



## **Survival and Death**

What Made you Know the Nazis Would Kill You?

March 12, 2014

1 hour, 34 minutes, 51 seconds

Speaker: Frank Biess and Peter Gourevitch

Transcribed by: Rachel E Lieu

[Holocaust Living History Workshop](#)

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Survival and Death: What Made you Know the Nazis Would Kill You? (2014)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

Time	Transcription	Slide Transcription
00:00	[A Holocaust Living History Workshop Event]	
00:04	[Survival and Death: What Made you Know the Nazis Would Kill You? with Peter Gourevitch (sponsored by Charlie Robins)]	
00:08	[March 12, 2014 / Geisel Library / Seuss Room]	
00:12	<p>Susanne Hillman: I am pleased to welcome you all to the Holocaust Living History Workshop of today, March 12th. Before I pass on the word to Frank Biess, who's going to introduce our speaker tonight - or this afternoon - I would like to acknowledge the sponsorship of the Library, the UCSD [University of California San Diego] Library, and Judaic Studies. It's been thanks to their support that we've been able to carry on this program for, um, I don't know almost six, seven years now. We have also been fortunate in benefiting from the support of individual sponsors. Sadly the person who has chosen to support tonight's event, Mr. Charlie Robins, passed away in January. So obviously he can't be here, but I would like to say a few words about him. Charlie Robins was born in 1922. Uh, he served in the U.S. [United States] Navy from 1944 to 1946. A long-time resident of La Jolla, um, he was the founder of the Robins Group. He held a Honorary Bachelor of Arts degree from Johns Hopkins University and was recognized as the first honorary alumnus of the UCSD [University of California San Diego] Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies for his continued involvement in, uh, in this University. In 1992 Mr. Robins resigned from active participation in family businesses and began devoting 100 percent of his time to volunteering activities. And his activities in this realm were really prodigious, as you will see.</p>	

01:52 Susanne Hillman: He served on the executive committee of St. Vincent de Paul Village; he was a director of the San Diego Opera, a Trustee of the University of California San Diego Foundation, the co-chair of the Scripps Memorial Hospital Advisory Board, and an Executive Director of the World Trade Center of San Diego. As this little overview shows, Charlie Robins was particularly dedicated to this University. And I would like to quote now retired Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Joseph Watson who said, Charlie, has been an extraordinary ambassador for the campus and its students. His tireless dedication and enthusiasm for the school is of tremendous value to us all, and we truly appreciate the support he has given us over the years. Mr. Robins is survived by his two sons, who are actively involved in the Robins' family business, his sister, and other family members and friends and we would like to dedicate this lecture tonight to his memory. Now Frank Biess, history professor, will introduce our speaker, Professor Peter Gourevitch.

03:03 Frank Biess: Thank you. Thank you Susanne, and also thank you for organizing these wonderful events here. I think they've been a real success story, and every time I've been here the room has been packed. So, this is really, um, a great series. It's a real honor and a great pleasure to introduce my colleague this afternoon, Professor Peter Gourevitch. He's a Professor Emeritus of Political Science and of the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies. He had a very distinguished career here at UCSD, got his BA [Bachelor of Arts] at Oberlin [College], his Ph.D. at Harvard [University], and then arrived here in 1979. He served for 10 years, between 1986 and 1996, as the founding Dean of the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies, and he's the co-author, author, editor, co-editor of 11 books on a wide range of topics. I can't name them all; the most recent one was entitled *The Credibility of Transnational NGOs: When Virtue is Not*

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*Enough*. It's co-edited with David Lake and Janice Stein, published with Cambridge University Press. Another very important book came out 2005 with Princeton University Press, *Political Power, and Corporate Control: The New Global Politics of Corporate Governance*. And then my own personal favorite as a historian, and now - by now - a real classic in the field, is a book that he published in 1986 which has been translated into Italian, Spanish, Chinese - probably some other languages by now - um, was entitled *Politics in Hard Times: Comparative Responses to International Economic Crises*.

04:56 Frank Biess: And, I think, when Peter retired his colleagues put together what in German is called a Festschrift, like an honorary book, which was entitled *Politics in the New Hard Times: the Great Recession in Comparative Perspective*, of course referring to the recession which we're just coming out of - or not quite, I'm not entirely sure. Now, when I asked Peter to send me his CV [curriculum vitae] so I could introduce him, he told me that introductions are really odd to me in the modern world since people can look up things so easily. And everything I've told you so far, you can look up on his website, and is readily available. So I thought, I wanted to tell you one thing about Peter that you cannot look up, or that you cannot at least easily sort of see on his published CV. And that one thing is that I think Peter is a real intellectual, and this is actually something that, you know those of you who um are not in academia, um, it's not, um, self-evident that every academic is also an intellectual. You can be a very distinguished and very brilliant expert in your own field, but you may not know much else.

06:14 Frank Biess: Peter is a very different kind of academic and intellectual. I've seen him in many contexts, talks, seminar, and he's one of the few people, I think, who can ask intelligent, intelligent questions, make, um, intelligent comments about virtually every subject. And I always find it

very um, interesting to talk to him for purely selfish reasons because he usually tells me about new books - not in his field, but in my field - and alerts me to, you know, what's going on, um, in, in the field that, that, um, that I should, should know. So, um, I'm therefore not surprised that Peter has taken on this, uh, new challenge, a very different kind of intellectual task than the one that, the ones that he's been engaged in in the past, and that is to write the fascinating history of his family. Oh, I'm sorry, just, yeah, yeah. Okay, so yeah. So, the talk today is, um, taken from this, uh, from this larger project. And it's framed by this, uh, obviously very existential question: survival and death, what made you know the Nazis would kill you? I'm very curious to hear Peter's answer, so please join me in welcoming him.

07:48 Peter Gourevitch: Thank you very much. Oopsie, I have to turn this on right? Okay, I think it's now on. Thank you very much, Frank. And I'm glad you think that about me, because that's the result of that you invite me to all the meetings that you organize, and I enjoy that a great deal. It's my honor to go to those meetings. Um, this is a very, uh, kind of emotional moment for me to do this. It's, uh, poignant about Charlie Robins. Charlie Robins was a very strong supporter of the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies. That's how I got to know him. He gave us lots of help over the years, to young people and everybody else. And I wasn't even talking to him about this, and it was to my surprise that suddenly I learned that he had sent in support for this. So, it's sad that he's gone and I do think a lot about - this is emotional because it's my grandparents, and my family, and, and so, it's about these people. So I kind of want to dedicate this to them. This is mine, the left is my grandmother. I'm not good enough at, to PowerPoint to make those pictures bigger, but the person on my left is my grandmother. My grandmother was, uh, and her brother is on the right. They were both born in what's in Russian Kishinev, and which is

Why did one survive, the other not?

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Sophia Fichman Bronstein Garvy  
Born: 1879 near Kishinev (Chisinau) Then  
Bessarabia part of the Russian Empire  
Today: Moldova  
Left France: 1940  
Died: 1960, New York City

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Boris Fichman  
Born: 1880 near Kishinev  
Arrested by Nazis in Nice, sent to Drancy and  
Auschwitz in September and October 1943  
Died: 1943 at Auschwitz

now in what's today Moldava. Back then it was part of the Russian Empire. And my grandmother, um, survived, left France, left Europe in 1940, a day before the Nazis got to where she was living in Paris. And they came to America in 1940. And her brother, Boris Fichman, didn't leave France. He went to the south. He went to Nice. He was caught by the Nazis there. He was shipped to Auschwitz and he died.

09:23 Peter Gourevitch: And so, I grew up hearing about this a lot. This Uncle Boris was my mother's favorite relative. He had taken care of her when she was a child. My grandmother was a revolutionary; he was taking care of them. And so, she was very devoted and I think, for all of us, we think about the Holocaust if we have any personal connection, a lot of it looms in your mind. And so, to me, emotionally my mother's reference to her brother - or to her uncle - was the what, you know, if you squeeze it down to a single person, that's the single person. So understanding this, I heard these stories as a child, about how they escaped France, and I'm going to tell some of that to you. But, in a way, this talk is how that goes from an oral memory of a child, and acquires other characteristics to it. And one of them is that how it goes from oral memory to documentation. Over the years, I found a lot of documents that tell you some of this story, and I'm going to show you some overhead. And then also, I became a professor; I became an academic, and as an academic, I've never specialized in this but I read. I did specialize in Europe and I've read a lot of European history. So I have all kinds of other Social Science things to put on top of it. So you could see that this is my effort to layer several stories, as me personally, as a child becoming an adult turning this into, from oral history to documents, to social science, and my summary of what I want to say. Why did my grandmother survive and my great uncle did not?

10:50 Peter Gourevitch: My grandmother survived because she was a political activist with her husband. They were trade union leaders. They were Mensheviks. They had been thrown out of Russia by Lenin and Stalin. They went to Berlin and in Berlin, they were active in the Social Democratic Party. And the day the Nazis came to power, they knew immediately they were in trouble because the Nazis went after the political opposition first, anybody who opposed them in any way. So, and whereas my great uncle was not politically active, he was not aware of the danger as fast. He was a nice friendly warm Jewish businessman, and that was not enough to save him. So the, to me, the story I want to tell is that the Holocaust begins with the destruction of German democracy and that's my overarching theme. And I want to do that by telling this story.

11:39 Peter Gourevitch: So the Garvy family tree is, I don't know how well this comes up, comes out, my grandmother is the lady in the middle, the, uh, the great uncle who died in Auschwitz is this gentleman right here, and this is another brother, and he died some somewhere in Russia in the [19]30s. Families lost, lost complete track of him. So the grandfather who was sitting right there, on the left, and the grandmother. The grandfather was a grain merchant and moved from Moldova, Kishinev today, then Bessarabia, today Moldava - moved to Odessa, had those three children and he was a very successful grain merchant. And of course, those of you who read Philip Roth novels will know that the subject of a prosperous businessman funding the political activities, the radical political activities, of a child is a familiar theme. That's what happened.

12:28 Peter Gourevitch: My grandmother was, was the activist, was the political activist. She and the man she eventually married, who was Peter Bronstein, and he became Garvy because he was a political activist, and acquired it as a party name. You know Lenin, Stalin, those

#### Summary

- Grandma's political activism - trade union social democrat -- put her in danger, with the Tsar, the Bolsheviks, and the Nazis, and also saved her life: she left because her activism put her in danger.
- Great Uncle Boris: not politically active, not as aware of the danger as fast
- The collapse of German democracy in 1933: was key step in enabling the Holocaust to happen.

Fichman Family in Odessa about 1905  
Samuel and wife  
Alexander / Sophia / Boris (left to right)

Grandparents' political activism.

- Baba and Grandpa Peter (Bronstein)  
Garvy: a social democrat, trade union

are all party names; that's not their real names. So he is a party activist, had a party name. His party name was Garvy. He came from a fairly modest social background, and they became active in the Menshevik wing of the democratic, uh, of this Russian social democratic party. Quick history for those, that party broke in 1903 in a famous meeting. One branch became the Bolsheviks, which means in Russian bigger - like Bolshoi Theater, and the other branch became the Mensheviks and, of course, we Mensheviks see that they stole the name because the Menshevik party means smaller, was the bigger faction, but the Russians took that over.

13:22 Peter Gourevitch: So who were they? Who were these Mensheviks? This is an important part of the story to know. Mensheviks were social democrats. They were trade union types, democratic trade union types. They, they disagreed with the, um, with the Bolsheviks and they believe in democracy, not immediate revolution. They didn't believe in the dictatorship of the proletariat. They would be familiar to you today if you looked at, at a social democratic party and how it's different from a communist party. That was the difference. So they were active in political things in Russia when the, um, my uncle, who we all talk about later - my personal uncle, not the great uncle who died - was born in Riga in 1913. My mother was born in Odessa in 1915.

14:05 Peter Gourevitch: So when the so they were active in Russia, when my father, grandfather came to New York, he actually wrote his memoirs. Here's his memoirs, published in New York City when they were in their third exile. It means *Memoirs of a Social Democrat*. It's some thick Russian, so if you guys can get your way through that, there it is. I have many copies, and these are other publications of his including some in German, and, uh, and Russian. So they were active at the time of Revolution and when the Bolsheviks took over the Mensheviks

activist. Peter from modest social background, father a "worker"

- Politics: Mensheviks: democratic socialist wing of Russian Social Democratic Party: broke with the Bolsheviks in 1903.

Sort of Walter Reuther side. Believed in democracy, not early revolution or dictatorship of the proletariat.

Grandparents Political activism

- Mensheviks:

-Baba Sophia: active in political things, in Russia and in exile in Switzerland, met Lenin there

-married Peter Bronstein, Menshevik activist, labor Who wrote his memoirs in NY city in 1940s.

Peter Bronstein-Garvy - party name

George Garvy: uncle, born in Riga 1913

Sylvia Garvy: my mother, born in 1915 in Odessa

Russian Revolution

- Active on Menshevik side
- Peter Garvy Discusses 1905 revolt in his memoirs, "memoirs of a Social Democrat": sent to Siberia by the Tsar's regime
- Active in St. Petersburg, at time of Revolution



were in trouble. The Bolsheviks turned on everybody who was part of the political opposition, and, uh, started to throw the Mensheviks out in [19]22-23 and so they went to Berlin. And in Berlin there, Berlin at the time had the largest Social Democratic Party in Europe and this mattered a lot because there was a home for, a political home for, these people. And they immediately joined German Social Democratic circles.

Bolsheviks expelled them in 1922: creating Communist Dictatorship: went to Berlin

15:05 Peter Gourevitch: My grandfather earned whatever pitiful living he got as a journalist for the trade union movement, the trade union papers. There was a large community of people there who, who had fled at the same time. When I hear my, heard my mother talk about her childhood, she never felt she was a refugee, but never felt alone because she was surrounded by a large community of these uh emigre, Menshevik kids and the, of her generation. They participated together in many activities, and they had many, many German friends. They belonged to the social democratic youth movement that I'll talk about in a moment, and they had lots, you know, a very rich, active, active life. And it was, uh, they were very active in this world. Their parents, uh, uh, Sophia and Peter Garvy were very active with all the German trade union people.

In Germany: Politically active

- Worked for German trade union movement

-Peter Bronstein Garvy: worked for Vorwärts - Forwards

-Friends with Socialist emigre community, strongly anti-Communist, anti-Lenin, anti-Stalin. Led by [David] Dallin and [Rafael] Abramovich

-Friends with Karl Kautsky, Pavel Axelrod (see photo)

15:51 Peter Gourevitch: I don't know how well this comes out but I once saw this photograph and I said to my mother - this is my, in the back you will see my mother at about age 17. This is my uncle, her brother. And I said, who's that nice-looking elderly couple sitting on the sofa in front of you? And they said oh that's Karl Kautsky. And I was by then old enough to know who that was and I just fell out. I couldn't, Karl, you're sitting, you're standing behind Karl Kautsky. And just, oh yeah he gave me my first pineapple. Karl Kautsky was the leading social democratic theorist of, of Marxism in this, in the period of, in this period. And so, this is not kind of a random, a random figure.

[photograph]

Karl KAUTSKY and Luise Kautsky, George and Sylvia Garvy (my mother) in Berlin about 1931

- 16:30 Peter Gourevitch: And I'm giving you, this is another one. This is Pavel Axelrod, a similar thing. Those are my grandmother in, the back two people are my grandmother and my grandfather, and my mother is over there on that side, and that's my uncle, George. And again, Pavel Axelrod is another one of these characters from Russia, fairly well-known figures. I'm giving you these photographs only to show you the circles they were moving in because it matters to my story. Okay, they were quickly involved the Russian Social Democratic emigres. They were quickly involved in the Social Democratic circles of Germany.
- [photograph]  
Pavel AXELROD, sitting between Sylvia (my mother) and George, with my grandparents, Sophia and Peter Bronstein-GARVY. Berlin 1930s.
- 17:01 Peter Gourevitch: They were very active in it. They went to school there in Germany. They belonged to the SYAOT and Willy Brand was one of the people who was, you know, young social democratic leaders of the future. They were all there, but they traveled to summer camps, and socialist meetings of young socialists all over Europe, and all that. And they did a lot of fighting with the fascists. There were, the SA [Sturmabteilung] had gangs, and the opposition had gangs, and they would meet and fight in the streets. And I've talked, you know, you look at your parents, you have trouble imagining this that they're actually but they were involved in all that. So my mother spoke a lot about friends, solidarity, her German friendships, and, um, it was political, that they were aware of.
- In Germany
- My Mother and Uncle George went to School
  - Social Democratic Youth organization SYAOT - met Willy Brand and others there.
  - Summer camps, travel to socialist youth meetings
  - Anti-Fascist fighting the SA in the streets:
  - My mother spoke of many friends, solidarity in political movement
- 17:41 Peter Gourevitch: So what happened? So when the Nazis take over, when Hitler took office on January 30, 1933, these people knew instantly that they were in danger. It took hours for them, I mean. I'm not trying to make a point just about political analysis, right? They were hyper-politically aware. My friends say to me, you talk politics all the time. It's in my blood. I'm sorry. It's three or four generations worth, I can't not do it. They were hyper-politically aware. So they were very aware of who these people are, and what their, what they were doing. But there was immediate information within days. Within a day of the
- Emigres in danger
- Strong community: knew they were in danger
- street brawls with SA before 1933
- Nazi take over in late Jan 1933
  - Immediate arrests, prison, beatings, to friends and colleague
  - Call to grandparents' house

Nazis taking power, they began grabbing, sending, grabbing people out, beating them up, opening prison camps, opening concentration camps, sending people. They would beat people up and let them out so that they would tell all their friends what was going to happen to them. So these people immediately - my grandfather, the entire Menshevik community - was well networked. It was through the social democratic and trade union connections, and that's exactly who the Nazis were after. They wanted to go after the entire political opposition, and drive them out, and get rid of them. So they knew they were in danger.

- Left on train within weeks by March 1933

18:46 Peter Gourevitch: And then there's a story - now again this is now back to oral history. There is a story that I've been told, I learned my whole life, which is that one day, within a month of the Nazis taking power, the phone rings. My grandmother picks it up, is Dr. Garvy there? No, he's not. This is the Gestapo calling. We wish to talk to him. Let him know that we want him to come talk to us. A few hours later my grandfather and my uncle George were on a train headed for Paris. My mother was sick, and my grandmother couldn't take him. Did this phone call really take place? I mean I have no idea. I have no document, but this is, this is a story that I heard. I've always wondered, what could have been, really been, the Gestapo? When exactly did it get called the Gestapo? I don't know, but it doesn't matter that. The point of the story is, is because of their political network, they had immediately information that they were in danger, as social democrats, not as Jews. They were Jewish but that was not what caused them to leave. They were on the train. They went to Paris.

19:42 Peter Gourevitch: And so what happens, some of you may know what happens in Germany within a year or very quickly, is democracy is being destroyed left and right. Every opposition group is being locked up, pounded, imprisoned, intimidated. Even before formal laws take

Destruction of democracy

- Dictatorship came fast: people locked up and beaten, sweeping arrests, prison camps

place and there are enabling statutes. So there's a whole bunch of them, and I've listed some of them. But we can actually document the moment at which democracy is being destroyed. The rule of law is destroyed. Nobody bothers to ask a judge, can I beat this guy up? They just beat them up. But, but they then started doing things like throwing, uh, people out of the Reichstag, um, um, and finally enabled, the Enabling Act, which repressed all political parties, made Hitler a dictator. Control of different organizations, every independent organization was taken over and all that's happening in [19]33-34. The actual formal Nuremberg Laws that stripped Jews of citizenship is [19]35. So again, how could - this is a key part of the story to me - is that it's that destruction of all opposition. That happens first. And the social scientists is always, why did Germany - remains a spectacular case of - why did German democracy collapse?

- Special laws suspending civil and legal; procedures, take over of power from Reichstag: Reichstag Fire decree banned Communists; Enabling Act of 1933 repressed Socialists as well. Hitler as Dictator
- Control of organizations: Gleichschaltung
- Nuremberg Laws stripping Jews of citizenship: 1935.

20:54

Peter Gourevitch: And so I've listed a few of the a few of the reasons on the board, but that's a very big part of it. And I think a big part of it is that it was not simply an election - because the Germans never won an absolute majority of the popular vote nor of the seats in the Reichstag - they needed allies, they could not have done this if there weren't other people willing to cooperate with them and let them happen. And so I've listed some of the reasons why there were people, um, who were only too willing to happen, to collaborate with them. The army wanted control of the of the SA [Sturmabteilung], the military wing of the of the Nazi party. That many businesses were only too happy to get rid of unions and acquire control of the workplace. There was lots of nationalist resentment from World War I and Weimar; the fact that they actually signed the Treaty of Versailles. There were many right-wing judges in the, in the bureaucracy and all over the place who would let, let, the, um, the fascist people off and not the other ones. So there was little organized resistance to all of this and it's a famous moment as the

Little resistance to this

- Why could the Nazi takeover?

Took a coalition: no majority of votes or seats on their own: needed allies: Nazi takeover

Popular move with:

- Army: get rid of SA and rearm
- Many businesses: get rid of unions and control of workplace
- Nationalist resentments from WWI and Weimar - signing of the treaty of Versailles
- Many in bureaucracy
- Little organized resistance to this: night of Long Knives in 1934

light of the long - Night of the Long Knives in [19]34 when the head of the army, the head of the SA [Sturmabteilung], a whole bunch of people are killed just by a raid at night and nobody says a word because all these people above are only too happy with the result, and do not complain about the process. So by [19]35 the Nazis are, are in power.

22:17 Peter Gourevitch: Forgive me for this type of an extra zero in 1933, but the key part of the story is that they left right away because everybody in their network was being arrested, attacked, beaten up. It was clear to them that they could not live there, so they went to Paris, where they lived in from [19]33 to 1940. Great Uncle Boris went with them. He'd been living, he had left Russia with them. He had gone to Berlin. He helped take care of my mother, my uncle, while my grandparents were running around being politically active. And so, um, they went to France. And they again, there was a French socialist party. They became politically active. They were then, by then, 18 years old and going to University and, um, and my parents had known each other already in Berlin.

22:06 Peter Gourevitch: And my father - it's a whole other story - I'm sorry I don't have time to tell that whole story. But my father arrived in Berlin in 1931 from Russia. His father was a Menshevik, um, sent into exile internally and finally killed by Stalin in the purges. And my father was fortunate enough to be allowed to leave in 1931 where he joined the very large Menshevik community that was there. He says, the day he arrived he couldn't get any sleep or drink because everybody was asking him what happened to so-and-so, what happened so-and-so. He was the most recent person to arrive from Russia and they all wanted information. So he also told me an incredible story, which is that... So he stayed behind. They all left and it's, so it's [19]33. They were gone by, by March. My father wanted to finish his [unclear

Hitler and departure

- Grandparents and mother left Germany within weeks of Nazi seizure of power (January 30, 1930) for Paris:
- Knew the threat: friends and network being arrested.
- Socialist, labor, democratic, centrist, religious
- Gestapo phone call

My father's escape

- My father: arrived in 1931 from Russia
- His father, my grandfather: a left-Menshevik stayed behind. Name Boris Ber Gourevitch (archive in Hoover Institute) killed in purges 36/37.
- My father: joined the Menshevik community in Berlin where he met my mother. Activist with them.
- Drew beard on poster.

German], so he stuck around for a bunch of months longer. And he says that one day I - in Berlin, there are these round posts that they put a [unclear German] on - notices of this or that concert, event. There was one that had Hitler on it, and my father says he went up and he started to draw a beard, and suddenly he feels an arm on his shoulder and he turns around. There's a policeman and the policeman says, a young man this is not a smart thing for you to be doing here in Germany right now. I suggest you do not do this. Well, I assume the German police were social democrats and I, as they were not yet taken over and controlled by the Hitler. So my fantasy of what this story is, that my father was fortunate enough that the guy who saw him put his arm on his shoulder was a social democratic policeman, who told him not to do this. I find this - another one incredible thing to mention - my nice quiet wonderful dad actually was standing there, drawing a beard.

24:46 Peter Gourevitch: But he left as well. They went off to France. They got married in Paris in 1938. They went to school. They were both studying chemistry at the Curie Institute and then out comes 1940.

In France

- Also politically active: in French labor and socialist movement
- My parents went to school, to study chemistry, Curie Institute

25:01 Peter Gourevitch: And in 1940 there's, as you know, the Front collapsed in the spring of 1940. They knew that they were in danger so if the Nazis, uh, actually were going to head there, they were going to be in big trouble. And in fact, we discovered after the war, that the day that they arrived, which was May 11th I think - on June 11th. They actually went to my grandfather's house because they had lists of all the refugees, and they knew where everybody was, and they were going to go after these people who had escaped. So it turned out that in France at that time you had to stand in line and get an exit visa. It wasn't just enough to get an entrance visa to someplace. You had to have an exit visa. Those of you who have seen *Casablanca* will know

How Grandparents and parents escaped  
Outbreak of War:

The Front collapsed spring 1940

- Knew in danger from German experience: Nazi policy went to grandparents' apartment.
- Stood in line for exit visa, Aunt Juliette told them real news on Nazi advance; left visa line went to train station: got last train out of gare de Lyon. "Mom what did you have for breakfast"

that that's really what Ingrid Bergman is doing is looking for an exit visa to get out of France. So that, this is a story I heard very often, you know, the last day - because the story I heard was that they got the last train out of the Gare de Lyon. And again, if you think of *Casablanca*, what's Humphrey Bogart doing? He's waiting to get the last train out.

- Casablanca story: Dad the day you left Paris it was raining
- Went to Toulouse to see father's aunt:
  - Letter found by uncle in train had Aunt Bacia's address

26:03 Peter Gourevitch: So they were standing in line at the French offices to get an exit visa when the woman that my uncle eventually married was working for a press guy, she called them up. And they were getting bulletins from the front that said, they're not, they're not a week away. They're going to be here in two days. Don't wait for your exit visas. Get out. So they left the line, went home. The next day they got up to go. And one day I was asking, I was trying to get my mother, I wanted to tape my mother telling this story. My mother, for some of you who remember her, was quite a fascinating and strong-willed person and had her own idea about how I should be asking the questions. So I suddenly tried something which I had seen [Claude] Lanzmann doing *Shoah*, which is to ask people an obscure question. So I said to her, hey mom the day you left Paris what did you have for breakfast? She stops, looks up, and suddenly out comes a torrent. She talks non-stop for 10 minutes. I had a [unclear] tartine - we went downstairs - we forgot this - we left to find it. We arrived at the Gare de Lyon. There are so many people that it took us five hours to get up to the top of the stairs. We arrive in the plaza. It's a hot day, the sun is shining. My mother was fainting all the time. We had to get water for her. We finally got to the tracks. So this was you know 15 minutes that I had never heard about the [unclear] and made it all fantastically more graphic, uh, to that. So, uh, that was very fascinating about that.

27:29 Peter Gourevitch: And so, of course then it's 196- now sleep until 1964. I'm a graduate student at Harvard, where I knew Judy Hughes,

who's sitting there back someplace. I'm standing. It's 1964 in January, the Brattle Theater in Harvard Square had Bogart Festivals and I go to see *Casablanca* for the first time. I was stunned by seeing *Casablanca* because it so evoked an atmosphere that I'd heard from my parents. And the moment that completely stunned me was Bogart's waiting at the train station for Ingrid Bergman. The piano player arrives and gives him a note, and he opens the note and it says, Dear Rick, I cannot come. Love, Ilsa. And it's raining, and the rain hits the ink, and it blurs, and the piano player grabs Bogart, pulls him on the train station. I left the Brattle Square Theater and went to a pay phone. Remember what pay phones cost in 1964? I didn't have a lot of money. I called my father. I said, dad the day you left Paris, was it raining? No, no it was not raining. Well dad that's a long time ago, you know, how do you, how do you remember? Oh, I remember very, very well. Because it was dry, the fields of France were very dry, the German tanks were rolling faster than they would have had it been a rainy day. And that's what made us vulnerable, how we all almost got caught. I remember very well what the weather was like that spring the day we left Paris. It was not raining. So okay, that's license if you're making movies in Hollywood. You don't have to worry about that, but my father did.

28:53 Peter Gourevitch: So another incredible story is, so they get on the train, and the train was bombed, and they're going south. And they knew that my father's aunt was living in Toulouse, and so they were headed for Toulouse. My uncle was in the French army, my mother's brother. The one you've seen earlier was in the French army and the Front is falling apart. They abandoned their thing and they find a railroad car. They open the railroad car and they see packets of letters, bags of letters. They see one of them is addressed to their regiments, so they start leafing through it. My uncle finds a letter addressed to him, addressed to him, and he opens it up. And it's from the great aunt

Go to Marseille to get Visa: from Emma and Vladimir Woytinsky  
[image of telegram]  
"The whole family authorized visas United States Contact American consul Marseilles See you soon Emma"



saying, we're in Toulouse, please find us. So he goes to Toulouse. He finds the family in Toulouse. Now when they're in Toulouse. They're in Toulouse. They're away from, the Vichy is established; Toulouse is in the free zone. They're safe from the Germans, and so the, um, they get a telegram. And here's the telegram, which my mother actually had a copy of, from Emma and Vladimir Woytinsky. Some of you who know German and European history will know who that is, it's a very famous economic historian, a Russian, a social democrat, active in, in Russia was living in Berlin. I mean, I don't have time. I'm sorry. It's a very big story, fascinating story, but for historical reasons, this is an interesting little tidbit in here. And it says, go to Marseille. Whole family authorized visas United States contact American council Marseille, go to Marseille. Get the visas.

30:19 Peter Gourevitch: Well that's an incredible story. So suddenly they have visas to get to the United States. They do not have visas to get out of France. They have visas to get into the United States. Well, what are those visas? How in the world are these people, you know, penniless, stateless people sitting in France until, how in the world do they get visas? Well, that's a very interesting story for me, and it led me to a very interesting fight with an archivist at the Holocaust Museum and made me discover a tension that I think is relevant to the politics of my story, which is a tension between the Holocaust Museum people and the presentation that they were giving of how to understand this whole thing, and something called the Labor Archive at NYU (New York University), of which it also exists. Because I was, I had gone to the Holocaust Museum exhibit when it opened. Of course, I really wanted to go. I went there and there was also an exhibit of Varian Fry. Varian Fry is another fascinating person. He's an American, kind of a wealthy, American elite protestant type, who gets sent over with a lot of money to get visas to, to help smuggle people out. And so he's a

#### Visas to US

- Emergency entrance Visas to the US
- US Labor movement and FDR
- My Disagreement with Holocaust Museum curator, at time of Varian Fry exhibit
- NYU Labor archive: George copy of Visa
- Tension between Holocaust Museum and NYU Labor Archive

righteous gentile, and so there's in the founding of the Holocaust Museum, there's an exhibit to him. And of course, I went there to see it, and I have a friend who worked at the Holocaust Museum, and she said well you must meet person x and she will talk to you about it. So I meet person x. And I start to tell person x my family story.

31:44 Peter Gourevitch: Oh no Peter, you must be wrong. What do you mean? Well, there couldn't have been more than a couple dozen visas like that. Your story it says, you completely do not understand the story. I said wait a sec. I mean, I've grown up with this. What do you mean? So I call my cousin the - okay, my cousin who's the daughter of my mother's brother. Oh, there's a quiz on this at the end; I'm a professor, remember? Um so, she says, snaps her finger, she says, wait a minute I'm visiting Helen. She lives in Santa Cruz. Wait a minute. She goes to a closet, pulls out a box and there is my uncle's visa. Pulls it out. There it is because my uncle was famous in the family from never throwing things away, and also for, he collected postage stamps. So when the heist and hyperinflation in Germany occurred in 1923 the family lived because my 10-year-old uncle was selling, would sell post stamps to collectors to get enough money to live. So, there's the visa.

Visa of my uncle George Bronstein-Garvy  
Received as Child of Peter and Sophia  
As was Sylvia and Alexander Gourevitch  
[image of visa]

32:42 Peter Gourevitch: And what happened was that in 1940 the AFL [American Federation of Labor], it was not CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] at the time, the American Federation of Labor - those of you old enough remember George Meaney, President of the AFL. So the [unclear] Federation - and I'm sure this is hard to read - in the case of America - this is to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, July 2, 1940, In the name of the American Federation of Labor, Jewish Labor Committee, representatives of organized Labor, we wish to appeal to you in a matter of great urgency. The Nazi occupation of France and the Soviet seizure of Lithuania have placed in jeopardy the lives of a

American Federation of Labor Request to State  
Department (Secretary Hull) for emergency  
entrance visa to European Labor Leaders  
trapped in France.  
[image of letter]

great number of men and women prominent in the democratic and labor movements in Europe. So this was a request of the [President Franklin D.] Roosevelt administration to grant emergency exit visas to a lot of people living in France. And miracle of miracles, it was granted. This was approved and who was it signed by?

Peter Gourevitch: Well, I the thing I rocked out, I thought it would have the signatures but it doesn't. But I know, President American Federation of Labor was George Meaney, President International Ladies Garment Workers Union, David Dubinsky. Some of you might be old enough to remember who David Dubinsky is. He is, was a very active. He was the head of the ILGWU [International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union]. This was a very, uh, active and important labor movement of the time. It was very Jewish. Lots of, lots of women and it was the SEIU [Service Employees International Union] of its day. And so, these are the General Manager of *The Jewish Daily Forward* and the Jewish Labor Committee. So they made this request to the, um, to the State Department and it was granted. So, to me, political scientist that I am, fascinating question to me. Why was this granted? Why was this thing approved of? And what made the Holocaust Museum people unhappy about my story, was that they have a frame of what they were presenting, which was that the Breckinridge Long at the State Department of the Roosevelt administration were so hopelessly antisemitic, that they did nothing to help anybody, and this story can't have taken place because it doesn't fit that script. Well, now my view is that, well they're completely right in saying that Breckinridge Long was a flaming antisemite, made it very difficult. The Roosevelt administration didn't do it. But this is a different story of what's happening. Remember these people are being asked for visas because they're labor leaders, not because they're Jews. Breckinridge Long didn't have to think about them as Jewish. I don't know whether

Signatures:

George Meany as President of AFL

David Dubinsky head of ILGWU [International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union]

1940: an election year

[image of the letter]

Breckinridge Long, what he thought about them because I don't have any archival material on what Breckinridge Long did about all this.

- 35:14 Peter Gourevitch: But it was granted, and so that's what the telegram that I told you about earlier - this telegram - is telling them. That Emma and and Vlad, who are living in Washington since 1935, Vlad wrote the American social security law by the way. He was a technical economist and he had done it in Germany and wrote it in the United States. So they are living in Washington, friends of my grandparents, and so the it was granted and the labor archive people, the NYU [New York University] labor people wanted to tell this story because they wanted to to make something out of the role of the labor movement and playing all these things. The Holocaust people didn't want to hear it.
- 35:53 Peter Gourevitch: The other thing that really fascinates me, historically, for which I have no, um, again I don't know. So okay, so you can, you make a request to the State Department and it's granted, surprises everybody. The instructions are sent to France. How come the instructions were followed? Right, I mean that the consul could have been given the instructions, issued these visas and that could have, I'm not gonna do it. Well, the consul was a bigot. There are movies made about Varian Fry actually which show this consul because Varian Fry was interacting with this guy, and how difficult the consul was. But there was a man called, a lesser level guy, called [Hiram] Bingham [IV]. Bingham was actually very sympathetic to these people and Bingham is not a random person in history either. One of his ancestors was a senator, another is the man who discovered Machu Picchu. I mean, he's kind of not a random, you know, who the State Department was at that time, not random people. But he was a friendly guy to these people and he granted the visas. So, um, the so, what I have here then is, so this is the, I showed you the telegram. This is the AFL [American Federation of Labor] letter which I discovered after I left
- Go to Marseille to get Visa: from Emma and Vladimir Woytinsky  
[image of telegram]  
"The whole family authorized visas United States Contact American consul Marseilles  
See you soon Emma"
- Why did FDR [Franklin D. Roosevelt] Administration grant the visas?
- An election year 1940: needed New York and help of the US labor movement.
  - Why did Marseilles consult actually five them: Bingham -- movie on Varian Fry The US consul was a bigot, but Bingham was not and wrote the Visas.

the Holocaust Museum. I went to New York, and I went to the NYU [New York University] archive to ask them questions, and I found this stuff that's been published. You can find it, Volume 14 of the NYU [New York University] Holocaust Labor Act.

- 37:15 Peter Gourevitch: It was all published in there, and to my amazement here's the list of the people who were supposed to get these visas. They had copies of that list there, and here they are. I don't know how well you can see it, but there is my Garvy-Bronstein. That was his real name. That's my grandfather. What does it say? Born in Russia, political writer her, and his wife Sofia and son George. That's my uncle. There's my father, Alexander Gourevitch, and his wife Sylvia, my mother. This, by the way, some of you may have if you read the small print, that's Tseretelli. Tseretelli was the socialist Menshevik, president of the Georgian Republic for a few years when it, before the Bolsheviks destroyed it. And there's also, this guy is Boris Nicolaevsky, which if you do if you do Russian history, he's the guy who saved tons of material and got it. Anyway, so that's the list, marked up by hand. And I believe that this list was prepared by a guy called Abramovich-Rein. And some of you who know German specialists, that is a very famous story - the disappearance of his son Martin Rein. And during the Spanish Civil War, suddenly disappears and this became a cause celeb. I mean, Trotsky is a famous case of Stalin killing people but they were doing this all over Europe. They were finding enemies of the Bolsheviks of whom Martin, of whom Abramovich-Rein were important members, and, um, killing them. So that's the list.
- List of people to receive emergency entrance visas  
Probably prepared by Abramovich-Rein  
[image of list]
- 38:45 Peter Gourevitch: Here's my uncle's visa application. Bingham wrote the visas. They arrived at the French border. Many, many of their friends had to walk over the mountains and the Pyrenees. My mother was pregnant. Her best friend was pregnant. I couldn't imagine walking over the Pyrenees when you're pregnant, unimaginable. My mother,

they arrive at the border - on the, on the French border, and they try to go through, and, uh, this is another story about my grandmother. They try to go through and the border guide says, you don't got any visas. Well, that's okay and then they look at my uncle. My uncle is draft age. That means army age So it starts to create a stink, and the story is that my grandmother made such a stink at the border that the guard said, oh, you know. She was too much trouble. Let them go through. Again, I give you oral histories that are laid upon things. You know, how I, as a child, learned all these things and heard them, and how they became interesting. And so they came to America in 1940. My brother, born [19]41. I was born [19]43 in New York. And they, they loved America.

39:45

Peter Gourevitch: What happened to the great uncle? So, that's the happy story. They got out. Trauma, you know, my grandparents were refugees three times - had to leave Russia, Germany, France. Came to America. What happens to my mother's brother, Boris Fichman? He did not leave. He went with them to Berlin, then he went from Berlin to Paris. He, when the, when the front broke down and everybody fled, he went to Nice, and then that was a relatively safe place to go. The Italians had invaded France in 1940 and took over Nice. If you know history, Nice was once Italian; taken from Italy by Napoleon III, and so he went to Nice. The Italians were occupying. The Italians were not cooperating in the dragnet of the Gestapo, and so it was relatively safe to be there. And then the Allies invade Sicily. Mussolini is overthrown. The Nazis don't like that. They invade Italy and suddenly the Gestapo arrives in Nice and people start getting arrested and killed. And he is grabbed there. So we think that he did try at some point to go to the Swiss border and escape and was not able to do that. And so there's the very sharp and poignant question of why did he not leave earlier. He didn't have a visa. So you can see, the way my grandparents were privileged for having being, being trade union activists got you in

Boris Fichman:

Did not leave:

Went to Nice: Italian occupation:

- Family: begged him to come: did not want to be burden?

Went to Nice under Italian Occupation: Safe until Nazis arrive after fall of Mussolini

Did try Swiss escape; rejected at border

Why did he not leave earlier?

- Did not have Visa: not a trade union activist
- Did not see danger right away; lacked options when he did
- Family: Begged him to come: did not want to be burden
- Careful not to judge:

danger most of the time. At this particular moment got you a visa. He wasn't a trade union activist, didn't realize his danger, but also didn't have a visa. So he lacked options. The family, the story I heard is they begged him to leave and he didn't want to come. He didn't want to be a burden and so he stayed. And so, it's a hard thing, we can't judge it.

41:33 Peter Gourevitch: I got a lot of documentation. So I'd heard about this my whole life from my mother. As I said earlier, this was her favorite relative. And so I started to do, uh, research and to see what other documents could I find and some of it was by accident. When I went to the Holocaust Museum - and I told you that story about having an argument with the archivist - my very close friend, who had been working as a historian for, as an archivist for, the museum and helped the displays and movies and stuff like that, she said to go upstairs to the fifth floor. There's an archive up there, and that you'll find that interesting. And I go up there and I see sitting on a desk victims of um, the victim, victims, German victims of fascism. And I open it up and I start and I see its name by name - person, date of birth, time of death - name by name. I said, oh my god. This is an unbelievable document. I go to the archivist, and I say is there something like this for France? She said, yes, absolutely - goes, pulls out a volume by Serge Klarsfeld, who, um, had become famous as a documentalist and all that. He's the guy who found tons of materials in the French state. He's the major person who was responsible for having us understand the extent to which Vichy France was very complicit in, in capturing and shipping and deporting Jews. So I started to look through this, and I sat down there and spent an hour and a half going. All I knew was my uncle's name, and that's all I knew.

Documents on his fate:

- Klarsfeld list, visit to Washington Holocaust Museum archive, about 1992
- Found Klarsfeld train list document to Auschwitz
- Showed document to my mother
- Wrote to Klarsfeld; more material -- slide
- Charlotte Salomon, convoy 60, Drancy. Felsteiner biography; Klarsfeld father on Convoy 61
- CARNETs de Drancy: took money

43:03 Peter Gourevitch: I knew his name, roughly where he was born, roughly where it was and I leafed. An hour later, I come across convoy number 60 from Drancy to Auschwitz and I find his name, which is

Convoy 60  
Drancy to Auschwitz Oct 7, 1943  
[image of list]

Fichman. And it's here. I've lost it but it's there, believe me. It's there, down here. Yeah, it's there, believe me, it's there. And I found it suddenly, convoy number 60. So I was very moved by this. I wrote a letter to Klarsfeld and said, do you have any more information about this because you know all this thing?

- 43:40 Peter Gourevitch: And he writes me back a note. This is a copy of that note. And I also sent him a gift in honor of what he was doing, and he sent me back a nice long letter. And he also sent me back this book which is *Transfer of Jews to the region of Nice toward Drancy in view of their deportation 31 August 1933 through July [19]44*, and I start to read through it. And I suddenly realized one of the reasons I think Klarsfeld responded is that his father saved the family but by giving himself up and hiding them and his father was on convoy 61. So his father, that he, this, the living in Nice and being caught was clearly a very big thing in his mind. So he sent me that book. I looked through that book and I find more material, which is the train from Nice to Drancy - and there it is in hand and there's Fichman in the middle there. I see it more clearly; it's right there. And, um, this is the same thing typed up. And I then continue my work and a friend of mine tells me about a book by Charlotte Salomon that if you know who that is? She's an artist. You know who that is? Charlotte Salomon was an artist, a German-Jewish artist, who wrote these quite - there've been museum shows of her stuff. It's a mixture of, um, of drawings with, with let - with captions and stuff. And so it's a big exhibit of her, and so a friend of mine said, oh, you know, I have a professor at San Francisco State who wrote a book on Charlotte Salomon that would interest you. I read the book. My eyes pop out of my head because Charlotte Salomon was on convoy 60. Caught in Nice on convoy 60.
- 45:16 Peter Gourevitch: Oh my god, this is incredible, and I also learned from reading this book that there was money when you were taken. You, so
- Correspondence with Serge Klarsfeld  
[image of letter, in French]
- Receipt at Drancy  
Recu de M. Fichman, Boris



if they go from Nice to Drancy and you get to Drancy and they asked you if you had the money. If you did, they took it and they wrote your receipt. And there's a reference to this receipt from Charlotte Salomon. So I said to Charlotte Salomon, where are the, where are the receipts? They tell me, the receipts are in Paris. So, next time I'm in Paris I go to the, I think it's the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, near the Rue Rosiers someplace, and I look, ask, do you have the convoy to Drancy. Yes, they have the convoy to Drancy. And I sit there and spend an hour looking through it. And then bingo, I find this. And here's a copy of it. And it says, uh, received from Boris Fichman. It gives us an address in Cannes, the sum of treize mille quatre cent quarante Francs, which is 13,440 francs. Well, my eyes pop out of my head out of astonishment that actually I could find such a documented evidence that he was there, but also - the economist in me - is amazed that that's a lot of money 13,440 Francs. Almost all the other ones are five Francs, 10 Francs, 100 Francs, something like that. This is a lot of money and so, like imagine suddenly that Boris Fichman knowing that they're in trouble, liquidates all assets that he has, gets it in cash, and when and he has it with him when they arrest him and he's taken it with then - hoping to be able to do something with it. Maybe when they were in Nice, he tried to go to the Swiss border. He wanted to bribe somebody. I don't know. Of course, I don't know, but there it is and, and, so there's the other, the other material.

10 Rue de Balegrier, Cannes  
La somme de treize milles quatre cent  
quarante francs  
(13,440)

46:54 Peter Gourevitch: When I found this document, the first one, I called up my mother. I was in Washington and I said, um, do you think 1880, does that sound right for his birthday? And she said yes. And his wife is Olga? Yes, and there's... So when I came home and showed her this copy, she was very moved because, you know, she'd heard of, she knew this. They knew this right after the war. Right after 1945, they learned very soon what happened to him. So I'd grown up with my

mother, knew this had happened to her favorite uncle, but actually seeing that train list - she was very overcome by that. It really did. Again, the strange thing, why is seeing it on black and white affect you? But it does. Plus the incredible astonishment that the Nazis and the Vichy police are actually writing every damn thing down. Everything they even wrote down. So this lady, the expert on Charlotte Salomon, told me, she said wait a minute, goes to her archives, comes back and said, you know, not only were they both on convoy number 60, they were in the same car. They were in the same wagon. I said, how do you know that? Because the Drancy police would line you up in, in the dormitory, in the rooms, and then when they sent you off into the, into the train, they would take them floor by floor. So they wrote it down, who was where. We can find lists of who was in what building, and there it is. They were in the same car and this... So you can find out a lot by reading these things.

48:20 Peter Gourevitch: There are people who survived for, Klarsfeld published people from each transport who survived. A few people from most of them, one or two people, would survive and then write it down. So you can get actually somebody who describes being on that, on each convoy: what it was like to arrive, and what happened to them. So, um, I had a couple more experiences with this, is that, um, at some point, um, my choir - I sing with the La Jolla Symphony Chorus here, and we have rehearsal tonight - and one time the choir took a tour, and I went with the choir. We went to Czech Republic and Poland. And we went to Krakow and they had organized the option of going to Auschwitz. Well, I had made a decision years ago that I did not wish to do this. I just didn't. I knew a lot about it. I read a lot about it, but actually going there, why would one want to do that to oneself? But I was too curious, and so I, they organized a trip. I would be with other people. So I went on this trip. We arrived, and I thought about this

ahead of time, I'm going to do this and I made a dozen copies. I took a Kaddish, xeroxed it, and brought it with me. And when we reached Birkenau I, I - which is overwhelmingly likely where he was killed - I asked people in the choir, would they stand with me and a dozen of us would recite the Kaddish together. Which was something of an odd thing for me to do, because I'm absolutely certain that he was completely unreligious. This did not have any personal meaning to him. I was raised in a pretty secular unreligious thing. I needed the help from a guy who I knew was a cantor to actually lead us in saying it because I was not capable of doing it. But I thought, this man was killed as a Jew and I'm here because of him, and so let's complete the cycle. And so the dozen of us stood and did this together. And several people, of course, said what are we doing? What are we, what, what's he asking us? What are we doing? Which I thought was very touching. You know, that was very nice. So we did that together.

50:19 Peter Gourevitch: And then I discovered, a few years after that, that the French announced a reparations plan for people who had lost assets. And now, there are many people who lost huge assets, you know, art collections, uh, houses, estates, factories, all this kind of thing. So my uncle's 13,000 francs is not very much, even though 13,000 francs back then was a lot of money. I mean, I went through exchange rate things and figured out that that was in the neighborhood of, you know, that could have been, you could see that as \$20 or \$30,000, which is a lot of money to be walking around with. And so he, um, so I said, you know, I'm pretty angry at the French state. I'm, I grew up as a French expert. I speak fluent French. I love going to France. I still do, but the more I learned about this, the angrier I felt. And I said I'm going to actually demand a reparation. And so, I went through the whole process to figure out how would one do this. What would one do? And I did, and that takes a long time to tell that story,

Boris: financial reparation

- French reparations: France announced plan about 10 years ago, I filed and got a small amount of funds.
- Saying Kaddish at Auschwitz with La Jolla Symphony and Chorus.

but in the end, they granted it. And so, uh, I and other, my brother's relatives, and my cousin all got the small sum of money back from the French state. And it's not the money that, I think to me, it's having a piece of paper which says where the French state admits that it did something bad.

- 51:35 Peter Gourevitch: So, um, that's the, so let me bring this to a close. So what's the large, what's the lesson - aside from the personal story of telling you about how I discovered facts that I sort of knew before I looked for them but the documents that fit with them - is to get us back to this point: my grandma was deeply involved with politics and her involvement with politics meant that she was part of the labor opposition that knew that it was in trouble immediately, and so they got out right away and were fortunate enough to get entrance visas coming to America. My great uncle Boris was not political, not aware of his vulnerability from that point of view, and I don't think in the early [19]30s, I really thought that the Nazis were going to set off the Holocaust and come kill him. So he did not, he did not leave, or he took a, a smaller option, which was to go to Nice and stay there. And as I say, I heard the stories of my, I asked my mother that, you know, that they tried to get him out. We tried but he wouldn't come. Was he unwilling to be a dependent? Right, he was afraid to come and be a dependent. Uh, certainly lots of people do that, but he stayed.
- Grandma and great uncle Boris
- She: deeply in politics: made her vulnerable and in danger, also made her aware. Network giving information fast and analytic.
  - He: not political, not aware of vulnerability to him and his wife, too late by the time it became clear, not involved in political networks. Why did he stay? They begged him - not wanting to be burden? Not see the danger? Tired of refugee status?
- 52:44 Peter Gourevitch: So, to me, the canary in my grandmother's coal mine - you know the canary in the coal mine - what gives you the canary in her coal mine was that she was politically active and knew immediately that she would be killed as a socialist. My great uncle Boris the soul was the victim of the Holocaust. He was killed as a Jew in 1943. He was not aware of the danger until it was too late, like many other people, and did not have - by the time he realized it - did not have
- The Holocaust and Politics
- Grandma: in danger from her Politics, which also saved her life: the canary in her coal mine. Would've been killed as Socialist.
  - Great Uncle Boris: victim of holocaust - killed as a Jew in 1943. Not aware of the danger until too late.

access to a visa. How else he could have gotten out? You know, we've heard lots of stories. People have gotten out in other ways.

- 53:19 Peter Gourevitch: So that, to me, the story goes back to the destruction of democracy, that it's the destruction of democracy that, that then makes the rest of the thing possible. The, the destruction of democracy was happening in within days and accentuated and rolled ahead.
- 53:33 Peter Gourevitch: I've always liked the Martin Niemöller quote, first that came for the communist, etc. And when I looked it up to see exactly what the quote was, I discovered that it's very controversial. What is the quote? Because the sequence, you can see - those of you who study politics - I've given a quote that I found, but the sequence in which you tell it, some people say he started by saying, first they came from the communists. Well, of course, in my family, since they hate the communists, and they're socialists, they'd say no they, first they came for the trade unionists. I mean who, who is, what is the order in which you list this? It is political, controversial and the archives list several different versions, and people actually interviewed Neimoller and he has given different versions. So what the real, what's the real Niemöller quote? I don't think, uh, I don't think we really know. But it's, its point is an important one, which is that the first three on that list are - and that's only some of them, and it excludes religious leaders, uh, ordinary middle-of-the-road people who were not communist, trade union, or socialists. But just ordinary people of central political persuasion, who believed in civil liberties, democracy, the process of laws and courts, that, all that was destroyed. So that then made, when they went after
- So vulnerability
- Democracy: if it is undermined the threat is greater, it rises.
  - The lawlessness of the regime, early on, danger in first few weeks, night of long knives by 1934
  - Attack on Jews and Roma, opposition already destroyed
- The Martin Niemöller quote\*
- First they came for Communists, and I did not speak out -- Because I was not a Communist.
  - Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out -- Because I was not a Trade Unionist.
  - Then they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out -- Because I was not a Socialist.
  - Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out -- Because I was not a Jew.
  - Then they came for me -- and there was no one left to speak for me.
  - \*many versions of this exist: with different order - reflects politics of vulnerability and opposition

the Jews in the unbelievable way that they did, there was nobody to, uh, to protect them.

54:52 Peter Gourevitch: So I, I talk about this because I, I want to say that understanding the structure of democracy is critical to understanding of the Holocaust and I don't, I get uncomfortable when I hear people explain the Holocaust and they say, to understand that we have to start with how intense was antisemitism in Germany. And I don't think that's the right way to begin. I mean, that is the right way - a very fundamental question of understanding why it actually worked when they started to do it - but to get to the point of when they started to do it, you have to understand the destruction of democracy is the first step. And then the other thing, the reason I think that's important is that has a lot to do with then, how do we think about the uniqueness of the Holocaust as opposed to other genocides, and how it compares. Because if we think of the Holocaust, um, if we think that things like this can happen other places the destruction of democracy is a more general phenomena, and it's worth it.

55:45 Peter Gourevitch: So when I go to Holocaust Museums, and I've been to a bunch of them, I always look at two things. I look right away, the passage about 1933. How the Nazis come to power is something I spent a lot of time reading and looking at, and thinking very carefully. And of course, my blood pressure easily goes up that they didn't do it the right way. But the other thing I'm also interested in, did they make comparisons? Um, Celia and I were in Mexico City over this past holiday and they have a museum of the Holocaust, The Museum of Memory and Tolerance. And I got this book there and I was very fascinated by how they told the story of the Holocaust against the Jews, but they then - another floor - looks at a lot of other atrocities and genocides. And so, I thought it was very interesting that they make an effort to locate this, and think that this happened in other, in other

How do the Holocaust Museums present it?

- What do they show on how Nazis came to power? Do they treat it as antisemitism only? Do they look at the politics of the destruction of Democracy? They should look at that. The First step. Measuring degrees of antisemitism not the right approach.
- So they compare atrocities Armenia? Roma? See Mexico museum which looks at Guatemala Laos, Rwanda. Should compare Holocaust to other destructions: each unique, each in

places. So those are the two themes I'd like to stop with is, one is the importance of understanding the destruction of democracy, and that connects to me if we think about this in comparative terms we can think about the destruction of democracy in comparative terms as well. So thank you for listening to all this. So I, we have time for questions or comments, or observations. Yes, Deborah?

common with disregard for life and rights.

57:05 Deborah Hertz: Thank you very much. That was really, that had all the layers that you promised, family, history, and social science. I wanted to ask you about two different things, the first one has to do with escaping from the Gurs and the Drancy camps in the years before the deportation started.

57:20 Peter Gourevitch: Escaping from Drancy and Gurs?

57:27 Deborah Hertz: Because if I'm not mistaken, Hannah Arendt and [unclear] managed to escape. And I wonder if you could talk about that a little bit? Not necessarily in relationship to your family.

57:35 Peter Gourevitch: I don't know much about that. I think that they were somewhat different. My understanding of Drancy was that it was a transit camp and that escaping from that was a different - I don't know that people did escape from it but I am not an expert on that and I do not know.

57:51 Deborah Hertz: The other thing is, I wonder if you could comment on the suicide of Walter Benjamin. Because he's also leaving Paris and then he's on his way to Portugal and committed suicide. And I wonder if your parents would ever talk about something like that.

58:04 Peter Gourevitch: No. I mean it's an interesting group, okay, the Varian Fry group. This is the kind of, as their, as history becomes more complicated the Varian Fry group, and Walter Benjamin was one of

those, is saving a very large group of prominent intellectual and culture figures, of which you've mentioned two - Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin - but there's a lot of others. And it's not, it's a difference to my families, as it wasn't actually part of the Varian Fry operation because it was a labor leader story, which isn't part of that one. And so I just want to make that point but I think, that you know, that I just can't imagine that what it's like to be, to feel trapped and in that situation. I spent a lot of time preparing this thinking about how should I talk about my great-uncle, because I felt very worried about appearing judgmental. You know, is he, my grandma's the success, he's the failure? I mean, did he make a mistake? Isn't that a judgment? What, what do we mean by making a mistake in a situation like that? So I start to think more of it in a way. I think it's not so much that he lacked information because of his network. I mean he had the misfortune of being apolitical, which means he didn't have a network that they would tell him. And it also meant that when the time came, he had no visa because he wasn't part of this other group. So I feel, I know, of course, I don't know him, and I, uh, I did not know him. He seemed like a very, from the way my mother talks I have some vision of his personality, as a kind of a sweet gentle man. But I could imagine anybody in circumstances like that. We all know about denial, and hostile circumstances, terrible things, so that somebody commits suicide doesn't seem so bizarre. But do we know, I don't know that, we'd have to know a lot more about suicide and why people do it and all that. But that would not seem such a strange response. There's one of the, there are some famous stories of one guy, very famous German socialist finance minister Rudolf Hilferding, who was known to sit in a cafe in Marseille and shout loudly: they're never, I'm not going to keep my mouth shut. They're never going to get me! I'm Rudolf Hilferding! They got him. They killed him. So, I mean people do strange things. You had your hand up, over there.



- 1:00:25 Speaker 1: My question goes a little bit differently. It takes it back to today and when you see someone like [Vladimir] Putin going into the Crimea, and you see that the destruction of democracy in that country, and, um, not giving them a right to say yes or no on a boat, and stuff like that, how, what are you thinking about where that is going and do you see other, um, other, uh, would you see atrocities happening there in the future?
- 1:00:59 Peter Gourevitch: Well, I mean...
- 1:01:02 Speaker 1: You can't, you can't, um predict that, but where do you see that doing?
- 1:01:03 Peter Gourevitch: I don't know. I mean I, I have to say, you know, I read stuff a lot. I follow this and I find the situation in Ukraine more confusing than many I've read in a long time because I get so many different interpretations and so many different things. We're having a panel on the Ukraine next Tuesday afternoon, and one of the panelists is Amelia Glaser, who was in our literature department, and she had an op-ed piece in yesterday's, um, *New York Times*. Is that what it was, yesterday's, right? Yeah, yes, and, and so she gives a very rich and complicated picture of who are all the people. I mean Putin, Russia, and it's very hard to know because Russian propaganda is putting out an idea that the leaders, uh, the of the, of the protests are antisemites from, uh, World War II, and Nazi collaborators. And so how much is this true? Well there's probably some bunch of people like that who survived from that period, and there are a lot of bad things going on in Ukraine, and, uh, there's a lot of antisemitism in Ukraine, lots of evidence of people getting killed, and so it's possible. But is, do I really think that if the Ukraine, so who takes power in the Ukraine? I don't know and I don't know where it's going to end. I don't know what Putin's game is. What will he do? What will the Ukrainians do, or what

happened? I think it would be, I mean, as democracy falls apart nobody is in control. Every people are in danger, and I would say everybody's in danger. That's not to leap from that to another Holocaust. I wouldn't do that. So I wouldn't do that, but is that a dangerous situation for people? Yes. So there were other questions. Yes sir.

1:02:48 Speaker 2: Thank you. Thank you for your talk. Uh, this is a very interesting thesis that you present, a subplot, if you wish, from the Holocaust, and obviously, a small group who were staunch politically active, leftists, or socialists, or whatever who were smuggled out or given visas. I have a very different story. And, maybe in a year or two when I am ready, I'll talk here, if I'm asked, which I already was. Anyway, I am survived from the Netherlands. My entire family was killed and in the the reason why people - unless your, your title - the reason why people survived, or knew they were going to be killed, or not going to be killed, or would be able to disappear and stay alive had to do with the ugly word. And that is money. People who had, in the Netherlands things got much worse. The police and the populists, many of the populists were antisemitic more so than one would think of that green country. And they had wonderful lists of everybody who was Jewish, and they went straight to the [unclear] and they were all taken to Auschwitz and Sobibor and wherever. However only if you had basically enough money, enough connections, could you disappear into the populace. Did you have connections who would hide you for two, three, four years, mind you? And hence, in the Netherlands, 80 percent of the Jews were killed by the Nazis and the Dutch. Whereas in France, it was more like 50 percent. And that's a big difference and I will...

1:04:32 Peter Gourevitch: I think in France it was more like 25 percent.

- 1:04:34 Speaker 2: Much less, much less, very good, even better. But the difference is very pronounced. And then you look, I participated, was five times in Munich in the Demjanjuk trial as a witness of evidence. There were 23 people like myself called so called co-accusers in the file. So who were the other accusers? To my right and to my left the were people who were well established, who had connections and basically the money. And they survived, the others did not. So I, I said, well - this is just a sub-plot basically.
- 1:05:16 Peter Gourevitch: Well no, I think it's a very important subplot. I think probably a lot of subplots. It's not a it's not a coherent story and I think certainly money - there are famous incidents of a train from Hungary that, um, very wealthy people were allowed to buy seats on that train and get out in 1944. So, yes there are certainly stories of just exactly what you tell, and it says, supplements that account. I'm sure that there were people with connections that managed to hide, or find ways of hiding, or do different things. My thesis advisor in graduate school was Stanley Hoffman and he was living in Nice at the same time. And his mother, who was an American and his father was an Austrian Jew. She just got on the train with him, and they went west. They left Nice before when it was still possible. They went to live in a small town in rural France and um, Stanley talks about how the locals knew who they were, and took care of them. Would not, you know, he thought he had an antisemitic school teacher who said he'd be damned if he's going to let the Germans take him. So I thought, there are so many stories like that, and there are many stories, I think, where money makes a difference, connections makes a difference. Some individual choice makes a difference. So I'm not trying to tell a coherent story. I, I mean, and I, I'm not trying to say there is a single coherent story. I, I don't believe that. That was my fight with the Holocaust Museum people in Washington, but that, um, there are different kinds of things

give people information, and that certainly the thing I strongly believe is that without the destruction of democracy the rest would not have been possible. Although I'm not totally that optimistic about democracy, bad things happen in democracies too. I'm waiting for somebody to ask me that question, but, um, ask it and answer it. Go ahead. Who's next?

1:07:10 Speaker 3: Thank you. Thank you. Peter all my admiration for your presentation, and what I like in particular is the morphing that you have from overall history, to going to documents, and to making social science. So my comment and my question is when you write this - because you have to write what you gave us today - when you write this, do you write this as oral history, as a personal diary from the family account, but you make it as an academic and an intellectual thing to social science.

1:07:42 Peter Gourevitch: Well, that's interesting you ask it that way because one of my motives in doing this - I had several motives in doing this. I, why am I doing this? I asked myself several times. And one of the motives is, well, my children have been eager for me to do this. They want this documented. But, um, the uh, but one of the reasons to get a reaction from the audience because this is unlike anything I've ever done. I do normal social science and I don't feel the impulse to do that. The impulse I feel is to do what I did here, which is to mix them all together. To tell it as a - because, I think, my story isn't the same as yours, and that there are a lot of other stories. I don't know how, I don't, to me, that you know, the topic could be seen as a social science topic in which we're going to take a sample of you know 100,000 survivors. That's not how I imagine doing this because I think the answers are too varied. I can imagine making some points by telling a particular family history, and then using it to make some other points about democracy, and things like that. And also, but I feel more compelled to try to put these pieces together just as you described it. How to put the personal,

oral history, the documentation of the social science, and weave them together. But I'm curious what the, I plan to ask many of you that I know afterwards what is your advice.

- 1:09:08 Speaker 3: Just to follow up, it's also very psychological because you're asking a question of who am I? And who am I comes up through both your academic side as much as your role in history. And you calling your mother [unclear].
- 1:09:23 Peter Gourevitch: Right. Right. No, it is right. I mean that's one of my questions is, uh, why am I doing this is another whole half hour but uh...
- 1:09:33 Speaker 4: What would be your advice to Jewish citizens in say Venezuela, France, and Hungary now?
- 1:09:38 Peter Gourevitch: I would be, uh, I would be worried. Well, I think, yeah, I would be worried watching what's going on. And what's going on in Venezuela and what's going on, I would be worried. There's no way that you cannot, that they cannot be worried. I was in Israel about a year and a half ago, and I went to the Museum of Jewish History and it bothered me in a way. But I could see it, why it was this entire thing was built around how Jewish communities have been endangered all over the world, and that what, come to Israel and we'll protect you. And I heard this man standing next to me and his children there. And he said, you see, see what they've done to us. We'll come here; we'll be safe. I thought, oh my God, you really think you're safe here? Seems a, uh, I found that troublesome. But I also found troublesome, I also found troublesome the telling of Jewish history that way as well, uh, because Jewish history, I mean the Holocaust, is this gargantuan fact in front of Jewish history, but Jewish history is also cultural, and rich, and very - Debra doesn't spend her time reading all day long about

why did, you know, trains to from Drancy to Auschwitz. There's a rich cultural life there, and so I thought, gosh they've taken this Museum of Jewish History and they've turned it into a, a document to instill fear in everybody so that they will go settle in Israel and then they can claim they're safe. I, so what would I tell Venezuelans, French people? I would say be careful, watch out, um, defend democracy. Oh, Hungary is quite scary, absolutely. I mean, Hungary is far worse because, actually, openly antisemitic people are having a lot of influence there. So, yes?

1:11:28 Speaker 5: Um, I'm, I'm not political by nature. My brain is a sieve with all of this as far as like the politics of things, but I see myself being your uncle, more than your mother. Can you give some tips to someone like me to differentiate between manufactured fear, which I think is rampant, uh, in our country? And maybe, I'm just speaking for our country right now, but anyway, I feel like it's being manufactured right and left by our politicians, versus real fear and concerns. What, what are the ground-level things that someone like me should look out for?

1:12:06 Peter Gourevitch: Well I guess my message is, I would keep your eye out on the destruction of civil liberties. That's sort of the canary in the coal mine to me part is that. I get my, you know, I'm sorry I don't want to accuse anybody in the Midwest republican party of being a fascist. I wouldn't go that far, but when I read that the Governor of Wisconsin wants to destroy trade unions, my blood pressure rises. I mean, you know, you don't destroy trade unions, trade unions, that's, that's the canary in the coal mine to me. Trade unions are important. You may not like them. You may vote against them, but going and destroying them, that's not a cool thing to do. So, that's to me a very unpleasant, uh, characteristic of things that are happening. Uh, and I would, my advice actually to you would be somewhat different, would be to read many different news sources. Get a variety of opinions. Don't stick to

any one, you know. I tend to do that a lot, you know, when I, when Fox News appears on my google news thing, I don't click on it. I wonder, it's because I live in San Diego that they've given it so much prominence. If I lived in New York Fox News wouldn't appear where it does. So, let's move to New York so we don't have to deal with that anymore. But the solution is, I just don't click on it. I don't click on it, but, um, I would say that. I would say trying to get different sources of opinion so that you're not only hearing one point of view, and that increases possibly the chances. But I don't know what to say to you because you don't like reading about the news. And I don't mean that judgmentalist to you, but -

1:13:32 Speaker 5: But I've always not absorbed a lot of things. So it's just something, my brain goes to the mathematics and different things, but not -

1:13:39 Peter Gourevitch: Yeah. No, that's a problem. Try to.[laughter] I have nothing. I have no advice to give you. No type, no but really, at least open Google news and look at a lot of the different headlines and try to look at different ones and see what they say.

1:13:58 Speaker 6: Quick comment about the convoys. At the, uh, San Diego County Fair last year there was a Holocaust exhibit. One of the posters was an apology from the French rail company. I believe it's called SNCF [Société nationale des chemins de fer français]. They may have been a sponsor of the exhibit also. I noticed that last year.

1:14:16 Peter Gourevitch: That's very interesting. There's a lot of news about them because somebody is suing them for reparations, and I think that's really quite fascinating. I thought one of the, and if any of you saw *Shoah* - the Lanzmann movie - but there were a lot of fascinating things about it, and how he made it, but one of the ones that

fascinated, this idea of asking people trivial questions because they reveal themselves. One of the ones if I remember vividly was he's talking to this very nice elderly German fellow who worked for the German train safe system. And the guy was explaining how the - just what the SNCF did in France - they demanded payment per passenger being transported. And so, Lanzmann keeps asking, well did you think about that? Well, not to, you know, we needed to get our payment. Did you think about it? Not very much. Well, so where were they going? They were going to Auschwitz. Well so, what happened to the trains when they came back? Did you get anything for that? No, they came back empty. Well did you wonder why? You know, you were counting and millions of people were being sent there, and nothing was coming back, no goods, no transports, nothing. Did you ask? No, I didn't. And he called him Herr Lanzmann. Which I thought, Herr Lanzmann, no, I didn't think about that. So I thought about that when I read about this SNCF thing. It's a similar thing of demanding that the French trains - now is that culpability? I'm not sure that I would, you know. I'm angry at Vichy, but I don't know that I would say the SNCF is responsible for that. It wasn't the SNCF that did this. It was the Vichy authorities that did this, and the people who were conspiring. So going after the SNCF strikes me as not a tremendously productive use of energy, in my personal view. Yes?

1:16:01 Speaker 7: So, earlier you said, when I was thinking about this, I don't, I don't necessarily go to Ukraine right away. I also think about what's going on here, you know with the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and what-not. Um, even [unclear] Dianne Feinstein finds them invasive, you know, or some senators, but anyway. Um, you said to the lady who asked about Ukraine - I wouldn't take that leap - but I kind of think that's maybe what why so many people got stuck in Europe



because they didn't, it was just so ridiculous. It was so outrageous.  
They didn't take that leap until it was too late. Right?

1:16:45 Peter Gourevitch: Well, I think that's true. I mean, I think it is true in the sense that nobody, very few people in 1933 thought that they would actually start - once they had all this power - they would actually start killing Jews. I don't know that they knew. I think if you somehow could zip into Hitler's or Himmler's or anybody's houses, are you in seven years, are you going to start killing Jews when you get the chance? I don't think they could have answered you, and so they would have answered, or I don't know. It would have been a meaningless question asked at that point. So there's a process here of getting from 1933 to the Wannsee Conference, and doing all these things. And, uh, it's not a transparently obvious question. So your point is a very good one, that even if you see - if the canary in the coal mine faints - it's still not clear what that means to you completely. So, I mean, I think again I'm here in front of you today because the signals to my grandparents were obvious, and the signals to my great uncle were not obvious. So he did not survive, and they did.

1:17:48 Speaker 7: And the threat to your, your mom, your grandmother. The threat [unclear]. The heat was building.

1:17:56 Peter Gourevitch: Yes. They call her up in Berlin, you know. We want to talk to your husband.

1:18:02 Speaker 7: Yeah, so did your Uncle, um, Boris have kids?

1:18:06 Peter Gourevitch: No.

1:18:09 Speaker 7: And then so, last one, um it and this might be personal. You might have mentioned it, but I didn't hear it. And by the way, thank you for your talk. It's riveting and I could see this as a movie. But, um,

the reparations, um, I know you don't care about the money but was it, did they add interest or was it compensatory?

1:18:37 Peter Gourevitch: No, no, it's not a, that's not a ridiculous question. I thought about it. Like I tried to I, I called some economist friends and say how do I take 11,000 Francs in 1943, and turn them into a current purchasing power. Because I want to know, what should I demand from the French state? I just don't think, that was a lot of money for an individual to be walking around with his wallet. It's a lot more money than I carry in my wallet. But, um, you know he wasn't an owner of big estates, castles, factories, apartments, and stuff like that. Um, so that's, but I just want to make the, you know, the translation of the whole thing. So this was, yeah. So, I mean, there was reparations. This was not the German reparation of, after World War II. This was the French State getting around very, very late, and still hasn't finished. I mean the French State, I think, has behaved very badly in this. There are all kinds of, you may read about corruption and parrot, you know, some apartment or another that some minister is given to live with. And it turns out that he shouldn't have that. Where they, how'd they get that apartment? Well, we're discovering many of those apartments were taken over from Jews, who were, who were refugees. And the state kept them, and nobody's ever pursued them, and said - where'd that come from? How did you get that apartment? So, I think France has been, uh, slow. And I have relatives who live there, and, you know, they feel anxious about - an answer to your question - the antisemitism there is palpable and they feel it. Yes, Ellie?

1:20:08 Speaker 8: Yeah, so, so Peter. First of all, I'm in awe of your ability to intersperse the personal and the social science here. Let me try a personal question. You can tell me to shut up.

1:20:19 Peter Gourevitch: I never tell you to shut up.

1:20:24 Speaker 8: If I think - Peter was a colleague - if I think of your intellectual trajectory, your interest in European politics, and history, institutions, democracy: can I understand you without understanding this story? How much of your intellectual motivation comes from this?

1:20:44 Peter Gourevitch: I think a lot of it. You know, when I go back and, uh, you know Celia and I talk, I've talked a lot about why am I doing this. You know, when I go back and, and I think a lot of it. I think my interest in European politics and history, all these things is very deeply affected by my family's experience. The difference is, I've never actually tried to study that, right? I, my parents are refugees from the breakup of Russia, and all that. I did not become a Russian expert. I didn't want to become a Russian expert. I did not want to have to sit there and think about were my grandparents making the right decision about who they backed. You know, I, that was, how can I do that? So I didn't study that, and, and then, but my work on Europe clearly, is very clear. From the very first political science courses I ever took in college, that I was very fascinated by the collapse of Germany, the failures of the French Republic, the success more, the comparable success of British Democracy, the origin of democracy. All these things were very fascinating to me, and that clearly is thinking about my family experience. So I was a little odd in my family. I was the one, that would not surprise you know that I was the one in my family who kept asking people to tell me that story again, and, um, would find another relative, and ask for another, tell another story, and what about this, and that kind of thing. And, and, uh, my older brother didn't have quite the same intensity of interest, and other people, other people did. But I'm the only one who went down that - my father was a microbiologist. My mother had been studying chemistry. My brother became a physicist. So what am I, a political scientist? But, but politics was another way, you could say, it's the family business, right? That's all they did. That's

all, in fact, that's all they ever talked about, was, was, uh, was politics. So, um, so in that sense they all fit together, and it was not actually, quite late in life that it suddenly it occurred to me that, you know, one of the books that I'm most well known for is about the impact of the great depression of the late 1880s and [18]90s upon, upon the world. And one of the big things about that is the grain trade was a very important part of that. Suddenly the world was flooded with cheap grain from the Ukraine, from Ukraine - not the Ukraine - from Ukraine, the Midwest, Canada, these places. Well, suddenly, I realized, my god, that's what my grandfather. My great-grandfather was a grain merchant. That's what he was doing. I've been studying without ever realizing, and I, part of my work is studying what my grandfather's impact upon the world was by buying and selling grain in Odessa. Odessa was like Chicago. My grandfather - great grandfather - was exactly as if you would find somebody working in the Chicago Board of Trade who was dealing with futures, uh, bushels of grain grown in, in Nebraska or North Dakota. That's exactly what my great-grandfather was doing, and that global market changed the world. And that's what my book was about. Without quite realizing it, without telling a family story. But yes, I think that they're all connected. I think there is a connection, but I've never tried to tell it this way.

1:23:44 Speaker 9: Excuse me. You had animosity...

1:23:49 Peter Gourevitch: Maybe you should...You talked already so...

1:23:50 Speaker 10: We're friends.

1:23:52 Peter Gourevitch: You're friends? Okay, you can defer to each other. I'll let you decide. Fight it out between the two of you and let me know who wins.

- 1:23:58 Speaker 9: You said you had animosity with the Holocaust Museum and I just wanted to know if you shook hands and made up.
- 1:24:04 Peter Gourevitch: Oh yes, animosity is too strong a story, and, and I found myself in disagreement, in disagreement with them. And I found it very fascinating, uh, because it in a way helps me tell a story. The tension between the Holocaust Museum people and the Labor Archive people in New York I thought was very illustrative of the point I'm trying to make. The Holocaust Museum people are understandably focused on the death and destruction of Jews, and the Labor people are interested in the labor movement. And so, they are interested - and many of them are Jewish, but that's in the point - they're interested in the role. What role did labor play in saving people? Well, they played some role. So these people have different points of view. And, as I say, the Holocaust Museum people are not wrong in being critical of Breckinridge Long and the U.S. State Department and of its behavior. They're, that, they were wrong only in neglecting a complexity of the story. And I, I would fault them for that. That their exhibit did not really, doesn't show it, and it's hard to find it if you're there. Yes, I'm sorry.
- 1:25:20 Speaker 10: I'm touched by this statement - the disregard for life and rights. And we - oh, I'm sorry - and we are talking about atrocities in the past, Armenia, Roma, Guatemala, Rwanda. Simplistically, what do we do as ordinary people to build a regard for life and rights in the future?
- 1:25:45 Peter Gourevitch: Well, I think I would say that all we, you know, that's a both a mini and a macro story. You know, as individuals what can we do is support those organizations that work for things like that, that support it. And, uh, and, and help people who do things who... There are lots of organizations out there trying to do work like that, trying to defend human rights, or there's Amnesty International. There are

organizations. There's Human Rights Watch. There's lots of organizations out there who do that. There are groups that specialize in, in different parts of the world, and there are ways that we can, I mean, are you going to change the world working with one of these organizations? Probably not, but.

1:26:22 Speaker 10: Hopefully. I'm thinking more of within our own community, within our own families, within our own education system, to build a sensitivity towards it.

1:26:31 Peter Gourevitch: Well again, by doing this, I think by helping those organizations at the local level - they all have local chapters and I think they're all desperate for volunteers actually, or they're desperate for people who would articulate and, and talk about, you know, Amnesty International what do they do, and how - they'd love to have people who will go around the schools, or young people, and talk about that, and narrate, and communicate. They're based, those are organizations based entirely on volunteers, and so there are organizations that specialize in doing things like that. And helping one of those is one way, one modest way, but something that you as a person can actually do. And then if they're regions of the world that you care about, then you can um get involved with that. There was an election recently in San Salvador where the good guys barely won, and the bad guys are trying to destroy the country and throw them out. I got an email today from something that claimed that was a Latin American rights, election rights monitor and I read it. I was kind of shocked, so I sent it to Celia's daughter, who works in El Salvador. We had a correspondence today. Who are these people? [Unclear] this was some right-wing organization pretending it was for democracy. It's not because its story was very different from even the *New York Times* and the *Reuters* that was presenting a completely different view of what had actually happened in El Salvador. So in a way, if there's a particular country or

region that you care about one thing you can do is get involved in the organizations who work on that country or region.

1:28:08 Speaker 11: First of all I want to really thank you. I want to really, hi my name is Gail. I really want to thank you for your wonderful story. I think that one of the best ways to understand history is through family experiences, and the fact that you supported it with facts and documentation was very moving. In my own family, my grandfather spoke five languages, and he lived in Belgium, and he came after you from Hungary, and he warned all his friends. He says, get out and they didn't listen to him. But what happened was, he was able to get a visa from his father who was a rabbi in New York. And he got out, and then a few months later the house that was right across the street was, they saw trucks moving in and out. And it turned out that became the headquarters for all the ammunition when they took over the city that he left from in Belgium. Um but another question that I would like to ask you is that I'm very moved by the fact that you have a different view of the Holocaust based on the fact that it was destruction of democracy that led to the eventual killing of the Jews because there was nobody there to defend democracy. And last night my husband and I saw the Monuments Men, and, um, you know I really started learning much more over the last few months about the Monuments Men. If people don't know, this is the, there were 350 people in 13 countries that vowed to save the cultural, tremendous artwork, and culture in books that was stolen from Jews and other people. And what I was really struck and horrified by, was that Hitler had a Nero Decree, that if he was killed, he wanted all of the priceless art and - of our history of the civilization that was really an expression of the human spirit - to be destroyed. And I'd like to ask you what you feel about that. And also, about, you know, uh, ways, you know, your view of that? And

how that might tie in with destruction of democracy, and how we can prevent that from, that from happening.

1:30:18 Peter Gourevitch: Well, uh, well again I, actually I, I haven't seen the movie. And I, you liked it? You recommend going and seeing it?

1:30:24 Speaker 11: I think that it's useful to understand how he portrays the men, I think that perhaps it could have been much better done, personally. But I feel that if you go on the Monuments Men Foundation, there is a particular man who, I think, is one of the only survivors, and he is a Jewish survivor, and he's portrayed in there.

1:30:48 Peter Gourevitch: Well it's, I, I'm eager to see the movie. It is a fascinating story, and I think of course the, the, uh, the destruction of culture by the Nazis, I mean, the Nazis aside. They killed millions of Jews and they destroyed a good part of our civilization. All those cities of Europe in ruins? Why did all that happen? And all the monuments, and buildings, and the paintings, I mean, those are the found paintings and cultural things. There are lots of them we will never find, the things that are lost. They're whole communities that don't exist anymore, towns, villages, people. So there's a colossal cultural destruction. So I think that, you know, saving democracy is a part of saving culture and that kind of thing. At least, democracy when it's in good shape.

1:31:34 Helen White: Hello. I'm Helen White. I come from a family - my parents on both sides - everybody got out. But I have to say that, um, immigration policy. I mean one of the things that the Holocaust Museum in Washington - I'm a documentary producer and researcher - and I've spent years working in different materials, especially at the National Archives, Library of Congress, and some at the Holocaust Museum. And I think that the Holocaust Museum brought to light people that were turned away, those shifts.



- 1:32:10 Peter Gourevitch: Absolutely.
- 1:32:11 Helen White: And I think that the immigration policy in the United States is very complicated. I mean, why yesterday on the border we had children, you know, trying to bring their parents, people that have been split up. We have refugee children trying to come up from Central America, five, seven years old alone. The question is, who is the U.S. turning away now and under what circumstance because of this bizarre immigration policy now? And what do you think? I mean we're talking about, what can you do in San Diego? Uh, we have kids in lockup now, seven and ten years old, that are being questioned without any family members for months left here.
- 1:32:48 Peter Gourevitch: Yeah that's terrible.
- 1:32:49 Helen White: I mean this is like critical human rights issues and whatever organizations you're with, I would encourage people - if you want to get active - you got to do something for the kids and the families because this is horrendous, horrendous.
- 1:32:58 Peter Gourevitch: Yeah, that's an important point.
- 1:33:05 Speaker 12: Also thank you very much for your speech, and I like your comment about doing something, like helping. Maybe you can't personally do something, but you can help, get involved with an organization like Amnesty International. Um, there's, I think it's just finding what motivates you. So you could work with an orphanage in Mexico. It's right across the border. If that's your passion, go. You know, help my students. I'm a teacher and all my students are English language learners. And we raised \$1,500 to send to Afghanistan when we saw the women there being, acid thrown in their face. And, you know, the honor of killing. So, it's whatever moves you.

- 1:33:50 Peter Gourevitch: No, I think that's true.
- 1:33:52 Speaker 12: You can, you can do something, you know, uh, you, you, I also go to USD [University of San Diego] and they have a Peace and Justice. It's Joan Kroc Peace and Justice. There's many, many panel speakers that off, you know, they're from Africa trying to stop the cutting of the clitoris. Whatever motivates you, get involved and help out whatever way you can.
- 1:34:16 Peter Gourevitch: I think those last two points are kind of important points. Okay, I think we're, thank you very much, everybody.
- 1:34:32 Susanne Hillman: Thank you very much for coming. Um, it's been wonderful to see such a big and varied audience. Uh, please take the flier for our next event, which will be on a Tuesday. That's not a typo. It's going to be a Tuesday, April 8th. Thank you and have a good night.