ~~circumstances~~ (the reference was ~~circumstantial? voice trails off into a whisper~~)

Q:

Perlzweig: Of course we didn't that kind of thing.

At any rate I must tell you that there was this meeting in the House of Commons which I addressed, and the purpose of it was to induce them, who were leaders of their parties -- of the Conservative, of the Liberal, of Labor, ~~xx~~ people who were not in the Government, but people who were leaders of their parties, and I remember Sir Archibald What-was-his name. . . the leader of the Liberal Party -- (\*)

At any rate I addressed them on the bad way in which the Jews

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(\*) This was Sir Archibald Sinclair (1890-1970) was per Mr. Jessup's notes.

of Poland and Rumania were being discriminated against and were having a very bad time -- I needn't go into details.

The conclusion of the meeting was that they would approach, or at least Josiah Wedgwood would approach the leaders of British public opinion to get them to sign a letter to the Government, asking the Government to intervene with the Polish Government,= for example, in order that they should ease their anti-Jewish legislation.

Well, Wedgwood said to me, "You'll have to draft these letters." And I remember spending hours drafting a letter of the sort which I thought that Lloyd George (1879-1941) would sign, that Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Liberal leader, would sign, and Churchill, who was not in the Government, would sign, and so on.

I must tell you that as far as that part of it was concerned we had brilliant success. Lloyd George signed the letter which I drafted for him, so did Sir Archibald Sinclair, and so did several others. The one man who refused to sign it was Churchill. I don't think that was due to the fact that I couldn't reproduce the Churchill style quite as easily as I reproduced the others, but he had a common sense view. He said, "We have not armed ourselves as I have been advocating, and therefore what we say to the Poles will carry no weight whatever. I would be all in favor of intervening with the Poles, but in a practical way. And all my efforts to secure the rearmament of Great Britain have been in vain."

Well, this was one incident which at least acquired a certain publicity then.

Another incident where I found myself at work before I began going abroad that I think I can mention in this context was, after the war broke out, to make contact with De Gaulle (1890-1970), ~~and~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ who came to England, and who was boycotted by English ~~s~~ociety. I think it's important to remember now -- it explains a great deal of what happened -- that in fact De Gaulle was not only not recognized as the leader of what afterwards became the Free French, but in general he was regarded as a person who carried no weight and had views which were, to put it mildly, reactionary.

I asked Lady Reading before I made an attempt to see him, to ask the Foreign Office what in their view they thought we might do, and their answer was simple and instant. They said De Gaulle was a fascist and is best avoided, and can have no influence on the future.

That was the view of the establishment in England.

Q: How much of that was due to his personality and standoffishness? Would another person have been treated differently?

Perlzweig: Yes, I think so. I think a great deal of it was due to his own standoffishness. Now I didn't find that at all. <sup>It</sup> maybe that he hadn't yet matured into what he was afterwards to become. I had no difficulty in obtaining an appointment, and in fact the conversation, which I remember, was really quite different



from what one would have expected.

First of all he said to me, "I am not a politician, I am a soldier, I have no political ambitions, and therefore when you ask me about the restoration of Jewish rights I will say to you that when we have recovered France we will return French law to what it was on the day that the German invaded it. I can't talk to you about what happens after that, what our view will be about Palestine or anything like that. I can only say my duty as a soldier is to wipe out the nazis and to restore France to what it was before."

Secondly he said that he had been to Palestine and he had conceived a great admiration for the                      who had built the moshavim and the kibbutzim and so on. In fact he used a phrase which rather astonished me, that he rather hoped that the French people would prove to be as stable and patriotic for their land as these Jews had been for that land.

Then I said to him, "Look, supposing the Vichy Government take as we ~~may~~ anticipate, as everyone anticipates, the same line as the Germans take?"

He said, "You tell me at that stage what you want me to say and I will say it."

And I want to tell you a very remarkable thing -- he kept his word to the letter.

When the time arrived -- which I think was November of 1940 -- when I needed a statement by De Gaulle, I went to see in New York a man called Jacques . *Soustelle* -- I'll think of his (last) name --

who represented De Gaulle --

I ought to interject at this point that De Gaulle wrote me a letter asking me when I went to America to keep in touch with this man, and in fact I have a copy here of a letter which De Gaulle wrote to a man who in his day was a famous French novelist, Albert Cohen, who represented at that point the World Jewish Congress in its relations with the Free French, and who says to him that he had told me and had informed his representative in ~~XXXXXX~~ America that I would be in touch with him.

And I went to this representative, and it's really ridiculous that I don't recall his name. He has a very famous name, a name which was very famous at the time of the French Revolution. (pauae)

Anyhow the representative said to me, "You want De Gaulle to make a statement?"

I said yes, and he said, "Well, tell me what the statement is." Which I did, on the back of an envelope, and if ever I go to the bottom of all these heaps of papers I will find it. And he took that envelope and he telegraphed it to Libreville in Africa, where De Gaulle was, and the next day there came to the British Consulate -- remember that I was and am a British subject -- the same statement in French without changing so much as a comma, ~~which~~ with the request that it should be delivered to me at the American Jewish Congress. And this state<sup>a</sup>ment became ~~the~~ statement which was repeated time and again in the literature of the Free French. It was not anything very startling. It was what he had promised

me -- that ~~rights~~ the old rights and property and everything would be restored, which he said was all that he as a soldier, and not as a politician, could promise.

Well, that was another encounter.

Then I have to mention another encounter which turned out to be I think of very great significance, and that is a man called Albert Einstein (1879-1955).

I was at this time, and remained during the war and after the war, chairman of a body called the World Union of Jewish Students. This was a federation of students, of Jewish students from all over Europe. I think there was nothing from America, but in those days it was a very large organization of countries, anything from Latvia to Rumania, Hungary, Transylvania, Czechoslovakia, Israel, Italy, Greece, and so on. It was a very impressive organization.

One of my functions as chairman of this organization was to represent it on a committee called something like Committee on Universities, which existed in the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, the predecessor of UNESCO.

I look back on that with great satisfaction, because one of the people who cooperated with me was the representative of the student Christian movement, who was -- what was his name? -- afterwards the representative of the United States on the Commission on Human Rights. This was long before that of course.

Wait a minute (interrupts himself to look up names)

Q: We'll fill the names in later.

Perlzerig: Right. I've got a letter from him there which I wanted to show you.

We had a very great grievance then which related to the Jewish students in Poland. At the universities they were compelled to sit in the back of the lecture halls, which were called the ghetto benches. They were under all sorts of restrictions; they were not admitted to the universities in the same proportions as other people were. They were abused.

Now the chairman of this committee, <sup>at</sup> the predecessor of UNESCO -- the Institut International -- was a Polish professor called Oscar Halecki. I have the suspicion that he is still alive, living on his very ancient days as a refugee in , but I am not sure about that. All I can say about him is that at these meetings which we held, at which the Christian representative and I protested against these conditions, he was the one that defended the Polish Government. And I have no doubt that he was also one of those responsible for these restrictions. His answer was ~~in~~ for example, "What are you going to do with all these university graduates ? Who is going to clean up the streets if you don't have ignorant people?" All the arguments which are used against any extension of education. In this case they applied to the Jews.

The number was deliberately reduced, because otherwise they had an intellectual proletariat, which is what they did not want.

Well, this is where Einstein comes in.

I felt that what I said at these meetings, -- which were held twice a year, once in Paris and once in Geneva -- ~~did~~ did not carry

any weight, or at least not enough weight, and if the president of the organization, who was notoriously partial to student complaints, namely Albert Einstein, made a statement, it would make a difference. And therefore when he came to London, which he did in 1936, I took every precaution I could to make sure that I saw him and got a statement from him.

I had no great difficulty because he came to see another body of which I was also a member, called the Council for German Jewry. He came to plead for money for German-Jewish scholars and others who had been expelled from Germany, and therefore I was one of the people, in a sense, to whom he appealed. Of course I was I might say one of the least influential members of this important body, of which the chairman was Sir Herbert Samuel (1870-1963), but it gave me the opportunity of arranging to see him (Einstein), and after some discussion he agreed to see me on some day after he had been to this meeting of the Council of German Jewry. He gave me an address in the West End of London which he said was secret. He had been sworn to secrecy by the British police, who was afraid that he would be murdered, and I remember very vividly one morning in that year when I made my way through various channels and obstacles in order at last to see him. He was very closely guarded.

I remember being shown into a big room in which there was a piano, and on the piano a violin case, and the room otherwise rather sparsely furnished. And then all of a sudden, without warning, in walked Albert Einstein, and he looked and was dressed exactly as the caricature picture, that is to say he had no socks on -- he had

shoes, but no socks. His other garment was a pullover. He didn't wear a jacket or anything like that. He did have a tie, I with astonishment noticed.

I told him about this situation with the Polish Jewish students, and he agreed with me that it was intolerable.

He said, "What can I do?"

I said, "You can give me a statement which I will present at the next meeting in your name, and which will carry very great weight."

Then he acted like the fictional Einstein. He said, "What shall I say?"

So I told him what I thought he should say.

Then he said, "What shall I write it on?"

So I went over to the piano, where there was --- what do you call it? Not block notes. . .

Q: Sheet music?

Perlzweig: Not sheet music, but sheets of paper, a block of paper, and gave it to him, and then he said in a childlike way, "What shall I write it with?"

So I went over to him, and took out of where his sleeve was a fountain pen that I saw there and handed it to him, and I more or less dictated what I wanted him to say, and what I wanted him to say was that in the Jewish tradition education was not a way of earning a living -- it was a way of enlarging the personality, and that it

was a fundamental human right which every human being should have, including the Jews.

Now this declaration -- I am not ~~sure~~ sure whether I have the original copy or only a photostat somewhere, I think I gave the original to the National Library in Jerusalem -- this declaration has been at least in part reproduced. There is a life of Einstein which was written by a gentleman whose name is Clark and whom I don't know, and who says in the course of the narrative that I was one of the last that he saw before he went to America, and he repeats the declaration or part of it. But where he got it from I don't know. I've never seen him, and I know nothing about him. Perhaps that's my fault, excepts that he spells my name wrong, but I didn't know anything about him. But he makes the declaration to mean or to indicate Einstein's anxiety for the scholars who lost their jobs and had to leave Germany. In other words, they are saying we are scholars not because we want a job, but because we believe in pursuing the truth wherever it may be.

That's a misinterpretation. What he wanted to say -- at least what I induced him to say, and I take full responsibility for it -- was that education is a right and not a means of earning a living.

Well, I want to tell you that we had a long discussion after that. We sat down, and we had a long discussion about the future of the Jews in Europe. And what amazes me as I look back on it is the way in which he foresaw what would happen.

I said I thought the only solution was to take five million Jews out of Europe. He said, "No, you are wrong, it's seven million

Jews."

I said, "Where do you get seven million Jews from?"

He said, "Two million in the Soviet Union."

Now this is an astonishing statement. I am talking about 1936, when the number was about two million. That anybody then should say all the Jews in the Soviet Union should go out, should leave, as they had no future there! He said it then, not now, and this shows you that he wasn't as simple-minded as he seemed, and I say it's astonishing because if you read the people of the time -- let me say Leon Feuchtwanger (1884-1958), the great novelist -- who saw in the Bolsheviks the bulwark against nazism . . .

Feuchtwanger himself went to Moscow and saw Stalin, and there is a book that he wrote called Moscow 1936, published by Gollancz whom you've mentioned on other occasions. I've read this book, and I still got it. Feuchtwanger represents himself as being a man who. . he represents ~~himself~~ himself as pleading for the other leading Bolsheviks whom Stalin is convicting, people like Zinoviev (1883-1936) and (others). I've forgotten their names now, but it doesn't matter.

Now what did Stalin say? He uttered these remarkable words, "You Jews have created one eternally true legend: Judas."

Now they weren't talking about Jews. I don't know whether Feuchtwanger was conscious <sup>that</sup> ~~of~~ the people for whom he was pleading, the former members of the Politburo, were Jews. As far as Stalin was concerned, what mattered that the people for whom Feuchtwanger was pleading were Jews, and he was a Jew, and <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ thing was strictly Jewish.



Nevertheless this man who was not a rightist but who was a leftist, and years later the Foreign Office refused to give him. . . or when I asked for a visa to enable him to go to Peru said no because they said he had communist connections.

Q: You are now talking about Feuchtwanger?

Perlzweig: No, Einstein.

Q: Oh!! I see! Einstein himself.

Perlzweig: Einstein himself. He was regarded by the authorities of this country as a leftist if not an extreme leftist. But in 1936, when every leftist, every liberal, everyone who had any progressive views at all, regarded the communists as the people on whom they relied to hold back the flood of nazism, this man said No, you've got to take all the Jews out of there.

Well, he made a very deep impression on me, which remains to this day. I remember going back home and having lunch with my family -- we lived in the Hampstead Gardens suburbs -- and I remember my older son, the one I think you've met, kept turning to me and saying, "Wake up, Dad."

I was completely overcome by the personality of this man, who seemed to me to be as near to a saint as anything I've ever met.

Well, I mentioned that because there are books that mention this encounter and the statement that I got from him, which in a

sense was my statement. His trustees many, many years later, who read about this, spoke readily up and abused me for not having given them ~~this~~ important statement. Anyhow I didn't know at the time that he was so terribly important, and I didn't realize -- except for my personal feelings about him -- that Einstein was the universal man that he was. Anyhow, that was Einstein.

Now the next thing that I would like to talk about, which is ~~also~~ also in regard to the World Jewish Congress, is the first diplomatic steps we took other than seeing De Gaulle or other leaders of European communities which had been overrun ~~when the Germans went over London (?)~~ , and meetings of the House of Commons. I had innumerable meetings in (with ?) the House of Commons with leaders of the various parties, in the hope of securing more movement on the part of the British Government against the states that were persecuting the Jews.

These included above all one man whom you know, R.A. Butler, with whom I was very close.

But the first real success that we had, and which was due to the advantage that ~~gave us over Jewish organizations who were merely representatives of local Jewish groups,~~ was in regard to Rumania.

Rumania in the 1930's was one of the worst countries in regard to anti-Semitism. One of its Prime Ministers <sup>was</sup> a man who answered to the peculiar name of Goga, now largely forgotten (Octavian Goga, 1881-1938).

Q: Was he a religious type?

Perlzweig: No, he was an ethnic type. He was a poet, and the people who backed him up were sometimes religious. There is in America today an Archbishop. . .

(voice trails off)

Q: Valerian Trifa.

Perlzweig: Yes, Trifa, which is one of those

Goga, Octavian

The Foreign Office papers, which have been released after what is called the 30 years' rule, recount what I said to the Foreign Office when I went to see them about Goga and his successors and his collaborators, and one of them says I said he was worse than Hitler. I don't think I used that exact expression, but what I meant was, whatever Hitler did he made a point of going one better, or if you prefer one worse. That is to say if Hitler said that no Jew could employ a female under 40, he would make it 45.

At any rate it's on record there -- a continual stream of visits to the Foreign Office about these things. We did not know what to do about it.

We happened to have a correspondent in Rumania, who afterwards became my colleague in running the International Affairs Department.

His name was Alex Easterman, and he was at that time the foreign editor of the Daily Express, and he was in Rumania, and he used to send us material out of Rumanian newspapers on things which he reported himself, of which I can only say it might make your hair stand on end, they were so bad.

We decided to present a petition to the United Nations, or rather to the League of Nations -- I am sorry, I haven't gotten used to the idea of the United Nations. We decided to present a petition and we used this material, and it was very impressive.

The petition was presented on our behalf by our representative in Paris, whose name was Mark Yarbium. The reason for that was that he was nearest to Geneva, and the only man we had in Geneva at that time was Nahum Goldmann, and Goldmann ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ <sup>for an interesting reason</sup> ~~which is interesting~~ and probably not recorded anywhere else -- was not in a position to present the petition himself. Wise of course was too far away in New York.

The interesting reason which I think should be placed on record, however ambiguous one may feel about the whole thing, was that Goldmann as well as representing the World Jewish Congress represented the Zionist organization's Jewish agency, and in that capacity he had to deal with a body called the Permanent Mandates Commission, and in the Permanent Mandates Commission, in fighting' for bigger emigration, he had two countries which supported him. Those countries were Poland and Rumania, because they wanted to get rid of the Jews, you see.

Therefore he decided that the better part of valor in this case was not to affront the Rumanians too obviously. So Yarblum signed the petition, and I went to Geneva to speak in favor of it.

I had great difficulty in getting in. Remember we are talking about the League of Nations, not the United Nations, which has non-governmental representation. That was all in the future. But I got in as a representative of a newspaper.

I remember that the young lady who looked after the press when I applied with a letter which I had received from a Yiddish paper published in London said to me, "This is a fake. You are not a journalist, you are a rabbi," because she knew me, I had been there before. And I remember saying to her, "Precisely because I am a rabbi I am allowed to lead a double life, I am trusted to lead a double life." (? voice trails off)

Anyhow I had a very hard struggle in the corridors of the League of Nations against the Foreign Minister whom Goda had sent.

Well, there was no formal way of receiving a petition -- all that was in the future -- but it made a very great impression, so much so that Goda, when he fell -- when he was dismissed by King Carol of Rumania (1893-1953) as Prime Minister, put it down to what we had done in Geneva. When he was leaving the King's Cabinet, and the journalists asked him what he had to say, his answer was, "Israel, thou hast conquered."

Now I have no doubt at all that our efforts managed to get rid of the head of the Government. What followed -- the other Governments -- weren't very much better, and I had to undertake a more personal

approach.

I did this, and I was helped very considerably by the British Foreign Office because the man I spoke to was R.A. Butler, ~~Red~~ *Rab* Butler. He was very hesitant at first. I said, "I want to go to Rumania."

Only by confronting ~~him~~ <sup>them</sup> face to face, and telling them the damage they are doing to their standing in the West is there likely to be any change, I said.

Well, this only took place after the British had intervened in Rumania. There were minority treaties concluded after the First World War which gave the signatories the right to protest if the rights of certain minorities were undermined.

We appealed to the British and French Governments. We couldn't appeal to the American Government because the American Government wasn't a signatory of any of these treaties, although Roosevelt unofficially did what he could.

But we had this one tremendous advantage, that we could talk simultaneously to more than one Government, which the American Jewish Committee couldn't do -- they couldn't talk to anybody except the American Government -- which the Anglo-Jewish Association, a similar body, couldn't do, which the Alliance Israelite couldn't do. We could. So you had this conspirator called Nathan Goldman sitting in Geneva and telephoning to Yarblum in Paris and to me in London, and we went simultaneously to the British and the French Governments, and because they could feel that they weren't going alone and the others would go with them, they agreed under the

treaty to intervene, and they did.

I remember one Saturday afternoon when I came in, I was rung up by the Foreign Office, and <sup>they</sup> said, "We have decided to intervene. But we want you to keep quiet. We don't want them to know that the initiative came from the World Jewish Congress, because if they think that we did it in order to keep you quiet they won't take it very seriously. So don't talk to any of us for ~~a~~while."

I said okay. But then a few days later it appeared splashed across the front pages (that) the British and the French Governments had intervened under the minority treaties in favor of the Jews of Rumania.

I remember ringing up the Foreign Office and saying to this man whose name I don't remember, except that it was Irish, "I want you to know that I am not responsible for this."

He said, "I know you are not responsible for it. We are responsible for it."

That meant that the British Government showed that it really was interested, and was willing to use its influence, so when I said that I wanted to go, at least I had a foundation on which to build, and Butler having consulted his people finally agreed.

He agreed that the machinery of the British Government in Bucharest, namely the Legation that it had there, would be used.

The Prime Minister at this point -- I am talking about 1939 -- was a man called Armand Calinescu (1893-1939), and he had the reputation of being slightly liberal because he had been educated in France .

I was given a paper -- not exactly a parchment, but it looked like it -- in which it said that the Reverend M.L. Perlzweig, chairman of the British Section of the World Jewish Congress, who is known to the <sup>undersigned</sup>underside -- the <sup>undersigned</sup>underside being R.A. Butler, Parliamentary Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs -- is going to Rumania, and I call upon all British officials to treat him with appropriate deference and so on, and he is authorized in case of need to apply for guidance or help to the nearest British post.

I was afraid that I would be for reasons that I will tell you in a moment. I wish that I could produce that thing for you, because it has a big red seal on it, and it was done deliberately to be impressive.

And I went to Rumania.

Q: Now what year was this?

Perlzweig: This was 1939. I went to Rumania, and I was met at the station by a large delegation of Jews, who got into a taxi with me and said, "We are taking a taxi, and we are talking a language that the taxi driver won't understand because we shan't be able to meet and talk."

And they told me the bitter truth about their

And I went to the hotel, which I think was called the Hotel Alexandria or Alexandra -- something like that -- and then I went to the British Legation, where the Minister was a man called Sir



Reginald Hoare. He was a cousin of the more famous Samuel Hoare. I'll never forget his name for a very simple reason -- because I had to address his wife, with some difficulty, as Lady Hoare, which I found difficult!

Q: (laughs) Lady Hoare!

Perlzweig: Anyhow I got on very well with him. At one point he got me to stay at the Legation. He said, "Somebody will take a potshot at you -- the Iron Guard or somebody else -- and somebody will stand up in the House of Commons and say why didn't I protect you?, How can I protect you in a hotel room in the Hotel Alexandria where you live?"

His wife and I got on very well, except that she was a very indiscreet woman who used to say what she got for leis, their currency in Rumania, which she wasn't supposed to do, and he was very upset about it. And then she had another foible ~~kw~~ which I fitted in. She had children at Eton, and I was teaching at Eton, so at least I didn't come from the outer darkness. And secondly she was a great devotee of the kabbala about which I know very little, but after all I was a rabbi, so she took every opportunity of asking me about the kabbala and what was in it and so on.

So a good time was had by all in the Legation. And then as a result of the intervention -- and ONLY as a result of the intervention -- of the British Minister, I was received by the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister was Armand Calinescu, and it was an encounter which I shall never forget. If I were to live to be 1000, I will never forget it.

I went to the Palace, as it was called, of the Prime Minister, or of the President of the Council, and I was accompanied by one of our local representatives -- because we had a committee of the World Jewish Congress -- a lawyer called Dr. Kramer, who showed me where to go, because I was a stranger. And we went up to the door or gate of the Prime Minister's office, and he knocked on the door, because it was locked, -- security was very tight, because if you were at all careless you were liable to be shot by the <sup>Armed</sup> Iron Guard and the friends at the time of Archbishop Trifa -- and the door opened, They asked what it was about, and Kramer told them in Rumanian that I had an appointment with the Prime Minister.

So the hand of this servitor came through the crack that was opened, and took me by the lapel and pulled me in, and then shut the door, and wouldn't allow Kramer to come in.

Well, I was rather frightened by that time. I didn't know what was going to happen to me, <sup>although</sup> ~~and~~ I was relying ~~on~~ on Sir Reginald to rescue me if anything went wrong. (laughs)

The man who had opened the door, who was some kind of flunkie, pointed to a strip of carpet across the entrance chamber. When I looked I saw two soldiers, both standing at either side, and as I ~~ap~~ passed by they raised their rifles to cover me.

Well, I tried to walk as slowly and in as dignified a manner as I could, and I got to the steps leading up to where the office

of the Prime Minister was, and every few steps there was a man, in what looked to me like the uniform of a field marshal, raising his hand in the fascist salute, so I did the only thing I could -- I took my hat off -- and I was shown into the antechamber of the Prime Minister by a young man who spoke French.

And we had a desultory conversation. His French was better than mine, but neither was perfect, so we could forgive each other for the mistakes that we made.

Then he asked me the usual questions. Did I think it was a beautiful country? And I said yes, of course. He said didn't I think the women were very beautiful? and I said yes, but unfortunately it takes 30 hours to get here.

He said, "Thirty hours? why can't you fly?"

I said, "Because the plane goes down in Germany, and I am a Jew, and I can't fly over Germany."

And his face suddenly hardened, and his lips began to twitch. He was trying to say something, but he didn't know what to say. It must have been one of the very few, if not the only time in his life, when a man admitted that he was a member of this persecuted minority.

Then he made a further attempt to speak, and he gave me a copy of a French paper, Le Matin -- which today is socialist, but in those days it was a Government thing -- and we sat and read the newspaper. We didn't talk any more, until he announced the Prime Minister. And he opened the door and I went in.

It was a very long chamber, conforming to all the folklore about dictators. As I say it was very long and narrow, and at the end there

was a desk, so that you had quite a long walk, which would enable him to appraise you before you got to the desk.

He came out to the front of the desk and put his hands out and said, "Mon cher rabbin! I've been waiting for you."

Then we had one of the most extraordinary conversations. I told him what was wrong about the situation of the Jews and the various disabilities under which they suffered. For example, I said, in the town of Bukovina" -- I forgot what it's called now, I think Czernowitz or something of that sort. . .

No, in Bukovina there was the town of Czernowitz which is now called Cernauti.

Q: Yes, with a strong Jewish population.

Perlzweig: Yes, there used to be, I don't know if there still is. It's now in Russian hands.

(I said that in this place) they passed an ordinance in which everyone had to close his business on Sunday, and open his business on Saturday.

The Jews had no objections to closing on Sunday. In effect one can say that they are used to that kind of thing, although this was one of the best days of business. But to insist that they open on Saturday whether they close on Sunday or not was to compel them to violate the rules of their religion, and these were very Orthodox Jews.'

Q: They were?

Perlzweig: Oh yes, I mean the others didn't care one way or the other, but the Orthodox Jews -- the very Orthodox Jews --- were very upset by this, and the result was most of them were ruined. But that's only part of it.

What I wanted to tell you was that he said, "No, no, the thing isn't true, it's propaganda."

So I said, "But I have spoken to some of the people who have undergone this treatment."

He said, "I am still sure that it was wrong, but I am going to make inquiries, and if anybody is guilty of anything like this he will be severely punished."

And he took a notebook and ~~he~~began to make notes when I told him what the facts were. Now the joke was that he was the man who had himself been responsible for this order, you see. We were talking not at cross purposes, but we knew we were talking in an open and honest manner to each other. In other words he knew.

Q: He knew what was going on.

Perlzweig: Oh, yes, he knew that I knew that he was lying, and nevertheless we went on talking like that.

The other thing was, I said, "It shouldn't be necessary for me to come from London to protect Rumanian citizens. I am not a Rumanian citizen. Rumanian citizens should have the right of access to their Government and present their petitions."

He said, "Look, you go to the committee" -- there was a Jewish committee headed by a certain Dr. Friedman -- "you go to Dr. Friedman and ask him what they want to come back and tell me."

I said, "No, I won't do that. I want you to see them. I want them to go to you. I think it is wrong in principle that I should speak to the Rumanian Prime Minister on behalf of Rumanian citizens."

And he agreed.

Well, I had a very long conversation. I haven't repeated the whole of it, but this gives you an idea of the character of it. But the story appears, together with a document I wrote for the British Legation, in a book called The Shadow of the Swastika by Professor Bela Vago of Haifa University.

Q: And who published that?

Perlzweig: Well, this is it. I've got two editions of it. This was published by a body called Saxon House in London. The Institute of Jewish Affairs -- which is the research arm of the World Jewish Congress -- actually commissioned it, and this body called Saxon House published it.

Now I must tell you I had some interesting results as a member of it.

First of all, when I had come back from seeing the Prime Minister they wanted to know at the British Legation what had happened, so I told them, and Sir Reginald said, "I think I'd better let the Foreign Office know because we hadn't expected as good a result

DK

Inter-viewee: Dr. Rabbi Maurice L. Perlzweig

Interviewer : Peter Jessup

Place: New York City

Interview No. 12 - June 15th 1982

Q: So, Dr. Perlzweig, here we are again on a nice spring day after so much rain in the past month, on West 72nd Street. This is Peter Jessup from Columbia. It's nice to be here again.

Dr. Perlzweig: Well, I think that I ought to continue just for a minute or two about Rumania, which was the scene of my visit to the Prime Minister, Armand Calinescu, and about which certainly from a superficial point of view I can say that this particular effort was very successful. I broke through the barrier which had been erected by the anti-Semitic movements in the country, which were very powerful, and which had separated the Jewish community from any attempt to come to some understanding with the Government of Rumania about their needs.

I did discover afterwards that the royal family -- by which

I mean King Carol and his mistress who was ~~KRONATHELEXER~~ Elena, known generally as Magda Lupescu (1904-1977) -- had associations with such Jewish industrialists and merchants who had made it in a big way. And it's an interesting note which may help any future dictator who wants both to make money and to obtain (the means) to exercise great power if I mention one thing that I discovered about this relationship.

Every Jew in Rumania was obviously subject to the possibility of arbitrary persecution or discrimination. There was one way to ensure that you escaped that, and that was by giving the King a financial interest in your business. In other words, you gave him a certain number of shares, and he knew that if you prospered then he would prosper too. The agent for this remarkable system was Magda Lupescu.

Lady Hoare, to whom I have referred -- the wife of the British Minister -- had said to me several times, "Whatever result you may get with Calinescu will mean nothing unless the King is in some way connected with it, and the King means Magda Lupescu."

And she offered to arrange a meeting with her, which she finally succeeded in doing. It was a very short encounter, which taught me a great deal about the situation in Rumania at the time.

The appointment was made that I was to see her one night after the opera -- after she had returned from a visit to the Opera, of which she was one of the patrons-- and this was to take place at the villa of one of the leading Rumanian families.



Now Rumanian for this purpose meant Greek. There was then in the upper crust of Rumania a considerable section of people whose families had been there since Byzantine times, but they maintained their relationship with Greece.

I went up a flight of stone steps to the door of this place, and was admitted into a very large salon in which there were a considerable number of settees and sofas and so on, which were inhabited, if that is the right word, largely by rather plump women who were noticeable because of the immense masses of jewelry which they wore. And I sat down a little bit uneasy, because I could only talk to them in French, and their French, like mine, was anything but perfect.

However, just about midnight in swept Magda, and I stood up, she was introduced to me, and curiously she spoke to me -- which was an indication that she knew more than I thought she knew -- in German, and she addressed me as "Herr Rabbi ."

She looked around this big salon onto which a number of doors opened ~~at~~ from surrounding rooms, and she went over to one of them, she opened the door and swept in, and I swept in after her, and we sat down and talked.

Q: How old a woman was she then?

Perlzweig: Oh she looked as though she was in her middle 30's or something like that. She was a very striking and handsome woman.

I told her what my mission was, I said I wanted to make sure that the Jews weren't murdered and so on, and her answer was very characteristic of the situation. She said, "We have done the best we can for the Jews," we being she and the King. In other words she was undoubtedly a very important element in the situation.

Anyhow I told her about Calinescu, and I said I wanted her to know about it because I wanted the King to know about it, and she said, "Well," -- she took note of it and she said, "I think everything will be all right." And that was that.

There I was with this glamorous femme fatale, ensconced in a room alone with her after midnight, which gossip writers could possibly make a great deal of, except that I didn't say anything about it.

When I said goodbye to the Prime Minister, of which I have a very clear recollection -- he stood in front of me, a little man, with one characteristic sign that no one could mistake or forget, namely a black monocle over one eye --

Q: That was smoked glass?

Perlzweig: No, absolutely black, and I found out afterwards that it was because in some encounter which he had had of a rather violent kind that eye had been destroyed and he wanted to hide it.

He shook my hand and he said, "Don't wait a long time before coming back, because the armed guard will get me sooner or later," which in fact is what happened.

Q: Within a few months of that?

Perlzweig: Yes.

Q: He was assassinated.

Perlzweig: He was assassinated. He told me to keep in touch with a man called Monsieur Tilea, who was a Rumanian Minister in London.

In the Jewish community there was a kind of euphoria as a result of the report which I gave them, and I was feted for the last couple of days in a most extravagant way.

Q: In Bucharest?

Perlzweig: In Bucharest. Bucharest was then often called the Paris of the East, and it deserved the title. I was a little uneasy about all this -- I thought they were building too much on it, and of course I turned out to be right, because although the position improved for a short period until there came the war -- I am speaking now about July of 1939 -- ~~and~~ the Government was overturned and the position reverted to what it had been.

Q: The King went into exile, didn't he?

Perlzweig: Yes, later on he went into exile with Magda. Now I don't want to add anything more about Rumania because there is an excellent book which is called The Shadow of the Swastika.

Q: By Bela Vaga.

Perlzweig: Yes, by Professor Bela Vaga of the University. . .

Q: We mentioned that book in the previous interview.

Perlzweig: Oh yes, I mentioned the book because a memorandum which I wrote for the British Minister in the Legation I wrote by hand and had no copy of, and he found a copy of it in the British official papers which he examined and he reproduced it, and the story he tells about Rumania -- because he deals also with Poland and with Czechoslovakia -- is as far as I can judge extremely well done, and anybody who would want to pursue the subject would find a great deal of information in that.

Q: And he is the man you met in recent times, and he was astounded that. . .

Perlzweig: That I was walking about, yes, because as far as he was concerned I was really a figure out of the past. But he had rescued from the papers which he had read the British papers which had been published, and he was also one of the few men who had access to Rumanian papers.

So he was naturally rather startled when I was introduced to him, and for a moment didn't (know what to say). It took him a moment to take in the scene.

Well, there is one other thing that I should mention about Rumania, and that is that when I talked to R.A. Butler about going there, and he as I have already said was extremely helpful -- in which respect he was rather different from his permanent officials who thought that the whole thing meant taking a risk or making a commitment which they would afterwards regret -- one of the things that he said to me, and I don't know whether I have already reported it or not, was, "We are doing everything we can to be helpful to you. There is one thing you could do for us in return."

I said, "What is that?"

He said, "Try and get them to stop the illegal emigration to Palestine."

My answer to that was very simple. I said, "You stop Hitler, and I'll stop the illegal emigration."

And he said no more about it, and I am bound to say that Sir Reginald Hoare in the numerous conversations that I had with him didn't say anything about it. But it was Butler who made this thing possible. I don't think it could have been done without him.

You must remember I am talking about a time when the British Government in a fit of romantic regret for its negligence of the whole situation had given a guarantee to Rumania and to Poland, a guarantee which of course turned out to be quite worthless, and anyone who had any sense would see it, but nevertheless it was a symptom of an attempt on the part of the British to be helpful to these rather backward countries who were obviously worried about the accession to great power of Hitler.

Well, I must leave Rumania, as attractive a country as it was, even though I'd like to say as I look back I have to wonder that the World Jewish Congress, which was a very young organization whose only staff were volunteers like myself, managed to achieve so much.

I think. . .

I have not the slightest doubt that Goga was right when he attributed the fall of his Government to <sup>our</sup> the efforts <sup>at</sup> of the League of Nations. I am quite sure because I was told at the Foreign Office that the intervention of France <sup>under</sup> and the minority treaties was the direct result of our intervention, and now there was this meeting with the Prime Minister, and the understanding with him, and I think that was in its way a considerable achievement.

Now while all this was going on I was rather worried about the fact that I held <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ position not only of member of the executive of the World Jewish Congress and the chairman of ~~the~~ its British Section, but I was a member of the highest body in the world Zionist movement, and I sometimes wonder, although not for very long, whether there was any conflict of interest. This of course is in addition to the fact that I was a volunteer in both cases, and I still had to fulfill the requirements as best I could of being a rabbi, of conducting services, of officiating at funerals, marriages and so on. I thought I ought to talk to Ben Gurion about it.

So at one Zionist congress -- I think it was in Geneva -- I went to him and I said I ~~xxx~~ said, "Look, I want you to know that I am acting on behalf of the World Jewish Congress in contacts with Governments and public officials, and if you have any objection

to it I would like to know, or if you fear that it may create situations of difficulty I would like you to tell me."

Then I reminded him that ~~xx~~ one Zionist congress -- several congresses before the one where I was talking to him -- had adopted a resolution unanimously calling on all members of Zionist organizations to support the World Jewish Congress.

He looked at me a little quizzically and he said, "I want to tell you something that you ought to bear in mind. If a Zionist congress adopts a resolution unanimously, it is quite worthless."

What he meant by that I think was that if there were a really serious matter discussed there would be differences of opinion. That was democracy. If they adopted a resolution unanimously it meant that nobody really took it seriously.

Anyhow I said, "All right, you don't take it seriously. I take that resolution to be a sort of mandate which is binding on me. What do you think about what the World Jewish Congress is doing?"

He said, "I have nothing against the World Jewish Congress. I also have nothing in favor of it. I regard the whole business of conducting this kind of negotiation in the Diaspora as a waste of time. The one way in which to safeguard the rights of the Jewish people is to persuade them to go to Palestine and create a Jewish State."

"But," -- he said -- "if you want to know whether if these conversations take place I would prefer you or Goldmann. . . " -- who like me had a foot in both the Zionist and the World Jewish Congress camps -- (if you ask me) if I would prefer you or Goldmann

to go to the American Jewish ~~Committee~~ Committee, there is~~no~~ doubt about it. I wouldn't trust the American Jewish Committee, whereas I know who you are and I know who Goldmann is. I know who the others are, and you would do your best for the Jews."

I ought to mention at this point that in those days the American Jewish Committee in addition to the excellent work which it did in protecting the rights of minorities and so on, had two features about it which would be dis-serving to a man like Ben Gurion.

I must emphasize that I am now talking about the late 1930's and not what has happened since.

One of his chief objectives was to prevent the establishment of a Jewish State; even if he didn't object to Jews going to what was then Palestine, they did not want to create a situation that could lead to the accusation of dual allegiance, which for them at that point was state and

The other feature about their activity was that it was a sort of elitist activity. It was a small group of very influential people who were telling the Jewish community what was good for them, and who was intervening in their behalf, without the consent of the Jewish community.

One of them, when I subsequently went to America, put it to me very simply. He said, "We are not a plebescitory organization. We are a group of people dedicated to pursuing certain aims."

Well, that of course has changed completely. I want to make it quite clear in talking about this that I am talking about the



late 1930's, when I was in England. Since then the American Jewish Committee one might almost say has become ferociously pro-Israel. I am constantly being surprised by the strength of the stand they take, also cooperating in ecumenical matters, for example, and in relations with the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Methodist Church, the World Council of Churches. They are cooperating in a committee which is really led by the World Jewish Congress, and the body in this country which now represents the Jewish community in matters relating to Israel, the American Jewish Affairs Committee -- the famous or notorious Jewish Lobby, whose power is much exaggerated -- they don't form part of it, but they are present at all its meetings. They can't swallow the past quite as easily as some other people can.

Anyhow I will not go into details about what I was doing for the Zionist movement. I will leave it to anyone who might be interested to turn to a book, which is one of the most interesting I have read from <sup>that</sup> ~~the~~ point of view, the title of which is Baffy, and it consists of the diaries of Mrs. Blanche Dugdale (1936-1947).

Mrs. Dugdale was a niece of Lord Balfour (1848-1930), who signed the famous Balfour Declaration. She became for all practical purposes -- and again she was entirely a volunteer -- a member of the bodies in the Zionist movement -- the World Zionist Movement whose headquarters were then in London -- in their dealings with the Government, and this diary, in which I occur a half a dozen times, she gives an account of the way in which this Zionist lobby operated, which was based upon her friendship with a member



of people who not only contributed but who worked as volunteers in it -- it was due not only, as I say, to the Jewish effort, but to the fact that there always has been, as there is today, a significant section of the non-Jewish population which believes for one reason or another -- religious, political or strategic reasons -- passionately in Israel.

For example, just to cite the most obvious example, the Jewish population of this country forms less than three percent of the population, and yet the Zionists can always rely on a considerable number of people in Congress who represent constituencies where there aren't any Jews to speak up for Israel. Even when Israel is judged to be guilty of acts which are embarrassing to the United States Government.

That's due to the fact that there are literally millions of people who are interested in Israel, which is one of the end products of the influence which the Bible in its King James version has exercised on certainly the English speaking world and a good many other people.

So I will leave it there as far as that is concerned and as far as my Zionist activity is concerned, except to say that as she (Mrs. Dugdale) reports, at this period -- in the late 1930's, when Zionism was going through a severe struggle in the British Government -- there was set up a political committee in London, of which I was a member, and so in that capacity I went very frequently to the House of Commons and to Whitehall to speak to

people and to try to put the point of view of the Zionist organization (to them).

One of my recollections to which I want to refer is, a little before the time of which I was speaking the British Government had put forward a proposal to establish a council in Palestine with membership 50 percent Jews and 50 percent Arabs, and with a British chairman, and we objected to it, because it meant that decisions would be taken as a result of 50 percent Arab membership, which would in effect have been a veto. We had to try and kill this proposal.

One of the things that happened -- a part of a very much larger effort -- was that Mrs. Dugdale and I went to the House of Lords, and in some mysterious way, while this was being debated, we were permitted to stand at the bar of the House, so that any member could consult us.

One of the things I remember was the courtesy with which one of the noble Lords provided a chair for Mrs. Dugdale to sit on, whereas I had to stand, and it was quite a long stand -- I think it lasted several hours.

There was only one episode which I remember, when one Lord -- Lord Lloyd (Lord George Ambrose Lloyd, 1879-1941) -- came over to talk to me, and I said to him, "Lord Lloyd, you are . . ." -- I used this word -- "a reactionary." He had been the British representative in Egypt and virtually the <sup>British</sup> ~~Viceroy~~ resident, and therefore the Viceroy of Egypt.

(I said), "This thing is supposed to be a step toward democracy. What have you got to do with democracy?"

And he said to me with good humor, "Now that's a point I'll have to think about."

And he went back and sat down, and after a short interval he came over to me and he said, "I am about to yield to your importunities and go home."

I do not recall what happened. I think it was defeated, but in any case it didn't matter because the Arabs wouldn't accept it. The Arabs from that day to this, unless the events in Lebanon make any difference -- I mean the events which are taking place as I am speaking -- from that day to this the Arab side has always said No, No, No, 100 percent, we object to the whole business.

Anyhow that was the Zionist side of it which I have confided to Mrs. Dugdale.

There is one other Zionist matter to which I must refer, and that is to a conference which took place at St. James' Palace in London in February and March of 1939. This was sometimes called a round table conference, and ~~simply~~ certainly the intention was that the British Government should meet together with the Jewish Agency, as it was called, for Palestine, and the Arab princes -- that was the expression used for the Arab World in those days -- and we should hammer out a solution.

Well, the conference duly took place, and it was a very imposing affair, but one of the intentions was never carried out. We never met with the Arabs. There were certain personal, private contacts, but the Jews as Jews, the Arabs as Arabs never met because the Arabs refused to meet us. As I have already said, their view was 100

percent, wipe the whole thing out.

Nevertheless, it remains in my recollection one of the most important meetings I have ever attended. The Jewish Agency was represented by seven people as a formal delegation headed by Weizmann and Ben Gurion, and I was one of the seven.

The British Government was there in all its power and glory, headed by Neville Chamberlain, with Lord Halifax, the Foreign Minister, Malcolm MacDonald, the Colonial Minister, and R.A. Butler, who was then the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, and the chief people in the Colonial Office, the permanent officials.

I remember the opening session which made us groan because Neville Chamberlain got up and said, "Gentlemen, you know our methods. We are against conflict, and we think that an attempt should be made at conciliation."

Well, we knew his methods, Munich and so on, and we realized that we were going through a very difficult period.

In addition to the seven who represented the Agency directly, the Government had agreed that we should get as many as we could of the leading Jews of the world, and we got 40 or 50 from all over the world, including men like Stephen Wise from America, Chief Rabbi of Palestine Isaac Herzog (1888-1959), Lord Bierstead and Lord Reading, and others, and the leaders of the Yeshuv as we called the settlement in Palestine, men like Menahem Ussishkin (1863-1947) and others, and it was a very impressive spectacle.

Q: You said Ussishkin?

Perlzweig: Yes, Ussishkin, and I will come to him again because he was a very important man. He was the president at that time of the Jewish National Fund, and one of the traditional leaders of the Zionist movement in Russia before he went to Palestine.

My recollection, which I once wrote down, was never published because somebody wanted a book on the subject -- a book not on this subject, but on Great Russell Street. That was 77, Great Russell Street, which was the office of the Jewish Agency as well as of the British Zionist Federation. That's the street almost next door to the British Museum in Bloomsbury, and people who worked at Great Russell Street were asked to write essays, but for some reason or another the thing has not yet been published, although it was years ago when the thing was first done.

So I just want to put on record two of my own recollections.

One is a debate which was not in a formal session, and therefore not on the record, when we came together with a number of British spokesmen in order to discuss the situation, and this is one of the things that took place which casts a light on the whole situation.

There was a kind of altercation between Malcolm MacDonald, who was then Colonial Secretary, and Ben Gurion, who was then the chairman of the Zionist executive.

MacDonald said, "There is a war around the corner. We must make sure of the Arabs," to which Ben Gurion replied, "Why don't you make sure of the Jews," to which Malcolm replied, "Make sure of the Jews? Are you going to be on Hitler's side?"

In other words the British Government had decided that there was a possibility if not a probability of war, and the Suez Canal would be in danger if the Arabs were , and the Suez Canal in those days meant the route to India and their whole empire in the Far East. This was one thing, and one thing that the Zionists in my opinion should never forget. One of the difficulties about the situation as it is now -- every time that there was a conflict about Israel, about what is now called Israel, the Jews, theoretically at any rate, had an option. In 1914 to 1918, there was an option -- either the British Government or the German Government.

I've seen a telegram -- I cannot now recall the exact words of it, but I am sure that Churchill's biographer, Martin Gilbert, makes reference to it in one of his books -- when somebody in London sent a telegram to Colonel E.M. House (1858-1938), Woodrow Wilson's assistant, in which he said OUR INFORMATION FROM SWITZERLAND IS THAT THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO TAKE OVER THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT, -- and there is no doubt that certain Jewish bodies, not only Zionist, in Germany at the time were trying to protect the comparatively small Jewish community in Palestine from Turkish suppression, -- there was a choice. At least both sides thought there was a choice.

The same was true in 1947. While the American Government was hesitant about what it should do on the subject of Israel, the Russians were not. It's now forgotten that a passionately pro-Zionist



speech was delivered at the United Nations by Gromyko. I've still got the text of it somewhere, and it's quite ~~un~~believable, the historical connection and everything else.

So there was the option.

In 1939 there was no such option, and I have no doubt that it was the absence of the option which helped to sway the attitude of the British Government.

The other recollection I have is of two people who were friends of mine and who were in the British Delegation. One was Malcolm MacDonald, the Colonial Secretary. He reminded me at that meeting where we had coffee together, as he put it, "You were once my leader."

I was the first chairman of the University Labor Federation of Great Britain, and he was the first treasurer, and he remembered that.

The other person whom I knew was of course Butler. Now it's one of the most remarkable things about Butler -- he has written his life, he is on record for a great many things, but you will look in vain for any reference either to Zionism or to Israel or to Palestine, and the reason for it is very clear to me.

During the conference I went to see him from time to time, and he made a gesture. It was a private gesture, but it was a significant one. He had a dinner at his own home during the conference to which he invited Weizmann, Moshe Sharett (Shertok, 1894-1965) and myself. There was nothing public about it. The subject of conversation was how to get the Jews and the Arabs

in the same room, which he said he was trying to do.

Now when I say I wanted an explanation (wondered about an explanation ?) of his complete silence on this subject in which ~~my~~ after all he was very much implicated -- he was Undersecretary, Parliamentary Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, and he was Halifax's principal assistant on that, and he was deeply interested --

I remember once when I went to the Foreign Office to see him and there on the desk in front of him was a book. I asked him what it was, and he said, "It was written by my uncle." His uncle was Sir George Adam Smith (1856-1942), who was a famous theologian, and Sir George wrote the book, The Historical Geography of Palestine, which ~~General~~ Field Marshal (Viscount) Allenby (1861-1936) is said to have used when he entered Palestine.

But he was a great theologian, and the book in front of Butler was called Jeremiah, so I said, "I didn't know that you were interested in the ancient history of the Jews."

And he said, "Yes, I am. I am doing the best I can to understand it." And then he gave me his description of something which had happened at the conference at which he and I were present, and here I come again to this man, Menahem Ussishkin.

He said, "When. . . " -- he couldn't pronounce the name, and he said "Uss, Uss,", and I said, "You mean Ussishkin?"

(He said), "When Ussishkin stood up and began to talk it was as though the centuries disappeared and I was listening to one of the old prophets of Israel."

You see Ussishkin spoke in Hebrew, and it was translated by Moshe Sharett, or Shertok as he then was.

It was quite clear from what he said to me that he was completely fascinated by this story of the German Jews  
(voice trails off)

Now he had a choice. He could have said, "I don't agree with the policy of the Government," and retire, but that's not what you do if you think that there are other issues. It is after all a common experience of politicians to have to make their choices.

Now while he was a man ~~with~~, I think, of deep convictions he was not, to use his own words about certain other instances, a butcher.

That was ~~why~~ -- and I think it's the common judgment -- he never became Prime Minister, although he came very near to it on two occasions -- because he wouldn't turn around and smite his adversaries.

Now this was the man, since I am speaking about Butler, who in a sense was responsible for my going to the United States. It was only in a sense.

I was once summoned to the Foreign Office in order to see Butler, and like a bolt out of the blue he said, "Why don't you accept Stephen Wise's invitation to go to America?"

So I said, "What do you know about it?"

He said, "I've got a copy of the letter in front of me."  
It had been intercepted by the post office, or secret service,

or whatever it was. The trouble about this letter was that the substance of it had no necessary relationship to a post script that Wise wrote in his own hand. The substance of it was that the people in the United States didn't realize who Hitler was and what ~~ix~~ he was up to, and they felt that this was something which had to be remedied by somebody who came from the scene or as near to the scene as possible.

He was -- I am speaking about Wise now, and I think I ought to elaborate a bit on this -- Wise of course was very antinazi, which goes without saying, and a very great admirer of the British. A lot of people find that very difficult to believe, because he attacked the British after the white paper which I'll come to in a moment. But in fact he was, as I used to say to him, "You are not an Anglophile, you are an Anglomaniac." Even the table and the chairs in his office were acquired in ~~an~~ ancient English monasteries. He tried to talk like an Englishman. He had two Bibles: one was the Hebrew Bible and the other was Shakespeare. And he certainly was a tremendous admirer of British history and British literature.

So his appendix to this letter, written in green ink in his own hand, was, "If you come to America you will do great things for England."

Now Butler drew my attention to this fact, He said, "Wise thinks you will do great things for England."

I said, "What great things will I do for England. I have no idea that I can do anything at all."

He said, "I don't know, but if Rabbi Wise says it's so, it must be so."

And I told him that I was very reluctant to leave England.-- of course I am talking now about later on in 1939.--I was very reluctant to go and to leave my wife and two children behind, and his answer was very simple. He said, "Damn your wife and two children! If you were a soldier at the front you couldn't go up to your commanding officer and say I am thinking about my wife and two children."

So I thought the thing over, and after discussing it with Weizmann I decided to go. I didn't go representing any official body. I went representing the World Jewish Congress.

After the war began, the central office of the World Jewish Congress was transferred from Paris, where it was, to London, and I was made the head of it, so that I had as it were the theoretical right to speak on behalf of the World Jewish Congress when most of Europe was out of the picture, and that was why Wise wanted me in America. And because of this unfortunate sentence about doing great things <sup>for</sup> ~~of~~ England, that was why <sup>apparently</sup> Butler wanted me to go to America.

Now it's very striking because if you examine the papers which have now been published on the Foreign Office about that time you will find that there were a number of people who said, "We would like to go to America in order to present the British point of view."

And the British were not in favor of it, nor were the Americans. There was a malady in America at the time which was called propaganda-

phobia. There was a kind of objection to having to listen to Germans or British or, whoever it might be, who wanted to embroil America in the conflict. Consequently if any member of the British Government thought that there ought to be exceptions to this, it must have been for some very good reason, which to this day I still don't know.

Anyhow I did talk to Weizmann, and Weizmann told me that he was himself going to America, and in his case it was quite clear what his objective was. He was going to California to talk to the makers of airplanes about expediting the export of airplanes to England. And so his answer was, "Yes, if Butler thinks you ought to go then you ought to go."

Well, I've gotten a little ahead of myself because I wanted to explain my relationship with R.A. Butler, and I know that he had a great deal to do, however unintended it was, with the way in which my life developed.

Now of course there is one more thing to be said about the meeting at St. James' Palace, which was one thing <sup>in</sup> which I also participated. I think I ought to mention also that when I was talking to -- er. . .

This one thing I am talking about is the white paper of May 1939, which was a white paper in which the British outlined their policy for the future, which would have meant the end of their

to the Jewish national home in Palestine,  
no question about it.

(voice trails off)

I remember talking about that to MacDonald, and I said to him, "Look, Malcolm, you did a great many things," which he did do, to counter the effects of people like Lord Passfield, Sidney Webb (1859-1947), who had himself issued a white paper many years earlier. Malcolm MacDonald was one of the principal people who was responsible for the fact that his father, Ramsey MacDonald, wrote a letter more or less repudiating Passfield's white paper.

I said (to Malcolm MacDonald), "Now you are involved in this effort to do the whole thing over, over again, to put an end to the progress of the Jewish National Home."

And his answer, which he gave without any seriousness or awe (?)

quite calmly, was, "You know in your heart that you are going to win this battle, so what are you worried about?"

Anyhow that's what MacDonald . . .

When it came to disclosing the white paper, the Government, which was not quite ready, was prepared to let us know the gist of it before it was actually published, and on the last day of the conference the Zionist executive deputed three people to go and take it down at the dictation of Malcolm MacDonald. The three people were Leonard Stein, who had for many years been the political secretary before Namier of the Zionist executive, Professor Selig Brodetzsky (1888-1954), who was then a member of the executive, and myself. I was chosen because I was the youngest, and I had the unpleasant chore of writing down at MacDonald's dictation the text of the white paper. I was therefore the first person outside

the Government who saw it.

Well, there you are. If you ask me why they couldn't give us a copy of this thing, if they were prepared to read it, I cannot tell you what the answer is. Perhaps it was that MacDonald had a twitch of conscience and thought they ought to warn us in time. Or it may be, more probably, that the Government hadn't completed its work on the text, and it didn't want to be bound by any paper that it issued.

At any rate I sat there at a table, and I don't know any shorthand -- I mean I am too old fashioned even to go as far as shorthand -- and MacDonald read the document, and I took it down.

This document limited emigration, it limited the right to buy land, all kinds of things that could only have the effect of making it impossible to create the Jewish State which ultimately came into existence. (? voice trails off)

Now I come to the point at which war broke out, about which I think I ought to say something.

When the war broke out Weizmann called a meeting of the heads of the Jewish community. It wasn't a meeting of any organization. He called the people who, because of their activities or their names or for whatever reason, were really the leaders of the Jewish community. It included Zionist leaders, it included the Rothschilds, it included anybody who meant anything in Jewish life.

I was summoned to this meeting as a Zionist leader, and I remember the scene very well. The meeting took place in Great Russell Street, in the office, in the board room of the Zionist



organization. And we sat there, all these people, including very famous people, and the background of it was the firing of anti-aircraft guns which the Germans had begun.

Q: The air raids.

Perlzweig: The attacks on London. And Weizmann stood up, and he said words which I shall never forget. He said, "I am not Jeremiah, and I cannot therefore give expression to the feelings we now have. But Hitler will not get me. I am a chemist, and I shall know what to do if and when he arrives."

Well, that was the atmosphere of the meeting, and there was a discussion -- a typical Jewish discussion -- about the nature of the Jewish people and its relationship to the environment in which we lived, and I remember that Weizmann said, "The British Government may go to Canada, but the English peasant will remain, and he will outlast Hitler. But you and I will not remain."

Now this was the atmosphere of the time, and this particular meeting -- which I tell you was a quite unofficial meeting -- is something that I shall never forget.

I was summoned again to the Foreign Office, ~~AND~~ and Butler said to me, "We are making a list of the people who ought to be taken out of England if we have to leave. The Government is considering that if the position becomes very bad we should not surrender the fleet to Hitler but should take it to Canada, and should continue the war from Canada. We want to take out the people who are most vulnerable,

and we would like your advice about those in the Jewish community."

I said, "Well, this is really a very difficult question to answer -- who shall live and who shall die. I must consult friends and colleagues." And I consulted Weizmann. Weizmann's answer, which I still don't quite understand, but no doubt there is an explanation, was, "I do not want to be on that list."

Anyhow, as it turned out, the British Government didn't have to go to Canada, and the list did not have to be activated, but I think it's an interesting fact, which is probably not on record anywhere, that the British Government was actually contemplating after the war broke out that it might have to go to Canada and take the fleet with it.

One other thing about that period after the war broke out which I would like to record is that my two boys were then at a school in the South of England called Frencham Heights, which was -- how shall I put it? -- a progressive school, but not madly so. What we were worried about, which was <sup>not</sup> odd in Jewish parents, was not the nature of the instruction they got, but whether they would be properly fed. (pause)

Anyhow I used to go to Frencham Heights. The reason we had them there was not because we followed the English system of sending the children away, but because, as I think I have mentioned, my wife had been very ill, and the doctor had advised that she should not have to look after these children. So I used to go down to Frencham Heights from time to time to see them and to talk to them, and occasionally the headmaster would ask me to talk to the school.

This showed you that it was a progressive school. If a man asked a rabbi to speak to a school in England at that time you would assume at once, and correctly, that he was a man with progressive ideas.

I remember one incident in which I was I won't say an unwilling but certainly an unexpected participant, which again I will never forget. Frencham Heights is in <sup>the South</sup> ~~XXXX~~ of England -- I have forgotten the name of the nearest town to it, but it's not very far from Aldershot, which is the military headquarters for the Army in the South of England -- and one day as the train stopped at the station all the doors were flung open and soldiers began rushing in, and I looked at these men, and I could see that they were, even to my unpractised eye, very disheveled. Their clothing was torn, and they were in disarray. I was sitting there, and one of them was standing there -- of course they packed in -- and I asked them where they came from, and they said, "Dunkirk."

I think my face must have shown my worry, and I remember one of these cockney soldiers said to me, "That's all right, 's all right, Guvnor, that's awright, Guvnor, we are going back, Guvnor. Give us some guns, and we'll show them Germans what we can do with them."

Well, that was an extraordinary thing. If your mind goes back to what happened, to the evacuation of Dunkirk, and these men having just recently landed and not having had time to get a new change of clothes, got onto the train and were saying, "It's all right, Guvnor."

It was one of the reasons why as far as I was concerned I never for a single second had the faintest doubt, even though it was<sup>a</sup> logically ridiculous view to hold, that England would win the war. I never had any doubt about it at all, and that was a faith which was shared by the whole of the English people, and to which expression was given by Churchill. I think that<sup>as</sup> Churchill himself once said it wasn't that he had inspired the English people, he had been the voice of the English people, which I think is true.

I remember for example I was in my house in the Hampstead Gardens suburb on that September, a Sunday morning, when the war broke out, when we heard Chamberlain say that the war was on. I think it was 11 o'clock when the ultimatum expired, and not very long afterwards we heard the sirens go. They had detected an airplane over England. Nobody knew that the airplane was that of some lunatic that was flying back home from Scandinavia and hadn't warned the authorities, but at any rate the whole apparatus began to operate.

I was alone in the house there except for the cleaning woman, who bore the Dickensian name of Mrs. Pennyfeather, and she was standing in front of rows of books, shelves of books -- because I had books then as I have now -- and was dusting them, and I said to her, "Mrs. Pennyfeather, the Germans have come. I think we ought to take cover."

She looked at me, and when it dawned on her -- and I repeated it, "The Germans have come," -- she looked at me and said,

"Oh, the wicked people!" And went on dusting the books.

I mean that's how the war was received. Even -- I don't know whether I am right -- I detected an air of relief that the uncertainty was over. We knew it was going to be very difficult.

Before the war broke out I was summoned together with other ministers of religion to the local police station. The police were there, the chief of police ~~and~~ of the district of Golders Green (was there), and ~~he~~ they told us that they had been warned by the Government that the bombs that the Germans have would dig a hole when they fell which would be six yards across, or something like that, something terrific, and they were collecting coffins -- or caskets as they are called in this country -- which they needed many thousands of. They expected air raids of the utmost intensity.

Well, some of these things were exaggerated, but we knew that it was going to be difficult. But I must tell you the way in which the people stood up to it was really one of the most remarkable things that I ~~have~~ have ever encountered. I remember one night the Germans came over, and I went out into the garden and watched the airplanes as they were pinpointed by . . .

Q: By the searchlights?

Perlzweig: By the searchlights. You could hear the bombs fall in the West of London, and this thing moved over to where we were, so my neighbor on one side and I, who were outside, went in to take such cover as we could in the house, which wasn't very much, and

I remember following the ~~sk~~ instructions that we had received, and kneeling down under a staircase, which meant that the bomb would have to go through several layers of wood. It wouldn't have done me much good, but the thought I had at the time, which was a typically English thought, was that I was glad that the congregation couldn't see me kneeling under this staircase. It was a very undignified position. But on the other hand a bomb was dropped after it had passed over the house on a piece of ground which is called the Hampstead Heath Extension, and when we went out the next morning we learned that there were soldiers there who were caught by pure accident -- they had an antiaircraft gun -- and they were in a trench, they lay down in the trench, but it didn't help them. The bomb had hit that particular piece of ground.

One of the great theological questions arose: How can you bury a body which has disappeared? How can you give it a funeral? This is the kind of problem we had.

Anyhow that is how the war began, and there was one other incident that I think I should like to recall to show you the spirit of the people.

I was alone in the house, because I had sent my family away to Oxford, and the bell was rung, and there was a man on a motorcycle who said, "One of your congregant's house has been hit, and they would like to see you."

So I got on the back of this cycle and I went. I was taken to the ~~h~~house. It was pitch dark. It was an eerie business because

all the lights had been put out, and I came to a house, and I walked in, and I saw that there was a group of men there -- I don't know where they came from, but they were evidently passers-by -- taking children out and so on, and I saw a door which hadn't been opened, and I said, "Is there anyone in there?" And a man walked over, opened the door, and he saw an old woman there, he picked her up and he carried her out, and thereby saved her life, because the next thing the thing began to collapse.

This man was an absolute stranger. We were never able to find out who he was, where he came from or anything. But that was the way people acted. You could have collections of old iron, for example, in certain places. You could be quite sure that nobody would pick ~~xxxxx~~ any of it up and take it away.

Well, this was the beginning of the war, and I had forgotten one other thing ~~xx~~ which I would like to get in, if I can, before the tape runs out, and that is the visit that I paid to Poland on the eve of the war, which following my apparently successful intervention in Rumania a good many people thought that I would be able to do something about the situation.

We were telephoned to from Poland, and they said somebody must come and try and save the Jews of Zbaszyn, I think.

I've got a book here which mentions it, and from which I can possibly get the spelling, though it doesn't really matter.

There was a place on the border of Germany and Poland, a place which I used to call Zbaszyn, which begins with a Zee, which is all

that I am quite sure about, where hundreds of Jews had been driven by the Germans on the ground that they were Poles, and these Jews were not admitted by the Poles on the ground that they were German, so they were out more or less in the open, having nothing to live on, and it was a nine day scandal, and it was decided by people -- mostly Zionists as it turned out, one of whom was called Berl Locker, who said, "You've got to go to Poland, and see whether you can persuade them to admit these people."

Well, there were two people who helped me, and if anything had come of it they would deserve the credit. One was the Polish Ambassador, whose name was Count Razinski. He arranged for me to be ~~admitted~~ received at the Foreign Office in Warsaw. The other man to whom at the time I felt a very great debt, and still do, was Lord Reading, the Second Lord Reading, the son of Rufus Isaacs, Gerald Isaacs, the Second Marquess of Reading. He was at that time the chairman of a committee of which I was a member, which raised funds in order to deal with the refugee problem, especially German Jews. I remember discussing the matter with his wife, who was the president of the British Section of the World Jewish Congress, at his home, and he said, "You can't go just like that with nothing. You'll get nothing out of the Poles unless you can show them that they won't lose anything by helping you."

He said, "You will get from me a check for 10,000 pounds," -- which in those days was a very large sum of money -- "and that money can be used for ~~rescuing~~ taking the Jews out of this place in



Zbaszyn, and settling them at least temporarily in Poland, and we will be responsible."

Q: How many people are we talking about?

Perlzweig: Several hundred. The number varied. I wish I could. . . Somebody mentions in this book. . .

Oh, here it is. There is an excellent (book), Britain and ~~of~~ the Jews of Europe by Bernard Wasserstein, who <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ an English scholar who is now at Brandeis University. This is after this period which I am talking about, but at any rate he mentions this particular incident, and ~~he~~ spells the name, which as I say is not of very great importance, but he <sup>also</sup> has something about the question of who they were and what they were.

The point is that the Germans wanted to get rid of the Jews, and one of the things that led to the final solution, in my judgment -- or to what is called the final solution -- was that they tried to get rid of the Jews and nobody would take them, so the only way to get rid of them was to ~~murder~~ murder them.

Anyhow, I was to go to Poland to see whether we could get the Poles to allow them to go to Poland, at least temporarily, and then I had this check which I thought would do the trick.

Anyhow Count Razinski arranged it, and I went. I remember the journey. I had to change at Copenhagen to get to Warsaw, and the first striking thing that happened was that as I descended

the steps from the airplane the soldiers were drawn up down below, and there was a band, and it played "God Save the King." I thought, this is a rather unexpected honor. Then I found out my mistake. On the same plane on which I traveled there was one of the chiefs from the general staff. As I have mentioned, the British had given a worthless guarantee to Poland, and they thought that they at least ought to discuss with the Poles what they should when war/broke out. I forgot who the general was, I think it was Lord Gort, but I am not quite sure.

At any rate that was the first information that I had that war was on the way.

So I went down, and I was met by various people who had been alerted, and I stayed at the Hotel Europański, which I subsequently stayed at years later.

At any rate the day came and I rang up the Foreign Office, or got somebody to ring it up, and I was told when to come. It was my first encounter with electronic safeguards. I had to ring various bells, and things opened mysteriously and so on, because evidently they were afraid of being murdered.

Anyhow I was received by a gentleman whose name should be immortalized. It was Sokolowski. He was a rather severe man, and if I may summarize the conversation he asked me why they should do the things that I was asking them to do -- to allow the Jews of Zbaszyn to come into Poland.

And I said, "After all, you are threatened by the Germans,

The man who conquered Flume, what was his name?

Q: Gabriele d'Annunzio? (1863-1938)

Perlzweig: D'Annunzio. I heard all about that from one of his followers. It is sometimes successful, as it was in the case of Iran, where people are willing to be martyred (murdered ?) that this peculiar vision they have should be fulfilled.

But here was a man, a                      man, sitting in the Polish Foreign Office, whose name was Sokolowski, and he said to me, "With one hand tied behind our backs we can defeat the Germans."

Now the Poles have been paying for it ever since in one form or another. Whether we can ever get rid of that I don't know. I think that there was a lot of it in both the Argentine and the British response to the trouble about the Falkland Islands.

When I first heard on the television what was happening in the House of Commons I thought, have all these people gone mad? They will end up killing more people than there are people in the Falkland Islands or the Malvinas. And then afterwards they'll have to pay for it, they'll have to confront it, and what are they going to do with these wonderful islands once they have them?

It isn't only Poland. This country has bouts of it. A man has only got to stand up and say, "We haven't got as much as the Russians," and everybody gets very excited. It has nothing to do with rational considerations, or humanity or anything like that. It's a romanticism which has come out of the literature

and which is quite irrational, and which is liable to destroy us.

Now I want to say one other thing about that which throws light on history generally. I think it was in the Zionist Congress of 1939, which was held in Geneva, that we heard the news that Molotov and the German von Ribbentrop had signed a pact. Now I can't describe to you the atmosphere of that Congress. Here there were 400 or 500 people from all over the world, and we were stunned. Why were we stunned? Because we were romanticists. We believed that the nazis put nazism above everything, and we believed that Stalin put either Stalin or communism above everything. Now here were these people signing a pact. It was obviously going to be war.

Nahum Goldmann in his memoirs says that war broke out as we were sitting in Geneva. That's not true. I mean he is a man of great imagination too. But what happened was, everybody thought of war. I spent the rest of the Congress trying to persuade people not to go back to Poland. I didn't succeed very well -- they practically all went back to Poland. We don't believe in reality unless it hits us in the face.

What nazism and communism had in common was that they were both utterly unscrupulous. When I read about Mrs. Kirkpatrick's semantic speculations I am not much touched by it, because what dictators who are authoritarian and dictators who are totalitarian have in common, which is unscrupulousness, is far more important than what separates them -- their different flags, and some of

them pretending to believe in God.

So this had a great impact on me. Everybody until 1939 thought that the idea that the nazis and the communists would get together was idiotic. It was almost like MacDonald saying to us, "Are you going to be on Hitler's side?"

Well, we couldn't be on Hitler's side. But they could be. There is something there that needs examining.

Now everybody believed that Stalin was the man who was going to save Europe and the European civilization. One of the things wrong with the Poles is that they didn't believe it. They wouldn't undertake that he would have the right to pass through Poland to attack Germany. But everybody believed it. I mentioned to you earlier, I think, the case of Leon Feuchtwanger, who actually went to Moscow and wrote a book, 1936, which is still on record, in which he talks about saving the world from Hitler. Everybody except one man, and that man was Einstein.

Einstein, as I have recorded, said to me in 1936, "We have to take the Jews out of the Soviet Union," because he foredaw that under totalitarianism they couldn't exist.

Well, I got to the war. I think I ~~will~~<sup>will</sup> go on until the ~~tape~~ runs out.

As I told you, I decided, havi~~ng~~<sup>ng</sup> consulted Weizmann, to go to America and find out what it was all about, because I didn't know, and one of the things that I found out before I went -- when I was ~~walking~~ making preparations, which in time of war meant very

considerable preparations -- was that no one in England had the faintest idea in high places what America was about.

I was approached by various people in Government offices, including the Secret Service, one particular man whom I used to call Colonel Cooper -- except that he told me that it wasn't his real name, and he gave me an accommodation at -- and I was absolutely staggered. What I learned from him was that England expected invasion, all along Whitehall there were sandbags, they expected parachuters to be dropped and the Central Government to be taken over, and they knew that there was no chance at all of Britain winning the war, ~~even though every Englishman was taken~~ ~~firmly convinced that Britain would win the war~~ unless America came in, and in the case of one man -- and that's Churchill -- unless Russia came in.

I had personal proof of that, and I'll come to it later.

At any rate I went in -- I remember going in and going to see Butler and saying, "What shall I do now?"

He said, "Well, you can't leave the country without the permission of the Government, and boats that go out are dangerous because the Germans but we'll see to it that you get . Go to Number Something Great Anne Street."

I went, and it was just before lunchtime, and the man said to me

"Are you in a hurry?"

I said, "What do you mean, in a hurry?"

He said, "I am just about to go to lunch?"

I said, "That's all right, I'll come in after lunch."

He was prepared to give me a passport on the spot.

He said, "What sort of passport do you want?"

I suppose if I had said I wanted a Bolivian or a Tibetan passport he would have given it to me. But I don't know, I was too naive to think of some grand passport, and I said I just wanted an ordinary

(above not at all clear, and now voice trails off)

So I got a passport, and I don't know how I got the boat. I've forgotten that, but somebody in the Government provided it, and I had to go to Liverpool to get onto the boat.

Oh, no, I am getting a little bit mixed up now. I was going to travel with Goldmann, and the thing that I was going to do was to go to Spain, and travel by one of the boats which were going then, which were either American or Italian.

Anyhow I got the passport, and I went without any exceptional incident to Calais from Dover. It must have been an eerie crossing because the submarines were in the Channel. I went by boat. There was very little airplane (service), and what there was was rather primitive -- I am talking about 1939, end of 1939.

I met Goldmann in Paris, and we were going to travel together.

I was met at the station not only by Goldmann but by a man called Alex Easterman, who was later on my opposite number in London, but he was then foreign correspondent in Paris.

We got onto a train and went to Hendaye (France).

Q: On the border.

Perlzweig: On the border, which I have come across very often.

Before we crossed the border we decided that it would be better to eat in France, so we went to a restaurant, a kind of big thing, and the woman apologized. She said, "You know, things are rationed and this is a meatless day." We said, well, give us what you've got.

It was one of the most magnificent meals I have ever had in my life. The meatless meant that it was chicken and not meat, you see.

After we were finished we went to the border and carried our bags across. There was no train, the border was closed, but we were allowed to cross, and then we were taken in to be examined.

I had a British passport, but Goldmann, who is a man of infinite resource -- you will find it difficult to believe this -- had a Honduran passport, but he was the Honduran Consul in Geneva, and he had some arrangement with them by which he carried documents or something, and he exercised the functions of a Honduran Consul,



which was very useful, because he would go into the League of Nations to any meeting he wanted to, and he had a Honduran flag right ~~was~~ outside the house. I remember he told me he had once been asked by the Minister in Paris under whom he worked what he should do if Hitler should die. How could he, a representative of the World Jewish Congress, fly a flag at half mast?

So the Minister said, "We'll take no notice of him, and we won't pressure him to do it."

But his other difficulty was that the instructions he had about getting visas excluded Palestinians. Well, the instructions were drafted before but nevertheless it was awkward.

Anyhow he had a Honduran passport, which of course was in Spanish.

There was a young girl there -- she couldn't have been more than 16 or 17 -- who opened the passport and looked in, and she couldn't make it out. She said, "Where is Ginevra?"

She had never heard of Geneva.  
(end of tape)

End of Interview 12 w/ Rabbi Perlzweig by Peter Jessup, June 15th 1982.

DK

Interviewee: Dr. Maurice L. Perlzweig

Interviewer: Peter Jessup

Place: New York City

Interview No. 13 - June 16th 1982

Q: Good afternoon, Dr. Perlzweig. Last time we left you on the Spanish-French border, across the border, and you were headed in the direction of Lisbon. This is Peter Jessup.

Dr. Perlzweig: I just want to add a word about Irun, where the misery was so obvious that Goldmann said to me, "We can't stand about here for several hours. Let's get rooms in a hotel."

I said, "What, just for three hours?"

He said, "Yes, for three hours. This is really too much," what we were witnessing.

So we went into the hotel. I think the most heartrending spectacle which confronted us in the streets were the children -- children six or seven years old, obviously not more than that -- who

were begging, but whose faces were wizened, as though they were old people.

Our staying in the hotel didn't help very much because as soon as we got into our room all we wanted to do was to read, and the light just about flickered, not more, and it was impossible to read. In the hotel itself, at the receiving desk, there were bottles and we looked at the bottles, but they were all empty. <sup>h</sup>The misery was indescribable.

As we went along in the train, whenever we stopped there were ~~xxx~~ the same scenes, the same kinds of children with their wizened faces holding out their hands to get whatever we could give them.

The train was only, I think, about half full, and a good many of the people who were going on the train were refugees. This was the first sight I had of something in which I became deeply interested -- the fact that the Spanish frontier was open to Jewish refugees. There were people who came from Holland, from Belgium and from other parts of Western Europe, and who were going to America, and who had apparently no difficulty in getting Spanish visas.

Well, that was the beginning of my education about Franco, about whom I'll have something more to say.

Anyhow we got to Lisbon, and it was like entering another world. The platform of the station in Lisbon was decorated -- I think that would be the right word -- by young ladies carrying baskets in which there were little bottles of local products like wine and so on, cakes and biscuits, which they gave to us, and which we eagerly accepted, because it'd been at least 24 hours since we had

been properly fed -- there was no breakfast on the train.

But as I say the one really bright spot was the fact that we had on the train a number of people who were obviously taking advantage of the open frontier.

I ought to add another word about my experience at the frontier which left a mark on me for a very long time.

Goldmann, who had a Honduran passport and no difficulty at all, except that the girl who looked at it was obviously illiterate -- somebody recruited very late to replace the regular frontier officers --

Q: Is this the Portuguese or the Spanish?

Perlzweig: The Spanish.

Q: On the way out?

Perlzweig: On the way out. But I was taken by a man who looked like, and probably was, a thug, into a shed, and then searched, because I had a British passport. It was one of the longest searches that I have undergone. He left no part of my body untouched, or any pocket unemptied, and grudgingly he then let me go.

Now I was a little apprehensive because I had come into conflict, obviously, with the Axis powers in the feeble ways in which I could do it, and I didn't know what black lists were about, or whether I was going to be confined to a Spanish jail for the rest

of my life, and I think I ought to explain this because it did make a great deal of difference to my attitude and some of the things that I did.

There were two incidents in particular that I would like to recall where I had great publicity in the Axis countries, which in some ways made me a marked man. That's one of the reasons why before I went to Rumania I went to R.A. Butler and finally persuaded him to give me a document with a big red seal on it which enabled me -- or at/least we hoped would enable me -- to get in touch with any British office if the need arose.

The first incident was, curiously enough, a sermon. In the town of Maidenhead in the Thames Valley there was a Protestant minister who was very upset about ~~the~~ what he read in the newspapers about the goings on in Germany, and he decided that he and his congregation ought to do something about it, and they thought that one of the things they could usefully do would be to invite a rabbi to take over the church, which they regarded as one of their most sacred possessions, and conduct the service and preach the sermon.

Now there had been at that time quite a number of cases where a rabbi had been invited by a church to preach a sermon -- that was more or less commonplace. But so far as I know this is the only case which occurred up to that time, and as far as I know since, where the minister temporarily resigned and said to a rabbi, "Take over my congregation and say to them what you think they ought to hear."

He was advised to invite me by a woman who was then a very well known social worker, the Honorable Lily Montague, who was a member of my congregation and one of the founders of Liberal Judaism. And she suggested me because I had become notorious as an antinazi.

I went to the church, and the minister said to me, "I am going to open the proceedings by introducing you to the congregation, then I am going down to sit in one of the pews, and the rest is up to you. You can put into the service whatever you think is appropriate," which I proceeded to do. I had no difficulty about it, because after all there were the Hebrew Scriptures from which I could read in English translation, there were psalms, there were any number of hymns that were appropriate for a synagogue, and we went through that service with myself as temporarily the minister of the synagogue church.

Of course it was crowded, -- it was unusual -- and it was crowded above all by journalists, because I thought I ought to make the most of the situation, and I sent out a notice saying THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY THAT A RABBI HAS TAKEN OVER <sup>AND</sup> \* CONDUCTED A SERVICE IN A CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION..

Now the publicity was enormous. I used to subscribe to an organization -- I forgot what it's called in England -- which clipped the press for you, and I had an enormous bag full of clippings and I don't know what's happened to them. My estimation is that there wasn't a newspaper in England, however small, which didn't have some notice about this unprecedented thing.

But what was more to the point, the Germans took it up, and it was publicized to an even greater extent, if possible, in their newspapers all over the area which at that point they controlled. They used it of course to back up their theory, which was that the Jews were engaged in taking over everything and ruling the whole world, and they pointed to the singular fact that now the Jews in England had evidently taken over the churches. But on the other hand their notices were read also by the people who didn't believe what their newspapers said.

Many years later in Geneva I met a Czech pastor -- a Protestant pastor -- who recalled the incident, and told me that it had given a new lease on life to the feeling of resistance that they had. They were so pleased that Christians in England were thinking about their faith.

Well, this was one incident where I became known among the people whose business it was to compile black lists of particularly bad guys.

The second incident was in a sense even more important. This happened, as I know from what I heard over the radio -- I can more or less fix the date -- early in 1939. The man who was really responsible for it, though he never knew anything about it and certainly was unwitting in whatever he said to me, was R.A. Butler.

He told me several times when I came to see him how glad he was that he was dealing with me, because the Jewish problem had become the subject of discussion among the nations -- how to deal with it.

He didn't tell me what the subject of <sup>the</sup> discussions was, and probably if he had I wouldn't have been very pleased, but at any rate it was then the subject of intensive discussions among European and probably other Governments too, the question being what to do with the Jews.

Now I don't know and I cannot recall, however much I try, where I got the story which I decided that I would publicize, but the story went like this, Mussolini had offered to give a portion of Abyssinia, which he then controlled, for Jewish settlement, subject to the condition that the other Governments would make their contributions. The French should contribute Djibouti, and the British should contribute an area -- a small area -- called British Somaliland, and these three pieces of land should be put together and the Jews of Europe should be shipped there.

Now I had a vision of a large, largely middle class and probably professional mass of professional people being taken over to this tropical area which was quite uncultivated and quite unsuitable, and I made up my mind that I would do whatever I could to prevent it.

Now I had no proof. I had read innumerable newspapers. As you will have gathered, one of my weaknesses is that I read. I can't stop reading, I go on all night sometimes. I am fascinated by what I read, and I rarely read anything from which I don't learn something. So I had read a great deal, and putting what I'd read in one source together with another. In fact some people knew of my obsession



to such an extent that they sent me bits of magazines and newspapers which referred to the question of the resettlement of the Jews.

So I decided that I would publicize this story because once it came out it would be so horrendous, ~~xxxx~~ the newspapers would know how impossible it was to make a Jewish settlement in these deserts and sands and waste places, and that would kill it.

I went about it very simply. I was then the minister of what was called the Northwestern Reform Synagogue in Golders Green, and I decided to preach a sermon about it, which wasn't a very difficult decision. But I also decided that I must preach this sermon not only to my congregation but to the whole world. How could this be achieved? Well, this is what I did.

On the day before the Sabbath -- on Friday, that is -- on which I preached the sermon, I sat down a little reluctantly in front of the typewriter, because I can only type with one finger, -- which is at least one more than I can at the moment -- and I gave the substance of this story, and I said that the civilized world must not allow something like this, and I made -- and that is the point of the typewriter, otherwise I would have used my hand -- I made three copies. I sent one copy to Reuters, one copy to another agency called the Exchange Telegraph, and a third copy to another one which I think was called the Press Association or something like that. I sent three copies. I gave no explanation. I knew the story was sensational enough to command some space, and I simply put on the top FOR FAVOR OF PUBLICATION, and I sent them on,

wondering what was going to happen.

Well, what happened the next day reassured me about this little essay on publicity.

Remember the World Jewish Congress at that point was a very small and feeble organization which had no public relations staff at all, and I had to do it all myself. I felt what had happened when I came in on Saturday afternoon, that is the afternoon after I had delivered the sermon in the morning. I came into my ~~xxxxx~~ home in the Hampstead Gardens suburb and put on the BBC, and I heard the reader of the news read out the headlines, and they read like this, MR. CHAMBERLAIN, THE PRIME MINISTER, RETURNED TODAY FROM ROME. GENERAL FRANCO IS AT THE GATES OF VALLADOLID. RABBI PERLZWEIG HAS ASSAILED MUSSOLINI FOR HIS PLAN TO RESETTLE THE JEWS.

Well! I hardly listened after~~that~~ (I had to listen after that ?)

This was going on all over the world. The BBC had received through one of these agencies this news.

Of course the next day, which was Sunday, the Sunday papers were full of it. There was one man in Manchester. . . -- I keep forgetting these very well known names -- Laski, the father of Neville Laski and of the other Laski. . .

Q: Harold.

(the father)  
Perlzweig: Harold Laski. He/was a sort of patriarch in the Manchester Jewish community , and he got up at some meeting and denounced me

for having embarrassed the Prime Minister. Well, as that was one of my objectives I wasn't very upset about it, but there was a great deal more.

Later that day I went to Paris to attend a meeting of the World Jewish Congress, and there was a reception the reason for which I no longer recall, and I was introduced to a French Senator, and he flung his arms around my neck and embraced me and said, "You have saved Djibouti for us," because it had apparently gone all over the place.

Q: Not much to save.

Perlzweig: Well, I believe that the French have been very anxious to get rid of it for a long time, but the people who live there know that if they withdraw their troops they will have a very short life.

Q: Actually it is an independent country now, but there are I think French legionnaires there.

Perlzweig: Yes, French troops. There are French troops, and they have got into all sorts of trouble, but that's not the question. The point I am telling you is that I am introducing this into the narrative in order that you should understand why I was so nervous.

Q: Yes!

Perlzweig: I thought that the Gestapo would be more or less in charge in Spain, and that this man who was searching me was doing more than a perfunctory job. So it's important to bear that in mind, that I was, as I afterwards discovered, on the black list of the nazis, and if they had come to England I would have been one of those who would have been dealt with in the appropriate manner.

Now we are in Lisbon, and our intention was to take what was called the Flying Clipper.

Q: Oh yes!

Perlzweig: Which I think was run by Pan American or its predecessor.

As we were waiting about in the hotel in Lisbon we got a telegram from somebody whom we both knew very well from the Azores. This was a man called Arthur (S.) Lourie.

Q: Oh yes, who later was Ambassador to London.

Perlzweig: That's right, he was the Ambassador to London, but he was for quite a long period one of the chief men in the Israel Foreign Office. I had worked with him because he had been secretary of the Zionist executive, and I knew him very well.

He told us in the telegram that he had gone by the Flying Clipper, and it had to refuel in the Azores, but he had been there for three days, and it was impossible, for weather or other reasons, to go on, and he advised us very strongly not to go the

same way, but to go by boat. So we had to change our minds and our arrangements on the spur of the moment, and we decided to go by a boat the name of which I have forgotten, but it was an Italian boat. At the bottom of the gangway, as the passengers went onto this boat, there was a man who either directly or indirectly represented the United States, and he had one anxiety -- that we were properly vaccinated, and he made quite sure of it. I produced a document to show that I had been vaccinated. He took no notice of it at all, but gave me what I can only call a great big and the result of this was that I have practically no recollection of that journey across the Atlantic. There were no submarines or anything like that because it was an Italian boat. But he knocked me out completely.

The whole atmosphere of course changed when we got to New York.

When we got off the boat there was a large welcoming party to greet us, headed by Stephen Wise, and we were taken off to a very posh hotel. I am trying to think of its name -- it's on the south side of Central Park in New York, a rather furnished hotel --

Q: Was it the St. Moritz?

Perlzweig: Yes, the St. Moritz, which I think that Wise chose because he knew Goldmann's tastes, which were always of the highest in these matters. So I had the advantage of that.

We were there, and I began to look around. I went out for a walk, and I was filled with astonishment at all that I saw.

I knew that I was in what I thought was a foreign country, but all the people spoke English, and all the notices and the marks above the shops were all in English, but in a peculiar way which I could not define rather different from what they looked like in London.

I remember going with great eagerness into a tobacco shop. There were a great many more about then than there are now. I said to the man, displaying what I thought was a knowledge of the trade, "Can you give me a good mature Virginia?" And he looked at me in astonishment and said, "If you want English tobacco I can give it to you." And all the visions that I had had of a tobacco growing country which produced these remarkable tobaccos vanished at once, and I had to put up with a tin of what is called Virginia in England. It has names like Players, Navy Cut and that kind of thing which I don't think is Virginia at all, but that's what they call it.

I had a great many surprises like that, but then I discovered one unpleasant ~~factor~~ factor in the atmosphere which made it very different from England, and that was a pervasive acquiescence in anti-Semitism, sometimes of a rather, to me, shocking kind. That is to say I discovered that the universities of the Ivy League kind had quotas for Jews, and were very anxious to keep down the number of Jews that they had. I found that there were all kinds of places you couldn't rent if you were a Jew or a Negro or a member of any minority. There was a word for it, which was quite

new to me, and that was RESTRICTED. You looked at a list of apartments in The New York Times or some other newspaper, and you would find attached to it the letter R, which meant restricted. I simply couldn't understand it. I was staggered by it.

Of course there was in a sense less of that in New York than there was in other places, but on the other hand I found that the Jews in New York -- which was the first place where I landed -- occupied a very conspicuous place in the life and work of the City and in its government, and I realized -- I began to realize -- that the secret of it was the Bill of Rights, the kind of polity which the Founding Fathers had envisioned. That is to say while you might not be admitted to Harvard or Yale, when it came to the City College of New York you were dealing with a public institution, and under the laws governing equality in the Constitution and in the Bill of Rights, you couldn't be excluded.

The same applied to professions which are part of the Civil Service. I found for example that a very large proportion of the corps of teachers in the public schools were Jewish, just as a very large proportion of the police were Irish. Various ethnic groups went into occupations which were protected by the Bill of Rights. They had much more difficulty in getting into private universities or other private institutions.

So there was this contradiction. On the one hand there was this overt anti-Semitism, and on the other hand there was this Constitutional protection of civil rights, and the combination was fascinating, and sometimes led to all sorts of difficulties.

(pause)

Well, I hadn't been in New York very long before I got a telegram from Noah Barou, who was the honorary secretary of the British Section, and who as I have explained earlier was a very important man in the Congress. The telegram said that the British were in great need of certain supplies which would help them to guard their coasts, which was being done by volunteers. They lacked binoculars, for example. It was not much use standing on the coast watching for an airplane if you couldn't look very much beyond your eyesight. And revolvers and guns (were needed). Could I do something about it?

So I had a meeting with the women's division<sup>of</sup> the American Jewish Congress, and I explained the situation to them, and they got very busy. It wasn't many days before<sup>in</sup> the desk at which I sat all the drawers were filled with binoculars. I didn't go in for guns -- I thought that that was rather. . . that it might be against the law or something.

I went to various British offices, and I was directed to a man whose business it was to issue certificates to American and other ships enabling them to go through the blockade which the British were trying to establish around German territories.

I remember my conversation with him very well. He was very morose and rather gloomy. He said, "My job is to ruin the trade of America, and I don't like it."

But at any rate he was prepared to take whatever I gave him,



and to arrange for it to go to England.

It became quite clear to me that even at that stage -- and I am talking now about early 1940 -- so far as the executive in this country was concerned, which means of course in the last resort Roosevelt, F.D.R., they considered themselves practically in the war, and all the executive apparatus had been instructed to facilitate anything which would help the Allies against (the enemy).

About that I had further proof later on. Of course the country was officially neutral, and as far as public opinion was concerned -- and that is often forgotten now -- was deeply divided about the whole thing.

Q: There was America First. . .

Perlzweig: Yes, America First, tremendously powerful organizations put up, and as we now know subsidized by the Germans, whereas the British were very feeble.

I remember one conversation I had with the British Consul in Chicago, a man called Bernays. Bernays is quite a famous name in Jewish history. There was once a rabbi -- a haham as they called him in Hamburg -- of that name who left his mark, and they are a big family related to Sigmund Freud's family.

This man was not a Jew himself, and had no feelings about it, and was several generations away from the Hamburg rabbi, but he was very frank with me about the position of the British in America.

He took me to his window and he showed me a big skyscraper, and he said, "That's the German office of propaganda. That skyscraper is full of people working day and night and spending vast sums of money. Look at us -- I got nobody. And not only that. What we do get, whether as salary or as expenses, is in pounds." And the pound had dropped catastrophically.

In other words the British had it all against them. Of course there were sections in the population with whom I established relations which took the opposite view. There was <sup>the</sup> British War Relief which was headed by Winthrop Aldrich, who was a very powerful man and who had the unofficial support of the Government. There was another body which was very active and very vocal, called Bundles for Britain.

Q: Yes, Mrs. Oswald Lord, a Pillsbury from Minneapolis.

Perlzweig: I knew these organizations because one of my tasks, as they developed, was to prevent them from quarreling with each other.

So there was the other side, and when I spoke to people in the general population -- when I sat next to a man on the train for example -- and they would talk to me, my nationality became instantly obvious. I talked English then with a sort of accent that you would hear at Oxford and Cambridge and in the courts in the House of Commons. As somebody put it to me, "Your accent is so thick you could cut it with a knife." I think it's been considerably modified

since then, even though even now it is I think still English. But then it was very English, and of course as soon as the man heard my intonation he would talk to me about the war and the rights and wrongs.

On one occasion I remember I was traveling in a train and I sat next to a man whose name was Morley. I can't be the famous man of that name in England, John Morley, who was a member of the 1914 Government who resigned when the war broke out. This was another Morley who was a very well known writer, and I remember he said to me at the time, "As far as I am concerned I'll do anything for England." So I had both sides.

Q: That was probably Christopher Morley.

Perlzweig: Yes, maybe. I wish I had accepted his hint and got in touch with him on personal grounds, but I was too busy.

The same thing happened on airplanes. In those days you didn't have to book an airplane. They were never full, and it was very comfortable. And when the hostess came and talked to me, the moment I opened my mouth she'd say, "You are an Englishman." And then the next thing she would say was, "What are you, a Member of Parliament?" For some ~~xxxxx~~ reason or other they thought that Members of Parliament traveled all over, and did very mysterious things.

Neither country knew very much about the other country, and the people whom the British sent over here to watch the situation

apparently never really penetrated to the heart of it.

Now one of the things I was asked to do was to go to the British Office of Information and look at the reports they were sending back to England and to say what I thought about them.

I was handed three folders ~~xxx~~ in which there was a long essay about what a particular portion of the population thought about the war. One referred to Protestants, the other to Catholics and the third to Jews. I can only say that as regards the Protestants and the Catholics what they wrote was banal. Anglicans were said to be pro-British, which wasn't a very deep insight. Lutherans were said to tilt towards Germany. Among the Catholics the Irish were anti-British -- that kind of thing. It could have been written by somebody on the moon.

But the Jews were different. What staggered me was the assertion they made that the Jews are not terribly interested in Hitler. They've only got one interest which they really believe in, and that is -- and they used this word -- Jerusalem. They want Jerusalem.

I turned to the man who had written these things and said, "Where did you get this from."

He said, "Oh, in the press."

I said, "What press do you read? Do you read the Jewish press?"

He said, "Yes, I read the Jewish press."

I said, "What do you read in the Jewish press?"

He said, "The New York Times."

So far as he was concerned, the fact that the people who owned it were Jews, and that a lot of the people who wrote for it were Jews, made it a Jewish paper. And he got an entirely wrong view, a completely mistaken view of the Jewish community.

I said to him, "Don't you read the Yiddish press?"

He said, "How can we? We don't know Yiddish."

It was a rather simpleminded answer. The daily Yiddish press in New York at that time published at least a million copies every day, and they represented a very important section of the population.

Well, so what could I do to correct this? First of all I pointed out to him that it was all wrong. He showed me clippings from The Times. You see, there was a battle going on in the Jewish community -- in the world Jewish community at the time --- as between those who thought the first thing to do was destroy Hitler. As ~~Wk~~ Weizmann once put it to me, if he wins we all go down the drain, and therefore everything else didn't matter. On the other hand there were Zionists who said the thing to do is to fight the British because of their white paper to which I have referred -- the white paper of May 1939.

Every now and again somebody would come over from Palestine and address Jewish audiences in the United States and denounce the white paper and Britain, and this would be reported by The New York Times, so that a casual reader who didn't know the situation would assume that on the whole they were not ~~int~~interested in Hitler, as the document said.

Well, I got that changed. I arranged for the American Jewish Congress to give them every week -- or every day, I've forgotten which it was now -- a summary of the Yiddish press, which was written by one of the leading Yiddish litterateurs who was on their public relations staff. So I think that I at least enabled them to understand the situation a little better -- not very much better. As I go on you will see how childish the whole thing really was.

I went all over the country. I was in great demand as a speaker because there were very few people who had actually heard the bombs dropping and knew what was going on. My most popular passages were when I described the way in which a bomb left the airplane and hit the ground on a slant. They were literally fascinated by these stories of what had happened during the Blitz and so on.

I went all over the country, and wherever there was a British Consul he came, and sometimes presided. But they were extremely pleased with me because nobody else was apparently telling the story. But I learned something very strange during this odyssey across America, and that was the tremendous power of German propaganda. It was not straight propaganda which said the British were scoundrels and the Germans were wonderful -- nothing quite as simpleminded as that. But the story was that here were two imperialisms, two colonial powers, fighting each other, and decent democrats like the Americans should keep out of it.

And in order to demonstrate it, I heard the same story everywhere, from Boston to San Francisco, repeated to me by Jews -- what is happening is that there is an understanding between Germany and Britain designed to prevent too much damage <sup>from</sup> being done.

For example, the Queen Elizabeth was allowed to leave from New York for Liverpool and was not attacked on the way, and the Bremen was allowed to leave New York and go to Hamburg, which was a sort of tradeoff which showed you that these two powers really didn't want to harm each other.

Another story which was put out was that the British were not bombing the Ruhr, which at that time they were not. I think the explanation is very simple -- they just didn't have the planes to do it with. They didn't bomb the Ruhr not because they didn't want to do any damage but because Chamberlain, according to the story-- which I think is quite false -- had investments in the Ruhr, and he didn't want to have that ruined.

What is important about it is that what the Consul General in Chicago told me demonstrated <sup>that</sup> the power and the subtlety of German propaganda was really staggering, and it affected not only the general population, but the Jews who might have been skeptical about ~~it~~ it for reasons which I needn't explain.

Well, the most staggering contact I had in that regard was with Mr. Justice Brandeis (Louis D. Brandeis, 1856-1941). Now if there was ever a levelheaded man in the United States or anywhere else it was Brandeis. When I was in Washington to speak at a

meeting I went to see him. As you know he was a very passionate Zionist. While he was on the bench of the Supreme Court he was very discreet about it. Whether it was proper for him to be active in the Zionist movement while he was a <sup>e</sup>member of the Supreme Court I don't know, but at any rate he was discreet about it. When I saw him he was, I think, already in retirement, and I told him my sad story that looking rationally at the situation it looked that unless the British and those who stood with them -- who were at that point mostly Governments in exile in London -- had help from the United States they would probably go under.

Well, he was very sympathetic, but he said, "I don't care much about England."

I said, "What's the matter with England?"

And he said these exact words, "The best I can say for them is that they are not as bad as the nazis."

Now that was Brandeis. He was a man who would not be touched by what I call irrational romanticism. There was very strong anti-British feeling in the Jewish community, even among Jews like Brandeis who didn't belong to popular movements and wasn't a populist, because of their policy in regard to Palestine, and of course it became more acute as Jews had to find a place to go, and when they were not allowed to go to Palestine, which appeared to be the only place, the feeling became stronger.

This was one of the feelings which I think Roosevelt, from all that I heard from Wise and others, had to overcome, although paradoxically he was no Zionist, not because <sup>u</sup>he was against it,



but because he was a good American who didn't understand all this ethnic nonsense. <sup>He</sup> ~~They~~ used to say ~~xx~~ to Wise -- Wise told me -- "Why do you bother about this bit of land at the end of the Mediterranean? Why don't you acquire something in South America and take your people there?"

The significance of it, the meaning of it completely escaped him, although one of the other things that Wise told me and which I repeat only because he told me -- I have no proof of it -- was that he believed himself to be of remote Jewish descent. He thought that the name Delano was the name of a Sephardic family which several centuries ago had married into his family. Whether that is true or not I don't know. There has been a lot of talk about it, and of course the American Firsters and others always referred to him as Roosenfeld.

I could say a lot about America, but I think I can sum up one aspect of American life in the way in which travelers take the liberty of doing, even though they don't really know what they are talking about.

Somebody asked me what the difference was between America and Britain, and I said, "The Americans are conservative in thought and liberal in ritual. The British are liberal in thought and conservative in ritual." (laughs) Now I probably got that after going to synagogues. One of the things which was so striking to me was the casual way in which <sup>the</sup> ritual was conducted. Or I went to the House of Representatives and sat in the gallery and saw the way in which people were walking about and not really taking any

notice. They <sup>are</sup> ~~were~~ very casual about that.

Now the British are very exact about ritual. In the House of Commons you could be a communist, you could say that the Prime Minister is a scoundrel. What you can't do is to pick up the mace or cross the line on the carpet in front of the row of seats.

This ritualistic way of life which is very British has nothing to do necessarily with religion, although it has a certain relationship to it, but I think it's one of the things which enables the British to be so liberal. It's the ritual which keeps them, and which maintains the structure of their society. That was the difference.

So far as the general population was concerned, so far as the British <sup>with</sup> ~~the~~ were concerned, I would say there was ambivalence, a mixture of envy and dislike. They disliked what they thought was the self importance of the British, and the fact that they were the mother country, but they envied them their manners <sup>and</sup> their speech. In fact I found that it was a great advantage to be either an actor or a preacher who spoke with an English accent.

But the most remarkable case of all was Stephen Wise, whose British accent, which couldn't deceive any Englishman, was so British that it was more than British. He would certainly not say circumstance, he would say circumstaaance (with the A pronounced like the A in father), which I think very few British would do. He would make his A's broad in that way, in a way <sup>in which</sup> ~~make~~ the British would not do. And of course he read Shakespeare as though it were more or less the equivalent of the Bible.

Well, all of this information I gathered, and a good deal more which I got from the British Embassy and the various British Consulates which I visited, and I returned to England after three months. I must have delivered scores of speeches, and when I was in Washington one of the speeches that I delivered was at the convention of the American Jewish Congress, which was held there. I remember staying at the famous Willard Hotel.

Among the speakers <sup>who</sup> were what you would expect -- in addition to Wise and Goldmann and the others who belonged to the Congress, and myself -- there was Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and the Czech Minister. One of the reasons I mention this is because <sup>she</sup> ~~he~~ invited me to have tea with her at the White House, and something happened that I will never forget. While we were having tea the President was rolled in in his wheelchair, and he asked me what I was doing, and I told him as best I could because I really didn't know what I was doing. I wasn't representing the British Government, and I wouldn't have done that in any case. I have a prejudice against representing any Government, whether British, American, Israel or anything, which is a prejudice that I acquired from Einstein, who had the same prejudice.

Well, I told him what I was trying to do. I said, "I want American Jewry to know what's happening in Europe, and this is why Wise has asked me to come."

He had great respect for Wise and great affection.

I told him that I thought that the British, although they all believed they would win the war, would not succeed if they didn't

have help from outside, so he told me, "I'll give them help." (?)

He spoke to me about what was then being discussed -- the question of

Q: Destroyers.

Perlzweig: Destroyers, which in fact later on I saw, but that's another thing. And then he began to speak about Hitler and his

No Jew, however fanatical, could have spoken with more force and anger than he did.

One thing I came away with from that casual encounter, and that was the fact that if there was one antinazi in the world it was Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and that he was determined to do what he could, which wasn't as much as he wanted to do, obviously.

Well, I came back. On the way back we went a different way. I stayed three months in the United States and I covered it. I saw any number of people, and I have only given a rough outline of what I did here. The thing I brought away which meant most to me was the story of the Founding Fathers, whom I have revered and worshiped from that day to this. I know all their faults, but the things that they did, however imperfect, made it inevitable that this country would be quite different from any other country.

It's not an easy thought for an old Zionist like myself to take with a great belief in the value of ethnic traditions and

so on. This was another tradition but I understood it, and I was very grateful for it, because I could see that these huddled masses, as it says on the Statue of Liberty, who come to this country and who live terrible lives as peddlers, as sweated laborers, live to see their grandchildren university professors or famous doctors or whatever it may be, and this<sup>is</sup> made possible by the system which was founded, with all its imperfections -- and I think it has many imperfections -- by the Founding Fathers.

The difference between the two countries at that point was much greater than it is now. I know when I used to come back to London after visiting America or being in America I was always struck by the accent of the girl who made the announcements on the loudspeaker, which always struck me anew as being quite different. Now I don't notice the difference. It may be because of changes in me.

The two countries are culturally moving together. As you can see, I am surrounded by newspapers and magazines, and I never have one without reading ~~an~~ articles<sup>written</sup> by English writers, (heavy static in tape) academic and other writers.

The two countries are coalescing, and<sup>as</sup> a matter of fact there is almost a constant line of communication between the two. It used to be a joke in England that you could live very well -- I am talking about the England of 25 years ago or 30 years ago -- by going to a lecture agent in America and hiring yourself out as a lecturer, and then (heavy static in tape)

in the winter. Then you came back and lived like a lord on the proceeds. But you didn't have to have a job. Well, this is still a big industry in various ways.

So I think that although there are going to be political differences obviously, and while there are still cultural differences which I can illustrate I think very vividly by saying that on one occasions<sup>✓</sup> when I was at the United Nations I met an Englishman there who was a conservative Member of Parliament, and I took him up and we had a cup of coffee or something in one of the numerous places where they sell these things in the United Nations, and I said to him, "You will notice that this is not run by the United Nations. It is hired out ~~xxxx~~<sup>to</sup> private industry."

And he said -- and that was a very significant thing -- he said, "In England there is no question about it, it would be run by the United Nations." And he thought this conservatism in America, although he was a conservative himself, was carried too far.

Anyhow I got onto a boat with Goldmann called Conte di Savoia, which was an Italian luxury liner, and we had a good time on that because it was a very big ship.

Q: This was coming back for the second time?

Perlzweig: No, leaving America.

Q: Oh, coming back towards Europe.

Perlzweig: Towards Europe,<sup>and</sup> of course there were very few people, because who wanted at that point to go into the war in Europe.

Q: Who wanted to get into that?

Perlzweig: And we went, and the first place where we stopped was Gibraltar, and I noticed the war at once because all the Germans -- there were a few Germans on the boat, mostly Jewish --- were taken off ~~by~~<sup>by</sup> the British. I didn't speak to these people, I had no opportunity of doing so, and therefore I don't know why they went to Europe. There must have been compelling personal reasons.

Anyhow we went on to Naples, and we got off at Naples, and at Naples Goldmann said to me, "I have a friend here in Naples whom I want to see, and therefore I can't be with you, but I will meet you in Geneva." In other words, he was onto some. . . I don't want to say mission, it's too big a word, but (something) of his own. It was probably a purely personal thing. He said he was going to see a professor. I think it must have been a female professor, but at any rate I never questioned these things. I knew that Goldmann was a law unto himself especially as regards the other sex, and therefore it was useless (to ask). I once tried, and tried very hard, to convince him that his wife was suffering on account of his what I might call divagations, and he just laughed at me. He was a man utterly without this particular kind of ethical feeling, in which respect of course he was very different from the line which I toed.

Anyhow I walked about the streets of Naples, and people came and talked to me in English. I discovered what I shouldn't have been surprised about, namely that everybody wanted to go to America, and what they spoke to me about was how to go about it, what you did. Well, of course I wasn't very knowledgeable about that. I pointed out that I wasn't an American and therefore I couldn't tell them, but at any rate I had a chance of speaking to the people, and I knew that there was great distress and they wanted to get out. There was one man who insisted, who said he knew of a particularly good wine which they had in little bottles which were due to the <sup>neighboring</sup> ~~volcano~~ volcano's kindly efforts.

Anyhow I remember going into a cafe and having a bottle of this, for which of course I paid. It was obvious that anybody coming from America must be rich whether he was an American or not.

Then I got a ticket to Geneva, and I noticed that you could get a certain amount off if you undertook to go to an exhibition in Rome which the fascists were displaying, of artifacts of one kind or another . . .

(interruption)

I noticed that if you undertook to go to this fascist exhibition there was a reduction in the price of the ticket, so I got a ticket for the fascist exhibition, which meant that I had to get off in Rome, which I had to do anyhow because I needed a Swiss visa. So I went on the train to Rome, and I took a hotel room for a night.



Now as I told you I had been very tough with Mussolini in my publicity, and I was therefore very fearful; since I heard nothing from any authority which was likely to protect me I was very worried as to whether I would be picked up by the fascist police or whatever secret service they had.

So the first day I went to the Fascist Museum which they had put up, and it was predictably very bad. There were all kinds of statues and busts of Mussolini and that kind of thing, and I have no recollection of seeing anything that appealed to me in any way whatever.

But I also had an opportunity of walking along the famous thoroughfare the name of which I don't recall, near the Forum, and there I saw Italian imperialism in bloom. There were big posters put up on which were stuck maps of the Roman Empire as it was in the time of Julius Caesar, that is to say they included everything between the frontiers of Scotland and the Middle East and North Africa. And there were various slogans in Italian there which said THIS IS WHAT USED TO BELONG TO US, BY HISTORIC RIGHT IT STILL BELONGS TO US, AND THEREFORE WE ARE GOING TO GET IT BACK. Well, I didn't much like that.

At any rate I went on walking, and everything I saw was full of significance. I stood in front of a newspaper office, and there they had, in their manner, a newspaper headline in which they disclosed the news of the day, and it happened to be the day, or the day after, when the nazis invaded Scandinavia.

I still remember the word "fulminante" which appeared in large letters, <sup>and</sup> ~~in~~ this tremendous portrait of Hitler. And there were people standing in front of this window, reading this stuff, and it was obvious to everybody that they all hated it. They didn't want to go to war. You don't have to be a sociologist, If you see a crowd of silent people looking very glum <sup>when</sup> ~~who~~ your ally has won a tremendous victory, you know that they don't like it.

Anyhow I went to a restaurant and I had lunch, and I had a chance of talking to the waiter. Of course when I talked in Italy it meant that I gave away the fact that I was a foreigner. I knew very little Italian.

Well, this man -- the Italians are very garrulous, as you know -- was quite open. We talked and I asked him what he thought about the war and all that, and he said, "We don't want to get into it."

Well, as soon as that was over I went to the Swiss Consul General, and there another aspect of the war struck me. I had to ask for a visa--in those days you had to have visas for everything -- and the man who was in charge put a form in front of me which I filled out with my name and address and so on, but it also said RELIGION, so I said to him, "Isn't this against democratic practice? What does religion have to do with the request for a visa?"

He said, "Oh, you don't have to worry about that. You put in your religion, but it won't affect you because you've got a British passport and you are going to Britain. What we want to keep out are German Jews." (pause)

As a matter of fact, as I afterwards discovered, it was the Swiss who insisted with the Germans that they should put in every passport of a German Jew the letter J, and it was done by the Germans at the request of the chief of police of Switzerland, who went to Berlin for the purpose. Of course I didn't know that then, but I realized suddenly that the problem that was worrying me -- what is to happen to the Jews -- was leaving its footprints, if one may mix one's metaphors a bit, everywhere.

And so I went onto the train, which I am bound to say was punctual. You know the famous saying that Mussolini made the trains run on time. I very soon saw as we went north from Rome signs of the war, because coming in the other direction, going south, there was an endless line of trucks filled with coal, and I assumed that the coal was there for the purpose of preparing them for war, that they needed this energy, and they don't produce coal. I assumed it because the line was endless. I began counting them thinking that I would come back to England with some ~~piece~~ piece of valuable intelligence information, but I had to give it up because it became dark and still they were coming.

We got to Geneva, and I didn't stay long in Geneva because I wanted to go back to England, and I took a train back, and I got to London, and in London I did two things. I wrote a report. Now believe it or not, in this mass of papers somewhere there is that report. I found it. . . I was going to say recently, which for me means a couple of years ago.

I wrote a report because I thought that all the things that

I saw the British should know, and I took it to the Foreign Office.

I said everything as honestly as I could, and I said everything. The only thing I concealed was, I didn't mention Brandeis's name. I thought that without his permission that wasn't right, but I don't know that it meant anything, because I said a member, a Justice of the Supreme Court said to me that the only thing he could say for England was that it wasn't as bad as the nazis.

Well, this report, which I think did a lot of good, some of which when I began the journey dealt with matters I hadn't in mind.

(static in tape)

For example, I am fairly certain that one thing that happened was that the salaries of the members of the British Establishment went up, because what had happened was the pound had gone down, and the result was they were suffering real hardship, and I talked rather tough to Butler about it, and the fact that I didn't represent the Government and didn't have anything to do with it carried weight.

There was also the side to it that I wanted Hitler to be defeated. I mean that was my dominant motive all the time, and I knew that England had to do certain things in order to secure that result, and therefore I wanted them to beef up their propaganda for example, or their information. It wasn't called propaganda. They told me that there is something in America called propaganda-phobia, and I can understand that, although the Germans made very

little secret about it.

Anyhow one of the results of this report, which was apparently very well received, -- and to this day I can't understand why, because I said what was obvious, and any good journalistic observer could have seen ~~of~~<sup>it</sup>, and I had no secrets -- it had its reputation spread. One day a man came to me and said, -- this was a man whom I knew -- he said, "You have presented a report to the Foreign Office." And I said yes, and he then disclosed to me that he was on the periphery of their intelligence service. I mean when I saw on the periphery it meant that he was a man who was very anti-Hitler, and they employed him to speak in Hyde Park or on platforms against Hitler, which I think is not much more than peripheral, but at any rate he was on their payroll, and he said to me, "The Secret Service would like to have that report."

I said, "Sure, they can go to the Foreign Office and ask them for it."

He says, "Oh no no no, they don't want to do that."

I said, "But there is not much in it that would be of much interest to the Secret Service, because it would be of interest to anybody living in Britain."

He said, "Anyhow will you see one of them?"

I said, "As long as I don't get involved," because one thing I didn't want to do was to get involved with Intelligence, and I mean intelligence with a big I, not with a small i, and that was partly because intelligence very often has a big I, but it doesn't have a small i.

So I met this man by arrangement through this third person who has since died-- I suppose he died long ago, as I am talking about 1940, and he was much older than I was -- and I met him in the lobby of ~~the~~<sup>a</sup> hotel, and the name he gave me was Colonel Cooper, which he told me wasn't his real name--I mean all this shadow boxing always amuses me, because it doesn't amount to anything-- and he said to me, "You've been to America." I said yes, and he said, "You know, very few people go to America now."

I said, "Yes, I only went because the Government encouraged me, or at least Butler encouraged me to go. I couldn't have gone without their permission."

He said, "There is really one question. When is America coming into the war?" This was 1940.

I said, "There is no question of it at all. Nothing at all will happen of any consequence until after the next election, the next Presidential election."

He said, "The Presidential election? What's that?"

Remember, this man was Number 2 or 3 or 4 of the Intelligence Service.

So as best I could I explained to this innocent ~~man~~<sup>soldier</sup>, which is what he was, what it was/

He said, "You mean to tell me that we've got to wait till November?"

I said, "Yes, and even after November they won't come. It will be a long process."

He said, "Oh all right," and then he asked me some other elementary questions about America, which I answered, and I cite this in order to show you that in Whitehall they didn't really know that the situation was, they didn't understand it.

He then said, "Will you give me a copy of the report?"

I said, "Well, there is nothing secret in it. If you want to have it I think I can give it to you, but what I should like to have kept without publicity is the fact that I wrote such a report, because I ~~didn't~~ <sup>didn't</sup> represent the Government, I was an individual who had gone over at the invitation of the World Jewish Congress of which I am a member in order to speak to the Jews about Hitler."

I gave him a copy of the report and he read it and he wrote me a note -- I think I've still got it somewhere -- and he thought it was wonderful. To him it was all new.

That's all I had to do with them. I mean it was at that point that I met with the British Secret Service, and I didn't think much of it. In fact I was really rather shocked to realize how little prepared the country was for having relations --- decent relations -- with the United States.

Q: It was about that time that Sir William Stephenson came to New York with the approval of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Perlzweig: That's right.

Q: And he did a great deal of work preparatory to the O.S.S.

Perlzweig: Yes. I've read Stephenson's book, and although some people have disputed some things in it, nevertheless if I told you that there was no doubt . . .

I went away from this encounter at the White House with the absolute certainty that Roosevelt would sanction <sup>(what he could)</sup> and do whatever he could to defeat the nazis. He was also a great admirer of the British because of the naval business and so on. Anyhow I had nothing further to do with him, but what happened was that the Consuls in America began sending messages to Whitehall that I was to come back. I hadn't realized that when I was talking, doing . . -- what is the expression? -- working up the multitudes in Buffalo, in Detroit and elsewhere, what I was doing was making it certain that I wouldn't have to come back, because they had no staff, they had no propaganda, and here was I, talking stuff which they liked. I talked from the Jewish angle and about Hitler and all the rest of it, but this is what they wanted.

Q: It fitted in perfectly.

Perlzweig: It fitted in and it didn't cost them anything, and they weren't responsible for me.

So I having seen Whitehall I went and resumed my duties as a rabbi at the synagogue, and my unpaid duties as a member of the



two executives, <sup>of</sup> the World Jewish Congress and of the Zionist organization, and I had a number of interesting contacts. I won't go into details because it would take too long, and this is already too long.

But I did have one contact which I think I would like to record because it had its significance.

I went to a meeting ~~xxxxxxDorchesterHotel~~ which was called at the Dorchester Hotel. I think Weizmann was either staying there or somebody was staying there. It was an unofficial meeting of the Zionist executive. People who were present on the Zionist side were Weizmann and Sharett, who had come from Israel -- I think he was still called Shertok at the time -- and Sir Lewis Namier, or Professor Namier, as he then was, and I was there as a person with a vote, as they say pompously in political affairs.

Sharett had come in order to plead with the Government to allow a Jewish regiment or battalion or formation to be set up in Palestine, because Rommel was in the desert, and they were afraid that they would be wiped out. They wanted to fight. The alternatives they had was either to have a Jewish formation or to join the British forces in some capacity, and he came to plead for it.

There <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ also present in the room -- as I say it was an informal meeting of the executive -- two British officers. One was the famous ~~Lord~~ Orde Wingate, and I am trying to think of the other one's name. He was a colonel and a Member of Parliament, but I can't think of his name. He was of Huguenot descent, I remember.

(speaks very softly, plus static in tape)

Anyhow he said very little. He was very pro-Zionist. He is not alive now, but he made an impression in his day. When I was last in London I found that somebody had written a book about his life.

But the man who dominated the gathering was Orde Wingate. He was a remarkable looking man. He had a tunic which was

(static in tape)

and when he spoke he went into the middle of the room and spoke like an orator, and he had a slightly Napoleonic look about him -- across his forehead there was some of his hair in the way, like Napoleon used to wear.

The subject of discussion was this proposed Jewish formation. Weizmann was to go to Churchill, whom he knew,--and somebody said irreverently, "If he happens to be sober at the time" -- and put to him the case, which didn't really need to be done, because Churchill was a dyed-in-the-wool Zionist. He was at one end of the spectrum in these matters, just as Roosevelt was at the other.

Sharett was saying, "If we don't get the Jewish formation, we don't want to die without fighting, <sup>and</sup> our men will have to join the British forces in one form or another."

And Orde Wingate jumped in the middle of the room, and began not to say but to shout, "You can't do that! You can't do that!

You must have a Jewish formation! Because a Jewish formation will lead to a Jewish State."

I am talking about a man who didn't have a tincture of Jewish blood in him, who was a professional officer in the British Army, and who belonged to a small, obscure Evangelical sect and read the Bible with his daily bread. But he believed in it, and he wanted to see a Jewish State, a Jewish formation, and a resurgence, if he could, of ancient Israel.

He said, "You can't do that." Then he calmed down a bit, and he said, "The Jewish soldier is the best soldier in the world."

And Namier, who was sitting there and who was a man of skeptical temperament, said to him, "The nazis are good soldiers."

So Wingate said, "I fought in many parts of the world -- in France, on the Indian frontier/states and in other places -- and I have seen all kinds of soldiers, and I tell you the best soldiers in the world are the Jews."

So Namier said, "What is it about them that/makes them the best? It's not courage, because all the others have courage."

And he (Wingate) answered with a siggle Hebrew word, which is also a Yiddish word, "Saichel," which I can best translate as intelligence. That is to say the Israeli soldier is not a mere automaton. He is a man who acts on his own initiative. And the officers do too. This is I think one/ of their great advantages certainly as compared with the Russians, who won't move an inch without consulting the headquarters or the head of the regiment or somebody. The Jews leave a great deal to "Saichel."

I mentioned the incident because I saw Wingate and really got to understand the kind of man he was. Wingate could have played a great part in history if he had been allowed to, but he was very unconventional, and the conventional military bureaucracy didn't like him, although Churchill did.

When Weizmann finally went to see Roosevelt much later about a Jewish regiment or a Jewish formation, he proposed that Orde Wingate should be in command. Now both Churchill and Roosevelt regarded Wingate as a genius, which a great many people say he was, with little ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ no controversy against it.

Anyhow this was one of the first encounters that I made when I was back in London, and it went on like that. I went to do my duty at the synagogue, I lived through the most part ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ alone in the house because I'd sent my family to Oxford. I remember once going to a village near Oxford where my father was living ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~  
~~XX~~

and I was astonished by the spirit I saw. He took me out for a walk and I went into the middle of the village, and they had one of these wains, I think that's what they are called -- not trucks -- it wasn't motorized. They put that there at the entrance in order to prevent the Germans to come in. (Laughs)

It was an astonishing spectacle -- people who were going to use agricultural implements to. . .

Q: To hold the Germans back.

Perlzweig: At any rate I went, until the pressure became too great.

Not only did I hear from various sources what the Consulate were asking, but I also got reports from Jewish sources that I had made a difference, which in effect I had, because I was completely free. I had mentioned to you the anti-Semitism that seemed to me to be pervasive even when it was ~~known~~ under the skin, and that was one of the things that made me different -- that I took no notice of it. The others had.

At the time there was an agitator called Father (Charles E.) Coughlin.

Q: Oh yes.

Perlzweig: People have forgotten about Father Coughlin, but he was a tremendous power in the land. He was one of the first of the electronic preachers, and that is why no Jew dared to say -- not even Wise, who was more religious than most -- "We ought to go in on the side of the Allies." It was always "Every assistance short of war." That was the formula.

There were people who had objected to my being there, but they knew I was going back.

But I was able to make a difference, I was able to be indignant about anti-Semitism, which many of them had gotten used to and had adapted themselves to. If I saw some notice which said RESTRICTED, after I had had it explained to me, and I began to say, "It's terrible, it's disgraceful that such a thing should

be tolerated," I began to stir up people a bit. So there was a double pressure, and above all pressure from Wise.

Now the letter I showed you the last time I was here when he was going to invite ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ and were to preach from his pulpit, he still had that idea in mind.

(static in tape)

It was before he began training, or before he established a school of rabbis. He wanted me to be his associate.

(end of tape)

End of Interview No. 13 w/ Dr. Perlzweig by Peter Jessup, June 16th 1982.

DK

Interviewee: Dr. Rabbi Maurice Perlzweig

Interviewer: Peter Jessup

Place: New York City

Interview No. 14 - June 23rd 1982

Q: Good afternoon, Dr. Perlzweig. This is Peter Jessup. Here we are on a beautiful summer day. I think summer began yesterday, technically.

You were in the United States when we last met, on your second war journey.

Dr. Perlzweig: Yes. I had just come on my second journey, which I think was in the latter part of 1940, because from the moment of my return to the United States I was under constant pressure from many sources currently associated with the Government to return -- I had to return, that is to say, to the United States.

What was happening at the time was that the Councils in the United States, who had had what I thought the doubtful benefit of my advice and also were present at the meetings at which I spoke, were very anxious that I should come back and renew

the activities which I had undertaken.

My purpose in these activities was first of all to make sure that the Jewish community knew and understood the nature of the menace to which European Jewry was being subjected, and at the same time quite frankly and openly to support the cause of what were then known as the Allies.

Now I came with that object in mind, and I told my British interlocutors -- ~~including~~ which included Ambassadors, members of the staff of the Foreign Office and other institutions -- that one of my great difficulties in the United States was that I could give them -- the people to whom I spoke -- nothing concrete about the intentions of the British Government when the peace treaty ultimately was made.

The man I spoke to about this in particular was Arthur Greenwood, who was a member of the Cabinet and the Minister charged with the duty of working out lines of the reconstruction of Britain and presumably Europe after the war.

Now I knew Greenwood intimately. At the time when I had been chairman of the University Labor Federation of Great Britain he had been the president, that is to say he occasionally attended meetings, and he was a very strong supporter of this organization, and I had had numerous contacts with him, both on behalf of the Zionist movement and the World Jewish Congress, and he was very willing to be helpful.

He suggested that I should take with me a statement of the British Government on the future, and he asked me to draft it.



I drafted a statement, which as a Foreign Office official afterwards put it, promised the Jews not only the sun and the moon but also the stars, the result of which was that it was reworked by the Foreign Office, and it ended up as a more or less platitudinous statement about the resolve of the British Government to return the liberties which had been destroyed by the nazis and ~~son~~ on. On the subject of Palestine it was particularly feeble, whereas my draft, as you would expect, was rather strong on that.

Anyhow I took what I could get, including what I remember was a grammatical error which the Foreign Office introduced into the draft, and I took it with me to America.

But when I arrived -- which was in the fall, in the autumn, of 1940 -- I found what I can only describe as a rather discouraging atmosphere.

That the Executive -- that is to say the President and his entourage -- were determined to do what they could against the nazis there could not be any doubt. The journey that I made would normally be regarded as a rather perilous one, but during the war it was almost commonplace. The ship that I was on in Liverpool was bombarded from the air by the Germans, and we narrowly escaped serious damage. We were attacked again on the sea off the North of Ireland, but the journey had its consolations.

Halfway across the Atlantic we encountered the celebrated destroyers -- the out-of-date destroyers.

Q: Of the Lend Lease. . . ?

Perlzweig: That were under the Lend Lease arrangement, and what was pathetic was to see the passengers on the boat on which I traveled line up on one side as the destroyers passed and cheer frenetically. Now these people were virtually all -- or at least the great majority of them -- German refugees. To give you an idea of how deeply they felt although they were leaving England how unequal the battle was. Of course the cheering wasn't heard by the American ships because the wind dissipated the noise, but there was no doubt about it being serious.

When I landed at Montreal I went down to New York, and as I say I found the atmosphere discouraging. In the first place, there was this ugly phenomenon of anti-Semitism.

Q : You covered that before.

Perlzweig: Did I mention it? I referred to Father (Charles) Coughlin?

Q: Yes, but you mentioned anti-Semitism in the newspapers, the restricted ads and all that.

Perlzweig: Oh I see. Well, I had this one incident -- I don't know whether I referred to it. I was returning to bring my wife and my two children to the United States, since it was obvious that I was going to stay for some time, and I tried to rent a furnished house, and I found such a house in the New York district of Mount Vernon.

I was driven to the house by the agent who was very amiable and very helpful, and we agreed on the terms, which were suitable. And then he said to me, "According to a long standing arrangement we are supposed to have two references."

I said, "I think I can provide that."

The first from Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador, I said, and his face lit up with a kind of glow. He had this weakness that so many Americans have for aristocracy.

Q: And celebrities.

Perlzweig: And celebrities. Then I said, "The second will be Dr. Stephen Wise," and his face fell. As I put it to somebody afterwards, it fell so suddenly that I almost bent down to the ground to pick it up.

Q: Ah!

Perlzweig: He said, "I am sorry, that won't do."

I said, "Why won't it do?"

He said, "Are you a Jew?"

I said, "I am a rabbi."

He said, "My instructions from the owner of the house -- with which I don't agree, and which I think are very bad -- are that in no circumstances can I let this house to a Jew."

And he drove me back to 42nd Street, where the office of the Congress then was in the McGraw Hill Building, and I walked from 42nd Street right down to the Library. I tried to walk off the immense surge of anger that I felt.

You must remember that I had lived in England roughly 45 years, and I had never encountered or even heard of anything like this. Now when you add to it the fact that great universities like Harvard and Yale and Princeton had restricted numbers of Jews among their students, and a great many other phenomena of that kind, you will understand how I felt that I was living in a kind of negative atmosphere.

But it wasn't without its good points. I began to harass my colleagues in the American Jewish Congress, and I think I had something to do with the fact that they began the agitations which ended this particular form of negativism.

Secondly, there was a Jewish community in which some of those prestigious institutions were anxious to observe what I call discretion. The number of descendants of German immigrants in the American Jewish Committee, for example, was very large, and I have no doubt that they had been influenced by the propaganda of the egregious -- I can't call him by any other word -- Dr. Schacht (Dr. Hjalmar Horace Greeley Schacht) -- who kept on assuring the Jews that the persecution was a temporary phenomenon.

One member of the Committee -- and I would like to emphasize that I don't think he did it on behalf of the Committee -- came to

me and begged me to leave the country, since I was as it were a destabilizing element -- I was always urging the Jews to do something about nazism. Of course I didn't take his advice, but I mention the fact only to show that in addition to the American Jewish Congress with which I worked, and of which the head was Stephen Wise, there were other institutions who thought that the best thing was what is now disguised as quiet diplomacy, which meant whispering things to people. I think the Committee is now convinced that this attitude is clearly wrong.

Now this was not the only negative element. The other element that I found very difficult in this regard were the Irish.

I spoke at a meeting of the American Jewish Congress in Boston, which I will never forget partly because after the meeting I was to go to another meeting in the suburbs, and I set out with a companion in a car, who drove the car, and I never arrived because ~~af~~ the snow that fell was so heavy that it equalled any of the tall stories that Americans were supposed to tell about these things.

I also remember it because I had to spend the night in a house ~~xxx~~ at which I rang the bell only because there was a light, and when the door opened I saw an old friend of many years' standing whom I had last seen at a Zionist congress in Europe. I can't recall his name at the moment, but he happened to be the member of the Massachusetts Legislature who moved the first resolution of support for a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine.

But the reason I am mentioning Boston was because a few days before I arrived the Cardinal Archbishop, whose name was (William)

O'Connell, issued a blast against people who were trying to get the United States involved in the war, and this was a clear reference to my coming to Boston, because the meeting at which I spoke was widely publicized.

Now of course the authorities had to take this bloc of opinion, which was very important, into consideration.

A third, and quite unexpected, source of embarrassment to me in what I was trying to do was the Communist Party,

People have forgotten that at this stage, in 1940-1941, the communists and the nazis were working very closely together.

Q: As a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

Perlzweig: Yes, that's right, it was one of the products of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. And they were doing it with extra zeal in the United States. I don't know whether this was in order to cover up their sense of guilt. It was a very great lesson to me, which I have never forgotten, that when you are dealing with despotisms, whether they are nazi or Soviet or what are now rather delicately called autocracies, what matters is not what they believe, because they will work with anyone who will further their principles, but how scrupulous they are in what they do. For that reason I regard all the present discussion about the difference between autocracy and totalitarianism as really so much nonsense, and I think that what has happened in Argentina as I am speaking

caused me a little anxiety because it showed that they were familiar with discussions very high up in the British hierarchy.

Churchill did, as it now appears, try to divert these bombings from military installations and from big agglomerations of human beings as in London. He was able to do this because the British were in command of certain German double agents. They had captured these people and turned them into double agents.

Q: Oh yes.

Perlzweig: And therefore the double agents sent messages which had this in mind. This was of course perfectly legitimate. It didn't always work, but the idea was to persuade the Germans to drop their bombs as nearly as possible in the open country. In other words, there was a glimmer of truth -- more than a glimmer of truth, a glimmer of information that they had illicitly got by saying that it was possible in one way or another to divert the bombing from places you wanted them to avoid.

The idea that they bombed the working class districts and not the affluent districts is absolute nonsense. They bombed large areas of docks in the East End of London, which is very near working class districts, and those working class districts did suffer, but I didn't myself live in a working class district and I had myself watched until I returned and went into my house -- I ~~was~~ watched from my garden, as I think I have already

reported, one German plane which dropped a bomb very near this elegant district called the Hampstead Gardens suburb in which I lived.

Q: You did recount that.

Perlzweig: Yes, I did recount that. But the point is that there was this vicious piece of deliberate falsehood reported. I never in my life, although I've read many thousands of accounts of meetings and speeches, read anything which was so clearly a piece of deliberate misinformation.

This clipping was sent to me by Arthur Lourie, whose name I think you know.

Q: Yes.

Perlzweig: He was a very important person in the Israeli diplomatic service with whom I had worked for many years in the Zionist movement, especially when he was the political secretary of the Zionist Executive, a post to which he was succeeded by Sir Lewis Namier, the celebrated historian.

So here were all these various influences not only working against the Allies, but in various ways impinging on what I was trying to do, and I found the situation very difficult.

Now I want to emphasize that I am talking about the New York



of 1940-1941-1942. It was a different universe than the New York of 1982, and I am not criticizing New York as such, but certain elements in the life of the United States which ~~had~~ <sup>have</sup> an unfortunate habit of resurfacing from time to time.

The next time this kind of attitude resurfaced and was then exhibited by the American Firsters was in the time of McCarthy (Senator Joseph McCarthy), and then with a difference. There was an attempt made in Europe to attribute anti-Semitic tones to McCarthyism.

The extraordinary thing is that for one reason or another there was absolutely no basis for it. Now if I survive long enough I will come to that episode, because I was flooded with cables from Europe, especially in connection with the famous trial of the Rosenbergs.

Some of McCarthy's most objectionable assistants were Jews, and for one reason or another that didn't surface, but what did surface was this outbreak of xenophobia and this suspicion of foreigners, and ~~as~~ especially of people who emanated from the great academic institutions of the East Coast. This is something which still has to be overcome. It's for the moment a permanent element in American life, and one of the things that a foreigner finds very difficult to adapt himself to.

Anyhow, in spite of that I went on. I cannot now record -- it would take too long -- all the things that I did. I am anxious to cut down on this narrative because it has already gone on too long, but my activity varied from visiting various embassies in

Washington as well as the State Department, with a view to getting more help for the Jewish communities which were in difficulties.

It included speaking at innumerable meetings on the most varying kind, both Jewish and non-Jewish, and of course there was the work that I did after the first few months abroad, anywhere between Costa Rica and Singapore, which would take a whole volume to describe.

But I realized then, and it influenced everything that I did and dominated my mind and it has from that day to this, that what was really at stake at that moment in Jewish and world history was the fact that a great power, which is what Germany was, had decided to get rid of the Jews not only of Germany but of Europe. This was a view which had been maturing in my mind from 1932, when I startled and upset the Jewish community of Britain in my address -- my presidential address -- of the First Lodge of England of B'nai B'rith.

I have recently been able to see the report of that address which appeared in The Jewish Chronicle in London. They were kind enough to let me look at some of their back numbers and even gave me a copy of it.

The report is very flattering in many respects. It says that it was vigorous and all the other things that you say about somebody who is a rabble rouser and you don't quite want to say it. But it very carefully leaves out the statements I made about what the nazis were capable of doing, and it leaves out above all the

text of the translations of the songs that their masses were singing as they marched through the streets of German cities, which quite openly promised to get rid of the Jews by the use of a long knife.

I was deeply convinced that the one thing to do was to get as many as possible out of Europe, and a great deal of my unofficial diplomatic activity arose out of that conviction, and among other things it was the origin of my long relationship with the Spanish Embassy in Washington. This is a matter which has not yet been considered sufficiently by historians, though a number of books have come out about it.

I would like to recall the announcement of an address that I delivered at the Northwestern Reform Synagogue of which I have already spoken, in 1939, when from sources that I no longer remember, or from the ingenuity of piecing together different pieces of information, I had announced to a world which didn't expect it that there was a scheme being discussed by Governments to remove the Jews of Europe to Ethiopia.

What I didn't say when I referred to it last time was that I got a letter from Germany written by a rabbi in Berlin called Max Nussbaum. He has, one might say, a footnote in history because he was the rabbi who many years later converted Elizabeth Taylor (the actress) to Judaism. That was when he was rabbi of what was called The Temple in Hollywood.

Anyway he wrote me a letter and enclosed a rather long

clipping from the Volkischer Beobachter (which means Popular Observer) which was the official nazi newspaper, I have no doubt I have it somewhere, or at least I hope I have it somewhere if it hasn't been eaten by mice or some other animals or insects, but I haven't seen it for some years. As I remember it, it first began by a quite false biography. It said I was a German-Jewish refugee, which of course I was not, -I had nothing to do with Germany-- and that I was befouling the land of my birth. It then went on to say that this was a scheme with which Mussolini -- whom I had attacked and whom I had accused of promoting the scheme -- had had nothing to do, but it was thought up by the American Ambassador in Rome, whose name was Phillips.

I recall that because it confirms what R.A. Butler often said to me at the Foreign Office -- that the Governments of Europe were deeply concerned about the Jewish question and were discussing how to handle it. He wouldn't tell me anything about any details, about what their decision was or how it had come about, but he repeated this to me on several occasions, and it was partly that which. . . He used to say that he was glad to be able to talk to me because he had attended these meetings.

Anyhow this was one attempt to get rid of the question by banishing the Jews to Ethiopia and to British Somaliland, Djibouti and such places, tropical places w-hich were quite unsuited for the settlement of German Jews.

I thought that Jewish policy ought to be at the time to secure the exist<sup>8</sup> of the Jews, and the paradox was this. In the early days -- before the war, at any rate -- the Germans, although they placed obstacles in the way of emigration, did not forbid it. When I say they placed obstacles what I mean is that they wouldn't allow the Jews to take their property with them, and in other ways made it very difficult for people to undertake the act of emigration, which is after all for a man with a family a very difficult act to undertake. But they let them go if they were willing to sacrifice their property, and if they were willing to pay various taxes which in fact had been imposed on people going abroad in Germany, or settling abroad, even before the nazis.

But the trouble was that there was nowhere to go. The United States, which could have dealt with a great part of the problem quite easily, wasn't -- in the atmosphere which I have already described -- prepared to do it. There was one disgraceful example of that. There was a ship called the St. Louis, which left Europe with people who were going to Cuba. All the people -- several hundred of them -- on board this ship had visas to Cuba, but before they got to Cuba the Cuban Government canceled the visas. The result was that the ship cruised for some time off the coast of Florida, and in spite of frenetic efforts on the part of various Jewish organizations, neither the Justice Department or the State Department could be persuaded to allow these people to land, even if only temporarily.

This is an astonishing story, but it's true, and it gives you some idea of the way in which the rest of the world kept the Jews out.

Q: And this was the ship that eventually went back to Hamburg?

Perlzweig: Yes, it went home. It went back to Europe. I don't think it went to Hamburg -- the war was already on -- but it went back to Europe, and the people on it went back to the countries, or were taken back to the countries from which they had made the journey: Holland, Belgium, France and so on. Most of them of course in due course were caught by the advance of the Germans. You were possibly thinking of another ship called the Exodus, which was many years later, which was sent back to Germany from Palestine. But that was when the war was over.

At any rate here is an example of that.

Q: No, I was thinking of the ship that went to the Dominican Republic, and Trujillo (Rafael Trujillo Molina) accepted a certain number of people.

Perlzweig: Yes, yes. I was going to say there were two other places in the world where Jews could go and did go. One was Shanghai.

Q: Oh!

Perlzweig: There was at one point a vast Jewish community at Shanghai. It had been before the war a very prosperous community in the international settlements, with synagogues and. . .

Q: With Sephardic people like Sir Victor Sassoon.

Perlzweig: Yes. There were a great number of Sephardic people who had come from India for example, having originally come from Iraq generations ago.

But there was a very large and prosperous community, and I used to receive and would read with great appreciation magazines in English published by Jews in Shanghai. There were no visa requirements -- anybody could go to Shanghai, and those that could went. Sometimes a good many of them, or their children, are now in New York.

I have forgotten who it was, but there was a member of (President Jimmy) Carter's Cabinet. . .

Q: Oh, Blumenthal who grew up in Shanghai.

Perlzweig: He grew up in Shanghai, and he was one of the refugees who went there, and then afterwards made his way to the United States. So there was Shanghai.

And there was also the Dominican Republic. Trujillo was quite prepared to accept Jewish refugees, and he did, but it wasn't a

large number -- it was several hundred, I think, <sup>and</sup> I saw some of them years later--and in fact he went so far as to build a synagogue in the capital city, and in other ways to show his friendliness. This was one of my sources of trouble afterwards, when the Jewish community in Santo Domingo sent delegates to our congresses and made attempts to rehabilitate Trujillo in that way.

But at any rate, with these two exceptions, there was nowhere in the world, <sup>and</sup> unless the immigrant had some special access to a friend, to a Government, so far as mass emigration was concerned, or even communal ~~in~~ emigration, there was none.

There was one document that I wish I could produce now which I wrote. It sounds very odd. I haven't found it yet, and I may write to the magazine myself to find out.

I once wrote a whole copy, a whole issue of The New Republic. What happened was that one of my friends, Rabbi Philip Bernstein then of Rochester, New York, told me that The New Republic was prepared to publish a special number dealing with the question of the position of the Jews in Europe, and asked me whether I would contribute to it. So I said I would, and I went to a lunch -- I wish I could remember who was there in addition to Bernstein, but I can only be sure of Max Lerner, the others I am afraid I have forgotten -- and the contents of this number were divided up, and I was assigned the Introduction.

So I wrote the Introduction. The others were more because nobody knew anything about it. That was why I was called in.



That in a sense was a justification for my being in the United States.

The editor read this Introduction and liked it. He liked it so much he said, "Look, it won't do to have this Introduction as it is, because the others will be written in American, and yours is written in British. The only way of dealing with the problem is, write all the articles."

I remember going to Maine -- it was during the summer -- and I sat down and wrote the articles, and the issue appeared without my name on it, by the editors, which is what The New Republic still does.

The thrust of these articles was to look at the figures of emigration to the United States, for which I did quite a good deal of research on the subject, as I remember, and I was able to show that the United States could without even changing the law, if it eased the conditions, include tens of thousands of people who would otherwise be lost. (? voice trails off)

I do not know what effect it had. I know that the White House bought a hundred copies, and that there were others that bought it too. But at any rate this is what I was after -- to get countries to admit Jewish immigrants in order to save their lives.

Now this leads me on to the next episode which I wanted to have on record, and that is, as I said a little bit earlier -- before I lost the thread of my discourse -- my connection with Spain.

It all arose because Stephen Wise one day said to me that there was a lady in France -- in the part held by Vichy -- who had escaped<sup>to</sup>/France from Warsaw and who was the wife, and afterwards the widow, of one of the rabbis in Warsaw who ~~was~~ was regarded by Western Jews, not by Eastern Jews, as one of their leading scholars. And he said the Spaniards if they would could persuade Vichy to let her go.

So I said to him, "Well, all right. Are you going to the Spanish Embassy? Do you want me to arrange that?"

He said, "No! I wouldn't be seen dead in the Spanish Embassy."

And this was one of the difficulties I had to overcome. In the whole world at the time, with good reason, it was assumed that (Generalissimo Francisco) Franco, who owed everything to Hitler, was his obedient servant and was so tight up with him that if you said that you were antinazi you were necessarily anti-Franco.

Now <sup>Wise</sup> ~~he~~ said to me, "You are the head of the political department, and it's your business to deal with it, so go to ~~in~~ Washington and deal with it."

Now I didn't feel as <sup>helpless</sup> hopeless as he felt about it. I heard two/sides of it. (?)

First of all I had myself crossed through Spain when I went to America on the first occasion late in 1939, and on the train -- apart from the fact that I wasn't interfered with, I mean I was searched and so on, but nobody tried to stop me even though I had a British passport, which was not particularly pleasing to the Spaniards -- on the train on which I/traveled there were others

who didn't have my advantages -- Dutch and French and German and other refugees -- who had apparently had no difficulty in obtaining a Spanish transit visa.

Well, this was something which in the light of what I have said I couldn't overlook.

Secondly, in my own office -- and in fact the man who became the secretary general of the World Jewish Congress, who was then known as Kubovizki, who afterwards when he went to Israel changed his name, Hebrewized his name, into ~~HEBREW~~ Kubovy, had himself --

Q: Arie Kubovy?

Perlzweig: Kubovy, K.U.B.O.V.Y., who was an ambassador to the Argentine, and was generally politically very important, and he was there sitting at the same table as I was, and he had come through Spain, and apparently without difficulty. So I realized that in this respect Spain was different.

Anyway I went to Washington, and I might interpose at this point that I never had any difficulty in Washington. I only had to say I was coming on behalf of Dr. Stephen Wise, and all doors were opened, whether embassies or Government, or whatever it was. He had an extraordinary influence which is only now beginning to be understood. However (this time) I had difficulty.

My first visit to the Spanish Embassy, after I made the appointment, was even comic. That is to say I was greeted at the door by a gentleman wielding a broom and wearing a green apron,

who was evidently a functionary at the Embassy, who told me that the Ambassador was not at home, that in fact he had to go off to deal with members of the Japanese Embassy who were being released or something of the kind. The Spanish Embassy had taken over the representation of the Japanese.

I remember going back and writing a memo, and I wish I had the memo because somebody who was very high up in the City Government said he never laughed so much in his life. I tried to get over my sense of frustration by resorting to humor.

Well, I waited, and then I tried again. This time I succeeded. It was rather obvious that the Ambassador would rather not have dealt with me, but after I was persistent he had come to the conclusion that I might have something interesting to say.

I do not recall what happened to the lady about whom I have spoken, except that I do know that the Ambassador undertook to try and get her out, and I think he did.

But at any rate I began a long series of conversations, and I used to go to see him even when there was no particular matter which needed resolution at the moment.

Q: This was Ambassador Juan de Cardenas?

Perlzweig: Yes, his name was Juan de Cardenas. He was a very kindly man, and afterwards, when ~~HEXMAN~~ we were able to talk quite freely after his retirement and I saw him in Madrid, he used to

refer to "we liberals." He was a man of very great humanity, and he had another quality, which is the last thing I would look for in a Spanish Ambassador -- he was deeply interested in the poetry of John Milton. Now you wouldn't think that a man who stands in our minds for Puritanism would be a favorite poet in another language of a Spanish Ambassador, but he was, and of course I had had something remotely to do with Milton, having been the president of the John Milton Society at Christ College (in Cambridge), and having lived in what were reputed to be his rooms.

So we had this rather exotic link, and he began to open up and tell me a great many things. It was quite obvious that he was no friend of Franco, and that he had been sent to Washington because it was a very important post and he was a very experienced diplomat with a great reputation in Europe.

Now the moment of truth arrived when I came to him one day on a visit to have lunch with him -- NB and I can remember the scene very well, he was ~~making~~ making his dry martini, for which at that time in Washington he was apparently famous, and which he always made himself -- when he said to me, "Why are you looking so downcast?"

And I said, "I've had very bad news."

He said, "What was the news?"

I said, "The reports that I am getting from our correspondents in Europe is that Spain is on the point of introducing the Nuremberg Decrees."

He suddenly sat down and looked at me in astonishment, and when he recovered he began to laugh, so I said to him, "What is there that's so funny about it?"

He said, "What is funny about it is that if this were true the first to be touched by it would be the Generalissimo." And he proceeded to tell me -- this is what he said -- that Franco's father was <sup>a man</sup> of Portuguese-Jewish descent who had married a Catholic.

Now after a great deal more reading and research on the subject I am a little doubtful -- in fact I am more than doubtful -- as to whether this is the last word on the subject. I have no doubt about the Jewish descent, but I don't know ~~xxx~~ whether his father was of Portuguese Jewish descent or whether he had married a Catholic in order to conceal the whole thing ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ and <sup>whether</sup> that the lady he actually married wasn't herself of Jewish descent, which I am now inclined to believe.

Then he went on to tell me about how his interest in Jewish matters arose. He said that his first post was that of Spanish Minister to Bucharest, to which the <sup>late</sup> ~~xx~~ King Alfonso had appointed him, and then he went by train, as people did in those days -- I mean in the days before airplanes -- and when the carriage stopped at Sarajevo three men came in. Then when the train began to move they began to speak in what he thought was medieval Spanish, and as you may imagine he was deeply shaken by this, and he spoke to them in Spanish, and discovered that the language that they were speaking was ladino, which is one of the names given to the language

which the Sephardic Jews, or many of them, speak.

This aroused his interest, so much so that when he came to Bucharest where they told him there was a Sephardic community, he got in touch with them -- he felt a certain obligation -- and he became so intimate that he ended up by marrying a Rumanian Jewish wife.

So this is what he described to me as the beginning of his Jewish education, and I must say -- I don't want to go into too great detail here because it would take too long -- that during the period that he was in Washington he did everything he could to be helpful in taking people out.

Now he was very frank with me, and he said to me, "Look, I have difficulty with my people in Madrid, who say, What are we getting out of all this?"

So I said to him, "Your answer is that you get the good will and the understanding of people in the democratic world, which after the war you will reap."

I had nothing else to offer him, but he accepted that, and he argued, as the papers which have been preserved (?) show, that this was worthwhile.

There have been a number of books published on this subject to which I must refer because they arise out of the subject matter about which I have recited the facts.

I don't know whether I can. . .

There are two, One of them published by somebody at the Hebrew University.

Q: That we mentioned -- the Bela Vago book.

Perlzweig: No no, this is not Vago, this is Spain. Bela Vago is Rumania.

Q: Oh yes, Spain, The Jews, and Franco by Haim Avni.

Perlzweig: The book is called Spain, The Jews, and Franco by Haim Avni, and it's published by the Jewish Publication Society of America in Philadelphia. The book has a special relevance because it was published under the guidance of a professor at the University who had been highly critical of some of my activities. He had published many works. . . er. . . uh. . .

I am just looking to see whether I can find. . .

Q: His name?

Perlzweig: Yes. . . (pauses to think) His first name I think was Yehuda. . . I hate to waste the time. . .

Q: You keep talking, and I'll look for the name.

Perlzweig: He was a professor who came into my life so to speak.



In 1975, I wrote an article for The Jewish Chronicle of London on the subject of Franco. It was the time when he died, and this number of The Jewish Chronicle, which is in many ways ~~xxxxxx~~ the most influential Jewish newspaper anywhere in the world outside of Israel, had three pieces on Franco. There was my article -- not the whole of it, there wasn't room for everything that I wrote -- there was an editorial on the death of Franco, and there was an obituary on Franco, and this professor -- whose name I think was Yehuda Bauer, B.A.U.E.R. -- wrote a very angry letter to The Jewish Chronicle in which he said, "You gave three signs of respect in your last issue to Franco, whom you should have ignored because he was a friend of Hitler."

Well, he also said that there was being researched at that time a work on Franco and the Jews by one of his pupils at the Hebrew University, and this would in due course come out and be translated into English.

Well, this is the work -- the one I referred to -- and in considering what it says one has to take into account the fact that the presence of this Professor Yehuda Bauer hovers over it, and the result is that it is highly critical, and sometimes more critical than the facts justify, of my relations with the Spanish Government. In fact it almost begins by quoting a letter which I wrote some years later and which the Spaniards included in a kind of white paper or pamphlet which they disseminated in various languages all over the world. They overlooked the fact

that it would have been courteous to give me a copy, and I've never actually seen it.

But the letter I wrote on behalf of the World Jewish Congress , or a large part of it at any rate in what I think is a very bad translation, is included in this book.

Now just to give one example of the way in which it is slanted in a critical direction, he refers to the fact that I undertook to broadcast on an American station which would reach all parts of the country a statement in favor of, or praising Spain for what it had done to allow Jews to go through Spain in order to emigrate.

Now the fact is -- as I ascertained by accident, I happened to find a print of this broadcast which was at Northwestern University -- that not only is it untrue that I spoke at a station that could be heard all over the United States, which I think at that time could hardly exist, but it is equally untrue to say that I singled out Spain for special praise.

What I said there -- and I have it in print -- is that I would like to see Britain and the United States admit people with the same liberality as such neutrals as Sweden, Spain and Switzerland. And I quite deliberately sandwiched Spain in between Sweden and Switzerland in order that it should not be conspicuous, because

I was very well aware, as this man Avni himself remarks at some point, that the whole of this relationship had its element of ~~sub~~ embarrassment.

I just cite that as an example of exaggeration. He says that I was much too full of praise, and therefore I assumed <sup>that I</sup> ought to be told now that I shouldn't have done it.

On the other hand there is another book written by a Professor Harry S. May of the University of Tennessee, which takes note of my views, that is to say it includes my article ~~in the~~ -- the article which I wrote for The Jewish Chronicle -- in his bibliography. On the other hand he says, and it has been repeated in numerous articles, he suggests that I didn't go far enough.

He says, "Franco got for all this -- for all the things he did to protect Sephardic Jews and so on -- only the thanks of Maurice Perlzweig of the World Jewish Congress, and a slap in the face by Abba Eban."

Well, the slap in the face, I ought to explain, was when Israel voted against the membership of Spain in the United Nations, on the ground that it was an ally of Hitler.

But what else could I have done except to write a letter in the most solemn way which I could?

I reminds me of saying with the late Claude Montefiore, "If you want Hitler to change, send him a barrel of herrings, and he'll like it."

What was I to do to Franco?

What happened was that when we were summing up the situation towards the end of the war the meeting of the World Jewish Congress took place at Atlantic City, I think in 1944, ~~and~~ the first meeting

attended by Jews from lands which had once been under Hitler's command -- such as North Africa and parts of Southern Europe -- I proposed to the full meeting of this international executive that letters should be sent -- letters of appreciation that is -- to the International Red Cross, to the Vatican, which had been helpful, and to the Spanish Government. And this was adopted unanimously on the basis of the fact that I was able to adduce.

So I wrote a letter to de Cardenas on behalf of and in the name of the World Jewish Congress, expressing in what I thought was adequate language the sense of appreciation we felt that during one of the most trying times in Jewish history the Franco Government had facilitated the passage of Jews through Spain, and had intervened diplomatically in a number of countries, including Germany itself, to save Sephardic Jews and other Jews -- because the word Sephardic <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ very liberally interpreted-- from massacre.

Now Professor May says that there wasn't enough of that, and he thinks I could have done more than that, even though even what I did was regarded by Avni as being ~~xxxx~~ almost treacherous.

Now it's perfectly true that de Cardenas in writing to Madrid says, "The fact that I received Rabbi Perlzweig made it possible for me to communicate with places and institutions which I otherwise couldn't have done." And that is perfectly true, and I say again, this I did because I thought the one thing that mattered was to get Jews out of Europe.

Now why did he do it? Because clearly, although de Cardenas must have had some weight with him he was not a favorite of Franco. There were all sorts of reasons.

One was, I think, his very close relationship with -- what was the name of the head of the Vichy regime -- Marshal Petain. He and Petain worked together at St. Cyr. One of the things he didn't like about Hitler was that Hitler wanted to take over the French territory of North Africa, which would have been devastating to Petain. This is one of the things that I think counted with him.

The other thing which mattered, and which I had written for The Jewish Chronicle but which they didn't include for reasons of space, was that the 40's of this century was a time when to admit to having a Jewish grandmother or a Jewish grandfather was practically committing suicide. This had actually happened in Hungary, where a man who was the Premier, when it was discovered that he had a Jewish grandmother committed suicide -- there was nothing else he could do. Well, he would have been in the same position.

And I think the other thing, the thing that mattered to him the most, was his Spanish nationalism. He was utterly determined not to allow the Germans, even though the Gestapo was there, to have any military grip on Spain, and anyone who reads the documents already available will be fully convinced of that.

There is one document which anybody who reads it will find interesting, and that is the Diaries of Count (Galeazzo) Ciano, the son-in-law of Mussolini. He records in these diaries that Hitler told Mussolini that rather than sit down again with Franco he would prefer to have three teeth pulled out of his head. He loathed Franco.

He met Franco -- I think it was in 1940, I don't recall the exact date -- at Hendaye, France, and all the proposals that Hitler made to him he rejected. The chief proposal was to be allowed to go through Spain and to take Gibraltar from the rear. To that he said no, because it meant German troops on Spanish soil. He wouldn't allow him even to send an airplane which would stay overnight on Spanish soil. Anyone who goes through these details will be convinced that Franco thought, and probably correctly, that once Hitler was in Spain with troops to enforce his will, or look like enforcing his will, then Franco was finished.

And so all of these things, together with the question of his Jewish origin --

Now Professor May of the University of Tennessee in his book goes into this question in very great detail, and I confess that I haven't read all of it because he shows that some of the genialities that were concocted to prove the purity of Franco's Spanish descent and so on ~~xxx~~ were concocted in other words.

But he gives what I think is a very plausible account of the way in which the Franco family -- not only Francisco, but his father, his grandfather and his great-grandfather -- all of them strove so hard to go to the institute where they could register -- I've forgotten what the Spanish expression is -- purity of the blood, which is a very old Spanish phrase, and which one Spanish Ambassador in London explained to me that it didn't really mean race, but meant something which had to do with feudalism. Now

whether that is so or not I don't know, but at any rate the family, both Franco is a Jewish name and his wife's name is a Jewish name. And according to what he writes in a book or what he has gathered, Franco was not only a man of Jewish descent but a man of Jewish feeling.

Now I say that because I went to Spain subsequently I think three or four times -- I don't remember how often exactly -- on one of which I went to see de Cardenas in Madrid, living in retirement, on the occasion on which he referred to "we liberals," and what we used to try and do in working together, but I met a good many other people.

One man I met there was Salama -- I think it was Salama, or was it Salaman, I am not quite sure of that -- who was a wealthy industrialist who had been and was a friend of Hitler. I cannot date this, but he was very willing to talk, and most anxious that I should see Franco. This was at a time when I still could not, without the consent and the knowledge of my colleagues, go to see Franco, because that would have been a kind of closing of the accounts, which was too soon for not only the Jewish but the liberal. . .

So I declined his invitation, but I accepted his invitation to his own parties, which was a great revelation to me. <sup>When</sup> I was introduced -- I am talking about the 1950's or thereabouts, when Franco was still in command -- when I was introduced at his home -- Salama I think his name was -- to the Ambassador of <sup>S</sup>audi Arabia, and I was introduced as the delegate of the World

Jewish Congress, I expected to be knocked down. Well, I wasn't. He cordially shook hands with me, and we had one of the usual trivial conversations.

I saw the Andalusian dancing girls that he had hired, and I looked at them with astonishment because they looked to me in their features exactly the same as the Jewish girls that I see here walking down West End Avenue.

Q: Ah!

Perlzweig: They are very probably genetically connected.

At any rate Salama -- that's the name, I've got it now -- told me that he was very close to Franco when he began his revolution, and went so far as to say that he lent the first airplane to Franco to fly to Spain to head the revolution.

He told me that when Spanish generals spoke against the Jews as they quite often did -- even though they had very few Jews to refer to as the cause of it in Spain -- he rebuked them. He was very conscious of his Jewish connections, and I have come across other instances of that.

There was a man who wrote a book about Spain and the Jews, in which he referred to Franco as a Sephardic name, which it is -- you can find hundreds of Francos in New York, or at least scores of them, hundreds may be too much -- and he sent this to Franco, and Franco sent him back a letter saying that what he had written



about was near to his heart and did not show any objection to his references to his Jewish origin. And this has appeared in Spanish publications without any contradiction. So there is truth in it.

Now you may ask, what does this amount to? What did this actually do? Well, here again it's a question of space and time.

There was an American Ambassador in Madrid ten years after the war -- I am just trying to find his name --

Q: ~~Wasxxx~~ Who was a Columbia University historian?

Perlzweig: No, much later than that.

Q: Not Claude Bowers?

Perlzweig: No, it was later than that, ten years after the war.

Q: Well, for a long time we didn't have an Ambassador there.

Perlzweig: Well, it may be that there was a hiatus and he came back after the hiatus, but he wrote an Op-Ed piece for the Times.

Q: This former Ambassador?

Perlzweig: The Ambassador, in which he said that at least 200 Jewish lives were saved, and I ~~was~~ am inclined to think -- it's natural in a sense to think that that's an exaggeration.

Q: Are you talking about Spanish Jews?

Perlzweig: Well, Jews. The word "Spanish" was very broadly interpreted. There were two kinds of people who were saved. You could roughly -- very, very roughly -- divide them into two kinds: those people who were saved because they were not stopped at the Spanish frontier and went right through to Portugal or wherever it might be, and then on to overseas countries. There were thousands of them. Some of them, as I've said, I've seen myself. And that, from my point of view -- getting them out of the heart of Europe -- was something to be pressed for.

The others were interventions in favor of Sephardic or so-called Sephardic Jews who had already been rounded up.

I read in a Jewish newspaper here in New York a letter which unfortunately I was too stupid not to keep, which a man who had been at Bergen-Belsen or some such place testified that while he was there he was told that Franco had communicated with Berlin and as a result they were going to be released and sent to Spain.

There were Sephardic Jews in Greece, there were Sephardic Jews in North Africa, there were Sephardic Jews everywhere, and where it was necessary the Spanish Government intervened to prevent them from being murdered. And I knew quite a number of them, whether it was Bulgaria or Greece, who were of Sephardic descent and spoke ladino, who were admitted, admittedly in limited numbers, into Spain.

What was the total? I don't think anybody could tell you with any certainty, but there is a kind of consensus which is being jelled into position which puts it between 40,000 and 70,000 people who survived because of the intervention of Spanish influence.

Now if it was so, tens of thousands of people  
(voice trails off)

then I would have more than justified anything that I did, and this was one of the ways in which I made a particular effort with the Spaniards, and succeeded to such a degree that I am now stuck with this account whatever I may do about it.

My article which flows from it has been the basis of a discussion, and academics even in this country have felt to take part.

Now I went to Spain later to try and get more information. I met with a number of people who told me not only ten years but 20 years after the war how they had succeeded in helping people to escape with the benevolence of the Spanish authorities -- to escape out of Europe.

I've no doubt but that many thousands of people owe their lives to the help that they received, directly or indirectly, from the Spanish Government.

Trying to find out what people thought about this Jewish business, I didn't find that very easy because I didn't find that the Spaniards were worried about Jews as much as other people were.

One Spanish Ambassador whose name I remember, Lecarica, when I told him after the Six Day War that I had written the Spaniards were very jubilant about it, his surprising answer was, "Why shouldn't they be? Practically all of them have Jewish blood."

Where I found a little bit of hesitation was in the Foreign Ministry, which is conducted, I must tell you, in the most extraordinary way. People come there, they are not there for the greater part of the day, they come there at night, and I had very great difficulty in keeping appointments there. I found them not hostile to the Jews, quite different from their attitude towards the Protestants to whom they were very hostile, I think I helped them in one unexpected way -- the Protestants, I mean -- by handing over copies of Commonweal, a Catholic newspaper, which reproved Spain for not being sufficiently tolerant of the Protestants. This was a Catholic paper, and they took this from me with very great appreciation as a way of <sup>showing</sup> ~~indicating~~ some people that even the Catholics in the United States were worried about the Protestants and the treatment they were receiving.

When I asked them what the difference was, the answer was very simple, "The Jews don't convert people. The Protestants do." What they were worried about was that if they tolerated the Protestants too much they would go about making converts.

Now the statement of course was not strictly true, but the Jews in Barcelona and elsewhere where I went lived up to it.

That is to say if a Jewish man or woman wanted to marry someone who wanted to be converted to Judaism it wasn't done in Spain -- they went to Paris and had it done there.

But there was a difference in the attitude towards the Jews and the attitude towards the Protestants. The attitude towards the Protestants was definitely colored by theological ideas.

<sup>towards</sup>  
That ~~if~~ the Jews was not.

Now when I asked the people at the Foreign Office in 1959 for example -- I wanted the Spanish Government to send a delegate to the congress that we were going to have in Stockholm, and I wanted every Government which had a Jewish community to be represented to see what was going on. I wanted them to agree that the Jewish community in Barcelona, which was at that time <sup>the</sup> only one which was really properly organized, should send a delegation to Stockholm, and I wanted the Government itself to be represented there. Well, believe it or not I succeeded in getting the Government to send a representative to Stockholm, to sit in the Parliament Building which we had hired for the purpose, to sit in the seats assigned to diplomats. The people whom I couldn't get to Stockholm were the Jews of Barcelona, because they couldn't agree among themselves as to who was to represent them.

But at any rate the representative turned up from Spain, and he got very much involved in the affairs, and you can imagine my astonishment when he came to me full of anger, and reported

that he had heard the debate on the Sephardic Jews in Israel, and he said to me, "What are you doing to my Sephardic Jews?"

They got very interested in it. Where I could not get them to open their mouths was on the subject of Franco's descent.

Once in Madrid, when I was told that they'd have to think very carefully about whether a Spaniard should go to Stockholm, I did what I think was ~~diplomatically~~ diplomatically a very unwise thing. I said, "We would have thought that Franco, that the Generalissimo, who is of Jewish descent, would have been sufficiently interested in an assembly of this kind to be represented."

This was followed by a dead silence. It wasn't the end of the business. I thought I'd messed the whole thing up, but they came back after, at another meeting, and this time there was a long palaver on how the word "Franco" could have arisen. It had nothing to do with race, according to one man. It was probably somebody who was made free, and who therefore was called "Franco." He was given the privileges of aristocracy or something, and was called "Franco."

What they wouldn't say was anything at all -- they wouldn't deny it and they wouldn't affirm it, that he had any Jewish descent.

Salama, who was certainly very devoted to nationalism in Spain and who was also a good Jew who subscribed to the United Jewish Appeal and other things and went to Jerusalem, every time

Abba Eban or somebody put out a statement which wasn't very friendly to Franco, objected to it. Salama was very clear about it, that he had known and knew him intimately -- and offered to bring me to him if I wanted to (?) -- and that he had been a man very conscious of his Jewish heritage, and would certainly have done whatever he could.

Well, that's the story -- part of the story -- of my relationship with de Cardenas. I must say that he was always a very liberal man. He used to talk to me about his Jewish mother-in-law who lived on the on one of the Balearic Islands, and who when I last was in Madrid was over 91 and was flourishing, which was one of the reasons why he had this almost superstitious view about the Jews.

Now I not only dealt with embassies in Washington -- I dealt with Governments of various countries who came to my attention for what I can only call Jewish reasons.

One such country which you wouldn't suspect as a haven of anti-Semitism was Costa Rica. I came in one day to my office, and was told that somebody from San Juan in Costa Rica would ring up at one o'clock, and duly at one o'clock the telephone rang, and I took the phone and I said, who is that, and a voice said in German, "Hier ist Biberstein." I even remember the name.

He talked to me in German, and he told me he was ringing up from Costa Rica, and I must come at once, because next Wednesday -- this was on a Friday -- there would be a pogrom.

So I said, perhaps a little cynically, "What am I to do? If I come when there is a pogrom would you expect me to stand in the middle of the street?"

He said, "No, I want you to go to the American Government, and I want you to come here and talk to the President of the Republic and tell him ~~by~~ that if a pogrom takes place all hell will be let loose in Costa Rica and the rest of the world."

I said, "Well, I can't come at once. It's Friday, it's the weekend. I would go to Washington, and it's no use going on Friday to Washington, but I will telephone."

So I did what I could. I telephoned first to the Costa Rican Embassy, and by good fortune I got not the Ambassador but his wife. Costa Rica is a small country and has a small embassy and a small staff, and his wife I think is really part of the staff, or was then. She asked me what it was about, and I said that the Jews of Costa Rica are going to be murdered on Wednesday, and I wanted to talk to the Ambassador to find out whether it's true and what he is going to do about it.

She said, "Can you come at three o'clock?" or at four o'clock or whatever it was.

I said, "Are you sure <sup>he</sup> ~~you~~ he'll be there?"

She said firmly, "If I say he'll be there, he'll be there."

That's why I say I was fortunate in getting his wife. I think he might have refused to see me or put it off.

I then rang up the State Department, and got the division or



the desk which dealt with Central America, I knew that I could go and see them, and they would have an interest in seeing me because I told them that I had seen the Costa Rican Ambassador, I told them why, and I would like to go to the State Department and tell them what had happened. You see, I would have given them something too.

Q: Yes!

Perlzweig: Well, ~~xxxxxxx~~ that's how it worked out. I saw the Ambassador, and he said, "I have not heard of this pogrom." I said there were notices in the papers calling people to a march which was going to go down a street with Jewish shops, and they had nazi symbols and swastikas and so on.

He said, "I've never heard of it. I get the papers and I haven't seen this."

I said, "How long do the papers ~~xxxxx~~ take to get to you?"

He said a week.

Q: Gee!

Perlzweig: So I said, "Well, I got them on Friday. I mean they told me from Costa Rica. What do you suggest?"

He said, "I suggest that you should go and see the President of Costa Rica."

I said, "How can I be sure that he will see me?"

"Get somebody" -- he didn't say who -- to send a telegram."

I did get somebody when I got back to New York, and that was a man called Israel Goldstein, Dr. Israel Goldstein, who was a leading rabbi and who was chairman of the North American section of the World Jewish Congress. I didn't have anybody else.

I said, "Send them a telegram and ask them to receive me."

He said, "Fine, draft a telegram" which I did, and I never got a reply.

Q: Never?

Perlzweig: No. But now I come to the State Department, and I told them what I already told you -- what they had telephoned me from Costa Rica -- and they said, "We know nothing about it, besides which we as Americans don't interfere in the internal affairs of that country. What grounds have we got to interfere?"

So I said on the inspiration of the moment, "The Treaty of Chapultepec, which has a lot <sup>of</sup> human rights. You agreed with them and with various Latin American countries that you will support human rights, and if any country doesn't support human rights you are entitled morally to intervene."

They said, "That's too thin an argument. We can't possibly intervene."

Q: Was the President Pepe Figueras then?

Perlzweig: No, he had been the President. He was there, and he was very helpful to me.

Then I said, "Well, I'll tell you what, I am going to. . . This is very well known. This thing will get about in the world that there is trouble in Costa Rica, and it will be known that I came to the State Department, I warned you about it, I gave you all sorts of excuses."

I remember now -- it's just coming back to me -- one excuse I gave them was that it touch<sup>d</sup> on the security of the Canal. It was not too far from the Canal, and if there was disorder that would be very bad.

"I gave you all sorts of excuses, and you refused to do it. You know what will happen? If you don't intervene to stop it and something happens, we will have to ~~send~~ have a collection to get money in order to send supplies to the refugees of Costa Rica. What's that going to do to you?"

Well, they began to think about it at that point. It had nothing to do with diplomacy. It was a pure threat. And they said, "Well, we'll look and see the documents."

They took out a file, and they they said something which struck me. They said,  
(end of tape)

End of Interview No. 14 w/ Rabbi Maurice Perlzweig by Peter Jessup  
on June 23rd 1982.

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Interview # 15 -'

Interview with Dr. Maurice Perlzweig  
New York City

by Peter Jessup  
November 30, 1982

Q: It's nice to resume this after our lapse during the summer, when you were abroad. I understand you had an interesting time. When we left off, you were in the middle of a specific episode. We're going to cover later on some of your reflections on the World Jewish Congress and your long role in that and its leader, Dr. Menachen Goldman, who died this summer while you were abroad.

Dr. Perlzweig: When we last talked, I was in the middle of a conversation that I was having with two foreign service officers at the State Department on the subject of Costa Rica. They looked up the files they had, and there was nothing in them on the subject about which I had approached them, namely, the threat to hold a march in Costa Rica in San Jose, the capital, which would undoubtedly have resulted in bloodshed. They went on to explain the reluctance that the United States had -- we're speaking now of many years ago -- of being accused, of interfering or seeming to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. I may say in passing that I've never held that view, and I was only asking them, as a matter of fact, to draw the attention of the Costa Rican government to the ill effects of any such outbreak of violence on their relations with the United States.

Perlzweig-15

At any rate, in spite of all my efforts, I thought I was going away with nothing. As I picked up my briefcase, one of them said to me, "Well, we won't let you go with nothing. The American ambassador to Costa Rica, General Fleming, is going to dine with the president of Costa Rica, Senor Urriarte, tomorrow night, and we will telephone to him and ask him to mention this in the course of his unofficial dinner. "

When I had that, I knew that I had succeeded. All I wanted to do was to bring home to the Costa Rican government that they would be making a very great mistake with regard to American opinion if they compelled us to issue an appeal for aid to refugees from Costa Rica, which I think was really my most effective argument.

So I went away rather pleased with this interview, and with my faith in considerably strengthened, and on the way I went into a liquor shop and discovered something that I should have known long ago, that liquor in Washington, certainly in those days, was much cheaper than it was in other parts of the United States, and I bought a small bottle of whiskey. I drank it and went to bed in a sort of torpor of relief.

About 2 o'clock in the morning I was awakened by the telephone. It was Abba Eban, who was then the Israeli ambassador in Washington, who asked me whether I'd heard about what was going to happen in Costa Rica. I told him, "All right, Aubrey, " which is what I used to call him, "you can go back to bed, it's all right. The American ambassador will talk to the president of Costa Rica tomorrow night. "

Well, that was on a Monday. The next day, I went back to New York, and on Wednesday the telephone rang again from Costa

Rica, and the same gentleman who had alerted me to the situation began to speak in terms of euphoria, to bless me for all that I had done.

I said, "What's happened?"

He said, "The newspapers have appeared here today with notices calling off this Nazi march, as they put it, out of respect for international opinion. "

So I said, "Well, then I don't have to go to Costa Rica."

He said, "Oh yes, you must go. If you don't come, the thing will just pass over and start all over again. "

So I gave him a date and I went to Costa Rica, which I remember as a very difficult journey because I had to go via Panama, and spend most of the night not sleeping in the Panama airport.

I arrived at San Jose on this difficult journey, difficult not only because of the sleeplessness but because the airplane was full of all kinds of things that you don't expect in an airplane-- goods and chattels that had been brought in, including one goat, which made the journey rather hideous -- I was met at the airport by representatives of the Jewish community and of the protocol office of the foreign ministry, the foreign ministry of Costa Rica. And the gentleman, the protocol officer, took me at once in a car, before I could go to a hotel, to the foreign ministry, because he said that the foreign minister wanted to be photographed with me.

So I went, and sat down, and had a little conversation with the foreign minister, not much, and the photographers came in and took these pictures, which all duly appeared in the principal newspapers of Costa Rica the next day.

I got then a whiff of what the World Jewish Congress means in these distant places -- distant, I'm talking now about 30 years ago. My movements were followed by the newspapers. I was referred to as " Il Rabino, " the Rabbi.

I had said to the foreign minister, "I've come to see the president."

"Well," he said, "the president's very busy, but you just settle down and in due course we will arrange it. "

Day followed day and there was no invitation from the president, and I did what I could to stimulate it. I went to -- I first went to the American ambassador, General Fleming, who was an extremely amiable man. He was a general of artillery. And I gave him something which he much appreciated, namely, a cap which had been specially made for the march by local tailors with a swastika on it, and one of the non-Jewish tailors gave it to one of these Jewish confreres, so to speak. He thought this was evidence that we could use and he would do something about it.

I told him that I was worried because there was a lot of bomb throwing, and he said, after telling me that he was an artillery officer, "If a Costa Rican bomb of these terrorists hits anything, you can be sure it was not the thing they were aiming at. "

Anyhow he was very helpful. I asked him to remind the president that he was to see me. I went to the British and the French embassies and they were very helpful, saying they would convey it to him, to the president. I also found two people who were almost in the government, two journalists, one British and the other American. The American represented the CHICAGO TRIBUNE and

the British represented the NEW YORK TIMES. They were both in the entourage of the president. It was that kind of a country. They were influencing him. I spoke to them too.

I must say that the TRIBUNE man wasn't at all sympathetic. But the Englishman was. Anyhow, in due course, after all these efforts that I'd made, and although the foreign ministry tried to keep me quiet and took me out to restaurants and so on, I was finally summoned to see the president.

The car arrived at the hotel and I was taken to the presidential residence or palace, as it was called, and I had the peculiar experience of being saluted by what I should think was the greater part of the Costa Rican army, about a score of them who were standing by as I was taken in.

I saw the president immediately. There was an interpreter present.

Q: This was Urriarte.

Perlzweig: Urriarte. Yes. And he began at once coming to the heart of the business, and didn't allow me to go on very long before he was in effect telling me that what he had, I won't say instigated, because I don't know whether he did, but at any rate what he had tolerated was a response to the fact that the World Jewish Congress had set out to destroy him politically.

Now, this of course was complete nonsense. We'd never heard of Urriarte. We had no interest in doing it. But then he went down to details. He said, "You decided to cut off the newsprint from Canada for my two newspapers, and thereby ruined them."



So I said, "Mr. President, I assure you that there isn't a tincture of truth in this. We don't have that power, and if we did we wouldn't use it in that way."

He said, "I know you're bound to deny it. Of course, you must deny it. But I want to tell you that I want from you"-- this is what he said to me--" an undertaking that you will not do this thing. You're the one who organized it, and you are instructing your colleagues to carry it out."

Well, it was no use arguing with him. He said, "Are you going to give me assurance that you will not do this thing?"

Well, I thought that was the only thing to do. I said, "Mr. President, I will give you absolute assurance that this thing will never happen. "

He turned to me with a beaming face and he said, " And I will protect the rights of the Jews with my heart's blood. "

Well, I learned a great deal from this, the first of which was that the country wasn't well governed, and I had that confirmed to me in a curious way , when I went off in a taxi, which was driven by a Negro, and I began to talk to him. I suddenly found he not only talked fluent English but with a marked Cockney accent. He was a man from Jamaica who had settled there. And he knew all about it because the newspapers had been full of it. He knew about my mission and so on, and he said, "What this country needs is that the Old Man should take it over and put it right, " the Old Man being Winston Churchill, who was then at the height of his fame.

Well, I went away. I called together the Jewish community, about 400 people turned up which meant practically at least half of the adults of the community, and as best I could, I told them

not exactly what had happened, and certainly not the strong language that the president had used, and which as a matter of fact I knew enough Spanish to know that the interpreter was toning it down all the way, but giving them some assurance that the fact that I had been received by the president was an assurance, and the Jewish community was almost delirious. I was loaded with gifts of one kind or another, products of the country, which are still lying about in a room next door ~~deteriorating~~, you could say. I was going to go back because I had heard that the TRIBUNE had published a statement that an attempt was made to bomb me, and I was afraid that this would upset my family, which is one reason why I was glad to go back.

The second thing I learned, in addition to the fact that the country was very badly governed, was, the old legends which had been put out by the protocols of the Elders of Zion that the Jews were a conspiracy seeking to govern the world and get out of it everything they could, was firmly believed by the ruling people in Costa Rica. Of course there were others. There was for example Jose Figueres, Pepe, I think they called him.

Q: With an American wife.

Perlzweig: Well, when you say an American wife, you're telling the truth, because he had a succession of American wives. Whenever he got married it was always with an American wife. And after all, he had been in this country. He was always very helpful to me by getting the matter raised in their Congress there, their legislature, and making all sorts of suggestions, and I

found that the ordinary people with whom I spoke in Costa Rica had none of these prejudices. I couldn't speak to many of them, but I spoke for example to a waiter when I was having lunch one day in the hotel, and I asked him whether he thought they would get at me with a bomb. He asked me, what floor I was on? I said the third. He said, "Well, they can't reach as high as that."

So then I went on, encouraged by that, to ask him about the Jews, and he spoke about them in the most favorable terms. He said, "You see this suit that I'm wearing. If it weren't for the Jewish merchants here, I wouldn't have such a suit, because they brought in the device of paying for it in installments."

I found that <sup>in</sup> the people, as far as I could question them, there was none of this.

So there it was. This was one episode which shows that the superstitions about the Jews sometimes have a positive side. That is to say, people think there's a power that they exercise that is such that they'd better be careful what they do about them.

When I go from Costa Rica, because I want to compress all this more to a very different scene, which I will not deal with at such length, namely Morocco. Two of us --that is to say, my colleague Alex Easterman, who was doing in London what I was doing in New York, we were told to go to Marrakech in Morocco where there was a very unusual character called El Glaoui.

Q: The old tribal leader.

Perlzweig: Yes. El Glaoui. He was the Pasha of Marrakech.

Now, in 1948, when the Jewish state was proclaimed in Israel, there was rioting against the Jews in practically every city in the Middle East, from the Atlantic right up to the Caspian Sea. One exception was Marrakech, which was due to El Glaoui. What happened was that there was a Jew who was having his hair cut in a barber shop, and the mob arrived to deal with him in the way in which they deal with people, and somebody had the sense to telephone to the palace, and within minutes a car arrived, and the majordomo of El Glaoui got out and stood up on the roof and shouted to the mob, in the Arabic equivalent of "get the hell out of here."

And they disappeared. What I discovered earlier and I was able to confirm it was that this was a feudal society, and El Glaoui was like a feudal baron, and even the what the people wore reminded me of the Middle Ages -- the long Djellaba, with the hood at the back, which in a peculiar way took my mind back to academic clothes in the Cambridge of my youth.

It was El Glaoui who compelled Mohammed V, I think he was, the sultan of Morocco, to go into exile, which I think he did somewhere in the Indian Ocean. I don't remember exactly where.

Anyhow, El Glaoui was very highly regarded. On the way out, Easterman and I stopped in Tangier, and went to see the American minister who was there, and he envied us the opportunity of talking to El Glaoui, and told us that Churchill and Eisenhower and all sorts of leading people had a very great regard for the old man.

So one of our Jewish friends in Casablanca gave us a car with an Arab driver ; it's important to point out Arab because in Marrakech the people are not Arabs, they're Berbers, a tribe of a different kind.

Q: El Glaoui was a Berber, wasn't he?

Perlzweig: I think so, yes. Perhaps that accounts for his attitude. Because one of the things about him was, he worked very closely with the French, who were then, I won't say in possession but in occupation of Morocco, and he had a profound hatred for the Arab League, which is why he decided to protect the Jews.

Anyhow, we went in this car, and slowed down at what was then a famous hotel, called Hotel Mamounia.

Q: Churchill -- ?

Perlzweig: Yes. Churchill was the man who used to stay there, and got to know El Glaoui and made it a very fashionable place to go to, and we went down to the lounge, and said to ourselves, "How on earth are we to get to El Glaoui?"

As we were talking, the telephone went, and I was called to it, and the man said to me, in very good English, " I am M. Berdugo, the diplomatic secretary of His Highness, the Pasha."

I noticed he called him His Highness, although according to protocol he should have been a mere Excellency.

He said, "His Highness has asked me to welcome you to Marrakech, and to tell you how deeply he appreciates the work of the World Jewish Council."

I said something suitable about appreciating his appreciation,

and M. Berdugo went on to say, "And he particularly wanted me to say that he knew personally and appreciates what you've been doing in Washington lately."

This astonished me and I said, "How does he know ?" "What I was doing?"

He said, "Because I told him."

I said, "M. Berdugo, how do you know ?"

Then he floored me. He said, "I'm a member of the World Jewish Congress. I get your reports."

Q: Was this 1950?

Perlzweig: Yes, in there or earlier, something like that.

So I said to him, "Well, we've been anxious," I told him about Mr. Easterman and myself, "to go and see El Pasha."

He said, "Well, he's asked me to invite you to lunch with him at one of his palaces." He had several.

Well, the day arrived, and a car came to fetch <sup>g</sup>us and took us to this place, and there was the Pasha waiting to greet us, and then steered us into what I can only call a cocktail party, and he disappeared. He was a Moslem and not supposed to drink.

And there was this bar, with all the usual bottles behind it, and a young Arab who advised us to have what he called "le specialite de la maison, " which was a cocktail made of orange juice plus various liquors.

While we were there, M. Berdugo appeared accompanied by two nieces, two young women, who were apparently there to undergo the rites of being received at court. I remember when I was a rabbi in Morristown, New Jersey, the local newspaper, I think it was

called the MORRISTOWN REGISTER, once a year would have a list of the young ladies of Morristown who were received at the Court of St. James, which is the best that American young ladies could do at the time. I think it has since--it was so ridiculous, it's been abolished. But this is what it was.

Then Berdugo said, "You're going to be photographed with His Highness, but there can be no women in the picture, " so I said, "Well, we're not in charge of the arrangements, so, we have no objection. "

Then, after we had had our drink, the Pasha appeared, and led us <sup>into</sup> ~~until~~ the place where the meal was to take place. Easternman and I were allowed to sit on the <sup>t</sup>setees, while he was going to sit probably on a cushion on the ground, and we sat down with the Pasha, I've got the picture somewhere here, and were photographed with him.

Now, I must tell you, this was a very curious thing. Here was Berdugo, who was dressed in what years ago Americans ~~used~~ used to think was the English diplomatic dress, striped pants and Homburg hat, in short, something that Anthony Eden would have worn, and on the other hand, there was this old man, he was 85 at the time, dressed in Moroccan costume, and we sat in front of a round table and he clapped his hands, and a big fat Negro woman came in bearing a dish which she put on the table.

Well, they were very courteous. For example, two spoons were provided, wooden kitchen spoons for our use, so that we didn't-- they knew Europeans or Westerners had the curious habit of

not eating with their hands.

The woman put this thing down and took off the cover, and then the Pasha, putting up his finger, pointed to me, that I should dig into the pie which was there, the crust on top of it, which turned out to be a chicken pie, so I didn't know how to go about this at all, so I beckoned to him to do it.

So he did it. He put in his finger, and he moved around the bottom of the dish, and he pulled out the leg of a chicken, and then as a mark of his royal favor he handed it to me. It was the most difficult thing in the world for me, to take it out of his hand and to start eating it, but I thought for the sake of justice and righteousness, I should do it, and so I did.

Now, this went on. We counted the number of courses -- 13 courses, for some of which we used the wooden spoons that we had, but it was really one of the most fantastic episodes in my existence.

When we got to the end of it, with green tea to drink, which I will explain afterwards, with milk of almonds -- when we got to the end of it, they brought in a box of Havana cigars, and then he pushed back one side of his Djellaba, to his back pocket, and took out a gold cigar cutter. That's when I noticed how pro-British or pro-Churchill he was, because he was wearing what we used to call plus fours and argyle socks!

Well, anyhow, we discussed a number of things, and poor M. Berdugo, who had to translate everything he said into English, had a very hard time. We discussed one of the things that I'd asked Berdugo about on the telephone, which was the reputation



of sexual athleticism that he had. I said, "Is it true, "this was to M. Berdugo, "that he has a hundred women in the palace?"

He corrected me. He said, "A hundred ladies of the Household."

"How does he remember their names and know which is which?"

Berdugo said, "That's my task. I have a list, and I come to him from time to time and I say, Your Highness, you haven't seen Fatima for several weeks."

You know, Berdugo engaged in the kind of -- he was what we used to call in the Middle Ages a palace Jew, who did various chores for the lord of the manor, and this included the procuring.

Anyhow, it is true that he had a hundred, and we discussed it with him. I said to him, "I'm asking you, " I asked Berdugo if I could ask the question and he said, "Oh yes, he likes to talk about it, " so I asked him about it, and I told him how different it was in the West.

"Well," he said, according to Berdugo's translation, "I don't know that it's so different in the West. They call it by other names. " But he said, "You know, " this was the summation of his philosophy, on the subject, "monogamy is monotony." That's how he put it.

So I asked him how he managed, at the age of 85, to lead this kind of life.

He said, "There are two ways, two things that you must have. One is garlic, and the other is milk of almond. "

"Well, " I said, "I can't feel any garlic in what I've had."

He said, "Yes. It depends on the way you cook it."

And I was able to confirm afterwards that in the soup, -- in the market, there were big sacks of garlic wherever you go.

I said to him, "I don't think that garlic is something I could introduce in this way in New York."

He said, "Well, let them try and see ."

Then I said to him, "I've learned that you're contemplating coming to New York. I wish you'd let us know before you do. "

He said, "Well, it's a long way to go. It's weeks."

I said, "You can go overnight by plane. "

"Oh," he said, " I wouldn't go on a plane. That's a new-fangled thing. It's very dangerous. There's one good thing for planes, and that is, they can be used to wipe out rebellions and subversives and so on, but otherwise I have nothing to do with planes."

Well, I must tell you that this made a great impression on me, and a still greater one on my colleague, who was a foreign correspondent with his normal appetite. I wanted to stay on because the Negro majordomo that I mentioned as rescuing the Jews said to us, " As they say in New York, you ain't seen nothing yet," and that he was preparing for us a feast at night with dancing girls and what not, and of course my journalist friend was delighted, but I said, "Alex, we've got to go. " I wasn't going to be caught in any such adventure, and I reminded him we had a meeting at Casablanca that night, so we left.

Well, now, here you have Costa Rica and you have Marrakech, which is in the south of Morocco near the Atlas Mountains, where the people are very primitive. I visited one Jewish village, which I think consisted of Berbers. Some generations ago, they were converted to Judaism, and I saw there a typical Arab scene or Middle Eastern scene, with the men sitting about in a

courtyard smoking cigarettes, and the women in the field dealing with the cattle and with the agriculture. And I went into a little school they had there, where they taught the children Hebrew, and they had books which were so disheveled, they were torn to pieces, that I wondered how anybody could read them. One of the results of the journey was that at least they had a new set of textbooks that we were able to send them.

Now, here is Costa Rica. Here is Marrakech. Two utterly different places. I was talking about their sexual habits. One place we went to was a sort of café, at which there was a performance, and a woman came onto the stage. She was completely covered, right down to the ground, but her face was not, and the mere appearance of a woman showing her face made them full of excitement, that you could see -- that was their sexual indulgence.

Here you've got in these two places the World Jewish Congress exists. It is regarded in either a friendly or a hostile way, as a subject which exercises power, which I say to you that at that point certainly was an exaggeration. I think it means something today. I've just heard that the president of the World Jewish Congress, Edgar Bronfman, has been invited to Moscow to discuss the Jewish condition, which would never have happened in those days. So today, when it's grown as it has, it means something, but then, this was a mere superstition.

Now, I can't go into all the other places. It would take me much too long. But I visited innumerable foreign governments, in Latin America, in Africa, including South Africa, in Singapore, -- I didn't do much in Asia but I did go to Singapore-- and

I went to Australia, which I visited twice, and once to New Zealand. I know that in the case of Argentina, for example, I spoke to the people there in my broken Yiddish, and I got a newspaper from there which described this speech and said it was absolutely atrocious as far as Yiddish was concerned. They had a phrase there, "mogne sprache, " a peculiar speech. It has German background.

But "he spoke to our hearts and we knew what he said."

I went to all these places. I think one of the most difficult I went to was Bolivia. I went to the State Department before I went. I went to the British embassy. At the British Embassy they said, "What do you want us to do for you?"

I said, "Well, if somebody takes a potshot at me, "because there was shooting going on, " I expect His Majesty's government to afford me decent burial."

So he said, "It's not that that you should worry about. It's the height. We had a man," he told me, "who went to Bolivia and he threw himself out of a window, because he couldn't stand the lack of air pressure. "

I felt that too, but at any rate, I won't go into the question, except that I found the president at the time, what was his name? begins with a B? Z? Zualdo ? He's still alive. He spoke impeccable English and gave me almost everything I wanted. In fact, I wanted him to make a statement and he said, "Don't worry, write the statement, and whatever you write I will sign."

What I learnt in Bolivia and everywhere else is the incredible corruption , which in all my journeys I've found in the Third World, and which I think is the basis of a lot of their trouble. When I went to -- one of the first men I saw was the

American ambassador, who was a nominee of Truman. I've forgotten his name. He was a Jewish businessman, who was appointed for political reasons, and when I asked him did he think the Jews were in such danger as they thought they were, his answer to me was, " The people of this country have three hatreds. One, against white people. One, against foreigners. And one, against capitalists. And the Jews are in all three categories."

I said, "The Jews here are not capitalists. They're small people. "

"Oh," he said, "in this country, if you have a corner grocery you are a capitalist."

Well, the result of my visit was I think positive. The president issued, on the Jewish New Year, a statement of greetings on the independence of Israel, and so on.

Q: Was that Ambassador Ben Stephansky ?

perlzweig: No. I've got it somewhere.

Q: I can look it up.

Perlzweig: But he had, like the Secretary of Defense (Weinberger) a Jewish name, of that kind, sort of a bit of German in it. What's his name ?? Weinberger, which is a Jewish name. The only trouble is that Weinberger hates it, the onus behind it, resents it.

But this name-- one of the things, the British charge d'affaires whose name I don't know, he was very affable, he arranged a dinner for us at the British embassy, which he publicized very largely with the rabbi and so on-- it was then quite a good community, and

they had one thing which pleases me as I look back on it, was that I was told by the <sup>lv</sup>rabbi, whom I happened to know, he had been a colleague in England at one time, he said, "We've announced on the radio you're going to preach tonight." Because it was a Jewish festival.

I said, "What am I going to talk about? In what language?"

The language most of the people spoke was either German or something--"I'll try and talk German."

I remember going to this synagogue, which was a peculiar place built into the side of a mountain, like an enormous cave, and there in front of me were these Jewish burghers, which is the only word I can think of, obviously Germans, dressed like Germans, with big watch chains like Germans, and I began to speak, and the strange thing was, when I couldn't think of the word in German, I would turn to the <sup>lv</sup>rabbi who was sitting next to me and whisper it to him in English, and he would tell me what the German was, but before he could reply, the whole congregation told me what it was.

So a good time was had by all, and if I did nothing more than to give them some reassurance that somebody was caring about something, about their troubles, I did all I had to do.

I had all sorts of strange experiences. For example, in Melbourne, I spoke at a big meeting, and outside there were a lot of picket lines denouncing me as a Fascist and as a friend of the Germans, because this was after the reparations, which was one of the things I dealt with over time, and was very closely associated from Germany, and I remember that when, at the first meeting of the Trains Conference, Australia was before this episode that I've

told you about, the Australians couldn't send somebody to New York. It was too far for a meeting of a few hours. So they asked me to represent them, and to vote against it.

So I came back. I'm there to represent the World Jewish Congress and I will vote for it. "If I do what you are requesting and vote against it, I merely cancel myself out. What I'm prepared to do is to abstain on your behalf, and to explain why."

The reason was, there had been quite a considerable German immigration into Australia, and it had brought with it the most virulent anti-Semitism. And therefore they were doubly opposed to this proposal, which had a great deal of opposition to it in all of the world. At one of the meetings in New York, I remember rather painfully, helping to push out certain people from the, people who now run Israel, the young Likud Party, who were trying to break up the meeting. We didn't want to call in the police. We didn't want to make a big thing of it. We didn't want these poor misguided youths to suffer because of the idiocies of their elders.

But I remember this occasion. But I got away with it. In Australia, the leader was a man called Morris Ashkenazi, who was one of the leading lawyers, one of the best plea that I ever heard in my life, and I managed to convince him, and he became a very good friend of mine, and I traveled with him often in Europe.

But I did go there. I went to New Zealand, which I found one of the pleasantest countries I ever went to, and where I had a great advantage, because when I made a joke, which is usually

in the English humor, they immediately understood it and laughed, which very often didn't happen in other places.

I remember one thing that upset me a little and gave me time to think. I went to Singapore, among other places, and because the man who was then the chief minister, David Marchman, had been a student in London and used to come to me when I was a rabbi<sup>lv</sup> in London for advice and guidance and so on, and he invited me to come, and said I must preach at the synagogue. At the principal synagogue, which was a very orthodox synagogue, and I remember it for two reasons. One was, I had to wear what is sometimes called a praying shawl, a Talit, a very big one suitable for a rabbi<sup>lv</sup>. It covered me. The temperature outside was over 100. So I sweated a great deal, and at the end of the service, something which I didn't expect, the president of the synagogue, who looked like a Western businessman, came up to me and said, "You're going to lunch with me, so if you'll come along with me I will introduce you to my wives. "

And there they were, one blonde and one brunette. He was still practicing polygamy. And before independence, I don't know what the situation is now, that was possible. You could register a marriage either with the central authority, which this man did with his first wife, or with the ethnic authority, which he did with his second wife.

I must say they seemed to get on very well together, and the -- all these things are a question of habit. Like the Berbers who went mad when they saw a woman on the stage, which was to them obscene, with her face uncovered.

Q: Was this New Zealander, the head of the synagogue, Sephardic?



Perlzweig-15

Perlzweig: No, this was in Singapore. They call it Sephardic sometimes. He was really Oriental. His exodus came through Iraq. And their rab<sup>lv</sup><sub>^</sub>i was a man who said he came from Iraq.

I found out in talking to him that he was an East European Jew, who put on this --

Q: Bagdadi complex?

Perlzweig: Yes. But in Singapore was another thing which upset me, -- the sermon which I preached was in favor of what we called ecumenism, and I remember, it coincided nearly with Christmas, Chanukah, and a Hindu feast about the same time which is also a feast of lights. So a day or two later, I was asked by a group of Jewish women whether I would go with them to a Hindu temple. They didn't think that, they wouldn't dare to go by themselves, but going with a rab<sup>lv</sup><sub>^</sub>i they felt safe.

So we went, and I saw some of my colleagues there, and was a little bit taken aback. They wore nothing but loin cloths, and they were gashed in various parts of their bodies like ancient prophets, and I remember saying to myself, "Am I going to be ecumenical to this point ? "

It was a very difficult problem, which is still not solved.

I went round the world twice, in addition to separate journeys to various countries and attending conventions, attending seminars at United Nations and so on, but twice I took deliberately a journey around the world and stopped off at various places. So I saw a great deal, and as I say, I found that one of the things that was almost impossible to overcome was corruption.

And I'll give you an example of what I mean. I -- when I was in Bolivia, La Paz, I wanted to buy a gold chain. Bolivia is a country which produced gold. And I was referred to a name, someone with whom I could talk freely, a Jeweler, and I bought a chain. I said, "This is Bolivian gold?"

He said, "Oh no, we don't produce enough. "

I said, "Well, how do you get it ?"

"It's brought in over the frontier. "

"How do you get it through the frontier?" Because it was forbidden.

He said, "Very simple. I give the frontier guards something and they let it through. "

So when the ambassador once said to me, what I think is a policy long discarded, "We Americans are not going to do anything. If they choose to go Communist, we will just let them."

"In a very short time, they'll find out what a mistake they've made."

So I said, "What about their being armed by the Russians? and others?"

So I told him the story of the gold. The man who brings donkeys in which carry these.

So this gives you an idea of the way in which , this was one lesson. The other lesson I learnt, which I read many years ago, when I was a student -- there was a statesman, I don't know, 16th, 17th century, in Sweden called Axel Oxenstierna who was preparing his son for a diplomatic career. His son wanted to know what to read in preparation, and he said, "Well, after a few years, you will learn one thing, how badly mankind is governed."

656

That was confirmed to me again and again.

Well, I will leave the foreign scene and say something about one other aspect of my activity, which in some ways is the most important, though I haven't mentioned it at all, and that was at the United Nations.

When I got here, I found in getting through my books the autobiography of <sup>N</sup>ahum Goldmann, and he describes and puts in a very few words the function that I performed, which will do much better than I. He mentions that Rabi<sup>h</sup> Maurice <sup>h</sup>Perlzweig, head of the WJC's division for international questions, and for many years its most authoritative representative at the United Nations,

Q: What year was <sup>N</sup>ahum Goldmann's autobiography written?

Perlzweig: I think it was--

Q: It's about ten years old or longer?

Perlzweig: Oh yes, it's 1969. So you're right, it's -- and of course I read after that.

I was personally associated, right from the beginning; for example, I was a member of the Jewish delegation which went to San Francisco, and that's quite a long story in itself. The thing that stands out to me is not important but it stands out. One of the men brought in was an extraordinary character who was generally called General Two-Gun Cohen, whose name I think was Maurice Abraham Cohen. His "General" was a rank conferred on him by one of the Chinese leaders, Sun Yat Sen, and he was probably

a gun runner for him. He had a long and interesting career. And he was brought in by Samuel Bronfman, who was head of that great whiskey establishment, and whose son Edgar is now the president of the World Jewish Congress. Cohen decided that we were all, and me in particular, likely victims of Arab terror.

There was no ground for it, as far as I could make out, but he was convinced of it, and he appointed himself my bodyguard. He stayed at the same hotel.

Q: In San Francisco in '45 -?

Perlzweig: In San Francisco in '45. Yes. I had some difficulty with him because on the floor above there were what was called Chilean dancing girls, and that was his chief interest in the hotel.

But I was invited to preach at the synagogue there, which was the oldest in the United States, Israel, because the rabbi<sup>l</sup> had been for a period in England. His name was Morris Goldstein, now retired, a brother of Israel Goldstein, who was very well known in New York. And he asked me to speak to his congregation, which I did, and I had the curious experience of staying in the pulpit and sitting just below me, General Two Gun Cohen with a loaded revolver in his pocket.

Well, since San Francisco --up to a certain point, I've attended every Assembly, nearly all meetings of the Commission on Human Rights. We succeeded in --not we but the Americans succeeded, with our help, in getting what was called consultative status established. The State Department has had a list of organizations which it calls in I think once a year, and this was

based on the American model, and there were rules about what a representative of a non-governmental agency of this sort could do. He could attend a great many meetings. He could speak at some meetings, like the Commission on Human Rights and the Social Commission and so on. And I attended these meetings and I spoke.

Now, we covered an immense ground, and we had a certain number of friends who were immensely helpful to us, Mrs. Roosevelt in particular, and Walter Kotschnig.

Q: I remember him. He was a Viennese by origin.

Perlzweig: Yes. He was also -- he became representative of the United States in the Economic and Social Council. He was extremely helpful. And others who came up from time to time.

Now, it wasn't only human rights in the broad sense of the term, but a number of other things. I don't say very much about it because I've written about a good deal of it, in a book of essays presented to Israel Goldstein, Dr. Israel Goldstein, in 1956 on his 60th birthday, and I wrote one essay on what the Congress had done at the United Nations, and a lot of the facts are there. There is also another book by Dr. Nehemiah Robinson, one of my colleagues on the World Jewish Congress at the United Nations. What I want to emphasize is that it wasn't only human rights in the sense of declarations.

For example, there is one thing which I think probably nobody or very few people even knew about, which turned out to be very important, for which we were responsible. It's called the convention of the Declaration of Death of Missing Persons.

A great number of people, a very large number of widows,

for example, whose husbands had been lost in the Holocaust, and who couldn't prove their death-- there were no provisions under national or international law to produce such a proof. The result was, they couldn't remarry, they couldn't inherit what little property the man might have left, and generally, there was unnecessary suffering and anxiety.

Well, we came along and proposed this convention. This was the direct work of the World Jewish Congress. And after a great deal of lobbying, we succeeded in getting them to summon an international diplomatic conference to consider it. One of the experts, their expert was our expert, Dr. Jacob Robinson, and they had a meeting and discussed this. We had already arranged for a text. I was the only non-governmental representative to address that conference. Its effect has been for individuals dramatic. Thousands of people were saved from abject poverty, because they couldn't inherit, or loneliness because they couldn't get married.

I'll give you a single example that I know. A woman who lived in Brooklyn, who had last seen her husband in Holland when he was taken off by the Germans, and disappeared in Poland, where was she to go? The national court of the United States couldn't do anything for her. So this convention organized a system by which national courts could refer cases, I'm putting it very simply and briefly in order not to take too much time, to international tribunals. And as a result thousands of people found a new life.

This is one example of the way in which the United Nations has been useful, in unpublicized ways.

Now, a great many other things, when a country was liberated--

in the case of Libya, which was a result of the diplomatic comings and goings, was left to the United Nations to settle the future of. We appeared, at least I appeared. I had great difficulty in being heard for a curious reason. The British, in their democratic zeal, had said that any significant portion of the population of the country concerned should be heard, and then when they heard that we were going to be there, they suddenly realized that this was a mistake.

I had to pass through two committees. One consisted of three people, a Norwegian, a man from the Dominican Republic, and a Brazilian. Now, I was cooperating with the Italians, who were there in numbers and had the same problem as we. So as far as the Brazilian was concerned, that was easy. The, no, a Haitian was the other man. I had been to Haiti, and talked to them, before the famous Resolution on Partition of Israel, a subject I'm not going into. I mean, this was the convention. They gave me a reception there and the next day sent me the bill for it. Which is the kind of corruption that goes on. Which I paid without a word. I knew what they were doing.

Well, these three people saw me and they questioned me, and they asked me how many there were, how many Jews. <sup>in Libya.</sup> /I said <sup>chairman</sup> 35,000. The Norwegian said, "My figure is 30,000."

Does it make any difference? The question is, is that significant?

So I said to him, "Mr. Chairman," I was just about to leave, "do you think the Jews in the United States are significant?"

"Oh, Justice Brandeis," and we began to recite names.

He knew all about it.

I said, "What proportion of the population are they?" They listened. And the Jews were considered. So I say, it was through that committee-- the next committee, where I wasn't allowed to appear, was more difficult, and the Indians fought against me. But I was backed up by the French and the Poles

So when the political committee of the Assembly met, I appeared, under the chairmanship of Lester B. Pearson from Canada, four times, and I remember one episode which I will put down, because I think it's rather good, I was cross-examined by all the Arabs, and the Iraqi Foreign Minister said to me, "What is your nationality?"

So I said, "British."

"Ah," he said, "did you consult your government before you came here and delivered this brilliant speech?"

I said, "In my country, it's not the citizen consults the government, it's the government consults the citizen." The whole place roared.

The other man I met there was Sir Zafrulla Khan of Pakistan. He was really the last word in politeness. He began his speech by saying, "I would like to congratulate the reverend gentleman, as I understand him to be, on the brilliant speech which he has made."

I got to be very friendly with him. I even appeared in the pulpit together with him at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, where he began his sermon by quoting the Koran, and I began mine by quoting the Old Testament.

But I mean, we did succeed in getting them to accept the Declaration on Human Rights which had been adopted by the



Assembly. It's a resolution with a good effect, to say they would stick to it.

Of course, things have changed since then. We've got Khadafy now, which is quite a different story. But I'm telling you, there are all kinds of things.

I'm going to talk about the most important matter, which was human rights, which we fought for steadily and doggedly and are still doing it, because one of the things I learnt very soon was that the top people in the secretariat at various times are not very keen on human rights. It complicates their job. One of the men with whom I worked very closely, who delivered a speech about my alleged contribution, and this was at my 70th birthday, was a man who was then the director of the Human Rights Division, Professor John Humphrey, a very noble character.

Q: What nationality ?

Perlzweig: Canadian. He was a professor of international law at McGill University, when he was appointed, and he went back after he was appointed.

He was a man who much exaggerated the influences I had on the people who listened to my argument. I don't want to repeat it. It's too flattering. He came to this meeting and said, "What you've heard is only the tip of the iceberg." That was the phrase he used. But he told me that once when he came to Dag Hammarskjöld with a folder containing papers on human rights on which he thought something should be done by the Secretary General, Hammarskjöld said to him, "If I could open that window, I would take these papers and throw them out."

Why? Because they dealt with governments, about governments, with whom he dealt. So this was a very tough assignment. And there weren't many governments--there was always the British and the French, the British and the Americans, and there was Rene Cassin who was very helpful, who represented France.

Q: Rene Cassin was Jewish, wasn't he ?

Perlzweig: Oh, of course. He was the president of an organization called Alliance Israelite Universelle, which began long before the World Jewish Congress, and who was one of the leading persons in the Jewish establishment in France.

I've got a paper here written by Haim Cohen, which he dedicates to me as his friend and mentor, but I didn't always agree with Cassin, because he represented the government, and very often I had to differ from what he said.

We played a great part for example in securing this document, this resolution-- the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. We are responsible for some of its clauses. We had great difficulty. For example, there are two clauses about education, one clause which says everybody has a right to an education. Well, everybody was in agreement with that, but we knew that Hitler's boys had a good education and Germany had a good education, and that wasn't enough. So we said, "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality, and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms."

So that, I'm bound to tell you that Mrs. Roosevelt objected to. She said, "That's not education, that's orientation."

Those were the words that she used. Nevertheless we got it through. What is more important is the last article, which is article 30, which they accepted for us: "Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any state, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth here."

In other words, if you use democratic rights to undermine democracy, this Declaration doesn't say you can't do it-- it couldn't go as far as that. It says, "This Declaration doesn't authorize it."

So when the Nazis march through Skokie, they're ignoring-- and the government protects them, and the American Civil Liberties Union sends Jewish lawyers to plead for them, they're ignoring what this says. I fought for this interpretation.

Q: But the Skokie thing was long before the UN.

Perlzweig: No. No, the Skokie thing was about a year ago. When the Nazis marched through Skokie.

Q: Oh, in Illinois.

Perlzweig: In Illinois. Yes. No, no, they were protected by the police. Just as the police protected the Ku Klux Klan in Washington.

Now, I said, and I was attacked for it in America, that incitement to racial hatred is an offense and should be punishable by law. In some countries that is true. It's true in England. It has been true in Germany for some time. If you go to see a Jew who's come out of the camps, survived the camps, in Skokie,

and hit him on the head, you're arrested. But if you do him psychic damage, if you drive him crazy, that's not an offense.

Well, I didn't succeed on that, but we're still on that, but I did this incessantly day in and day out, and one American delegate-- what's his name, he's just written his life memoirs, he comes from the South, told me that I nearly converted the Commission on Human Rights. Of course, you never got through the Russians --

One of the services that I did for Humphrey was, told him that the Russians were trying to get rid of him, because one Russian diplomat with whom I got very friendly told him so. As it happened, he was very glad because it was about the time that he was preparing to leave. His contract was up, and he didn't-- they would never let him come in.

The United Nations has done very little, except produce documents. They have produced some very good documents -- the Convention on various kinds of freedoms -- but actually, about doing anything about it, they haven't been able to do it because most of the governments in the United Nations are engaged in precisely the kind of thing that we want to have forbidden, discrimination and so on.

Well, anybody who ever reads this thing will have to get further information on the basis of what I've said. But I mention it rather late in my narrative because it was in fact one of the principal parts of my activity, and that's what acknowledges in his autobiography.

I've got here, I think I've shown you this book,

letters from all over the world, about what I did in regard to human rights. I think some of those things that were ancillary to it were very important. I went to Warsaw, a few weeks after the Six Day War, and what I saw there would fill a book. The home minister at the time was the head of their party school, who now fortunately is in Stockholm, tried his best to keep me out, and the tricks they were up to were really the worst possible. I mean, I couldn't get into a consulate general and so I came over to the liaison officer in Warsaw whose address had been given me by the United Nations. I didn't get any answer from anybody. I got an answer from another address which said, "We have nothing to do with you at the United Nations." We are a commercial organization." In other words, the thing had been, not wrongly delivered, because they couldn't have given it-- the other address was the University of Warsaw. But it meant a waste of time, so when I actually went to Warsaw it was without a visa, on the advice of their travel office in Geneva, Orbis; I just went on the plane and they gave me a visa when I arrived.

I must tell you, it was the most peculiar experience. I discovered that the place was full of two classes of people whom I don't naturally consort with, namely, Secret Service agents and prostitutes. It took me an hour to get a room, although I'd made a reservation, and I didn't get that before their people got \$100-- made me change \$100 into zlotys-- and then I remember getting to-- legal? they never invited me to their receptions--the reception for the United Nations, and there a man approached

me, the head of the party school whom I have mentioned, and who said that he had read my speeches to the United Nations and was interested and wanted to discuss them with me.

I remember saying to him, "I'd be glad to discuss them with you, but I want to see the Jewish community, what should I do?"

He said, "Well, you're very discreet. I know you're very discreet. Write a letter to the foreign minister and ask him whether he would arrange it."

I said, "That won't do, because I'm only here for a week and I know I won't get an answer from the foreign minister in less than a week."

Anyhow, we went on talking and he suddenly said to me, "Be very careful what you do. Angels are standing guard over you."

Now, I didn't know what sort of angels these were, and before I could ask him, he moved away.

When I got back to Geneva, and talked to an expert on Warsaw, on the Yiddish that was used in Warsaw, they use, for Secret Service agent, the Hebrew word "Malakh" which means angel. In other words, he thought I spoke that kind of Jewish idiom, which I didn't. And he was telling me that the Secret Service was watching me.

I did go with him. I met him secretly on a street corner, and we went through Warsaw. We went on trams, got off trams, got a taxi, got off the taxi, in order to throw off the people, didn't

He was an assimilated Polish Jew, that is to say, he ~~could~~ speak Hebrew, Yiddish, anything like that. There's a monument in Warsaw to the Jews of the ghetto which has three inscriptions, Polish, Hebrew and Yiddish, and it talks about the Jewish people,

, which is odd in Warsaw, that they should notice such a thing, and I had the peculiar privilege of telling him what it said in Hebrew and Yiddish, which he couldn't read.

Q: He changed his name or not?

Perlzweig: No. I've forgotten his name. I've since heard from him. He was a Communist, I remember, as a Jew. He was the first man to tell me what was about to happen with the Jews in Poland. In '67, '76, early sixties.

He wasn't the only one, but he knew exactly what was happening, and I asked him the question, "Do you still believe in Communism?"

His answer, which was rather illuminating to me, "This is not Communism," which would explain to you why a great many intelligent people in Europe believe in Communism, not the Communism which is practiced by these governments, but the ideal Communism. He still stuck to it, and he found refuge in Scandinavia, like many of those people.

Where are we now? One of the things I did do, what happened was that when I came down to the lobby of the hotel one day, I was encountered by a member of the Secretariat to the United Nations, who was the son of the <sup>✓</sup>rabbi, whom I knew pretty well, ~~a~~ man I'd had dealings with, and ~~he~~ took me aside and said, "It's a cold pogrom going on here. I must talk to you about it."

So I agreed to go with him, in <sup>the</sup> car which was placed at his disposal by the Poles. He was in that part of the United Nations that dealt with development and that sort of thing, and he

warned me not to say anything in the car, certainly not in front of the driver, who was supposed not to be able to speak English, but he spoke it.

We sat out on the bench and he told me that he had seen the principal Jews, ,by which he meant, those who were in high positions-- one man, I've forgotten his name, whom I used to know, who's a member of the International Court at The Hague-- and they all believed that their number was up.

We sat down on this bench, and he told me the whole story. And then he said to me suddenly, "Let's walk."

I asked him as we walked on and he said, "Did you see the man sitting opposite there?"

He said, "I know that man's face. He had an instrument to catch what we were saying."

Q: What nationality was this man?

Perlzweig: American. Anyhow I got in touch with the Americans, through an American professor who stayed at my hotel who came over and I told him, "Look, I can't go near the American embassy because they will be watched, " and I knew a young man there and I arranged to meet him at a street corner. We also went to a park, and it was a time when Gomulka was still in charge, and Giereck who came from, not Pomerania-- from, he was called locally Tschombe because, of Katanga, because he came out of that part of--

Q: Silesia .

Perlzweig: Silesia. And I told him, I told this young American from the embassy, whose name I don't remember, who was very helpful to me,



what I heard from the others about, that Gierrek was anxious to get in touch with the Americans, and so I would, I asked him whether somebody at the embassy would see him if he came, to Washington, and he said yes.

never?  
So I passed that on. So I knew what happened.

I imagine that the embassy, if they had a chance to speak to the Secretary General--

Anyhow, I meant to tell you, this was a seminar at the university on some aspect of human rights and so on. I was the only person present who represented a Jewish organization. The others didn't go, either because they didn't want to, or were afraid to, or whatever it was. The result was that all sorts of people came to see me. That's one thing about Poland one has to remember -- it is above all inefficient. Its Secret Service is inefficient. They do everything with great affectation. In the room in which I stayed, for example, the door opened at midnight one night. It opened because there was no lock, which of course was typical, and it was a big who went over to a big table and saw a book there and picked it up.

A book which of course I had carefully chosen, called THE DEATH OF GOD, which was then a fashionable phrase in Christian philosophy.

I talked to her in every language I knew. She didn't understand. And then she went and looked under the bed, in the cupboards, and then she went back and picked up the book again, which had a about it.

And I was told ~~I was told~~ at the United Nations afterwards by that something appeared about my protest in a

journal they called POLITIKA. They said that he was bad for tourism in this country.

I'm telling you these stories only because they won't believe me. It shows me what a disheveled place the world is. But that was the United Nations.

Now, in order that I don't prolong this too much, let me tell you :-

Q: We can shift to the other side.

.....

Perlzweig: ... Generally, what I would like to talk about a little, not very much, because you suggested it, obviously it's very important, and that is, Goldmann's part in all this activity.....

Side 2

Q: You were going to mention Dr. Goldmann.

Perlzweig: Yes. Dr. (Nahum) Goldmann was in many respects one of the leading Jews of the age. It will give you an idea of his universal appeal when I tell you that, when he celebrated his 80th birthday, among those who sent messages were not only President Carter but Tito and Ceacescu and a great number of other people who had for one reason or another come to admire his expertise in the field of international politics.

Now, he had a remarkable career. He was actually born in Lithuania. He left Lithuania for Frankfurt as a young child, and his education was entirely German. He remained to the end of his life a man who was permeated by German culture and an admiration for German ways of living. He never really became assimilated to America, though he came to America at a certain point. In fact,

when, shortly before, shortly after the war broke out in Europe, before America entered the war, and --although he did assimilate to a great extent in France. This young Lithuanian lad went to German universities, and he made a habit of collecting doctorates. He had great brilliance. He was a doctor jurist. He had several PhD's.

Q: All from German universities ?

Perlzweig: All from German universities. He was, till the end of his life, a quite welcome speaker on German television and radio, and articles by him and about him were published in the German press.

Q: How was he as an orator?

Perlzweig: Well, he was-- he had all of the qualities, that leadership in the Zionist movement required, that is to say, a very great capacity as an orator.

Q: Old fashioned and flamboyant, or measured, or could he tailor it?

Perlzweig: Well, he could tailor it. He was , in the best sense of the word, an amateur -- that is to say that he very rarely prepared his speeches. Sometimes the result was a little unfortunate. It would go on much too long, and drift off to anything that came into his head. I mean, I have myself some of those qualities. But when he really wanted to deliver an important political statement, he would think about it, and sometimes would even dictate it.

I only remember, in my long association with him, which must have been nearer half a century than not, that he only gave me two speeches which he had written, on which he wanted me to express an opinion, and there was only one of them that I persuaded him

not to deliver, which I'm glad I did. But that was a long time ago.

If you want to know the kind of a mind that he had, I think that the best analogy that I can draw is to the Jewish mind as it's described by a man called A.S. Lindsay, who was the master of Balliol College, Oxford, and who puts his thoughts down in the introduction to a book called THE LEGACY OF ISRAEL, published many years ago, rather more than a half century ago, published by the Oxford University Press, which I have read and studied, because the book, although it was published after his death, had been planned and organized and edited by a man called Israel Abrahams, who was my teacher of rab<sup>u</sup>in<sup>a</sup>ic<sup>a</sup>ate, Cambridge.

Lindsay says that there are two elements in the Jewish mind, one of which I can describe as messianic. That's not his word, that's mine. A passionate belief in high ideals, and in some future good for the human race. And on the other hand, it also is a very skeptical mind, which questions everything, and the resulting activity of the Jewish mind is the tension between these two apparently incompatible things.

Now, both those elements were very prominent in Goldmann's thinking, and it was underscored, underlined by his cosmopolitan experience. Here was a man who was born in Lithuania and had a thorough Jewish education. He was familiar with all the great texts which are read, Jewish, religious texts in Jewish history, Bible and Talmud and so on, and at the same time he was a first rate student of German philosophy and German law, and in that sense, he was a true child of the European Enlightenment.

That is to say, he had all the strengths and weaknesses of it. I recall things that he said to me. When Adolf Eichmann was captured, by the Israelis in the Argentine, he came out publicly in favor of his trial by an international court. He didn't want an Israeli court to try him.

Now, I remember the incident, because it was his personal decision to make this declaration. He didn't consult any executive, so far as I know, either the Zionists or the World Jewish Congress, of both of which he was president at the time.

I remember going to the United Nations one day, and being intercepted by representatives of Israel radio, who asked me what I thought about it. So I said I was in favor of a trial by an Israel court. It wasn't that I was against an international court, but I couldn't for the life of me see how any court, either existing or to be constituted, could be put up to conduct such a trial, or who would agree to take part in it. I mean, would the East Germans and the Russians, and the West Germans and the French stick together? And how many months of weary negotiations would we need?

So, as I wanted the whole story to come out, and it did, I wanted a trial. Well, as you know, he was tried by an Israeli court. The idea of an international court was really a -- quite impractical, as it would be today.

Now, I was told by the attorney general of Israel afterwards, years afterwards, Gideon Hausner, that he was deeply grateful to me, for having broken the tendency, in which a great many Jews joined, to have an international court, because he said, it would have meant that we wouldn't have had a trial at all.

I mentioned that because that shows you that, although he was very deeply devoted to Jewish causes, he was a child of the Enlightenment. He was the most progressive of progressive minds, in relation to human beings.

I give you another example, which isn't I think known. You mentioned that he was supposed to be very influential in Israel. Well, he was, and he certainly had very close relations, sometimes <sup>amicable</sup> amical, sometimes combative, with David Ben Gurion. With Chaim Weizmann, he was very close, although at one period in his life, he had helped to remove Weizmann from the leadership.

And there is no doubt that if he had wanted to occupy a position in the government, or even to be its representative to the United Nations, he could have had it for the asking. In fact, he was offered such positions time and time again. And he always refused.

He tells me there were two reasons for his refusal. One was, it would have limited his independence. He asked Moshe Sharett, for example, "If I become ambassador to the United Nations, would I be allowed to say what I think ought to be done, or would I have to refer to the foreign office?"

"Oh," he said, "you'd have to refer to the foreign office."

He said, "Then it's no good."

The other reason for not becoming a minister was that he didn't want responsibility for war. He said to me, and I'm reporting it as testimony which I think you probably would not find anywhere else, "I would not want to be a minister who ordered a young man to go to the front and fight for the country. I dislike war. I dislike violence or anything like it."

So this is partly the reason why, toward the end of his life,

although he was highly regarded by a man like Kissinger, for example, who knew international statesmen, he never became, he never occupied any office in the government of Israel. It was a deliberate action on his part.

I'm speaking about the idealistic side of Goldmann, which is a very important part of it, what he wanted to do in life. He had two objectives. One was the resurgence, the renascence of the national life of the Jewish people, in Palestine, on the ancestral soil. I'm using that rather convoluted phrase because there were references about whether it should be a state or whether it should be -- but he wanted a place where the Jewish genius could flourish, and have an opportunity of producing what it could produce without outside pressures that might be hostile.

The second objective of his life was to create , which he did in the World Jewish Congress, the organ of organized unity of the Jewish people. There is a sort of unity, anyhow, a sense of fellowship, a sense of sharing of burdens, a sense of sharing a rather extraordinary history, but it doesn't have practical expression, and there are a lot of people who want to argue about what should be done. He wanted to create something which would be the organized Jewish people who could get together, and come to conclusions about their fate and what they ought to do.

Now, he wasn't 100 percent successful. First of all, the different Jewish communities insist, and it's embodied in the Constitution of the United Nations, on taking their own decisions. The common decisions must be as a result of common consultation.

Then, as as far as you can do it in an imperfect world, he went a long way to do it, and one of the purposes of that,

one of the purposes of this unity, the organized community of the Jews, which hadn't existed until the World Jewish Congress, in a real sense, came along, although there were all kinds of international organizations, was that he wanted them to unite in maintaining their culture and their values. He was deeply committed to culture, in the broadest sense, Jewish culture and culture in general, right from the beginning of his life. He did brilliantly in Universities. But he was one of the founders of the ENCYCLOPAEDIA JUDAICA in Germany. The first ten volumes were published in Germany, before Hitler put an end to the enterprise. He was connected with all kinds of cultural institutions, and the present ENCYCLOPAEDIA JUDAICA which is published in Israel, and in English, which is undoubtedly the most important Jewish work of its kind, ever introduced -- he had a great deal to do with that.

He was a man to whom music meant so much that he had to go every year, whether he was well or not, to Salzburg for the Festival. He went to every musical festival he could think of. He was not a man who played an instrument, so far as I know, but he was deeply moved and committed to the study of music.

Well, this is, if you like, the idealistic side. There was also the pragmatic or critical side of him. As I say, this young Jew born in Lithuania, early in the First World War, was recruited, although he wasn't a German citizen, but he was at least technically an enemy alien, into the German foreign office, for purposes of propaganda. And he believed in Germany. He believed in it then, more than he did, to the end of his life. He used to write essays praising German nationalism and the Prussian spirit, two of which I've seen. They're very difficult to get now.



And he was the man who instructed Marshal Ludendorf on the way in which to deal with the Jews of Lithuania and Poland, when they marched in. Ludendorf issued a famous proclamation to those Jews, promising them emancipation and all sorts of goodies, if they supported the GERman invasion of the Czarist Empire. "Meine Liebe Juden" I remember the first words were, "My dear Jews, " and it was written in Yiddish and published. The man who wrote it was

So you see, he was a pragmatist. I'll give you another example of his pragmatism which will seem odd to a lot of people. He became a German citizen in due course, and he was in every sense a GERman citizen, but when Hitler came along, one of the things whose coming he didn't foresee-- this was one of his weaknesses. When he returned home from a journey abroad, he was warned that the Gēstapo was after him, and he took the first train out, and he told me at one point himself, the train was going to Italy and he went right to the end, to Naples, to keep out of the Gestapo's way.

In due course he was accused of treason in Germany and deprived of his citizenship. He was a very clever man, and he persuaded the German consul general, in the early years of the Nazi business, to renew his passport. Of course the second time it was quite impossible.

So what did he do ? He needed a passport, else he couldn't move, so he became a citizen of the Republic of Honduras. He was assisted in this by the French foreign minister, who wanted--

Q:-- Leon Barthou.

Perlzweig: Yes. Who wanted him to become a French citizen.

Goldmann said, "No, I can't be a French citizen, because if I'm a French citizen I will be conscripted into the French army, and I will cease to be able to move about and to do the things which I am doing."

So it was Barthou who assisted him to acquire Honduran citizenship. That is to say, he became a subordinate of the Honduran minister in Paris, who had some connection with the French government, what I don't know. Anyhow I know that not only did he become a Honduran citizen, but he became the consul of Honduras in Geneva. Now, this was pragmatism. First of all, he needed a passport, and secondly, this gave him privileged access to the League of Nations. He was a representative of the government of Honduras to the League of Nations, except on state occasions.

And the result was that, on the edge of Geneva, he opened, purchased a house and opened the consulate of Honduras. I visited him there, and saw the Arms of Honduras outside, and I asked him whether he didn't find it awkward. He said, "Yes, I do," and he told me what he found : awkward.

One thing was, he said, "Supposing Hitler dies. I shall be under the protocol obligation of hanging the flag at half mast."

I said, "What are you going to do? You might be shot."

He said, "I discussed it with the minister in Paris and he said, take no notice of it. We won't force you to hang the flag at half mast."

The other was, he showed me the papers that he had been given which contained an absolute prohibition forbidding visas to Palestinians. Now, these papers were drafted in the eighties of the last century, and they obviously had no reference to the

Jews who were Palestinians later, but he said, "It's an awkward question." Fortunately no Palestinian Jew came to him and said he wanted to go to Honduras. So far as I know, he never went to Honduras, then or afterwards. But this is his pragmatism.

Now, it went further than that. In the time I'm talking about, which is in the late thirties, I, either I or one of my colleagues in Paris, Marc Yarblum, would have to go to Geneva in order to represent the World Jewish Congress in complaints against Poland or Rumania or other anti-Semitic countries. Goldmann was living there, but he couldn't make the complaints, because his main job was, representative of the Jewish agency for Palestine. In Geneva, at the United Nations. And in that capacity, he had to deal with a body called the Permanent Mandates Commission, which supervised the mandates, including the mandate to Palestine, and to get allies, which he needed, in order to press the British to allow immigration, he had cultivate the Polish and Rumanian members. Because they wanted to get rid of their Jews, so they were all in favor of a Jewish national homeland.

Well, you couldn't ask for their votes in the Permanent Mandates Commission, and then go out and attack them for their persecution of the Jews. So his pragmatism led to this, and although he lived in Geneva, and was undoubtedly the most effective person in securing advantages for Jews under persecution, he never opened his mouth in Geneva on the subject, and I used to have to fly from London to go and make the statements or present the petition or whatever it might be.

Now, this is the pragmatism. It was very useful to him. I know that in , late in 1939, we crossed the Spanish frontier

together, on our way to the United States. I met him in Paris, and we went down to Hendaye.

Q: You've covered that.

Perlzweig: I've covered that. But the point was that he had a passport which was written in Spanish. Now, the girl who interrogated him didn't know where "Ginebra" was, was obviously illiterate -- nevertheless, he was just shuttled through, whereas I was taken away and thoroughly searched as I had never been searched in my life before.

And then, when he knew that his time was up, when he thought that the Germans might invade Switzerland and he must go to America, he obtained a place as a Latin-American, on the American boat which collected American citizens in Europe and took them to the United States. They didn't collect other people who wanted to get out, of whom there were thousands, but he was an Honduran citizen. It undoubtedly saved his life, because the ship was --

Q: It was a Swedish ship, wasn't it?

Perlzweig: No, it was an American ship, and it was stopped by a German submarine at sea, and they were looking for escaping Germans, and the captain of the ship said, "We've got no escaping Germans. We've got mostly American citizens with some Latin Americans."

So he escaped by the skin of his teeth, because they would certainly have executed him. So his pragmatism played a part. And he was the sort of man who would come and report to a committee about a conversation he had had, an arrangement which he had made,

with some diplomat or statesman, and he would say, "This is secret. If you say anything about it or make it known, I will deny it." And he said it without hesitation. That is to say that he had this pragmatic way of dealing with things. But he succeeded in moving a great many people -- I mean, I don't know whether it's anything for his ghost to boast about, but when the announcement of his death appeared, one of the people who expressed regret and said that he would never forget him, and his people would never forget him, was Yassir Arafat, which certainly didn't make his memory more popular in Palestine.

Now, he had an idea that, and this was when he was a child of the European Enlightenment, there are two nationalities in Palestine. One was Jewish and the other was Arab. And they both had rights. And the solution was to find a formula which would give both of them their rights.

He worked at this for years. Sometimes in a clandestine way. A great deal of the movement for collaboration with the Arabs, which is represented by a paper called THE NEW OUTLOOK, to my knowledge, he subsidized, for years before the present -- while the Labor government was still in office. He did everything he could to secure an arrangement with them. He did the same with the Russians. He didn't succeed at all with the Russians.

He saw Anatoli Dobrynin, the ambassador, every time he was in America, and before he left America, he used to go visit Dobrynin. They were very close friends. And he was always trying to find a formula which the Russians would accept. In fact, he became very unpopular in the Jewish world, because he wouldn't protest against the Russians. He occasionally did but very feebly.

He didn't want to alienate them. This was his pragmatism. And he wasn't quite sure whether it was right to take the Jews out of Russia. He thought that if they created a community there, a really powerful community with their own culture and so on, it would do. But he never succeeded in persuading the Russians, although he got a certain amount of sympathy from Gromyko. People forget that when the Partition Resolution came up, a very powerful and passionate Zionist speech was given in the United Nations by Gromyko. It's somewhere, I have the tape, in which he speaks about his connections and how the Jews were mistreated in Europe by the Western Powers, of course, and not by the Eastern. But he never succeeded in that, and I think he was clearly wrong.

The Russian business was very interesting. He was against the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, when certain trade privileges were taken away from the Soviet Union so long as they denied Jewish emigration. Well, it worked; a quarter of a million Jews in the last ten years or whatever it is have left the Soviet Union-- a quarter of a million, which is a large number of Jews. In Israel, in this country, in Australia and elsewhere. Well, I think that was a considerable achievement, which tells you that the doctrine that you mustn't interfere in the internal affairs of other countries is all nonsense. They all do it. And it works. But he was against it, wanted that repealed and tried to get it repealed.

So, he had these two elements in him, which you will not understand the man of you don't know, that they were both there-- that he was a ruthless pragmatist, at the same time a man of the most profound idealism. And what he did, was a result of the tension

between these two things.

Now, he was greatly helped by his cosmopolitan experience. A man who was at home in the literature not only of Germany but of England and France -- he had a very considerable knowledge of the literature of these countries and was constantly reading. But also of the whole literature of historical Judaism, and who appreciated all of it, was not a man to have petty prejudices. He never had the temptation to become a zealot, because he knew, from his own knowledge and what he had deeply studied and imbibed that the great English poets, great writers, great novelists--

For example, he lapped up that Polish-English novelist, Joseph Conrad, and I remember, he was so astonished when I told him, because I knew Conrad, that Conrad couldn't speak English with an English accent, which is why he was such a good writer. I mean, the words were things that he had to deal with and manipulate, just as Goldmann did. But he had always -- he was one of the very few Jewish leaders who was totally impregnated with the Jewish tradition, from really the inside out, and was equally totally committed to Western culture. And this made him a man who had very few prejudices of a personal nature. It also gave him a sense of freedom, which some people think he abused. For example, when he made statements which obviously implicated either the Zionist movement and to some extent the Israel government or the World Jewish Congress without consulting these bodies. He was very insistent on the contribution to history which individuals as individuals could make. He was not a great fan of democracy. He thought it was the best system on the same grounds as Churchill did, because the others were worse, but he thought that the multitude, the mob, was a very bad guide. He was

not a populist.

Well, this was Goldman, a very, I think, compassionate man, and here I want to say a word about Germans, the German reparations, which after all is one of the most striking things that has happened in human history. Goldmann was <sup>not</sup> the inventor of it. I think, in justice to the people who did the groundwork, that ought to be on the record, and in what I said in London when he died, that's one of the things I said, and it was repeated here when they had a memorial meeting here. They all read this which I'd written, which I had dictated, and they repeated it. The people who invented it -- there's one unknown man, now dead, who told me, of whom Noah Barou told me that he got the idea from this man, a German refugee, whom I tried to see -- I went to see and arrived in Germany shortly after he died, so I missed that, who had told Barou, who is the real inventor, Noah Barou, very remarkable man in many ways -- anyhow, in the Institute of Jewish Affairs, which was headed by the two brothers, Eliezer and Jacob and Nehemiah Robinson, whose biographies I myself wrote, for the ENCYCLOPAEDIA JUDAICA, to give you the history of it, had worked on it for years -- the idea, which seemed totally impracticable, of getting back what the Germans had taken or stolen from the Jews.

They worked on it and the Israel government, to some extent, not much, worked on it, and there were individuals, like my colleague Easterman, who wrote about it, but the man who really brought it to life was Noah Barou. Noah Barou happened to die when I was on one of my trips to London. That's why I mentioned to you here, I seemed to -- when I go to London, people die. And it was an opportunity for me which I hadn't anticipated



to find out the background of what he had done, because his wife, who was a lawyer and an atheist, which was one of my problems about his funeral, didn't want any religious service. He himself hadn't belonged to a religious body, although he had great sympathy, as he often told me, with people who had religion, and he, to some extent, envied them.

I did my own little bit of pragmatism there. I said to Mrs. Barou, "You must have a funeral because the Jewish community, which has such respect for your husband, will want to be there, will want to show its respect at a funeral. "

"I'll give you a way out of the difficulty which you have. I will read the funeral service, and anything which refers to God, or immortality, I will read in Hebrew, which you will not understand."

So the deception was not a deliberate deception. She knew I was reading these things but on that ground she agreed to his funeral, and I officiated at the funeral.

But she asked me to look through his papers, and I went to his desk and I looked through them, and I found not only had he anticipated in what he had written Goldmann and Sharett and so on, many of the things that actually happened, in which the Germans did a great deal in supplying Israel with oil and so on, and he had made, building the fleet and so forth, all of which he had outlined in the papers which he had written, but what was so striking to me was his passport. It was a British passport. He had become naturalized. And I found that in a single year, he had got to Germany over 50 times.

What did he do ? He went to trade union meetings. He went to

the Bundestag. He went to journalists. He went personally to every section of the opinion making public, to tell them that Germany should make reparations and this is how it should be done. He was an economist. He was a very well known economist. He worked out, if they paid even what we demanded, which they thought was a lot, it only meant one bottle of beer per family for a year. Something like that.

What I'm trying to say is that nothing would have happened if he hadn't undertaken this work of reparation. As a result of what he did, Adenauer became interested. The story reached him. He was anxious to do something to rectify the bad situation which Germany morally was in, shortly after the war. Germany became a -- an independent country.

Goldmann, at that stage, was not committed to the idea. I won't say he was tepid. He liked it. But he knew the difficulties. And for example, he went to the State Department, discussed it with them, and they poured cold water on it. When he told them what he was out for, billions, they said, their answer was, "If you get \$100 million you'll be very lucky. "

And they were doubtful about it because Germany wasn't what it obviously became, "the wirtschaftswunden". It was a poor country and they thought that the United States would have to supply the money. So he got no encouragement from anywhere.

Q: You're talking about Goldmann?

Perlzweig: Goldmann. Goldmann. And so when this was brought up to him, he opted for pursuing a very cautious way.

And he laid down conditions. He said, "The initiative must come from Adenauer."

Well, in due course the initiative did come from Adenauer. It's too long a story to go into detail, but the point was that a meeting took place, a secret meeting in London between Adenauer and Goldmann, at which Barou was present, and that was an association between Goldmann and Adenauer which had the most remarkable results afterwards. German officials were very leary of him because they said Adenauer did everything that Goldmann asked him to do, including recognizing Israel also. But Adenauer treated him practically as a son.

He said to Adenauer, "You have got to make a statement in the Bundestag, taking responsibility for this thing, "which Adenauer did. I remember, the usual statement was circulated among us. He spoke in general terms. But once he had spoken, Goldmann established the Jewish Conference on Material Claims Against Germany, to which the World Jewish Congress belonged, the American Jewish Committee, and Aguda Israel, the extreme orthodox. It turned out to be a body really representative of Jewry, which was largely governed and manipulated by Goldmann.

There have been books written about this episode. But it was Goldmann who in the last resort was really responsible, because the whole scheme met so many obstacles. The German officials tried to cut it down, and there were so many claimants, and a good part of the Jewish world was opposed to the whole business. They called it blood money, which explains the pickets outside who marched outside the hall in Melbourne where I spoke.

All kinds of conclusions were drawn from it, that we were somehow associated with Fascism. And Goldmann had what to him was the rather peculiar experience of being accompanied wherever he went in New York by policemen, because his life was threatened.

What happened was that whenever there was a snag, the people who were negotiating this settlement, the Israelis and the Jews, called in Goldmann to settle it.

Q: So what you're saying is that Goldmann executed the concept and the plan of Noah Barou?

Perlzweig: Yes. He was not the originator of it, and I think he would have hesitated. In fact, the only man in Israel who accepted the idea, it turns out, absolutely peculiar, was Ben Gurion. All the other members of the government were against it. They thought it meant forgiving the Germans, or receiving a bribe in order to forget about it, or something of the sort.

Q: I remember the chief of the Mossad, Isser Harel, resigned in protest.

Perlzweig: Yes. I think there was a member of our own executive called Rabbi Mordecai Nurock who was on the executive of the World Jewish Congress, went on wailing about it and until the day of his death would never have anything to do with it.

Goldmann's answer to all this was, "I would have been disappointed in the Jewish people if they had tamely accepted this. I think their refusal to go along with these views is a sign of their vitality and their genuineness. " He never argued with

these people. He thought they were mistaken. And of course they were, because Israel benefited of it.

What happened was that while Adenauer was alive, the relations between Israel and Germany couldn't have been better, and Germany went out of its way to supply the things they needed, even if they weren't in the protocol.

As a matter of fact, Goldmann went back time and again and got increases. All of a sudden large numbers of Jews from Poland who were victims of Nazism suddenly appeared in the West, when they were allowed to go, and they hadn't made their claims. They didn't stick to the dates which had been set down. So Goldmann went back and got it extended for these people.

Before he died, he got a large sum of money placed in the charge of the Conference on Material Claims, for the purpose of dealing with cases which had been overlooked. I don't know what the total sum is. I think I read somewhere, to this moment, it's about 36 billion dollars, a considerable sum of money, for a government to have paid out, and it's still paying, without having to do so.

And anybody who really can claim credit for it was Goldmann. It set a precedent in history, which in a sense hangs upon one occasion when he went on a visit to Spain. There was a wild rumor that went out that he was going to get reparations from the Spanish government for the expulsion in 1492 when -- of course it was all nonsense, but, that was how he was regarded.

Q: Well --

Perlzweig: -- this was Goldmann. I don't think we shall see anything like it again, or will see in any nation, a man who will stand up

and deliver an eloquent speech in five or six languages, or who would be on speaking terms-- I mentioned Tito, whom he knew well, Ceacescu, or even Jimmy Carter or Kissinger. I didn't mention that when Mussolini was alive, one of the -- Goldmann went to see him, nearly converted -- was Mussolini. He was an extraordinary character, as far as I'm concerned, although there were things which were, how shall I put it ? matters on which we didn't agree, on morals, for example. He was a, believed in, like the Pashà of Marrakech, in the sexual life. I remember, I once took my courage in my hands and approached him on this ground. I said, "You're inflicting a great deal of suffering on your wife. "

And his answer, his pragmatic answer, was, " I don't know what suffering I'm inflicting on her. I don't bother her as much as other husbands do. She gets everything that she needs. She's only got to ask for it. "

So I think he believed in it, as a form of, how shall I put it ? Prolonging life?

He was a man in a million, in that respect. He left his mark everywhere. For example, he was very unpopular among American Jews because he was a man who wanted to deal with Nasser when he was alive. The Israel government prevented him from going to see Nasser. He did see the King of Morocco and was photographed with him. He wanted to deal with Arafat. But nevertheless, wherever you look now, the things which he created are still functioning. American Jewry is represented in all this Israel business by a body called the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, which goes to the State Department, which is treated

with great respect by the President and others.

Who created it? Goldmann, a man you never hear about now. He was very pragmatic. He didn't say "I want you to join the World Jewish Congress, " which in those days was<sup>by</sup> the American Jewish Committee , thought to be a wicked organization. He didn't ask them to dissolve their organizations. He solved it by this title, Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. And yet it had a tremendous effect on the course of affairs.

He created that. He created, he was very instrumental in the ENCLOPAEDIA JUDAICA. He created other things. And I don't think he will be soon forgotten. Even this man who was eulogized by Arafat, who was buried on Mount Herzl, which is the sacred burying place for Jews in Israel, even though there had been very strong objections in some quarters.

And so, as far as I'm concerned, it's commonplace to say, I get older every day. I'm the same age as Goldmann. Except that I am now 87. He was 86 when he died. I don't believe -- I've long suspected, that's not true. He had a little bit of vanity. He wanted to make out he was younger than he was. But I do become older, and I get more lonely as time goes on, and so now, although I remained in touch with him during his and my retirement, although I was called in from time to time to try and solve what are impossible problems, such as what to do about China--to try and rescue what remains of Chinese Jewish life in China-- all that has gone out of my life, but nevertheless, I don't regret that I knew this man and worked very closely with him. And I still hope to live long enough to put on paper what others have done

so much better than I could do about Chaim Weizmann. Isaiah Berlin wrote a beautiful piece about Weizmann. Nobody, as far as I know, has written in the same essay form about Goldmann.

He was a man whose mind was open, clear and uncluttered. He never sacrificed for a moment his right to be critical, to take the line in which he believed. But even though that meant that he had to argue and quarrel with a great many people, it nevertheless didn't affect his deal ideals, which came out on the occasions which I have mentioned to you. The Eichmann business and all the other business.

Well, I think, then, that is the story. If there's any time left, I would just like to add that two things, of this long career, some of which I haven't mentioned. For example I was actually a rabbi<sup>✓</sup> in Canada for about a year or so, in Toronto. I've said nothing about that and the experiences of that kind. I've said very little about my rabbinical<sup>✓</sup> experience.

But I do, I can sum it up in this way. The world, if I may use that quotation again, I have found it very badly governed. There are very few countries anywhere in the world, really, at all, of whom those in charge do not make horrendous mistakes. That applies to democracies as well as the so-called Socialist countries.

On the other hand, I have found two things which I value very much, one of which I learnt from Goldmann, which is that the individual can make a difference, if he is sufficiently motivated and sufficiently obdurate, and even to use a word which is very commonly used now, intransigent. But it is possible, by deeds, not ideas so much, to make a difference.



I have found , in this time, very often a time of travail, that a single act, historical act, changes the whole atmosphere. You saw it in America for example when Sputnik went up. America changed and became a different country, simply because of the Sputnik, not because some philosopher thought out something.

And the same thing has happened with the Jews. I am a survivor of an age which is dead. I remember the poetic line, I think it's Matthew Arnold, but I'm not sure, "Wandering between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born."

That's who I am. And I live in a Jewish world, so far as I live in it now, utterly different from the one I was brought up in. I was brought up in a Jewish world which was pacifist, which was unmilitary. I remember the world which scorned and scoffed at Vladimir Jabotinsky when he came to England and talked about a Jewish regiment.

And I now live in a world in which the Jews are credited with being experts in the military field, where their battles are fought over in military schools. The Six Day War changed the world. It changed the Middle East. It changed the Jews. The Jews who were indifferent to Israel were suddenly transfixed by it.

I was in California when the Six Day War took place, and what astonished me was the way in which people who had been tepid on Zionism or even opposed to it were suddenly full of energy and enthusiasm, and gave vast sums of money, and looked at the television and egged on the Israeli soldiers.

I've seen it entering the folklore of the world. I read the other day a review of a book , published I think by General Haim

Herzog, on Jewish wars, in which the writer, who is a lecturer at the English Military College, refers to the Jewish desire or tradition of military excellence, and ~~uncon~~<sup>vers</sup> the fact, which everybody has forgotten, that Ben Gurion was once a corporal in the British Army, and that Sigmund Freud was an officer in the reserve army of the Austrian army, as though that were their -- characteristic of them, which it was not.

Today, the Jewish soldier does apparently remarkable things, and the American Army is now in Israel finding out how it was that they were able to get rid of various bits of machinery that the Syrians put up, which the United States doesn't yet know how to dispose of.

So, if you perform an act, as the Arabs did, for example, when they stopped the oil flow, you change the world. I have become, in a sense, more optimistic. I'm pessimistic because I know what atomic weapons can do, and I think they're all mad in the way they deal with them. And this I told the Americans and the Russians and all of them. Even to contemplate the possibility of what was called, in an American paper " a prolonged war or protracted war " using atomic weaponry.

I know the danger we suffer from, but I've seen so many changes, so many profound changes. I've seen the change in the Jewish people. After 2000 years of quiescence to every possible wrong, culminating in the Hitler business and their going into the camps, apparently without resistance-- which is not quite true, but there's a great deal of truth in it -- to turn around, to the situation we've got now, where this man Begin, whom I don't

happen to like, whom I denounced in the days when I worked with Weizmann and Ben Gurion, defies apparently the whole world, including the United States-- it's a new generation.

And because we know we can create new generations if we have the energy, I remain, on the whole, what I think I get out of the Hebrew Scripture, namely, one who believes that this is a good world, and that we can create in it the kind of world which the Prophets thought about, when they talked in messianic terms.

You will see, obviously at the United Nations, that war --it's the opposite of Isaiah -- "They shall turn their swords into ploughshares and their swords into pruning hooks ."

I still believe in that. I think it can be done. I know, and I've made it quite clear, that I think mankind is very badly governed. But man has the capacity, and he's shown it in our own day, throwing out the Greek colonels, for instance, or in Spain, electing their Socialist government, after, not so long after Franco --

Q: With a king.

Perlzweig: With a king, yes. It is an extraordinary thing, as you look at Jewish history, to try and plumb the depths of human endurance, of human creativity. And that's why I still believe in life, though I'm coming rapidly to the end of it.

Q: Dr. Perlzweig. I want to thank you very much for a most unique and extraordinary memoir, which I have enjoyed doing as much as any other I have done, and I want to thank you very much for your patience and the sessions we went through. We won't do this on tape, but

I think we should talk, éither a little later or some other time, about possible contributions you might want to make in the form of supporting documents to your memoir. You have a number of things and we might just attach them, which would be very valuable, but we won't go into that now. I want to thank you very much. I enjoyed it.

Perlzweig: Thank you. Thank you very much.

PERLZWEIG INDEX:

Abrahams, Israel	p.139,141,155,187-193,673
Adenauer	p.687-690
Aldrich, Winthrop	p.558
Allen, J.W.	p.51-53
Arafat, Yassir	p.682,691-692
Ashkenazi, Morris	p.652
Baden-Powell, Robert	p.42
Baeck, Leo	p.156,187,234
Baines, Norman H.	p.101,103-104
Balfour, Lord	p.380
Barnes, Binnie	p.311,333
Barou, Mrs. Noah	p.686
Barou, Noah	p.467-470,556,685-689
Barthou, Leon	p.678-679
Bauer, Yehuda	p.614
Begin, Menachem	p.415,450,695
Belloc, Hilaire	p.59-61
Benenson	p.372-373
Bentwick, Norman	p.47,63,116
Berdugo, M.	p.643-647
Bergman, Dr. S.	p.114-115,117
Berlin, Isaiah	p.693
Bernay	p.557
Bernstein, Philip	p.605
Bevan, Professor	p.161-164,169
Bierstead, Viscount	p.362,513
Billig, Louis	p.170-173
Black, Dora (Mrs. Bertrand Russel)	p.57,83
Brandeis, Louis D.	p.119,563-564,576,661
Brodetsky, Selig	p.348,412,522
Bronfman, Edgar	p.648
Brooke, Rupert	p.89-90
Buechler, Adolf	p.124
Burke, Edmund	p.108
Burt, Cyril	p.118
Butler, Neville	p.179,205
Butler, R.A.	p.378,390,483,487-489,504,513,516,518-521,524,538,545,547,576,578,601
Calinescu, Armand	p.488,491,493-499,501,505
Cardoza, Benjamin	p.331
Carnegie, Andrew	p.41-42
Carson, Edward	p.107-108
Carter, President Jimmy	p.456,671,691
Cassin, Rene	p.663
Cazalet, Victor	p.391-394
Cecil, Robert	p.105
Chamberlain, Houston Stewart	p.401
Chamberlain, Neville	p.450,513,527

Chesterton, G.K.	p.59
Cholmley, R.F.	p.35-39,44,82
Churchill, Winston	p.582,584,595-596,638,641-645,684
Cohen, Albert	p.475
Cohen, Haim	p.460,663
Cohen, Israel	p.342
Cohen, Maurice Abraham	p.656-657
Conrad, Joseph	p.684
Cooper, Colonel	p.538,578
Coughlin, Charles E.	p.585,590
Curran, Lionel	p.362-363
d'Annunzio, Gabriele	p.535
Dark, Sidney	p.436
Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury	p.61,382-383
deCardenas, Juan	p.609-612,617,620,628
DeGaulle, Charles	p.473-476,483
deSola Pool, David	p.23-24
deSupervilla, Conchita	p.335-338
Deutsch, Gotthard	p.59
Disraeli, Benjamin	p.345
D'Israeli, Isaac	p.78
Dobloom, J.K.	p.426
Dobrynin, Anatoli	p.682
Dreyfus, Alfred	p.21
Drinkwater, John	p.83
Dugdale, Blanche	p.298-300,508-512
Easterman, Alex	p.485,540,640-641,685
Eban, Abba	p.628,634
Eden, Anthony	p.416,644
Eder, M.D.	p.432
Eichmann, Adolf	p.674
Einstein, Albert	p.476-483,537,567
El Glauoui	p.641-642
Elliot, Walter	p.509
Epstein, Isidore	p.249-250,281
Esmond	p.39
Falwell, Jerry	p.450
Feuchtwanger, Leon	p.481-482,537
Fleming, General	p.634,636
Foster, Gregory	p.84
Franco, Francisco	p.607-630,696
Franklin, Mrs. Ernest	p.405-409
Galsworthy, John	p.94-95
Gaster, Moses	p.245-247
George, Lloyd	p.472
Giereck	p.669-670
Ginsburg, Rosa	p.115,447-448
Ginzberg, Morris	p.93,266

Ginzberg, Solomon	p.114-117
Gluckstein, Louis Halle	p.349-351
Goering, Hermann	p.393-394
Goga, Octavian	p.483-487,505
Goldman,Nathan	p.328
Goldmann, Nahum	p.400,445,466,470,485,487,506-507,536,539-544,553,567,570-571,633,656,671-693
	p.366-367,426-429
Goodman, Paul	p.631,658
Goldstein, Israel	p.657
Goldstein, Morris	p.353,359-360
Green, Carrie	p.80
Green, Hugo	p.588
Greenwood, Arthur	p.683
Gromyko, Andre	p.342-346,383
Guedalla, Philip	p.433,505-507,514,675,689,695-696
Gurion, Ben	
Ha-am, Ahad (Asher Ginzberg)	p.45,114,447
Halecki, Oscar	p.477
Halifax, Lord	p.39,513,517,591
Hammarskjold, Dag	p.662
Hartog, Philip	p.228-229
Hausner, Gideon	p.674
Hayden-Guest, Stephen	p.85
Healy, Tim	p.95-96
Henriques, Basil	p.221
Hertz, Joseph Herman	p.421,424
Herzl, Theodore	p.9,19,21,327
Herzog, Haim	p.695
Herzog, Isaac	p.513
Hindenburg, President	p.395-396
Hitler, Adolph	p.248-249,251-252,269,279,396-404,411,415,419,456,484,504,514,519,524,537,541,560-561,568,574,576-580,607,616-620,628,677-679,695
	p.490,499
Hoare, Lady	p.490-491,495-496,504
Hoare, Reginald	p.452-453,456
Hofmeyer, Jan	p.344-346
Hore-Belisha, Leslie	p.277
Hos, Dov	p.662,665
Humphrey, John	
Inber	p.24
Isaacs, Rufus	p.289-291,293,308-310,468
Jabotinsky, Vladimir	p.67,694
Jacobs, Louis	p.229-230
Johnson, Hewlett	p.350
Joseph, Morris	p.72-73,124-126

Kallen, Horace	p.375,463-466
Karensky, Alexander	p.92
Kempner, Walter	p.442
Kennett, Canon	p.163-167
Keynes, John Maynard	p.369
Khan, Zafrulla	p.661
Kirchwey, Freda	p.464
Kissinger, Henry	p.456,676,691
Klutznick, Philip	p.456
Kotschnig, Walter	p.658
Kubovy, Arie	p.608
Kutch, Professor	p.24
Lanchester, Elsa	p.92
Laski, Neville Jonas	p.408,413,418
Laughton, Charles	p.92-93
Lawrence, T.E.	p.376-378
Lerner, Max	p.605
Levy, Felix	p.435
Levy, Jack	p.363-366,368-369
Levy, Oscar	p.64
Liebmann, William	p.323,373
Lindsay, A.S.	p.673
Lipsky, Louis	p.463
Liverman, G. Gordon	p.243-245,249,337,417
Lloyd, Geoffrey	p.180,185,459
Lloyd, George Ambrose	p.299-300,511
Locker, Berl	p.429
Loewy, Herbert	p.139,155,189-193
Lourie, Arthur	p.552,597
Ludendorf, Marshal	p.678
Lupescu, Magda	p.499-502
Lvov, Georgi Yevgenyevich	p.92
MacDonald, Malcolm	p.48,297,513-516,522-523,537
MacDonald, Ramsay	p.92,97-98,513
Mack, Julian	p.463
MacKenzie, Compton	p.35
MacLane, Norman	p.142-146,159-161
Magnes, Leon	p.152
Marchman, David	p.653
Marks, Simon	p.46,114
Masaryk, Jan	p.450-451,457
Mattuck, Israel	p.130,133-135,150,153-154,219-228,256,262,280,313,335,341-342,346,354,356-357,394
Mazin	p.25
MacDonald, Ramsey	p.297
May, Harry	p.616-619
Melchett, Lady (Eva Reading)	p.283-290,297-311,324-326,352,359,468,473
Melchett, Lord Henry	p.267-276,279-286,288-



Miller, Jonathan	290, 300, 324-331, 333, 359, 421
Milman, Henry Hart	p.12
Mocatta, Duke of Spain	p.133
Mond, Alfred	p.74-75
Mond, Violet	p.60, 269, 280-281, 303, 445
Montague, Lily	p.274-275, 302
Montagu, Owen	p.93, 262, 275, 405-406, 546
Montagu, Ivor	p.196, 405
Montefiore, Claude	p.196
	p.75-77, 80, 99, 128-131, 133-136, 148-150, 154-165, 165, 187, 190-191, 228, 247, 250, 256, 272, 323, 349-352, 435, 438, 454, 616
Montefiore, Leonard	p.408, 413
Montefiore, Moses Haim	p.75, 129
Morley, John	p.559
Moses, Siegfried	p.458
Mosley, Lady Cynthia	p.197-199
Mosley, Oswald	p.180-181, 195, 197-201
Mountbatten, Louis	p.210-211
Namier, Lewis Bernstein	p.329-331, 374-390, 581-583, 597
Newton, Professor	p.54-55
Nordau, Max	p.120-123
Nurock, Mordecai	p.689
Nussbaum, Max	p.600
Oates, Titus	p.83
O'Connell, William	p.594
Owen, Alice	p.34, 37
Oxenstierna, Axel	p.655
Pearson, Lester	p.661
Perlman, Moshe	p.427
Perlzweig, Emil	p.84
Perlzweig, Giselle	p.438-444
Petain, Marshal	p.618
Philby, Harry St. John	p.431-432
Philby, Kim	p.195
Pollard, A.F.	p.48-51, 56, 68-69
Prout, Ebenezer	p.18
Quiller-Couch, Thomas	p.168-169, 206-207
Razinsky, Count	p.531-532
Reading, Lord (Early)	p.291, 297, 305-310, 408, 513, 531
Redesdale, Lord	p.403
Reinhardt, Rabbi	p.291, 308-309
Rinsing, Kenneth	p.48
Robinson, Jacob	p.685
Robinson, Nehemiah	p.658, 685
Rommel, General	p.581
Roosevelt, Eleanor	p.567, 658, 663

Roosevelt, Franklin	p.567-568,579-580,582,584
Roth, Cecil	p.11
Roth, Leon	p.11
Rothstein, Andrew	p.40-41,203
Rothstein, Theodore	p.40
Sachar, Abraham	p.175
Sacher, Harry	p.46,63-64,437
Sacklett-Varler	p.213-215
Salama	p.620-621,627-628
Salmon, Judge	p.370
Samuel, Herbert	p.406-410,421-424,478
Schacht, Hjalmar Horace Greeley	p.592
Schiff, Jacob	p.341
Schultz, Lilli	p.464
Seaton, Dr.	p.85
Sharett, Mosher	p.430,446,516-518,581-583,675,686
Shaw, George Bernard	p.94-95,108-109
Sidebottom, Herbert	p.436
Sieff, Israel	p.46,114,268
Simmons, Vivian	p.291
Simon, John	p.109
Simon, Leon	p.45-46,63
Sinclair, Archibald	p.471-472
Smith, F.E.	p.95-96
Smuts, Jan Christian	p.173-175,449-451
Sokolowski	p.533-535
Soustelle, Jacques	p.474
Squire, John	p.111
Stanford, Leland	p.69-70
Stansky, Max	p.425
Stein, Leonard	p.522
Stephenson, William	p.579-580
Sutro, Mrs. Alfred	p.292-293
Swift, Dean	p.108
Trevelyan, George Mcauley	p.167-168
Trujillo Molina, Rafael	p.603-605
Urriarte, Senor	p.634,637-638
Ussishkin, Menahem	p.328,513-518
Vago, Bela	p.495-497,503,613
von Neurath, Konstantin	p.409
Wagner, Richard	p.253,403
Wallas, Graham	p.51
Wauchope, Arthur	p.430
Webb, Sidney	p.84-85,92,294-296
Webster, Charles	p.388
Wedgewood, Josiah	p.185,230,456,470-472
Weizmann, Chaim	p.9,46,66-

Wells, H.G.  
Wingate, Orde  
Wise, Stephen

67,114,119,247,276,280,294,  
298,303,327-330,347,378-381,  
383,388-390,412-413,420,428-  
429,446,516,520-521,523-526,  
537,561,581-584,675,693,696  
p.92-94  
p.581-584  
p.43-44,136,151-153,  
189,219,256,283,339,435,445,  
4 5 4 -  
455,460,463,465,467,485,513,518-  
520,553,564-568,585-586,591,  
593,607-608

Yahuda, Abraham  
Yarblum, Mark  
Yellin, Avino Em  
Yellin, David

p.121-123  
p.485-487,680  
p.169-173,191  
p.170,191

Zangwill, Israel  
Zangwill, Oliver  
Zunz, Leopold

p.26,58,105,242,327,338-341  
p.339-340  
p.129

# CBS MEMORANDUM

FROM: Peter Jessup  
TO: Oral History Research Office  
DATE: 22 Feb

Enclosed is a recent letter from Rabbi Perlzweig commenting on the attached Fenyvesi article on Gerhart Riegner and the long smoldering controversy of how much American officialdom dragged its feet on addressing Hitler's genocide of the European Jewry.

It might be useful for future researchers if attached to his memoir. The matter has been hashed over many times but rarely objectively and perhaps most thoroughly by the late Arthur D. Morse in 1968 in WHILE SIX MILLION DIED, A Chronicle of American Apathy.

A handwritten signature, likely of Peter Jessup, consisting of a stylized 'P' and 'J' intertwined.

# The Nazi Secret No One Believed

## Remembering the Man Who Knew

By Charles Fenyvesi

In 1942 a German industrialist risked his life by revealing the secret of Hitler's order to exterminate European Jewry.

Only one person is still alive who knows this man's identity. He is Gerhart Riegner, in Washington last week for a meeting of the World Jewish Congress, the most influential international Jewish organization. He is now a portly, pink-cheeked gentleman of 71. Dressed in a three-piece suit, of a heavy woolen cloth of midnight blue, he looks like the mayor of a Swiss town: stolid, somber and exceedingly respectable.

During the war, Riegner was—and is still—the representative in neutral Geneva of the World Jewish Congress. Then he was a brilliant young legal counsel; now his title is, secretary général. Then he was a refugee from Germany, one of the few the Swiss agreed to admit. He still travels with the laissez-passer of a stateless refugee; after close to 50 years of residence, he hasn't been able to bring himself to apply for Swiss citizenship and passport.

"It took two days to persuade myself that the industrialist was telling the truth," Riegner now says, "and finally I came to the conclusion that it was possible and probable." Riegner then went to the American and British diplomatic representatives and asked them to transmit the information to their governments and to key Jewish leaders.

That now-famous telegram—sent Aug. 8, 1942—and others that followed were curtly dismissed in the

State Department and Whitehall as "the opinion of one Jew in Geneva."

The State Department advised the U.S. legation in Switzerland that Riegner's charges were "unsubstantiated" and waited for 20 days to send a copy to Rabbi Stephen Wise, the key American Jewish leader of the time, to whom Riegner had originally addressed his cable. [Undersecretary of State] "Sumner Welles told Wise not to publish it," Riegner

See RIEGNER, C4, Col. 1



By Lucian Perkins—The Washington Post

Riegner: "Nobody really believed it. Not even Jews who knew it."

Steve Martin's 'Whoopee':  
TV Preview, C4.

'Winds of War' premieres  
Sunday: TV listings, C10.

WASH POST 5 FEB

# The Warning That Went Unheeded

RIEGNER, From *CI* says. "In wartime it was an order."

For several months, no Allied or neutral-official believed the industrialist, who heard about the plan during his many visits to Hitler's headquarters. He had free access to top Nazis because his factories, with their 30,000 skilled workers, were pressed into the service of the German war machine. The industrialist's fervent hope was that once the world learned of the death camps, it would do something to stop them.

"Nobody really believed it," Riegner says. "Not even Jews who knew it. For instance, at the height of the extermination policy I counted 4 million Jews as dead. My own office in New York—where I sent all my reports and which was directed by a great Jewish leader—published the figure of only 1.5 million."

The recent controversy over the Holocaust Inquiry Commission led by former Supreme Court justice Arthur J. Goldberg deals in large part with what American Jewish organizations did or did not do in response to Riegner's cable. Riegner says he welcomes an impartial inquiry by independent scholars. Hut, he charges, the commission as it is now constituted is "ideologically fueled by people determined to rewrite history." The people Riegner criticizes are associates of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, "who want to indict the Zionist establishment" of neglecting rescue work.

Riegner tells how another American Jewish leader sent him a list of 30,000 addresses of Jews in Poland and asked the Geneva office to send food packages to those addresses. "That was in 1943 or '44," Riegner says. "What madness! They saw all my reports and knew that none of those addresses were valid. Those people were . . ."

Riegner doesn't complete the sentence. He stares into space, purses his lips and declares slowly, flatly, impassively: "They knew it but they didn't believe it."

Riegner, however, was convinced. At 30, he was "an unexcitable, serious young man," he recalls, "always a well-balanced type." Having studied law in Germany and then in France, he intended to become a professor of jurisprudence. He saw himself as following in the footsteps of his father, once Germany's minister of justice, and a person drawn to the philosophy of law. "I come from a typically German-Jewish bourgeois family very deeply embedded in German culture, a humanistic tradition, interested in philosophy, history, art," Riegner says. "But also roots in Jewishness."

From the time Riegner saw Nazis beating up Jews and other political

enemies on the streets and in the universities, he was a stiff pessimist in face of what he calls "the Jewish optimism of the centuries—a kind of wishful thinking, really."

Unlike many other Jews, who dismissed Nazism as an episode and predicted that Hitler would soon run out of steam, Riegner argued that Jews should leave Germany while they still could. He left in May 1933, four months after Hitler became chancellor. He read "Mein Kampf" and listened to Nazi slogans and songs. "From my first encounter with Nazi terror, I took the Nazis seriously," he says. "Hitler made many speeches in which he threatened to destroy the totality of Jews."

"Why people didn't believe is a question I have always struggled with. It was so terrible that the human mind refused to accept it. An encounter with absolute evil is something very few people are prepared to accept. It is a paradox: The most positive experience is that people can't accept evil. That means that man is basically good."

At the time Riegner had no doubt: The industrialist was telling the truth, and all other evidence supported the report.

Headquartered in Geneva, only a few miles from Germany and France, Riegner collected information, all of which confirmed the industrialist's report. The list of witnesses grew every week. A Jew who

survived . . . (95,000 dead) in the ghetto of Riga and reached Switzerland; a Swiss employe in the consulate in Prague briefed by Czech Jews on deportations; a Polish Jew who was smuggled out of Russia by a disaffected German officer warning him about the extermination camps he had seen; messages, smuggled out by French railway workers, of mass roundups of West European Jews for transportation to concentration camps in the east.

There was even testimony from a Danish Jew close to Field Marshal Hermann Goering. "Goering had such strange associations," Riegner explains, "and we asked ourselves how reliable he was"—who somehow smuggled to Geneva a sheaf of the railroad schedules for Jewish transports. In a supreme example of bureaucratic punctiliousness, the German railways billed the Berlin Jewish community for the cost of the deportations.

Riegner kept filing the reports, kept asking for action. "We never did enough," he says. "Sure, we could have done more. All of us. In 1944 Wise finally got the American government to agree to a free port admitting 1,000 Yugoslav Jews. It was a procedure to postpone immigration

problems. It could have been done with thousands of others. Also, we could have put stronger pressures on the neutrals—Sweden, Turkey—to accept more refugees. We could have brought more people to England, to North Africa.

"Hitler could have been stopped several times, but once he started rolling, only thousands, maybe tens of thousands of Jews could have been saved. Not millions."

The industrialist, ostensibly in Geneva on business, met Riegner three times, each time warning of the rising number of Jews being killed. He passed on details such as the kind of chemicals used in the gas chambers.

The industrialist was frustrated that nothing was happening, Riegner says. "In December 1942, finally, there was a condemnation of the massacres of Jews [from] London, Washington and Moscow. The British Parliament rose in two minutes of silence. But they wouldn't act."

Riegner says he does not know why the industrialist wanted to remain unknown. Fear of revenge against his family might have been a reason, Riegner says. He adds that it is possible that the industrialist never told his family about his role. "I wrote to his wife after his death," Riegner says, "and I alluded to his service. I think his wife might have known. Perhaps. But not his children. I don't know. For me, what mattered was that he was a democratic, deeply anti-Nazi—a man of great moral standards who wanted to relieve his conscience."

On one occasion, Riegner concedes, he was forced to reveal the industrialist's name. When he made "a desperate attempt" in the fall of 1942 to convince the Americans of the truth of the death camps, Riegner wrote down the industrialist's name, put it in a sealed envelope and handed it over to the head of the American legation in Bern. This was a few days after the industrialist had warned Riegner that he now had definite information on Hitler's direct order to exterminate all Jews. Riegner put all the evidence together in a document of 25 pages, to be transmitted to Washington.

But the envelope has disappeared, Riegner says, and an inkling of a sly grin spreads across his impassive face. The sealed envelope is not in the American archives, Riegner says, the U.S. diplomat is dead and no researcher has come up with the industrialist's name.

"I gave my word not to give out his name," Riegner now says. "I am bound to my word. He never asked for anything else. Many people have approached me to give out his name, but I did not break my word. I never will."



Stephen Wise

Sumner Wells

the British Council is aware would have reacted to any  
 Silverman who has information for making the (war) Minister  
 knowable by the Parliamentary question  
 in any case, Silverman who knew nothing about the  
 situation who was associated with the [redacted] and he  
 forward to make inquiries. It was noted later that [redacted] was  
 summoned to Washington and told by [redacted] (I remember the exact  
 words) that "I am sorry to say that it is true."  
 Silverman would be very reluctant to say anything critical of the U.S.  
 but it is a fact that in set meeting from start except the [redacted]  
 great advice to remain quiet while inquiries were made as to what  
 could be done.  
 We had no doubt that the Russian message was "at least  
 substantially correct". This is quoted from a letter I wrote to my kind  
 colleague Eastman, which is reproduced in part by Prof. [redacted] Lague  
 in his book "The Tenth's Secret". He also quotes me as having  
 written that Russian message "had what I only describe as a  
 shattering effect". Nothing was done in Washington for months of  
 great substance until Henry [redacted] Secretary [redacted] sawed the  
 [redacted] of the War Refugee Board. [redacted] was the late  
 Both the U.S. and the U.K. were anxious to [redacted] in the  
 that the war was fought in [redacted], if not the only, of the [redacted]  
 unfortunately they did not [redacted] [redacted]  
 If I am not held up by the snow, I shall fly to Geneva  
 tomorrow, and I will [redacted] the [redacted] & [redacted]  
 with [redacted] and [redacted]

ALICE

W.L.P.



It. if you are in touch with (Gumbel) Kshatras  
you could mention that I shall be away  
for some weeks and I'll be brought  
can therefore wait

You will be interested to note that as

HAIM AKI!

Israel Professor, Haim Akir, who is  
founder of Bnei Akira, has successfully

to obtain the passport. He wrote a

book in French, in which I figure rather

prominently, and which he considers as the

history of the U.S. & Israel

France & save the Jews from Hitler!

The book, like the famous English one, is

very good in parts

It is now mostly in French, and

chiefly, but not exclusively, in Hebrew for

the great majority of the Hebrew University

L. J. J. J.

## Holocaust Revisionists

I have great respect and admiration for Gerhart Riegner ("The Nazi Secret No One Believed," Style, Feb. 5). He was one of the first to alert the world community to the catastrophe of the Holocaust and deserves commendation from every humanitarian person for doing so.

There is one sentence in the interview, however, that leads me to the conclusion that Mr. Riegner apparently has been misinformed. He is quoted as saying that the American Holocaust Commission is dominated by revisionists. As chairman of the American Holocaust Commission, I want to point out that this statement is not accurate.

The members of the American Holocaust Commission consist of representatives of American Jewish organizations and leading academicians. In a poll that I conducted of the members of the commission, I found that a number of the members, like myself, have all been supportive of Israel's Labor Party. Some members of the commission are supporters of the Peace Now movement in Israel; others have no affiliation whatever. Indeed, the poll shows no member of the commission has any association with Israel's revisionist group.

It is true that some staff members, very few staff members, of the commission in past years were identified with this movement. Their association with the commission has long been terminated. The staff of the commission is not identified with any political movement of Israel and, like the members of the commission, is only concerned with doing research about the attitude of American Jews toward the Holocaust during the period immediately preceding and including World War II. It is therefore entirely inaccurate to describe the commission as dominated by apostles of the Zionist revisionist movement.