

Transcript of the Shoah Interview with Benjamin Muremelstein, Part I

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Muremelstein

Boite 0 (plan 22-26)

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Q. This is a beautiful city, isn't it?

A. Yes, Rome is known for that.

Q. Yes, you think so?

A: Yes, at least I think....I cannot say much about it because I am neither an architect nor an art expert.....

Q: When did you... When did you come to Rome? Since when do you live in Rome?

A: Since 1947

Q: 47?

A: Since 47.

[Second "clap"]

A: I am telling you, I am neither art expert nor artist, but I know that Rome is beautiful.

Q: When did you come here?

A: I came to Rome in 1947...

Q.: 30 years ago.

A: It has been almost 30 years that I have been in Rome.

Q: Yes. And are you happy in Rome?

A: I cannot say that, but I have.... to the extent that you can feel well in exile, yes.

Q: Yes. And you are not afraid... to look back to the past?

A: Well, see, if.....you may not ask me this question. First of all you talked me into it and

now you are asking me. You know [mumbling] it is difficult to look into the past. So, let me get back to something which is removed from our subject, but closer to my specialty, mythology. There is the myth of Orpheus and Euridice.

Q: Orpheus and Euridice.

A: who escaped from the realm of the dead., or let's say they almost escaped, but she looked back and then had to stay there. Sometimes it is good not to look back. On the other hand, you have convinced me that this retrospective is necessary and it is not my way...

Q: This is very good.

A: to recoil. It never was my way to recoil from a possible danger. Let's hope that it will end well.

Q: A possible danger..... there is no danger.

A: Well, let's say not. Let's say that there is nothing about having passed over the grave, that everybody who had to deal with this will perish.

Q: I will not be a danger to you.

A: No, I think you can for me

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Q: This is Rome.

A: Yes, this is Rome.

Q: Beautiful, isn't it?

A: Yes. I mean, Rome does not my confirmation that it is beautiful. On the other hand, I am neither artist nor art connoisseur [both speak together]

A: In 1947

Q: That means already 30 years

A: Almost 30 years.

Q: And are you happy in Rome?

A: I told you something already earlier, but to give you an answer I will say: To the extent that a Jew can be happy in exile, yes.

Q: Yes?

A: Yes.

Q: But it is really unique, remarkable, to look back onto the past here in Rome. Is that not so?

A: Especially here in Rome. The past about which we are talking has its effect all over Europe. Just as – and you know it – a forest which has been destroyed, such a loss has an effect on the whole region, climatically, even away from where it took place. Just like that, the missing of the Jews from the East, the European Jews, has an almost climatic effect on the whole world. If it is Rome or any other city. We can talk about this peacefully in Rome. It... the Jewish life is missing, it is missing all over the world, that which has been destroyed. It is also missing in Rome.

Q: Yes, but how do you feel talking about this past, now?

A: Yes, see, I want to say that looking back is never very pleasant. Not only because of my personal reasons not to look back, but in principle.

Q: In principle?

A: In principle. See, permit me to get back to a myth. You know perhaps that my subject is

mythology, as a science.

Q: Mythology.

A: There is the story of Orpheus and Euridice. She is in the world of the dead, and her husband is able to release her. And shortly before she leaves the world of the dead, she looks back and then she has to stay there. Sometimes looking back is not good. On the other hand....

Q: Do you think that it is dangerous?

A: It could be dangerous. On the other hand, you know that we have talked about it for a long time. You have convinced me that your discussion is important, and for that reason I have decided to do it. On the other hand, I have still..... and I will come back to this. In my public work, my former public activity, I have never let danger hold me back. And I consider our talk today a delayed epilogue to my former work. For this reason, I overcome this sentiment of danger and put myself at your disposal.

Q: Yes. But for thirty years, you have been silent for thirty years.

A: I have not been quite silent. You know, I have.... I have.... The others have talked so much, that.... and let them talk so much.

Q: Others have talked very much?

A: and I have published a book on Theresienstadt in 61.

Q: Eichmann, model ghetto?

A: Eichmann ... Terezin model ghetto of Eichmann, and finally, some years later, I had a chance to publish in the press a summary of my activity as Judenälteste [Jewish Elder] in Theresienstadt. You cannot say that I was silent.

Q: But this is the first time that you speak in front of a camera?

A: This is not the first time in my life that I am in front of a cinema camera. The first time I was filmed was in 44.

Q: In Theresienstadt.

A: In Theresienstadt during the city beautification, as repre...

Q: for the beautification...

A:representative of the Jewish Elders. Well, the city beautification, I did not exactly contribute to it, personally. But during the beautification I was.... there was a film made "Theresienstadt", the session of the Council of Elders, Epstein gave a talk and I was seated next to him and was supposed to listen attentively.

Q: Yes, but this was not a free...

A: What?

Q: This was not a voluntary....

A: No, voluntary it was in Theresienstadt (not). The only time that I was present in the film. Otherwise I have.... [both speak together]

Q: a city.

A: No, no, this is an error. "The Führer is giving the Jews a city" – that is a film from 1942 and this film is called "Theresienstadt" and is from 1944. I never saw this film. Together with Rudolf Kasztner I saw it on April 16, 1945.

Q: Which?

A: What?

Q: Which film?

A: This second film.... and I was very glad about it that the scene in which I appear was taken out.

Q: Taken.....?

A: Was taken out. This scene does not appear. This is simple. First, I did not understand it. I was together with Epstein and Epstein had in the meantime been executed and this film was supposed to be propaganda.

Q: He was the second one.

A: The first, the first, at that time he was the first, at that time.

Q: Yes, but....

A: The second...

Q: Jewish Elder.

A: The second Jewish Elder, yes. It is not possible to make propaganda with a dead Jewish Elder, you understand. For this reason they deleted this film. This scene. And I was deleted. And I evaded this film like the pest, just as an example, the apartment, my apartment was filmed.

Q: Your apartment in Theresienstadt?

A: was filmed in Theresienstadt. During the city beautification the order arrived that the architect of the Prague Opera House should furnish my apartment. This means, if I had until then a trace of comfort in my room, this was now gone

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A: [start unclear]... I will explain this to you. I always come back to my myth, eh... because there is one... there is one in the old...., there is a custom that a slave is promoted to king

and is permitted to reign for one day, and then he is killed. And during that one day he is ridiculed, teased, and then killed. Yes, and this, this myth has been inherited, it came from.... to Rome. The Romans then brought it to the Rhine – there you got the carnival princes.... And Rumkowski, who knew nothing about these things, is in this way, that the Jew is a tragical-comical being. It is said that he had himself called King Chaim, King Chaim...

Q: King Chaim.

A: King Chaim. Krol Chaim, this is Polish for King Chaim. Yes, he ridiculed himself. He knew that the Jewish Elder is something like an object of ridicule, an object of ridicule. He knew that. This is in the mind of the Nazis. With the Jews it is an object of ridicule. [Translation of interpreter and Angelika]

Yes, a character that has been put up, in order to....ridicule, and to subsequently destroy when he does not serve any further purpose. You understand? They have.... the system repeats itself, just as Jesus has been ridiculed by the soldiers. Then the legions, the legions which were in Jerusalem at the crucifixion; it was originally part of the garrison where these customs were traditional. We know this; you understand? Thus, Rumkowski understood it perfectly well that the Jewish Elder in reality a tragic-comical figure is.

Q: But this is very curious because, you are also a myth.

A: Who? I?

Q: Yes, you are also a myth because it was very difficult for me to find you and I am increasingly pleased.....

A: But.....

Q: ... I have found you

A: Well, finding me was not difficult.

[Both speak together]

Q: Many people told me that Muremelstein is dead, Muremelstein has to be very old.

A: I am that, I am that.

Q: No.

A: Me too. [Both together]. I want to tell you something: I have to support those who said that to you. According to the Talmud there is an ancient saying which says: An poor person is just like a dead one. Thus, if you understand it in this manner, you were not wrong.

Q: Well, this is not exactly not exactly so. You are.... You are the last of the Jewish Elders.

A: No, I am the only one who survived, the last one, you might say. How you look at this, if you regard it qualitatively or chronologically... it does not matter.

Q: Yes, you are the last one, there are no others.

A: No.

Q: ... on earth, in all the earth, isn't that so?

A: No, it... I would not know, I would not know. I am the last one. I was... this is also a funny matter, to be the last one. Because when I got to the interrogation in the year of for the first time, at the Pankratz prison in Prague, in 1945, the question I was asked was: why are you living?

Q: Why are you living?

A: “Why are you living?” However, I am a person that is not easily scared and can get rough, and said: “Why are you living?” He then became aware that he cannot surprise me and then he said: “Well, you see, all the Jewish Elders have been murdered, etc.” A whole debate followed. Because I demanded....I said: “I will only answer you when you have gotten my luggage.” My luggage was then fetched, because I said that I will be silent until it is there. And then I took a passport from the International Red Cross out of the luggage, but not a refugee passport, but a diplomatic passport, a passport of a member of the delegation of the International Red Cross in Czechoslovakia which was valid as a crossing permit for all police and army barriers etc. And then I said that I just wanted to show him this so that he could see that I had been incarcerated for six weeks since May 5, 1945 and would have been able to leave any day, that nobody would have been able to hold me. I stayed incarcerated because I wanted to talk to you. As I am talking to you today, I am in custody, but I am, as it were, a voluntary prisoner.... a voluntary prisoner who can leave at any time.

Q: But you did not do that?

A: I did not leave. Well, now we can talk. I can tell you something that I did not tell him, I don't have his intelligence... perhaps I did not think of it at that time. You know, are you familiar with the story of 1001 nights?

Q: Yes.

A: There is the princess and the sultan. The sultan murdered every woman. She survives because she is supposed to tell a fairy tale. And she tells these fairy tales for so long until she survives. I have survived because I was supposed to tell a fairy tale. I was supposed

to tell the fairy tale of the Jewish Paradise of Theresienstadt. You thought at least that I would tell it, that there is a ghetto where Jews live like in paradise, where they live well. And they kept me in order to tell this fairy tale, and finally it got to the point, on April 5, 1945, when the International Red Cross was in Theresienstadt. Then a small mishap occurred. You know... in order to stay with fairy tales, the story of Little Red Riding Hood. The wolf who dons the grandmother's night cap and goes into bed, disguised as grandmother, do you? Then, when an accident happens and the cap slips, then, you know, the beast comes out and one can see, that this is no longer the grandmother. That is about what happened on April 5. And that saved the ghetto, and not me, somehow I did not appear. That is the whole mystery about survival. As I said... I was not able to tell him that, he might possibly not have understood this. I just had to convince him at that time in prison, that I was no spy. I convinced him of that, that just spies were killed.

Q: Yes.

A: That just spies were killed. That just spies were killed. He thought that I was allowed to live as a special reward for some special services. And I had to explain that to him, had to convince him that this was not for some special services. The more services one had performed, the more one was thanked, the higher their interest was to let someone disappear.

Q: You are the only one ...[in English] you will translate for me, I said that Dr. Marmelstein is the only one who is able to testify about the Jewish Elders. [German resumes]

Angelika: You are the only one who can testify about the Jewish Elders.

A: No, no, this is a category which is not the same. That cannot be said, that has no.... let's

say, a doctor can speak of doctors, that is a standardized category, just like an engineer of engineers. Jewish Elder is a category which very much.... which has been shaped depending on the local circumstances. Thus I can....

Q: But the problems....

A: The problems? The problems were... they are also not always... also not always... It was different in Theresienstadt, different in the East. But basically it was the same problem. Basically, the Jewish Elder was always, as can be said, between hammer and anvil, between the Jews and the Germans. And you know, those who are between hammer and anvil can divert many blows. That means that the blow coming from above, does not hit the anvil. But not all blows, one blow from time to time.

Boite 1 (27-29)

Q: Dr. Marmelstein, when did you start working for the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde?

A: Well, you know, working directly for the Kultusgemeinde [Congregation] I only started in 38. Just when it was started...

Q: After the annexation?

A: After the annexation. That.... But that did not occur suddenly, it was a development that led to it. Please let me, please. This was..... I was actually Rabbi in one.... in the 20th congregational district. This was the second largest Jewish district in Vienna. At a certain time a.... a plaque was to be dedicated for front fighters, for fallen front fighters, Jewish ones, from World War I and I was supposed to give the main speech. There I somehow got the idea and said: each people has an unknown soldier. We Jews have twelve thousand unknown soldiers. Those are the twelve thousand German Jews who fell in

World War I, which Goebbels has had removed from the war memorials. That somehow impressed people and the speech was reported on in the press, in Vienna as well as abroad. This is the way I became known with some political accent.

Q: When did that happen?

A: That was about in the year 34 or 35. Then in the year [tape full of noise, talk inaudible]... occurred the famous putsch by the national socialists and Dolfuss was murdered. The congregation arranged for a week of mourning for Dolfuss. This was a strange matter. It was during the summer, people were on vacation [jump in the recording].

There was a representative commemoration in the Temple. I was the only Rabbi in Vienna because all of them were on vacation and nobody had time enough to come back. I don't know if that was the case of if they did not want to get that kind of exposure.. At any rate, the congregation had no choice in the matter and had to resort to the youngest, and I arranged for the memorial commemoration for Dolfuss, gave the speech for Dolfuss. Then came a third event where I was politically involved and the was...

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[part of tape inaudible, then stop and 28 again.]

Q: start.

[Second clap]

when I do this you may....

A: I joined the administration of the Kultusgemeinde [Religious community] in June 1938. This relationship....

Q: This means after the annexation.

A: After the annexation. However, this was the result of developments that started years earlier, in 34, when, on the occasion of a memorial service for fallen front fighters I gave a speech at the Temple in which I served, about the 12000 unknown soldiers and said: each people has an unknown soldier, we Jews have 12000. This are the 12000 German war victims whom Goebbels had removed from the war memorials. This was a compilation which impressed all of these people and which was picked up by the press, not only in Austria but also in the West, and...

Q: Even in Germany.

A: That I don't know. But I do know of France, of England and Poland. Then, there was a second occasion when, after the murder of Federal Chancellor Dolfuss, the congregation considered it appropriate to arrange for a memorial service and found itself in a bind because of the 18 Rabbis who would usually clamor for it to give the main speech in the main synagogue, suddenly none were available. However, the excuse was that it was vacation time.

Q: All the Rabbis were.....

A: It was vacation time, they were away. If it also was a political precaution, I don't dare to say. At any rate, the congregation had to resort to me and I gave a rather anti-Nazi speech. This made for a chain reaction. When Schuschnigg was preparing his permanent constitution, there appeared in a magazine called "Die Schönerer Zukunft" [The Better Future], published by Eugen Kogon. He is known today as a big democrat in Germany. At that time he published a magazine "Die Schönerer Zukunft."

Q: Eugen Kogon, the

A: He wrote about Buchenwald.

Q: Yes.

A: And in this magazine appeared an article by a certain Professor Severin Gril, a priest, a monk, a monk, a from Möglind, about Talmud and Shulchan Aruch to prove that Jews have a special law. The Talmud and Shulchan Aruch are special Jewish laws. And that was supposed to show that in the new constitution in Austria, the Jews should be subject to special laws. Mr. Kogon, who was not yet such a good democrat as he is today, refused to print the response by an old Viennese Rabbi, Dr. Max Grunwald and his response appeared in a rather weak form in a Jewish weekly which was published with the exclusion of the public. This ended this matter. However, in place of a speech, a whole book suddenly appeared, titled "The Talmud and the Shulchan Aruch." At the same time it was said that Prof. Gril, he was a professor at a theological seminary in a Catholic one, was to be named to the Vienna University, and he was supposed to give a speech at the Adult Education Center, always about Talmud and Shulchan Aruch. This was real pogrom propaganda. In response I published a book which was really not a book but a booklet "A few questions to Prof. Gril" I wrote and proved that he is not able to read the Talmud, that he never saw the Talmud, that he is faking, that he has wrong citations, and similar things. The result was that the book was mailed to all representatives, to all ministries, to all university professors, and the result was that the speech at the Urania was cancelled and there was no further talk about the position at the Vienna University. Interestingly, I sent him the book directly and privately from me with a dedication, ironically, for which he thanked me. This were more or less all my qualifications.....

political measures, political steps. But always scientific and pastoral measures. I was suddenly pulled into the political life in the year.... early 38. A consultant was to be appointed in the Vaterländische Front für Jüdische Jugendfragen [Patriotic Front for Jewish Youth Concerns]. The two parties in Vienna were unable to agree on whom to propose. They eventually appeared to agree on me. And I was invited to the Youth Director of the Patriotic Front, Count Turnwald Sesima, with whom I spent a whole afternoon discussing the Jewish problems in Austria, and, as I was leaving, he said: See, here is the Jewish question in the Patriotic Front, and also all the problems dealing with the Jewish Youth Problems. Take this with you and study it so that you will be able to consult. This did not constitute an official appointment, but he let me know that he considered my appointment as given.

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A: After the annexation, the Jewish community was for some time blocked and the most important people taken into custody. During this time there were occasions to present Jewish interests to national socialist offices, and I had the chance to do so. It was shown that the students.....

Q: What do you want.... can you explain this. To say I had the....

A: Yes, I am going to tell you. Professor Christian with whom I had studied and who always encouraged me; of whom, on the other hand, it had always been known... or I knew, that he was a National-Socialist, assumed the direction of the philosophical faculty as temporary dean, and it happened that the Jewish students suddenly were banned from the university. There were cases that people had already passed their exams and only wanted

to graduate in order to get the title– the diploma – or had finished and only had to pass the final exams, and they were no longer admitted. Among them were also my students who came to me for advice. On my own initiative – there was no Jewish organization to which I could turn because there was no Jewish organization – I wrote to Christian and asked him to see me. I thought that he would ask me to his home. He did see me, officially, in the dean's office. And I explained the matter to him and he promised me to have a talk with the vice-chancellor, to speak with other deans, and he really was able to obtain the graduations and final exams.....

Q: He was a Nazi?

A: Yes, yes... he got it through to have graduations and final exams for Jewish.... Jewish students. When the Jewish community was opened, there was a need for two appeals: one appeal to the youth and one appeal – certainly the basic appeal which was also directed at foreign countries, who was supposed to represent the interests of the congregation. This means: it has to be dignified but still convey the message “ we have to leave.” You understand? And as I was at the time in some way being considered for youth matters, I was asked, even begged, to compose the appeal to the youth, which I did. The appeal, the basic appeal, the main appeal, they tried and tried to do it, but nothing came of it. In the end I was given the task to compose this appeal. I wrote it and it was approved even by the censorship, but also found approval from the Jewish point of view. Well, this now was diplomacy, difficult diplomacy. [mumble] It was translated. I saw it translated into Hungarian, but it was also translated into other languages. This led to the first contacts of an administrative type with the Jewish congregation. They assigned to me the writing of

the reports for the authorities. Because reports to the authorities had to be, on the one hand.....

Q: The authorities, what do you mean by authorities?

A: The Nazi authorities. These reports had to be, in my opinion, not servile, but represent the Jewish point of view, but also, at the same time, such that something was accomplished. In this manner, one nice day, I was given the job to deliver a report which had to be written very fast to a Mr. Eichmann. He received me in a staircase, at that time he did not yet have an office, he was "Untersturmführer" which corresponds about to a lieutenant, and his total office consisted of a huge briefcase. He received me in a staircase and we discussed the report while standing in the stairwell. This was the first time I saw Eichmann here in 38, and since then I had for seven years....

Q: When was that?

A: This was in the summer of 38, I.....

Q: Before the war?

A: Long before the war, yes. No, no, this was long before the war. I said, in the summer of 38, war was only in 39 and...

Q: Summer of 38?

A: Summer of 38, yes. And I stayed in contact with him for a full seven years. He soon found out that I could be helpful to him. In particular, he wanted to study emigration. There was nobody in Vienna who knew something about emigration. We had some technicians, emigration technicians, people who had worked in travel agencies and then for shipping lines, and then lost their jobs, and the Jewish community engaged them now

for their emigration department.

Q: Eichmann wanted to study Jewish emigration?

A: No, but in general, emigration and Jewish emigration. He now has.....

Q: Listen, Dr. Murelstein, the central office for Jewish emigration....

A: was only established later. Later. He needed someone who could study the problems for him, who could prepare the literature for him, who read the books for him, and composed a short report. You understand? He did not say what I am telling you now, that he wanted to learn about this, but the matter looked like this: A report arrived, Mr. Obersturmführer or Mr. Untersturmführer Eichmann wants a report about this or that, within two hours. And then I had to find books, put things together, dictate and provide. This was such an act, you know, there are correspondence courses. This was a correspondence course. He studied emigration with me. He said that he is an expert on emigration, sure, he learned it from me. This means, he learned something from me which I myself hardly understood....

Q: And you yourself prepared these reports?

A: I had to prepare them. I learned from it myself. I knew.... when the subject had been proposed in Berlin, I had to read the literature...

Q: For example, can you give an example...

A: No, I cannot [mumble]. He wants to know something about Jewish emigration, about the history of Jewish emigration, about how this was with this.... this emigration to America, the statistics etc. I had to put together the encyclopedia and the books and present it to him. I first had to learn it myself, this was not my area of expertise.

Q: But, excuse me, you took that very seriously, or was it not serious.

A: He was very serious about it....

Q: You, you, you.

A: No, well, for me this was serious. I had to do it. This became very serious. One has to know about this history. But if you have to do this work, even if it is silly, it takes three hours, but he says he wants it in one hour. Well, this is serious. Because he has... he has..

Q: No possibilities?

A: No, everything depended on it, when it had to be delivered.... questions had to be answered. When he.... when he had to reply within one hour, he had to have the report in time, you understand? And it was work. If I took three hours for some job, this became a tragedy.

Q: But you were not able to say that three hours is not enough?

A: Yes. It was said that three hours is not enough, but then there were threats and screaming etc. Then he came to... then he came to Jerusalem.... and said that he was an expert in emigration matters. Certainly, he was an expert. He had learned it. He learned it from me.

Q: But, but was he really an expert, or....

A: No., no. See, he knew something superficially, just as superficially as it was said that Eichmann understood Hebrew. You understand? There are some of the many of the ridiculous....

Q: [unclear]

A: No, among the many ridiculous statements there is a book which claims that I taught him Hebrew. In the book.....

Q: He said that?

A: No, not he, somebody stated that I gave Hebrew lessons to Eichmann.

Q: Correspondence?

A: No, Eichmann himself, when he was arrested, when he was arrested, the.... a book was published now by Har..Issar Harel, who made the arrest of Eichmann, there he reported that Eichmann referred to Baeck as his teacher. I know now that this is also not true. At any rate, I had nothing to do with this Hebrew. I know that at one time he requested some translation from me, and there I saw that he does not know with which hand to get to the text. He had no idea. He superficially got himself some knowledge about emigration in a cultural way. But I was actually his source for a correspondence course for correspondence study, you understand? In this way he has....

Q: You had no chance.....

Boite 2

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A: The relationship with Eichmann was not easy. In my way I pretty much assigned it to the not so serious, in the sense that I spoke my mind. One time, as an example, in Berlin we were together, the three of us, Edelstein, Epstein and I. At that time.... in order to receive information.

Q: Edelstein for the....

A: For Prague, Epstein for Berlin and I for Vienna. We....

Q: When was that?

A: That was sometime in 1940. And when it was done, he said to me: You stay here, I need to talk to you. Somehow, the devil got into me. It did not suit me, because people are

talking: what has Murrelstein to do with Eich...., what did Eichmann say? What did you have to discuss with him? People always had to talk about this. I then said to him simply: You have to excuse me, Mr. Sturmbannführer, I have already bought the air ticket. I thought that Epstein and Edelstein were just about to fall. But he said very quietly: So, we will then... I may be in Vienna on Saturday... I will call for you. That was very simple. Thus, I have... And in this....

Q: You were totally free.

A: and in this manner, totally free. I always have..... have tried to restrain myself at all times. For example, there was the....

Q: Were you not afraid?

A: Fear... I was... you know, if you show that you are afraid, all is lost.

Q: But you were afraid.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes

A: Yes, yes, I was.... I was afraid... God help me, afraid, certainly, in this sense it is necessary to be afraid, because I saw Eichmann on November 10, when he broke into my office, revolver in hand. That was...

Q: November 10, 38?

A: November 10... Kristallnacht [Night of the Broken Glass] November 10, 38. By the way, this is a very important thing because the verdict in the Eichmann trial stressed that there was no proof of his participating in Kristallnacht. And I do not understand that, how they got to that conclusion, because I was awakened at 3 am in the night from December 9 to

10.

Q: November

A: November, excuse me, November.... was awakened by the janitor of the Synagogue Tempelgasse where I was employed at that time – it was the largest synagogue in Vienna, and he told me that he had a visitor, he was unable to tell me more. I immediately got dressed and drove to Seitenstettengasse (?) to the central offices of the Jewish Community [mumble] .. The central offices of the Jewish Community. I was already arrested on the street, led to the Temple, Seitenstettengasse, where I found a team that was eagerly in the process of destructing everything with hammers, axes, they applied them to the furnishing, holy objects. And the commander of all of this was that Mr. Eichmann.

Q: Eichmann was there.

A: He was there, he was the commander. And then....

Q: [unclear]

A: This was... this was a SS special unit. If I ... you... This is a strange coincidence, this is .. an odd coincidence that you are asking about this. Because when I got there I met at that time people who were in battle dress, and I thought: Well, so this is the military. At that time one was still deceived, believing that the army would be an organization to make order. However, in reality this was the SS, the so-called “Verfügungstruppe” [Special Units] of the SS who wore battle dress, not black. This was the first time I saw SS not in black.

Q: And Eichmann was there with a revolver?

A: No, there he was with a crow bar with which he destroyed the furnishings of the Temple.
And after a...

Q: Eichmann himself?

A: Eichmann himself. And after some time I was led away and brought into the apartment of Engel. You have to know that at that time I was only number 3 in the Jewish Community. Engel was number 2. And... Löwenherz was away, in Paris.

Q: Dr. Löwenherz

A: Was in Paris.

Q: He was the head.

A: Yes, he was the head, he was in Paris. And I was brought to him in the apartment and we both had to stay there under guard, one or two hours. Afterwards, each of us was supposed to go to the office, his office. I had just sat down at the desk when Eichmann broke in furiously with a revolver in his hand. I thought: he will shoot now. "Emigration cannot stop. That has to keep going." Really, I thought... I... one had to cry, one had to laugh about the method he will employ for emigration.

Q: Were you.... you were...

A: I sat at the desk, the door across the room was torn open, he came with the revolver at me: "emigration has to continue." Really, to make emigration with this method seemed strange to me. However, he then calmed down and a day later, when Löwenherz returned, he told him a story that he was forced to come to the Jewish Community because otherwise the Jewish Community would have been totally destroyed. In short, he was there in order to protect the building.

Q: He was a protector?

A: He was a protector of the Jewish Community... he made himself out to be a protector of the Jewish Community. You know how it is... if you know that and then read the justification of the decision that there is no proof that Eichmann participated in the action of November 10, it hits you as peculiar. Because, basically, regarding the Eichmann trial: it was not difficult to convict Eichmann, it was not difficult to execute Eichmann. That would even have been possible without a trial. But if you have a trial, it has to be done civilly, it has to be done orderly. And when you then fail, to even omit such important things as November 10.... but if you permit me, I would like to say that November 10 – I deal with these things – I do not agree with the usual opinion. November 10 has nothing at all to do with the attack in Paris by Herschel Grynszpan. No. November 10 is the 20th anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic of Weimar. On November 10, 1918 Philip Scheidemann proclaimed the Weimar Republic, the so-called Jewish Republic. And there are pronouncements by Hitler as well as by Rosenberg which state that on November 10, 1918 the Jews committed treason against Germany and they will pay for it. On November 10, 1938 was the 20th anniversary of the Republic. I even found out that already on November 10, 1937, when there could not even be the idea of Grynszpan and the attack, there was anti-Jewish propaganda. Because that was always the anniversary of the so-called Jewish Republic which is important due to the fact that the story about the murder attack against....

Q: Vom Rath

A: Vom Rath has been misinterpreted in every possible direction; whole novels were told

about the relationship between Grynszpan and Rath.

Q: [inaudible interjection]

A: But there is.... if you read what Hitler said to Walkovsky (?), the Czech. Foreign Minister: on November 10, 38.... 18, the Jews committed treason against Germany and they will pay for this. They will pay for this. It is interesting; you are right, that it is not... the fact is that, according to what I found, this pronouncement by Hitler is wrongly cited. In a book which was published two years ago, the pronouncement is cited and then corrected: instead of November 10, 18, it was written, November 10, 38. But this is not so. On November 10, 18 the Weimar Republic was proclaimed. And for this, Kristallnacht is the punishment of the Jews for the Weimar Republic.

Q: But why.... why did the people who organized the trial, why did these people not invite you?

A: You have to ask these people. I cannot give you an answer to this. When the trial started, I took care of.... May I now speak openly? There is no recording now?

Boite 3 (31-2)

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Q: Well, but why were you not at the Eichmann trial.

A: Look, I did not push myself in. I regarded it my duty to furnish them my address, which I did. The intermediary who provided this information was told that they had my address and even my telephone number. I even provided them with my book. And then....

Q: About Eichmann?

A: About Theresienstadt and Eichmann. Subsequently I got a letter – I will give you a photocopy of this letter – in which was said: we thank you for the book that you sent us, it was useful to us to the extent that it confirmed statements by trustworthy witnesses. I thought to myself that I cannot help these people. For them I am not a trustworthy witness. With this, the matter was done for me. I made contact once more when Eichmann said that all Jewish representatives agreed with Nisko, but he excluded me...

Q: Eichmann said that in the trial....

A: said it in the trial. I read it in the paper. Nobody sent me the protocol, but I read it in the newspaper. He stated that all the Jewish representatives agreed with Nisko and stressed that the only one of whom he could not say so was Murrelstein. I could then just have kept quiet and be happy that Eichmann said that I was the only one who did not agree. However, I considered it my duty to send a telegram stating that I considered the assertion by Eichmann that all the others agreed as untrue, because – as I also once wrote in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung – I, as the last one in this category, felt obligated towards the others and to protect their honor. He naturally excluded the living one, because he was afraid that he could defend himself; of the dead ones he could say that they agreed. And I spoke up for the dead ones. But the telegram was left to disappear as far as I know. Nobody acknowledged it. And in this manner the trial continued with witnesses who testified about Eichmann, whereby they confused him with Möss. For example, they declared that Eichmann was in Theresienstadt in October 44, which is not true, that was Möss. Then, as another example, there were witnesses who said that Eichmann gave, did not give, we don't know, etc. the speech in Nisko in which he threatened death, dying.

Thus, this was just stumbling, nothing went forward.

Q: Ok, but I don't understand why this tribunal in Jerusalem....

A: Well, see, the Czech. tribunal in Leitmeritz stated in their verdict justification in the trial of Rahm, in the trial against Rahm: we have to base ourselves on the statements and the knowledge of Murelstein, which poses the question: is Murelstein believable or not? And we have to say: he is believable. All accusations against him have been refuted. Everything which was said against him was the product of hysteria, of persecution mania, what the man says is true. And for this reason it was possible for the tribunal in Leitmeritz to conduct an orderly trial against Rahm. The court in Jerusalem apparently had a different opinion and conducted the trial in their own way. The result was that, for example, Mrs. Arendt published a strong criticism of the trial and got a totally wrong image of Eichmann.

Q: This is strange, because you are an Eichmann expert.

A: Well, see, but for them I was not an Eichmann expert but Murelstein, whom you could not trust. This is something... See...

Q: But this is really...

A: This is an important question, I cannot comment on this. After all, I cannot convince anyone.

Q: [inaudible interjection]

A: Well you have to ask the people. I cannot comment on this. I only can tell you one thing: In spite of that, I did not bear a grudge against the court as the foremost Italian jurist, Prof. Carmelutti, published a criticism of the Eichmann trial and wrote about the second

trial in Jerusalem in which someone was to be sentenced by force, whereby he referred to the trial of Jesus. Subsequently, as nobody responded, I made an unrequested comment and responded to him in an open letter, saying: See, Sir, you are not the first one. The old Romans already crucified Jesus together with two criminals. And you also add a criminal. You are crucifying him again with a criminal. Thus, you can see I was not at all offended.

Q: This is a very good response.

A: I have....

Q: Where was that written, in a.....

A: In a Jewish newspaper. He wrote in the Journal....

Q: Did you....

A: I did not keep it. Unfortunately I did not keep it. He wrote in the "Journale d'Italia" and I responded in the "Voce Republicana." I responded to him and told him that, as I said already, just like in the past. You have no new idea. The old Romans already crucified Jesus together with two criminals, and you are crucifying him again with a criminal.

Q: This was disgusting.

A: Well, he knuckled under. He was the most famous Italian jurist, professor of law and the highest paid lawyer in Rom. He stayed silent. He simply took it. I did not keep a grudge. You see, I did my duty. But nevertheless, for example..... the image of Eichmann during the trial came out totally wrong. For example, the theory by Mrs. Arendt about the simple Eichmann. The story of the corrupt Eichmann, for example, never came out. For example, the story of the so-called Colombian action. In this, Eichmann kept running around and came to Löwenherz and told him: there has to be group emigration. You keep

sending single people away, there has to be group emigration. This way we finish faster.

As if only....

Q: Group emigration?

A: Group emigration. And....

Q: A curious term...

A: Groups.... whole groups go away. We said that we send individuals away where it is possible. You must not forget that the emigration department of the Jewish Community took care of 121,000 cases.

Q: Hundred.....

A: 121,000 cases. I mean.. we.... It was said that this was too much, we chased people out, we drove them out. This is an accusation. However, I would like to know what would have happened if Hitler, in 1942, instead of 40,000 Jews would have found 80,000 Jews in Vienna. Would he not have deported them to Auschwitz? Would he have deported 40,000 instead of the 80,000? You see, we better leave that alone. At any rate, he wanted group emigration. One nice day he came and said: "Now I will show you how group emigration is done. Here, Mr. Schlie, from Hamburg, he has 300 visas for Colombia. But we have to be ready to travel in three days." This Colombia matter is very interesting to me, because that is how I got to the emigration department at that time. Because it was necessary to get the people ready to leave in three days, which means three days. I got busy and collaborated. And I stayed with the matter, practically with the emigration department. And we

Q: When was that?

- A: In 1938, in the fall of 1938. I worked alongside and did different things. The people got ready. How....
- Q: In three days?
- A: In three days. They sold everything, dissolved apartments, we completed their passports, everything.
- Q: All in three days?
- A: In three days, everything.
- Q: Complete?
- A: Complete, yes and we have
- Q: They did....
- A: Everything, everything, they gave it away, everything. They wanted to leave. And then...
- Q: They wanted to leave?
- A: They wanted to leave. We then gave Mr. Schlie the passports, paid what he asked, because it certainly was necessary to bribe him to get the visas. And then Mr. Schlie brought us the passports, pocketed the money and told us: But the people cannot leave with these visas, they are not valid. This was simple fraud. He took the money, he wanted group emigration....
- Q: This was fraud?
- A: this was wrong.
- Q: And Eichmann knew that?
- A: Certainly. And Mr. Schlie then set up shop in Rome as "Hanseatisches Reisebüro" and then committed the following extortions: The people in Vienna there was the problem

of the KZ [concentration camps]. People were in the KZ and could come out if they had proof of emigration possibilities. And then many of them registered for an illegal transport to Palestine. It then turned out that the Hanseatische Reisebüro was the only source for illegal Palestine transports. I don't have to tell you that the Hanseatische Reisebüro had nothing at all to do with the illegal Palestine transports. This was simply a way to extort money from the people, because he had... [end of tape segment]

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A: The deal was that people had to have a confirmation that they were registered for an illegal transport. You understand? And they were cheated by Schlie, who was nothing other than a friend of Eichmann, and had to pay so much money that there was nothing left for the trip. Anybody who really....

Q: People gave up everything.

A: People gave away everything because they wanted to rescue the relatives from the concentration camp. We then had to give them the money for emigration. And if someone protested, Eichmann had them arrested and handed over to the Gestapo. Somebody, a certain Pappenheim, an orthodox man, a very nice man who did a lot for the illegal emigration.

Q: An orthodox Jew?

A: Yes, yes. Pappenheim said: "For heaven's sake, the money is being stolen from the people. The man has nothing to do with it. He then was also handed over to the Gestapo. It took a lot of effort and trouble to get him released. This was just ordinary extortion. The Colombia people then stayed in Vienna, without apartment, without possessions, and

some of them then emigrated to other places, some could not emigrate and were finally deported to the East. In this manner Eichmann solved his problem of group emigration. But this Colombia affair, for example, was not mentioned with a single word during the Eichmann trial, not with a single word.

Q: But you yourself, Dr. Murrelstein, you never had to...

A: Well...

Q: emigrate?

A: Well, the story is as follows: I could have emigrated because I had double reasons for a non-quota emigration to America, as university professor and as Rabbi, thus I could have gone to America (USA) outside of the quota. I also had several offers from England even with job offers.

Q: With?

A: With jobs. Not only the entry but also work, you understand, with a guaranteed job. Well, I have to tell you that in April 1939 I accompanied the oldest Rabbi from Vienna, Dr. Taglich, to London. I traveled to London and he emigrated. I took him along. I had been asked to take him along on the plane.

Q: In April 39?

A: In April 39.

Q: You had a passport?

A: Yes, yes, yes. For going and returning. And there was...

Q: You were in London?

A: Twice. I was there in January 39 and in April 39 in camp matters, in Camp Greensboro.

Q: And you came back?

A: Yes, yes, I.....

Q: [not understandable]

A: No, Löwenherz was out of the country ten times and always came back. Well.

Q: But this is surprising....

A: Well, I did come back. In April 39 I came back and was all alone in the airplane from London to Vienna; the airplane was empty. This was the day on which Hitler gave a war talk and nobody dared to go to Germany because one was afraid that he would declare war on that day. Until Rotterdam, we were two, from Rotterdam to Vienna I was alone with the hostess.

Q: Was it a German airplane?

A: No, a Dutch one, KLM. And I also wanted to tell you that Dr. Taglich asked me to arrange for him a meeting with the Chief-Rabbi Herz. I did that. Chief-Rabbi Herz....

Q: Rabbi of London.

A: Of the British Empire. He even was sick and we had heard that he wanted to see me and that I should come to his apartment... he was not in the office. He dressed to receive me and even accompanied me a piece to the underground. And I told him: "See Chief-Rabbi (I spoke German) here is Dr. Taglich who asked me that he would like to be received by you. Please give him this honor (I said Koved, in Hebrew). Give him this Koved." He said: "You know, I give this Koved to the Rabbi who is going back, not the one who stays here. You know, I give this Koved to the Rabi who is going back, not the one who stays here." And, as I said, I was going back at that time.

Q: He said that you were the courageous one to

A: Yes. I would say, the commission which came for..... money matters, I even worked together with them at one time. It was the first time that I was slandered when it was told that money could be used to get a permit by paying me. And it was said that my son was collecting the money. That was then....

Q: Who said that?

A: People said that. That came from abroad. But then it turned out that my son was three years old, thus a little too young to conduct such business. Then, they suddenly came abruptly and requested to check all written documents because they had received information that there were abuses in the matter of the Kemt(?) affair. They were there for three days and did not find a single instant for a reproach. Everything was cleared up. Everything was fine. Do you know why? I was not able to do everything by myself, but the people who worked for me were deadly afraid of me. They knew if they create any mischief, there will be thunder. On the one hand they knew that they would be able to emigrate with my help, that I would protect them. You know, I was deported to Theresienstadt, but my whole office, six people, stayed in Vienna all through the war, untouched, Jews, Jews by choice [Glaubensjuden], nothing happened to them. They could move freely. They knew that, that with me.... they did not know these things at that time, they would be treated justly. However, the condition was: no wrong moves. For this reason I could rely on them.

Q: OK, but you did not answer my question.

A: Please.

Q: My question was: why, in 1939, did you not...

A: Oh, well, the reason... in London... It was not just that simple to stay in London. I did have a wife and child at home.

Q: Well, but why.....

A: See, I have to tell you something else: Can you not accept that someone has the impression that he has to do something, and that this does not go away. Is that so strange? See....

Q: But this is very interesting...

A: Well, look, this was a mistake. In June, on June 12, I made an ever greater mistake, still a greater mistake. In June, in the summer, in June, two certificates arrived.

Q: Of which year?

A: 39... two certificates arrived, in my name and in the name of my wife, you understand. Directly from Israel, two certificates.

Q: Two...

A: At that time it was Palestine. For Palestine. And I relinquished the two certificates in favor of a student of mine, who was also a friend, who then, based on these certificates – he had the same size family – he had a young child, emigrated. And I stayed. Well, see, I still believed that I still had things to do. Perhaps this was a mistake I made. If I had emigrated I might today be settled in Israel or in the USA or in England, somewhere in a college, or at a rabbinical seminary, or at some temple, a well settled rabbi, nobody would have bothered about me, nobody would have gotten mad at me; all the experiences that I had, I would not have experienced and everything would have been in order. But

this is the way it happened, that's all I can say. Perhaps it was looking for an adventure, thirst for adventure.

Q: Thirst?

A: No, it was not thirst for adventure. Well, it really took something to not emigrate but to stay. You understand? But it was not thirst for adventure. It is.... for example... see, I have to tell you regarding the Kent matter. This matter.... someone had to take care of the Kent matter. The Kent matter had to do with the KZ, the KZ people. People came out of the KZ and they had a short time to emigrate. Otherwise, they were told that they had to come back to the KZ. They were nervous, they trembled, horrible. And I had to communicate with the British Consul so that he would give visas. At one time I sent him I don't know how many visas and he told me: "for heaven's sake, I cannot do this...." Please do this, I will not send you any more this week. You understand? He gave them. Three days later he got another pile. He then summoned me and said: "this is not the way gentlemen behave. You promised me not to send any more this week..." I looked at him with big eyes and said: "See, sir, Mr. Consul General [*Translator's comment: The rest of the paragraph is inaudible on the tape. I translated the transcript.*] As a Jew under Hitler I cannot afford the luxury to be a gentleman. I need the visas. He gave the visas. He gave the visas.

[Some sentences of this plan are missing, but it is not important, says Lanzmann on tape.]

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Q: What do you want to say when you speak of thirst for adventure?

A: Well.... It really means the following: the work, particularly in 1939 showed a certain

amount of success, which provided some satisfaction, so that one could say to oneself that one cannot just drop this matter. Emigration in 1939, in the spring and summer went rather well. This succeeded with the aid of the “Aktion Kent Richborough” which was directed by me, the problem of the KZ people. These were young people who were put into the concentration camp just for reasons of emigration and who....

Q: You mean, for example, the people who came from Dachau...

A: and were expelled, but that means that they were let out only based on the assurance that they go away immediately. And to have gotten out these people, about 2000, or more than 2000 was a great satisfaction. Also the inter-European emigration went very well, particularly to England. Almost daily special coaches left with children and women, under the program of the household help action. All this went through my hands. And for me... you have to understand, there was little to say: yes, I saw a mission in that, certainly, but I am human enough, weak, in order to say, there was also a certain amount of personal satisfaction. And that is what I meant under thirst for adventure. There were adventures. For example – I am skipping ahead – at the end of 1939 I found that I had some 60 or 70 permits in my hand that had not been used. My signature had been notarized and deposited with the Home Office in London and based on my signature on a permit form, which was entrusted to me, the consul was allowed to issue a visa. In late August the consulate was closed. I found myself with unused permit forms. I then quickly called the people together to check which cases were urgent, who was threatened to possibly go back to the KZ and told them: we have to risk it. I risk as much as you do, because if I sent these people away and they had to come back, something bad would also

have happened to me. You may leave just based on a permit. The permit, after all, had the stamp of the Home Office, I will add my signature. I pleaded with the central office that they were permitted to leave without the visa. They left. And behold, the Dutch and the Belgians let them pass through and the British let them in and all the permit forms had been used, to the last one. As I said: an adventure. This is what I meant, it is a personal satisfaction in the sense that it was possible to help other people and I was personally pleased by it.

Q: [in French] Could one say that this was a certain. [rest unclear]

A: Well... I don't want to say today that it is not true. But from there to the accusation that I abused my power.... this is a far step. Because I believe [unclear interjections by Claude Lanzmann]. Well, I am saying this because it is printed in the Encyclopedia Judaica. That I abused my power in Vienna, but not everybody has that opinion. Because in 1947 the American Joint Distribution Committee wrote to me to thank me for the work which I had done at the time in Vienna for the Viennese Jews. This letter is at your disposal. But I only say this, I am not disputing it... that the sensation of power.... after all, I am just human. That is.... who is displeased with power? By which I mean the possibility to accomplish something, the possibility of doing something, this is real satisfaction. For what did I abuse power? Not to get advantages for me, not to get advantages for my family, but just in order to help people.

Q: [Lanzmann speaks French, not understandable]

A: Well, yes, see, this feeling... anybody has this feeling when he does something for which he has a passion, he has the feeling that this is a calling.

Q: Where you passionate about this?

A: Well... passionate... It is not possible to say to be passionate about the situation of the Jews under Hitler, that you cannot say. But I only say that someone who does something with passion is always convinced that he is the one who fits the task on hand. And you know, there were real adventures. Yesterday you asked me about Prochnik. With Prochnik we filmed a piece that is just like a detective novel. Well, I am getting ahead of myself and this goes content wise in between, but it might fit in better here. After the war, Jews traveled across Manchuria, i.e., by bus, trans-Siberian railroad, Manchuko, Japan, you know that, and then across the ocean to America. During the war.

Q: During the war.

A: During the war. And Prochnik was posted as liaison from my emigration department in Berlin. And there was..... the transports were always very well organized. I received letters of commendation from Bentwich.

Q: [not understandable]

A: Emigration transports, naturally. The word "transport" has become ambiguous, unfortunately. For each transport group I have appointed a representative who had to report on his experiences so that we could learn from them for the future, you understand? In this way the next one could avoid mistakes which could be corrected. In this manner I learned that people demanded, that it was necessary... at the border they demanded that one produced 10 dollars. Each person had to present 10 dollars.

Q: At which border?

A: At Manchuko. And they confiscated them, you understand?

Q: Who confiscated that?

A: The Manchurian authorities gave....

Q: Excuse me, when were these transports?

A: During the war.

Q: During the war?

A: Yes.

Q: In which year?

A: In 1940.

Q: 1940:

A: They confiscated that and gave them Jun instead. Jun is Manchurian money. On exiting they were informed that Jun cannot be exported and confiscated that money again. This was theft, pure and simple. They (took) 10 dollars from the people

Q: This was done by the people in Manchuria?

A: Yes, they stole 10 dollars from them. Subsequently we did the following in which Prochnik distinguished himself. The General Consul of Manchuria in Berlin received an anonymous announcement that the Jews were committing fraud against him. They did this by showing 10 dollars each, you understand? He was told that these are always the same 10 dollars. He then said: "what shall we do?" He talked to Prochnik: "I have an announcement – Prochnik knew who sent the announcement – that the Jews always present the same 10 dollars." Prochnik answered simply that they should request a check issued on the name. We had discussed that before. A check issued on the person. That's for everyone, perfect. After that — from then on, each Jew registered with an

authorization of the office that he could export 10 dollars which were issued in his name. However, the 10 dollars were transmitted to America for the Jew and he got the visa based on the permit to export 10 dollars.

Q: But these 10 dollars were....

A: They went to America, for the Jew, but... but he got the visa based on the permit document. At the border, they confiscated the permit and gave them Jun. Then they took the Jun from the and the people kept the permits. For some time this worked very well. In the meantime, they wanted to cash in they finally wanted to cash in, and the bank bursted out laughing because these were permits, they were not checks.

Q: This means, the Jews were smarter than....

A: They thought they were smart, but that was Marmelstein-Prochnik work. And then they stopped the last transport. They stopped the last transport at the Manchurian border. I then received a telegram from the committee in Harbin: transport blocked, send me so-and-so many dollars. Fortunately, this was the last transport, the last of...

Q: Excuse me, these transports were....

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A: This was shortly before the declaration of war against America, and we were no longer able to communicate with the Joint in Lisbon. And all our monetary operation were routed through the Joint. Because we refused consistently to bring money into Germany, because we did not want that, one nice day, the people would succumb to the temptation to use some excuse to confiscate this money. Since the beginning this money was located

in Lisbon, at our disposal, and we disposed of it.

Q: And Dr. Löwenherz... was he in Lisbon?

A: Yes, he was several times in Amsterdam, I think that he was in Lisbon once or twice. However, now we could no longer communicate with the American Joint Distribution Committee. So, what should I do? I did know from Prochnik, who always reported from Berlin, that the "Reichsvereinigung", which always was very punctual and correct, maintained a dollar account in Harbin for such purposes. I then sent a telegram – without asking too much and obviously impertinently, but I did not do it for me, I did it for the people – stating: "Use money Reichsvereinigung, Marmelstein approves." The people were fully aware that it was impertinent, but they understood, there was a war, there were no further transports, the money remained frozen and they were happy to have some excuse to use the money because otherwise these Viennese Jews would have had to stay there. This way, they paid it and the matter was resolved. Epstein then received from Harbin..

Q: Excuse me, Epstein was in Berlin?

A: Berlin, yes.... received a debit note that money has been taken from his account. The bank had to send him a debit. He thus found out and was upset. The next time we met he shouted: you owe me money. Well why do I owe you money. You have embezzled money in Harbin, he said. I responded that I did not embezzle money from him. This was not his money, not my money, this was money of the Joint destined for Jews. What would you have done with the money in Harbin? Are you sending it now during war to America? After the war we shall settle this. You are acting like Alitalia, I told him. But I

took Alitalia for a ride, and I will take you for a ride too. Alitalia was generally paid for the steamship tickets in dollars. One nice day, Alitalia demanded through the Gestapo to be paid immediately in dollars for the ship passages. But we did not have any more dollars, we were actually unable to dispose of them anymore. I was called to the Gestapo because of the Alitalia. They believed that I was hiding the dollars because it was necessary to pressure the Jews; they will be able to cough up the dollars. I then told the Gestapo representative: “look, why don’t they take marks, the Italians. They.... why not marks, I will pay the exchange rate.” And he was very quiet. And while he otherwise would have had a claim for the Joint after the war, he took Reichsmark and had to sign that he had no further claim. And I told Epstein: “You can attain the same end with me. We will pay the Reichsmark and the thing is settled. At the end of the war – if we both survive – you can, if you want to, go to the Joint and I will prove that you are due to receive dollars.

Q: But you said explicitly, after the war?

A: Yes, if both of us survive.

Q: Yes, but before, you stated after the war; I would like to ask [French, not understandable; German translation also not understandable]

A: Oh, no, I don’t know that; I have not thought about this, I could not have known. But permit me to say something more. The matter had a short post-script. When the Manchurians realized that they had been swindled, they turned to the Japanese government and the Japanese government made a solemn protest in Berlin because of this fraud. They received the reply that the responsible person has been sent to a camp. In the

meantime I had been sent to Theresienstadt. With this they had told the truth and thus terminated the incident diplomatically – the person responsible was sent to a camp. In the meantime I had come to Theresienstadt. This... this ... all was... I only wanted to tell you, these were things to cry over, to laugh at, particularly for one who is young and healthy. One was always hoping to still get just so many people out. You cannot believe the adventure to get people through occupied France to Portugal and to Spain. When I first had the idea – which later on was picked up by all the others – they thought me crazy; how would it be possible to send people through unoccupied, then occupied France by train transports? The matter succeeded, without fail. And...

Q: You sent people through the South of France?

A: No, not the South of France, Germany, French coast, Spain, Portugal etc. We even sent children's' transports to America in this manner.

Q: In what year?

A: 40

Q: 40?

A: 40. And this was also the first time, it happened for the first time, that between me and Löwenherz, and between me and the Joint a misunderstanding occurred. This was the first time that complaints about me were made abroad and the first time that I was talked about abroad. The matter was....

Q: [not understandable]

A: The matter concerned a Professor of Medicine who worked in our hospital. At this point I have to explain to you the principle of our transfers. You know, there was the Havura in

Germany which was debated, because they really sabotaged the goods boycott against Germany. That did not exist with us. But with us it was as follows: the dollars were abroad. The Jew who emigrated, who was supposed to emigrate, was allowed to give the Jewish Community marks and the Jewish Community assigned him dollars abroad. Now, it was so that Löwenherz, who was responsible for the budget, obviously wanted to get as many marks as possible. But I always thought that it was not a good idea to get all the dollars into one hand, particularly after the onset of the war when ship tickets had to be paid in dollars. You understand, if I give one person 30,000 dollars, I no longer have the 30,000 dollars to buy ship tickets. The man had a great deal of money and did an enormous amount of business with the Jewish Community. He asked for three ship tickets, for himself, his wife and his 90-year old mother-in-law.

Q: Who, who?

A: This professor of whom..... this professor.

Q: From Vienna?

A: From Vienna. For himself and the 90-year old mother-in-law. I thought that I would not waste a ship ticket for the 90-year old mother-in-law. You must not forget, at that time, ship tickets counted. The 90-year old could have been placed here in the Old-People's home. But, you know. In addition, he claimed priority. The lists had already been completed. What can I tell you, I was forced. I was not in the habit to call on outside institutions for inner-Jewish matters and thus gave in. I had to cancel the list, to people who were ready to emigrate I had to say: you have to wait, I have three places booked by the man, his wife and his mother-in-law. The man was supposed to leave Saturday

evening and on Saturday afternoon he comes to my office. At that time I was in the office on Saturday, because when people need to be saved, there is no Sabbath. He comes and says: “Dr., I have decided not to go” – “What, you are not going?” – He said that he still had a house which he can sell, I want to have more dollars from the Jewish Community. But you have already gotten so many dollars. Yes, but the Jewish Community should [On image/tape, voice ends and words missing on transcript] – I said, don’t worry about the Jewish Community. I am mainly concerned about the ship tickets. I am unable to reassign the ship spaces. I cannot reassign the ship spaces. You have to leave today.

Q: This means, you lost the ship spaces...

A: I lose the ships.....

Boite 5 (35-36)

35

A: Well, I kept repeating “you have to leave” and he kept saying how much he can get for the house and that he wants to buy dollars from the Jewish Community, etc. Finally, this got too much for me and I told him: “See, Sir (Mr. Professor), you have to think about one thing: putting together these transports is done under the auspices of the SS, and when they find out that we wasted three ship tickets, you understand?, I cannot authorize this. If you do this, it is your responsibility and you will have to bear the consequences. It was not pleasant for me to have to threaten him in this manner. But, it really was not a threat, but just the facts. At the time, the people recognized the situation and certainly would have taken action. Thus, here that he was, when he heard that it was this way, he

suddenly no longer said anything about the house and the dollars, left, but not before calling Löwenherz to complain about me, and then went on the trip. Some weeks later the children's transport left and one of my colleagues, who received orders from me to talk to the Joint in Lisbon, wrote to me that they were outraged at the Joint. Professor X had been there and he complained about me, that the emigration department was threatening people with the SS. Naturally, the Joint was very upset about this matter. I would have been able to clarify this matter, but that would have meant, first, all our letters abroad were censored. I would have exposed Löwenherz to the Central Office because of the emigration. It would have come out that there was tension between Löwenherz and me because I wanted more emigration and he wanted more marks, etc. Besides that, the same problem would have arisen at the Joint because the Jews in America who donated the money wanted to save people and not that Professor X would immediately be able to buy himself a villa in Miami. This was very clear. Thus, I had to postpone the whole matter and hope that at the right time I could clear it up. Later on so much came up that there was never a chance to clear it up and thus it remained as it was.

Q: [in French, partially understandable] Were there moments at that time when you thought that you could deceive the Germans?

A: Well, that is... deceiving. See, it is scarcely possible to talk of deception. The Germans deceived us everywhere. Deception, all kinds of things could be done. I want to tell you about one case which is interesting for its principle. In 1941 there was a time when there were still possibilities of emigration. At that time emigration and concentration camp existed next to each other.

Q: This is a very important matter...

A: Yes, that is the reason I mention it. And the people.... if someone who was already in a camp for deportation could prove that he could emigrate, they let him go. People to be deported were taken to a collection camp; if it then could be proven, or if I gave assurance that the man could go away, they let him go free; he could emigrate. Now, there was a young man who was an industrial manager who was taken to a collection camp for deportation. However, he had a visa for South America. His wife came to me and I told her to go there and to show the visa, to which I added a note; I told her to go there that this would take care of it. What she did not tell me that she had a recommendation from Goering for her husband. If she had told me that, I would immediately have told her to burn it, to not show it, but she did not tell me. All of this played out at the Central Office. And what happened? The man....

Q: Eichmann

A: With Eichmann..... with Brunner, yes at the Eichmann Central Office. Subsequently, it happened for the first time that a request from me, to release someone based on his ability to emigrate was not delivered on. The man stayed in. Because if Goering supported someone, he was 100% convicted to deportation.

Q: This was the fight between Goering and Himmler?

A: I don't know how this was. But A recommendation from Goering was comparable to a letter from Uriah.

Q: And you knew that.

A: Yes. The only recommendation that was tolerated was that from Goebbels. There were

such. I had one of those in my hands. For the brother-in-law of Franz Lehar. Then there was a recommendation directly from Hitler, that was orally, for Dr. Bloch who was the physician for his mother and who also treated him when he was a child. He came to me proudly stating that he treated the Führer. He wanted to emigrate and wanted to have special treatment [inaudible interjections by Lanzmann]. This was Dr. Bloch. I then told him: "But don't tell that abroad that you treated the Führer, that you healed him." He did not understand me and I restrained myself from explaining it to him. But to get back to our subject: a recommendation from Goering was a condemnation. And it happened that the man stayed in the camp and it was his fortune that no transports were organized.

There was a pause. They were waiting. Nothing could be done. I did this because you ask me about deception. There was a time, a few days, during which I knew that Brunner had gone away and his deputy, this is the deputy of the deputy was a certain Gürzig.

Q: At the central office.

A: At the central office. He was a good-natured fellow, in his way, to the extent that an SS man can be good-natured. And... and he did not understand much of these matters. And when he had to make a decision, he preferred not to ask Brunner, because Brunner was not supposed to know that he did not understand something, because Brunner, after all, was his superior. And when I knew that the man... that Brunner was away, I asked the wife to come and told her: "prepare everything for the trip and stay at the Jewish Community; I want to have you, so to say, ready." I knew that when he was alone, he would phone sooner or later if something is the matter because he needed a clarification. And he really called; I gave him the clarification which he asked for and then said

casually: Say, Mr. "Hauptscharführer" I do have a case who is in the camp; he has an exit visa to America, it would be a pity to lose the space and the visa, why don't you send him away?" "Certainly" he said " send me the note." I sent him the note. By the afternoon, the man had crossed the border, you see. Nobody cared any longer, because when the case did no longer exist, nothing is to be shown. See, this is an example of deception. It was not a deception in this sense. In Vienna it is said when playing cards "to trump with the bottom man." You know what that means to trump with the bottom man? Play the lower card. At time it is better not to play the ace, but the lower card. I played the Gürzig card; the man got away, he was in Hungary on the same day.

Q: [in French] What did you know of, what did you think of the plans by the Germans at that time?

A: See, regarding the plans by the Germans at that time, at the time of which you are now speaking, I already was... I already had some risks behind me. You understand? And the Eichmann – don't forget – who is described by Mrs. Arendt as banal and a small man, that Eichmann said to Löwenherz in December 39, when he was going to travel abroad for the first time after the start of the war the following: "tell the Jewish organizations to make available emigration possibilities and dollars, as much as possible, because I will wait until October. In October it will start up again." And I don't think that there was anybody in Germany at that time who could plan then, that.....

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A: I don't think that there were many people in Germany at that time who could plan from October and December, from December, i.e., from December 39 to October 40. Because

Eichmann said in December 39: "I am giving you time until October. In October, 6500 Jews from the Rhineland/Palatinate and one thousand Jews from Lorraine were deported to the South of France. And this started a new wave of deportations.

Q: This is the famous transport from Baden.

A: This is the famous transport from Baden that came to Gurs, you know. I only wanted to say this to show that the man was not banal, that he knew what he was doing, that he had the power to make good on his promises and his threats. That means, he made good on the threats, not really on the promises.

Q: Well, can you now (tell us) about the founding of the Central Office....

A: You know, the Central Office for Jewish Emigration was some kind of "Golem". Do you know the motif of the Golem? It is made for a certain purpose, and then it gets too big, too strong, too powerful and becomes an element of badness, of destruction and demolition. In principle, the Central Office was conceived as something useful because the Jews at that time wanted to emigrate. In Vienna, the thought was from the first moment on only about emigration. But there were difficulties...

Q: Also in Germany...

A: No, there is no comparison, no comparison because the living conditions in Vienna, the living conditions in Vienna were incomparably worse. And in addition, there was the famous word from Goering....

Q: No, I did not mean this for Germany, I thought [remainder of question unclear]

A: I see, excuse me. And Goering had promised to eliminate the 300,000 Jews, which never existed, but he said that he would eliminate the 300,000 Viennese Jews within two years.

Q: Excuse me, why did the Nazis always have such a wrong idea about numbers?

A: Well, that was propaganda. For so long, in order to emphasize the Judification of Vienna, they published wrong numbers, and finally even they believed them. In Vienna, the total of Jews at any time was never more than 200,000 to 220,000 and that included mixed marriages and baptized Jews. 220,000. Also, to get back to emigration: the people could not and did not want to. In order to go away, there is a conversation, a telephone conversation which took place after the emigration... after the putsch in Austria and during which reference was made to the Italian king etc., everything about the Viennese Jews. And Goering said: "they may not leave with money. The money they better leave here." Then it happened that it was demanded of the Jews that they provide a confirmation that they had paid the taxes. But the taxes that they had to pay were ordered, what they were ordered. But, you know, it is always necessary to negotiate the taxes, prove. The taxing authorities and the tax payer are two different parties who come from different points of view. And particularly high taxes were demanded of the Jews, so that they could not pay them, people bled to death from that, they were unable, they could not emigrate because they could not pay the taxes. In addition they had to provide all kinds of certifications, among them, that the dog tax had been paid, I mean, only to give you an example.... the dog tax, if he was unlucky enough to have had a dog. But all tax....

Q: Only for the Jews?

A: No, no, that was for everybody, but he had to prove that he paid the gas bill, he had to prove that he paid the electric bill, the telephone bill, and everywhere you had to stand in line at the offices... and everywhere the Jews had to cede their places to Aryans, which

means, when the Jew stood in line and an Aryan came, the Jew had to let them in and always get further back. Well, it was impossible. Well, Löwenherz, when he talked with Eichmann during the first few days, described to him the difficulties. But, the answer to such questions was always that the party program said “Jews die, not Jews leave.”

Q: Eichmann said so?

A: No, no, but that was the program of the party. “Judah verrecke, nicht Judah verreise.”
[Jews die, not Jews leave].

Q: Yes, they wanted to have both.

A: Yes. Thus the result was.... the conversation resulted in the idea to get one office, to combine all in one office, where there were no Aryans, so that nobody had to yield, a purely Jewish office, with only Jewish traffic. All the offices which had to do with emigration would have their representation there and it was like a moving belt. The Jew arrived, filled out a questionnaire and took it, with the necessary documents, to one teller after the other. And he came out with a travel passport. On the passport it stated that he had to leave the area of the Reich within thirty days.

Q: Excuse me, please, the idea was an idea of Eichmann or from the Jewish Community?

A: Which one, the idea to have to leave the Reich within 30 days?

Q: No, no.

A: The Central Office? No, the idea arose. I cannot say how, because I was not present during the discussion. It just came up. The idea to centralize in order to speed it up. However, the bad feeling was there right away, as soon as they saw the first passports they saw that the Golem was in command... one does not command it any more, he was

independent. Because as soon as the Jew received the passport, he was automatically expelled, they had..... he then came to us and said that he had to emigrate, he was expelled, then its validity had to be extended, it was just a chain of troubles, of suffering for the people and for us. For example, one thing could be corrected because earlier... to get back to the question about the amount of leeway that was available to help. The story about the taxes, yes, it was stopped. I am not telling you who had the idea, you can guess that yourself if you so desire. The questionnaire was typed in my office and there was a heading "Tax position", yes? And a sub-heading was added to this: "reduced to:". Eichmann accepted it, it was printed this way and the tax offices suddenly had in front of them an official document with the eagle, the official eagle, swastika and everything, where it was printed: "tax position reduced to:" Thus, this means that taxes had to be reduced for the Jews too. You understand? This was the end of the story about the tax reduction; quietly, without much discussion about it.

Q: You did this?

A: I did.... I did not tell you who did this. I told you it was typed in my office and my secretary..... secretaries sometimes make mistakes. Sometimes it is....

Q: But I am not Eichmann.

Boite 6 (nr. 37)

37

A: I am taking advantage of the fact that we are talking about the Central Office in order to correct a statement by Reitlinger. In his book about the final solution, Reitlinger states

that the Central Offices in Vienna and in Prague were located in the building of the Jewish Community. This is wrong. It is based on a misunderstanding because it has been shown that the people who came to the Central Office needed help, protection and information, which was obviously not available from the SS people. It was then agreed with Eichmann that we would establish in the Central Office a branch office of the Jewish Community, or more accurately, a branch office of the emigration section. Thus we had a branch office of the emigration section at the Central Office. And the people who came in, turned first to the branch office of the Jewish Community. They always had...

Q: The people of the branch office...

A: No, the parties, they were our employees, they were always....

Q: Yes, yes, but they were Jews?

A: They were Jews, our employees. It was their job to take care of the people, to make sure that nothing happened to the people, that they made no missteps and primarily, to continue to inform us about everything that happened at the Central Office. The man who was at the Central Office came to the Community every day after office hours and reported either to Löwenherz or me about everything that happened there. This means, we practically had an observation post there. That was important. It was particularly important, I want to tell you, what that means organizationally, from the point of view of the Germans. In 1935 Heydrich divided the security services [SD = Sicherheitsdienst] into the actual police services, to which the Gestapo belonged, and an information service – news service, to which Eichmann belonged. Thus, the Central Office belonged to that

part of the SD which was the information service and the Gestapo was in some ways its competition. The Gestapo did not like to see that Eichmann took the whole matter of Jewish emigration to himself, because the Jewish emigration was, after all, a business to make a profit of, just as the Gestapo in Vienna made good money from the deportations, later from the deportations. But, there was also a profit in the emigration. And we had to, there always was a fight between Gestapo and Eichmann, and those in the middle...

Q: [inaudible]

A: Everything was based on economics, because there was, for example.... and those in the middle were the Jews who suffered. You understand? We had a good division into three parts. I put myself on the side of the Central Office because anything positive that could be done, could only be done with the aid of the Central Office. You understand? I want to say, for example, I tried for a long time to get people out of the concentration camp, which was under the jurisdiction of the Gestapo. Because it was officially under the jurisdiction of the Gestapo. We.... my people in my office worked day and night to complete registers with emigration possibilities and we turned them in. Löwenherz said that he had been promised that it would be taken care of immediately, it would be processed right away. Months later we learned that it was sitting on a box and gathered dust. I then left the Gestapo out of it and turned to Eichmann, and a few weeks later the people were out. I am certainly the last person to put in a good word for Eichmann, but at that time when it concerned emigration, it was possible to rely on his help. I could not afford to do without his help. Löwenherz, as the one responsible for all of it, was actually the one to maneuver between Gestapo and the Central Office. And the third one, Engel,

Eichmann could not stand him and he was considered the liaison to his service; it was he who was sent when it was necessary to speak to the Gestapo. Contrary to this, it had always been known that I would be able to accomplish something with the Central Office. I was promised things, sometimes it was kept, sometimes not. Do you know the golden rule? This is what Brunner said at one time when I reproached him that a promise had not been kept, and I have to admit that I am not a pleasant person, and I was also unpleasant to them if I was in a bad mood. He told me: "A promise is certainly valid, but only if it is kept. That means, if it is not kept, it is no promise." Now, do something with that.

Q: Who said that?

A: Brunner, Alois Brunner, you know? At the Central Office, they started unpleasantness also on a material basis, which they really exploited, to wit: Eichmann set up an emigration fund, i.e., the Jew who was to get a passport had to provide a list of assets and was assessed an emigration fee. The fee was paid to the emigration fund which was administered by Eichmann, or rather by his confidant Dr. Reakowich. And this was a very important matter because money is a power factor. In this way, Eichmann was independent of the Economics and Administrative Office of the SS, while all the camps dependent on the pol [sic]. Eichmann was the only one who was independent of this because he had his own money. This led to excesses. For example, if on a certain day only a few Jews came to the Central Office, Eichmann called up and threw a fit that the Jews do not want to emigrate, they do not apply for passports. There were two reasons: first, because they do not apply for passports, they do not emigrate, but mainly, he does

not get any money. In reality, he contributed very little to emigration from the emigration fund. Once he promised to make a contribution to an illegal Palestine transport and then it turned out that the money had been invested in an Aryanized department store. There was no way to get it out. However, the story about the emigration fund runs through the whole story like a red thread. I am convinced that one of the reasons that Theresienstadt was kept – there were several reasons that speak for liquidating Theresienstadt – but one reason to keep Theresienstadt was: as long as Theresienstadt was in existence, Eichmann had a reason to keep his own accounts for maintaining the ghetto, always his own account, his own administration.

Q: You believe that?

A: Yes, one of the reasons.... it was certainly one of the reasons. See, the following is one example... as a cultural curiosity: one day a law was published in the “Reichsanzeiger” that the Jewish Community in Innsbruck will be liquidated as an enemy organization to the Reich. I went to Löwenherz and said to him: “Did you read the Reichsanzeiger? We have to do something about this.” He responded: “What can we do against this?” I said: “well, we just cannot let it stand that we are enemies of the Reich. Although we are Jews and they are Nazis. However, if we take it once without protest that they are declaring us enemies of the Reich, openly, and we go along, they will do other things to us tomorrow if we are enemies of the Reich. We are not enemies of the Reich, particularly in the former Austria where Jewish Communities were public legal entities, something which was not legally changed until 1943, the end of 1942. It is not possible to declare a public legal entity as an enemy of the state.

Q: [French – German translation not understandable]

A: Sure, but in principle we respect... we have respected the laws, we did not commit any crime... and we have... we were not enemies of the state and I would never have tolerated to be regarded as enemy of the state...

Q: [French – German translation not understandable]

A: I could But I could not admit that, this was my responsibility for the people. I was responsible for the people. If they wanted to kill us, they could kill us, but should I supply them with the legal foundation? Well, finally I said: “you have no objection if I do something against this?” He said: “Please, if you want to do something, but this is wasting your time.” But I had nothing to do, there was no emigration.

Boite 7 (38-39)

38

A: Regarding the matter of Innsbruck, I talked not only to Löwenherz but also to our legal office, and they too were of the opinion that nothing can be done. Subsequently I.....

Q: That was in 1941?

A: This was in 1941, yes. Subsequently I started to study the Nazi code according to Talmudic methods. I got the “Globkes Kommentar.” [Globke’s Commentary]

Q: Globke?

A: Globke, the famous Hans Globke. And, based on Globke and sources which he indicated, I finally assembled a request in which I proved that the Jewish Community in the “Ostmark” – which was Austria – never can be an organization that is an enemy of the

state. I sent it on to Eichmann, and, imagine, one nice day there was a new law in the “Reichsanzeiger”: the law no. x of such and such a date, regarding the Jewish Community in Innsbruck has been rescinded. Löwenherz told me then that I could be proud because this was the only Nazi law regarding the Jews which had been officially rescinded. I was uncomfortable with this and tried to understand why Eichmann had helped me. And then it dawned on me. The matter was quite simple: it was again the money which they could get for it. I have to admit, they had the right scent for it. If a Jewish Congregation is dissolved as an enemy of the state, the money goes to the Ministry of Finance, and Eichmann gets nothing. If the Jewish Congregation is not an enemy of the state, the money belongs to Eichmann, the emigration fund. Now you understand why he has helped me.

Q: It means that the source of the money stays on.

A: The source of the money stays on. Towards the outside, it can be said that the Reichsanzeiger officially rescinded an anti-Jewish measure, the only one in all of literature. But the reason for it is, without saying so, the money.

Q: And you were happy about...

A: No, this was no victory and I was not happy but I just knew.... it shows the type of problems one had to deal with.

Q: I am very impressed. You have a fantastic memory, Dr. Murrelstein.

A: Well, I....

Q: No.....

A: Well, I don't think that it is so fantastic, after all, I also have my notes.

Q: You remember everything.

A: Well.

Q: Not so?

A: Well.... I don't have to respond to everything, as we have agreed upon.

Q: But this is not a question, just a.....

A: Yes; earlier you wanted to get back to the question of Nazi culture.

Q: Yes, Nazi culture regarding Jews.

A: The Nazi "science" about Jews. This...

Q: I would like to understand the idea of the Council of Elders, the Jewish Elders....

A: I see, this has nothing to do with science about Jews. Well, I will also explain that to you so that it can be put aside once and for all.... I have not thought about this until I read your questions. The matter is quite simple: in the Jewish history of Germany, the Jew who represented the Jewish community before the Imperial Chamber carried the title of Senior, or Elder. Thus we actually had a Jewish Elder in Germany in the olden times. However, I dare saying that this has no connection, but rather that this was meant to degrade the Jewish organizations. Jewish Council, Jewish Elder were supposed to be a type of tribal organization – third world – as one would say today. It was supposed to stress the dehumanizing degree of the organization of the subhumans, as the Nazis called them. The Jews have an Elder, just as the Negroes, just as the bushmen, just as the cannibals, and we have, just as the Negroes in the bush have a council, so the Jews have their Elder council, etc. This is what I believe, nothing more, only the attempt to degrade and diminish.

Q: Well, but why the term of “Elder”?

A: In primitive tribes the people who govern are called Elders. And, according to them, the Jews also were a primitive tribe. The Jews were supposed to live in a reservation, in a ghetto, just like the Indians, which are administered by a council of elders and directed by an elder.

Q: But that was a tribal....

A: A tribal organization, exactly the word which I used before, just like a tribal organization, the Jews were supposed to have a tribal organization, just like any wild tribe. However, how this relates to the “science” of Jews, I would say straight: not at all.

Q: Were these Nazis good organizers or not?

A: Well, with regard to Jewish matters, they were no organizers at all. They did not bother, because if it failed, the only ones who would perish were the Jews. But how.... You asked earlier about the science about Jews by the Nazis; the science about Jews of the Nazis was nothing at all.

Q: Nothing?

A: Nothing. One time the “Stürmer” printed a page from the Talmud, purportedly the page where everything is written. It was printed in reverse and nobody ever guessed and nobody ever pointed out that the page was upside down. The people did not understand anything. Eichmann always declared – I told you that earlier – that he knew Hebrew, and it was his knowledge about Hebrew; he did not understand Hebrew. The question about the science regarding the Jews was as follows: Rosenberg wanted to create in Frankfurt

an institute for science about Jews. However, all started with theft. Jewish libraries were plundered and a big library and big research institute for Jewish matters was supposed to be established. Nothing ever came of it. A problem arose at the time of the deportations when Jewish apartments were emptied. There was no longer any use for Jewish books and... Thus Jewish books and religious objects were simply lying around on the street. Party offices used them to heat the offices, etc. And there was.... I know, for an example, that there was an effort in Bratislava that these valuables were not destroyed. In Vienna, nobody cared. Thus, I intervened, or at least tried to intervene by means of an Aryan friend who was a Hebrew professor at the National Library, a protestant theologian, Hans Greitmeier. And with his assistance I got in touch with Christian, with whom I no longer had any contact, but who remembered our old friendship. And Christian who, as professor at the university occupied a high rank in the SS, as dean of the university, arranged for a collection of Hebrew books. Then the following happened: it turned out that there was nobody who knew how to handle these things. There was the problem that the Jews left and the books and religious object remained, with which nobody could deal, which nobody understood. And then, something peculiar happened. It was at the time when Jews were no longer permitted to teach, a course was established at the Jewish Community – with the permission of Eichmann and the Secret Police – where I taught for two hours every week and the participants in the course were the dean of the philosophic department, Christian, the professor of the university for Arabic, the head of the Oriental institute of the university, Dr. Jungreitmeister from the Oriental library, the Hebrew professor of the university library, a total of 8 or 10 people. They had the permission of

the Gestapo to pass two hours per week at the Jewish Community, where Aryans were otherwise not permitted to go. And I gave the lectures [interruption]

Q: And these people were not Jews?

A: No, Nazis..... [French interruption]

39

A: I would like to go back for a moment and tell you how I got to know Dr. Jungreitmeister. He introduced himself as Hebrew professor at the National Library and asked me (to help) with a very secret order. A Jew had been arrested who had pigeon post with him and that was supposed to be deciphered, and it was thought that I would be the suitable person. It is in Hebrew. I took it into my hand and saw....

Q: The doctor was a Nazi?

A: Yes, you will hear that, he was from the district of the Führer, a co-patriot of the Führer. He played on this – in Yiddish you would call it “Yichus” – pedigree preference, however, he really was not a Nazi. Well, he came to me with this document, I looked at it, it was a small parchment roll, I opened it and said: “See, this is a ritual scroll that comes from Tefillin, you understand, which are used during prayer. In these prayer leather strips are scrolls with chapters from the Holy Book. And this was a Jewish partisan, most likely, who, in a non-Jewish surrounding, did not even dare to have Tefillin, but wanted at least to keep those scrolls...

Q: That was in 1942?

A: This was about 1942. And then, when he was arrested, these scrolls were found on him

and it was suspected that it was pigeon post. Then I said, for heaven's sake, the man is innocent; I even let a Bible be brought, opened it and showed him the passage. He knew some Hebrew. I showed him the passage that was pictured there, enlarged it with a magnifying glass, showed him the text and said: Do something for this man because he is innocent. He hemmed and hawed, that he had been shot some time ago. I would really have loved to throw him out then, but I became very irate. Because what does he really want from me? They shot an innocent man and then he comes to me just to learn the secrets? For this I am not here. I was ready to help the Jew, to excuse him, you understand? Well, leave things alone, it was too much. From this encounter resulted a long lasting friendship. He even came to me to Rome. He became a well-known person in Jewish circles. He always participated in Jewish services, and in Rome he told me: "Do you know...."

Q: Yes, but, please, these lectures....

A: Yes, one moment, I shall get to that. In Rome he told me: "You know, the way that the prayer for the dead, the Kaddish, is said after a service; I always think of the little partisan. So, together with Christian he organized that. You see the background, so that you can see, I wanted to describe the man to you, so that you have a background. This course, which was a cultural curiosity, because, you know, in 1942 a Jew was not even allowed to have a kindergarten and there was a course with 8 people, professors, librarians etc. who listened to the lecture of a Jew. Every day.... every week for two hours each, I think it was on a Thursday. And I have to add...."

Q: And they were satisfied with you lectures?

A: Well, I know.... they pretended to, they were well-educated people.

Q: [inaudible]

A: No, that does not exist. These were well brought up people. At least they acted this way when they were with me. The matter then continued....

Q: Did you already have the Jewish Stars?

A: N.... yes, yes, yes, yes. I also permitted myself the trick when I explained the Talith to them, the Talith, I permitted myself the trick to show them a damaged piece. I explained to them the fringes, the knot code... there are knots which are a knot code, a formula etc. The piece was damaged, torn, etc. I explained on the side that the piece was not quite impeccable; you have to excuse it, the piece is not quite impeccable, it was in the Temple on November 10.... no, the Talith, the prayer shawl, is not quite impeccable because it was in the Temple on November 10. You have to excuse that it is not quite impeccable; it was in the Temple on November 10.

Q: And what did they respond?

A: Silence, deadly silence.

Q: Were these people in uniform?

A: No, no, university professors had an SS rank, but did not have to wear a uniform. Only for parades. This matter had its effect even in Theresienstadt. This happened as follows. When I was arrested in order to be deported, the people came on the last Thursday, or whenever that was, because the course had not been canceled. This is how Christian found out what happened. Subsequently, the University of Vienna officially made a request to the Reich Security... to the Ministry – the file was then passed on to the Main

Office of the Reich Security – to release me from the Ghetto and send me back to Vienna.

Well, I think that this was also the only case in which a university asks for the release of a Jew, you understand?

Q: But they did not succeed?

A: No, but it had consequences. The Main Office VII of the Reich Security Main Office was responsible for cultural. They got this for evaluation. They said: “he can no longer come to the books, but the books can come to him.” And then, in April 1943 – I already was in Theresienstadt – I was called to the headquarters. There I found a Dr. Kellner, he introduced himself: Dr. Kellner from the Reichs Security Headquarters, Main Office VII. “Do you know what Main Office VII is?” No. It is cultural matters. Please. I found out about the whole matter with the university, etc. “We now wish for you to do cultural work.” And they had books by the tons, piles of books, and they did not know... nobody knew what to do with them. Thus, the culture, the book action Theresienstadt started or the book action Dr. M., 3 to 4 truck loads....

Q: Dr. M. is Dr. Murelstein?

A: Yes, yes. Three or 4 truck loads with books arrived in Theresienstadt.

Q: Transports

A: Books, yes. They were the Jewish... confiscated Jewish libraries from Warsaw, from Breslau, from Frankfurt, from Amsterdam, private....

Q: Book Kibbutz Galuyot?

A: Well, yes. Kibbutz Galuyot of books. That is what it was. Well the books..... I was given a whole little house, and was supposed to have the books brought in piecemeal, or in

groups. They also supplied the most modern book shelves and containers made for libraries and I was supposed to establish a scientific catalog. Well, I do understand something about Hebrew books, but I do not know anything about library science.

However, in Theresienstadt one could find anything from a polar researcher to a [not understandable] – you could find anything you wanted. Well I did find a Hebrew library scientist, a certain Dr. Munalis, who knew a great deal. And I said to him: “See, Dr.....

Q: A Jew from where?

A: Please? From Prague, from a cultured Jewish family. I told him: “See, Dr. Munalis, you will have to do this; I will cover for you. Because I cannot do anything here. First of all, I have other things to do, I have my duties in the administration, but I will cover for you. You have to do the work, etc.” And he.... Because it turned out that among the orders I was given for the establishment of the scientific catalog was one which said that the ownership information has to be destroyed. But I told Dr. Munalis that we were not going to do that, and I will bear the responsibility. But I want to draw your attention to this; if something happens, you will also perish. So he would not think that I would perish and nothing would happen to him. I am nice enough to make sure you know this: If something happens, you will perish, just as I will. But I will do everything possible to cover for you, I assume all responsibility. He stated: I am with you. It then happened.....

Q: Was this a major risk?

A: No, well, I think it was taking a risk. It was sabotage. So, after a few months, Kellner came to see how the work was getting along. I showed him the first catalog cards, I showed him this and that, did everything possible to prevent him from touching the

books. I talked a blue streak, as we say in Vienna, I guided him around, talked back and forth, went outside with him, and he did not touch a book. You see – and I may be getting ahead of another question – but only in short, because you asked why I was hated.

Q: Go on, go on, go on

A: Why I was hated. No I have....

Q: Go on, go on, the sound....

A: Why I was hated. The article in the volume Theresienstadt from the Association of Jewish Communities contains an article by Dr. Feder who was later a rabbi in Prague. He also tells about the visit by Kellner and that I bawled out a rabbi, I don't know from where he was, a certain Dr. Nürnberger. You know what bawled out means?

Q: A Dr. Nürnberg?

A: Dr. Nürnberger. Yes, you know, it means I reprimanded him, in a certain unpleasant way. I have no precise memory if it was unpleasant. In my opinion, he deserved it. You can imagine how relieved I was, and – after what you know about it – how the visit by Dr. Kellner weighed on me. When I led him out and came back, and look at Dr. Munalis, we just look at each other. We stood there – he was sitting, I was standing. We just looked at each other. Because we could not.... he could not say anything, I could not say anything, nobody was allowed to know anything, because this was a secret between us two. We just stared at each other which was to mean: well, it went well this time. Poor Nürnberger thought that I was looking at Munalis to indicate “have you seen what a great man I am, how I have received the SS man and led him around.” And suddenly he blurted out: “Yes, yes, you have the honor and we have to work.” You can imagine that I then.... this

is no way to talk to someone, quite apart from everything else, because, after all, I was his superior. And discipline has to be, if it is convenient or not. His working group... if there is no discipline and order, everything falls apart. It is also unbecoming to reproach me like this.... even if I had done this. But this was not the case. I really looked at Munalis in this way in order to say: This time we could save our heads. He had no idea of the whole matter but said to me: “Yes you have the honor and we have to do your work.” I then asked him to please be quiet...

Q: This means that the Nazis wanted to destroy all the Jews, but they wanted Jewish culture...

A: Just like....

Q: with Jewish culture....

A: In Frankfurt, yes, these books were supposed to get to Frankfurt. By the way, these books remained so beautiful, that the owner of the books from Amsterdam – his son was taken to Theresienstadt – where he had his own books... I took him into the group, there he could take care of his books himself, in Theresienstadt. What happened later, I could not take care of. But I want to say, he had his own books. He could get them, the owner of the books from Amsterdam. The other books were prepared to be given back; the owner indications were untouched. It was clear where every book belonged.

Q: [not understandable discussion between Lanzmann and his interpreter in French]

A: See, Mr. Lanzmann, I cannot explain this to you, I also do not have to explain everything to you. But, I think the Nazis never imagined to eradicate all the Jews. In the worst case they thought of eradicate Judaism in Europe. And they knew that world Jewry would then

even more become their enemy and you have to study your enemy. That is how I imagine it. They wanted to study this enemy. But.... but... but I want to tell you that again, they had no understanding of this matter. There was not a single one among the Nazis who really occupied himself with Jewish science. It was all superficial.

Q: [Lanzmann in French is not understandable – translation by his interpreter also only a few words understandable]

A: Well, look, yes, it was my intention at that time: first, to show the people Judaism in a good light; they should see what values they are destroying. And on the side, it was also practical because at the time I had to take into account that the Jews would really be gone from Vienna, all of them, and someone ought to be there, people should be there, who could care for these values and know how to treat them. At the same time I wanted them to be aware of the fact that these were books and art objects which had a value, a general human value. You understand?

Q: [Lanzmann in French is not understandable – translation by his interpreter also only a few words understandable]

A: They stayed, they stayed. They stayed. At that time it was said we go and they stay. And I will... I did not intend to speak of this for so long. Lets give an example. You know a Talith? The prayer shawl?, Talith, Zizis, the fringes? You see; this is the only Jewish piece of attire in which wool and cotton may be mixed. Wool and cotton. This means, shepherd culture and farm culture. The shepherd is wool, the shepherd shepherds sheep, the farmer is cotton. The Zizis are the only mixture of wool and cotton. The threads are mixed in knots which are knotted by certain rules. Take a look sometime when you are in a temple,

you will see it. And I explained it to them, an explanation which I read by an important poet, Bialik. He said that this is a knot writing, just as with the Aztecs; we Jews also have had a knot writing at some time. The first wars of humanity were between farmers and shepherds, because the herds of the shepherds destroyed the fields of the farmers. The shepherds, the herds eat the grain. And the first wars arise between nomadic tribes and farmers. Then there are peace agreements and a peace is concluded. And these Zizis are farm culture and the shepherd culture, wool and cotton. And in the old knot writing is the formula for peace, peace. I said: "see, this means peace, the peace of people of good will." You understand? In this way I wanted to convince them that there is no sense in destroying such objects. When I show you at the same time that this piece, which is, so to speak, the first peace agreement between people from ancient times, which reminds us, that this piece...

Boite 8 (plans 40, 41)

40

Q: Doctor, I think that Eichmann asked you for a scientific report about a Jewish State as a solution to the Jewish problem.

A: See, this is true, it is the report which appeared in the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem as Löwenherz report because it was delivered with a cover letter from the Jewish Community that was signed by Dr. Löwenherz. However, the study was by me and had been requested from me directly by Eichmann among the many reports about which we spoke yesterday, which he always requested from me. Now I can see certain connections which I was

naturally unable to appreciate at the time. At that time I received an order from Berlin to write about the history of the idea of a Jewish State in connection with the possibility of a solution of the Jewish question.

Q: In which year was that?

A: That was in 40.

Q: 40. Why are you saying that today....

A: Now, that I studied this matter more closely, I know that Eichmann worked at the time for the Foreign Ministry on a memorandum about Madagascar as a solution for the Jewish problem. There is a statement...

Q: This... this report...

A: Yes. At the time, Eichmann worked on a report about Madagascar for the Foreign Ministry. There is a statement about this by the Secretary of State Luther. He found in Paris, during the occupation, the writings done by a Polish committee before the war about Madagascar, regarding.....

Q: In 36.

A: about the possibility to settle Jews. That is what he found. Thus he had the practical documents and he received from me the theoretical ones, and this made him a big man. This was his ability, he was always there and always had the documents. In 37 he was in Palestine, spoke of Nisko, was in the district of Lublin with Stahlecker immediately after the occupation, always knew what to say about it, was in Theresienstadt the day before the Wannsee Conference, he always was at the location where something was to talk about and always was able to say: I was right there. And he was always able to say: I have the

authentic documents.

Q: Excuse me, the people, the Germans, did they believe that Eichmann was THE man?

A: Well, they did not know that behind him stood a Jew who, as you might say, was his Negro, today this is called a Negro.

Q: Yes, you were a Negro.

A: For him I was the Negro, you understand? But I did not do my work as Negro, and I am sorry that... because of the superficiality – I am sorry to repeat that – with which the trial in Jerusalem was conducted, nobody was found who would say: “I really have to read through this stuff, I have to look at it.” That was written there. You understand? Mrs. Arendt stated: Yes, there was... she does not say anything about me, she does not know that it is from me, you understand. Eichmann ordered the theoretical background for the Madagascar plan from his friends in Vienna. But if someone would have read these documents, he would have found something strange. Because it was clearly proved in these documents that the creation of a Jewish State was inextricably connected to Palestine. You understand?

Q: Excuse me, a...

A: another question.

Q: another question. Were you a Zionist?

A: Well, a politically organized Zionist in the sense that I paid my dues, yes. Politically active in Zionist causes, no, culturally yes, in a political way I could not, as I was a Rabbi in a community in which Zionists only amounted to about half of the members of the community.

Q: Personally.

A: Personally, yes. See, personally I can just tell you that I was the Rabbi who introduced a Hebrew sermon, who experimented with giving a sermon in Hebrew..

Q: In Vienna?

A: In Vienna. I was the Rabbi who in a demonstrative manner convinced his friend to marry him in Hebrew, whereby the question arose, to what extent that this was legally valid. I assumed the responsibility. I married him in the side temple, in Hebrew etc. If you call this a Zionist activity, it is so.

Q: You were a partisan of a Jewish state?

A: Partisan of...this has a special connotation. I was not.... I did not participate in any partisan activity, I was a supporter of a Jewish state which is logical. It is based on my birth and based on my whole family which was that way. Thus I have.... but if someone had read this, he would have seen that the author of this study pleaded for Palestine. And he would have found something else, and Mr. Hausner might have avoided a stupid error. In his book "Justice in Jerusalem" he is writing of two Jewish elders who were tools, or marionettes, of the Germans: one of them is Rumkowski, and he reports the fact that this marionette voluntarily boarded the train in order to accompany the last Jews to Auschwitz. What he considers marionette behavior in this, I cannot understand. With me he does not even try to state why I am a marionette. He just says so, and that is enough. In his opinion, this is generally known.

Q: He says Dr. Marmelstein...

A: Tool...tool, if I am not mistaken, you do speak English, you know. A tool, not like

Murmelstein and Rumkowski. For me, he does not give any details. For Rumkowski he cites the voluntary departure to Theresien... to Auschwitz, which, after all, is not as a tool. But for me he considers it as understood that I was a tool. However, if he had read or had someone read this study, he would have found out that this tool – at a time when Hitler reigned from the Atlantic ocean to the Caucasus – had the courage to write: “Any power which would be of importance in the area of the Mediterranean after the war, would have the task to solve the Jewish problem by the founding of a Jewish state in Palestine.” After that Eichmann blew up: “what does that mean, any power? Does Murmelstein not know – he had them tell me – who won? Is that not clear to him? What else do we have to do to convince him that we won the war?” He did.... Storper, I don’t know if you have heard this name?

Q: But, excuse me, you said that this was written in 40; there were no Germans in the Caucasus...

A: Oh, well, let’s say I have exaggerated. Let’s say....

Q: From Norway...

A: From Norway to... let’s say.... and... well... I retract, from the Atlantic Ocean to Norway, from the Atlantic Ocean to.... to.... the Bug. Sorry if that is not enough for you. Sorry, I did not change my opinion.... even when they were at the Caucasus; I did not change it. At any rate, I was punished in the sense that, for one, it was of no interest; Eichmann had completed his theoretical studies and no longer needed my reports. Soon, there was no more emigration, this also became uninteresting. For the purpose of deportation, it was known that I was someone with barbs.... You know what that means in German, barbs?

Someone who opposes something, someone who can say no, you understand? Yes, and they did not like to see me, even if they said the opposite because they did not understand the action that a Jewish official had to take. A Jewish official under Hitler could not afford to say: You, Eichmann say this, I have nothing to do with it. He could not do that, he would have been finished. It was necessary to be there to be able to intervene. One could not make a clean break. But one had to be ready to attack at any time, to work alongside to help; we were not able to cancel anything. We were able to mitigate, and that is what we did. If you permit me, you will hear about the whole question of age limit for deportation...

Q: Who?

A: Age limit, this means that....

Q: Age limit.

A: that old people over a certain limit would not be sent to the East, you understand, this came from me. The whole matter came from me. I created a "fait accompli". And....

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Q: Well, Dr. Murelstein, how many pages does this report contain?

A: I cannot tell that anymore. It was a very large piece of work. I did.... I only remember that I took much from Adolf Böhm, "History of Zionism," took a lot from other works. Then I used a lot from my history of Judaism.

Q: Herzl too?

A: What?

Q: Theodor Herzl?

A: Well, that is understood, but, no, I mean, this is child's play, because Eichmann knew Theodor Herzl. He read that himself. He did not need to learn that from me. However, I had to study Adolf Böhm, as well as my history and similar works, and how many pages this was, I cannot tell you now. It was quite substantial. Well I think we have the energy in Jerusalem..... Mrs. Arendt cited it, she said that a friend did this for Eichmann in order to prepare the theoretical base for Madagascar. But if someone had bothered to read it, he would have seen immediately that she is writing nonsense.

Q: But did you know at that time that it dealt with....

A: Madagascar? No, no, no, no, otherwise I would not have I would not have been able to prevent it that it would have been in Madagascar, but I would not have written. But at least I would not have been so stupid to argue so much for Palestine. I would have somehow toned down, while I worked with great enthusiasm.

Q: The idea was a Jewish state in Palestine.

A: In Palestine. I would have.... I mean, I did work with great enthusiasm, because, you must not forget the following. At the time it was spoken of Rommel to come to Alexandria and go on from there. I don't even want to say to where. You understand? And there was... there was, you understand, the Jewish state in Palestine was not such a wild idea with Eichmann. You understand, with him, in his brain. You understand? At a time when they thought that they would be occupying the Near East. You understand? This was....

Q: He thought that he could a Jewish state?....

A: I could.... I could easily imagine that something like that went through his head. Although,

I would have preferred not to live to that day. Well, you understand? But I could imagine that he was thinking such thoughts. But I had no idea about Madagascar. He needed this at the time as the theoretical part of his report to the Foreign Office. With Madagascar it stood like this: The idea of Madagascar, if you let me explain, is German. It had been invented in the 19th century by the Oriental Studies Specialist Paul de Lagarde.

Q: Paul de Lagarde.

A: Paul de Lagarde. No, he was German in spite of his French name. He is a Paul not Paul (French). He was a famous Oriental Studies Specialist, understood very much of the Bible, but was an anti-Semite, and he was the first to bring up the idea to settle the Jews in Madagascar. People laughed at him. Then, National Socialism came to power and the dream of Madagascar was revived. But it was attacked through Poland. It happened that the story reached Poland from Birobidjan. Some years before an autonomous Jewish area had been created without, if you please and to remain objective, any underhanded ideas with which, I want to stress that again, no underhanded ideas were connected, apart from political bases which was to use any excuse to make a white population go to the Far East, near the Manchurian and Chinese borders. To create a Jewish area was an excuse in order to get a white population there, but it was not directed against Jews. The best proof for this is the fact that – at the same time – agricultural Jewish settlements were promoted in the Ukraine and on the Crimean peninsula which were much larger than the whole autonomous area. It was possible to create an autonomous Jewish area. However, the Poles were impressed; it is possible to create a Jewish area. They did not have any colonies, so they thought: Madagascar.

Q: Yes, but in reality...

A: Yes?

Q: in reality, what....

A: Well, now...

Q: ... the German plan...

A: The German plan to get France to cede Madagascar for Jewish settlement. It was put onto the Poles. First in 1939, after November 10, 1938, we find for the first time that the Germans often speak of Madagascar. At that time, Göring said on November 12 that the Führer will tell the people: "You want the Jews, take them, if not, send them to Madagascar. And then he did....

Q: What does Madagascar mean in this.....

A: At that time it was still called Madagascar-Madagascar.

Q: Don't forget that Madagascar is an island.

A: Yes, I have not forgotten. In one of his reports Eichmann wrote that in order to prevent a contamination of other people, an insular overseas solution is preferable. So, you see, Madagascar. He was well aware that it was an island, but an island with 360,000 square kilometers and space enough for the settlement of Jews. You understand?

Q: And, for example, if the plan for Madagascar had been possible....[not understandable French]

A: I am at this time unable to say.

Q: At that time....

A: See, the history is as follows: after Nisko – certainly not.

Q: Before Nisko?

A: Before Nisko – I don't know. After Nisko I would have rejected it because it had been shown that the people had not bothered at all to take organizational measures for the Jews. The famous organizational mechanisms for which the Germans were well known failed bitterly where Jews were concerned. The Jews were just sent there, and thus I am convinced that Madagascar too would just have produced mass deaths. And for this reason I would certainly have....

Q: But that was the idea...

A: Well, yes, but see, this is the idea of Madagascar, a masking of the final solution. If the British, let's say, I think in May of 42 occupied Madagascar, and the Führer himself during the noon discussions – the famous noon discussions – stated that they would not return Madagascar, the British, they would not even return it to the French. Then, two weeks later, as if nothing had happened, he talks about sending the Jews to Madagascar. So, what is his idea about Madagascar?

Q: An obsession.

A: No, this is no obsession, this is a so-called camouflage measure, one says Madagascar and means final solution. When Hitler talks to Frank, talks about sending the Polish Jews to Madagascar, at a time when Frank has Polish Jews liquidated en masse, it is also clear that Madagascar serves as camouflage word, a code, a mask. And this is of importance because Madagascar this inheritance of Madagascar, was transferred as a mask to Theresienstadt, to fool the world. Instead of saying "wiping out," they said "sending to Madagascar." Instead of saying "sending to Auschwitz," they said "Theresienstadt," continuing on from

Theresienstadt, but Theresienstadt. Here too is the politics of the mask.... See, Auschwitz was chosen because it was an industrial area. There is a document by Himmler where he states directly, that it is an industrial area. There one more chimney, smoking chimney... Imagine, how much heat was created there. Just think how cozy this was. One more chimney, a smoking chimney does not matter there, because there are so many there already, many factories. Yes, this is the way one did... according to this system the

Q: It is very important, this idea, this mask....

A: Mask for camouflage.

Q: The language too.

A: What?

Q: The language too.

A: Yes, this is, in a way, a language solution, a language solution. Well, the following happened then: Hitler talked about Madagascar when the British were still there. This Madagascar appeared and disappeared.

Q: But there is also a discussion between Ribbentrop...

A: and.... and Bonnet, I think, Bonnet.... Ribben.... Ribbentrop and Bonnet in December 39... 38. In December 38. There was..... [fading to silence].

Boite 9 (42-43)

42

A: As long as Poland was put up as a front man in the question about Madagascar, France did not consider the matter serious, spoke back and forth. But when Ribbentrop started to talk

about it, the French got scared, because this was after the Sudeten affair when it was already known that imperial demands by Hitler had to be taken seriously. And then France made a very interesting declaration: they did not want to give up Madagascar because they want to use it for their own Jews.

Q: Oh.

A: Yes. They wanted in particular the.... to the extent that they were not French citizens, the Jews from France...from France to Madagascar...

Q: I think that Bonnet said that...

A: Bonnet said that to Ribbentrop. If he was serious about it or if it was only an excuse, I can naturally not decide. Then, the war broke out and France was eliminated, the negotiations could no longer continue. And then there was Nisko. Nisko appears and disappears; in the meantime France is conquered and from a conquered France it is possible to again demand territory, one can demand Madagascar again. Madagascar reappears, even though it was nonsense, because the organization of the transports and resettlement would have been impossible for the Germans.

Q: Did they not know that there were already people on Madagascar?

A: But, there was space, there were 360,000 square kilometers, there would have been space for the Jews. They simply thought to extort the territory from France. Then, Madagascar disappeared again when the British occupied it and the Führer gave up, Madagascar was lost to him and then, unfortunately, the final solution appeared.

Q: Well, this is very interesting – Island Madagascar, and now this Nisko reservation, island Nisko also. I know that Nisko is no island...

A: Island.... island Nisko.... Nisko is no island but it also is one. If you want it to be, it is an island. Because it is an area – and they also copied Birobidjan. Do you know why it is called Birobidjan? It is an area surrounded by two rivers, Biro and Bidjan. And there was a triangle between two rivers: the Bug and the San. And this whole area between Bug and San was to be blocked off as a Jewish reservation.

Q: There are bridges over the Bug and the San?

A: There are bridges, but bridges can be demolished. When I was there, the bridge over the San had been demolished, for example. But.... in any case, it had been planned that way. And the item was called Nisko, because Nisko was the only attempt to solve the matter in a more or less constructive manner, and it failed terribly. This was....

Q: Well, can you tell the Nisko story?

A: The Nisko story....

Q: More accurately, can you tell when you first knew Nisko as a possibility for a solution?

A: I, no, no, I never....

Q: Can you tell?

A: I never believed in Nisko as a possibility, and it was never as such.... I also don't believe that there were Jews in Germany who believed in it. Eichmann stated in Jerusalem that the Jewish representatives allegedly agreed with the Nisko solution. But he stressed that the only one of whom he cannot say this was Murrelstein. That comes from the fact that on the way to Nisko, in Nisko proper with him, as well as on the trip I decidedly spoke to him and Günther against it.

Q: Yes but I believe that... [not understandable].... because it is very important...

A: yes, I think that it could not be regarded as constructive solution.

Q: yes, it is very important to show how the Nazis were thinking...

A: thinking.

Q: Nisko was in October 39...

A: ...39. Yes, on October 15, 39, I think, Poland had barely been occupied, I received the order to report in Ostrau in Moravia to "Sturmbannführer" Rolf Günther, the representative of Eichmann in Berlin. And.... I was not told anything else. I had to travel to Ostrau in Moravia to report. You understand? I had to conclude that it had something to do with the East, because of what happened at the same time in Vienna; the preparation of a transport to the East. But I had nothing to do with this, because I was busy preparing my trip and I really left the administration of the Jewish community, because I knew that I was going away and nobody expected really that I would ever come back.

Q: [inaudible]

A: See, I had orders to travel to Ostrau in Moravia, to travel to Ostrau in Moravia and to report there to Günther, you understand? It was known that it had to do with a trip to the East. Because, at the same time, preparations started in Vienna for a transport of Jews to the East. Did they know that this was connected to it? Nothing in particular was said. It was known that I would presumably also travel to the East, and assumed that I would probably not return, you understand? You can imagine how excited my wife was about this solution. Wife and child were to remain in Vienna. And I reported to Ostrau in Moravia, you understand, to Günther. I found there that there were also preparations being made for a transport to Nisko. Günther....

Q: Czech?

A: What?

Q: A Czech transport?

A: A Czech ... transport from Ostrau/Moravia. This is not a coincidence, because in Ostrau/Moravia were technically educated people, it is an industrial area and they were suitable to construct camps, you understand? They were selected with this criterion. This was well organized – from their point of view. In addition, this was an area where they wanted to vacate apartments in order to send Germans there. This is an area between Bohemia and Slovakia. This area was supposed to be Germanized in order to prevent forever that any Czechoslovakia could reemerge there. A wedge was supposed to be inserted there, a German wedge and for that reason Germans were to be settled there. Ostrau/Moravia had been selected for just this reason, technical and also political reasons. I reported to Günther, who was not particularly intelligent, but I had from him.... He first received us, all three of us, because I encountered there also Edelstein from Prague, an official from the Jewish community in Prague, and the head of the Palestine Office from Vienna who had come with me, and the head of the office for illegal transports...

Q: The head of the committee...

A: Overseas transports, Stolper, yes. Yes, they also came along. Günther received us collectively. However, I also had orders, to personally report again. I never liked those things because the others always talked about that and wondered: God knows what bull he is selling us. I never liked it, but orders are orders, nothing can be done about that. Thus, I went there and he laid into me, that a large Jewish reservation would be created there, that

it would also comprise Polish Jews, Austrian Jews, German Jews, and whatever else would be added, etc., etc. I listened to him and then told him, that in spite of the war there were still possibilities to sail from Italian and Dutch ports to America, and that there were Palestine Certificates available at the Palestine Office in Trieste, so that also the emigration to Palestine could continue, and illegal transports always went through Italy. He listened to me for some time and even understood that I wanted to divert him from this matter to emigration. Then he said to me: "Well, you are not impressed that you would become king of the Jews. You are supposed to take charge of all of this. Everything would be under your administration. They wanted to make you king of the Jews and you don't want this. You are rejecting this." I can tell you that I gave only a short answer: "King of the Jews is an inscription on the cross." He misunderstood this and threw me out...

Q: He did not understand?

A: No, he did not understand that I alluded to the fact that he read the crucifixion. You understand? He sent me away. But it must have stuck in his head; he must have told it to Eichmann, because Eichmann alluded to it. The curiosity is that Eichmann, after so many years, in 1960, that is more than 20 years later, remembered the story and stated during the trial in Jerusalem that the only one of whom he cannot state it, is Murelstein. And the gentlemen, Mr. Hausner, hears that but does not draw any conclusions from it.

Q: Well, but I would like to understand why you were offered to be king of the Jews and not, e.g., Edelstein and the other people who were there?

A: Well, see, see, I really.... you know, I am sorry that I told you this... you and others will draw conclusions from this... as a special secretive connection to Eichmann. He was the...

Q: [unclear interjection]

A: please, let me finish... It is very simple. Among all these people I was the oldest acquaintance of Eichmann; when I got to know him, he was 2nd Lieutenant in the SS, just promoted to 2nd Lieutenant, had no office, but just a briefcase as his office and carried out his duties in a staircase...

Q: Office?

A: At the time when I got to know him he had a briefcase as his office and worked in a staircase.

Q: A....

A: Yes, and he knew my work in the emigration department, and in that regard, the people were always well informed and he was able to clearly observe that I solved some organizational problems. You understand? Organizational. I would have....

Q: Was Eichmann a good organizer?

A: Eichmann? I don't think so. He really did not understand anything of organization. He did.... the actual system, how it should be done, I shall tell you about it.

Q: [not understandable]

A: He knew that I had solved certain organizational problems in the emigration department. He knew that I understood how to select my co-workers. I knew how to let them do their

work, to direct them; he knew all that. That was....

Q: It was very important.

A: And he knew that, and he thought, please. Certainly... I can still say, afterwards, after the matter of the study of Madagascar, he was finished with me, he was finished....

Q: Why?

A: Because I had earlier doubted the final German victory, he was finished with me. That is also the reason that I got to Theresienstadt without special orders, as a simple Jew. My.... Mrs. Arendt wrote that it was a special political idea of Eichmann to send me and Epstein to Theresienstadt. I cannot say what was the case with Epstein, but there certainly was no special idea with me, he did not send me with any special idea. I was deported just as an ordinary Jew. Only at the last moment, when he decided to leave Löwenherz behind was I appointed. But it happened, that the next day the commander in Theresienstadt asked to speak with Löwenherz, they had not even been informed of the change. When...

Q: But Löwenherz was excited for you.

A: Well, see, I have to tell you something; not like in Berlin, where there were power disputes between the groups, and not like in Prague where there were power disputes between Edelstein and Weidmann, etc., there were no personal competitions in Vienna, no power disputes. We stuck together, we each knew that he could rely on the other. You understand? And this is.... as we both have survived, this may perhaps be attributed in part to that. Because a lot that happened in Berlin, unfortunately can be traced back to carelessness and conflicts. You understand? I will not comment on this, there is no point in your asking me about this, it should remain buried, just as the people, because they

could not do more than die. But in Vienna, such things did not happen. And there was.... I mean, for example, there was a situation where they wanted to play me against Löwenherz. In the year.... I will just give you that as an example... In 1942, at the end of 42. At that time Brunner asked me to compose a list of 500 Jews who would be left in Vienna. This was based on a personal agreement I had made with Brunner, with Eichmann and with Brunner, and this was the only case, it was not repeated anywhere in the German Reich. See, this is a historic fact which they don't want to see, but it exists, the 500 people are still alive, the names are there. Nowhere were 500 people left free. In Berlin they also left a small group, but they were incarcerated in a camp. But in Vienna they were totally free and there were 500. This list....

Q: yes, but in Berlin they were

A: No, no, in Berlin some were left behind, concentrated in a hospital, concentrated in the hospital.

Q: After 43?

A: After 43. They were not allowed to leave the building. But in Vienna they remained in their houses, could go around, totally free.

Q: To the end?

A: To the end, yes. You understand, I was able to get this. 500. Naturally, you see, this is always the case. When Himmler decided, or Hitler or Göring, to rid Vienna of Jews, I was unable to prevent this, to annul this. I was able to tear away 500 people, I tore those away. If someone thinks that this is not enough, one can debate this, you understand. But I was able to get away with 500 , with all kinds of excuses, even the dirtiest ones: leave me this

women because she is my mistress, and I need this woman for the office, and this woman such. This is the way I got them out. But when the time came to compose the list, Brunner, who wanted to put me up against Löwenherz, said; we two will write up the list. This is your doing, your success, the people should know whom they should thank for this. You understand? You know what happened? I brought him Löwenherz, sat Löwenherz down, he was out of favor at that time, you understand? And Löwenherz was there. I said that without Löwenherz I will not do this. You understand? That's how we did it in Vienna, we held each other up, no competition. When I was supposed to go to Nisko, he cried and did everything possible, he convinced Prochnik to enlist in my stead voluntarily because Prochnik was single. He wrote a request which I – you see – only got to read in 66. The request was written by Löwenherz. It is one of the few requests that I did not writ and which I would never have written, never signed, because it is only done by someone who is desperate, such as a father for his son. Everything possible....

Q: Exactly, I would like to read something. He wrote, in order to from Nisko....

A: Well, see, what he writes is very servile, this is written by a person who wants to get me out at any cost. And in part.... at any cost, even the cost of his own dignity, at the cost of my dignity. He wanted to get me out. But... see, I would never have permitted that Prochnik would sign up for me, I would never have permitted that. He has... I have ... the request.... the request was found together with other Gestapo.....

Q: “In order to emphasize the work load of Dr. Murrelstein, I want to state, that within the last 16 days, he worked through 11 nights at the Jewish Community, and that without his work, the difficult and complicated apparatus of the Jewish Community would appear to

be in real danger.

A: Listen, I never knew all this.

Q: “Belongs to the few people who are indispensable for the leadership of the Jewish Community of Vienna...”

A: I knew nothing of this. Please, see, I would not have let him write this, because.... The matter really is as follows: In this regard, I always followed the rule that one of us is either useful or superfluous. When he is needed, he can do anything, because nothing happens to him. If he is not useful, he is finished. At that moment, I was not useful in Vienna, Eichmann could not use me in Vienna. He could not use me for the composition of the first transport to Nisko. And he was right, because when he put it together in my presence, the transport to Poland, he was convinced that he was right. I played a surprise joke on him. Thus, he wanted me to be away, you understand? And....

Q: ...”I want to stress in particular his accomplishments during the difficult work in the last few weeks, in particular with the counting of the Jews in Vienna, with the establishment [not understandable], creation of all the necessary calculations and documents for the counting of the Jewish property, and of the

A: [Lanzmann talking in background, not understandable] Well see, he did everything, put together lies, he wanted to save me at any price. He wanted to save me at any price because it was known that if I go, I would not come back. There was a miracle that I did come back. You understand? Thus, I mean, you can see from this how we kept together in Vienna. The many saved.....

Q: Great solidarity.

A: See, in the year.... September 42, Eichmann called me. That was after a long time that he received me again

Q: In Berlin?

A: In Vienna, in Vienna, yes.

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Q: Restructuring, professional restructuring, restructuring camp, etc.

A: No, no, no, no.

Q: Well.

A: You will not get me into this, Mr. Lanzmann.

Q: But, yes...

A: No, no, I will not follow you there. I will not follow you there. I don't say, to confirm your intelligence, this is not my matter.

Q: Please, Berlin 1942

A: No, Vienna. It was Vienna 1942. It was Yom Kippur, a Yom Kippur war, a little one. He summoned me to the central office; I had to walk there. And after he had berated me some because I kept him waiting, I explained to him that I don't ride on this day. He then told me that he was at the end of his patience. Löwenherz would go to Theresienstadt as Jewish Elder, and I would have to live with that, to take on the leadership of the organization in Vienna. I told him that this is not possible. For starter, Löwenherz does not

want to go to Theresienstadt, he has a sick wife and he is hesitant to do damage to others who would be shoved aside by his arrival. This has to be respected. Yes, they failed.

Q: I don't understand. Why?

A: Löwenherz knew that when he arrives, the one who is now Jewish Elder will be pushed aside. And we knew, we both knew, we had that much experience, that the one who will be pushed aside is finished. He will be eliminated sooner or later. Thus I have... this was a reason for Löwenherz to defend himself, not just for his own person, but also for the one who was there it was necessary to act. And I also told him that those remaining in Vienna would not just be religious Jews, it would be baptized Jews, mixed marriage Jews and for them I would not be the suitable leader. Don't forget, in the end I was a rabbi. He said, yes were. But the people will still be surprised that it would be me to be in the position of such a community. Then... No, you know that I have to have someone...

Q: Who said that?

A: Eichmann. I need someone who can run the store. This was his expression. At any rate, I fought against it and he dismissed me harshly. This was another case where I said no. On the same day I informed Löwenherz. And thus, the decision was delayed by another three months. This is only to show you how we were together and supported each other mutually. And this also explains the content of the letter by Löwenherz, which in its content and format can only be explained to be written by a person who is more or less desperate. He did.... there was a case in which certain telephone conversations were attributed to him, which he made and were intercepted, when I took these conversation on me and exonerated him. This was.... in response to the State Police etc. Thus, we had a

relationship that was really good. For this reason, my traveling to Nisko was a severe blow. He did everything possible to....

Q: But you did go to Nisko. [rest not understandable]

A: No, I went to Nisko. The letter had been rejected. I would have advised him to not... discouraged him, if I had known, as I have already said.

Q: Now can you tell us about this trip.

A: Now...

Q: Were you alone in a passenger train?

A: No, the train was.... others. We had a compartment to ourselves, the representatives of the Jewish organizations in Vienna and Ostrau/Moravia; we were together in a separate compartment. But all the people were in passenger cars. The freight cars only were along with supplies and building materials for the barracks. For the barracks. Memories. An indelible memory for me is the stop in Cracow. There, Jews were working at the railroad and I looked out of the window and what I saw, scared me. I will never forget the looks of the Jews. That were eyes which saw, but were dead. Dead eyes.

Q: Already in [not understandable]

A: In October, yes. They looked at you with dead eyes.

Q: Dead eyes?

A: With dead eyes. This were eyes that saw, but were dead. Dear Lord, there is no other way that I can express this.

Q: This were Jews – religious?

A: Religious Jews with beard and Polish caps were working on the railroad, on the tracks,

adding gravel to the tracks, etc. But they understood immediately that this was a transport of Jews, somehow approached us, but when I looked at them, I got scared.

Q: And did you talk to these people?

A: No. That was not possible. We were with an SS escort. But one could see, look at. There was a mutual understanding.

Q: What did you understand?

A: What?

Q: Did you understand something.... when they....

A: Well, I would have been able to talk to them in Yiddish or Polish. But it was not possible to understand them.

Q: No, did they understand what was going on?

A: Yes, they knew what was going on. When we looked at them we saw what had happened. The Jews had been forced into forced labor, convicted. You understand? That was obvious. The next day we arrived in Nisko. This is a railroad station on the San. And there we were...

Q: Near Lublin?

A: No, no, this is in the former Galicia. Lublin is Russian... formerly Russian-Polish. This is still on the San. This is... higher up there is the District of Lublin. And then we had to march 12 km.

Q: 12 km?

A: 12 km.

Q: [unintelligible]

A: Well yes, you wanted to get that behind you. 12 km. We had to.... We also had to cross a bridge over the San and came to a village named Sanjietce.

Q: Sanjietce?

A: Sanjietce. I am stressing the name because the name is not unimportant. Literally, the word means on the other side of the river. Because it is on the other side of the river San. Sanjietce means in Polish "on the other side of the river." There we were herded onto a bare hill and on the following day....

Q: A what? A bare...

A: A bare hill, an elevation. And the next day we appeared for roll call.

Q: But where did you sleep?

A: I don't remember. Somewhere we slept, but I mean, they did not house us in hotel rooms. There were farms, there were barns. I know that during the whole time that I was in Nisko I slept in a barn on hay.

Q: Straw.

A: Straw, yes. On bales of straw, bales of straw, lets say. We then had to laugh because Stauffer explained, held forth that he needs the straw bales, that they had to be arranged vertically, because they would... and not horizontally... they were pressed if they wee horizontal and it would be impossible to sleep. I believe today, because he already then was an older gentleman... But we just laughed at it and went on sleeping. Thus, the next day was roll call and Eichmann was speaking. He told us, in short, that a camp was to be erected. The barracks for the SS would have to be built first, then the barracks for the camp staff, for the people who would stay there. Careful about sanitary matters, do not use

the water, dig new wells, because there is typhus and cholera in the area, etc. Thus....

Q: Did you know...

A: No, there is typhus and cholera in the area. All the wells are contaminated.

Q: [not understandable]

A: Yes, he then said: “thus, provide new water at all cost, which is not contaminated. And otherwise,” I still remember it today, he paused in order to leave an impression, he smiled and the continued: “it means dying.” You understand? “Otherwise,” pause, smiling, “it means dying.” You know, that reminds me of Edelstein – excuse me, you know how in old people things run through our heads, memories.... Edelstein always trusted Günther in Prague, Hans Günther, you know.

Q:

A: Yes, yes, but in Prague he always trusted Hans Günther. This was good and bad, because both of them talked a lot.

Q: There were two Günther.

A: Yes, Hans and Rolf. The Prague Günther was Hans. That both of them chatted a lot was good because often Günther let out something that had been heard.... something one could find out. And during the preparations for Theresienstadt, Günther talked to Edelstein and promised him all kinds of things. Then, when Günther came to Theresienstadt for the first time, Edelstein went towards him and told him: “For heaven’s sake, all the things that you promised me.” You understand?

A: You mentioned earlier that the speech Eichmann gave in Nisko is of basic importance for the final solution. I am risking to disappoint you, but I have to say this is a discovery which is quite obvious. And the tribunal in Jerusalem, as I can see from the protocols, also has understood it. For this reason it dealt extensively with the talk; the question was, did Eichmann ever give such a speech. Eichmann denied it. He was told: "You have spoken in Nisko and of this... and said: otherwise there is death." Eichmann declared: "I have not given any speech in Nisko." And he was right. He spoke in Sanjietce, not in Nisko. He fooled all of them, all the Jews there. He spoke in Sanjietce. He was absolutely right. He never spoke in Nisko. But nobody there knew that.

Q: How far is that from there?

A: 12 km. The people.... somehow the idea arose, he was accused that he gave a speech at the train station in Nisko. This is not true. He spoke in Sanjietce. And he denied it so vigorously that he was believed. The only witness who was listened to had to acknowledge, to a question from Servatius, the defense attorney, that he did not personally know Eichmann and is not sure that it was Eichmann or someone else. Then Mrs. Arendt writes, and presumes that it was Dr. Jakovich who gave the speech. But see, I knew Eichmann well. I stood in the first row. I was not further away from him as I am now from you, and at that time I certainly was not senile...

Q: How were you there, at attention?

A: No, we stood in a circle around him, and he was in the middle. Well, I was the first....

Q: How many people?

A: All the people from the transport out of Ostrau/Moravia, who were already in the camp.

Several hundred people. Right? And imagine, the tribunal was not able to prove the matter which was publicly done in front of several hundred witnesses. In addition in the archives or I don't know where, is a book in which the speech is described. The first chapter of my book "Theresienstadt" carries the title "Altimenti cioè morir" – "Otherwise there is death." But they did not even look at the table of contents.

Q: Did you take this speech seriously?

A: Well, dear Lord, I have to tell you something. Eichmann always made threats. Sleigh rides, he will us... sleigh rides, he will do that. One never knew how far he was serious about anything. But unfortunately I see now: he was much more serious than I had thought. See, with Eichmann....

Q: We now know....

A: See, I want to tell you something. An Eichmann anecdote, which is true. General (Obergruppenführer) Wolff, an aide to Himmler..

Q: I know Wolff.

A: ... once called Eichmann to plead for someone. You can believe, each one had his protected Jews. And Eichmann bluntly turned him down. He then told him: "You don't know with whom you are speaking." You know what Eichmann said? "YOU don't know with whom YOU are speaking." And that was that.

Q: Wolff told me this story.

A: See, I am informed and do not pretend. There is, for example, the story of Jochem... a writer, I can't quite remember his name. He had written a novel about Frederick the Great, Rex. And he was married to a Jewish woman who had, from a first marriage, one, two

children. The first child had emigrated, and the second child, a daughter, was still with the family. This.... this.... Jochem Krebs..Krepner, or something like this, such things I don't have so.... The man had a support in the Minister of the Interior, Frick. Frick, Interior Minister Frick. We have the diaries which he left, this man. I have excerpts of them, I shall give you the name later, if you permit. And Frick cared about this. The wife was close to the daughter and he was close to his wife and the wife's daughter. The matter was... the wife should... the daughter at least should have been able to emigrate. The wife was protected by the mixed marriage. And Frick gave him a letter of protection. This was his undoing. He should have gone to any Jew in Berlin. Right, he would have been able to pull him out. But a letter of protection from Frick was a disaster in this case...

Q: As with Göring.

A: As with Göring. Well, for a time it held then it came again, the daughter was in danger. He went to Frick and Frick told him.... you can read it in his diary, "I cannot help you any more. Go to Eichmann." And, just a moment! This is not now. Two days later, the whole family committed suicide. Collective suicide. Right? This was the answer by Eichmann, in spite of the fact that the Ministerial Counsel Greger – I remember this name – came to Eichmann on the request by Frick to ask him that so and so will come to you; please take care of him. Nothing doing. That was Eichmann. And then they wrote that he was a banal, small man. Yes? And this artifice had the effect of the official indictment in Jerusalem, which permitted him to appear in this light. He was a demon.

Q: He was a demon?

A: And this demon was possessed of the idea of group migration. I spoke yesterday of the...

of the Colombia matter, the famous one, which he undertook in the name of the group migration. When the war ended, against Poland, he went as scout to the Holy Land. You remember, Moses sent two scouts from the desert into the Holy Land. The bible tells this. And they came back and said: “The land is beautiful, but the people will pose a problem.” And such scouts have always gone to the Holy Land. Eichmann and Stahlecker. And they came back and said: “The matter is urgent! The report has been published. The land is very suitable.” They liked it “wonderful for the solution.” And then the play of intrigues starts. For that... Nisko, Yes.

Q: Yes, they made a special trip, an air trip with Stahlecker...

A: With Stahlecker, yes, yes, yes, as scout he went to the Holy Land.

Q: And in three hours he saw enough....

A: He saw enough from the perspective. You know... You know what he answered me after the speech when we were received. I said to him: “Well, how are we supposed to do this? There are people living there?” – “Well you just have to kick out the Polish peasants (excuse me for this expression – it was his expression) and settle in his house.”

Q: He said that?

A: In just these words. These words. It had been set up on this premise. In reality that was then so for the resettlement: the people who were needed for setting up the camps remained with the transport, the others were sent, under escort, a few kilometers further away. They were told: Now you go on. Find a home where you want it. You may go into the houses, across the border, wherever you like. Right? They then shot into the air, or not into the air, in order to scare them. And that completed the action. And when the escort

made a mistake, a whole group was chased into a marsh. Nothing could be done about it.

Q: But that means that this is already the final solution, this means disappearance.

A: This....this is not yet the final solution. This is... a final solution as a victim of a terrible disorganization. This is a final solution as the result of a terrible disorganization. One still has shame, they still care about foreign reaction. Nisko is still masquerading as a resettlement operation. Because why was I... do you think...

Q: This was no resettlement...

A: This was no resettlement, but towards the outside... if you read the documents now, those that were found from the Gestapo in Ostrau/Moravia in 1965, you will see the press instructions. The press was supposed to be told that this was a resettlement and that the Jewish organizations were supporting it. And that Jewish officials were included, if at all possible, everything connected with the loading should be left to the Jews.

Q: Spontaneously.

A: The Jews... This is supposed to mean.... it was supposed to indicate that the Jews deported themselves. This was supposed to be a self-deportation. Right? We did not know that at the time, but today it is very clear from the documents. Today it can be clearly seen in the documents what was really happening, that this was actually an illegal transport. On October 6, Hitler gave his peace speech and spoke there about a reorganization of the Jewish question. Then there was... I think behind this is...

[Translator's note: long interruption in the sound on the tape – long picture of Lanzmann smoking and obviously talking to someone, then suddenly sound comes in the middle of a

sentence, still picture on Lanzmann, but Marmelstein speaking; there is no transcript of this part]

A: was, I should give something from my packages because I was getting too much.

Right? Nobody thought of him, nobody sent him anything he would have starved if I would not have given him something from time to time. [interjection by Lanzmann, inaudible – picture does not go along with sound]. Oh yes, very nice.

I told Epstein, when Hitler wanted to send away his chief of the general staff, he did not have the courage to say: “you Mr. Fritsch have to go.” That was Hitler’s method.

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A: this speech by Eichmann in Nisko, or rather in Sanjietce, was certainly already a hint to the later final solution. Because... at the time there was still a chance of an open door left to the Jews, if they were young and healthy, that was the Russian border. The Russian army had orders to let the Jews pass. I don’t know who gave those orders, however, it is a fact that deserters encountered no difficulties by the Germans on passing the border. At the beginning at least, the Russians were helpful in every way. They received the people with understanding. But for us, the problem were the old people who....

Q: In Nisko?

A: In Nisko... who were not able to get across the border. Because it was not....

Q: There were people who were old?

A: I have not age statistics, but there were people who, let’s say, were unable to make long marches. There were people who were chased away with luggage, who just dropped the luggage because they could no longer carry it. See, and this Nisko event has been with me

all the time. From the start, always the problem for the aged during deportation. Right? It was always with me: the aged always have the worst ending during a deportation. I have seen them lying in the forest, exhausted, lying...

Q: Where, in Nisko?

A: In the forest.

Q: Also in Theresienstadt?

A: I am now speaking of Nisko. They were always left behind. Right? This always... this picture has been with me ever since. And this also explains many of the initiatives that I undertook later when I got to Theresienstadt and found that efforts were made, or had been made to send away the aged.

Q: Deportation?

A: Deportation. It had been requested as a special favor from the SS to send away the German old people. Right? As if one had....

Q: Who requested that?

A: What?

Q: Who requested that?

A: Who requested that? The council of elders, let's say. Right? There is still today.... You know the book "Die verheimlichte Wahrheit" [The concealed truth] by....

Q: Adler

A: Adler. Even today you can see a drawing there which makes propaganda for sending away the aged. You know, the famous sieve where one can see exactly the shown bad development; what happens if the old remain and the young go away. This is propaganda

to send away the old and keep the young. Naturally the young also should....

Q: This was done by the council of elders, this....

A: Yes, yes, yes, this is a drawing by the council of elders, by a Jewish Czech artist. You will find this in the

Q: this was Edelstein... Edelstein policy?

A: See, the Edelstein policy in Theresienstadt we can discuss in a separate question. I would like..... it might be better if we stayed with Nisko. But, in short, I can tell you that Edelstein had a guilt complex towards the young Czech people because he trusted Günther and on that basis made promises to them regarding Theresienstadt which he was not able to keep. And now I remember where we stopped. At his first visit when Günther came to Theresienstadt, Edelstein went out to meet him, horrified, and said: “where are your promises?” Do you know what he said to that? “Now the Jews are in the shit. Now you can show what you are able to do.” Excuse my use of.....

Q: Günther?

A: Günther, Günther, yes, right. And you have to understand... In order to understand how awful this expression was, you have to know that it was Günther who said it to Edelstein with whom he had been talking for hours, whom he cosseted, with whose feathers he adorned himself etc., etc. But, please, this was... this was.... And what happened now? In Prague, people who were of mixed origin, who were protected, registered voluntarily for Theresienstadt, because they liked the program offered in Theresienstadt. And suddenly they were there and had to go to Auschwitz. Edelstein was blamed for this. One has to understand this because if one thinks about it that a Jewish elder asks that the old people

be sent away, this is terrible, but you have to understand the situation. There were these young Czech people who trusted him and came to Theresienstadt and now suddenly they have to go away and said to him: “You misled us, we could have simply and under protection stayed in Prague.” Right? But let’s leave this matter now. We were still at Nisko. This subject.... this final solution should not be the final solution for us, thus, let’s get back to our subject. Because I continued to hound Eichmann. He did come almost every day to the camp. And I reported regularly every day and always reminded him – there too — of the promises which had been made. That this was no system, right? And he said then to me: “Well, see, let’s do the following. Report to the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Nisko,” ... there was a Central Office for Jewish Emigration...

Q: In Nisko?

A: a central office for Jewish emigration. For a long time, I even had a document...

Q: There was nothing in Nisko.

A: A Central Office for Jewish Emigration. I had a document, again, an identity paper with the stamp “Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung, Nisko” [Central Office for Jewish Emigration, Nisko].

Q: Yes but it had just been established.

A: Yes, it had been established. It was supposed to become the administration for the whole reservation of Lublin, in Nisko... with Nisko as center. And you will hear more about it there. I then reported to the famous Dannecker, whom you presumably know from Paris, and whom I know when he was still a young man.

[Background conversation; picture disappears]

And he gave me an identity paper.... Well, I reported to Dannecker and received an identity paper which I did not understand there. But I...

Q: He was also in Nisko?

A: He was in charge of the Jewish.... He was the representative of Eichmann at the Jewish Central Office in Nisko.... Central office for Jewish Emigration in Nisko.

Q: Emigration.

A: Yes, Jewish emigration... Central....

Q: not for deportation?

A: No, it was called Central...

Q: but....

A: [picture reappears] Well, all of this is just a mask, it is all fraud. Thus, I received a safe-conduct letter for myself and for an escort troupe, and it was made very clear that nothing was to happen to us. Because, after all, there were SS people there on the road, it was a war zone, there was shooting in the area. And police, and soldiers etc. Well, in this safe-conduct letter reference was made to highest orders, etc., that we had to do work, we should be transported, all kinds of things, supported etc. it was not even mentioned that we were Jews. Member of the Reich so-and-so. Usually it was written: the Jew so-and-so. Member of the Reich so-and-so. We needed it once when we got into the middle of a pogrom in Lublin. Right? People came into the room and demanded: "Who are you?"

Q: In Lublin?

A: In Lublin, yes.

Q: But, excuse me, the people in Lublin did not know that you were Jews?

- A: What? What? The people with whom we stayed? Yes. But the soldiers did not know, the soldiers who came in, checked our forms of identity...
- Q: Member of the Reich....
- A: Member of the Reich so-and-so, and then they went away and we did not only... due to our presence we protected the whole house. They left and did nothing.
- Q: Who made this pogrom?
- A: Well, you know, to the extent that I could observe it, I certainly only... I have to admit that I had no interest to take a walk, to observe, though I was relatively well protected. But I had the impression – it was the German army.
- Q: The German army?
- A: The German army.
- Q: But a real
- A: Yes, house searches, arrests, etc. We were in Lublin for 10 days and were twice in the center of such an action. You can imagine, we had Jews there, how often they had to go through such a thing. At that time they were not yet in a ghetto.
- Q: Did you see when they [incomprehensible word]
- A: No, no. This was... I cannot (remember?) such... but I only say the Poles who led them around, Polish Quislings, showed them, who were ordered to rile the Jews etc. That I have seen. Well.... Lublin was the final destination of our journey. On the way we stopped at Janow-Lubelski. This was a bombed-out city. Janow-Lubelski was... had the honor to accommodate the Polish General Staff for two hours. And it paid for this honor with a “coventryzation.” This means, the German air force totally bombed this little city. For me,

this matter was interesting for the reason that I found a small town that was totally devoid of people. And I preferred to house the people in ruins than to know for them to be in the woods. And then.... I have.... First, though the military police arrested us, wanted to shoot us, it was curfew, etc. Well, our papers got us out again. Well, we went to the land director, to, to – not the land director, the district director. I.... to the Head of the Land Administration, please, excuse me, to the Head of the Land Administration of Janow-Lubelski. I was together with Richard Friedmann; he was an official from Vienna who had been sent to Prague, to the Jewish community. And we informed him of our request to settle Jews there. You know what he told us? “You are crazy, I just got rid of the last Jew from Janow-Lubelski. And now you want to bring other Jews here. Out of the question.” He did not really prevent us, forbid us to go to other offices, but said that we should go to Lublin and report there to Storm Command Leader (Major) Strauch. So, we were sent away. The Jewish community in Lublin also kept its distance from us, in a way and said: if someone is coming, we will help him. We are not able to start any action for the people. How? If someone arrives in Lublin, we will not let him starve, we will admit him to the hospital. But we are not able to do more. And thus, after 10 days in Lublin, we received orders from Strauch to travel back to the camp and he told us that Eichmann will certainly give us more detailed instructions. Now I know what happened. Based on Hitler’s speech of October 6, Eichmann received from Müller – the so-called Gestapo-Müller – permission to transport Jews from Vienna, Ostrau/Moravia and Kattowitz to the East. Müller assumed that this was arranged with the Führer, but, the following day, he was persuaded – through an accidental statement by Himmler – that the German army is

decidedly against this. He got scared, wanted to rescind this order, but Eichmann did not let him out of the trap. There is a record of a telephone conversation in which Müller is looking for Eichmann, and offers him a plane to travel to Berlin..

Q: He was unable to find him

A: He could not be found. Then he prohibited by telegram the transport from Ostrau/Moravia, but the representative of Eichmann did not accept the order. In the documents of the Gestapo on Ostrau/Moravia is written: "Mr. Brunner cannot be found." Actually, they knew exactly where he was. He was at the station where the Jews were loaded in Ostrau/Moravia. Right? Thus, under these circumstances it was certainly not possible to maintain Nisko, for the moment. The fact was that the people were afraid of the matter. Although they covered themselves with the fact that allegedly it was an initiative of the Jewish organizations.

Q: This was an experience?

A: Please?

Q: This was a....

A: An attempt. An attempt to see how this works. This first attempt failed, as one can say. It did not fail. This is a serial test from a laboratory. The first series was Nisko, the second series was Litzman.... Kielce, there... and the third series was Litzmannstadt. And then came Minsk and continuing to Theresienstadt. This is a chain, a series of normal laboratory jobs. And for each test remarks are made, noted, this is research work, direct, scientifically studied final solution, with a scientific system. Right? For each test notes are made and used for the next attempt. Right? Then, Eichmann received us, looked at me

ironically and repeated the arguments back to me which I had made to Günther in Ostrau/Moravia. There is emigration from Trieste, through Dutch ports, there are.... Palestine certificates in Trieste. He continued looking at me while he spoke, what I would say to this, see how well I learned the lessons. And I was supposed to return to Vienna and reassume the leadership of the emigration department.

Q: How long did you stay in Nisko?

A: Well, see, if I add everything together, uninterruptedly, with Lub... 10 days in Lublin, the trip, etc., about 25 days. I then came back and in Vienna nobody wanted to believe me that the action had been called off, that the action had been called off, because a transport had just been assembled there. The people were kept in a concentration camp and were not let out, and were not released. That was.... when I came back, that was in November and the people were released only in January. In January they were finally released, the people in the camp. Until January the Jews were pushed together in a concentration camp, in an old school building, in order to be transported to Nisko, whereby I knew exactly that Nisko was no more....

Q: They remained in these concentration camps in Vienna and Prague?

A: In Vienna. I don't know anything about Prague. In Vienna a transport was quartered in a concentration camp, and it was not possible to attain that they would be let go. Basically, see, Storm Command Leader Eichmann told me such and such, and I was told: Don't mix yourself into what does not concern you. I have my orders. It may be that he was still hoping for a power war. There is a place in the documents from Ostrau/Moravia where Eichmann says: "A transport has to be made in order to guard the prestige of the

Gestapo.” Perhaps this was also such a transport to guard the prestige of the Gestapo. At any rate, Nisko was called off. Then, Himmler inserted himself as a commissary for the German national tradition. And he made a proposition to Göring: he wanted to bring 30,000 Volhynia Germans to the Reich in order to make space for Jews. Göring responded with something which clarifies all the doubts the people had: “You cannot do this, we have to see what the Americans say to this.” This shows us that they were afraid of America. But they convinced themselves that they did not have to be afraid of foreign countries. For other countries this was an internal German administrative matter, into which they should correctly not interfere. And this is what happened. Löwenherz, who left in December even told me about the statement.....

Q: Where?

A: of a....

Q: What trip?

A: He was in Amsterdam, he got together with the.....

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A: As we have talked about, Göring rejected Himmler’s request to exchange Jews for

Volhynia Germans in the East, referring to America. However, he apparently overestimated the Americans because America, as well as the other foreign countries, ignored Nisko. 5000 people were terrorized, deported, mishandled, some sent to their death. Nobody said anything. It was an internal German political administrative measure. And Hitler's policy was in this regard just as his usual procedure: one step after the other; occupy the Rhineland, rearming, Sudetenland, Austria, Poland. And after every step he looked around to see what people said about it. And after the world was silent, he went on. Nisko was an experiment planned by Heydrich and Eichmann, which was certainly approved by Hitler. And as the world remained silent, it was logical that other experiments would follow. They had to follow. The world was silent because the war in Poland had ended and in France not yet started. And because of the Jews nobody wanted to risk that shooting would start. Even after Nisko, Hitler was a negotiating partner for Roosevelt who sent his secretary of state, or deputy secretary of state, Sumner Welles. There is a diary note by Rosenberg in which Hitler jokes that an association for the protection of Jew was to be established in which he would be president and Rosenberg the secretary. And it has to be said that the world really deserved this irony. Thus, the matter continued. Eichmann said: "in October we will continue." And he said that in December. Interestingly, even Jewish organization abroad or individual persons were fooled by Hitler's speech. In December, Löwenherz reported back from Amsterdam a statement by a very well known personage who, based on the report on Nisko had nothing else to say than: "This is the solution of the question." This was meant well, yes, if the Jews who cannot go anywhere else are sent to Poland, that they can in Lublin....

Q: Who said this?

A: That I will not tell you. I will not say. This will die with me. Because the man did great service. And I am sure he did not mean it to be detrimental. In his naïveté he believed....

Q: A Jew?

A: Yes, in his naïveté he believed that the Jews who were now unable to emigrate to anywhere else would be able to go to Poland where they would be received readily by the Polish Jews and would be housed humanely there.

Q: Yes, I understand well what you mean. But, you were in Nisko yourself.

A: Yes.

Q: ... after Nisko, what did you think?

A: After Nisko I have not....

Q: YOU.

A: I personally? I have always rejected Nisko. Right? I can... we already talked about the fact that I rejected Nisko in any form, whereby Eichmann remembered that after 20 years. But the thing that stayed with me is the conviction that old people must not be deported. While I was in Nisko it was not an extermination transport for people you were healthy and young, could work, could march, but it was a death transport for old people. For this reason the conviction became rooted in me that old people could not be sent.

Q: Yes, but it was already extermination...

A: There....

Q: Because for old people...

A: For old people it would be extermination. For old people Nisko was extermination.

Q: Yes, but my question is: what did you think of the overall Nazi plan?

A: That.... I have... I knew that something was going to come, and I intended to do all that was possible so that the old people would not have to go. And I did the following....

Q: Well, but in general, but...

A: See, excuse me, Mr. Lanzmann, I did not have time to think. I have... it was necessary to act. Let me finish, so that I can tell what I did. Because thinking.... the time lost with thinking would have made it too late to act.

Q: No, but this is very, very interesting what you are saying....

A: Well, now, see....

Q: Do you think...

A: No time to speculate – there was no time for that.

Q: I think this was the case for all responsible Jews.

A: Well, please, perhaps this was a mistake, but I am telling you... See, I assume, thinking, thinking too much may be a national mistake of the Jews. It is necessary to act. Not always wisdom. But I.... [inaudible interjection by Lanzmann.] please, I will tell you to continue. Thus, in 41 was the first transport again. In October, Eichmann kept his word, in October 40. You know there were the Jews, 6500 Jews from the Rhineland/Palatinate, there were 1000 Jews from Württemberg went to the South of France. In February, I think, 41– 5000 Jews were again sent to Poland. They were again refused entry. Not a single one of the 5 transports ... 4000 Jews reached their destination except for the second, I think to Kielce...

Q: Kielce? Opole?

A: Kielce... arrived correctly. All the others were declined, let's say: addressee refuses the shipment. And all the others were scattered. But....

Q: transit, but they did not know...

A: Yes, but this time there were no old people among them. And I will tell you how that was. We were.... and this is important for Theresienstadt, because there [not understandable] for Theresienstadt. And I will tell you in principle for the acceptance of the Jewish elders. The Jewish elder was in a position to be a marionette, a ridiculous marionette. But just this marionette had to act in such a way that he could influence matters from his laughable position. Nobody could understand that, nobody was supposed to understand that otherwise it would have cost his head. But he had to act in such a manner that he influenced matters as a marionette. This means, usually marionettes are pulled by wires, but in this case the marionette had to pull the wires. This was the hard part of the job of Jewish elder. Of that others understand nothing. This was a marionette who had to pull the wires himself. The others had to dance for this marionette. You know, this was as follows: I have always declined to assemble the people. This was always my principle. This means, the negotiations were always done with Löwenherz, but he discussed it with me. I told him: we will not assemble the people. The Jewish Community, I told him, had done, at that time – I was a way then, or almost away – assumed enough with the Nisko transport. It was time now that the gentlemen do it themselves. And we arranged it that way....

Q: In Vienna already?

A: Already in Vienna... the gentlemen should do this themselves. We twisted it in such a way, adroitly, I have to say, Löwenherz did this adroitly. The matter went as follows: the

execution – should have been done by the emigration department. And I said that I would not do it, so what should have been done? He could have said... he could not indicate that Marmelstein was not going to do it. Thus he was forced to say something in such a manner, and he did it very adroitly, that Brunner got the idea to have the people come to the central office where he would see them himself and decide on the people. He would be selecting. And he just sent us the lists of those he selected for the transport. Right? If he not... When he selected the people, I cannot do anything. I can.... I have to repeat again: an order from Himmler or from DaLuege or whatever their names, or how to pronounce these names, I cannot annul. But.... but I... but...

Q: Who was at that time responsible for the Jupo, the Judenpolizei [Jewish police]...

A: The Jewish community had nothing to do with the Jewish police. Remember, the Jupo was...

Q: I have read that this Jupo was very brutal..

A: This Jupo were people who had nothing to do with the Jewish community, the Jewish community rejected them. They then got to Theresienstadt where they were beaten and then immediately went to Auschwitz.... were sent away.

Q: This Jupo?

A: This Jupo.

Q: Well, who (selected) these people?

A: See, in the camp, from among the people who were selected for the transport... for transport purposes, for deportation into the camp, certain types were chosen who were the hitting kind, muscular, and with a corresponding intellect, and they were promised

protection if they would, so to say, make themselves available. You might say... that were some 10 or 12 people who were put directly under the command of Brunner. I can only tell you....

Q: Directly....

A: Directly, what?

Q: These people were brutal...

A: they had been selected by the SS, were commanded by the SS and acted on orders of the SS. The Jewish Community had nothing to do with them.

Q: But it is true that they were very brutal?

A: See, I can only tell you one thing. At one time I liquidated a whole Jupo group.

Q: You?

A: Yes.

Q: Where?

A: In Vienna. I liquidated them, but they set up a new one. I can tell you how that happened. But...

Q: But how? How did you liquidate them?

A: They went to the East.

Q: To?

A: To the East. After all, when 1000 Jews had to go, I preferred that this number was attained with Jupo.

Q: You did that?

A: Yes, I did that. I take responsibility for this. You know how that was? I will tell you soon.

But I will get to that, let me speak first. Thus, Brunner was supposed to omit the people... should have selected the people and sent us the lists. Yes? And he said that Murrelstein should then contact him. He sent....

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A: Thus, every day the central office sent us a list of the people. There were their names, addresses, and age, and then I did something which is known, but which one did not want to admit. I made a duplicate list. All the names of those whose age was over 55 I crossed out. In addition, I assembled a medical commission and said: all those people who report ill, should be examined. To head this commission I called on a retired – forcibly retired – chief physician of the Vienna police, Dr. Garr, and everybody who reported as ill, was examined. And those who were declared ill, not able to work, if older than 55, I took them off the list without asking anyone, I did not even say anything to Löwenherz. I simply called Brunner and told him that I needed more names. This worked. Finally we got 5000 people who were all healthy and less than 55 years old. This means, from my point of view of Nisko they were in a bad situation, but from my point of view of extermination transport they were ok, if it had been like Nisko. They were able to march, healthy. But suddenly Brunner got time to think after the matter was completed. He suddenly found the odd matter that he supplied me with 7000 names for a transport of 5000 people. He called me in and said: “Tell me, why did you keep on calling me that you needed more names, and you needed 7000 names. Where are the other 2000?” I told him that they were over 55 and ill. – What does that mean? Who gave you permission? You – Why me? You told me that it was a work transport. You told me that the people would have to work. A man who

is over 55 and ill cannot work. That would have been sabotage to send those people. He was speechless because I trapped him with his own lie. He then said: Well, those over 55, you set your own age limit, but well. But those who were ill, I will have them examined by my own SS doctors. We shall see what mess you made. A week later – the people all had to report to the central office – he summoned me again and said: This was really a mess. 20 percent of the people whom you declared as ill were declared able to work by my SS doctors. I said to him: This is really a mess. He says: why? I said: if there is only a difference of 20% between the Jewish doctors and the SS doctors, this is a mess. So, he says....

Q: you told him that?

A: Yes. If the verdict between the Jewish doctors and the SS doctors is only a 20% difference, this is really a mess. He then said: You are too often playing with the concentration camp. Too often you get the best of me. Gradually he lost the [not understandable word]. I left. But the idea of an age limit remained. The Nazis changed it, they lifted it from 55 to 65. But with this power play, without consultation. See, this was the Berlin system: think about it, call a meeting, talk, argue, work on the matter. That made no sense. No democracy, it was necessary to act. But this ploy had the effect that the idea arose to house the old people separately. If they wanted to maintain the lie that work transports were sent, it was logical that no old people can be sent. And they did not want to play the card that these were extermination transports. In this manner, the idea arose slowly to accommodate old people separately. And I have...

Q: But you knew that these transports were extermination transports?

A: No. For me this was – and I don't want to brag – for me this was still something like Nisko. I had no idea. Buried in each question was the one if we knew what the task forces (Einsatzkommandos) in Poland did. No.

Q: You did not know that?

A: We had no idea of the measures in Poland. See, even in Poland they had no idea. You can read in Adler, his book on the fight against the final solution, and you will see that the Jews in Warsaw had no idea of what took place just a few kilometers from Warsaw. See, I now get to the Litzmannstadt transports, this means Lodz. I always say Litzmannstadt for the simple reason that there was never a ghetto in Lodz and no Jews were transported to Lodz. Jews were transported to Litzmannstadt. It is nonsense to talk about a ghetto in Lodz. There was never a ghetto in Lodz. There was only Litzmannstadt. This is so, I believe. Ergo, 10,000 Jews were led away from the Reich and from Vienna, who were already in Litzmannstadt, in the spring of 42 they were taken from Litzmannstadt for extermination. You see, there is already the core of the system which was to be later in Theresienstadt. From the Reich people were sent to Theresienstadt. But Theresienstadt, if you please, Theresienstadt – old people's home Theresienstadt – the Führer is giving the Jews a city. As you like it, call it. But very quietly, underhandedly, they were sent on from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz. So, 5000 Jews from Vienna, 5000 from Prague, 5000 from Berlin were sent to Litzmannstadt. To Litzmannstadt, that is nothing to be scared of. This is just a large ghetto, half a million Jews, I don't know, 300,000, 400,000 or half a million, they will be able to accommodate another 15,000 Jews. After all, Jews shared a common destiny. They will not perish there. But as soon as they were there, in the spring of 42,

immediately after their arrival, about 10-12,000 were sent away underhandedly from Litzmannstadt...

Q: To Chelmo.

A: To Chelmo. Do you know when the council of elders in Litzmannstadt learned about this? What happened in his Litzmannstadt? Do you know when he learned about this? In October. This was done so expertly. And now you will understand that in Vienna we were certainly unable to have any idea. Whereby I always say...

Q: [not understandable]

A: Well, see, of the Jewish elders in the area.... in the occupied areas, only the Jewish elder from Sosnowiece was known.

Q: Moses Merin.

A: Merin, yes the name was known. But we never heard anything of the others. Well, I just want to say, because I... I always have to say it because one always waits for it: what did you know? I always answer: we knew nothing. But at the same time I have to ask: excuse me, and if we had known something, what could we have done?

Q: Yes, but this is a very important question.

A: What could we have done?

Q: Can you answer this?

A: We could have done nothing, nothing.

- A: I don't know, at least I.... there was nothing else but to kill oneself, let's say, as a solution. But that would have been the only thing that one could have done. .
- Q: Suicide?
- A: Suicide. Because – I want to stress – the only Jewish elder who actually did this was not Czerniakow in Warsaw, but Parnass in Lemberg. He said, when ordered to name people for a transport, an extermination transport, he took off his coat and asked: please shoot me.
- Q: Yes, and what do you think about this attitude?
- A: See, I have respect for it, but I mean, see... there is nothing one can say to this.
- Q: This was not your way.
- A: No, my way was rather to look, smooth things out, buy time, rescue 500 Jews in Vienna, 370 at one time in Theresienstadt, once there, and in the end I succeeded to slip through with 17,000 Jews in Theresienstadt. I mean, if I had killed myself, I don't think that 500 Jews would have remained in Vienna, I don't think that the people who in Oct.... on October 28 left for Auschwitz would have stayed in Theresienstadt, and perhaps even the ghetto Theresienstadt.... if you know that in October.... there is a book by Bernadotte which is called "The End of Germany." The book – I only know its Czech version – states that in October, you may not forget this, that in October 44 there was an order from Hitler to evacuate Theresienstadt. Actually the remaining population was supposed to go on foot, 14 days were allowed for the march, to another location. A 14 day march, can you imagine this for the older people. Please this is a death march. And this marionette... Can you imagine: on one side the Führer and on the other side the marionette, the tool, the Jewish elder. And, you may think me crazy, I can only tell you this, that the plan by Hitler

did not get executed it was only due to the fact that the plan by the Jewish elder became active. That I can tell you. And I think this was more important than suicide.

Q: Yes this is.....

A: See, there is a book by Bernadotte – I only now it in its Czech version – called “The End of Germany,” this is the approximate title in Czech, in which it is reported that there was a directive by Hitler that the inmates of Theresienstadt, i.e. those people who remained there after the October transport in 44, should be taken to another destination in a 14-day march on foot, this means a death march, you might say, it was mostly women and old people for the most part. You see, you say that the Jewish elder should have committed suicide. If the Jewish elder had committed suicide, it is possible that the people would have been led away. But it happened here that it was not the decree by the Führer which was activated, but the tool, the tool, the marionette pulled at the teeth accomplished that, when in December.....

Q: December? The marionette fooled the Führer?

A: No, not fooled the Führer, nobody was fooled, but I have the diploma from Guidon Hausener, who is supposed to be an expert in these matters, that I was supposed to have been a tool. So, I consider this as an honorary title, see?, and when an inspector came in December from the “Reichssicherheitshauptamt” [Main Office of Reich Security] to see what actually remained in Theresienstadt, and most likely already had the directive in his pocket, an evacuation order, and what did he find: an orderly organization. And, again I eavesdropped and only heard one thing when he said to Rahm: “The way it is now, it really could stay” see?, apparently he reported, apparently things remained, they remained

in December, in January, until April, until May. Suicide does not pay off. The suicide by Tcherniakov is tragic, but I think as a gesture I am more impressed by that of Parnass which I mentioned already. With Tcherniakov I rather see a nervous breakdown than heroism.

Q: You had very strong nerves.

A: Yes but I have.... I have let my nerves cool down, I cooled down. That is why I was able to hold on. If they had been able to bite into me, I would have collapsed. But the people also don't want to understand that. But, let me say, sometimes it was necessary to fake a nervous breakdown, but let's leave that....

Q: You did that?

A: Please?

Q: You did...

A: Sometimes it was necessary to fake, sometimes it was necessary. See, we first went through the bakery, the four of us. And the old baker... you have.... imagine where the bakery is, and he says: "this is our bakery chef" and we wanted to go on. The old idiot comes forward and says: "You know, there is so much flour coming in, I don't even know what to do with all this flour." And.... this was none of his business. He only saw the unloading through the window. Because I had arranged something with Rahm and plundered a whole mill. A mill near Theresienstadt! We simply evacuated it, the mill, and led it to the ghetto, see? without permission, see? And he did not know this, I was not going to tell it to him as he had nothing to do with it; he only observed it through the window, and had to tell about it. Rahm turned green when he heard that. And then I

suffered a nervous breakdown, screamed at the man and then the people no longer thought of the flour, first of nothing but that the Jewish elder went berserk, that he is uncouth because in the presence of the superior from the SS you cannot behave like that. I simply accepted my reprimand and... went on. In the evening, when we settled our accounts of the visit, Rahm told me: "You did that very cleverly, but don't do it again next time, otherwise you will go to the concentration camp for something like that. But on the other hand, I also would not like to go to the concentration camp because those dumb dogs there." This is an example for the need to fake, see, a nervous breakdown, but there was no other choice and.... you are laughing? In December

Q: No.

A: In December 45 I had to defend myself for the abuse of an old person in Theresienstadt, and this was our old idiot, our baker. He did accuse me of abusing him in the presence of the SS.

Q: Yes.

A: But, when I explained the matter he was happy that nothing happened to him, see, despite the fact that I summoned him, see, explained everything to him, told him that next time when a visitor comes, he should remain silent because he cannot know what lies I might have told, etc. But in spite of this, he probably was incited, because he was really an old and senile idiot, and accused me. I had to account for it: "how was that, how did you treat an old man in Theresienstadt," they always said that: "You have abused an old man." yes. It just was necessary to clear that up here, see?

Q: Yes, yes.

A: Yes. Well, this is just with regard to nerves. See.... I am getting back ... excuse me that...

Q: But yes....

A: You have to excuse me, you have gotten hold of a seventy-year old subject, I can't do otherwise. Well, I finally get to it that I wanted to obtain a concession so that the old people could remain. Eichmann summoned me and said: "Don't do something like that, because, you know, you should have asked for permission." "But it was just logical, Mr. Sturmbannführer." It was said that it is a work transport. The people were supposed to work. How is it possible for seventy-year olds to work? He could not show his hand. So, he said: "See, let's raise the age limit to 65 and we agree." This is how the word "agreement" came about, from Eichmann. He was not in a bad mood. Let's agree on this. Up to 65. Those over 65 will stay here for the time being. And.... no, I said: "See, we leave those over 65 here." He said: "Do you have any other requests?" "Yes, it is the old people, the ill people, the war wounded, the decorated ones and, in order to keep the machine going, a selected core staff of the Jewish community." This is how the categories were created, and he said: "I will think about it, but you may make a document note."

Q: Excuse me, was that in Vienna, or....

A: In Vienna, in Vienna. "You may make a document note about this." This was an agreement, because at the moment when he says "You may make a document note about this" it is authorized. Naturally, he did not stick to it.

Q: But it Eichmann gave his word?

A: what does that mean? His word?

Q: Yes, yes.

A: Whatever its value, the word by Eichmann. I was not worth the sound wave that it used. Because first he raised the age limit from 55 to 65, then I learned that the sixty-five year olds would not go to the East, but to Theresienstadt, and now we have gotten to where we wanted to be. And then he did, for example, please, to cite an example of the worth of Eichmann's word. Löwenherz summoned me and says: "Look, you have made an agreement with Eichmann." He used some irony, because, you know, the old experienced politicians did not like my systems very much, they were somewhat too revolutionary for them.

Q: For.....for....

A: For Löwenherz, yes, he said: "See, just now an old people's home is being emptied by the SS at the Malzgasse. I can tell you, I don't.....

Q: Which street? Which street?

A: Malzgasse, At any rate in the ghetto. An old people's home was in the process of being emptied for deportation.

Q: In Vienna?

A: In Vienna.

Q: Yes.

A: I cannot remember the reason, but Jews were not allowed to use the streetcars. But the Jewish community had passes for the streetcars to use for official business. Why I did not have my pass with me at that time, I don't remember. At any rate, I had to crawl there on foot to the Prinz-Eugen-Strasse, the former Rothschild palace, and was lucky that Eichmann was in! I had myself announced – he was not always there, but just then he was

there. I was going to Brunner, but when I heard that Eichmann was there, I asked for Eichmann and said: "See, you told me that I could make a documented note and now you are dragging the old people away." He said: "Certainly, Murelstein is right," he said to Brunner, "the people who are already in the camp should be brought back." When I came back to the Jewish community, I was regarded as magician because the cars were already on their way back with the old people from the camp to the old people's home. That was one week. The next week, while Murelstein thought about it, while Murelstein spent one night finally – after many sleepless ones – at home to sleep in, the people were taken directly to the train and were gone by the time I got up.

Q: Yes, yes, this was Eichmann's word.

A: This was Eichmann's word, they were gone. What could I have done? Could I have said: "I won't talk to you again?" I had to continue negotiating. Because, as I have told you before, Brunner stated: "A permission is only valid if it is kept." If it is not kept, the marionette has to keep on hopping, keep going, nothing else can be done. There was no way that I could not talk to him, you see?

Q: He destroyed it again.

A: He destroyed himself. He did..... the Reichsamt has destroyed itself. He acted, legally... he did... Everything was disorganized. He was the worst organizer you can imagine. That went so to the end.

Q: Well, but... he was a very bad organizer, and you were a very good organizer.

A: Fine, but he mad the decisions, see? He decided. He told me: Don't worry about it.

Q: Yes.

A: Don't worry about it, he told me.

Q: Yes, Your actions, your actions were hopeless.

A: Yes. hopeless.

Q: And you did not have to.....