



# Phillip Rodney on Wolfgang Rimalower



## Questions & Answers with Timestamps

### 1. In what ways did antisemitism affect Wolfgang's life?

03:01 Unable to go to university as they were closed to Jews, so he went into the family business instead – this wasn't what he wanted and the regret about his education and lack of choice about his career followed him for the rest of his life.

03:25 Underlying feelings of fear in his family and among the Jewish community.

03:37 His parents made the house safe with bars and heavy locks so they would have more time to call the police if the SS or Gestapo arrived.

04:39 He knew Jews were being deported from 1938, fears of his own deportation after a car accident, sent away by his parents and never saw them again.

05:39 Thrown off a train when he admitted he was Jewish as a visa was required for Jewish Germans in Switzerland (not required for non-Jews). He was jailed while an arrangement was negotiated with his aunt and he was able to stay for three months only.

06:52 Tried to live in Italy but was unable to stay there without friends or financial support.

07:17 He was unable to convince authorities to let him stay in Switzerland, they said things weren't as bad as Jews made them out to be. He went to numerous embassies and finally to the British embassy but as he had no relatives or friends in Britain, he was unable to stay. He finally got a visa after being turned away from several other countries.

11:49 Wolfgang lost his parents Febus and Marie in the Holocaust, but never found out exactly what had happened to them after they had been sent to the ghetto in Poland.

12:34 Separated from his brother Harry who went to Brazil, initially. They only met again in 1974.

12:57 Wolfgang's sister Rita escaped on the Kindertransport and came to a family in Glasgow. There was later a sense of tension between them, due to the relationship Rita formed with her adoptive parents.

## **2. What was the effect of Wolfgang's experience on Phillip? How did it affect his life when growing up or as an adult?**

04:13 As a child, Philip remembers his father being very concerned with security in their house, checking the doors obsessively before he went to bed, influenced by his own experiences in Germany.

10:01 His father changed his name to a more British-sounding one when he joined the army. Philip has never felt comfortable with his surname Rodney and has almost nearly changed it back to Rimalower.

12.57 Aware of tension between father and aunt, who had come on the Kindertransport. Wolfgang's younger sister Rita got a place on the Kindertransport and was taken in by a couple from Glasgow. Her relationship with her adoptive parents was very hard for Wolfgang to see, and it became a point of tension between Wolfgang and his sister, which was something that Philip also felt.

13:33 Family structures were changed – Philip only had one grandparent (on his Mother's side) and although his aunt's adoptive father Fred Nettler offered to act as a surrogate grandparent, his father resented it.

14:01 Phillip felt caught between worlds. Aware of the distinctions between his parents' friends – the refugees were more 'European', not so affluent, well read, political.

14:25 As a child, he was aware of a black cloud of depression that affected his father.

14:53 Feels that his father's experience has shaped him. He feels an insecurity, not complacent, fear of failure drives him. But feels there is a legacy of resilience passed down, has a sense of proportion when things go wrong.

### **3. What does Philip think Holocaust Memorial Day means for us today?**

15:21 It is a remembrance of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, commemoration of the deaths of 6 million Jews and millions of others murdered. Reminder of where unchecked persecution led in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur. Reminder of the fragility of civilization and need to stand up against intolerance.

In 2026 this message is still as important as ever, with terrorist attacks against the Jewish community taking place in Manchester and Bondi Beach. The relevance of this goes beyond the Jewish community as antisemitism is a warning sign that society is prepared to scapegoat and marginalize different groups. The Holocaust showed how quickly a cultured and educated society could descend into barbarism. We all have an obligation to stand up and speak out.

### **4. Discuss – why was it so hard for Wolfgang to escape? What could have made things easier?**

## **Glossary**

### **Aryan**

Term used by the Nazis to refer to exclude groups of people from German society, namely Jews, Roma and people of colour. Historically the word was a more neutral term that was manipulated – there is no racial group that can be defined as 'Aryan'.

### **Gestapo**

The German Secret State Police, which was under SS control. The Nazi regime relied on them to maintain and protect their power.

## **Ghetto**

Areas within a city that were used to separate Jews from the rest of the population during World War II. This occurred while Nazi leadership was deciding on the best way to remove Jewish populations.

## **Kindertransport**

From German, meaning 'children's transport'. Programme approved by the British government, allowing the admission of almost 10,000 mostly Jewish child refugees from central Europe following Kristallnacht, until the outbreak of war. Due to immigration restrictions, the children were unaccompanied by parents and had to be sponsored by welfare agencies.

## **Kristallnacht**

From German, meaning 'Night of Broken Glass'. A nationwide action, organised by the Nazis, on the night of 9th-10th November 1938 in which Jewish businesses and homes were attacked and looted, synagogues burned, and 91 people killed. More than 30,000 Jews were held in concentration camps until they agreed to leave Germany. Also called the 'November Pogrom'. Pogrom is a Russian word meaning a violent riot and has historically referred to anti-Jewish violence.

## **SS**

The SS, short for *Schutzstaffel* (German for "Protection Squadron"), was originally formed as Adolf Hitler's personal bodyguard unit. Over time, it grew into one of the most powerful and feared organizations in Nazi Germany. The SS was in charge of protecting Hitler, enforcing Nazi policies, and controlling German secret police and concentration camps. They played a central role in carrying out the Holocaust and other crimes during World War II. The SS acted above the law and was responsible for many acts of violence, discrimination, and terror in the Nazi state.

## **Tefillin**

Black leather boxes containing Hebrew parchment scrolls with leather straps so the wearer can secure one to their head and one to their arm.