

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Sacerdoti
Forename:	Cesare
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	24 February 1938
Interviewee POB:	Florence, Italy

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Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
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**REFUGEE VOICES**

Interview No. RV171
NAME: Cesare Sacerdoti
DATE: 12th April, 2016
LOCATION: London, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

Today is the 12th of April 2016. We are here to interview Cesare Sacerdoti. My name is Bea Lewkowicz, and we are in London.

Can you please tell me your name?

Cesare David Salomone Sacerdoti.

And when were you born?

I was born on the 24th of February 1938, eight o'clock in the morning; it was snowing. In my parents' flat.

And where?

In Florence.

Thank you very much for having agreed to be interviewed for Refugee Voices. Cesare, can you tell me a little bit about your family background please?

My family background is that my paternal family was in Italy since time immemorial. In fact, they think that it was there even before the destruction of the temple when Pompeii intervening in, in the land of Israel, and some ostriches were brought back. Whether it's true

or not, there is no documentary evidence. And they were in Italy certainly for a very long time. That is sure. Moving from one state to another. In the 1500s there was the story in the family, that the women of the family embroidered a tablecloth for the Lord of Florence. Whether this is true or not, we don't know. Then there was another possibility that later on they were in Lombardy. And then they were kicked out of there because it became a Spanish dominion, and they were kicking all the Jews out in the- in 1594, what-have-you. And then they reappear in Florence, where they stay... all the time, until my great-grandfather left Florence to go to Alexandria to seek his fortune. And I think he made some fortune, but he died in a, in an accident. And the family were just brought up to spend the money, so they finished it all. And my grandfather, who was the youngest of the... boys, went back to Italy. He had enough money to go as far as Naples, and there he had the education of a young gentleman. He stopped writing letters for illiterate sailors, to get the money to go back to Florence, where of course the family was known. In fact, in a census of 1848, before my great-grandfather left, they are listed as living at the- in the ghetto, in the house number 3. And they must have been, in relative terms, comfortable, because they had a non-Jewish maid. So that was already a sign of some kind of comfort.

[0:02:54]

What was his name?

Emanuele...Emanuele like, is the second name of my first son. The first name of my son is of course is my father's name and the second name... And he's the one who then went to Alexandria. But as far as that's concerned, then my father, he, as a young man, was very religious. My grandfather was not very religious. He was a- he was more a 'man of the world' if you like. And he was studying at the Rabbinical College in Florence. And at the same time, he was studying music at the Conservatory in Florence. Cello. He had problems with that, because he started- He was one of the founders of the Quartetto Italiano. But as students they started. When they started to have some success, well he wasn't prepared to play on Friday, or on Saturday. So after a while they said, "We love you dearly, but we have to pick somebody else." And so he just pursued his career if you like, in the rabbinate.

We have to stop. Can you hear it? You were telling us about the background of your father's family.

Yes. So, my grandfather, Cesare, so he was- he was married and he had two daughters. He was left with these two young...children. His wife died. So he married again, with my grandmother, Silvia. And ...my father was, as they say in Italian, *'figlio di secondo letto'*. And...

Can you translate that for us?

I'm sorry?

Can you translate that? What does it mean in English?

[0:04:58]

'Figlio di secondo letto': 'Son of the second bed'. Because it was the second marriage. And he was- they lived near the synagogue. And my grandmother was very religious. And he took from her. My grandfather didn't care much. You know, that he didn't- that he was against, but he was not terribly observant. Traditionally. So he was, his life was really very much around the synagogue. As a child, and as he grew up. And then ...so he became a Chazzan and he was- in fact he was Chazzan Berechit when the Chatan Torah was Nathan Cassuto, who then later on became the Rabbi of Florence. And the son of the Cassuto, the famous Cassuto in Israel, the one who... wrote the textbook to teach biblical studies to, in the schools. And... And that was it. And he was at the same time, a musician, until the two – if you like - professions clashed, so he neglected the musician side, and he in the main, played in orchestras sometimes, but... or he would play in trios or quartets for fun, with friends. In fact, I have memories of being, when we were in Viareggio, that... his friends would come – musicians - and I have been there and I would go to sleep always with this quartet playing until ...midnight or one o'clock. They just did it just 'cause they enjoyed playing together. So that was my father's side. My mother was one of eight children. Her mother came from France, and...her father from Livorno. But they lived in Florence. Her father died shortly after she was born. She never knew her father, basically. And... the children were looked after by the... Community. Not put in an orphanage. In those days, they would just- they would be sort of taken like foster children, in an informal way. One of them, in fact the

second youngest, the one before my mother, my uncle Fernando, he was taken in by the rabbi who was Rabbi Vergilius – Rabbi Arto - sorry. And... he then became a rabbi himself and he was Rabbi of Florence, later on. He was a minister like my father for many years. And then... my father went as a rabbi to Viareggio and he took the Rabbinate of Florence.

And what was his name?

[0:07:52]

Fernando Belgrado. And he had the most powerful and wonderful baritone voice. So much so that at one stage, it's very amusing in a way to see this parallel between my father and my uncle, there was a great temptation to go for- to seek a career as a baritone in the operas, because it was really an exceptional voice. But as well, his being observant stopped him from doing that. And so he pursued the rabbinate. And I've got recordings of him as I've got some homemade recordings of my father. In fact, I recorded when he was already seventy-nine, the Seder according to the Minhag of Florence. And every- and my children they digitalised it. I say my children - Simon and Jonathan. And when it comes at this time of the year, I listen to his CD just to refresh my memory. Because I am musically... impossible. Even a *recitativo* with me...has no relation to what it's supposed to be.

Although you have the music from two sides?

Yes, from two sides, but I'm afraid... it didn't really... come to me. Although my children, strangely enough, yes, both Simon ...and Jonathan are keen, and they're in the choir. And Daniel never joined the choir, but he- he's very musical. And he has got in fact a beautiful voice as well; the best of the three, probably. Alexandra I don't think- took more from her mother about the singing, not great. And... anyhow, so that was ...that is my family background. My grandfather from my mother's side, and I like to - to think of that. He was a craftsman. He was a French polisher specialising in pianos. And he would go, he had made his own mixture. And he would be called all over Europe to re-polish pianos by concertists. And... But he died young, and... leaving this huge family to my grandmother. And the other siblings of my mother, they all were brought up, but they became very assimilated. In fact, with the exception of my uncle Fernando, they all married non-Jews. And some of them I think basically all of them, they were basically non-believers. Somehow they- they are

completely non-believers. And the sisters, her only one, like my mother, married another Jew. And she had two girls, and a boy. The husband unfortunately is the only member of the extended family that was taken to the camps, and never came back. The son of my Auntie Emma, unfortunately, he - sorry...he died after the war, when the synagogue in Florence was basically like the Community was revived by the Palestine Brigade, the Water Company of the British Army. They were all... Palestinians, the real Palestinians, the Jews. The Pioneers in Israel, that were all volunteers. And of course in the British Army, they tried to give them non-fighting roles because they knew they would have troubles with them after the war. And they didn't want to teach them to fight them. And they were fantastic. But one of the lorries, in leaving the grounds of the synagogue, ran over my cousin Raffaele, and he died. I mean, that was a... This auntie of mine was really- I compared her to *Mother Courage of Brecht*, really. She had so many terrible things in her life. And she still struggled all the time, and she always had a smile. Anyhow, there is one of my cousins from that side is still alive in - in... Trieste.

[0:12:20]

How old was the child when - when that accident happened, your cousin?

He was a little bit older than I, he might have been... ten or eleven, not more than that. But he was really the light of her eyes, not that she didn't love the girls, but you know, he was the one to carry on the name of the family. The- her husband was called Osmo. And he was from...I don't think from Salonika but from the Feria. They had come to- They had basically from Venice they had gone down to the Orient to like, Salonika, and then they had- some of them had gone back to Istria and Trieste, and that's where they basically, he - he lived. And he then got- met my auntie, when he was for his work - I don't remember what it was - he was in Florence. But strangely enough, my cousin Lucia, then met somebody from Trieste, and she went to live and she's still- she's a widow now in Trieste, and she married one man from the same extraction as her father. It's very interesting.

You said your grandfather on your father's side wasn't so religious. Your father became more religious. What was his profession, your grandfather, your paternal grandfather?

My grandfather, he was, as I have mentioned earlier, he was brought up as a young gentleman. He spoke perfect Arabic of course, because when he was a little- a baby, they basically had his own goat, that there was an Egyptian sort of young man, who was in charge of keeping the goat clean. And it was the goat that was used to feed him. Cause my great-grandmother obviously wasn't feeding - breastfeeding. And he was brought up as a young gentleman. He spoke Arabic, French, English, Italian. But he wasn't really taught to earn a living, because it wasn't, I think, anticipated he would have to! But then of course life is what it is. So, when he arrived in Florence, back from Egypt, but he was born in Egypt but as a member of the family, he found employment with a – the tram company in Florence. So he became an executive there. And I remember one of my aunties telling me that when there was a strike, the tram– and it was- they were still drawn by horses, they were not electric yet, it was just at that time when they were gradually being transferred to electricity. That he was, at one stage there was this strike, and he had to take the tramway with the horse out, and they stopped him after a while, because he wasn't really any good at it. And there was something very funny- she thought it was funny, and that's why she told. But anyway, he was working there. And I think he was also doing some kind of business as a middle-man either in the jewellery field. I don't know what exactly. I know that because my Uncle Fernando told me that the first present he bought for his wife-to-be when they were to get engaged, was a gold watch and bracelet, which he bought through my grandfather. He referred to him as “*Il Signor Cesare*”. He obviously was considered a man of some standing in the Community although he wasn't a - a particularly observant man. But he was still, in relative terms not observant. He would still be part of the Community. You would still be part of it.

[0:16:08]

Yes...yes. And tell us a little bit. Where did you...How did your parents meet? [pause] How did your parents meet? How do you know...?

My parents met because they...they were going- of course there was eight years' difference, eight years' difference between them; my mother was eight years younger. But they knew each other at the school. It was- there was a – a school there, a Jewish school as well. And when then my mother was about eighteen, a non-Jewish friend of my father had met my mother, and he was very keen on her. And so he told my father he says, “Well, you know the girl. Can't you just...arrange it so we can meet?” My father first of all wasn't keen that this

non-Jewish man should basically marry this Jewish girl. And ...as much as they were at school together, he used to tease her and pull her plaits or things like that. He realised that she was not a little girl; she was a beautiful young woman. And so they knew each other. The community was small; it was not big. So... thanks to this fellow who brought his attention on her, they started to... be together. And of course, my uncle was- my Uncle Fernando was a - a minister like he was. They were very young ministers at that stage. And so they got engaged, and they got married.

And which year was that?

In 1936, which was already during the Fascist period. In fact, my parents' photographs show that there were some people in full Fascist uniform. Cause the Jews were quite accepted, I mean... the Jews in fact had come out of the ghetto you know about... in the middle of the 19th century. And they were assimilated in the Italian society, still keeping their Jewish identity. But there were many military. In the military there were many Jews, there were generals and... politicians. And - and above all, in the academic field. Many... University professors. Once the gate opened, they all went first year of education.

[0:18:30]

Yeah. So for example, did your parents, at that time, did they have non-Jewish friends?

Oh, yes. Well the...people would mix together...

Yeah, as you said...

It was not, yes. Well, like, you know as I said about my father. And when my father had to - they- the Fascist party, in the beginning, was not against the Jews. There were Jews who had very prominent positions. For example, the... Mayor of Ferrara was - was a Jew! And he was a great friend of Balbo, who was one of the Fascist leaders. Although it was the side of the Fascists which was more benign if such a thing could be considered. So much in fact so that Balbo then was killed by the Fascists in a supposed "accident"... although in North Africa. And so they had non-Jewish friends. And in fact when the trouble even started about the racial law, that was in '38, but even before there was a build-up towards them. And my father

had a problem when he had to take his diploma at the Conservatory, because he was going slowly because he was doing- studying to be a rabbi and studying as a musician. So the two things took a lot of time. And working as a minister, so... And in... one of the exams for his diploma, as Professor of Cello, was to play in a, in a quartet. And...the fascist spirit of many of the students, they just wouldn't play with him. And the ones that in the end played with him, were some, that then were later were even persecuted by the fascists. They were not Jews, but they were sort of politically... they were sent some of them on internal exile which in Italian was called "*al confino*". They were sent in small villages in the south, isolated from everybody. So... there were friends, I mean non-Jews. And one mixed and... I remember my mother got very friendly with a woman who had a...a hairdressing salon. And her father- her husband was a *Carabiniere*, was a non-commissioned officer in the *Carabinieri*. And in fact, they were very helpful to us when the trouble started. The husband warned us that there would be a raid, and so... at the synagogue. And so he said, "Look, things look pretty bad." So we ran out of the house. And at one stage of my father running away from one place to the other, he was in hiding in the attic of... one of the girls who was working or the girl's family, working in the salon of the hairdressing salon. So there were many non-Jewish friends. And my father had... many of the musicians, most of them were non-Jews. And they kept, some more openly than others, but they kept relationship even when - you know - you were not supposed to fraternise with the Jews.

Yeah. So that was mostly of course before you were born. What are your earliest memories?

[0:21:50]

My earliest memories are ...going. It was- our life was around the synagogue. Very much, by that time, we were firmly in there. And... I remember going in - in the morning, although it was not very far, on my father's bicycle with him, going to the kindergarten, where I remember I was taught how to do the buttons up. And I had to do the bows up, with some kind of contraption that I've never seen after that. And...

This was a Jewish kindergarten?

It was a Jewish kindergarten yes, which it was all in the compound of the synagogue, if you like.

And that- the synagogue of, the Firenze synagogue?

In Florence, yes.

In Florence, yes.

Which was relatively new. It was going back only to about 1840. There were smaller synagogues before. If you want I can tell you a bit about that background as well. And... And there also, But instead of going on the bike I'd go with my father and my mother and my grandmother. We'd walk to synagogue and there I would sit with my father in the choir, unless he was the one taking the service, but still with the young people of the choir, which was on the right hand side as you faced the tevah. That was the right hand side. And on the left side, was where the rabbi was. But the chazzanim and the choir was on the right-hand side. And there was quite a nice organ in Florence. It was restored after the war. But the organ was used quite...[recording interruption]

Yes. We were talking about, you were talking about... going to synagogue. And being with your father and being in the choir.

And I would sit there and I have wonderful memories, because the scene in Florence at that time, the...the tevah, the reading desk, was built, much more closer to the [inaudible]. Forward. Now they keep it, they have made a sort of another one, more in the middle of it. The acoustic in the synagogue in Florence is diabolical anyhow. Not for a holy place, certainly. You can't hear a thing there. All you hear is echoes, really. And a voice is lost in there, I mean, completely.

[0:24:18]

But it's a very beautiful synagogue.

It's absolutely beautiful. You're quite right.

What did you want to tell us about the...? You said you wanted to say something about the history of that synagogue.

The history is that when the synagogue was built, the Chief Rabbi, if you want to call it, is...in Florence was Haham Maroni who... incidentally had some pupils that even were interviewed to be the Haham of the Spanish and Portuguese here in London. But then I don't know whether they were not selected or whether they didn't want to go. And... when it was built, the- it was a sort of a crucial time for the congregation to be- to leave the Italian Minhag, and adopt completely the Spanish Minhag. Because up to that point there were synagogues where there was the Italian Minhag and there was the Spanish one. And there was a Society of Haksharim, which was... adding some privilege to hold some services. Sorry, it was not the Hakhsharim, it was a society, which was in fact for the... I got muddled here, do you want to start again, or what?

No just tell us what it is.

Anyhow, this society had, through the centuries, had been allowed to hold their own services. It was a very prestigious society. And a... a Jewish society of course. Very wealthy the members were, and... they couldn't go hold service every day, or every Shabbat. Only on some occasions, because the holding of services had been very strictly regulated in accordance with the Lord of Florence. The Medici first, and then with the Lorena. And the society had been pressing.. all the time to see if they could have more services allowed. Nowadays you have problem to keep one service, to have a Minhag for one, but those were the days – these days were different. And in about 1600 in fact, they even appealed to the Lord of Florence at the time. And he... different the Lord of Florence said, "Well, you must consult with other congregations in Europe." So Amsterdam was asked, and even London was asked. And they all said, "No, it shouldn't be allowed." And so they were not allowed. But when the new synagogue was built, it was built with Florence being the capital of Italy, which it was for a very short period of time. So it was a monumental synagogue, which probably in my view, is the most beautiful synagogue I've ever seen. Probably because of the sentimental attachment to it. And... they asked the rabbi, Haham Maroni, well, whether they could adopt the Spanish Minhag, and forget about the Italian one. And his response was, basically, well that can be done only if there will be in Florence another synagogue, smaller as it might be, that will carry on with the Italian Minhag. So the society that for years had

been trying to get all their own services, they came and said, "Well, we will fit out one synagogue like that, if we are allowed to have our own synagogue and hold services every day." So there was some negotiation. They even contributed to the payment of the ministers for that synagogue that would officiate in the Spanish one. And so the two synagogues, in Via dell' Oche, which premises are now used for a hotel. They were two twin synagogues, which I remember very well, because after the war when the big synagogue was not in use because it had been damaged, that they are the ones that were used. In fact at that time, one was used by Ashkenazi which were many survivors from the camps, and one by the Florence Community. And... my father, after the war, took me to the - the other lodge many times. I have very fond memories of that as well.

[0:28:55]

And so that one officiated in... Minhag, in the Spanish Minhag?

In the Spanish, yes, but...

While the main synagogue stayed with the Italian?

They went Italian altogether, yes.

Yeah.

Yes. Whereas before there was a mixture. That sometimes there was one- But the Italian was the prevailing one. That was the tradition.

OK. Can you just tell us what the main difference is between the Minhag Italia, and the Minhag...?

Yes. And even- and there, the Italian Minhag, from one city to another there were some differences as well. You see, in the past, the composition of poems... was something ordinary. Every community had a few poems- poets. And so if you look at the piyyutim of different communities, they are different. And they are now not recited. But there was a Rabbi Arto, the son of the rabbi who brought up my Uncle Fernando, who in Israel, brought

together the whole of the Italian Minhag in different volumes. And even a collection of the piyyutim of the different communities and the occasions on which they were recited. Anyhow, going back to the synagogue, what happened then... The new synagogue needed of course a chazzan, and... they needed one with a powerful voice. So they advertised all over Italy. And ... a - a chazzan was finally selected. The selection of the chazzan at that time was quite an affair. There was the representative of the Mahamat [council] of the lay people. Of course the Chief Rabbi, the Director of the Choir, who was quite a prestigious position at that time, and so that the rabbi would decide on the moral standing and knowledge of the man. The lay reader on the ...acceptability from the congregation's point of view. And of course the Choir Director on the musical aspects of them. So, the first that was selected was a chazzan from Rome. And on the condition that he would learn all the Minhag of the Spanish of Florence, which was different from the Spanish Minhag in Rome. Where in fact they had two, they had the Aragon and the Catalan, plus the Italian one...

Yes.

... which is still there, right?

[0:31:32]

And... the man worked very hard at it. But when he got then to the High Holy Days that he was supposed to do, he lost his voice through the hard work so he couldn't perform.

Yeah.

So it was...

The chazzan...

It was advertised again. And in the end, they decided to take the chazzan from the ...Spanish side, the Italian Minhag, because he knew them both. And that was the one that then became Rabbi Ugelli. And he started but had to stop after a few months, because he lost his voice as well. This synagogue is enormous. And so they managed in the end, one way or another, using part of one chazzan from the other synagogue, and so on. When my uncle, as a young

man started to act as a chazzan, and my father, they started the same time, my father had, was very good in using his voice. He didn't have- I love my father's voice, but is no comparison to the sort of... enormous voice of my uncle. So when he became- my uncle became the chazzan of the congregation that was really. There were occasions when he would be, for example for Simchat Torah, when you have what in Florence was called the "*Giglo dei Sepharim*" – the Hakafot. And the music of the tune of the Hakafot in Florence, they are fantastic. And it was of course the chazzan doing the solo, and then the choir going after it. It was a beautiful thing. I remember as a child, there is a procession; it's quite large, the synagogue. So the, we little boys were given a torch, and... once going down we all tried to take it, to play with it afterwards. And little girls were allowed to be in the procession with bouquets of flowers. And all the Sepharim, there were quite a lot, with all the silver and gilded and the [inaudible] and the plaques and the... it was fantastic. And I remember it because this was done... still with daylight. And the synagogue in Florence has got different- The windows are multi-coloured glass. And this light. My memories of childhood are... memories of light. Different lights for different... flash of memories. Segments of memories. Like when then things got worse, I've got different lights. The lights bring memories. Even now, when I just look out of a window or walk in a place, the light is what brings me the memory back. That's why I love to go in Tuscany. Because there the lights are my native light and they are still there. They haven't changed.

Yeah.

No pollution changed the light. Although there is sometimes some fog.

But what lights, the light of the synagogue, the windows, what other lights? What lights were there?

[0:34:56]

Well, this is the light – when, you know, when I, we run away from home. We ran away and it was dark. And in this carriage drawn by horses, because they were like taxis at that time. Still after the war, there were some as well. And then when I think of the days in the orphanage, well perhaps it was the first few months there were winter, I don't know. It's all penetrated by grey light. A light that is more oppressive. Not - not a light of joy. There isn't

anything like that. And going back to Florence, in spite of my illness that I had, which I'll tell you later, it was the light again. When I was back in the synagogue compound after the war, it was, it was the light of before. Of before the - the unhappy period. This time of being- I don't know...when you just thought of as you are cold and you are hungry. That's what it was. And the light associated with it; everything together. Anyhow, going back to my uncle. My uncle and my father were the two taking the service there. And my uncle was treated as if he would be, I don't know, a special breed. And if he would say that he couldn't take the service one day, because he saved the voice, they wouldn't [inaudible]. So my father had to take always the bulk of the service. And my father thought that was perfectly all right, because you know, the voice, my uncle was the voice of the synagogue. And...for Simchat Torah, the memories that he has brought to that. But I also remember my father in taking the service there. And even when then he went back to Florence and he was living in Florence in the old people's home. Cause they both went to live there. And he used to go and see them and he would read the Haftarah and sometimes if I had been there for Shabbat, I would go with him. And people even, some of the old people that were in the old people's home. Cause when they went there, my parents, they met all their childhood friends again. And so when they would go to synagogue, my father said, "Oh, yes, good. You're reading Haftarah today." And so they were delighted. "Oh, why don't you read Shacharit?" Because they liked to hear. It was the sound of their youth as well.

What other festivals do you remember as a child?

[0:37:26]

As a child, Simchat Torah is the one I remember most. And then the Shabbatot in general. Otherwise...I remember Sukkot, but not so much in relation to the [inaudible] but as more in relation to the sukkah that was arranged in the garden, in the ground there. But more than anything else, it was really Simchat Torah and the Hakafot. That's what really...

Stands out?

...stayed in my mind more.

But you talked about Pesach also and the...or was that later?

Pesach, not in relation to the synagogue, but in the relation to the making of the matzot.

Go on...

Cause my father and my uncle in turn, they were supervising the making of the matzot. And I remember being down during the- when it was dark. I don't know why they did it at night. Not that- I'm sure they didn't go into the heart of dark, otherwise my father would have not taken me with him, because I loved to go with him and watch it. And also because the men making the matzot were- were very kind to me. And they would give me some of the egg and sugar that had been mixed together to make some of the biscuits, because they made not only matzot; they made all sorts of things. And... then throwing some of the dough on the ground so that they said, "Oh, that's not kosher anymore!" So that they could give it to me and I could play with it. So that- those are my memories of Pesach. And of course of the Seder I've got sort of vague memories. And... my parents always kept an open house. So that the Seder was not just the family; it was lots of other people. Until, and I remember that day well, Pesach 1943. Some neighbour of ours, on the same landing of our... apartment, they were very nasty fascists. And there were racial laws that the Jews couldn't meet in a place more than a certain number, and so on, and they called the police. And the police sent our guests away. So you know that was the - the last Seder I remember very well, of before the war. Was not a nice. I got quite frightened because the police arriving, people sent away, and all that. So that's a memory that stuck in my mind.

And you were very young; you were five at that time?

[0:39:48]

Yes, yes. Yes. But you know there are some memories of that time that are... are very vivid. But in relation to the synagogue, I only have happy memories. And it could very well be that perhaps I remember Simchat Torah, because probably it was the last time that we went to synagogue. Because I think the...in 1943, the Kippur service was held at the old people's home, not at the synagogue. It was thought already it wasn't safe. Although the old people's home wasn't safe either. In fact, they raided, eventually, the old people's home, took the old

people on the lorry and... they were all exterminated, so...it wouldn't have made... You just could not conceive what was going on! It was inconceivable, that basically...

As a child, did you – did you feel that things were changing? Did you feel...

Yes.

...You said that there were the racial laws...

Yes. Very much.

...for example?

You see, I was born in February 1938. The anti-Semitism was built up by the Fascist Party. So they even started a new magazine, in '*[La] Difesa Della Razza*'. Which I've got some issues of it; I found them on a flea market in Italy. And I bought it just to show my children... which is just something beyond belief. They are- they are a laughing matter today, but it wasn't laughing at that time. And how they built up this business from the Jews and so on. And then... started to have administrative... decrees. Jews were not allowed to go to public parks, gardens. Jews were not allowed to go on seaside or mountain resorts. And all things of that kind. My mother, we had no- we lived in an apartment. We had no garden, and my mother every day, as a little boy, when- after I came back from the kindergarten, she would take me, make a point of taking me out... I remember we... I remember that place, we used to go to a... milk shop, because at that time there were milk shops where you would go and buy- a dairy, basically. And- and headed there, to have a yoghurt. I remember the name of the dairy was Zatta. And then we would go a public park- public garden. Either the one near the synagogue which was the Giardin d'Azeglio or to some other bigger park. And...while I was at the synagogue I was there playing every day, and you know going to other parks and other children. Cause again, we mixed, non-Jews, children as well. There was no...there was not any attempt not to mix, basically. We had our own ...environment, but that did not exclude going outside. So ...when I, we couldn't go there, my mother found that there was the botanical gardens, were not considered a public garden. And you could go there though. So she used to take me to the botanical gardens, which didn't last for long because even from there we were told we shouldn't go there. Although it wasn't until the decree where, to be

safe, the people there didn't know. They just saw this young woman coming with the – with the children, so obviously [inaudible]. So they asked, "Why are you coming here?" And another thing that happened. My brother Vittorio, had a very poor chest and the doctor said he really should be on the seaside for a period. So, my mother...managed to organise, with her friends who had the hairdressing salon, to... rent with her a small- couple of rooms, in [inaudible] which is very near *Forte dei Marmi*. And...and we went there. And we had been there one day, I have a photograph with my mother written the dates at the back, or, with my mother and my brother and I in the water, on the beach there. But that was basically only for one day, because on the evening of that day, a Carabinieri which are part of the police of course, came and said, he said, "You shouldn't be here and you know it, because Jews are not allowed." He said, "I'm just telling you, because tomorrow morning I'll come to send you away." So of course we left the same night. So, as a child, there were these instances that... this change in your daily life that of course you notice and you feel something also in the air. The grownups talk about the problems. You know, you hear that your uncle, was the oldest brother of my mother, who was working for the Italian railways - you know there were all these bits of public service - had been dismissed. My aunty, the one who was my father's step-sister. She was dismissed. She was working for the Italian railway as well. And ...you hear the grownups talking; the atmosphere they can't help. You can feel that there is not much joy around you. And then ...you know the Jewish- the Jews reacted to it in a very positive way. By organising their own schools, because children were sent away from state schools. In the beginning, they were allowed to have a separate class for the Jews. And then they were allowed either to finish the course, and then out. So then Jews - teachers from the university, the professors – were sent away. So in fact the Italian Jews had the best teachers in the secondary school that you could have because they had those professors from university. So you feel it, even as a child. So you know, now, what I'm telling you, is memories which are not verbalised at that time. And then verbalising them now, through a filter of all these years.

Sure.

So I express also not in my mother tongue, what I felt as a child, now as an old man. So, I don't know. You have to- you make what you make of it yourself.

[0:46:28]

Yeah.

And... the... you felt it. The grownups were not a happy lot. There was not much laughing. And then of course, once we, we had to run away at night, things started to be much more dramatic, and you felt it. My father already had not been sleeping at home... for a while. I don't know when. He was in hiding in a Convittori San Leonardo, which was like a... a home for retired priests. ...Because at that time, I think I better make that clear, the Chief Rabbi Nathan Cassuto, blessed memory, with my father and my uncle, were his assistants. And the Cardinal of Florence of that time, Cardinal Elia Dalla Costa, who also had drawn some of the priests around him, one, foremost his own particular secretary, Monsignor Giacomo Meneghello, Monsignor Capretti, Don Casini- Made quite a few of them. They had organised a committee, was called a committee, '*il comitato*', to help first and this was not underground it was quite open at that time. Because Italian Jews were discriminated against, but we were not in danger of our lives. But many central European Jews were coming to Italy. Escaping to Italy. So there were refugees in Italy, and they needed assistance.

[0:48:24]

So of course the Jewish Community was the first port of call. And, and things started to get difficult for the community as well, as much as there was no risk of life as yet. And the church, the Catholic church was very helpful. And so were... the Valdese pastor and so were the Protestant pastors. And there were other people, really the people of good will, that came together. It was incredible. Freemasons working with the Roman Catholic Church? It was happening. Anarchists working with this group of people. But the core of it was the Cardinal Elia Della Costa, with his priests and nuns. And he basically, when the racial law came out, he went into the cathedral and... spoke against them, very bluntly. When Mussolini and Hitler visited Florence, he had all the windows and the '*persiane*' [Eng. blinds], of the archbishopric closed, and no flags out. That was his order. And I learnt that the ceremony of the last March, the last 8th of March this year, 2016, the ceremony of Righteous Among the Nations of Monsignor Meneghello, that I had the [inaudible] story repeated by the present Cardinal now, that he was – the Cardinal Elia Della Costa - was telling Monsignor Meneghello off, because he was trying to look down outside, to see what was going on in the Piazza del Duomo, with Mussolini and Hitler parading all around the place. And he said,

"You must not even look! As far as we are concerned they are not here." I mean, he was a very brave man. Speaking out against Mussolini was not, even for a Cardinal, it took a lot of guts. And... this committee started helping the non-Italian Jews that came. Finding a place where they could be accommodated, and so on. Then of course, matters started to precipitate. And... and the 8th of September comes, the Armistice. Italy is out of the war. The Germans said, "You betrayed us, we occupy Italy." They create a puppet republic, the *Repubblica di Salò*. And at that point the Italian Jews were being hunted, just like any Jew, because the Germans were in occupation of Italy. And the raid in Florence started only at the beginning of November, because... the SS officer sent by from Germany specially to deal with the Jews in Rome, was Captain [Theodor] Dannecker or something like that. He was in Rome, and he had done a very good job, as far as they were concerned. He took over a thousand people, sent to the gas chamber. Had the flu, or something like that. So he couldn't go and do in Florence straight away, and they preferred him to be in charge. Although in the end it was another SS officer who carried out the raids. Plus in Florence, there was an infamous band, part of the *Repubblica di Salò*. The *Banda Carit*. Carita was the name of the... leader of this band.

A fascist – fascist?

Italian fascists.

Italian fascists. Yes?

[0:52:22]

Italian fascists – black shirts.

Yeah?

Who were particularly vicious; they were special services. Particularly vicious concerning the Jews and the Partisans. And of course the Jews were even easier to catch than the Partisans. And they were hunting everywhere for them. Now, this committee started to work, and... my father was working particularly within the committee with Monsignor Meneghello, because basically he was like Meneghello to the Cardinal, was my father was to Rabbi Cassuto,

and...like my uncle, basically. And... When...at one stage, Rabbi Cassuto said we have to go in hiding and disperse. So my uncle went around in a bicycle to tell all as many people as he could to run away. Because the- we must remember, that when the racial law were declared, the Jews had to register as '*razza ebraica*'. So they had the complete list from the... from the town hall records. And they knew our address and everything. So Rabbi Cassuto basically told people to disperse.

And was that - sorry to interrupt you - was that his decision?

Well, to advise, yes. Yes, basically yes, it was the Rabbi's decision to advise. But it was taken as well, this committee that was meeting all the time, it was a - a matter of sensing what was going on - all the time.

That was a very wise decision, that's why I'm asking; that saved many lives.

Yes, that's right.

And the second question related to it: When, after the armistice, was there immediately an understanding of danger? Or did people think, 'now the war is over'? You know, how...?

[0:54:14]

Ah when the armistice took place, I have; I have a flash memory of it. Being outside in what was called at that time the Piazza Vittorio, for Emanuele Secondo, and now it's Piazza Della Repubblica in Florence. There, with my mother and my little brother Vittorio. We had little paper Italian flags waving and ...the crowd there, all feeling excited, the war is over. But that was not the reality of it. The reality was yes, the Allied forces had been in Sicily and then on the Continent. Salerno, Montecassino was still there and they hadn't really... they were not as near as that to Florence yet. And... they had to fight every kilometre South of Florence so it was not- it was a long haul. And...after the Armistice, and then the Germans occupied Italy. They arrived in Florence like...like if they were going sightseeing. There was no opposition at all. The Italian Army disintegrated, because [the] Badoglio and the King they just deserted the Italians and they ran south for their lives. So the Army didn't know what to do! I mean, I have known... later on, people that were part of the Italian Army in the south of

France, because the south of France was under the Italians. After the Armistice the Italians retreated across the Alps, to come to Italy, but not as an Army! Basically the officers said, "Well, everyone on his own!" and, "That is it." So some joined the Partisans and some just were interested in reaching- getting back home. And getting away from the north, where the Republic of Salò had started proscribing everybody to join their – their army – to- with the Germans. And... In fact, in our story there is a historian...Susan Zuccotti, an American historian of the Holocaust, who wrote a few books about this - if you like - migration from the south of France to Italy, and then to Florence, and then farther on. And she focuses on some particular family as well. Very interesting, her books are. Published by Yale. A very... it's a sympathetic but realistic... books. She's not Jewish. And she's not Italian. She's an American married to an Italian-American. But not a Jew, again. So it's fantastic how she has really ...In my view, she really understood the feelings and the atmosphere of the time. And if I say that, I was a child.

Yeah.

I absolve that, from that. And in fact she has helped me to verbalise what I felt, in many ways. Not influenced me; she has been a help to, to, to express it.

I understand. So that's why I wanted to understand when the Rabbi made this decision and said to flee, for example. Did the Rabbi- do you think that they had any knowledge what was going on in...you know in Auschwitz?

Not knowledge- they had some knowledge, but you know, it was a fact. The Germans are occupying Italy, they occupied Italy, and you know, it's a matter of what they will do. So then the Rome- in October there was a big raid in Rome and so you know there was not much to waste time. So that happened in October, so the Rabbi, towards the end of October- that's why, by degrees. First for Kippur they held a service at the old peoples' home. It was really- things were deteriorating all the time, and there was a more realising that it was happening.

Yeah, and they heard that Rome- there was a deportation already.

Yes.

So that...

[0:58:16]

Yes, the deportation of the Jews from Europe. It was known. I'm sure it was. There's no question about it. You know, there, there, there has been a lot of talk, but it was known. There's no question. All the...horrible details of it, I don't know if it was known. But...

No, I'm asking because you know, the same year, 1943, of course the Jews from Salonika were deported and there, the Rabbi did the opposite, and said, "Yes, we should go. We should be- or, we are going to be resettled." And that was- mind you, it was a bit earlier. January to July, you know? But that's why it's something interesting.

Yes, but it was also the geographical position of- Salonika was much closer to another front as well.

Yeah.

So, and the...Well the Germans took the Dodecanese Islands from the Italians straight away. So there were different factors, I think, within the war theatre if you like. So...and then, as of course, in ...They had more manpower, the Germans, in that part of the war theatre. You see, in – in Rome, they were concerned that the Italian population might react in a negative way, and rebel against their Jews being taken away. The Jews had been in Rome from immemorial time!

Yeah.

And some of the Italians might not like it! Rome already- and there was an Italian resistance already. But in Salonika you had no resistance, basically.

No.

What was there? Nothing much. And I don't think the Greek ever had much lost love for the Jews.

Well then again, it changed for Athens because that was Italian occupied. A different situation. But let's come back to you.

Right.

So, what happened to you?

[1:00:13]

Yes. So anyhow the decision, so much so that you know, particularly what happened in Rome, I assume that they said, "Well, we'd better sort of, run." And at that point, the safety of all the Jews in Florence, was really in the hands of the church - of the committee. But the last meeting of the committee was sometime in - in November, I don't remember the date. I could find it out. When basically... my father wasn't present; neither was my uncle. That was very lucky for them! But Nathan Cassulo was there. The Cardinal wasn't there, but Don Cassini, a very active priest in creating the false documents for all the Jews, both foreign and Italian, in those days were creating false documents, pretending that these people were just coming from the south of Italy, so they couldn't check if the records were right or not. Because the Allied forces were there. And then, there was a refugee, a very wealthy refugee, who had come to Florence with suitcases full of money and jewellery, and with a secretary. The secretary a non-Jew, which he picked up somewhere in Italy. He was a German I think, the refugee. And he was helping financially the committee and everything. And he was there. He was captured, but released. Apparently they were caught. The meeting was at Palazzo Pucci, and it appears from historical research that this secretary basically gave them away, because he was captured as well, but he was released immediately. The refugee, he was released. And went then to the *Convittori San Leonardo* – the same place where my father was hiding originally. Although my father then was in hiding in the house of the priest, Monsignor Capretti. He had to move all the time.

Where was his original hiding place, your father's?

My father originally hid in the *Convittori San Leonardo*, which is this sort of place for retired priests. And it was used then, by the Committee, as a safe house for people in transit.

Male of course, because men wouldn't inspire- give suspicion cause they were men, and it was a Convittor- a ...a house of priests.

Convent.

And the...so anyhow, Nathan Cassuto was captured. And he never came back. He was my Mohel. I was one of his first. He was also a - an eye doctor. He was a rabbi and eye doctor. Well those were, you know, even now the Chief Rabbi of Rome he's a radiologist – a Doctor of Radiology, and he's working in the hospitals as well. That was – that was the Italian tradition, right?

Yeah.

So we were out in the world. They were all out in the world. Not just...

And he was captured after this meeting?

[1:03:36]

He was captured at the meeting.

At the meeting.

There was a raid at the meeting. And... Then his wife was told, that to come to a meeting at one place in Florence, to see what could be done for him. This was organised by the secretary apparently, again, this secretary. And... she went to the meeting and she was captured as well. She came back, from the- from Auschwitz. And ...after the war, her two children, which had been taken care of by the grandparents, were at the Jewish school, where I was. David, who became then later on Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, and his sister, they were in my class. And the mother came back from the camps. And as soon as she arrived, organised to go, she managed to get a certificate I mean, straight away. In those days the British were giving certificates, or you'd go with an Aliya Bet, Aliya Bet - clandestine. And took them to Israel, Palestine as it was at that time. And she was working at Mount Scopus, and she was killed on the bus. Going to Mount Scopus, the bus was attacked by the Arabs... and the boy

and the girl were brought up by the grandparents. By Cassuto, the father - Umberto Cassuto. And it's an interesting, it's exciting, a friend of mine here in London, Leon Achon, his son was Bar Mitzvah in Jerusalem at the Italian Synagogue, and so David was there. And then we were, the reception was at the King David, and we were sitting next to each other. And Leon Achon as well, father of the Bar Mitzvah. And his brit milah was done as well by David's father. So we were talking and he told me, he said, "Yes, my father," he says, "did your brit milah, but your father helped me for my portion for my Bar Mitzvah." I said, "What do you mean? You were in Israel!" He said, "Yes, but your father was visiting in Israel, and he came to see my grandfather..." Because of course he looked him up, they were both Florentine and also had been one of his teachers. "...and... when he came, it was just about my, my Bar Mitzvah time, and my grandfather said, "Simone just listen to the boy, I have taught him the portion, but you know, I'd like you to straighten him up." And - because David says, "My grandfather, he was a great scholar, but as far as singing a note..." he says, "he was a dead loss." "In fact," he says, "your father straightened me up, and it was something entirely different to what my grandfather had taught me." So these are the funny things that happened in life in the distance of time.

But...So your father was the first to hide, while you were still in the flat with your mother and your brother?

Yes, and he would come. You know. He was not- it's not that we didn't see him, but on that night, on the – on the 6th of November, there was a raid at the synagogue, and they caught a few people. Because people used to- even some of the refugees, if they arrived in Florence, they would go there!

Sure.

[1:07:00]

They had, they had organised for some people to be at the railway station, to try and catch them before they would try and go somewhere else. But it wasn't so easy to recognise them all the time; they didn't have the – you know, the yellow star or anything like that. They were trying to... be confused with the rest of the people.

What was the address where you lived? What was the address? Do you remember it?

Yes, Via Borgo Pinti *trentuno*, [thirty-one] I remember even the first telephone number we had there.

Go on.

27 7 08, which we only got after the war. [laughing] I don't remember now these telephone numbers cause now we don't need to remember them.

And you said, so that was not only Jewish people in that building? Because you said there was a fascist next door.

Yes, but they didn't live...Sorry I didn't...

In the building, there were not only Jewish families?

No. No, no! That wasn't a ghetto!

Exactly.

Though in fact, in the, in the building where we lived, there were only Jewish families!

Right.

No- no others. That's how we lived. You know, the ghetto was dissolved a long time ago.

Yeah.

And... even before the complete dissolution of the ghetto, quite a few wealthy families had permission to live outside. So it's not... you see, the Lorena, the last Lord of Florence before it was Italy- when Tuscany became part of Italy, they were quite liberal... towards the Jews as well. You know, Livorno, as much as the beginning of the liberal Livorno welcoming the Jews, started under the Medici, but the Lorena carried on. And they didn't stop it. And...all

right well then when Napoleon was defeated, and things went back to the old regime, in Florence still ok, the ghetto was... was started again, but it was in a very flexible form. The Lorena were not- Florence...always had a relatively liberal policy towards the Jews. Not as much as Livorno there was no ghetto – part of the same state.

Yeah.

But, you know, it had some influence on Florence.

So your father went away, came to visit once in a while...

Yes.

... and then what happened to you, and your mother and your brother?

[1:09:26]

Well, when the- on the 6th of November, the synagogue was raided. And the Shamash were not moved out of there. As much as he was told with his family but he said, well he didn't know where to go. See, it wasn't easy, because some rich people in Italy, some of the Jews, managed to run away to Switzerland. But you needed money to do that. Some went into hiding in some properties they had in the country. But some were then betrayed by, by ...their own farmers, and some were not. There were also some things happening. So, on the- after the raid of the synagogue in the evening, my father came and said, "We have to get out." He says, "I have organised through the Committee... that you will go," telling my mother, "go to the Convento of the Piero Ferrari di San Giuseppe in Via dei Seragli. And I will stay there in the Convitto where I have been, and then we'll see." At that point everything had to be looked at on the...day by day. You couldn't plan ahead. So we ran away... in the dark, and there were two teenagers, they must have been sixteen, seventeen. They were the nephews of the baker in our street. And the - the bakers were two sisters. The aunties. And... they came to help us to take the few possessions we could take with us, which wasn't very much. The only thing my mother wanted to take with us was... the... photographs of the family, which was a crazy things, because you know... just the weight with those photographs, I mean... My father had already organised before, to have all his books, or his

Jewish books. He had some valuable books, in - in proper big cases, to be buried somewhere, so that he could either recuperate them later or that they would be buried so it would be all right from a religious point of view.

Ah, where did he— where did he bury them?

I don't know where he did it, because soon after the liberation he got them back. So I don't know where they came- where they had been. And... he had some incunabula; he had some valuable books.

So some photos you said, and what about you also told us about... Yeah.

And that... I can see my father grabbing that when they were going out. On this nail, he grabbed that, and took it away.

So what is that, explain for the- for the camera. What is it?

That one? Well, it's an amulet. You say, "Sabari" – 'omnipotent'. 'Bless us and maintain us.' And so obviously, to take it away, has worked out!

[1:12:19]

And who has given that? What was the history of that?

That was something that my Uncle Fernando had given my parents when they got married. Was not his wedding present, but was something he gave them, like an amulet. There is some superstitions you see, when it's Sephardi circle... You know, just- is not an Ashkenazi monopoly. And... And it was there. And... And that was it. So we went. And we arrived... at this convent. And there was this little nun, she was very small. Madre Maria Agnese. And she took us in. Took us to a room, which was a dormitory where there were quite a few other women, with children. And in a corner of the room, there was like a screen, and that's where a nun slept. And we were so to speak integrated as... 'refugees' from the south. That's what the nun believed, not the mother. Madre Maria Agnese knew who we were, because the Cardinal asked the nuns in his diocese and the priests to help the Jews. He says, "I'm asking

you, I'm not commanding you," which he could have done. And they should have obeyed, because it's one of the rules, if you like. The Bishop is the one that gives the order and the discipline within the church is to obey. He says, "I'm not telling you to do it, commanding you. I'm asking you. If you don't want to do it, you don't do it." And there was... one case where the Suore San Filippo refused, and the people they sent away, funnily enough they went into hiding in a place, and they were all taken away. It happened. And even some that were in hiding were denounced, had been very good. You know the Convent of the Carmine, Casa dei Carmine. Fifty women and children were taken away, and none of them came back. ...Yeah. And... so we went into this convent. And my brother and I, we had one nun each, so to speak, assigned to us to look after us. And we lived ...we sort of joined the life of the convent where they had a kindergarten for children. So we went to the kindergarten. But these nuns were told to stay with us all the time. One each, by the Mother Superior. And they didn't question; they did what they were told. Until, at night, we were given to our mother within the same building, and go to bed.

[1:15:14]

What was your mother doing during the day? Where was she?

The mothers were always in the dormitories, as far as I could make it out. I mean, I...you know, I remember seeing them in the morning there, and seeing them in the evening! Obviously they were... We ate in the kindergarten. I don't know.

Aha...

But I suspect they were there all day, because they - they didn't want to have non-nuns being seen moving around. And there was traffic with a convent because there were children being taken to the kindergarten. So you know, they tried to keep...I don't know exactly. So, that's how we lived. And we were taken to Mass by the nuns, our nuns. And... I wouldn't ...join. I just behaved but wouldn't join of course; no sign of the cross - nothing. And my little brother, the priest that came there, who was the Vicario Generale of the Cardinal, came there to recite Mass for the nuns. And he thought he saw him so with... the gear to take the service. And he saw him, he called him "Papa, papa!" He thought he was our father. You know, seeing him with stuff on top like a tallit and so on, thought that that was him, taking the service. And our

nuns were just scandalised, and took us out. And the nun, this is a story, I did not remember it. But when we had been ...proposing Yad Vashem, the... Madre Maria Agnese to be recognised as a Righteous, we had been visiting the convent, and we managed to, through the Mother General of the order now, the congregation, we managed to track three of the nuns still alive in their nineties. I have photographs with them...that were there at the time we were in the convent. And there was... Suor Caterina, Suor Generina had an incredible memory. They remembered even what my father looked like. Because they had, like in every convent, one of the nuns had also to stay at the gate, when the bell rings to see who is there. And she remembered my father coming to see us, because he was coming to see us. And...and when we went to meet them, they were in one of their homes, where they have- when they get at a certain age, within the congregation or the order, they are dispersed in the different homes, so that the nuns can look after them, in addition to what they do. This congregation of nuns look after children. Now they do a lot of work with children that have been ...kidnapped by the Roma and used for crime in Italy. And that's what they- they take them in hand, and they look after them. In Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro, where there are all these places they have opened home to look after them.

Street children.

Yeah, and...

And she remembered?

Sorry?

So the nuns remembered you?

[1:18:28]

Those nuns remembered. We have got...it was incredible. And while. Jonathan came and filmed the whole thing. And while he was filming, one of them says, "He looks just like his grandfather." And it's true. Jonathan is a spitting copy of my father. There are photographs of my father at his age. Put them next to him: it's incredible! And...and they remembered the episode, and they told me this episode, of the- my brother calling the Cardinal Generale

“Papa, Papa.” And then she said, “And I told the Mother Superior that you know, you were a good boy, but you wouldn’t even make the sign of the cross! And she told me,” she says, “not to press me, because we had been uprooted from our home in the south, been under bombardment and everything. She should just let us be. And that was it.” And they only realised that we were- they were harbouring Jews, when we had to run away. Because on the ...21st of November, I think was the 21st, the... which was a few days after the raid on the Committee, there was a raid at this Convento in Piazza dei Carmine, Serve di Maria, I don’t remember the name of the order, where they- It was a bigger convent than where we were. And they took all these mothers and children. And there are stories about that particular convent which are just incredible. The fascists and the Germans arrived there, and they said they took the women and children they wanted to take away. One of the children, one of the nuns had the presence of spirit- and he could have been no more than three or four - to put the child under her robe. So he wasn’t found. And a- another one, she was a German refugee, who had come from Germany, Belgium, Paris, south of France... crossed the Alps, Florence. She told the SS, “We are Hungarian Jews. You cannot touch us.” At that time, there was this agreement with Hungary, that they would deal with their Jews, the Germans should leave them alone. “And this is my mother, so you must leave them alone. We can’t...” So the Germans accepted it. And of course she spoke fluent German. Because she was German, in fact. Never mind the Hungarian; she couldn’t speak a word of Hungarian, so if they could... And there were also the Italian Militia there, the fascists, the Black Shirts. They didn’t take them away straight away. They just put everybody in one room, and... an aunty of mine was there, the one that the husband had been taken away. She was there with her two daughters. The son was somewhere else, because they are not...he was too old to be there. You know with the convent, with the nuns you had this problem of the sexes, if you like.

Yeah.

I don’t know where he was; probably he was at [inaudible]. I don’t remember where he was. I don’t know; I never knew. And the nun said, "Well, you can take her, but be aware because she has got TB. And also the daughters. In fact she’s due to go to hospital.” And the Germans were very peculiar about that. You know about that business about the island in - on the Tiber, where the doctor put a few Jews, in hiding there, in the hospital on the island, telling them they had a, a very strange illness, non-existent. And the Germans left it alone, cause they were very scared of it. So my aunty was left alone. In fact, they sent her to hospital. And

then she went into hiding and what-have-you. And then, she joined the Partisans actually later on. But... One of the women that was taken, a young woman that was taken, she told this woman that says, "I'm Hungarian. Please tell my husband that...and my son," because she knew the son had been hiding there where she was, "...that at six o'clock every day, I'll think of them." And that was it.

[1:23:09]

Now we go back to me, and then I'll link up to that. Because believe me, it's just incredible. It's... it's... I don't know. I don't know. There is a sort of a...it's like a... If you try to imagine and write stories like this, you couldn't. It's just... it's not possible! So... Anyhow, so my father came to take us from the convent. And he had his bicycle. So we walked down Via dei Seragli. We crossed the bridge, and we had there, in the little square, before, after the bridge on the other side of the river from where we were, because the convent was Diladdarno, on the side, not on the side of the main part of Florence, but the other part. Diladdarno, we call it in Florence. We are in this square, and my father jumps on his bicycle, and runs away. And my mother saw as well what's happened. There was a... like, a pick-up truck of fascists, the *Banda Carità*... that saw my father, and recognised him. And my father realised what was happening, so he ran away to take them away with him. Because they were looking for him, because they knew all the names of people of the Committee because of this betrayal of this man. And... he takes them, and he's caught just in Piazza Santa Maria Novella not far from us. My mother, realising what was happening, she takes my brother and I. We had a packet of sweets of, in our hands, which my father had brought us when he came to take us away from there. She walks back to the middle of the bridge, lift up – me up to throw me in the river with the idea of throwing me and my brother and then throwing herself into the river...

[1:25:18]

A non-Jewish friend, and she was a part of the Underground. Not a Catholic, I mean she was a non-believer, she was a- probably more belonging to the Anarchists than anything else. She happens to pass by there; she stops my mother, takes her and... and my brother and I to her apartment. And tried to calm her down. My father, in the meantime, has been taken by the *Banda Carità* to their headquarters, which were in Via Bornese in the villa which was called

the “*Villa Triste*”- ‘the sad villa’ - by the Florentines for obvious reasons. And start to question my father, but he wouldn’t talk. They took his jacket off, his belt, his shoes - like a prisoner you know. So he had trousers, socks and shirt on. That’s all he had. We are in November, not a very cold November, but still - November. So, after a while, *Carità* said, “Well, this is a bird that doesn’t sing. We’ll pass him to the Germans.” In the same building, there. So they passed him to the German. The German put him in a waiting room, and every so often a sentry passes by. In the waiting room, there is another man there. But he had shoes; he was properly dressed. He didn’t look like a prisoner. My father asked him, he says, “Look, do you know where the toilet is?” This fellow realised who my father was, I mean, not personally. He saw he was a prisoner. He said, “Why don’t you go down in the garden of the villa? It’s dark. Nobody will see you there.” So my father waits for the sentry to pass once. When he goes away, he goes down, in the garden, and hopefully there was the curfew. So as everything is dark, a lorry is going out at that moment with curfew lights. After the gates are open. So he runs after the lorry to get out of the place. And then he runs in his bare feet as long as he has breath. And then he stops cause he can’t run anymore; he’s exhausted. He doesn’t recognise where he is. He was born and lived all of his life in Florence but...in the dark he doesn’t know where he is. So, what to do? He rings the bell of a house. Two women answer. They say, “What is it? Who are you?” “Look, I’m an Italian soldier running away from the Germans.” They let him in straight away. The older woman was the mother, and the other one was the wife of a soldier. They didn’t know what happened to him, because you know, he was...wherever he was. That’s what they tell him. They let him rest, and they said, “Well you need some clothing.” So they gave him clothing. They gave him a jacket, an overcoat and a pair of shoes. And everything fitted perfectly. I don’t know. What do you make of that? So he thanks them, and he asks where he is, finds his bearings. And... he decides to go to the house of this woman. He goes to Gina’s house, and... he arrives there and we are there with her. But my mother is not there anymore, because she insisted with Gina, “Now that it’s dark, I want to go to Pastore Verniano...” who was the...Valdese Pastor, “and see what can be done.” Because they were part of the Committee. And they had contact, because the Protestants had some contact with some Germans through what had been the Con-, the German Consul in Florence. It was a whole network! You know, something, as I said, was the network of the people of good will. There was such a thing. You know, goodness came out as well- the two extremes came out. Evil and goodness.

[1:29:28]

And she went there... in spite Gina telling her “You are crazy. They must catch you. There is a curfew.” She wouldn’t hear. She arrives there. After a while she’s there, my father rings the bell! My father said, “Oh, I brought you trouble. They must have followed me now. We’ll all be taken.” So they tried to hide my mother in the house. And they go to open the door, see my father – they can’t believe it! So when they described to me when I was older, the reunion was... you know, something unreal. Anyhow, they had to get practical. My mother was a very practical woman. My father was always, ‘God will provide’. But would act! Not that he wouldn’t act, but you know, he was an optimist, a born optimist. He believed- was a great believer. My mother thought yes, or believed, but you have to help yourself, right? So they organised from there, on the phone, to speak with Monsignor Meneghello. They don’t say much on the phone. How they do it in the end, the moral of it was that I was to be – and my brother - will be picked up in the morning from the friend’s house, and to be taken by *non-fasci beni*, the priests who run these orphanages, and taken to this orphanage in Montecatini. And so, in the morning... we see our parents for... the last time, [emotionally] ...for that occasion. For a full month ...And they basically tell me, he says, “Well, you look after Vittorio. You have to say the Shema only in your head. And be sure that he doesn’t say it either. Be careful, when you go to do a wee, that nobody sees you. And be careful that he’s not seen either. And be good. Obey to the sisters as if they were us.” And that’s it. And off we go. And we arrived in this place. And the... the nuns were very nice to us. I mean, from the first moment there was a sort of a - a warmth, really particular warmth. But we, our heads were shaven, which was quite a- you know, if you see photographs of me, not long before I had my hair cut, my mother kept me with hair long up to here. The children when they look at it, Alexander, they say, “Oh, these are the photographs of when you were a little girl.” You know it was fashionable at the time, and I was a very good-looking child. So they have made a postcard which was even sold commercially. I don’t know how many they – I didn’t get any royalties for it, though. [Bea laughs]

[1:32:40]

And... So here we were, just shaved. And then we all put a black overall, with hand-embroidered name on here, our first name, with a white collar. And the nuns looked after us. The - the memories of that are... hunger, all the time. The cold. Lots of children had, you know, blisters in their... fingers. We didn’t get them; we were lucky because I don’t know – I

don't know why we didn't get. And... at that time, the main feature was hunger... and being worried about my brother. That's my memories. But hunger is a great healer in many respects, because when you're hungry, all you think about is food. And to me was food also connected to my brother that he would have to eat. He was always hungry, and he would complain! He was a little fellow! Two and a half! He was complaining; he wanted food all the time! So, I couldn't spare much of what I had, because I had very little. And the first few days we were eating with the nuns. Not in the ...big refectory with the other children. And I discovered later, when we were moved with the other children, they had even less than the children. They were really, they were really... wonderful people. But the first few days they did so that we could, we'd have their - their warmth, if nothing else. So the cold, lack of food, the only great thing in abundance was the warmth of the nuns. And it was good. And of course... we were made to pray, any time, for one thing and another. Then, there was a pasta factory near the orphanage, and the Allies kept bombing it, thinking it was God knows what. So every time there was a raid, because we were still in the German part, they had dug trenches in the grounds, and we would go in there and stay in there. And once a piece of a bomb, I don't know how you call it - piece of steel - just came very close to me. And I treasured it. When I got it I said, "Oh, this is mine." Because you know, there were these peculiar things you found cartridges of bullets and so on.

Mnn. Shrapnel...

[1:35:10]

Children didn't have- it was a great trophy for a child to have things like that. The madness of war. And... in fact, I was asked and there was another orphanage in the higher part of Montecatini, and one day a nun from the other orphanage came visiting. And... the nun said, "Show her what you have, what we go through here, with the bombing and so on." And then I was asked, and I gave it; I couldn't say 'no' to the nun. I still feel for that. She says, "Give it to the Sister. She will show the children there, what you are, the danger we have got here." So I had to give it! My great trophy. I still think about it like that, you see. [laughing] Anyhow, of that period in the orphanage there is a- the cold, as I said, and hunger. And the nuns, the first set, and then the nuns changed. There were missionary nuns that came after, and a missionary priest. We didn't have our resident, so-to-speak, priest before. A priest would come every so often for the Mass and so on. Otherwise we'd just be reciting the rosary

to – to nauseam in all the time. I knew it by heart, I mean I don't now; I don't know now. And... when the missionary nuns, they were- and the priest, they were just beyond belief. If it was possible, they were even sort of better; you felt their presence all the time. And you know, we, we had this overall. One of the orphans died, and I had the... picture of us, being all- We had little capes, which would be given only for occasions, if we had to go out of the orphanage. Otherwise- and there is a cape I suppose because then it fits all sizes at that age. And you know, and we had with these little capes, our shaved heads, going in this little procession to the burial of this boy.

[1:37:17]

And another highlight was... there was a field opposite the... orphanage. Where there were some kind of parsnip you know, roots. Was planted with them. And the Germans confiscated it. The Army. To make it a war cemetery, of theirs. So when that was done, there was a chaplain of that, this detachment of the Wehrmacht there, who was a soldier of the [inaudible] Corps; he was not an officer. The chaplains in the German Army could be either in the [inaudible] Division if you like, or they could be officers. But mainly they were in the [inaudible] Division. And he'd taken to look after- he was a- I think he was a Catholic chaplain. He basically had taken with sort of the orphanage- he adopted the orphanage, if you like. And he brought some food to us. That terrible black bread the Germans had. I don't know what they made it but, it was terrible but, it was good to eat cause it filled you up. Took a week to digest the blooming thing, so... And... he obtained permission from his Commander, that the children of the orphanage could have the field for a day to pick up the parsnips. And we went in there, and we didn't pick them up to take them home. With our hands were digging, wiping them, and eating them. I can see- and it was a great party for us all. Another thing, there was a carob field – a carob tree, in the grounds. And that was- the carob was the only sweet – the only sweet food we had for all that time. To have one of the carobs was – oh! – glorious, absolutely. Then there was another episode that I remember. And that has a follow-up again that...hard to believe. The caretaker of the – because the orphanage was an old villa. And it had a caretaker, which was given to the charity by a noble woman. And there was a caretaker there who was a...a farmer. He had a little bit of land there within the property. And he was also- he had a pig, which was being fattened up for Christmas. So one day the Wehrmacht comes, confiscates the pig. The chaplain obtains from the commander, that should be given back...to the orphanage. Cause we had nothing to eat.

So he was a good man, obviously. I don't know what he would have been if he knew that we were Jews. That's another story. You never know. ...And they gave the pig back before it was killed. Of course the pig was killed straight away, not waiting for Christmas. And- because it was a big Christmas, 1944. Not '43 had been, past. And it was duly consumed. I have a photograph in fact, of the ...chaplain. Do you want to stop?

I think finish the sentence and then we'll... Just finish the story.

...A photograph of the chaplain with a few of the orphans. One is my brother on his lap, because he was his favourite orphan. He always brought something special for him, some of the chocolates or what-have-you; it was his favourite boy. And me, up there, all of us with the shaven heads and our names on our overalls. And another thing about it, I had individuated there, another Jewish boy. His name was Elio. We did not... open up to each other. But I – I somehow realised he was a Jew. And the proof of it will come when I'll tell you the rest.

Shall we take a little break now?

Fine. Please.

[1:41:32]

Yes-

I had identified another Jewish boy. His name was Elio. He must have been between... four, he must have been four, because he was in the middle between my brother and I. And... I had confirmation of it only, when we finally left the orphanage. So, the life in the orphanage I have described as well as I could. You know if when, if I think about it, about memory in terms of light, it – it was not a very bright light. You see the, the, the time before that, perhaps because the last few months had been relatively - how can I put it - it had been decreasing. But once the parents were not with us anymore, I really felt that I was adrift. It's... entirely, you know a child has no, the only connection with the past was my brother. And the parting words of my parents. And feeling all the time the responsibility towards him.

...It's hard to, to sort of describe it in, in...but it is connected you see, even the day we went in the fields I remember it was a cloudy day, to get the roots to eat. The day of the funeral, of the little boy. So I don't know if that was really the light, or if the memory and the - the general things was affecting my memory of the light, or whether the light was like that.

But what seems to me that you have a very good memory, and that you took quite a responsible... stand for a five- how old were you? Five or six?

Yeah. Five-and-a-half.

Five-and-a-half-year-old boy. That you understood the situation, let's put it this way. The way you present it.

But you see, children understand much more than others probably reckon. I – I, I have realised that through my own personal experience. And of course it will always be a child's interpretation of what is going on, but, the main gist, particularly when the events are so dramatic, well, the child is affected. Very- I was affected- where are my parents? Where is my surroundings? All gone! Even my clothes are not the same. I've got this black overall all the time on. You know, it's the...the food. The food and- food is very important. Flavours. You know my memories of immediately after the war, of the re-conquered flavours. The first time I had rice. The first time I had chocolate after the war! They are experiences that... I don't think a child nowadays can even imagine what they are. It's reconquering something.

[1:44:48]

But were you scared? Do you remember fear?

It's not fear. No. It's not fear that I remember. It's a- it's a, it's a different state. It's a state of unhappiness. Of being ...adrift, a different kind of – of feeling, like floating. You know, but not. Fear. You don't know what fear is. A child can be frightened of the dark for instance...

Yeah.

But there wasn't anything of that kind.

No...?

No, was not fear.

And you were taken care of, in a way.

Yes.

There was a structure.

[1:45:20]

Yes, there was care there. Yes. The care was- that's what I think saved my mind probably, as a child. That's why it was not as traumatic as it could have been!

Yeah.

Because the care was there, and could not have been better. That's quite clear in my memory, you see? From the moment the drama started, going even to the nuns in Florence. And even then, the journey these men that took us from Florence to this orphanage, is a man who is not only a Righteous among the Nations, but is going through the process of being recognised as a Saint by the Catholic church. And so is Mother Maria Agnese. So you know, by all standards, they were exceptional people. If you think of this little nun, when the SS and the Fascist militia went to her convent and said, "We have come here, we heard there are Jews here." And this little woman, took her crucifix and put it to the face of the SS, and said, "In this place there are only children of God. And he died for you as well." And the man clicked his heels and left. These are human beings like you can't...what Don Giulio Facibeni. Was known as Il Padre by- he was a young chaplain in the First World War. And when the young soldiers were going out of the trenches and said, "Father if I die, will you look after my children?" And he always promised them he would do it. And the war ends. And he said to his superiors, "I have made a promise. I have to look after these children." Well, he started opening orphanages. By the time he died, that man had looked after 7,000 orphanages. And when the orphanages were closed, because in theory there were no more orphans. But there

were still orphans, and people that needed orphanages, he organised homes, with good Christians that would take four or five children and would bring them up as their own. Which was basically the system of the Jewish Community in Florence. When my mother was an orphan, that's how they look after things.

Before, yeah. But I think you wanted to link us to the boy...

To the boy, yes.

To that boy - you wanted to tell us something.

...The boy. So we discovered that he was a Jewish boy – had a confirmation really - when the... Florence was liberated, towards the end of August. Liberation took a while, because the *Comitate Nazionale de Liberazione*, the Partisans, they took possession of Palazzo Riccardi Medici in the centre of Florence...when the Germans retreated. But they left in town, many of the fascists and many – a few Germans, which were the – what do you call them? In Italian they are called '*franchi tiratori*', you know, sharp shooters. There was even a film of a Russian and a German one. What do you call them? I don't remember...

[1:48:40]

Snipers. Sniper... sniper.

Snipers. That's right. And so the Allied forces, they decided to surrender Florence, and the Partisans did the... town guerrilla, if you like, to get rid of these people. Of course with the Allied forces as well, but... And... we could not- so the front advanced. Florence was free, amongst which were the Palestine Brigade arrived with them as well, because they were organising all the... linking water services wherever they were disrupted. You know they were advancing with the front. And finally even the front went over Montecatini as well. At that point, my parents organised with the Palestine Brigade there was a company, that the lorry would come and pick us up...at the orphanage in Montecatini. There was no transportation. Trains I mean it was all up the creek at that time. So these lorries, loaded with food, arrived at the orphanage. They unloaded the food. And my brother Vittorio, Elio and I, were put in the back of the lorry with some of the soldiers of the Palestine Brigade. And...

we were taken to Florence... and we were back with a family. But, in the last couple of months at the orphanage, I got started to have plaques on my head, which were sort of spreading. And... when I arrived in Florence, our home, the apartment where my father and I were born... and my brother, had been given to Aryans. And ...we could not take possession straight away. These people were sent out, and eventually we repossessed the flat, the apartment. But in the meantime, we were housed at some rooms of the offices of the Community, in the grounds of the... synagogue there. With some other people. The offices were done in a very sort of...the rooms were more necessary for people to live in than anything else. And I was bedbound in the beginning, and then I had to go into hospital. And it was a - a kind of infection. I don't know what it's called in English. I never remember. It's an illness that cats usually get, and... these plaques would not just go away. In the- I think a lot was due to malnutrition.

[1:51:37]

Yes...yeah.

In the hospital I was put in the main ward. There were no children's ward. There was a hospital for children, but they wouldn't take me. They took me- whatever was available. Santa Maria Nuova. And the men in the ward were very nice to me. I was the only child there. And this was a very strange illness for, even for the consultants there. The antibiotics were at the very beginning, and they were not available. And so... to treat me, they told my parents, "We have the application of ultraviolet rays. And so all the hair will fall. And we think we'll kill whatever is causing these plaques. But he might be as bald as...the palm of his hand." But there was no alternative. So that was done. But the ultraviolet rays did not quite make my hair fall straight away; they just made it weaker. And then they had to pull it like a chicken, the feathers. And that was the part that I remember blooming well, I can assure you. And that was done after I had been to a place where the radiology department - I don't know what it was - took me back to the ward, and it was done in the cubicle of the... nurse in charge of the ward. And all the men came there, after, making fuss of me, and so on. And they tried to put me into the women's ward at one point. I was very unhappy. I said, "I want to be where I was." All these changes. You see, that's another thing. As a child you have no stability of any kind. That's something that I - I felt when I- going home- I haven't told you that during our stay at the orphanage my mother, undertook - she was hiding at that

time in a town called Faenza, with the sister of the lady who stopped her from killing us and killing herself. And... with false papers, of course, she decided to come and see us. She had... she looked terrible. She looked like a - a carnival mask; when she came I couldn't recognise her. I didn't like to see her. She travelled- she had false documents, all make up. She had dyed her hair and...she- she didn't look like my mother. And... she was there for a few hours. And I wasn't happy. I mean it's not...

[1:54:14]

You didn't recognise her in...?

I did and I didn't. I mean you know it sort of interrupted my... very hardly obtained peace, if you like, in a way, I suppose. And then she left, and left me more unsettled than I was before. ...Anyhow, going back to when we had been liberated- we were in Florence. So we- I was in the hospital until I was then treated. By that time, my parents had... got the apartment back. The short period that I was in the rooms, as I have mentioned to you, my cousin Raffaele Levi, he was killed accidentally by a car of the Palestine Brigade in the grounds of the synagogue. And just before he was killed, he had a little metal aeroplane which must have been one of those things that were on the mudguard in the front of a bicycle. And he had brought it to me all happy and given it to me. Cause I was bed-bound, because these plaques were giving me a temperature as well. And he went out, and then there was a great commotion and... he had been... killed by the accident. Anyhow, so after that, we moved into our apartment. And the apartment there was no furniture at all. They had stolen everything. Cause in Florence, when they raided all the apartments of the Jews, they in fact used the synagogue as a storage place... for all this furniture- anything they were stealing. ...But we managed to get some beds, and an old table for the kitchen. It was an old big table. I'll never forget that table; it was great. I have wonderful memories of that table. Worn out by scratching, by lots of scrubbing to keep it clean. It was like that when we got it; I don't know where it came from. Anyhow, the apartment was quite large. But we- there was the- was the four of us again together. And my grandmother was with - my father's mother - was with my aunties. But she came back in the apartment with us, once we were back there. And then, we had all these rooms, and there were all these refugees from the camps. Florence somehow was, must have been a place where people gathered, and crossed paths. As it had been, when people ran away from south of France, you know, having been in Germany, Hungary and all

that. And we just opened our house. Our house has always been an open house; my parents were like that. So first we had two brothers, which were survivors of Auschwitz. The only two survivors of a huge family. Their name was Midler, Israel and [inaudible]. And they... We gave them a room, and they lived with us. Beds were a rare commodity but somehow we managed to get them. And then they were very enterprising. They had managed it some way, I don't know how, to keep for themselves a pocket watch. How they managed to survive through Auschwitz with a pocket watch, without being taken, I don't know. It's not a diamond! It's a pocket watch. It's is a big thing like that. I don't know. And they started trading with it. They sold it. You know watches were quite a commodity after the war, I mean... And then they started... trading in currency. The occupation currency and all that. Illegal. One hundred percent. And they made quite a bit of money very quickly. Then, one of them was desperately looking for his fiancée of before the war. And he found her! He managed to track her. And she, and her sister- her name was Reina, and the sister was Sisle. They were all Polish, both families from Warsaw, evidently. They- so Hiel and Reina, they got married. And then, Hiel and Sisle got married as well. They got married in our house. I've got photographs of them getting married in our house. Married by my father and my uncle. That's where the wedding was, because the big synagogue wasn't - was still being sorted out. And they wanted to marry in our house, so it was done there.

[1:59:10]

I think we should have a little break and we'll come back.

Right.

Yes, we were already talking about the post-war period but I'd just like to come back a little bit more to the time in the orphanage. Can you tell us a little bit about how many children were there. In your recollection?

I often try to re-find the number. I think we must have been between twenty and thirty. I can't quite- and the way I try to figure out is, first of all, the photograph. On the photograph I know they were not all there. And then I try to think of the dormitory, because that would give me a better idea. And I think it must be between twenty and thirty. I could never refine it more.

That's absolutely fine. And what- what ages were there?

Well, they ranged from- I think from two, three, like my young – my young brother was one of the youngest. And I think they went up to perhaps ten, eleven, about that age. He kept his orphanages grouping in age, but you know, he couldn't have them... He had... He was running a few of them. And... the one in Florence that I mentioned earlier, where the Goldmans were, those were teenagers. Young teenagers, but up to seventeen or something like that.

And you said- so you met this other Jewish boy. What about the other children? What were their backgrounds, or...?

I don't know anything about them. And when, you see- I started to talk about the experience and... And what happened at the time and talk more with others and be willing to- even to give a talk, if asked. I don't go out to look for it, but I'm quite ready to do it, if I'm asked. My brother felt the same, at about the same time. So the first thing we did, we really felt the need to re-approach the institution where it happened. So we went back to the...Opera della Madonnina del Grappa, where of course there is nobody alive from those days. And they have, what they call the 'Association of the *Figli*' - The Sons, of the padre, which are all old men now, you know, I mean it's not... And you have there from the university professor to the electrician. He managed to maximise their potential, altogether. And... so, we met them. And we...we felt an affinity straight away, because we had at least some sort of similar experience, for different reasons. But when we tried to trace people that were there at that time, we didn't...we managed only one. But we did not. His name was 'Pasquale' but he neither remembered us, nor did we remember him. And I think that probably I would have forgotten Elio if Elio had not been the Jewish boy that then came with us, confirmed to be the Jewish boy. And... And then we saw each other in Florence. Otherwise, you know, I wouldn't have known.

[2:02:26]

And at one time you said you started- you were ready to talk a bit more. At what point was that in your life?

It was about sixty years after the event. [half-laughs] That's when it was. You know? So I was about sixty-five, thereabouts.

Sixty-five.

And that is not uncommon.

No. So was it triggered by something, that you suddenly felt you wanted to...?

No, I thought sometimes well, perhaps, you know, because... Rabbi Levi said, "You speak instead of me." But it wasn't because my brother had the same feeling. And we sort of did it together. And at first we went to the...to the people of the orphanage, to the Madonnina del Grappa. And then, an extraordinary thing happened. We were contacted by the [inaudible], because they wanted to know more, because they were building up the process for their founder and Mother General to be recognised and to be canonised. And we- this was just at the time when we had been in touch with the – with the orphanage. The orphanage people. And - oh, this was marvellous! We felt so happy. And we started seeing them. My brother lived in Florence, but I would go to Florence with Judith and so on, and we started looking for the nuns that had been there at that time. One was in a home of theirs in Forte dei Marmi. And two others were up in the Apennines in another house of theirs. And then we started to meet them, and when we went there the first time I went to visit again the convent. That was a, a, a very strange experience, because they always told that the mother and children were kept in the basement. I said, "No, we were not in a basement." And we walked in a corridor of the building there. And I said, "This is the corridor I'm sure but it really doesn't look like it. I remember it as a sort of a dark green." So one of the sisters there said, "It was dark green, there were green tiles before we took them out and put this wood panelling here." I said, "Oh, that may be." So she remembered when then had done it. And then they took me to a room which is a meeting room now, where they've got meetings, projects and what-have-you. And we were there; I said, "This is the room where the dormitory was." She said, "But, no, it was in the basement." I said, "No, it was not in the basement. I remember there in that corner there was the cubicle of the nun..." and so on. And so we reconstructed the whole thing. When they took me to the... kindergarten area I didn't recognised anything there. Nothing. The chapel, yes. When they took me to the chapel I recognised that as well. It's peculiar how I remember bits, you see?

[2:05:26]

Fragments.

Yeah. Yeah.

So what happened to your parents while you were in the orphanage?

Well my father, from the Convitto... after we went into hiding he moved out of there, because Convitto had become a bit of a transit house for people going into hiding. And also... too many people went there. And he was on the wanted list, basically. So one of a friend of Monsignor Meneghello, another priest, he was the...the priest in charge of San Lorenzo, or San Gaetano first, with another church. And he became the Canon of San Lorenzo, took him in his own house, in his own flat. And... there is even- and he even found in the records that Monsignor Meneghello kept and written - no computers at that time - of the money he was distributing on behalf of the [inaudible] to different institutions and individual Jews, the money that he gave to Monsignor Capretti for the keep of my father. Because you know, they were willing to give, [inaudible] they didn't have enough to eat themselves. I mean, it's no...And then he stayed with Monsignor Capretti for I don't know how long. After that, the, somehow the priests and convents were becoming less and less safe, because you know, they had- they were raiding more and more of them. So he went into the loft of the family of one of the girls of the friend of my mother who had this salon hairdresser. And from there he had a very... strange escape. The block was surrounded by Fascist militia, because they were looking for an illegal brothel. In those days, the brothels in Italy were a state monopoly. So when my father saw that, he said, "I'd better try and get through, otherwise they'll get you as well, and they- you're finished as well." So he went down, and at one of the exits of the block there was there a fascist that knew him. And he said to him, "What the hell are you doing here?" So he took him, give him the push and put him out. It finished like that. He probably thought he had gone to the brothel! He didn't realise he was hiding there. So my father out of it went into the doorway - you know - of one of the buildings, and waited for the dark. And then he knew where my mother was by that time. My mother was in the area of Campo di Marte, which was in the direction, it was towards the south, where the front was advancing. It was pretty close at that time. So... he

went— he waited for the dark. In the dark he went out and again, he couldn't see. Florence had been bombed so the, the buildings, he really was lost, again. You know also he had been locked up for quite a while. So he saw a man passing by, and he decided to stop him and ask the way. The man took out his flashlight, or his torch on his face, and he says, "You bloody Jew, you are still here?" So he started to try and get him, so they had a fight. And the man hit him with the torch, on his teeth; he lost all his front teeth. But my father grabbed on the torch and threw it away and run away. He managed to do that. And then he joined my mother in the Partisans. And that was it. And then they with the Partisans they were a different place every night. Still on the edge of town. They were sort of ...town parties, if you like, town guerrilla parties. And my father wouldn't have hurt a - a fly, because he said "What can I do?" He says, "Well, here! Here is a gun." He says, "A gun? I don't touch it." The only thing he'd do, would be to help to kill the animals to do *shechita*. So they said, "All right, you'll be a courier. You'll take the orders from one place to the other." Which was lunacy, because he was fairly well known in Florence. But in those days they didn't credit things like that. And then my aunty who joined- the one who was at the Carabinieri, once she left the Carabinieri before she... she joined the Partisans, but they put her to be like a daily where the Germans had an office. So she was the cleaner there, just to spy on whatever, to pick whatever information she could. But you know. Crazy days.

But the Partisans were they- who organised the Partisans?

[2:10:25]

The Partisans – well of course they had been anti-fascists for some time. But the one that my father [inaudible] was in fact mainly a Jewish brigade. Was a Jewish 'Brigade V', was called 'The V Brigade'. And... it was the head of the brigade – brigade sounds like very grand; it was just a handful of people – was a Jew. I mean, it's not a... And I don't think they went into any real fighting. There were more or less some sabotage and things like that but not much more than that. But they were hiding, I mean, all the same. And I think they were mainly they were sabotage, and intelligence, a little bit. If they picked up information, they knew how to get it across the line, but... I don't think there was a Brigade with a [inaudible]. I mean there was no opportunity, and they certainly didn't...

And then your parents, when the Germans withdrew, how long did it take them to get to Florence?

They were in Florence.

They were- They stayed in Florence.

They were on the edge of Florence, but in Florence. Yes, yes. Campo di Marta is part of Florence, yeah.

So did they see the Germans leave or what...?

Yes. I don't know if they physically saw them going, but...I think the Germans went very quietly. That's what I've read; I don't know.

Yeah. Yeah.

And they just established another line for the front, the following one, and so on.

And how did they manage then to get the message to the, to the orphanage to... release you?

You know, Florence was liberated. And they, they knew where we were of course because they- And it was liberated so they had waited for the front to go over Montecatini. It took a few weeks. Not long, because the following line for the Germans was farther up. So it was just the time for them I suppose to move all their artillery and their stuff.

And do you remember the- when the Germans leaving, or the front or anything?

[2:12:26]

No. I have no - no memory. No, because the only way one could, I suppose – this is thinking about it but I don't remember it, would have been if there was still traffic in the military service. But I remember the military service being [inaudible] That they would come and they would shoot up. Because we always tried to rush and get the bottles, after they'd been

shooting, you know, us kids. You know, shooting in the air for the burial, for the military burial.

And when they- when the order came that you should go in that truck back to Florence...

Yes?

Did you want to go? I mean...

Yes, yes.

You understood that you were going back?

We were told- you see, the nuns prepared us. I don't know how, but, you know, they prepared us. They prepared us and also you know when somebody comes, brings food and to see the war is finished. You understand what that means. I mean there's no question about it.

You did? You did?

Oh yes! They stopped bombing us! I mean, you cannot go wrong with that. I mean you know, it's not- They are coming with tons of bombs on the blooming pasta factory, there. So... no, we realised that. We understood that. Well I did. I mean a Vitti I don't know; Vitti I don't think so. But he was only three by then. He was not really...

And do you remember the journey going back to Florence?

I remember getting on the lorry...and then just being in Florence. No, I don't remember the journey at all. Just getting in the lorry with these soldiers there, and with Elio and my brother. Near the cabin, you know, of the lorry. Cause it was an open lorry. That's all. Nothing else. And then being in Florence. The first memory in Florence is being in the room in this room within the synagogue compound. And... on the bed, with my parents. I don't even remember the moment we... met. No. No, I don't even remember that. And then it was, everything was – lots happened to me. To go to the hospital was a... big thing because - another change again. You know, it's another environment I mean...

Yes.

And I don't know if you have seen well probably Santa Maria Nova again, it was a – was a, a hospital was built in the Medici's day. These huge walls, very tall windows, but dark, again, dark, dark, dark.

[2:14:50]

So you arrived and you were ill...immediately?

Yes, well not too- straight- I think it must have been a few days in... in the room, there in the synagogue. I don't know precisely how long. But pretty soon was in the, in the hospital.

And how long did you spend in the hospital, do you remember?

Well...I don't remember how long it was. It took a long time. I have memories of things going on you know, but not being able to... you see the one thing at that time that is firm in my mind was, the change to the women's ward which I didn't like. Another change. And then the pulling of the hair. That I remember. So when they came to pick me up in the morning, to take me to the radiology department to do the application of ultraviolet rays, that I remember. And then the cubicle, to have the hair pulled.

So for you, in a way, the start of normality was a bit, was not then, yet.

No.

No, so, when...

The start of normality... was when we were in our apartment again. And then, in that apartment everything was joyful. You see, again. The back of that apartment... Borgo Pinti is a very narrow street. On, facing on the street, it's dark, very dark - again. But the back, the windows of the back was my mother and my parents' bedroom. And... what was my father's study. There were two big windows which were on the garden of a – a patrician palace next

door to us. Because the building where our apartment was, was an old convent, which had been then divided in apartments. And so at the back there, there was always – it was always sunny during the day. There was this garden, beautiful, very large garden, with a huge magnolia tree and so on. I've been to see in Italy, I've been back to the garden, so, and it's the same.

And it was the same flat you lived in before?

Yes...

You came to the same...?

Where my father was born, I was born and my brother was born.

Did you own that flat, or was it rented?

Yes.

You owned it?

Yes, I remember my father telling me that they bought it for 27,000 Lire. The mortgage was started by his father, and he finished to pay the mortgage. So, it took a long time, I think, yes?

Mnn.

No, no, it was their flat. ...They never had a car, but there was a and they were very ambitious- their ambition was to have a car. Before the war they told me, I mean I don't know. But they told me that when they were having driving lessons, my mother was good, my father had an accident on the first day and said, "It's not for me."

Yeah. And how soon after- was your father then reemployed by the Community, or...?

[2:17:46]

Immediately.

Immediately?

Yes, yes. And... Anglo-Jewry was reorganising itself in Italy. And there was the Chief Rabbi in Rome, a...a great man, Chief Rabbi David Prato...of blessed memory. He had been in fact rabbi even in Alexandria! And he had been then on the Bet Din in - in Israel as well, something like that. Then he went back to Italy. And he had a- he was a man with really... charisma. He really managed to- he did a fantastic job in public relations between the Jewry and the Italians and everybody. And the Allied Forces as well, I daresay. And... he was a good organiser. He said to my father, "There is now the Community they are starting to build up in Viareggio; you have to go there." And so my father went there. And also it was quite rightly assessed that my uncle became, not immediately, the rabbi in Florence. Before him there was a Rabbi Bachiach, who was one of the people that we took in in our apartment when we re-possessed it. They were coming from the north, where- when they first came to us there was still war in the north. They...they hadn't finished. And he came to stay with us with his wife, his mother – Nonna Gigia - who was in her eighties, and... two of his daughters. They all went then, well, Nonna Gigia died in Italy, but they all went on Aliya then. They managed to get certificates. We didn't manage. We tried, but we didn't manage.

Did you- did you try to go to Israel?

Sorry?

Did you try to go to Israel?

Yes, my mother was – my mother was willing even to go with [inaudible], you know, without... And my father said, "No." And then Rabbi Prato told him, he said, "There is a job to be done here." He said, "You know, it's not- you have more- you'll be more valuable here. We have to rebuild the Italian Jewry. You go to Viareggio." He sort of reorganised a, a good part of the national scene at that time.

And how many Jews at that time- How many were- Jews were in Florence, let's say?

Florence, well, at that time I don't know. It must have been about... 600... something like that. But you know, there were lots of the refugees from the camps. So there was a floating number, really.

And people on their way to Palestine also, in Italy.

Yes, and not only- not only to Palestine, lots of Italians went to Palestine. I daresay the best went to Palestine. And it carried on for years, I mean... There was quite a strong Aliya from...from the...even from the days of my father's youth. There was quite a good strong movement. There was a Rabbi Margulies who was in Florence, who gave a revival to Italian Jewry. And he was, a driving force both religiously and in the Zionist direction. So he had a group of people, of followers, that either became rabbis, some very orthodox, some more normal let's say, more average. And some... completely just they wanted to go to Israel and build up Israel, and that's it.

That was pre-war?

Pardon?

[2:21:19]

Pre-war?

Pre-war? Quite pre-war. Oh, yes, yes. Yes. But you know it's built up today apparently. Florence had a rabbinical college there, which only later was then moved to Rome...

Yeah.

Because Rabbi Margulies was in Florence, I mean as a... He was a- he was a general rabbi, who when he was interviewed he was told, "Yes, it's fine, but by the time you come here..." - because he couldn't speak any Italian - "you have got six months. You should be- by the High Holidays you have to be able to give a ceremony in Italian." And the man did. And he put this condition as well. He said, "You have to reorganise the *shechita* and the *kashrut* here, the way it satisfies me." And they said, "Fine." And they did it.

And tell us about yourself. You started going to Jewish school in Florence?

In Florence, yes, I was there, in fact, after we came back... My father was, went to Viareggio, when I was in my fourth year of the primary school, towards the end. So I stayed on there, and then I stayed for the fifth year, to finish my primary school. I stayed in Florence with an uncle. And...and then I joined them back in Viareggio for my middle school.

So you had another separation from your parents in that way?

Yes – yes.

Did that bother you? Or by then you were quite independent?

Yes, it did bother me. But you know, since- I think what I had the biggest- it became almost part of the pattern of my life, in a way. And then realised reflectively, that probably that's why I feel always a bit of the outsider. Wherever I am. And- and it's not- sometime I thought that the people around me make me an outsider. But then I realised it's not the people. It's me. And when I'm off my guard, in fact I become very popular where I am. But I have not to be conscious of it. But I tend... to feel an outsider. And it can't, it must have an impact on your, on the way you are made. If every time you have to start again, so you are – you are a bit reticent to start.

Yeah.

That's the problem. It's like when I came to England I was- I came to England I was enthusiastic about the country. I mean, for what England stood; not stand any more. And now...in spite of that, it took me quite some time. And there, I cut with the Italian community here completely after a few months, because I found that too difficult. And then I found myself much more attracted to integrate in the... Jewish society here, which is much more separated from the Jewish society than it was in Italy. In Italy you live much more together.

Mnn. That's interesting.

[2:24:16]

So...and, and that's how it was. So, then it was by stage; first I joined an Ashkenazi synagogue, where I got married before that. And then I moved to the Sephardi synagogue and the integration was more complete.

That was more similar to what you had known?

Yes. Yes. And I think that was a very positive thing for me.

Yeah.

Even if I was a very recalcitrant person to take part in the managing of it, I wasn't keen on it. But... once I started and I did, I was quite happy to do it. And it made me feel more part of it.

Yeah. Yeah. And what was, Viareggio was much smaller than Florence, so... that must have been...

Yes, you see in Florence- when I stayed in Florence- I stayed in Florence not that long, basically.

Yeah.

And living with my uncle, he had- I had two cousins much older than I. Two girls. They were very nice. One was like a sister to me, really. The other one...The younger one wasn't so much. But I mean I was ten, and the youngest was sixteen. And the older one was nearly twenty, or thereabouts. And... my grandmother was there. Is...after when I went then to Viareggio, is really the first time that I started to live with my parents, with my brother, without being responsible for him. And then... to have school friends that I saw in the morning, and then we might meet in the afternoon. You know, the sort of thing that one takes for granted! But to me it was new! And I liked that. But even there, I said that for example one thing I did, I had a bicycle. Was, oh, that bicycle gave me so much joy. I used to go for long rides on my own... in the pine woods. And be away for perhaps two hours. I felt happy

and.... And then to be so happy to get back home. You know, I felt the freedom that I could spread my wings and at the same time...it was a very happy time.

Yeah. And did your parents have another child, born post-war?

[2:26:29]

Yes, my youngest brother was born in 1948. They wanted a child before, after- they were, you know, after the war, there was this belief now that the world was going to be wonderful. It was going to be good. Evil is defeated! No more! And they wanted a child of liberation. And they did. And... that's what my mother and you know [inaudible], my mother ran this kosher boarding house. So I brought up Marcello myself, but without, I used to - to bottle feed him. As a kid of ten, eleven, you know, it's not... And we are still close. But I was much closer to my brother Vittorio who now is dead. Marcello always saw me like a senior. Only in the last few years now, we are more like peers.

Yeah.

Because I was the one; I was the older brother.

You were much older.

Yes. Yes. Ten years older. Not that much- at this age now doesn't matter so much.

Yes. Tell us about the boarding houses your mother ran, you said.

The boarding house my mother made was... You know, Viareggio was a seaside resort. So... people loved her cooking. She was always well known. She was very well known. She was a fantastic cook. And the opportunity after the war. We had very little. We had the house, the... pay as a minister in Florence was very little. When we went to Viareggio, my father was not a terribly practical man. He didn't even ask. He never asked when one of his teachers said, "You have to go there" he would go! And my mother always said, "But what is the salary?" "Oh, I'll find out." It wasn't a marvellous thing to do. So then she thought, well if we sell the house we can rent a big house and I can do kosher boarding house. And it was always full, I

mean, during the season. Not in the winter. But in the winter we still used to get a few people that would come. Because if there were- there were many commercial travellers, Jews, and they would always make all effort possible, to make that they had to stop in Viareggio for the night. You know in those days, it was not that there were motorways. To go even Florence – Viareggio at the end of the day, for a commercial traveller, even if he was coming from Florence, was more reasonable to spend the night there and then go farther out and so on. And... And that's how it was. And it really started to be known abroad. So- but it was not a big enterprise. But there was – I remember - a Doctor Landau from New York. I don't know how he heard about it. That even when my mother had stopped it, he said, "But I am in Viareggio now." They would go to the top class hotel to sleep, but they wanted to come to eat at my mother. She should have done a restaurant instead of doing a boarding house. And those years were ...you know, it was, it was- we were never very comfortable financially. In the summer, my father used to play a few nights of the week, in a, in a hotel, doing a quartet, but not on Friday on Saturday. But they would have some Pop music then, so it was alright. And... my mother, so you know in the winter we had a ball. A closer life within the family. Then my father started to teach music in the state school, and that of course eased the situation you know, financially. And... And then, you know, he was told by another teacher he should go to Livorno. [laughs] Same story as before. So in the beginning my mother, when he came back, my mother said, "Well you go to Livorno. Ask them to give you at least a room where to sleep!" She says, "We can't move everybody now," she said. We couldn't live that way. "There is not enough." So...she says, "Until you have the school we'd better stay here." So my father was travelling a lot. And they gave him a bedroom in a, in a house. And then gradually they gave us a flat. And he was a better...he managed to move his ...school to an area, to a place near Livorno. And we normalised the life, but- and then I went to the Nautical Institute, and then I went sailing. So that was it. And my brother, he went to the Nautical Institute. But studying for to be an engineer. He got married straight away, and went to Israel. And then after two years, she didn't like it there and they came back to Italy.

[2:31:20]

What made you go to the Nautical College?

Nautical College?

Yeah. You went to the Nautical College.

Well, you see, that was the influence of being in Viareggio.

Yeah.

All the boys there wanted to go to Nautical College. So I wanted to be in the Merchant Navy as well. But the realistic attraction as well, was that the earnings were very good. And... I was tired of being a bit short. I had a cold and this ...hunger. I had no hunger and no cold any more with my parents. But compared to other kids I had much less, and I had enough! So I wanted to go a short way to earn good money and I was prepared to work for it. In fact when I then went sailing I sent all my salary home. I only kept a few thousand Lire as my working capital for some smuggling, cigarettes and things like that.

And you worked for the Italian Navy, or...?

No, this was the Merchant Navy.

Merchant Navy.

It was a company owned by Fiat.

I see.

Yeah. Sailing to South America.

So commercial – on commercial liners or...?

Yes, but was only cargo.

OK.

No passengers.

And for how many years?

Only one year, then I realised it's no job for a Jewish boy. Not for me at least. So I said I'll go- I'll go back the ferry. In the meantime, was a little bit more relieved, and the situation economically generally was getting better for everybody as well. And... I went to university - Pisa. And I got a job with Alitalia at the same time. Until then, I had to go for my National Service with the Italian Navy. And after that, I went to work in the clothing industry. It was a subsidiary of Chester Barrie, a very glorious name, used to be in men's clothing in England. Was owned by an American. Myron [Simon] Ackerman. And... after that I went to work for a knitwear company. I was the - managing a knitwear factory. And then I couldn't really study. Because it was- In a fulltime job the response is very hard. So I said to my parents, "I'd like to come back home. I'll get myself the smallest car." Because I was used to some... I was an adult! I got a little Fiat 500, I said, and I'll live at home like a - very economically, but I want to get my degree. So I started studying again, and I went a bit farther. Then, the people I had worked for, they said to me, an American lady who was looking for somebody to look after... They had a program in Italy; they were launching a new brand and it was an established company in the US. Susan Thomas. ...And they wanted me to look after their program there, not the fashion side, the production side. So it was very attractive, the salary, and so I said, "All right." I tried to study, but in the end I jacked it in. And then there was a flood in Florence, and the whole program was aborted! Because all the warehouses were flooded. So they said, "Well, we can't start again, again." So I decided to come here. When I had worked for Alitalia, after Alitalia I went to work for [] in Milan, but you know, I'm condensing a bit. Nothing so interesting.

No, but in the meantime you also met your future wife?

[2:35:06]

I met my future wife when I was working for this American company, because she was studying in Italy. She was studying Italian and History of Art. And my sister-in-law at the time, she was a teacher. She was teaching Italian. And my brother said, "There is a party at the school. Please come so that I won't be bored." He says, "I have to go because you know, she's teaching there." And I thought, "Why do you want me to come? There are kids there!" He said, "We spend the evening; we chat together." So I went and I met her. She was sixteen;

I was twenty-six. And... Well my brother and sister-in-law thought that we should get married but they didn't tell us. But anyhow we went out a few times, but I said, "You, know, I like this kid but you know..." Anyhow, she went back- she came back to London, and I said "Well, OK, I'll come and see you." So I came at one stage... and she refused to see me. And then we kept in touch all the same, and then in the end I said, "Look, I'll come and we'll make up our minds." And we did. I came for a fortnight; after ten days she said, "All right. We'll get married." And we did! And then I came over here.

So at the time... So, when you came to England what... what did you find here? I mean, what, what was the background of your wife?

What was, sorry?

What was her background? Your wife's background?

My wife- well, she was- she had just finished to do some courses, and she was at that time I think the secretary of Paul Hamlyn which is the first job she ever got. And... But the moment we got engaged with- and we got married about six months later, she gave up working and I worked for Marks and Spencer for a while. And then different jobs and then... we got married; we had children. And then I decided to really do something I liked in life. And that was basically when I bought the Karnac bookshop, and started publishing and bookselling. And I found that it was something came natural to me. I was very surprised cause I never had any idea. And it was quite successful. Very satisfying. The profession seems to have taken it well. So much so that you know after I retired, the International Psychoanalytical Association asked me to ...start a publishing programme for them. So I was their publishing director for two or three years. I don't remember how long. Then they decided to stop their publishing and just farm it out, which was one of the alternatives I had suggested to them. And they farmed it out to my old company, Karnac Books. So they do their series now as well. And I loved it. That's basically all I can say.

[2:38:26]

And it's specialising in...

In psychoanalysis, psychotherapy... and doing even analytical psychology. And then I sort of expanded the field even to organisation, group therapy and so on. Family therapy of different schools. I always have been more psycho-dynamically orientated. And my ...first love it's really psychoanalytically orientated specifically. And if one was to be pedantic, perhaps well, very, very classical. Freudian and Kleinian and so on. Having said that, I loved Jung. But you know all these distinctions that they do, a lot of it is really emphasis to terminology. Different ways to express the same thing.

But again, you came to this as an outsider. Not as a...

Yes, I was an outsider.

...psychoanalyst or...

And not very welcome outsider. In the beginning I was taken with a bit of scepticism. I'll never forget... Joe Sandler, a very eminent psychoanalyst, who, when I acquired the business and at the first International Conference I organised a bookstore. I think was in Amsterdam; was a European English-speaking conference. And so he was getting to, acquainted with me, he said, "What do you mean you want to publish? What have you done before?" I said, "I've never published before." He said, "Well, who is going to publish with you?" Well, I became his publisher. So that was- there was scepticism at first, but I think I earned my respect, you know, in the way I was doing things. I was an old-fashioned publisher; I read everything before I published it. Not pretending to be a judge, because I wasn't certainly at that time – a presumption. But my criteria was always that I had to be able to understand it. That whatever was written had a certain logic. Not necessarily that I agreed with it. Particularly as I did not necessarily ...could understand the fine point of it. But if there was a certain logic, and the other thing I found very important in publishing, is that a work would be kept at the same level of depth. You see every individual, every professional, every person, really, is more knowledgeable in certain particular points of a discipline, and they might take a lot as read. But it's not the case. So...the function of the publisher, in my view, is to make sure that they make their message clear, in that respect. Try to, not to take anything for read, and to keep it at a fairly ...equal level. And ...as I have said, sometimes in giving some talk to the profession, I said, basically, a publisher is like a... a midwife. But you know it's just guides

in the pregnancy, and then in the birth. Then that's it. But it has a function, I mean you know it's not. You can have good and bad publishers. I did my best, and I think it was- in a way I think it was appreciated. Not perhaps because not many publishers were doing it with such a personal touch, I think. That's probably why.

And what are the books you're most proud of, or...what are...?

[2:42:11]

Well, one is *The Fundamentals of Psychological Techniques* by Horacio Etchegoyen, and the other is *The Complete Correspondence of Freud-Abraham – Karl Abraham*. And but there are others. One of the things I'm very proud of is to have brought back to print, into print all the work of Bion and even stuff that had never been published. Now recently, still my old company has done a complete edition of the works of Bion. But when I started printing the works of Bion, many had gone out of print for a number of years. And... I worked with the widow of Bion who had been his editor in the years they were together. And found some of his old papers, and put them together. There is another book called *Cogitations* by Bion which I think is a marvellous book. It's a...It's just a collection of his essays. And...I, I feel, I had certain, books that I'm more proud than others. But they're all like my children, for a midwife. I don't claim paternity or I can't; it would be presumptuous of me.

And... what do you think drew you to the field of ...psycho- what drew you to this field, yourself, as an outsider? Did something particularly draw you to both publishing or this sub-field of psychotherapy?

Sorry, that I should...?

What drew you? What attracted you?

What attracted me to- no, what attracted me was not the therapy side. As a – as a young fellow, I was about...very young. I was very... I got... I don't remember it, it was one of the children illness. I was doing a – a summer camp for young people, very young people. It must have been after the war. I couldn't have been...fourteen, something like that. And at that time, as fashion goes, my mother said, "Oh, you must not come back to home because

otherwise you will give it to your siblings.” So I was sent to an aunty’s house and she had no children. And she had a wonderful library. So I was there doing nothing and I started going through her books. And as much as I was surprised, I found a book by an Italian Jewish psychoanalyst, in fact he introduced psychoanalysis to Italy, before the war. The book is called *Psychoanalysis*. And I found it fascinating. What I understood at fourteen, I don’t know. But I found it absolutely fascinating. And I carried on reading on this subject as I grew up. I tried to read Jung, but I didn’t find him very... somehow it didn’t square with me. I couldn’t... So I had an interest in it! And basically I only read Freud until I got more involved in the profession. But Freud you can read if for a hundred years and you still don’t know anything. You can carry on forever; there are so many different ways to read it. And that’s when I decided to leave a business I was working with, had to decide what to do. So Judy, my wife, said, “Why don’t you do something to do with books? As soon as you have time you spend time with books.” So I said, “All right. It’s not a bad idea.” I put an advert on *The Bookseller* to buy a bookshop. And my friend and solicitor, Sam Sylvester said, “What are you doing now?” And I said “Well, I put an advert try to... buy a bookshop.” He says, “Oh, before you do anything in the book trade, you must meet an old friend of mine, he used to be my neighbour. Harry Karnac.” I said, “Why? Is he selling his business?” He said, “I don’t think so. I don’t know. But what he doesn’t know about bookselling is not worth knowing.” In fact Harry Karnac was one of the 100 Bookmen. The Society of Bookmen can only have 100 members, and nobody can be appointed until one dies. And so we arranged, we met. And we talked for hours. I saw that he had special edition of Joyce, another one of my passions. So we talked about that. And then he showed me his psychoanalytic department which was a few shelves of books in the basement; it was nothing spectacular. I thought - that’s Aladdin’s cave. And we talked and talked and then I said to him, “Well, it’s time to go home.” And said, “Well, but you haven’t told me anything about the book trade.” He said, “We talked about books! That’s the book trade!” I said, “It’s a shame that you’re not selling your business.” He says, “I am in the process of selling my business.” I said, “So can I buy it?” He said, “No, I have agreed everything with Blackwell.” I said, “You can’t sell it to Blackwell; you have to sell it to me.” He said, “No, I can’t go back on my word.” So I said, “OK. Let’s stay friends at least.” So we just kept in touch, ‘cause we took to each other. And one day he phoned me and said, “Do you still want my business?” I said, “Yes, I told you, I’d pay ten percent more on what they are paying. I don’t know what!” He said, “I don’t want the ten percent more.” He said, “If you still want it, you can have it.” I said, “Why? What happened? Did they pull out?” He says, “No, they’re messing me about. A Board meeting

and that and the other. I have no time for that.” So in a month we basically signed up. And I asked him to stay on. And I said to him, the sensible thing would be to open a shop in the heart of shrink-land. Finchley Road. So he said, “Oh, yes, I suppose so. They always had to find me, they always found me here.” I said, “Well, let’s make it easier for them.” And he had started a catalogue, which was only a few pages, which went to about 600-700 people, worldwide. Well, when I sold the business it was about 30,000 worldwide, and it was used as a, as a reference tool. As good and as the comprehensive as they come. But Harry was a - was fantastic. The Chicago Psychoanalytic Index, which was published by the local psychoanalytic society, was... preparing the title to go on it, on his selection of books, to give you an idea. He’d do selections for different libraries in the field and so on. So we- And Harry and I had a lot of fun together. When I got the first manuscript, which was all in bits of paper, hand-written, Frances asked him – he was - was not really very tidy in that respect. And I said, “What do we do now?” He said, “You ask me? I’m a bookseller, not a publisher.” So we found a packager, and they did the copyediting and the typesetting was just before all that could be done by computer.

[2:49:44]

Yeah.

And ...the first book sold American rights to Yale. Second book the same, so...And then I somehow started to think, to do things my way. I started to question some of the procedures of publishing. And the answer I always got from people that knew, was “That’s how it has always been done.” And I took a more practical approach. I think that’s where my business experience came in. And what did help me was that Harry Karnac had a... established a very good trade, library trade, with Iran, of all places. In the days of the Shah. And he carried on even after the Revolution. So we carried on selling so I can say, that at that time there was the Gulf War, Iran-Iraq, that the Ayatollah basically financed my publishing program, which was very nice.

But it was also clever to move to Finchley Road because it’s near the Tavistock...

We opened- in Finchley Road there was there, you might remember, there was a dental equipment showroom there. It just it happens that my father as Rabbi of Ferrara, he had

organised the supervision, because it was in his area, of the ...kosher side of the Grand Hotel in Rimini. And he was there a good part of the summer. He had *shomrim* there, but he was there as well for a lot of time. So we took our family holiday to go there to the grandparents, so we'd be there with my parents. And there was a man from Bologna, who was the owner of the dental equipment company that had the showroom in Finchley Road. So, in talking with him one summer, he said, "I'm going to close it." I said, "Really?" I said, "I want it; I'll buy the lease from you." And so I did! And there we are.

And do you think your own personal experiences... of hiding, of separation from your parents, influenced you with this, that you were drawn to this psychoanalysis or...?

[2:52:17]

I don't know. I, I somehow I don't think so. When I, I, I thought about it but I don't think so. You know, I, I published Bion, even his war memoirs. And those were before - well before - he even had heard of psychoanalysis. And his power of observation and his make-up, come very clearly from his war diary. You know, in *Cogitations*, he said that he had heard when he was at Oxford of a thing called 'psychoanalysis'. "And I was interested," he said, "but I was told to keep away from it. There were lots of Jews involved in it." You see anti-Semitism was alive there as well. And he says, I got interested in it and... eventually he trained, and that was it. His early psychoanalytic writings, had the power of observation, it's the same that you find in his war diary. Or even in his *The Long Weekend*. In his so-called 'non-psychoanalytic' writings. Is...you know on the publishing side, is my great ambition which will be fulfilled one day is in the process of being done, was the publishing the pre-psychoanalytic work of Freud. And the contract, under which it's going to be published, I managed to put it together because it was quite complex in its size. And the man who is doing it is going to be Mark Solms, whom I found; we came together on that. He is the founder of the Neuro-Psychoanalytic Association. And... You see, there are things that you do... not because of one thing or another, because they are in your nature.

Yeah.

And obviously I could have probably, I don't know because I never tried that, I could have probably been a good publisher perhaps even in fiction. I don't know.

Yes.

[2:54:30]

You know, in fact, I think back, when I was young I had arguments at school about authors like Manzoni, which was the Classical boring thing I found at that time. In fact, the way they taught it made it boring. And I had put in against it somebody like Verga which I found more realistic and more... So perhaps the editor the publisher was in me already, the nature. Whether that attracted me to psychoanalysis I don't know. I don't think so. I think, it was somehow, it was a natural marriage, if you like.

Right. So then the question, what impact do you think did your early experiences have on your later life? The war experiences?

I think it probably had a- an impact on the way I see children, generally. And I notice that more now that my children, my own children are grown up. And when I observe my grandchildren. Because of course in the grandchildren, you are able to observe things that you could not observe in your children - question of time and what have you. When I look back at time and many things, I think I can more easily relate to their way of thinking, even the little one, than probably people that might not have gone through my experience. But I'm not sure of it. You see you can never be sure of that sort of thing. But I think it had an impact, because I can somehow relate certain situations, as much, not as dramatic as that period of my life, but to ...moods and reactions they caused me at that time. Just flick, just, you know, something that lasts a fraction of a second. So it might be.

For example?

Well if you see them, when they- when they can't be with their parents for one reason or another. Or sometimes the moment of leaving the parents. And you can see this, you know, fraction of desperation that first is not expressed. This is one - I never expressed my desperation of leaving my parents. I never did. I never had - practically the opportunity because I was told something and off! There was no lingering. I always tell my wife when she says goodbye to somebody, I say, "That is an *adieu* - an *adieu* that lasts forever." To me,

no; an *adieu* is now, finished. It's always been like that. Probably from that. And when I see the child that has got a little incident not because just is taken to school one day, and sometimes they don't want to stay there. They want to stay with their parents. And seeing that, that's the sort of thing that keeps me, brings back a kind of feeling, I don't know how to express. Probably everybody has got it, but I can relate it to my age at that time when I was going through that. So, the conclusions, are- you know, you can draw whichever one likes.

But the past is important for you now. I mean, you tried to- maybe tell us a little bit what you did to get people recognised for the- for Yad Vashem.

[2:57:54]

Yes, that's a, well, when I, my brother and I had this feeling about it. First of all, we did not know ourselves that the Il Padre had been recognised as a Righteous. So we asked them at the institution. Nobody knew about it. Nobody knew about it. So I got in touch with Yad Vashem and they realised that nobody knew about it. At that time they were not even publishing the book of the Righteous. And- they were just planting a tree and you know you are lucky if people remember. In fact Il Padre had a tree planted. They don't do that anymore. So, we said, "You know, but it's wrong, that the institution doesn't know". I said "Who got the diploma and mail or what-have-you?" They said, "Well, that was given to family." So I spoke to Irina Steinfeld, the Director there at the time. She saw the point. And then she said, "Look I think there should be another ceremony, but it should be done with the institution he founded." That was his real family. There, he had 7,000 children. They are his brothers. They are- his family is there. And they were very good. So a ceremony was organised... within the institution, and the Embassy from Rome sent somebody. And ...and I spoke, remembering all the days and the new Head of the institution spoke. The President of the association of the children spoke. And it was a marvellous thing. Really marvellous. And at that time, as I told you, the... nuns, the sisters of the nun got in touch. And I had already started- remember I had to say, but really we should have been more alert, and our parents should have thought about it, about this RighteousRighteous recognition. And anyhow, he said, "It's not too late. Let's get busy."

[3:00:04]

So the rapport had been created with Irina Steinfeld, and I said, “Oh, this is the situation.” She said, “Well, if you bring me evidence, we start to re-open a file.” And so we started opening the file, and... this was in the process when we had started to re-approach the institution anyhow. So the whole thing was fairly easy and smooth. When I found in the process that, a letter of my father, written in the 60s, to the Secretary of the Cardinal, was there recounting all the Cardinal he had done for the family. And he said, “Well can you please ask the Cardinal to testify that I, what I’m saying here, and that I was persecuted racially? Because I need a piece of paper to obtain some tenure within the teaching in the school.” You know, they were asking some titles and so on. So this letter has been really very helpful about that. So... that helped. I prepared the whole file for Madre Maria Agnese. Went to see the nuns, we photographed, we interviewed them, filmed them... Jonathan, my son, he has got, I don’t know how many hours. I don’t know what he’ll do with that. Of the whole thing when I opened up about that period. He also wanted to go to the places where things happened. He filmed there. He interviewed me a few years ago about certain things, but nothing happens with it. He’s always busy fighting anti-Semitism today, which is better. And...So, we brought it up, Madre Maria Agnese. And towards the end of it, I started to work also on Monsignor Meneghello, the one who was recognised relatively recently. At that point, I had started to have correspondence with Susan Zuccotti, an American historian of the Holocaust, and through her I got to know some survivors. In my attempt of finding if they had, older than I, and hurrying up because we get older and die. Many that I find, managed to trace, had died. And so I said, right, one was ...Leah Haberman, now called Quick, who lives now in New York. I don’t know if she’s alive today actually; this is the other point. And the other one was Leah Miriam in...that was in Israel at that time, track her down to Haifa. Her story is something... And... started to try to put in train both... the fight for Madre Maria Agnese was finished, but I started to work on Monsignor Meneghello, which I saw would take me years, because I couldn’t find the witnesses. So, let’s complete- so the contact for Monsignor Meneghello started, but in the meantime, in the process of that, I came across many, about Lia – not Lia, sorry – Leah, Miriam Leah, who is in Haifa. And I tell her, I says “Look, there is going to be this recognition.” She didn’t know my nuns. She didn’t know Monsignor Meneghello. But she was the Hungarian, the pretend Hungarian, who told the Germans, “You can’t take me.” Right? So she spoke- she speaks a very funny Italian, Miriam, but she speaks it! She speaks like a Hungarian. [laughs] She doesn’t sound German. Anyhow, she, I said, “It would be marvellous if you would come for the ceremony, because with my brother we have managed to get the sponsorship of the Mayor of Florence (who is

now the Prime Minister in Italy - Renzi) and it's going to be in the Salone dei Cinquecento. We are really going to make a lot of noise, because the Florentine church as a whole, not just the Madre Maria Agnese, has to get the full recognition of what they did." I said, "You know, now you hear about the church, only about bad things they do. But they still do good works today, and they- we owe our lives." You know, for us, if they hadn't saved us, today, twenty-five lives would not have had either the full course, or would have never been born.

[3:04:56]

So can you imagine what galaxy sees, twenty-five universe? Right? So, anyhow the ceremony was to take place. And she said, already an old lady, she said, "Well, perhaps it's the last time I will come to Florence. I will come." So she came, and the night before, we met at my hotel... and we were just chatting. And Jonathan filmed everything. I've never seen it again, what he filmed. And the language was a bit of Italian, English, a hotch-potch. And a lot of it was the feelings that are coming. So it comes out that she was the one... that the mother of Elio has said, "Please say to my child, so and so." And she told us. We didn't know this story; she told us. And she said, "All my life," she said, "I could never trace the husband. I could never trace the son." And it stopped there, because we didn't realise, yet, that Elio was that one. We didn't know that he was the one under the robe; we knew that he was the one in the orphanage with us. But we didn't know before that. You didn't ask people in those days, "Where were you before?" Because some of them, particularly some of the...the people that came from the camp, you wouldn't ask. It was something you wouldn't do. You know, I've seen a scene in Florence: one that recognised the Capo. It was an experience- I was, by that time I was ten. No, I was younger- younger than ten. Yes, it was after- I must have been seven, eight maximum.

[3:06:40]

Yes?

And this man recognised his Capo. But this Capo had his wife and daughter in the oven. You know...You can't judge anybody.

No.

Let's be clear.

No.

And in fact the man who was attacking him, realised it afterwards. Realised it. So we managed to calm him down. And they established a rapport. That was good. Because, well, the evil is not here anymore. You see there was this feeling after the war. Anyhow. So she came. Jonathan filmed everything and so on. Then the nun gave us something to give to Irina Steinfeld - a print of Florence I think. Because they were grateful. And Irina said, "But what has it got to do with me?" So anyhow Jonathan goes to Irina and takes it there, and tells him about the conversation with Miriam Roveni, right? And Irina realised, she says, "Wait a minute." She said, "Somebody came here from Carmiel about two years ago, and gave us testimony about his mother. He said, he was in the same orphanage you have mentioned about your father. And he was in the Carmine... Convent before that. And that was his story. His mother was Claudette." So she said, "Look, I don't know if he's still there. This is his address and his phone number." So Jonathan phoned him, and Elio, Elihau today, if he's still alive, was there, living in Carmiel, dying of cancer, not a young man. And when he told him the story he couldn't believe it. And he said to him, "I have somebody who would like to meet you." And then he got in touch with Miriam Roveni. She couldn't believe it. Jonathan was doing a course there with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. And he said "Look, I'm in [inaudible]. The only day I can do is Saturday." Miriam is not very observant, but ...anyhow he's - he's quite frum. Has become; he wasn't. I remember after the war him and his father were not. And he said, "Oh, for this- It doesn't matter. You come." He couldn't move much anyhow. So they went there, and Jonathan made a film of that and they gave a copy to Yad Vashem. And another thing, Leah Haberman |Quick, with whom we had been corresponding until recently. Last time I wrote to her she never answered, so that's why I don't know if she's still alive. I wrote to her and I said "Our Monsignore now has been recognised." And she didn't answer, so I suspect that either she died or she is not well.

[3:09:28]

So at that point you found out that the boy, the third boy with you was that boy.

He was the boy. That's right. And she was so grateful to Jonathan. She said, "You don't know what it means for me. I was going to- I not having been able to do what this woman who knew she was going to die, had told me to tell the husband. So what could I do?" And she felt...you know. This woman, I'll tell you but I don't want to say that, I mean, now. This woman... after the war, converted to Catholicism. Then she became a Carmelite nun. The Carmelitan Order sent her to Nazareth. After a while she was there, she realised that Christianity was not for her. She says, "I only believe in one God." So she got in touch with the Mother General of the Order, and said, "Mother, I don't know what to do." She said, "Well, just stay there and pray." Because when she was in hiding, she sort of, but really she got in love with Jesus.

[3:10:31]

This was this Hungarian?

This was [inaudible] the Hungarian, the German Hungarian.

Hungarian, so to speak, yeah.

And... she said, "Well I wouldn't do anything about it until the war was over, because I'd feel a real betrayal." But then after the war she fought within herself. She was in Rome; she did a course. She became a nurse, and then she felt she wanted to convert. She wanted to be a Christian. She wanted to worship Jesus; that was it. The Carmelitan is a very strict order, very strict - very tough. So she told her and after another month, two months, she got in touch again with the Mother General. She said, "Mother I can't do anything. I don't find the Christianity is really for one God only as I believed. It's not the God I believe in; I can't help it." So they bought her sort of civilian clothes, and they let her off. And she went to live in Haifa where she got married then. And she had no children. I think she's still alive, I think. [interruption:] Yeah?

Those things. And my father tried after the war to find the house where he stopped. He could never find it. Did it really exist? What is it? I'm not a mystic to believe that that was an angel dropping there. But sometimes you can't explain certain things.

Where he found the clothes?

Yeah, but I'm not going into the irrational, but why can't he find it? I said to him, "Why can you not find it? Those people practically, you know, they let you in! You could have been caught! I mean, you were almost like naked! What do you mean you didn't find it?" He said, "I couldn't find it. That's it." So, I don't know. And you know when my father was in hiding at the, in the loft of the... hairdresser, there was a... pharmacist, who actually in terms of religion, he believes in something- he believes in something, but something rather exotic, particularly in those days was very exotic. I don't know what. He basically paid for his keep in this place. You know, every month he was giving them some money, because they had no money to eat for themselves, so they couldn't feed my father.

Did they - the hairdresser's family – did they get acknowledged as well?

No.

No.

[3:12:56]

They didn't. They didn't because strictly according to the rules, they got money. And you see and it's like Monsignor Capretti, the one who kept, kept my father, in corresponding with Leah Quick we found out that her father was in his apartment as well, at one stage. But they were not doing it for the money. You know you have to be in that situation. You haven't got to eat yourself; how can you feed somebody else? And certainly, Monsignor Capretti was not doing it for money. I mean, you know it's not to do for gamble and women, I mean, for heaven's sake, you know, the Canon of a Church in Florence, what do you want him to do? And this Monsignor Capretti, [interruption?] ...yes love?

I have told the Yad Vashem that they should try - perhaps they've done it, I don't know - to revise the requirement. Because there are not many survivors left alive, and I do believe that today, there is certainly a function for historians to find out. And I don't think that the fact that the Righteous is dead, not recognised as such, they should not be brought to knowledge. I think he should.

Yeah.

You see- you know there was something else. Years... after all this, I was married with children. And... I was invited by an artist, a friend of mine - the one who painted the portrait in my study - to an exhibition of his in Montecatini. And believe it or not I had not been back to Montecatini since... I left on the lorry of the Palestine Brigade. I had no – no desire, no interest. So when we arrived there, which was quite early, before going to the vernissage. And I said to my wife, I said, “Well, I certainly don’t know the place.” I said, “Let’s ask for directions and see, before going there, if we can go to the place where the orphanage was.” Which I knew wasn’t there anymore. The orphanage was closed, et cetera. So we see a man in front garden of his house. We stop. And I ask him, and he said, “Oh, I see, you mean the orphanage of Madonna del Grappa?” I says, “Yes! You know about it?” He says, “Oh yes, I know about it.” He says, “It’s been closed for a long time.” I said, “Yes, but do you know where the place is?” He said, “Yes, it’s a...It’s a villa where now there is an old people’s home. And... nobody remembers it was there.” I said, “How do you remember?” He said, “Oh yes, because I lived nearby, and I had lots of contact.” And he said, “Why do you want to know?” He asked me. I said, “Well, I was there in a period of the war...” So we start chatting; I tell him the episode of the pig. And this man said, “I was the one who killed the pig!” My wife couldn’t believe it. And this man had- the right hand was now, wasn’t any good. I don’t know if it was because he killed a pig or what-have-you, but... [Bea laughs] But was incredible! And then by that time it was too late after the vernissage. We went for a day in the vacation, and we managed to get into the building. And so a woman comes and says, “Are you looking for something, can I help?” So I told her about the reason I wanted to see the place. And I said, “But this place has changed a lot. It’s all built around here now.” And I says, “There, there used to be a German war cemetery.” She said, “Well, I don’t know about that.” And then we walked in there. And...I had described the place to my wife. The staircase. The refectory on one side, where the nuns ate, where the chapel was. And then they take, so I said, “Can you take me to the chapel?” So they took me; there was a chapel. I said, “This is not the Chapel.” She said, “Yes it is.” I said, “It’s not what it was.” I said, “There were frescos on the wall.” “Oh, that’s the staff room! Now we understand why there are frescoes there.” These are incredible things that happened.

[3:17:13]

Did you talk about your past to your children at all? Did you talk about it?

Yes, they are aware. They, they are- all of them are aware. Jonathan took a very... active if you like interest, because of his - the nature of what he does and the way he is. Daniel is the one who basically I was not prepared to ...interest in talking to the Holocaust Memorial Foundation. I will tell you after, why.

OK.

I find that I'm a bit suspicious of these things all the time, because... it has become I don't know what. I mean...And I'm very sceptical about the usefulness.

Of testimonies?

It's a good therapy session for me to talk about it now. Right? At this point it's a good therapy session.

Yes?

But as far as the rest, I don't know. And Alexander, yes, knows about it. All of them are really...Simon, the oldest, he doesn't- he's not a great talker, but he as well, he knows about it. He came to the ceremony this time. He couldn't come the previous time because the wife was having a baby, so...

Yeah.

But, no, they are all very aware.

And did they, I mean, they met your parents, your children?

Oh, yes, yes.

So did you- did you find- what sort of identity did you want to transmit to your children?

Whatever I want to, it's not up to me.

No? [Bea laughs]

It's not... You know, life being different from what it was, what in reality was, I would probably have been a much more observant person. I would have been... probably not so internationally minded. And I wouldn't have been as sceptical as I am. That I can guarantee to you, the last one in particular. So... and my identity was formed by many things. It's not... It's not just that. The way that makes you in a certain way and then the way you reacted. You know, it's the dynamic of life!

That's right.

So the identity I want to transmit to them. I don't know, they all receive it in that they appreciate their Italian Jewish background. All of them do. I think that some more than the other and each one of them in a different way.

Yeah.

But they all do. And they are proud of it. They want to keep it. Proud in the sense they don't want to wipe it out. You see we didn't speak Italian to Simon and Alexander because in those days, they said that it's no good. It's confusing for a child. So, both of them tried to learn afterwards. Jonathan and Daniel they studied it at school. They wanted to learn Italian. And Daniel studied at university, and they both speak. And Alexander understands, so does Simon. So there is- the Italian component is there. And not as Italian. As Italian Jew.

[3:20:30]

Yes, so that leads me to the next question. For you, what is the most important aspect of your Italian Jewish identity?

You see the Jews were in Italy for a heck of a long time. And the... the western Sephardim, and to an extent even the oriental Sephardim had the ability, and the possibility - because

frankly I don't think the Ashkenazim weren't given much of a chance in that respect - to live and integrate, not assimilate, with... the whole society. The host was important, they accepted it and in spite of every so often getting a bloody nose. But you know in Spain it was all of a sudden. I mean, they start to put them on the fire. But before that, it wasn't so difficult. In Italy, the church was, had a very sort of ambiguous way to deal with the Jews. They made certain rules, and then you could have the dispensation. For example in the Middle Ages, Jews could not be physician. But if one applied for the dispensation from the Pope, you went and he gave the dispensation, in fact more often than not he had Jewish physicians. And that was it. So there is a tradition in Italy, which is more ...universalist if you like. I don't like the word 'pluralism' because it's been abused in the last few years. But I think the way that the western Sephardim and the Italian Jews in particular, because they go farther down, was real pluralism. You are part and parcel of the host society, of the host culture and society. Equally, you maintain your own part with full integrity. You don't assimilate, you integrate. And that is an open way, which by the way makes the host culture and the host individual much more willing to accept you. Because there is no pretence. There is no dividing from you. All right, somebody, sometimes it requires some flexing of the rules. One of the problems for the Jews wherever they are is eating with other people, right? Because of the kashrut. But if you are hospitable, and if you explain it from the beginning. You know, Catholics couldn't eat meat on Friday so there was something, you can find a way, if you know what they are, and they make present what you are, it does make sense that you can live together. This is what I think are exceptional values of Italian Jewry, and of western Sephardim.

And you think that's different from British Jewry, or when you...?

British Jewry, I think has gone a step back. I mean you know, tend to, they tend to really- and then you get a phenomenon like Rabbi Sachs. He was very outgoing. I think he was almost more the Chief Rabbi to the non-Jews than to the Jews! I mean you know, you get this situation. But I don't think that there has been a good balance. I don't find it here. When I first came to England, I was very impressed by the...Jewish institutions. Until two times, I realised that a lot of it is letter heading. Right? Under the letter heading there is a very little substance. I am now making a big sweeping generalisation, which is not fair. There are lots of good institutions. But when it comes down to it, institutions that are here, like the JLF, to me, are still very valid. Other institutions have been something that...have been more

important for individuals to affirm their own identity. I'm not being negative here, but I can't identify with this identity; I've got my own. The JLF, for argument's sake, in this kind of institution, is universal.

[3:24:52]

But you said, for yourself, Lauderdale Road Synagogue helped you to root yourself here?

The Spanish and Portuguese in London, they have got a great tradition in that respect. They had a hard time in the beginning, you know, when they came back. After Cromwell they had problems to have the first MP elected. They had to fight for it. And they fought. But they always stood their ground. You see this is the point: they always made quite clear what they are. And they had then to fight, to an extent, or be patient to be accepted. You hear this much better from Rabbi Levy than from me; he must have told you things like that. Sir Moses Montefiore who is his role-model, but he is the best example. He never pretended to be anything else but Sir Moses - an Orthodox Jew. But he still managed to do all he did. And he still managed to mix with royalty. There was no problem there. And to get his respect here, and wherever he went. This is what the identity that I find we must preserve. We must in fact not only preserve; make it prosper. And, and... it's a question of a different culture really. And that's why I - I hope, although I don't know, that our community will manage to maintain. I see that now, that it's not what it was. Not for- it's a question of numbers, as you say, that. And it would be a great shame, because otherwise what's the point of having a synagogue in a city where nobody lives? Right? And what's the point to have another synagogue in Maida Vale, when there is St John's Wood who can take everybody? Or in Wembley; there are United synagogues there. You don't need to have a...another synagogue. Just because we have different tunes? No, that's important, but only as a carrier of more substantial things.

So you think the Western Sephardi was a model of more integration on the one hand? Or maybe like your father, to be a cellist at the one hand and to be a rabbi at the other...?

Say it again...

[3:27:09]

No, a sort of symbiosis where you are on the one hand... quite Jewish...

Symbiosis is not quite the word, because symbiosis there is always the question of...it's not the... There is dependence, but basically one party in symbiosis is the prevalent one. But perhaps scientifically it's not right. That's the way I understand the word. Right? But it has to be like that, that we live in a British society which is rooted, and should stay rooted, in the Church of England. Which again, you know, like Cardinal Beteri as I quoted him at the ceremony of Monsignor Meneghello, I quoted his sermon, where he says: "It's wrong." This was his sermon after the Paris terrorist act. He said, "It's wrong to try and confuse your faith with the faiths of all the others. You have to know who you are, where you come from. And then, with the mutual respect of reciprocity, you then look at the other, and the other looks at you." This is basically, it's the same principle that I... He expressed it in Italian, in a very complex sentence but expressed it very well. Translating is difficult, but it's very concisely expressed. And that's what basically it is. So you see, of course there'll always be, if there is a host culture, and the one that is the guest one, well of course the host one will have a position of more power. But, you can lessen it and deal with each other as peers, provided you take a certain attitude, but not just formal attitude, a substantial attitude.

[3:28:59]

And do you feel that your Jewish identity changed over time?

The Jews, or mine?

Your Jewish identity – your...

My Jewish identity?

Yeah.

Yes, yes. When I meet my- you see- and I see it changes for others as well. When I go to Florence, I'm still a member of the synagogue in Florence. And... when I go there and I see the Community as it is now, well I see little bits of what it used to be, right? The day of

splendour have gone; now it's a different thing. And... But I find, if you limit zone of comfort if you like, because it's still there. Last time I was there – it was a few years now - for the Hakafot, at the synagogue, well, the choir was not the choir of my uncle and my father's day. And- but they made a damn good effort. They really tried. There were a few people that were kids when my parents, my father and my uncle were there, and they are now older, and they still make an effort to keep it going. So all right, you know, so there are these little bits there. So you try to find out more about that, and you see that for example the old people's home in Florence is fantastic. It's one where in fact the university sends people to see how they should be. Today. They have started now to take in also non-Jewish guests because there is room. But it's an incredible place. It's a place where when my parents went there, they met their contemporaries of the kindergarten and primary school! And... the ethos there, is just incredible! It's the ethos of the Community, that it applies whether it's small or large. It's— it's something that has got very deep roots. I can't explain it better.

Yeah.

But then I meet some Italians in Israel now. Again, the Italians you find are the group that is more close together still in Israel, more than any other nationalities. I don't know how many cultural institutes the Russians have got in - in Israel. The Italians have got one in Haifa, one in Jerusalem, one in Tel Aviv and I believe one in Rehovot. Right? These are cultural institutes which are run by the Italian state. Not because the Italian state is flush with money, but because the Italians demand it. And they make them prosper. The activities of these cultural institutes in Israel are incredible. The one in London is put to shame!

So you're saying it was- they stayed very Italian in their identity, the Jews?

They stayed very Italian Jews. Very Italian Jews. You know, the Italian synagogue in Jerusalem you go there, and not only that; you go in the Italian synagogue in Jerusalem and you see still, the Romans have [inaudible] of that bit, the Florentines and so on. It's all like that, which shows the richness of the stature that there was there. Through the centuries! You know, mustn't forget [inaudible], in the Middle Ages – and the Middle Ages - was the Jewish centre for Halacha. These things don't disappear.

And for you? How did it change – your Judaism?

[3:32:30]

How does it change now, personally?

Yeah, personally.

Personally, I don't think I am religious enough. My religion is ...has come to a conclusion, don't question too much. One thing I have sure of, and I have established, the Jewish values – whatever they might be called - as I described to you, still, integrating, not assimilating, are of great value. And they must not be lost – not just to us, but to humanity, to humankind. How have they been transmitted? Well, they have been transmitted through certain religions and rites. I don't know a better way to do it. People that try to change them, they've lost it. Just got lost! And that's it. So, I'm a very strong traditionalist. So you might find that I don't observe certain things, but I still want to have two Sederim – right? Because that's the time when you hammer into your children what we are all about. We have a piece that was originally composed by – oh my goodness - Elie Wiesel, which Alexander has adapted in English to what our family requires. We don't only remember our brethren that died in the concentration camp, we remember the saviours and we list the saviours of our family. We recite their names every Seder in our families, wherever the Seder is. This is part of it, right?

You made it part of the – of the story?

Yes – yes. So that's, well, that didn't exist with me before, but it does now. And yet the importance of it is transmitting it to the children.

Well, you did, yeah. And where would you consider your home?

Aha. I feel at home in three places. But at home, doesn't mean where I live, the premises where I live. I feel at home here, I feel at home in Italy and in Israel. And... when I am in any one place I don't want to go to another place. I don't want to leave again, right? But I think the priority is England, if I had to put a pecking order, I think would be today because my children are here, and my grandchildren. It would be: England, Israel - Italy comes last now,

because Italy's the past. Of my past there are traces, as I told you before. But you know the changes were in the whole world for everything; the world was whatever it was.

And do you have a message for anyone, you had already a bit of a message, but anyone who might watch this interview, based...

I am not a prophet and I am not a teacher...

Based on your experience? Based on your experience.

[3:35:40]

Yes, but it's not so much a message because everybody has to find his way. And that's why my scepticism comes as well about trying to transmit the experience of the Holocaust of those years, to following generations and to people that haven't got a clue about it. People that- the non-Jews. Even to many Jews it's not easy to transmit it. Even people that got involved in the Holocaust memorial, I don't think they had quite an understanding. Not because they don't want to know, or because they are unkind, or they are thick – no. All I know is when I meet somebody who has lived through it, whether it was in a concentration camp or hiding wherever it was, there is an immediate affinity, that comes to surface straight away. You see... that period, you can divide it in different stages. There was the time when you had to be treated like a second-rate citizen and that was their cleverness, so you adapt to that. Then the time when you have to start to run. Then the time when you are caught! And the absurd thing is my experience in talking to people – that have survived of course - after being caught they said, "Oh, well, I have to stop running, it cannot be so bad now." But there were even people that went to deliver themselves, at one stage. Not many, but some: "It's enough. I go." And then there is the people that went through the camp. The people that went through the camp, it can't be described. It can't be understood... by nobody! I sometimes wonder if the people that were there could understand. It's inconceivable! I have met many people. There was a, a great psychoanalyst – Italian – Luciana Nissim Momigliano. And we met the first time at an Italian psychoanalytic congress in Italy. She was the supervisor of Parthenope Bion, the daughter of Bion, who lived in Italy. And Parthenope and I were good friends, so she introduced me there in the break, between one thing and another. And we started talking and we talked, one evening and we talked, all night. All night we talked. Not a

word about the Holocaust or nothing like that. She was basically caught with Primo Levi. She was a friend of Primo Levi; she was a doctor in the camps. Doctor- I might say, in, in-inmate if you like. And... then...she and she never talked about things. I met her son who was then in his – I don't know – fifty or something like that, who was one of the most disturbed persons I have ever met in my life. You know, you are in that field as well you are third generation, fourth generation, you know, there is this problem that never ends. My effort has been, as far as I am concerned, to try and transmit to the children the experience without the painful parts. But I don't know if I succeeded. You can't avoid it. Part of it goes with it; it's part of the package. So you know, somebody that was caught. And I found when I spoke to the survivors' centre, first of all I think they were interested about the background in Italy. Because they didn't know much, and the Holocaust in Italy, nothing much is known. Although there were 6,500 Jews – that sort of thing. And... And then, I think there is a certain curiosity of the people that got away without, before being caught, by the ones that were caught, because it's a... I can't, but I could see that there was this kind of curiosity. I remember Luciana. She was in the camps all right, more than one. Once she was here, in this room, with a friend of hers. A Hungarian, a real Hungarian. Which...And they were in the camps together. And I published two books by Luciana, so she came here for a book launch – I don't remember what. And she was here with her friend and the friend said, "I owe my life to Luciana." This little woman jumped to the ceiling: "I didn't save anybody's life!" Cause you know what it meant? It would have meant she saved her life, she condemned somebody else to death. And she never wanted to talk about the Holocaust with anybody. Then, they did a program on Primo Levi. And they asked her – he had already committed suicide. Which, according to her, she said it wasn't suicide. She said, "I knew him," and she's a blooming good psychoanalyst. So I think- She knew the man; they were partisans together. They were in Fossoli together, they were taken away together. She met him again afterwards, and she said "No," she says, "Primo could not really reconcile himself because he came back and all he had left before was not there anymore, and he just felt his need of being the witness." She says, "It was easy for me. I came back; I met my fiancée again. We got married." 'It was easy' – like hell, I can tell you that.

Yeah.

Because I got to know her pretty well. I've got some correspondence with her which is really touching, I mean, and something like that... And there was this affinity, this community,

straight away. We spoke all night and then we talked about different things. And then, the programme on Primo Levi which she took part. And they asked her about one thing and another. And then they said they were asking, the programme was- could have been worse. But there is always a certain level of insensitivity when they speak about... It can't be helped!

Sensationalist.

It's a word that you can't...so, if you go over it, it can't be helped. So what...they asked her at one point, you know, "Some people were Capos. What do you think of that?" She said, "You don't want to know how bad you can be. You don't know how good you are. Nobody should be put to the test." She said it in such a beautiful way. You know, that summed up I think the experience, in many respects, of the camp. Not just the physical cruelty.

[3:42:36]

You said she didn't believe that Primo Levi committed suicide?

No, she didn't believe that.

Whatdid she...?

No. She think it was an accident, that he fell off from the stairs.

I see...I see, that he missed...

You know, simple as that. It doesn't sound great, it doesn't sound so romantic, but she believed that. She said, "No, all this because people said, Oh, because he saw that there are genocides going on all over the world all the same." She said, "No, he was concerned of being a witness all the time. He - he had seen genocide, but that wasn't the point." It's like Elie Wiesel, I mean he didn't commit... No! He doesn't commit- And I believe her. I mean it's not- is no question about it. She was a very fine analyst as well.

Do you think your life would have been different without your experience of the hiding and the...?

I would imagine so, yes. But you know, does it mean without- what would have been the alternative? Does it mean without a war, or does it mean... You know there were many non-Jews, children, that had many terrible experiences all the same, so... It's hard to. Comparisons, I frankly I don't think are all- theoretical situations are too theoretical to- hypothetical to I think to really try to - to imagine.

Mnn.

One thing is that this is my life, has been what it is, so it certainly had an impact.

Is there anything which we haven't discussed, which you want to add, or anything which is important?

No, I don't think so. I think- Well you know you can talk until the cows come home. And there are bits of- [half laughing] Well, where is that cow? But. I don't know.

So in that case I would say, thank you very much for this interview, and let's look at some of your photographs now.

OK. Anyhow thank you for having the patience in spite of the dream, of your [inaudible]. We won again, you see? [laughs] Mustn't give up.

Thank you.

[End of interview]

[3:44:41]

[3:44:52]

[Photographs]

This is my grandfather, Cesare, my father's father. And this must have been taken in the early 30s, in Florence.

This is my grandmother, Silvia Terni Sacerdoti. The photograph was taken let's say about...1950, in Florence.

My grandparents from my mother's side. Narcisa Anau Sacerdoti and Salomone...no, I've got it wrong, sorry.

Do it again.

My mother's parents, Narcisa Belgrado. And the husband, Salomone Belgrado. Taken in Florence...probably at the time, around the time of their wedding, at the end of 1800s.

A group photograph of my parents' wedding, March 1936, in front of the synagogue in Florence.

My mother, with me. I must be there two years old, so it must be 1940. In Florence.

This photograph was taken in 1942, towards the end, in a camp where Libyan Jews, with British passports, were interned. My father is holding a toddler. I'm the one right under my father, and the others, with the exception of the boy on my right, are from Tripoli. The other boy is from Czechoslovakia, interned there with his family.

In June 1942, my mother took my brother and I. Here in the photograph is the first day of this clandestine holiday, which was terminated on the same day. The day after, we had to go back to Florence, as we were not allowed, as Jews, to be on a seaside resort.

This is a photograph of a summer camp for young people and children. The lady in the middle, who looks after them, was then, after the war, one of my primary school teachers. Juliana [inaudible].

[3:47:57]

This photograph was taken by the German... The, the, no, sorry. Can we start again? Right.

This photograph at the orphanage, shows the Wehrmacht chaplain in the centre. On his left, on his knee, is my brother Vittorio. And I am the one on top of my brother, right at the top. This one.

This was taken at the Montecatini Madonnina del Grappa orphanage, in 1943.

This is a photograph of the Baroness Ricasoli, in October 1937. The Baron Ricasoli employed my aunt Lina Sacerdoti Paulini, when she was kicked out of the state railway employment, like all the Jews that were in public employment. Here is the Baroness giving the fascist salute to a crowd in black shirts.

This photograph is in the ground of the synagogue in Florence. That is the fountain which is a memorial to the members of the Community that fell in the First World War. The one in the middle, it's me; on my right is my brother Vittorio. And on my left, our cousin Robby Cohen, in '42.

This is a wedding...ceremony, in the synagogue in Via delle Oche, in Florence. The one performing the ceremony is the Chaplain from the Palestine Brigade - was a company. On his left is my father. On his right is my uncle Fernando. The one in the middle is Eugenio Cohen, the then Shamash of the congregation in Florence. This was taken in 1944.

This is my father playing his cello, in the Palestine Brigade Soldier's Club in Florence, in about 1944, beginning '45.

Yes. This is in the grounds of the synagogue. It's me, after recovering from my [inaudible] on the head. It must be 1945

This is in front of the synagogue in Florence, in 1945. The children and teachers of the reopened Jewish school. On the left, Elihau, on the right Arie, two soldiers of the Palestine Brigade who were instrumental in reopening the school.

This is a photograph taken in our apartment in Florence, after the wedding ceremony of Sisle and Israel, the two in the centre of the photograph. You can see my brother Vittorio and

myself. Then there are three of my cousins and my mother. All the others are survivors from the camps, mainly Auschwitz. The little baby was born after the war to a couple coming from Auschwitz. That was a great emotion.

1955 in Livorno: myself and my family. On the left-hand side...of my- looking at the photograph, my brother Vittorio. And the younger boy is my brother, Marcello. And the other two obviously are my parents.

This is me commanding a platoon in the Strait of Messina, to commemorate railway men killed during the World War Two. I was a midshipman. And there I had just been promoted sub-Lieutenant towards the end of my National Service.

And where are you in the picture? Where are you?

There is only one Officer! [joking]

At a meeting of rabbis in Florence. From the left, the second is Rabbi Fernando Belgrado, my uncle. And then, my father Rabbi Simone Sacerdoti. Rabbi Dario Disegni... The following one I don't know; I don't remember who he was. The one after was Rabbi Toaff, Chief Rabbi of Rome until not long ago.

[3:53:52]

Wedding photograph, myself and my wife Judith. July, 1967, at the Dorchester. [20]

This is a family photograph, Hanukkah 2015. Starting with the boy standing up from the right, my son Simon, next, grandson Benjamin **Rusnak**, then Daniel Sacerdoti my son, and Jonathan Sacerdoti. And then Joshua Rusnak, son-in-law. Going down on the left, Marcella Sacerdoti, daughter of Simon, Elie Sacerdoti, son of Simon. Claire Etinghausen Sacerdoti, Alexandra Sacerdoti-Rusnak, Ruthie Rusnak, Noah Rusnak, myself, Judith, Rachel, Benjamin Sacerdoti, Rebecca Sacerdoti, and daughter of Daniel and Rachel, Sarah Sacerdoti, daughter of Simon and Claire, in London.

This is my birth certificate. And indicating that I am of the Hebrew race, following the racial law. It's on the left-hand side. Obviously set in Florence where I was born. [21]

Cesare, thank you very much for this interview.

Pleasure.

[End of photographs]

[3:55:52]