

EI-221

BEZALEL PRUSSAK

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RESIDENCES:

- **PALESTINE: JERASULEM**
- **US: NY, NY; DETROIT, MI; MIAMI, FI; LOS ANGELES, CA.**

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Wednesday, September 30, 1992. Janet Levine and I are both here up in the Oral History Recording Studio with Mr. Bezalel Prussak.

PRUSSAK: Right.

SIGRIST: Who came from Palestine in 1947 when he was seventeen years old and was detained here at Ellis Island for two weeks at that time. Good afternoon, Mr. Prussak. Let me start by asking you your birth date, please.

PRUSSAK: 16 December 1929.

SIGRIST: And where, sir, were you born?

PRUSSAK: In Jerusalem, in Israel. In Palestine, I mean.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about what Jerusalem looked like in the '20s? Just give me a flavor of what the city was like when you were a child.

PRUSSAK: We lived together with Arabs all the life. Many Arabs with my father was partner. We live like brothers. And my mother live in the old, old city in Jerusalem. She was born there -- *imonu moder* [our precious mother] -- so we know the language very well. Because the neighborhood was together. If we have an apartment, we are sharing the same kitchen. So one to the other, we know how to cook the same foods. And we were -- up till today I have very good friend. And we live good, and we visit each other. Even I'm sixty-three, sixty-four and I still go to them because I have a feeling to them, and they have feeling to me.

SIGRIST: So that was a very warm relationship --

PRUSSAK: Beautiful.

SIGRIST: --- between the Arabs and the Jews.

PRUSSAK: I have a symbol money from the Palestine -- that we used the same money, the British, the Arabs and the Jewish. We paid, like the dollars here, like the whole -- the whole world. So in Israel -- in Palestine -- we -- we used the same money, even. Till the war came.

SIGRIST: So as a child you have no recollection of any kind of animosity between the two groups.

PRUSSAK: Any what?

SIGRIST: Any kind of a conflict between the Arabs and the Jews?

PRUSSAK: No, obviously I don't hate them. They are like friends of mine. And whatever belonged to them belonged to them, I tell you the truth. That's what I feel. The war is the war, but I was registered to go to Korea when I was in America in '49. They want me to go to Korea. I say, "Why should I fight? I don't like to fight." (he laughs) But--

SIGRIST: Talk a little bit about growing up in Jerusalem as a child.

PRUSSAK: Yes.

SIGRIST: Tell us about your house. What was your house like?

PRUSSAK: Most all the people, they build their own home, small houses on the mountains. In 1923 they start to build like condos, you know -- seven, eight families -- like a condo, three, four floor high. And we were mixing together. If somebody can't afford to live in a new apartment -- he can be Jewish or Arab -- we live the same, in the same floor. And we work every job, every job what was in the street and public work in the government. Everything was together. There was no different. Not at all.

LEVINE: Did you have common rooms? You mentioned you would use the same kitchen?

PRUSSAK: Yes, I did.

LEVINE: How was that set up?

PRUSSAK: Let's say we have an apartment of three, four rooms and a family came and they rent one room. So we rent them one room in the apartment of three or four rooms, so they have to use the same kitchen. So they have their own side. My mother and my friend mother, Arab, they're sitting in the same kitchen because it wa- was friendly, like family. That was the good, good, good time, believe me. Up till today I feel it, with all the wars, I still feel I am their friend.

SIGRIST: How many people lived in your apartment, your condo?

PRUSSAK: We used to sleep three or four people in one room. We took a one bed. We slide the other bed under, and the third one under the first one in the bed. At night time -- in the day time we close it, and a happy family.

SIGRIST: What was your dad's name?

PRUSSAK: Zeev.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

PRUSSAK: Z-E-E-V.

SIGRIST: And what did he do for a living?

PRUSSAK: He was in construction, a general contractor.

SIGRIST: Talk a little bit about your dad. What was his personality like?

PRUSSAK: His personality was involved with the high people in the city, in Jerusalem. He was very close with the mayor. If somebody got problems he sit like a

judge. He wasn't a judge, but he -- so fa-- the problem of the people, he used to be like a judge.

SIGRIST: Like a moderator.

PRUSSAK: Yes, exactly. And, you know, he was very involved with the public. He loved it. And he was the famous one because he started -- he started the construction for the condos, the first one in Jerusalem. Because nobody had money to build -- sat in their house or office building. So he was from the first people who they started to do all things. Even he have his own bank. Because those times one loan the other one money, no interest, no nothing, you know -- just to make the weekend or to make the month. That was the time. And I remember when I was young.

SIGRIST: So he was a very public person.

PRUSSAK: Very public. 80 percent of his life he gave to the public in Jerusalem, Mr. -- Mr. Prussack.

LEVINE: Were you like him, as a child?

PRUSSAK: Very much.

LEVINE: Describe yourself as a child, when you were in Jerusalem.

PRUSSAK: I got identical, identical twin brother. If he sit next to me now, you wouldn't know the difference. Only the two fingers that I got in the work in the buildings. Everybody say, "Say it's from the war." I say, "I'm not going to lie. Why should I lie? This is the -- from the cement machine."
(they laugh) And I had a beautiful life, my twin brother, I had two sister and another little brother. When I came back from America, I asked,

"Where is my brother?" Because I never saw him born, and he was a few years already.

SIGRIST: Describe yourself as a child. What were you interested in as a child?

PRUSSAK: (he sighs) You give me a question, and I tell you the truth. Just happiness I was looking, to be happy.

SIGRIST: I see. What was your mom's name?

PRUSSAK: Odena.

SIGRIST: And her maiden name?

PRUSSAK: It is one name, Shoshanna, in Hebrew, but it's a Rose, it's a Rose in Hebrew, to translate to English. She was born in the old city, so her mother, my grandmother.

SIGRIST: And her maiden name was . . .

PRUSSAK: Shoshanna.

SIGRIST: What was her first name?

PRUSSAK: No, no first, no made the first name. Only one name.

SIGRIST: She had no maiden name.

PRUSSAK: My twin brother got two names. I got one name, like you asking me, maiden name. He have two names. Because we give names of people who die from the family.

LEVINE: Yes.

PRUSSAK: So to follow the names, so you know, he was Abraham, Jacob, Isaac, since the Bible. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: What was your mom like as a person?

PRUSSAK: What do you ask?

SIGRIST: What was your mom like as a person? What was her personality?

PRUSSAK: I think I took from my mother everything, because she was beautiful. (sobs) I'm sorry.

SIGRIST: It's okay. Take your time.

PRUSSAK: (he pauses) (clears throat) She like everybody, that my mother was. She pass away few years ago. She was in America, too, because she have two sisters in Michigan. They came here very early, when they was young -- sixteen, fifteen. They was working in factories making ties and suits and tailoring. And all their life in Michigan, Detroit.

SIGRIST: Did your mother work in Jerusalem at all? Did she have a job outside of the family?

PRUSSAK: Yes.

SIGRIST: What did she ?

PRUSSAK: She was working in a hospital; but not for a salary, volunteer. All her life.

Special with kids, and special with the blind people. She used to – to cut the nails, to shave.

SIGRIST: Did Jerusalem have a large hospital? Was it a very modern city sixty-five years ago?

PRUSSAK: (he coughs) No. Only in the whole city it was, they call it *Misgav Ledakh*, the name of the hospital. And her father, my grandfather, from my mother's side, he was out working in the operation ward. He wasn't a doctor. But the doctor was from Vienna, from Europe, and he was helping him. So through the practice he become like a doctor in the – in the city, but with no papers. And I got few operations that he make me. It's still there, the marks. (he laughs) Sixty-three years ago, sixty years ago.

LEVINE: What was his name?

PRUSSAK: My --

LEVINE: Your grandfather?

PRUSSAK: Was name in Hebrew, *Arye*, but his in -- in English is Lion.

SIGRIST: How do you spell the Hebrew name?

PRUSSAK: H-A-R-Y-E.

LEVINE: Now, did he have a last name?

PRUSSAK: Subar. S-U-B—oh, it was a long name, like Subardovitsky. But they make it short -- Subar, S-U-B-A-R.

SIGRIST: What did your grandfather look like?

PRUSSAK: He have a small little beard. I remember I used to take every afternoon the food my mother cook for him and I took it on the plate, you know. There used to be three plates and the spoon on that side, the knife on that side to hold the plate. And I gave it to him. And he put me money every day like, you know, five cents. Every coin he put me on the side. The end of the month, I used to collect it. (he laughs) He was -- But everybody come to his home. If they have a cold, you know, he used to *schmear* inside with the red -- thing that he knows from the hospital. But he never took money from nobody. He was something, yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember any experiences with your grandfather?

PRUSSAK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Like when you think back when you were a little boy, things that happened with him?

PRUSSAK: Every day I went to -- with him to the synagogue. When I brought him the food, three, four o'clock afternoon, so he say, "You wait here another hour. We going to pray." He was religious. So I pray with him, and I enjoyed it, because always I was so on it with people. A synagogue, what like I say, there is not a pray without somebody come to pray. So it's empty. So when the people there, you know, the walls and the glasses are shaking from yelling and praying so from the heart. Not phony. Real, real mature people. And those people, they are good, they can never harm you -- religious people. They just thinking about God and how to serve God, so that's good. If anyone, I think, if he believes in a God, he can be Russian, American, Muslim, Israeli, whatever. He believe in God, is something good in him.

LEVINE: Was your family very religious, your whole family?

PRUSSAK: No, no. My mother's side wasn't religious. My father, he was going to the synagogue every Saturday, and wear -- we have *tefillin* [phylacteries] you call it. What you put in you, the black leather, you know. He used to put it every day. My mother told me, "If you pray, your day will be -- will go straight. Nobody lie to you, nobody fix you, you don't lie to people." That's five minute a day pray in the morning, all your day the best. It's like a -- an accession [sic] , you know. The mind, very quiet.

SIGRIST: Was the temple near where you lived?

PRUSSAK: Yes, but many temples.

SIGRIST: Many temples.

PRUSSAK: If you be in the old city, you see, you have about a thousand church -- Armenian people -- from all around the world -- the Arabs, Muslim -- you got the Gentiles. About a thousand church you have in the whole city. It was just ring-- you hear the bells day and night. You know from a church, which church. The best time in the world, from four in the morning till five. Quiet, quiet, you see the mountains and you hear the bells, "Come to pray." Not the Jewish. From the -- all the churches around the Old City. You have to be there to understand it, not just by talking.

SIGRIST: An amazing, sort of ethnic mix. Lots of people from lots of different countries and lots of different backgrounds.

PRUSSAK: That's what I call United Nations.

SIGRIST: Yes. (he laughs)

PRUSSAK: Not that building: United Nation. United Nation, the people is there from all around the world -- from all around the world. Even black people you see in the old city. They believe in God. They come in just for a wish or something. They believe in the Jordan water. They take with them in the bottle water to New York. It's like a holy water. So, you see, people believe the -- the God somewhere in the sky. I don't know where. Maybe in the seventh sky, they say. In the first sky nobody ca-- everybody goes. But the seventh, this is the -- the -- the few people. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Was religion part of school life when you were growing up?

PRUSSAK: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Talk about school life and how it -- the relationship --

PRUSSAK: In the morning, the -- the whole class praying, singing together from the Bible, from -- from the --. And Friday night, everybody home praying, sitting the whole family together. *Kidush* -- it's, you know, you take wine, and you. Everything -- but this, when I was young, you have to pray. If you eat the apple, you wash your hands before you going to eat. You make a wish, a *brukha*. It's mean blessing. In any little things, in each food you have a blessing for this fruit, for this bread, for the meat, for fish. And then when you finish to eat, you need three people at least to -- to --to make a pray, "Thanks God that You give us the food, and good food." And if somebody is religious, God will never leave him in life, even his son -- the son -- God never leave him. There so many things, it's too deep. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: So even though your family may not have been a religious family, religion

really is very much a part of your life.

PRUSSAK: Yes. You feel it in Jerusalem in the air. You feel it in the air. Tel Aviv is different. Different people, they don't give a damn. They don't care, they just live for the moment. In Jerusalem there is other places on the mountains. People are more, more mature. They – they – they -- they talk with God. You feel it in the air. What shall I tell you? And many Christian, when they coming there, I take them to Nazareth. I want to please them, you know. I say, "You close your pocket. I take you to the good places." And they coming from all around the world. It's amazing, I'm telling you. It's something, if you did the Wailing Wall. You see how people are kissing the stones, and they-- they're so fanatic, it's something, you want to cry when you see it. That's it.

SIGRIST: What kind of things did you learn in school? What did they teach you? What kind of classes did you have?

PRUSSAK: I tell you something. I never study. I never, maybe it's not good for the-- . I never finish public school. Never finish high school. I wa—I was finishing about six, seven classes. The education in Israel is very high, high. Because, first of all, in those time it didn't cost you money, only whatever you can give. They didn't press on you, like a salary, you have to pay for this. And then the government make the people have to go to school, so it was free, at public and high school. I think -- I don't know the law, but up till today what I know -- that everybody must go to school, and in Israel, they are educated very good.

SIGRIST: So instead of going to school as a child, what did you do?

PRUSSAK: I start working in building when I was fourteen. You know, I felt like a painter when he finish a – a picture. I feel like I'm create something. I .

follow my father. Whatever he did, I want to be like him. So I have a big fight with him. Even he was rich man and he wants me to go to school, I didn't want. I didn't feel like. That's the truth. So I become, myself, when I was twenty-three I was a general contractor. I was -- myself. Even in the state, when I came -- in Michigan -- I build a few [not understood], you know, with bricks. I saw a sign when I was seventeen. I went to build, in Michigan, the university. I was a bricklayer there, and they didn't believe me. I looked like fourteen, but already I was working like a bricklayer. Seventeen. I didn't have a school to go to study this.

SIGRIST: Were there a lot of young males in Jerusalem in that same situation who opted to work rather than go to school?

PRUSSAK: They left. (he laughs) All my friends. (he laughs) In those time, sixty years ago, fifty years ago.

SIGRIST: Well, and that would have been about the time of World War Two.

PRUSSAK: It was also many families couldn't afford it. They need the children to bring money home. So they went out to work, and the parents using the money.

LEVINE: Well, it sounds as though your family was pretty well-off --

PRUSSAK: Yes. My family --

LEVINE: -- compared with most.

PRUSSAK: Because they -- they was already in a good shape. We have our own car, our own chauffeur. My father was somebody. (he laughs) But, look, not always. Sometimes you losing your money, you lose everything. But in

that time when I was a child, I got my best.

LEVINE: What did you do for entertainment? What did your family do for entertainment when you were a child?

PRUSSAK: A lot of people, I remember, came to our home by dozens, and my mother was cooking for everybody. Now, they become so famous in Jerusalem. If you want to go to history, I can give you. It's up to you. You want to listen? My uncle was a Lithuanian, working in a bank. The British didn't allow the Jewish people to come to Israel, only if they can show that they have five hundred pounds in the pocket to come over. You know, not to be on the back of them, to come with money so they know they will use, do business. My uncle, the brother of my father, was working in a bank in Lithuania.

LEVINE: This is in 1920?

PRUSSAK: Even before. So, in the '20, '29 -- before the second war, even -- and special after the second war. So he gave the family a check of five hundred dollar. So with this five hundred dollar, I mean, pound; when they came over to the port to Haifa, they showed and it was like a visa. They say, "Okay, go in." Now, the same check, they send it back in mail to the bank. So another family used the same check with the five hundred dollar, pound. So the -- another family came. So, like you're smuggling people to Israel in a nice way, logical. With five hundred pounds, but it's only nobody cash it -- the check.

So it was coming and going, coming and going -- many, many. So my mother home become so -- because everybody came straight to us. So the first two -- three months till they settled down, they were sleeping in our home, they was eating in our home. They used to put me in the

bathroom, to sleep in the bathroom and to give my bed. My twin brother sleep on the chairs from the around the table. We make from this a bed. And so, and so, and so. So everybody remember my family, because they can't afford it, though they had money. And my father was a builder, and he helped everybody, everybody. They still call him Mr. Prussack. They don't call him Prussack. Everybody in the street, "Mr. Prussack." They honor him. He was a great man.

LEVINE: Where did your family come from before they were in Israel?

PRUSSAK: Lithuania, Lithuania.

LEVINE: And had your mother and father come from Lithuania?

PRUSSAK: My mother was born in Israel. My father and his father, they came from Lithuania. First they came to America in 1906, my grandfather. He was working on Brooklyn Bridge. After five years, he came back to Lithuania, and he had a shop in the village, he sell chicken. And he used to cut, you know, to take the feather out. Those time you have a partner, a woman. After five years making money, he came back to Lithuania, and my grandmother said, "Oh, no. If you want to leave the place, let's go to Israel." And that's the way they came. And his brother went to Boston, the brother of my grandfather. And he have a family -- daughters, and grandchildren -- in Boston, Massachusetts.

SIGRIST: It's interesting because I, you know, I think that historically we think everyone was coming to America and, indeed, there was a huge migration of people --

PRUSSAK: My grandmother, she say she wants to live in Israel with -- between Jewish. She doesn't want to go to—to -- to America. His brother went to

America, and he even die here, but he was here for many years. They came together in 1906.

LEVINE: Were there any ways that your family kept that were Lithuanian?

PRUSSAK: Yes.

LEVINE: What kinds of things did they --

PRUSSAK: They open up in Jerusalem organization from Lithuanian people. Then the-- my father have their own bank for them. Then everybody came to work for him in building, so he become a bricklayer, a plaster man, a painter, anything. And they was keep going.

SIGRIST: And he would hire Lithuanians?

PRUSSAK: Everybody, everybody. He hire, and he have a problem with the union. The union came to him. I remember. "Mr. Prussack, stop doing it because we have no jobs for our people." He say, "Listen, there is a right party and a left side." You know, like Republic and Democrat. "I'm from that side. What do you want?" One time we was fighting with sticks because it wasn't enough. I'm talking about '43, '44, 1943 and '44. And the union become bigger and bigger in Israel, Palestine. And after the independence, everything becomes so big because lots of immigrants came at one time. But I call it United Nations, from all around the world. Like in America they coming, they coming to Israel.

SIGRIST: Talk about how World War Two affected your life in Palestine.

PRUSSAK: I remember this.

SIGRIST: Talk about that.

PRUSSAK: We didn't have enough food at all. And Israel till '53, we used to buy food with points. The points, you got it from the government, so you can go, uh, point.

SIGRIST: Point.

PRUSSAK: And you have a book, and you have -- let's say you need butter. So they're taking forty-five points, numbers. He cut it, he put it on the side. You need coffee. Only by this. So the black market become -- for food. But in the World War Two, it was -- because almost from Jordan, from Jericho, from Alemain -- the German wants to go in Palestine. So even the British, they start to make places that the tanks wouldn't go through the desert. There was [not understood] on the Second War. that they go, they want to march from Egypt, from Alemain, from Tobruk. All the desert there. They was afraid of going in. So they start to register Israeli Army in the British Army. For us, it was good because we start to -- to develop a army, to know how to shoot, and guns -- what we didn't have even one bullet. So through the British, all those Israelis who got registered to the army, that was in the Second War, they call it *The Brigada* -- brigade. And they -- they were the first army to -- to Israel when the independent day came in 1948.

SIGRIST: Did any of your relatives fight in that army?

PRUSSAK: Yes.

SIGRIST: Or friends?

PRUSSAK: Yes. They -- they -- they went far up till Italy, and that was before the end

of the Second War. But almost they have the uniform and there was shooting and there was fighting against the Hitler in the Second War. But it was the three, the end of the war, the last three months before the end of the war. But we have a Jewish brigade in the British Army with a special badge and uniform, the same thing, everything the same thing. I went myself to register myself to the army, to the British Army, to go against Hitler. But I was too young.

SIGRIST: What about your father?

PRUSSAK: No, my father wasn't there. My -- his brother went there. His brother, the younger brother, went. My father was very busy with the public relationship and making money and a family. Big – big family.

SIGRIST: Did Jerusalem feel very threatened by the potential of the Germans coming in? Would you say, was the city very tense and feeling frightened because of the ---

PRUSSAK: We, as I remember, we was ready for it Because we build in the mountains -- like in the army, you know -- that the tanks go, don't go through. If the, the Italians, they bombed Tel Aviv in '44 -- they bombed Tel Aviv three times. So they sent their own planes to bomb. Many people was killing. They died, in '44.

SIGRIST: As a young boy, well, of course, you were in your teens at that time, was this an exciting time, or was this a frightening time for you? How did you react to ----

PRUSSAK: I wasn't afraid. I was proud of the people who were going to fight. Because I know, I felt that we'll be entering. And in this time I remember so many songs -- new songs came up, brought up, you know, from

people. And we was always giving things to the army. In the Second War -- well, many, many Polish Army came to us for Egypt -- you know, for vacation. So I remember my father took few soldiers for a few days for the, for the vacation they had. They sit in our home, they eat, they sleep. I remember they used to put the pants. They didn't iron it. They put it under the mattress. I came down to have the -- Polish -- Australian was a lot in Jerusalem. The Australian time, they spend money. They used to throw money to the children, and watches. They was very good-nature people, the Australians. But all around, from Canada was a Army. And in Israel they have in the camps, you know -- next to Tel Aviv, around Jerusalem, all around Israel they have camps. And my father was building for the British Army lot of camps. I remember, like a child; he used to take me every day to walk, on a vacation. We have a nice car with a chauffeur. It was atmosphere like you going to win, you don't going to lose. I wasn't afraid at all. Yeah.

END SIDE A, TAPE ONE

BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE ONE

SIGRIST: Tell us a little bit about what happened in your own life after the war.

PRUSSAK: Listen, in the British time, I was in the Underground against the British. This is a story that people doesn't even know about it. We was fighting underground against the British.

SIGRIST: This is after the war was ---

PRUSSAK: No. After the war, too, yeah. And take '43, '44, '45, '46, '47. Those years, they catch lot of -- they called us terrorists, you know. Like we call now the Arabs now, terrorists. So we were like terrorists, too. And, let's face it. And we had to fight, to fight, and they got afraid. Then, in '47 they declare -- the President Truman was, he's the one who vote to be independent in

the United Nations building here in Second, Third Street? Where is United Nations now. And they declare about Israeli '47. So, in '47, all the British went out and we – we start the fight. Because the British was the provocateurs. They told the Arabs, "Look, we're leaving on this special day -- the camp. Go catch it, occupy it. With the guns, with the tanks, with ammunition, everything. From second side, we know it also. So we want to catch those camps from the British, too, because we need the army.

So there, the British who make the *provacazia*, the provocation between us. If not the British, it wasn't even a war. We can settle down, "This is belong to you, this is belong to you." But the British make the fight with you up till today. For nothing! I think today in the world, a barrel of blood, a barrel oil. They fighting just for oil, for – for money. It's impossible to fight so many years. There's so much hateness [sic] for nothing. They losing people, and we're losing people. Sons and a father goes in a war, where you have the bodies? In one war, two generation, from both sides. You understand? It's a pity.

LEVINE: What was the British, what was the motivation of the British to do that, do you think?

PRUSSAK: Maybe they couldn't swallow that they have to – they have to leave the Israel, they have to leave Palestine. And after this, they – they lost all the colonial they have. You know, South Amer-- South Africa, they have places. And they start to go down and down. They have to leave every place. But the – the Israel was the first that they have to leave the place. It's like Ellis Island belongs to you, to America, suddenly someone come and he says, "Listen, this day you have to leave." The same feeling. That's what I think. And that's it. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about what some of your activities were against the British. You know, talk about some of the actual instances that ---

PRUSSAK: Every night they make a curfew, at six o'clock. If they find you in the street, they hit you. They take you to the station. You sleep overnight. Then you have to put a bail to go out. If somebody was blaming of somebody that he's a terrorist or something, they took you out of -- out of Israel to Kenya, to Africa. So you sit in jail for nothing, because someone was pointing on you, he is a terrorist. The British didn't give a damn. They was looking for a slick. Slick it means under -- under the dirt, the -- there -- they had -- we -- we -- the ammunition was. So they used to look for ammunition for, you know, like underground.

SIGRIST: And was there actual bloodshed between the British and ---

PRUSSAK: Yes, a lot. They catch people, they put them in prison and they hang them, they kill them. So we took revenge. Why to kill them? Why to hang people? Because he shot at you? Shoot him back, but no, they have the law. Listen, you have to obey the law. But I think that the underground people, they make Israel early in fifty years. If it was not under-cover people and all these things, I think Israel would become in another fifty years. But this is, they give the push for it.

SIGRIST: Would you say that mostly young men were participating in the underground, or did all sorts of people participate somehow?

PRUSSAK: Not everybody. No, no, no, no. First of all, they have to know who you are, what you are, and what you thinking. When I was fourteen they took me to this place. And I came with the willing to do it. I didn't come for killing, but to defense ([aside] yes say thank you) to defense. And I see what they did to my brothers. So. (he pauses to drink) Even before the

war -- Second War -- Jabutinsky, he was the leader of the underground. Before Begin. Begin was his, Jabutinsky was the teacher of Begin -- the prime minister, that he pass away last year? So even from Europe they started already to have a Jewish independent land. From 1879 they start to talk in Basel. You know, they start to talk for Jewish independence, all the Jewish come together in one place, and --. So the underground really begin in Europe, not in Israel.

SIGRIST: How did your mother feel about your participation in the underground?

PRUSSAK: (he laughs) Listen, maybe I have something special, but when I call my father on the phone, I told him, "Father, in another ten minutes, going to be sirena [sic]." You know, from the British. So he say, "Okay, I know where you are." He know already where I'm going to fight, and I was young, sixteen, you know. I used to call my mother, "Mom, you're going to hear a bomb now in ten minutes." Because I know that we're going to put the bomb. The action was go ahead like everybody. You get killed, you get killed. For the country. That was the whole, up till today. Israel is one army. From a child to old men, to eighty-year-old, like one army. That's what I feel. But they don't want to fight. They're only defending themselves. If they don't want to fight, they can go to Egypt, they can bomb here and there -- everything. But always we go back, we defense. But I think, is beautiful. From a child, one big army. That's what I feel.

LEVINE: How old were you when you left Israel?

PRUSSAK: I was exactly seventeen.

LEVINE: And did you go back then, again?

PRUSSAK: Yeah.

LEVINE: For any length of time?

PRUSSAK: Yes, yes. I came here in '47. They took me from the boat, straight to Ellis Island. I make my papers in the Jerusalem, in the American Embassy in Jerusalem.

SIGRIST: Why did you want to leave Jerusalem to begin with?

PRUSSAK: My father, I tell you the truth. Excuse me. My father told me, "Listen, we're going to have a war now, and I want you alive. You did enough. You were wounded couple places. I want you to go to the sister of my – of your mother in America."

SIGRIST: This is the woman in Michigan.

PRUSSAK: In Michigan, two sister of my mother. "And stay there till the war over. I want you alive." And I respect my father. Whatever he told me, I took my eyes down. I respect him a lot. And I was crying when I left. I was crying when the independence, when they declare independence day in the United Nation, I was in Jerusalem. And I have to go, because of my father. This is the only way that I left, the only way.

LEVINE: Did your brothers and sisters leave also?

PRUSSAK: No, nobody. They come to visit back and forth, but my dream was America. When I was young I used to say, "Next year America, next year America." (he laughs)

LEVINE: Why did --

PRUSSAK: Because my aunt used to come every New Year's, and she came for a month with the boat. You know, the exciting -- a boat, and America, so far away. Everyone is a dream, America. So I wanted to -- to do it. And then when they took me from the boat straight to Ellis Island, in this building. They kept me for two weeks here till they saw my papers, what I am. They investigate me. My language was Yiddish. The translate man, he was from Yiddish to English, to the judge, writing down there in the big hall with the American flag. So they asked me why I came. I came, the true -- I came as student, I want to study. And they asked me, "If you get married, you will stay here? You were in the Communist party once. You were all those things." They gave me a visa for four years to stay. And I went back to Israel.

SIGRIST: What port did you initially leave from?

PRUSSAK: Haifa.

SIGRIST: And what, you came by boat, obviously.

PRUSSAK: By boat.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the boat?

PRUSSAK: Marine Carpe.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

PRUSSAK: Marine Carpe, C-A-R-P-E.

SIGRIST: Oh.

PRUSSAK: Marine Carpe. It was a army, American army boat. So private people took it over, and they call it, this is the name.

SIGRIST: What did you take with you when you left initially?

PRUSSAK: Two suitcases. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: What was in the suitcases?

PRUSSAK: Only clothes, only clothes. Brand-new clothes with my initials.
(he laughs)

LEVINE: Do you remember your thoughts and feelings when you were coming here?

PRUSSAK: It was a dream come true, I tell you the truth, it was a dream. When I saw Manhattan, I didn't – I thought I'm on the moon. Big, big buildings, and three months I was going with my head in the top like this. I didn't believe where I am. Honestly! I was a shock. I'm in building construction, yeah. But to see tremendous things like this, big. And it was -- I felt like I was born here, with all my background. I felt good in America, and I like America. America is good, believe me, up till today. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Tell us about the boat ride. Tell us what the boat ride was like.

PRUSSAK: When I left Israel, it was in the British time. We took people in Egypt. The boat stopped in Egypt. We took about three hundred passenger from Egypt, and from Lebanon. Then we stop in – in Greek. And all the refugees, everybody already we come to America, I feel like a refugee. And I'd say, "Why all the refugee? If you come to America, you want to make a home, why you call yourself a refugee? You are not a refugee.

You are coming to a new land. That's all. Why you feel like this?" And I me-- it was beautiful in the boat. It was two weeks, a big storm. The waves was hitting the boat. I thought they going to make a hole.

And I was sick. I lost ele-- twenty pounds, eleven kilo. I came so skinny. I felt sick. When suddenly on the Hudson River, the immigration came with a small boat. The waves were so high that I saw the little boat is standing outside, you know, with the raincoat, you see, like a detective. They climb on the boat. Marine Corps, the Marine Corps. And from the boat they took us with buses straight to Ellis Island at one o'clock at night. So my first dollar I make to Ellis Island. The guy who sit next to me say, "Let me sit here by the bus. I want to see – beautiful." (they laugh) I said "Give me a dollar. I give you the seat." So this is my first dollar. To Ellis Island. Honest.

SIGRIST: When you, did you know what Ellis Island was?

PRUSSAK: Uh-uh.

SIGRIST: What were you thinking when this was happening?

PRUSSAK: Nothing. They took me. I don't know. They took me away in a line with lots of people from the boat. They say your papers is no good. Okay. We sit here, we have our meal, we sleep in a big room with lot of people. As I remember, it was a little electric I felt. When I wanted to step out of the bed, I felt electric -- like not to leave the bed. Then they count us every day when we went to the kitchen, to the dining room. It was a lovely time. In the big hall they used to give music twice a week, dancing. Then they brought once a week from the next building, they say it's a prison. And they brought the people from the prison, and they was with the people together.

And one ti-- one, one -- twice or once a week they give a movie. The policeman was around us all the time in the hall. I was sitting, I told you I met a girlfriend here from Canada. I'm hugging her. The police came with the stick. "Ahh, ahh, not here." You know. And in my broken English, I didn't understand. Then in the daytime, they gave us two hours to walk around the houses. But it's so frozen, frozen, you know, it's cold. I couldn't make it. It was below, like 14, 15 below zero.

SIGRIST: What month did you arrive in?

PRUSSAK: January. Here is my passport.

SIGRIST: So you arrived at Ellis Island ---

PRUSSAK: January '48.

SIGRIST: ---- in 1948.

PRUSSAK: '48.

SIGRIST: In 1948.

PRUSSAK: The end of '47.

SIGRIST: And you were detained how long?

PRUSSAK: Two weeks.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about who the other people here were. Who were the other people here?

PRUSSAK: From all around the world.

SIGRIST: Do you remember anyone specifically?

PRUSSAK: Yeah. I remember I'm still looking for him. (he laughs) I become very good friend of him in the boat, from Lebanon, an Arabic. And he left Lebanon from his village to be a doctor. So he came to America to be a doctor, and I'm still looking for him.

LEVINE: Did you have contact with him since then?

PRUSSAK: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Where did he settle?

PRUSSAK: He settled in Michigan.

LEVINE: Oh.

PRUSSAK: And we become friends, and for many years I don't hear from him. Maybe he went back to his village, because they sent him to be a doctor. That's why he came to America.

LEVINE: And did he become a doctor?

PRUSSAK: Yes, of course. Look, you are -- America is the opportunity of the world. You make it or you don't make it. This is the true. There are so many -- if you have an order of something, of an item; this order, you make it by the millions. So even you make a cent, you make a million cent. So it's money. No, a big opportunity. I've been through here a lot. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: So now you spent most of your days in the Great Hall.

PRUSSAK: Right. (drinks)

SIGRIST: And what kinds, you mention they showed movies and did music. What else was there for you to do, really?

PRUSSAK: Nothing. We were sitting and waiting on line that the investigation will be with the immigration, and they ask us question. They didn't release us right away. And that's what happened, you know. I fed--. Then the HIAS was here. I came to study like a rabbi. And the religious people, they have HIAS. Just came to me the – the word. You know about it, the HIAS?

SIGRIST: The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

PRUSSAK: Okay, the HIAS. He was wearing a beautiful suit with a beard and everything, and I talked to him, and he sign for me and everything. He took me out. And then the HIAS gave me some money for, to keep alive. You know, for clothes to go to buy in Klein on 14th Street. A piece -- he gave me a note, go buy a suit and a pants and this. Then he gave me seventy-five dollars. I can rent an apartment. I live in 96th and Broadway on the corner there. My family – it used to be ten dollars a week. I wasn't allowed to work, but I went to work. I took out the social security of my name, and I start to work. Then I went to Michigan. I studied there. I went back to Israel.

LEVINE: Did you study English there?

PRUSSAK: No, not English. Yiddish and Hebrew, like in Israel. It didn't help me out

at all because, you know the language. And I then went back to Israel. In '65, I came back again. And from '65, I'm here in United States.

SIGRIST: Let me ask you a few more questions about Ellis Island before we get too off the track. Talk a little bit about, for instance, was there anything at Ellis Island that you saw for the first time that you had never seen before, perhaps a food or something like that, something that was very different, that you had never encountered before. Of course, you came from a rather affluent background.

PRUSSAK: My feeling that time, I felt good because I felt like I'm above. I – I didn't feel like an immigrant. So they investigate me. I did—I wasn't a wise guy, you know, but I felt that it's a routine. It's nothing, like, to be afraid of something. But everything looked tremendous. The buildings, the sky, the water, the boat, the bridges. Everything was beautiful. I liked it.

SIGRIST: Did you have to undergo any kind of medical examinations here?

PRUSSAK: Yes, smallpox. They make me on my hand, you know, a scratch, and they put me the, but I was very sick here. I catch a cold. It was very, very cold. In my time, the Hudson River freeze, and two people from the prisons here run away on the Hudson River. It was in the paper in '48. They was running on the Hudson River. It become ice. And I couldn't talk. Ahhh! They give me penicillin, and after the Second War it was very hard to get those medicines. So I had to, I paid a lot of money, you know, like black market to the doctor. And then the first thing the immigration man, when he came on the boat, he told me, "Listen, in America you need the mind and a gun." The immigration, when he -- like a detective. I'd say, "What you mean?" So I thought maybe he want to see how wise I am, you know, holding a gun. I'd say, "Who needs the gun? For what should you willing a gun? Who is going to shoot you?" I remember that I answer him. I

said, "I don't want to know about guns." And I know already how to – to shoot with a gun. But the first thing he told me, "In America, you want to success, use you brain and a gun." The immigration man, on the way to Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: That's an interesting story. Tell me a little bit about how you felt when the HIAS finally sort of stepped in on your behalf to get you off of the island.

PRUSSAK: I tell you, my family came to take me up from the boat. So I know that I had a family, because I never know them. My father wrote them a letter that the kid will come. But they never know me, I never know them. So I saw two ladies waiting outside and they ask for my name, so I wave to them. So after eight hours, they are waiting for me. They took me to Ellis Island. And I have no connection, no nothing. So I felt that I have a home to come. When the HIAS came, I used them. You want to give me money, give me the money. (he laughs)

LEVINE: That's what I was going to ask you. Why, you didn't really need them.

PRUSSAK: Yes. I'm telling you the truth. Without your telling me, asking me. I felt if he wants to give me, if he's [not understood] me, if he may be -- between the Jewish there is things like this. I never took from nobody, but the HIAS gave me. That's the truth. They gave me clothes, they gave me an apartment for the first few weeks, and money. And I went to work!

SIGRIST: While you were being held at Ellis Island, was there any communication with your aunt in Michigan? Were you allowed to talk to her on the telephone?

PRUSSAK: No, no, no. Nothing, nothing, nothing. Nothing, but nothing. I waited in, on a -- the time, for two weeks. And I know that I didn't do something

wrong, but kind of a feeling you had, you're afraid they send you back where you come from. Because lots of people next to me, they didn't allow them to go to stay in the United States. Go back where you came from. So I felt like this. I am a guy, I don't, whatever, que sera sera. What's happened, happens. If they send me back this time, I go back, I try again. (he laughs) But many people they didn't let-- if they didn't answer the right questions, they didn't allow them to go. They send them back. That's it.

And last night I'm sitting with a woman in a dinner. She was invited to my cousin's, you know, Rosh Hashana is the New Year's by the Jewish. "From where are you?" "I tell you, I'm from Brooklyn, from Park Place." She said, "What you talking?" "I was born there, in this place, on Park Place, 1474." So we start to talk in our memories. So she told me about Ellis Island it's become like a museum, and you can find maybe you name there. So I say, "Look, I feel so to see it back where I was there and sleeping and eating, for memories." So I went to the computer. I find Prussak, and other four names. Maybe they are family. Who knows? I don't know. P-R-U-S-A-K. So the computer show me Isaac and, you know, Jewish names, on the same family. But I don't know, maybe to Ellis Island, the computer, I find my family now. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: Well, we want to make sure to get you on the last boat, but I'd like you to talk a little bit about, just briefly about when you first got here and what this was all like. Because this was, New York was very different from Jerusalem.

PRUSSAK: Yes.

SIGRIST: And I'd like you to talk about getting your first job here and that sort of thing, and what it was like to be an immigrant in this city.

PRUSSAK: Okay. I came here with a hundred fifty dollar, that somebody stole it on the boat, so I was broke at all. I put it under the mattress. I came to my family. I have a place to put my head, but I didn't have petty cash -- have nothing. So I went, I was walking in Coney Island. You know Nathan's, the hot dog, the hamburger? I worked there, in Coney Island. I was a bus boy. I didn't have the language, so I took things. And I got my tip, and people like me.

SIGRIST: What about learning English?

PRUSSAK: Never ever. Only from the street. (he laughs) The true.

SIGRIST: Was that hard? Was there a situation that you remember specifically where your inability to speak was ---

PRUSSAK: In Israel my mother took me a private teacher for English. So the base, I have a little bit. But I never wanted to study. I want to make a life, you know, to be --. So I have the base -- the ABC, you know. I can write. But for me writing I am good, but not by talking or expression myself.

LEVINE: So did you work your way into the building trade here in America?

PRUSSAK: I came already like a bricklayer, and I was working in Michigan in the union for a contractor. And in New York, in Brooklyn, in Utica Avenue, in '48, '49. I came with a trade already, like I am a bricklayer. I make my living good, all the way, all the way. I tell you, America is comfortable. You have your car, you have your apartment, you have everything, if you have a job. With this you work ten day, ten days in a month, let's say for rent. If you want to live higher, you have to work two weeks for the rent. (he laughs) Average. That's the true. I figured it out. And then you

make good life, good food, whatever you want, you have it here.

SIGRIST: How long were you in New York before you went to Michigan?

PRUSSAK: Ten years.

SIGRIST: Oh, a long time. When you first got to New York, what was the hardest thing to get used to?

PRUSSAK: The cold. Frozen -- like I want to die. All my fingers, everything was, I couldn't make it. It was very cold. And summer is too hot, the humidity. You get used to it. But the first thing, when I saw the Hudson River frozen. And when I was going around this building -- two hours, around and around -- I couldn't make it. I went in the building and out. It was warm inside. The building was warm, clean, nice. Everything was nice. It wasn't a prison. It was like ---

LEVINE: A hotel?

PRUSSAK: No. Let's say half-hotel. Lots of private room. (they laugh) But you felt good there. You got music, you had dancing, you see the movie, you see the people, the woman and mens together. It wasn't so bad, but the time, you know. And you was afraid they can send you back. That's it. Like I told you; the HIAS, they signed for me, they took care of me. And then I told him, look. He told me it's a routine, you get it. And then I gave them a charity. When I grow up, I want to return them back. I gave them a charity. Like one time in Detroit, I didn't have a dime, and I have to -- to go to my uncle [not understood] road. I didn't have a dime for -- for the streetcar. I -- I the one who cleaned the floor at night at four in the morning, I asked him, "Do you, man, got a dime?" You know, like they are asking. Then I look for him, I gave him ten dollar the next day, because I

didn't have in the pocket. I remember things like this. I was in Miami for a long time, for two years.

SIGRIST: Did you ever experience any kind of prejudice against you, either because you were Jewish, or because you had come from Israel.

PRUSSAK: Never, ever.

SIGRIST: Once you were here in America?

PRUSSAK: Never, ever. Never. I tell you, you came to a point now that I have a big fight with my principal in Detroit. Okay. Now you came to a point, you remind me. My uncle took me to Detroit to high school, Northern High School. The name is Northern High School, Mrs. Simpson. Look, my memory, it just hit me, Mrs. Simpson. And she, I didn't understand good English, so we have a refugee class. Chinese, from Europe, from all around the world they don't know English. We have a special class in this high school, Northern High School. And Mrs. Simpson is telling us, the word, "You jewing me," the base is coming from Jewish. So I ask her, "What you mean?" She says, "Look, the Jewish people, they like to cheat. If I buy, if you buy from me a suit, for money. When you come home you say – you see – you say the suit, it's not good enough. He was jewing me."

I didn't know this word. And Mrs. Simpson, she told us about it, and the base – the routine of the name jewing, it comes from Jewish. I came to my uncle and I told him that. He was so mad. He said, "Oh, no, that wouldn't pass." She was teaching twenty-eight years in this high school, and he was making a big mess, and they throw her out for this, telling us what this word. That I remember. I was a big scandal.

LEVINE: They threw her out.

PRUSSAK: Yeah, they threw her out. In Michigan, Detroit, in the high school, Northern High School, Mrs. Simpson. Why to teach such a thing? You're jewing me is coming from, what is it, in a refugees class?

SIGRIST: That's a very important story.

PRUSSAK: No, that's happened to me. I'm telling you the truth.

SIGRIST: That's a very important story.

PRUSSAK: With, only with this, when I was young. And after this in the school; I left school, it was April. In April I left. I couldn't stand the school—the teacher. And I say, "Oh, no, I'm not going to school." And I went to work. But if she wasn't bad-- I felt bad after my uncle, what he did. He went to the community and he told them what's happened. We went to the principal of the school, and they throw her -- after twenty-eight years study.

END SIDE B, TAPE ONE

BEGIN SIDE A, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: Did you have any kind of communication with your family after you'd gotten to America? Did you write to them or call them?

PRUSSAK: To Israel?

SIGRIST: (?) in Jerusalem.

PRUSSAK: Of course. What you talking? (he laughs) That time you have to wait three, four days for a phone call. In America, those time, you-- if you want to get a car, you have to wait in list. First they got the hospital a car, or a

teacher, or a rabbi, or somebody, but nobody can walk to a dealer and have a car right away. And this time the telephone, they used to use few people have the same line, I remember. If I pick up the phone, I want to call for my apartment, I hear some other voices. Its mean there they say, "Please, hang up " When it's be free – it's how we was two people on one line. I remember this. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you have any other questions, Janet?

LEVINE: Well, if you look back on your whole life, starting out in Israel and coming here and being here for a good portion of your life, what do you make of it? How do you think about your childhood and your ---

PRUSSAK: Look, America is good, good America, like the Spanish say. "Good America, America good, America good." But I think people supposed to be with their family. Wherever your family is, this is your country. You defends your family, you surrender to your family, you're not alone. Lonely, to be lonely is very bad. You live with the TV. Your face become TV, looking at the stations, bah, bah, bah, you know, with the channels. And all you see, crimes and crimes. Open up a channel. What you see today? Only crimes, day and night, and it's not good. I got blessed in my life a lot in America -- a lot.

LEVINE: What are you proudest of?

PRUSSAK: What?

LEVINE: What are you most proud of that you ---

PRUSSAK: That people create those big buildings. That human being did it, not machine. The Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, all over, the

subway. Everything, the people created. That's what I'm proud of.

SIGRIST: Did you ever have the opportunity to work on a very large building?

PRUSSAK: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about that?

PRUSSAK: I feel good. I tell you why. I live in 68th on Broadway, the Dorchester Tower. My apartment was on the seventeenth floor. I go up to the roof on the forty-fourth floor. I walk up on the bricks. I look down. I see every car's look like a fly to me. And I -- I working on the fan.. Not afraid -- me and God. I feel -- I feel proud, strong. That's the true. I feel people does everything what you see, people does it.

SIGRIST: Was there anything about America that you really didn't like, some aspect that you really --

PRUSSAK: I tell you the true. I live in Los Angeles for fifteen years now. The crime become there unbelievable. Somebody, you don't answer him the question on the street, he take a gun and shoot you. What [not understood]? The gangs, you call them the gangs. In Israel you don't see things like this. Right away they got you in the prison. Here the police afraid from the gang. Everybody cutting, everybody this. And New York is a jungle. It's not -- it's not a place. I wouldn't raise my children, I wouldn't live here. I love Manhattan, it's beautiful. Some places very class, class people. They dress -- they -- very class. You don't find this. But the rest, ninety-nine percent, it's -- I'm afraid. It's a jungle. My friend have a home here in 155 Street. He rent the people the house. This doesn't pay, this one is threatening him, "I kill you, I don't have money. If I kill you I don't have to -- to pay." The people have no manners, no respect to each other.

It's a big jungle – Manhattan.

SIGRIST: This is what the immigration officer meant when he said you need your mind and your gun.

PRUSSAK: You see, even forty-five years back. He told me right away, "Use your head (he laughs) and a gun."

LEVINE: Did you ever have a family of your own?

PRUSSAK: A family?

LEVINE: Did you marry and have children?

PRUSSAK: Of course I have a family, of course. My wife is with me.

LEVINE: What is your wife's name?

PRUSSAK: Dalia, D-A-L-I-A.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

PRUSSAK: She have no maiden name.

LEVINE: And how about your children? What are their names?

PRUSSAK: With her, I don't have children. She is a good mother. She was born to be a mother. But we don't have children. This is a pity. And now, uh, I leave America next week.

LEVINE: You leave?

PRUSSAK: I am leaving America for good.

SIGRIST: Where are you going?

PRUSSAK: Back to Israel. Back to my routine.

SIGRIST: Well, tell us about the family that you still have in Israel?

PRUSSAK: Ah, where? In Israel?

SIGRIST: Yes. Don't you? --

PRUSSAK: I have a twin brother, a little brother, I have uncles and aunts and cousins. The whole *mishpokho* -- the whole family, you know. (he laughs) Of course, I am happy with the family, with close friends.

LEVINE: Is that why you're returning, to be with them?

PRUSSAK: No, no, no, not because of that. I am afraid to live in Los Angeles. I live in The Valley -- they are shooting, robbery. Why should I give my life for someone who needs for dope, money? This is an excuse, he was high. Yesterday on Long Island Beach, a truck cut me, you know. I am on the line, like he is drunk. Because he is drunk I have to die? You don't see it overseas or in Europe. You don't particularly Israel. Let's say Europe, you don't see things like this. Here everybody takes the law to his hand. From experience, I'm telling you. They threaten you. You don't know how to behave. You don't—you couldn't fight for your right. That's what happen. Miami is good. I was in May there -- for two months, beautiful. In '48 I live in Miami also, two years. It's beautiful. The -- the --you are afraid from the law. The people the I-- look, you have shooting, once or

two, but not like in Los Angeles. Last month was two hundred murder. And the police even doesn't talk about it. They don't want to make the people afraid.

LEVINE: And you don't want to live in New York.

PRUSSAK: Look, New York, it's pulling me again and again back. It's beautiful, but it's a jungle, a jungle. I tell you the truth.

SIGRIST: (he laughs) Well, we live there, so --

LEVINE: I know what you're saying. (she laughs)

PRUSSAK: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did any of the family that's in Jerusalem now, your brothers and sisters, did any of them want to come to America to live and just were not able to?

PRUSSAK: No, no. They've been here a couple of times, eight, ten times. Even my brother-in-law is coming tomorrow, from Jerusalem. The one who married to my sister, he come with his daughter. We been here together in '65, '67. He went back. Not particularly. There are many, many Israeli here -- are success, very good, they never go back. They just go to visit Israel because it's different. They couldn't make it in Israel like here. You have to be very rich, very rich to live there what you get here -- for nothing. And there were -- things going higher. Once the apartment was the top -- the top that I pay -- two twenty-five in Dorchester Tower. Today is twenty-four hundred, the same studio apartment. Things go higher and higher. But they make it here. They -- lots of people, they make it here. They like to stay here. And I think if I come, I come to visit. But it's good that Ellis Island not exist any more. Only a museum. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Well, I guess that this is a good place to end. I want to thank you very much, Mr. Prussak.

PRUSSAK: You're welcome.

SIGRIST: For taking some time out and coming sort of on the spur of the moment and chatting with Janet and with me about your experience.

PRUSSAK: Thank you.

SIGRIST: It was a pleasure.

PRUSSAK: America is good, believe me.

LEVINE: Well, it's nice that you got a chance to see Ellis Island.

PRUSSAK: Yes.

LEVINE: Now, again.

PRUSSAK: I like America. Look. Most of my life, I live here. It's not bad for me. Only the childish was in Israel. But I am American citizen, I like America, But it's time to – to be with my family. That's what I feel, that's what I'm doing. Thank you.

LEVINE: Thank you.

SIGRIST: Thank you. This is Paul Sigrist signing off for the National Park Service with Bezalel Prussak and Janet Levine.